



THEORY INFORMING PRACTICE

5th Edition

The Center for
NEW DIRECTIONS
in Politics and Public Policy
Redefining Leadership for the 21st Century

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER
DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Theory Informing Practice*, a cooperative venture with the Center for NEW DIRECTIONS in Politics and Public Policy and the Colorado City County Management Association. This is our first year in an all-electronic format. We hope that you find it useful.

It has been more than two years since the passing of Center founder Bob Clifton. We continue to miss his spirit, enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to developing leadership for 21st century governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and communities. The Center for NEW DIRECTIONS strives to keep Clifton's spirit, energy, and commitment to Colorado, the United States, and the world alive and thriving.

As you may know, the Center for NEW DIRECTIONS offers a master's degree in political science with an emphasis in politics and public policy that has been recognized by the International City and County Managers Association for its outstanding education and collaboration with local jurisdictions. Its focus on politics and public policy can help you and your employees hone the skills necessary to survive in the politically charged world that is local government. The Center also founded the Cathy Shipley Best and Brightest Internship Program from which many of you have benefited in a collaborative effort with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and local governments across the state.

This publication provides abstracts of the master's projects completed in the past year through the program, especially those with state and local interest. As you scan these, please feel free to contact the graduates for an electronic copy of their entire work or to ask questions about their projects. Many of these projects address issues that affect numerous communities in Colorado and elsewhere. If you need assistance with a related problem, these graduates may be able to help you handle your challenge more effectively.

We hope that you find this publication useful. Please also feel free to contact NEW DIRECTIONS Director Kathryn Cheever at 303-556-5950 or kathryn.cheever@ucdenver.edu, to find out more about our graduate program or these master's projects.

Yours truly,
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CCCMA BEST MASTER'S PROJECT AWARD WINNER 2011

A Revision of High School Government Curriculum With a Greater Emphasis on Local and State Government

Colorado high school government curriculum for years has placed an emphasis on the federal government. While it is crucial that students have a grasp of how our nation's government operates, since it affects every United States citizen (and others), it is also imperative for students to understand the dynamics of state and local government. Again, it is inarguable that the federal government affects its citizens daily, but it is also inarguable that state and local governments affects citizens daily as well.

This project was designed to reinforce that state and local government is not being emphasized with any considerable degree in Colorado high schools (assuming Douglas County Schools are similar to other Centennial State schools), that the current curriculum could be modified to provide equal emphasis on federal and state/local government, and finally to create a young citizenry with the knowledge necessary to become active participants in their respective communities.

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Money Matters: A Financial Stability Plan for the Town of Bayfield, Colorado

The financial stability of local governments is critical. Local governments are responsible for delivering many services to their citizens that impact quality of life. This paper examines the concept of financial stability, which is defined as maintaining fiscal health over time. Fiscal health is most simply defined as having the revenues to meet essential expenses needed to provide services by a local government. Fiscal strain, stress, and fiscal crisis represent degrees of movement away from fiscal health. If local governments do not have the financial health to sustain delivery of vital services, citizens may suffer. Many local governments similar to Bayfield, Colorado experience challenges in maintaining fiscal health. Fiscal stress, strain, or even fiscal crisis can be brought on by lack of available revenues, excessive expenditures, unanticipated needs, financial mismanagement, economic decline, or a myriad of other circumstances. When these circumstances occur, local governments must respond by cutting services, increasing taxes, or finding other ways to bring themselves back into fiscal health. In some cases, response to fiscal stress can have devastating impacts to the local community. Moreover, all too often an attempt to return to financial health in the short term could create new challenges for long term financial health. Creation and adoption of a Financial Stability Plan can help small local governments like Bayfield, Colorado avoid fiscal stress and maintain fiscal health over time, even in the face of unexpected events, declining revenues, increased service demands, and other changing circumstances across the political demographic and economic landscape.

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State Legislative and Congressional Redistricting in 2010

Few things in American politics are more important and less understood than legislative redistricting. Because redistricting only occurs every ten years, the American public is keenly unaware of the constitutional and statutory obligations that surround redistricting. Many more are also completely uninformed about the political consequences that redistricting has on the partisan and demographic makeup of the United States Congress and state legislatures across the country. Every two years voters decide who their politicians are going to be, but every ten years politicians decide who their voters are going to be. How these lines are redrawn every ten years will inevitably play a major role in deciding the direction of our country for the ensuing decade.

In light of the importance that redistricting plays in American politics and the widespread unawareness of the process among the general public, this paper attempts to provide a general overview of legislative redistricting. The paper looks at the constitutional requirements that govern redistricting such as the one person, one vote principle and the Voting Rights Act. It also looks at state level statutory requirements known as traditional redistricting principles. Finally it looks at redistricting in 2010 and potential changes such as technology, the reallocation of prisoners, and redistricting commissions that could have a major impact on the future of redistricting.

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State Legislative Roles and Responsibilities in Dropout Prevention and Recovery: A Pragmatic Approach

There is a growing national momentum to dramatically improve high school graduation rates so that more American students graduate ready for success in college,

work, and life. While other nations continue to make progress on delivering the education and resources necessary for students' becoming productive citizens, the United States has stagnated. For the first time in history, it is predicted that the next generation of young people will be less educated than the current generation (Lee & Rawls, 2010, p.9).

America's current high school graduation rates are no better than they were 40 years ago. More than 7,200 students leave school daily, according to the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center (2010). Annually, that adds up to about 1.3 million students per year who do not graduate from high school with their peers as scheduled. Unfortunately, for students from underserved groups, dropping out is very common. While the national graduation rate was 68.8 percent for the class of 2007, only about half of African American, Latino, and Native American students earned diplomas with their peers (EPE Research Center, 2010, p. 24).

President Obama has set a goal of ensuring that America will regain its lost ground and have the highest proportion of students graduating from college in the world by 2020 (Greene, 2009). Yet, given our current high school graduation rates – especially minority students as their population increases – this cannot happen. If we want to meet this goal - to add an additional 8 million college graduates to current levels by 2020 - we must meet the needs of today's students so that they graduate with the skills and desire to succeed in college.

This study attempts to define state legislative roles and responsibilities in dropout prevention and recovery. State legislatures must ensure that graduating every child means graduating every child. The clock is ticking for our children, our states, and our nation.

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The Use of Vouchers in K- 12 Education Reform

This paper reviews the history of vouchers and provides an analysis of the early voucher programs concluding with a comparison of Colorado and Indiana Choice Scholarship Programs.

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A critical review of child and family investigators in Colorado including: Appointment, training, evaluation, and supervision

The role of child and family investigator in the state of Colorado is one that holds great responsibility and power. A review of policy, past and present, offers a clouded look into potential policy manipulations. Individual responses from current Child and Family Investigators (CFI's) and knowledge garnered from multiple literature sources grants more clarity on recommendations. Further research and recommended policy changes are included.

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E-Government Policy for the 21st Century Efficiencies with Public Interaction Enterprise Content Management & Social Media

Due to economic and political factors, governmental agencies across the United States are operating with decreased budgets. Agencies are looking to technology to bring new measures of efficiency to business processes to create, retain, and allow for collaboration, both internally and with external citizenry.

At the same time, a heightened level of mistrust and dissatisfaction in government is changing the way these same business practices are viewed by constituents, bringing a new urgency to transparency and the availability of the public to view documents and information created by agencies in these business processes.

This same mistrust and dissatisfaction in government is being felt across the country as community based decision-making processes are being rendered unproductive by small, focused groups aimed at derailing government practices.

Citizens are increasingly gaining comfortable with electronic communications and are utilizing social media as a regular means of communication. Social media communications are increasingly expected to be less linear and directive in nature and more collaborative by design.

Meeting the constituents in the communication form that they are most likely to utilize, in a deliberate and constructive way, with open and easy access to data to enable and ensure productive collaborative decision making is the challenge of today's governmental agencies, governmental communication specialists and the elected officials serving the public. It is imperative to the effective demonstration of the democratic process.

By utilizing the innovative emerging technologies to help organizations and citizens share, collaborate, create, develop and save content, policies and processes, Local Governments can be more efficient, effective and transparent.

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Lessons Learned: Smart Growth and Better Planning and Growth Management Practices for Colorado Counties

The State of Colorado has long struggled with the notion of how best to manage growth, as well as how to link open space protection with the containment of urban sprawl. It has attempted to implement various strategies and

procedures to meet that goal and it contains a long history of the many successes and failed attempts that serve as the guiding tools and lessons for others to embrace.

Municipalities and counties throughout the entire state have utilized many creative ways to contain urban sprawl and mitigate its effects, as well as to preserve valuable open space in order to achieve their respective community visions.

In this study, I investigate how urban containment, also known as urban growth boundaries, have furthered the community visions of Boulder City and Boulder County, Colorado, and the community of Fruita and Mesa County, Colorado, in order to analyze how such programs may be able to contribute to the realization of the community vision for the City of Durango in cooperation with its counterpart, La Plata County (also in Colorado). This paper seeks to understand the current planning practices implemented by Durango and La Plata County, and what improvements or changes can be made to further the community.

Interviews, the evaluation of demographic data, and scholarly sources have been studied in order to explore how growth management, the role of urban growth boundaries and better planning practices in general, might further the economic viability and livability of Durango and the County, by bringing them closer to achieving their visions.

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Education Reform in Colorado: An Analysis

This master's project seeks to develop a better understanding of Colorado's education reform and its potential to create successful change in teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Current research centers on specific instances of student achievement based on teacher effectiveness. This study separates the two instances in the case of Colorado and determines whether Colorado is

implementing effective change in its education system based on Terry Moe and John Chubb's (1990) studies in education reform, *Politics, Markets and America's Schools* and John Kotter's (1996 and 2006) organizational change method outlined in *Leading Change* and *Our Iceberg is Melting*.

The project analyzes the current and proposed legislation in Colorado to determine whether it will create effective change that will meet the Federal and State goals for student achievement and for measuring what an effective teacher is. This study uses current studies, journals, articles, personal interviews, and an analytical framework to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the direction Colorado's educational reform should take to be effective.

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A Case Study on the Impacts of Political Trust, Economics, and Political Types in the Stonegate Village Metropolitan District Inclusion Election

This qualitative research project examines the November 1, 2011 water/waste water inclusion election with Stonegate Village Metropolitan District (Stonegate) and Parker Water and Sanitation District (Parker). The purpose was to evaluate the election, and identify the factors that led to the failure. The goal is help local governments be better prepared to manage/run their own elections. It will also help local governments understand how certain political influences can affect their elections.

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Parental Leave Policy: Examining Variation and Solutions for Reform

This is a comparative case study regarding the parental leave policies of the United States, Australia, and Sweden. This study attempts to answer why there are observed policy differences in these countries by systematically investigating the cultural and institutional variables. This study addresses how the culture and institutional variables influence the parental leave policy making process.

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The U.S. Supreme Court and Campaign Finance Reform

This study is an analysis of the 2010 U.S. Senate elections in five states and the possible impact of the 2010 Citizens United U.S. Supreme Court decision on those elections. The methodology of this study involved two aspects. The first aspect was a review of campaign finance legislation, litigation, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions ranging from the 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act, to the 2010 Citizens United U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The second aspect was an analysis of five U.S. Senate elections in 2010 in the states of California, Colorado, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Nevada. The analysis focused on both individual hard money contributions as well as outside money contributions to these respective campaigns. From the available data, a prediction of how new campaign finance

regulations will be made on the 2012 U.S. Senate elections in California, Nevada, and Pennsylvania due to the Citizens United decision, such as the establishment of Super PAC organizations and limitations in disclosure requirements.

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Paonia's Comprehensive Plan: Utilizing diversity to move toward a self-sustaining community

The State of Colorado recommends that a Comprehensive Plan be completed every ten years, although communities with fewer than 10,000 residents are not required to adopt a plan (CRS 30-28-106). Comprehensive plans should address a plethora of issues ranging from public utilities, transportation, general character and locations of neighborhoods, to flood control areas, land use, and respective hazards.

The last time a Comprehensive Plan was completed for Paonia was in 1996. "The quality of life in the place we live is a key component of our happiness" (Florida, 2011, p.361). Urban and rural areas need to be treated differently, as they have different goals. Citizens of Paonia choose this rural lifestyle, this sense of community, and are willing to trade financial incentives such as higher paying salaries that would be found in more urban areas for the quality of life found here. The problem that needs addressing is an updated comprehensive plan that incorporates entrepreneurial endeavors that will diversify Paonia's economic base, thereby increasing the probability of a self-sustaining community that retains the character and values of its citizens while planning for the future.

The Town of Paonia is culturally diverse. There seems to be a place for everyone -- with a wide range of values and interests. The miscellany of the citizens is arguably the strength of the community. It is my intent to examine the

diverse nature of the community in order to better adapt the Comprehensive Plan; utilizing such diversity to create avenues through land use for a cohesive plan for Paonia's future.

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The 2008 Bradley Effect: Dead or Denied?

The Bradley Effect is a historical voting phenomenon first observed in 1982 and named after Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley. May Bradley was a black candidate running against George Deukmejian, a white candidate, to become governor of California. Polls taken the weekend before the election predicted a Bradley win by a 7% margin. When the votes were tallied, he lost by just over 1%. Something odd took place. It appeared a significant number of voters who were polled before the election did not want to be viewed as racists, so they concealed their true preference.

The Bradley Effect came to known as the difference between how a minority candidate polls before an election, versus how that candidate performs on Election Day. Sin 1982, there have been several cases of this ballot box phenomenon, though skeptics have always denied its existence.

In 2008, Barack Obama became the first African American to run in a general election and to win the Presidency, providing an opportunity for analysts to study the national dynamics of the Bradley Effect for the first time. Ironically, com Election Day, pollsters seemed to accurately predict Obama's 52.9% to 45.6% victory over John McCain. Due to this deceptive precision, considerations of the Bradley Effect quickly faded.

This paper will show that upon closer examination of the data, including the abnormal white, minority, and youth voter turnout, as well as the sizeable polling errors that took place, there is a distinct possibility the Bradley Effect played a

role in the 2008 election. The data will show that the Bradley Effect could very well have been masked by the miscalculations and the unique dynamics of the 2008 cycle. Therefore, analysts and pundits should be ready for these observations to resurface in 2012.

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A Discussion on Local Control and Improving the Process For Colorado Home Rule County Charters

It is my objective to add some clarity and explanation to the convoluted and misunderstood process of county home rule charters in Colorado. Home rule county charters allow counties to reestablish the organization and structure of county government to add strength and flexibility to the powers of a county in order to better meet contemporary demands. According to state law, home rule authority is provided to allow counties to better meet and resolve problems of growth and urbanization and to promote the health, safety, security, and general welfare of the residents. However, despite any reorganization of county structure, home rule counties must still provide all mandatory county functions, services, and facilities, and shall exercise all mandatory powers that are required by law for counties that do not have home rule powers.

Despite the authority in state law for counties to implement home rule powers, county voters routinely deny attempts for home-rule county charters. Yet the number of home-rule municipalities increase each year. The last county home rule charter was adopted over thirty years ago, despite several attempts that have made in several Colorado counties throughout the state.

Through this master's project, I would like to analyze why home rule county charters are largely unsuccessful compared to home rule for municipalities. This investigation

summarizes the current process in state law, compares the two existing home rule counties in the state, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of county home rule, and examines the recent failed-attempt in Eagle County.

From my findings I deduce common reasons for failure and suggest amendment to state law to improve the chances of county home rule charters to have more success in the future. The investigation of this project also:

- discusses the rights of local control and matters of state/local concern;
- compares this process with the process for municipal home-rule charters;
- discusses the need for efficiency in government;
- discusses problems with voter apathy and social disengagement; and
- makes an argument for county home rule in Colorado and suggest ways to improve the process.

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NAFTA and Public Policy: Colorado's Approach to NAFTA's Social Issues

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has a variety of social, economic, and political impacts on the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The NAFTA, true to its neo-liberal roots, tasks governments in all three countries with responding to the social impacts of NAFTA through agreements and programs such as the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. These and other programs and protections are offered to workers through federal, state, and local governments. This paper explores the role that the federal and Colorado state and local governments play in addressing the social issues that stem from the NAFTA in the

state of Colorado. It thoroughly describes the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, and some of the more prominent services offered to trade-affected workers in Colorado. It explores the ways in which these programs are benefiting Colorado workers and makes recommendations for improving workers' rights.

This paper takes an unbiased approach to assessing the ways in which workers can be better served both by the Colorado government and Colorado businesses. While it focuses on analyzing the benefits and faults of the support offered to workers in Colorado, it also reviews some of the more prominent supports being offered to both agricultural and non-agricultural businesses.

This paper views the actions and inactions of governments in the state of Colorado through a neo-liberal lens and makes recommendations that will give workers in Colorado better access to self-empowerment and protection in the face of free trade. This paper calls for partnerships to be created between workers, business owners, and the government in response to free trade and the general challenges of producing a powerful workforce in which workers' rights are honored, protected, and improved.

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Training and Professional Development in Rural Colorado Counties: To What Extent Are Rural Colorado Counties Utilizing Opportunities for Continuing Education?

This project focuses on the types of training opportunities available in rural Colorado counties, as well as how frequently they are utilized by various county departments. The research questions that guided the inquiry were: 1) What types of training are provided to department

heads, elected officials and new staff; 2) How frequently are training and professional development activities utilized; and 3) What factors have the greatest effect on availability and utilization of training and professional development activities?

Data obtained in this project were examined from the pragmatic worldview. Less concerned with overarching or unifying theory, the pragmatic worldview focuses on what works within a given situational context. Examining the data from this viewpoint, this project offers recommendations to increase county utilization of training and professional development opportunities, including:

- Increasing communication within counties;
- Increasing utilization of trainings offered by professional associations;
- Encouraging staff to join professional associations;
- Increasing utilization of trainings offered by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs;
- Forming partnerships with colleges or universities for better access to training; and
- Changing Colorado statutes mandating training.

Even so, this project recognizes that there is no single “silver bullet” to mitigate the variety of challenges faced by rural Colorado counties.

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CENTER FOR NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

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Mission statement

The mission of the Center for NEW DIRECTIONS is to develop academic programs and courses focused in the areas of politics and public policy with the purpose of developing the leadership capacities necessary to address changing public priorities for the 21st century within neighborhoods, communities, governmental jurisdictions, and nonprofit entities

About the center

In the early 1990s, CU/Denver's Political Science Department pioneered an all-weekend B.A. program in Public Policy and Administration tailored to the needs of working professionals. In 1997, in response to the request for graduate educational opportunities in the Western Slope-Durango area, an exploratory off-campus master's program was initiated through the CU/Denver Political Science Department with an area of emphasis in politics and public policy. The first cohort consisted of 31 participants. The Center still provides courses at its Durango site.

In 1999, the Durango-based program received the ICMA (International City/County Management Association) award as "The best academic program in the nation helping to meet the needs of local governments."

With the success of the Durango-based M.A. program, the decision was made to bring it to the Denver area, to complement the earlier B.A. initiative, under the more comprehensive designation as a Center. In September of 2001, the Center began offering an M.A., along with an Academic Certificate Program in Leadership, all with a special emphasis in Politics and Public Policy.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the Center's academic programs is its emphasis on politics and political awareness. This emphasis has little to do with traditional partisan politics as generally associated with political parties or ideologies. The Center's focus on politics and the policy-making process relates to the ability of leaders to mobilize resources and achieve constituent goals consistent with the public interest. In this context, politics becomes a synonym for communication and effective politics translates into effective communication. In short, this emphasis on political awareness seeks to help participants utilize the political process as the "art of making what appears to be impossible, possible" (Scheibner).

The Center's success to date in implementing its mission can be attributed largely to the early achievement of one of its major goals: to establish working partnership agreements with participating local government jurisdictions. The Center currently has partnership agreements with the following local government jurisdictions: Arapahoe County, Arvada, Aurora, Brighton, Commerce City, Denver, Douglas County, Englewood, Greenwood Village, Northglenn, Parker, South Metro Fire District, Thornton, and Westminster.

In November 2006, a Citizen Advisory Board was formed for our Four Corners Area program.

This group meets twice a year to offer programmatic suggestions and assistance in student recruitment and internship placement. Current participating jurisdictions include: Archuleta County, La Plata County, Bayfield, Cortez, Durango, Ridgway, Mancos, Ignacio, Mesa Verde National Park, Montezuma County, Montrose, and Ridgway. Courses offered through the Center are based on a weekend format that consists of two or three weekend sessions for each course spread out over a two-month period. Participants praise the weekend format, the integrative and holistic approach of the curriculum, and the strong encouragement of course requirements to address real community or agency concerns.

Students participating in any of the academic programs consistently identify the Center's focus on developing leadership competencies as one of the major reasons for their enrollment. In addition to the outcomes specific for the subject of each course, all courses emphasize outcomes related to the following competency areas that are considered critical in developing the required leadership capacities necessary to address changing public priorities for the 21st century within neighborhoods, communities, and governmental jurisdictions.

- Creativity and Innovation
- Changing Public Priorities
- Political and Social Diversity
- Ethical and Legal Accountability
- Deductive and Inductive Reasoning
- Applied Use of Appropriate Technology
- Strategic Planning and Decision-Making
- Resolution of Conflicts and Public Consent Building
- Individual, Organizational, and Cultural Communication Effectiveness

Participants in the NEW DIRECTIONS academic programs represent a wide range of demographic, occupational, and personal backgrounds. They include public and non-profit administrators, elected officials, private-sector employees, community activists, and a variety of others who might be simply called "concerned citizens."

All classes are offered in an integrative fashion of instructor presentation complemented with active participant feedback and involvement. Students frequently comment on how much they value the diversity of individuals in the program and how much they learn from each other in the feedback process.

All of the Center's courses are held off-campus and are sanctioned through the State Office of Extended Studies. The courses are held at the following two locations: the University Center at Chaparral located next to Chaparral High School in Douglas County, and on the Fort Lewis College campus in Durango, Colorado.

The weekend format helps facilitate participation by individuals living considerable distances from where the classes are held. At the Chaparral site, there are students making the trip to their weekend courses from such locations as Pueblo (100 miles), Las Animas and Poncha Springs (150 miles), and the Town of Holly (250 miles).

The Cathy Shipley Best and the Brightest Internship Program and 2004 ICMA Award

In 1998, a prototype internship program was begun through the Durango-based program in collaboration with six small, rural western slope jurisdictions and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. The program was so successful that in January of 2001 it was expanded to include 20 placements consisting of 13 jurisdictions scattered along the eastern plains and the Front Range, as well as 7 jurisdictions on the western slope. The sixth cohort of 20 placements started in January 2010.

Participating students receive up to a \$35,000 annual stipend for the two years of the program including full health and other employee benefits while, at the same time, completing all of the requirements for their Master's Degree in Political Science with an area of emphasis in politics and public policy. The program is the recipient of the ICMA 2004 Program Excellence Award for Outstanding Partnerships and Intergovernmental Cooperation for Local Governments.

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