

Achieving Respect and Understanding in the Arkansas Municipal Workplace



ARKANSAS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
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Introduction

We live in a rapidly changing world that challenges municipal officials and city employees to be aware of the evolving changes occurring in the municipal workplace. Many of the demographic changes in Arkansas, such as the growth in the number of minorities, the emergence of the Millennial generation, and the exiting of the Baby Boomers in the workforce increase the importance of Arkansas municipal officials embracing respect and understanding of others.

Demographic workplace changes can foster misunderstandings and serious problems. However, they can also present opportunities for accessibility to a wider variety of viewpoints and increased tolerance for different work styles, habits, and work performance. Responding to demographic, cultural and other changes in a positive, open-minded manner will be critical to leading your municipality to respect and understand all people. To fully embrace your role as an Arkansas public servant, you must strive to understand the world we live in today. The cities that you serve are dramatically different than those of your predecessors. Workplace changes occur daily. These changes will affect you in a variety of ways. How you choose to accept and respond to the changes will impact your effectiveness as a city official for years to come.

The purpose of this publication is to provide Arkansas municipalities with suggested guidelines to assist in navigating the choppy waters of workplace changes. This training manual is a way to encourage each Arkansas municipality to examine its specific set of challenges and adopt a workplace culture of respect and understanding. To supplement the overview presented in this manual, we have included a list of additional resources available that provide a more in-depth study of the issues covered here.

Chapter One

Responding to Change

Global changes have an impact on even the smallest and most remote cities in Arkansas. The world is getting smaller and more interconnected. What happens in China, India, or the Middle East impacts all of us in some way. Decisions made around the world can affect the price of gas, the cost of your clothes, car, computer, everyday tools, and appliances. These global decisions can also impact business and industry in your city sooner and more dramatically than any other time in world history. Global changes affect Arkansas municipalities economically, politically, militarily, socially, and technologically. We exist in a world where we are all tied together by a complex web of interdependent economies. Most manufactured items that we buy have been produced in several countries, on different continents.

The world has changed from an agrarian-based economy in which the primary products are food to an industrial or post-industrial economy in which the primary products are goods, services, and information. The world has a population of over seven billion people. Almost half the world's population now lives in urban areas. This has placed a tremendous burden on urban infrastructures, especially in developing countries. Accompanying the dramatic growth in worldwide population is the massive migration of immigrants into the developed nations of North America, Europe, and Australia. These are but just a few of the ongoing worldwide changes that have impacted and will impact cultural changes in the Arkansas municipal workplace.

Technological Changes

Technological changes have dramatically impacted the Arkansas workplace. Twenty-five years ago municipal workers performed tasks with a few basic technological tools. They typed on typewriters, used land-line telephones, visited the library for research purposes, and wrote memos on paper. Today's workers go about their day with smartphones and tablets attached to them at all times. The existence of the Internet means information is as close as the devices we carry. Email has replaced written memos, power point presentations have replaced bulletins and chalkboards, and there is an app for almost everything at your fingertips. With technology, the municipal workers of today have a wealth of knowledge and information not even dreamed about 25 years ago.

As a result of the many and rapid technological changes in the workplace, it is essential that all municipal employees, regardless of age, stay current with technology. Offering to explain new devices and software to older employees—rather than poking fun at them for not quickly understanding or getting on board with the new technology—will make for a happier and more respectful workplace.

Demographic Changes

Demographic changes in the municipal workplace should be apparent to even the casual observer. Beginning in the 1970's, the workplace has shifted from one dominated by white males to a more diverse community. Women, minorities, and those with disabilities now share the workplace at all levels. It is advantageous for municipal officials to recognize and take into account preferences, beliefs, and values of the various demographics that comprise their cities. Today there are more women in the workforce than ever before, including jobs in police, fire, and public works. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinos have now surpassed African Americans as the largest minority in the United States. There are several Arkansas cities in which the Latino population has reached half of the local population and we have at least six counties in which African Americans represent over half of the population. There has never been a time in Arkansas history in which the municipal workplace has been as diverse as it is today.

In addition to a more racially diverse workplace, the Arkansas workplace is made up of three generations: so-called Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. Today's municipal leaders should recognize the existence of the generations, the differences among them, and the ways each views the working world.

Personnel Law

As workplace diversity increases, trends indicate that more and more groups will be asking for recognition as a protected status. Municipal officials and personnel will have to continually maintain knowledge of emerging issues as they relate to legal compliance, including the most current personnel laws about discrimination, sexual harassment and medical privacy. As a result, municipalities should update personnel policies frequently to reflect the latest personnel laws and workplace changes.

Who are my citizens and colleagues?

Municipalities, like people, have personalities. Factors such as historical, geographical, and economic influences contribute to your city's personality. However, the citizens themselves are the greatest contributors to the personality of your city. In an attempt to understand your city and the people you serve, municipal leaders should be aware of who comprises your citizenship. Be aware of the trends that have developed in your municipality that contribute to changes that may be occurring. Knowing and understanding these changes will help you achieve respect and understanding in the municipal workplace. The Arkansas Municipal League has provided a sample form that may be used to measure and note a variety of demographic trends that may be occurring in your municipality. (See *sample form "Charting Your Municipality's Demographics" in Appendix A.*)

Careful analysis of local demographics can lead municipal leaders to better understand the personality of your city and thus prepare you to respond to these trends. Noted trends such as an increase in minority citizens, citizens over 65, or an increase of high school educated citizens, would dictate a different municipal government response to citizens' needs than trends indicating otherwise.

Who are my fellow municipal workers?

Municipal leaders need to know who comprises the municipal workforce of your city. The League has provided you with a sample form that may be used to note the demographic making of your municipal workforce. (See *sample form "Charting Your Municipal Workforce Demographics" in Appendix B.*) The information should be repeated for every department. Once the information has been gathered, the results should be analyzed. The results may show your workforce closely reflects the demographic makeup of your municipality or there may be areas where there are omissions of certain demographic groups. Why does this matter? Because a workforce that does not reflect the citizens it serves may have a difficult time understanding cultural differences and proper ways to respond to citizens' needs.

Similarities and Differences

As we interact with new American citizens, it is advisable to learn about cultural differences to avoid offending others and, more importantly, to be able to respond to their needs. It is important that you learn customs and traditions of various cultures.

The role of the family, views of morality, manners and religious faith are important to understand. These differences often define cultures and races and they also make us unique as Americans. However, it is equally important to understand our similarities. What do citizens whose families have been Americans for generations have in common with citizens who are first generation Americans? The most common similarity includes what has often been referred to as the “American Dream.”

For many, the American Dream centers on economic opportunities, personal freedom, education, and location. An economic opportunity is the ability to provide a better life for one’s family by working hard in any profession that a person chooses. Personal freedom deals with our First Amendment rights: free speech, freedom to worship, and the right to assemble. These are rights that many did not have in their countries of origin. Education is the key to providing for oneself and for our families. Today, the ability to obtain an education is not restricted by your socio-economic class. In many countries of origin, education is available only to the wealthy. As for location, it is a privilege to live anywhere one chooses and to travel without restriction.

Municipal officials and personnel must understand that we do have a variety of differences that define us as Americans, but what we have in common is far greater than are differences. Changes are occurring rapidly and differences are more apparent than ever before. However, the American Dream has remained a constant motivation to all demographic and cultural groups.

Accepting Change

It is not easy for some municipal officials or employees to accept change. Change moves us out of our comfort zones. Changes at work are among the top life stressors that we can experience. What steps can we take to manage these changes?

1. Recognize that change is constant. The more you recognize that change will happen, the less upset and surprised you will be when you encounter change.
2. Be flexible. Your ability at adapting to change greatly increases your chance of being an effective city official or employee.
3. Be positive in your actions and attitude. Focus on how change can benefit your municipality. Look for opportunities to apply your skills and talents to new challenges to effect positive changes. Change can be frightening and disruptive. However, with the right attitude and actions, you can find opportunities in that change.

Chapter Two

Law Enforcement and Citizen Trust

Law enforcement departments are dramatically different than other local government departments. Law enforcement officers often make life and death decisions regarding the use of force and decisions on whether or not to restrict the freedom of citizens. We ask law enforcement officials to make these decisions on the streets and under pressure. Law enforcement officers are required to abide by constitutional law, state statutes, and local ordinances. All municipal employees work for the citizens. However, the nature of law enforcement tends to place officers in more frequent and intense contact with citizens—often under unpleasant circumstances—than other city employees.

Through the years, the role of law enforcement has expanded, and as a result, law enforcement officers are working in a more difficult environment. As officers serve and protect, they must interact with people from different cultures, religions, races, and lifestyles, which can compound the difficulty of police work. For many cities and law enforcement officers, these are new challenges.

Municipal leaders should understand that today's social challenges are too complex for any one agency to manage alone. Now more than any other time police have to partner with other government and non-government service agencies, working to solve these far-reaching problems.

Get Involved to Build Trust

It is critical that today's law enforcement departments recognize that gaining the trust of citizens is paramount. Recent high-profile events in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, have highlighted the importance of fostering strong, collaborative relationships between local law enforcement and the citizens they serve. Creating a culture of integrity in your law enforcement department is critical. In cities with a diverse cultural makeup, law enforcement departments must make every effort to mirror the local population within the ranks of their employment.

Engaging citizens promotes trust. There are a number of ways that law enforcement departments can build trust and earn the respect of their citizens. In most cases, successful programs involve face-to-face interaction, such as:

- Coaching a youth sports team,
- Serving food at a local homeless shelter,
- Volunteering to read at public schools with a large immigrant population,
- Volunteering to help at a local hospice care facility,
- Volunteering your time at a domestic violence shelter,
- Educating kids about the dangers of using illegal drugs,
- Providing driver education,
- Coordinating neighborhood watch associations, or
- Speaking to civic organizations, schools and town hall meetings.

Law enforcement departments should not underestimate the value of developing partnerships with faith-based organizations. Most cities have deeply rooted faith-based organizations that may have a better insight into the sources of neighborhood problems that need to be addressed. Partnering with faith-based organizations to reduce crime can become a highly effective way of establishing respect and understanding.

When police officers work with different groups in their city, it reinforces the idea that law enforcement and citizens should be partners, not enemies. Recognizing new opportunities for involvement in municipal activities will contribute to building trust and understanding between law enforcement and your citizens.

Avoidance of Racial Profiling

In order to engage the citizens, law enforcement officers need to know and understand your city's demographics. Data on who is breaking the law, where crimes are being committed, and what types of crimes are being committed could be of benefit to law enforcement and city officials as they work to enforce the law and prevent crime. The League has provided a sample form that may be used to measure and note trends involving crimes. (See sample form "Charting Municipal Crime" in Appendix C.)

Data from the sample form can provide law enforcement and city leaders with an overall view of the types of laws being violated and alert you to trends that may be occurring. With this information in hand, law enforcement has the ability to foster positive and productive citizen and police cooperation.

However, law enforcement must be extremely careful to avoid profiling citizens. Racial profiling can hurt innocent people who may then become the victims of inappropriate police encounters. Racial profiling can erode trust between local law enforcement and citizens. Arkansas law enforcement departments should devote the necessary resources to train and develop all department personnel in diversity, cultural and community understanding. City officials as well as law enforcement officers should understand the requirements in Ark. Code Ann. § 12-12-1401, which addresses the state's prohibition on racial profiling.

Advantages of Residency Requirements

There are many city leaders that believe that a residency requirement for law enforcement officers is a desirable policy that contributes to building respect and understanding. It would stand to reason that municipal citizens are more likely to trust the officers that serve them if they get to know them on a personal level. Furthermore, when citizens see law enforcement officers at church, school, or at the grocery store they are more likely to view them as fellow citizens with the same goals and interests as the rest of the citizens. Many city leaders contend that a connection is lost when people who serve their cities don't live in those same cities. Perhaps the recent unrest in cities across America could have been avoided if most of the officers had been residents of the city where they worked. As municipal leaders who are trying to make a positive difference in our cities, you must consider whether residency requirements could be a part of the overall solution to achieving respect and understanding. After all, achieving respect and understanding is a two-way street. It can be easier to look down on and mistreat people you don't know and are not connected with as opposed to those who you view as your fellow citizens. Ask yourself: Would I prefer to have law enforcement officers reside in my neighborhood, rather than two counties away?

Being an Arkansas law enforcement officer is a duty of the highest honor. It is also a duty with the highest degree of responsibility and visibility, and it can be a great challenge. In order to carry out the police mission—to protect and to serve—law enforcement agencies' first job is to inspire trust and second is to extend trust. One of the building blocks of trust is credibility. Credibility comes from behavior. Arkansas municipal officials should do your best to encourage police departments to take the necessary steps to build trust within the cities they serve.

Chapter Three

Embracing the Immigrant Population

Today there are roughly 53 million Latinos representing 17 percent of the total population of the United States. Latinos are now the largest minority group in America. The Latino population in Arkansas has increased by 123 percent since 2000. The Latino population is now seven percent of the total Arkansas population. As with other Arkansas workplace changes, the addition of the Latino worker brings challenges to Arkansas municipal officials. How we embrace and manage cultural diversity will go a long way in creating cities that reflect the commitment to respecting and understanding all people.

The influx of people of Latino origin into Arkansas has been dramatic. Arkansas ranks sixth in the nation for the increase in the Latino population since 2000. There are currently over 190,000 citizens of Latino origin in Arkansas. As of 2016, several Arkansas cities have a Latino population greater than or near 50 percent. These cities include:

- De Queen (Sevier County) 55.4%
- Danville (Yell County) 52.6%
- Wickes (Polk County) 52.1%
- Green Forrest (Carroll County) 49.7%
- Hermitage (Bradley County) 42.0 %

Communication and Cultural Awareness

With the influx of the Latino population comes a need for heightened cultural awareness. Cultural awareness is the foundation of communication and becomes especially important to local government officials when interacting with people from other cultures. Miscommunication often occurs when we lack awareness of cultures other than our own. Because the Latino population represents the largest immigration group in Arkansas, it is important to be familiar with some of the unique cultural characteristics of these Arkansas citizens.

- Members of the Latino community typically have large families. The Latino concept of family extends to friends, neighbors, and organizations that make up their community.
- On average, Latino households in Arkansas consist of at least five people. Half of teens live with both biological parents until marriage.
- Divorce rates are low, motherhood is important, and children are expected to care for family elders.
- Religion is central to marriage and family life. The vast majority of Latino Americans are Catholic.
- Work is viewed as a means to meet family responsibilities and obligations. Latino workers are characterized as dedicated, hardworking, loyal and trustworthy. They are viewed as employees who do not complain. Latino labor has a great presence in service-oriented businesses, such as construction, landscaping, and agricultural activities.

In most Arkansas cities, the Latino population has been welcomed. This new group of immigrants has integrated into Arkansas cities and the economy just as previous generations of immigrants have done. However, Arkansas municipal officials must be aware that with the influx of Latino immigrants comes a variety of challenges. The most common challenges include:

- Education—Latino children whose parents are immigrants are the fastest growing group of children in the public school system. The limited understanding of English has challenged school districts in a variety of ways.
- Health care—Sixty-three percent of Latino immigrants under the age of 65 are without health insurance.
- Housing—Nearly one quarter of Latino immigrants live in crowded housing (defined by the Census Bureau as more than one person per room – including bedrooms and all other rooms).
- Language barrier—Approximately 25 percent of Arkansas Latino workers are bilingual, and over half speak limited English.

Here are some simple steps that Arkansas city officials can take to embrace immigrants and encourage respect and understanding.

1. Understand your city's unique demographic characteristics.
2. Utilize key resources and opportunities to effectively engage, communicate and serve your new citizens. Make Spanish language versions of all city mail-outs, signs, and informational materials available.
3. Prioritize the hiring of employees that reflect the demographics of your city.
4. Engage the new citizens in community decision-making.
5. Build community relationships.
6. Embrace cultural diversity.

Learning about cultural differences can assist you in communicating with others more effectively. Cultural differences may challenge us but should not divide us. Creating a work culture that embraces rather than resists cultural differences can lead to better and more inclusive solutions to solve today's complex municipal issues.

Chapter Four

Generational and Gender Differences

As a municipal leader of today, you must recognize that today's workforce consists of three different generations. Each of these generations views the world they live and work in very differently. These differences have the potential to become a source of workplace friction. In fact, sociologists believe that this type of generational diversity has not existed in the workplace since our great-grandparents abandoned the agricultural lifestyle for the factory and the office. Workers from these different generations may often find themselves at odds on how they view their role as workers.

Today's workplace consists of three distinct generations.

1. Baby Boomers—This generation consists of people born between 1945 and 1960 and for many years was the largest group to occupy the workforce, representing 70–75 million people. This is the generation that is often associated with 1960s counter culture, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement. As they approach retirement age, Baby Boomers will be rapidly leaving the workplace in the next several years.
2. Generation X—This generation consists of people born between 1960 and the early 1980s. This group constitutes approximately 41 million people. They have been referred to as the latch key kids. They were the first generation whose parents both worked, and whose parents had a higher rate of divorce. This generation, for the most part, has more formal education than the Baby Boomers.
3. Millennials—This generation consists of young adults born since the early 1980s. Their numbers have recently overtaken that of the Baby Boomers at 75 million. They are a differently motivated workforce than previous generations. They are very mobile. For them, technology is as natural as the air they breathe.

Every generation is defined by common tastes, attitudes, experiences, and defining social moments, and the more you know about those who are not within your own age group, the better we can understand and respect each other.

Although each generation may be broadly categorized, you must remember that not all persons of a specific generation can be profiled by the traits of their generation. Categorizing others based on our initial perceptions, physical features, and life experiences with persons of any group may be human nature, but we must keep an open mind in order to understand not only generational differences, but differences on all levels. Doing so will create a work culture based on respect and understanding.

Gender Differences and Challenges

Regardless of our age we have all worked with others who are not the same sex and gender as we are. Understanding gender and sex is critical to enabling respect and understanding in the workplace.

Sex and gender are two separate measures. Sex refers to biological differences whereas gender refers to the state of being male or female. Gender describes the characteristics that a society or culture delineates as masculine or feminine. Gender also refers to the personal sexual identity of an individual, regardless of the person's biological sex.

Important issues now impacting the municipal workplace are gender identity and sexual orientation. Gay, heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people have always lived and worked in our cities. What is different today is that many people now openly acknowledge their gender identity and sexual orientation because of evolving views and societal acceptance.

One of the basic rules of interacting with others is that people should have the right to choose the words that describe themselves. The following chart features terms and definitions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. It is important to remember that language and how it is used evolves. This means that terms accepted today may not be in the future. It is important to stay informed about how language and its meaning changes over time.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Terms

Sex	Biological differences, primarily chromosomes, hormonal profiles, internal, and external sex organs.
Gender	State of being male or female.
Gender Role	Characteristics and behaviors that different cultures attribute to the sexes.
Sexual Orientation	Term used to describe everything that goes into why people are attracted to each other. It takes into account past experiences, current situations, and self-identifications.
Straight	Common term used to mean heterosexual persons.
Heterosexual	People who are attracted to and love members of the opposite sex.
Gay	The umbrella term for homosexual persons, although it most specifically refers to men who are attracted to and love men. It is equally acceptable and more accurate to refer to gay women as lesbians.
Homosexual	People who are attracted to and love members of the same sex. Most people today chose to use the term gay or lesbian as a descriptor.
Lesbian	A woman who is attracted to and loves women.
Bisexual	A person who is attracted to members of either sex.
Transgendered	Men or women whose psychological self, differs from the physical sex that they were assigned at birth. They feel more comfortable as a member of the other sex, or, not completely comfortable in either sex.
Transsexual	Men or women who have had medical procedures to alter their physical sexual characteristics to match their perceived gender self-identity.
Transvestite	A person who dresses in clothing of another gender. This may or may not be connected to sexual orientation.
Homophobia	Fear of homosexuality.
Heterosexism	The assumption that everyone is heterosexual. The belief and behavior that heterosexual orientation is inherently better than other orientations.
Significant Other	A term created to signify the equivalent of spouse for people who live in loving partnership without marriage.
Closet	A figure of speech used to describe the hiding of one's sexual identity.
Coming Out	Telling oneself or other people about your gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity.

Adapted from Zuckerman & Simons.

Increasing our awareness and improving our understanding of this complex issue is a starting point. Fostering respect and understanding includes promoting a workplace that provides a comfortable setting for everyone regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Conclusion

Our country, state, and cities are in a constant state of change. Municipalities face a tsunami of challenges amid the changes. As a municipal official, working to publicly serve your citizens effectively, you must understand your city's demographics and characteristics. Keep an open mind in dealing with controversial issues such as race, immigration, generational differences and sexual orientation. Have the courage to engage in dialogue about diversity with your citizens and municipal employees, and utilize key resources in your city to effectively communicate and serve your citizens.

As municipal leaders, keep searching for new ways to serve the citizens of our ever changing cities and towns.

Appendices

Appendix A Charting Your Municipality's Demographics SAMPLE

CITY OF _____

Description	Year 2000	Year 2010	Current Estimates
Population			
Median age			
Median Household Income			
% of High School Graduates			
% of College Graduates			
Total Housing Units			
Number of Companies/Businesses			
Number of employed			
Individuals below poverty			
Number of Female head of household			
Race Breakdown	2000	2010	Current Estimate
White			
Black			
Latino			
Asian			
American Indian			
Two or more races			

Appendix B

Charting Your Municipal Workforce Demographics

SAMPLE

CITY OF _____

Total number of municipal employees per year _____

	Age Group			
Department	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-Greater

	Groups		
Department	Ethnicity	Males	Females
	White		
	Black		
	Asian		
	Latino		
	Other		

Appendix C

Charting Municipal Crime

SAMPLE

1. Who is breaking the Law?

Year	Age Group				Gender	Race	Income	Repeat offenders	Other
	18-34	35-44	45-64	65+					
2010									
2015									
YTD									

2. What laws are being broken?

Year	Speeding	Illegal Drugs	Resisting Arrest	Theft & Robbery	Violent Assaults	Murder	Other
2010							
2015							
YTD							

3. Where and when crimes are being committed?

Area of City/Town	Address or name of structure/subdivision	Time: Day/Night	2010	2015	YTD
Residential Neighborhoods					
Commercial areas					
Shopping Centers (i.e. Wal- Mart)					
Schools/Churches					
Community Center					
City Facility					
State Facility/Courts etc.					
Other					

Additional Resources

- *Police Perspectives: Building Trust in a Diverse Nation—No. 1. How to Increase Cultural Understanding*
Link: ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P344
- *Police Perspectives: Building Trust in a Diverse Nation—No. 2. How to Serve Diverse Communities*
Link: ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P345
- *Police Perspectives: Building Trust in a Diverse Nation—No. 3. How to Support Trust Building in Your Agency*
Link: ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P346
- “Reducing Fear of Crime and Increasing Citizen Support for Police,” by Richard R. Johnson, Ph.D., ©2015,
Link: llrmi.com/articles/legal_update/2015_johnson_reducingfear.shtml
- “What Influences Overall Citizen Satisfaction with the Police?” by Richard R. Johnson, Ph.D., ©2015,
Link: llrmi.com/articles/legal_update/2015_johnson_citizensatisfaction.shtml
- “Law Enforcement In Trying Times,” by Jack Ryan, Public Agency Training Council, www.patc.com.
- *Sexual Orientation in the Workplace: Gay Men, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Heterosexuals Working Together*, by Amy J. Zuckerman and George F. Simons, ©1995, SAGE Publications, Inc.



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