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INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION
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CONDENSED SUMMARY STATEMENT

In preparation for the meeting of the Executive Officers Group Friday, December 16, 1966, the International City Managers' Association surveyed a number of city managers concerning the principal types of administrative problems most often encountered in their work with various Federal departments and agencies.

City managers of the following cities sent us their comments:

Phoenix, 520,000	Arlington Co., Va., 173,000	West Hartford, 67,000
Cincinnati, 495,000	Amarillo, 164,000	University City, Mo., 52,500
Oklahoma City, 380,000	Hartford, 158,000	West Orange, N.J., 43,000
Oakland, 378,000	Tacoma, 152,000	Casper, Wyo., 42,500
Fort Worth, 360,000	Alexandria, 115,000	Oak Ridge, Tenn., 30,000
Toledo, 354,000	Saginaw, 99,000	Rye, N.Y., 15,000
Wichita, 275,000	Colorado Springs, 82,000	Atchison, Kans., 12,000
Charlotte, 230,000	Portland, Me., 72,000	Glencoe, Ill., 11,000
Des Moines, 216,000	Alameda, Cal., 71,500	Dayton, Ohio, 260,000

We received a considerable amount of information along with specific examples of problems and some suggestions. Most of the replies ranged from four to eight pages. A summary of the major points in the responses is made a part of this report, but for purposes of this discussion we would like to make the following observations as a brief summary of the summary.

A review of the comments indicates that, generally, the Federal programs are well received, useful, and very much needed.

The rather rapid-fire manner in which many of the new programs affecting urban areas have been created has apparently caused some problems for local government in attempting to digest the information and to accomodate to a vast new complex of intergovernmental relationships.

In order to have a constructive discussion, we structured our questions to the managers so that their responses would indicate where the most serious administrative problems lay in their work with Federal programs. Many complimentary things were said about individual programs, departments, and agencies, but because of the wording of our questions our report is based upon the problems encountered and not the many favorable aspects of the programs which would be emphasized if you were to visit personally with each of the cities involved.

Many of the difficulties described in their letters have generally been caused by an attempt to cover the entire country in developing programs and administrative regulations and to solve problems that, naturally, will vary infinitely at the local level. Most of the observations they made also have a commonality that lies in a lack of communication and mutual understanding between Federal and local officials. As one of the managers commented, "We have all discussed these problems many times before, and I question that the correction of specific procedural conflicts can do more than suppress the symptoms. The real ailment is a lack of understanding, comprehension, and flexibility."

The first question, posed in a very general form, was: Is there adequate information concerning programs available to local government? In this connection, the managers were also asked if they had suggestions for changes in application procedures.

Managers were concerned with the delay between the time a program is announced and guidelines are actually furnished.

The multiplicity of programs makes it extremely difficult to place one program in context with others and it is equally difficult to determine among the four or five programs dealing with the same subject which one would be the most appropriate for a particular community's use. Along the same line, expressions were made concerning the lack of information on the part of regional field personnel who apparently are not informed about new programs as early as are many of the cities themselves. There appears to be very little effort among various Federal departments and agencies to relate their similar programs to each other and to the comprehensive planning efforts that have been undertaken in other program areas.

A suggestion made by several managers was that once a city has proven it has the legal authority to accept a Federal grant, it should not have to prove itself again for each and every application. Regarding newly announced programs, it has been suggested that the Federal Government move away from a "first-come, first-served" basis of application processing so that cities can compete on the merits and the needs of their proposals. A Midwestern city, confronted with the decision for selecting a program for recreation, discovered there were five different programs available, sponsored by three different Federal departments. To secure information on these programs, it was necessary to contact three regional offices located in three different cities. This official suggested the need for some kind of clearinghouse where a city could discuss a particular project with someone who would be well versed in all programs and who could be of help in establishing it not only in the context of the needs of the city but also with the overall variety of programs being offered by the various Federal departments.

The second question asked was as follows: Are recognition and understanding of local government procedures evident in the development of programs and supporting guidelines? Almost universally the reply to this question encouraged

increased exposure of Federal officials to local government. Suggestions for improvement ranged from developing an internship program for Federal officials, with perhaps a reciprocal program for city officials in the Federal agencies. Other ideas included the suggestion that there is a need for panels of local officials to serve in a continuing advisory capacity to various Washington agencies. It was also pointed out that we are all too concerned with the political assumption that national legislation must apply uniformly to every part of the country and that it must provide something for every city. In stating this suggestion, one manager observed that increased flexibility is needed in the application of national measures to urban problems. Further, he hoped we were now past the point where we had to have 50 of everything since very few Federal programs offer equal value in every state and many simply would have no validity in a particular region.

There seemed to be a consensus that many Federal administrators simply do not know very much about the cities and particularly about the differences which exist among cities by reason of state laws, charters, and local politics.

The next question posed to city managers was: Do you experience any specific problems caused by the multiplicity of citizen advisory committees required in some Federal programs? Almost every response criticized the use of citizen advisory committees yet every one of them also recognized the need and importance of citizen participation. To summarize, the indication is that managers feel that there already is quite adequate machinery existing in those cities in the form of citizen advisory committees and that creation of additional groups not only causes serious problems in coordination but confuses the existing groups as to their roles and civic responsibilities. It was stated that the Federal Government is too often concerned with adoption of particular structures to accomplish certain objectives, and the citizen advisory committees are a major example. The proliferation of these committees, it was pointed out, is not only confusing to public officials but it is also confusing to local citizens. In short, it is felt that the Federal Government should insist on citizen participation but not place any particular structural form in the requirements to obtain this objective.

Question IV asked of managers was: "What problems do you encounter in funding programs? Have you had problems in arranging the local share of grant-in-aid programs without complete knowledge of the status of your proposal?" The uncertainty of the status of proposals, extending over months and sometimes years, appears to be the most frustrating part of the relationship with the Federal Government. Many managers concurred with the statement made by one of them, "It takes forever to get an answer; "yes" takes twice as long as "no"; "maybe" takes longest of all." A dependence upon federal funds makes it difficult if not impossible to effect long-range financial planning due to delays in determination of status of Federal applications and the uncertainty of future Federal appropriations. It was pointed out that it was virtually impossible to receive positive information on applications in time to meet municipal budget schedules. This not only raises havoc with local budgeting and legislative processes but frequently takes the steam out of citizen support. It was suggested by a number of managers that cities should at least be advised at the time an application is submitted the status of available funding.

Question V asked managers if they had encountered any difficulty in administration, record-keeping or auditing in connection with Federal programs. Most of the managers seemed to feel that they were able to cope with the record-keeping and auditing requirements. However, it was pointed out that there seems to be some incompatibility between local pay scales and Federal wage standards that in the past had caused considerable difficulty in contract relations. One city also felt that while all programs included requirements concerning wages and hours, equal employment, non-discrimination, etc., they were frequently handled quite differently, depending upon which Federal agency they were dealing with at the moment. One city recommended that prior to the commencement of a project localities should be given a checklist of the data to be retained for audit and an indication of how long they should be retained. It was also pointed out that the auditing procedure would be additionally simplified if the Federal Government were to make greater use of the Standard Classification of Municipal Accounts in preparation of auditing forms and procedures.

One very interesting suggestion recommended that the Federal agency either specify clearly the record-keeping and accounting objectives and leave all of the details to the local agency or that they establish a detailed chart of accounts and accounting system and provide that the cost of maintaining this new accounting system be included in the total project cost.

Question VI: Are there serious incompatibilities among programs aimed at individual problems? What difficulties, if any, are caused by the need for different comprehensive plans for each program? In the development of plans of a purely comprehensive nature for a community, it was pointed out that the many small and unrelated "comprehensive plans" required in the various Federal programs seem to be working directly against the overall objective.

It was suggested that perhaps a more comprehensive "workable program" should be developed that would meet the requirements of all the Federal agencies. This would enable a city that had become "certified" to supply only a small amount of supplementary information for each specific program of any Federal department. It would eliminate the vast duplication now required and leave only the careful consideration and evaluation of the merits of specific grant requests by the relevant Federal Department.

Repeatedly, it was pointed out that it is highly desirable that Federal programs be operated through existing units of general local government rather than encouraging the promotion or requirement of the creation of special districts or special-purpose semi-autonomous agencies for the administration of Federal programs.

Question VII. The final question we asked managers was, as follows: Some people have expressed concern that many Federal grant programs are too narrow in scope, especially with regard to formulas and matching requirements, etc. Do you find yourself tailoring your local programs to meet grant requirements rather than meeting particular local needs? Some of the cities indicated that they have in fact been tailoring their local programs to meet available funding

rather than meeting particular local needs. Nearly everyone, however, pointed out that the grant programs could be improved if they were directly geared to particular community activities rather than to specific projects. It was noted that it was encouraging to observe a repudiation on the part of HUD of the piecemeal approach with their successful development of the new Model City Program. It was also observed that local activity is often stimulated through the "carrot theory" and frequently assists communities in solving problems in areas that otherwise might have been neglected.

Throughout all of the responses, a common theme stressed the need for improved communication between federal and local officials. On behalf of our Association, we want to gratefully acknowledge evidence of similar concern expressed through the initiation of this meeting. City and county managers throughout the country have been expressing their appreciation for the excellent meetings convened by Vice President Humphrey to improve communication between local and Federal officials. We are also grateful for the keen interest and involvement which the Bureau of the Budget, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Office of Economic Opportunity, and many of the other departments and agencies have been providing for some of our professional administrators. President Johnson's November 11 memorandum encouraging close cooperation between Federal departments and agencies and groups representing state and local government, was warmly received by our Association. While there are limitations on what our Association can, or even should do in the field of legislation, as professional career administrators in local government there is a great deal that we can contribute toward improved administration and the exchange of professional ideas on future urban problems.

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