



# **MLGMA.**

## **Interviews, Positioning, Brand Panels**

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## **City Manager Interview Sessions at the Summer Conference in Boyne**

Phire Group was able to spend a day and a half at the Summer Conference. During this time we sat down and conducted individual, face to face sessions with City Managers from across the state.

Following are highlights from the conversations. The quotes were selected for inclusion because they represent consistent themes and are driving our recommendations.



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Why did you choose your profession?

**“To make a difference. To give back. To help shape a community.”**

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Why did you choose your profession?

**“Ultimately, it’s about building better communities.”**

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Why did you choose your profession?

**“Always had an interest in local government. I try to make a difference and make things better for people.”**

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Why did you choose your profession?

**“I grew up in Port Huron. I got to see the City Manager a lot, I saw his power, all the change he could make.”**

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Why did you choose your profession?

**“I wanted to give back to the communities. Service. It was an extension of wanting to make a difference.”**





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What inspires you most about your work?

**“I know that when I’m finished at the end of the day there is something that I can point to.”**

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What inspires you most about your work?

**“I get a real charge from helping people. Sometimes it’s the littlest things we can do to the biggest things. From a falling tree to saving a lost kid. I’m very idealistic about this profession. It’s about making lives better.”**

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What inspires you most about your work?

**“You know that when you leave the office,  
you’ve made things better.”**

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What inspires you most about your work?

**“I like to be right. When I can lead the city in the right direction. I like to be productive and keep us on the right path.”**



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What frustrates you most about your work?

**“Crankiness. The downtrodden atmosphere. The negative light that government has for many people post 2008. The national discourse filtering into the local level. Militarization of the public—people who want to solve national issues at a local level.”**

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What frustrates you most about your work?

**“There is a small vocal minority who can control everything.”**



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What frustrates you most about your work?

**“The negativity that hangs as an evil force over local government. We are always part of the problem in people’s minds. It’s very hard to penetrate that negativity. I like social media on a personal level, but it’s an avenue for people to make unsubstantiated claims.”**



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How do you feel about the title of your profession, are there alternatives?

**“I think the title City Manager doesn’t do it justice. The City Manager is the CEO of the city. City council is like the board of directors, who provide direction.”**

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How do you feel about the title of your profession, are there alternatives?

**“It’s a lot more than being a manager of a store. There is a lot of breadth and depth of the work. A little different than just managing. Steward. You are a steward for the community.”**

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How do you feel about the title of your profession, are there alternatives?

**“ I don’t like the City Manager title. We’re more of a CEO. We have the city council to answer to. MLGMA is not really a disease. I don’t think that’s our downfall. It’s more selling the profession. City Manager is the biggest Achilles heel. We are CEOs of our organizations. We need to act like CEOs. There is not much difference; they have to motivate, inspire, move a bunch of things forward.”**

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How do you feel about the title of your profession, are there alternatives?

**“It captures the nuts and bolts of the day to day, however the term Manager might not encompass everything. MLGMA might not be the best fight. But it might not be worth the time and effort to change it.”**



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Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the profession?

**“I am cautiously optimistic. I feel we have a great story to tell. We have a profession young people would find rewarding. There will be a large opportunity for young people to fill the void.”**



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Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the profession?

**“I am optimistic. But we need to be more inclusive of the younger generation.”**

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Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the profession?

**“I’m optimistic. It makes me sad how people seem more frustrated than hopeful.”**

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Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the profession?

**“I’m optimistic, I’m optimistic in nature. We have to remember our roots. The progressive era. It was made to correct bad and corrupt government. We need to make the lessons of the past relevant to today. If we don’t remember what happened then, it can happen again.”**

**MML as a  
resource, what  
could improve,  
etc.?**



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MML as a resource, what could improve, etc.?

**“MML is a very good resource, however, MLGMA needs to realize that their mission is different than our mission. They have been a huge resource for our org. But we need to be us.”**

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MML as a resource, what could improve, etc.?

**“The MML is a great partner. We should work together, but we can’t submit to them. MML represents the people who are often in conflict with us. Who do their allegiances lie with?”**

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MML as a resource, what could improve, etc.?

**“MML and Dan are doing good things. He came in and breathed new life. MML needs to keep pushing people to feel uncomfortable. I wish they would teach more, tell people what City Managers do. They need to figure out a way to connect with more elected officials.”**





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How can we better get the word out?

**“It’s relatively simple. You need a 3 minute youtube video that talks about everything. Not too much depth. We have done social in the past. That’s a good way to do it.”**

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How can we better get the word out?

**"A way to tell our story that is FUN and REAL. Sometimes we do a lot of serious stuff, but we sometimes take ourselves too serious. It doesn't cost anything to do video anymore. We should be doing more of this."**

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How can we better get the word out?

**“Double-edged sword because we are in the background, but telling the story is important. Social media is big, a lot of the other forms are obsolete.”**



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Describe the position of Local Government Manager in one sentence.

**“Kick-ass multitasking ninja.”**

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Describe the position of Local Government Manager in one sentence.

**“Exasperating, but at the same time rewarding, and I wouldn’t change a thing.”**

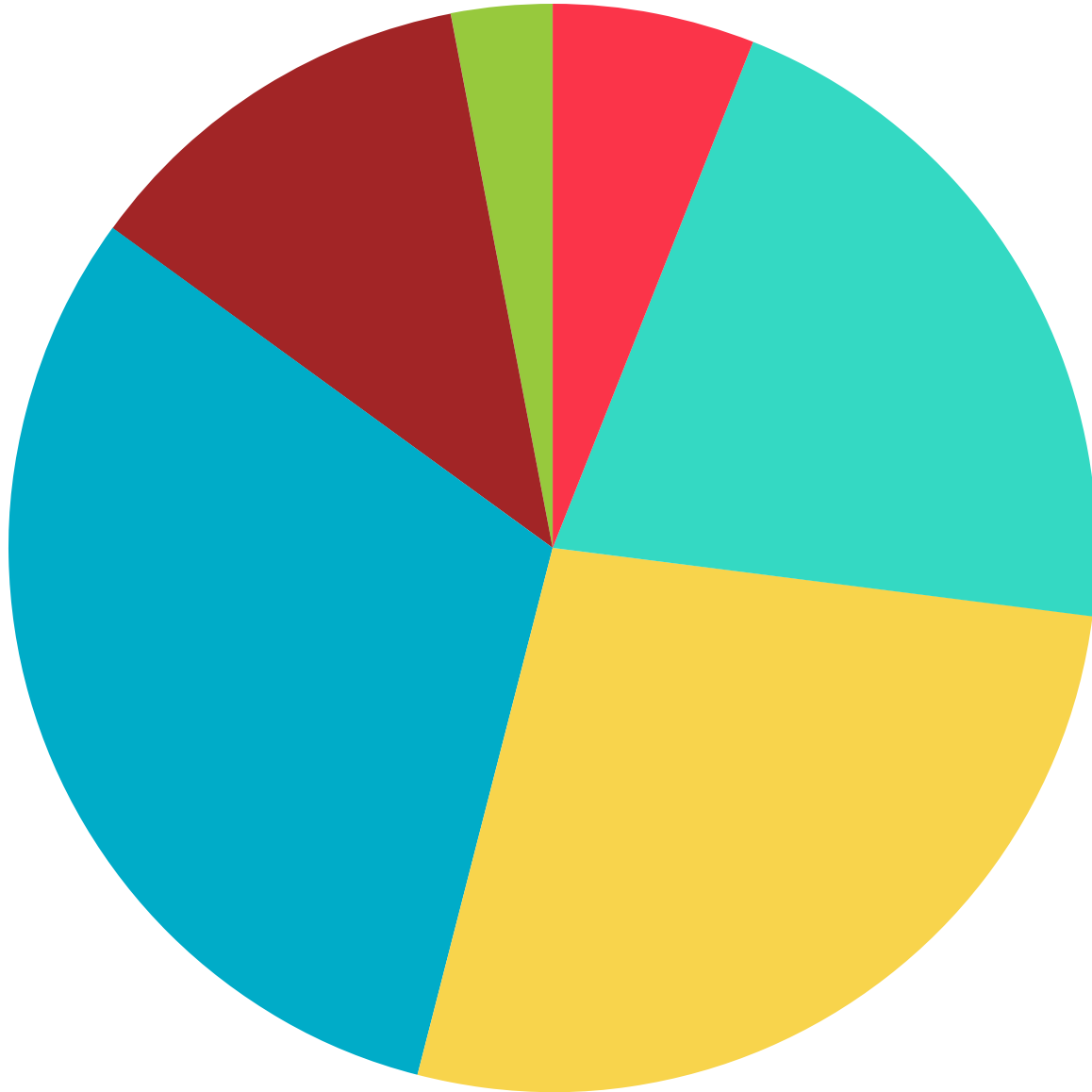
# City Manager Online Survey

274 Views

163 Submissions

189 Members

# How old are you?



**6.13%**

**20-30**

10 out of 163

**26.99%**

**41-50**

44 out of 163

**11.66%**

**61-70**

19 out of 163

**21.47%**

**31-40**

35 out of 163

**31.29%**

**51-60**

51 out of 163

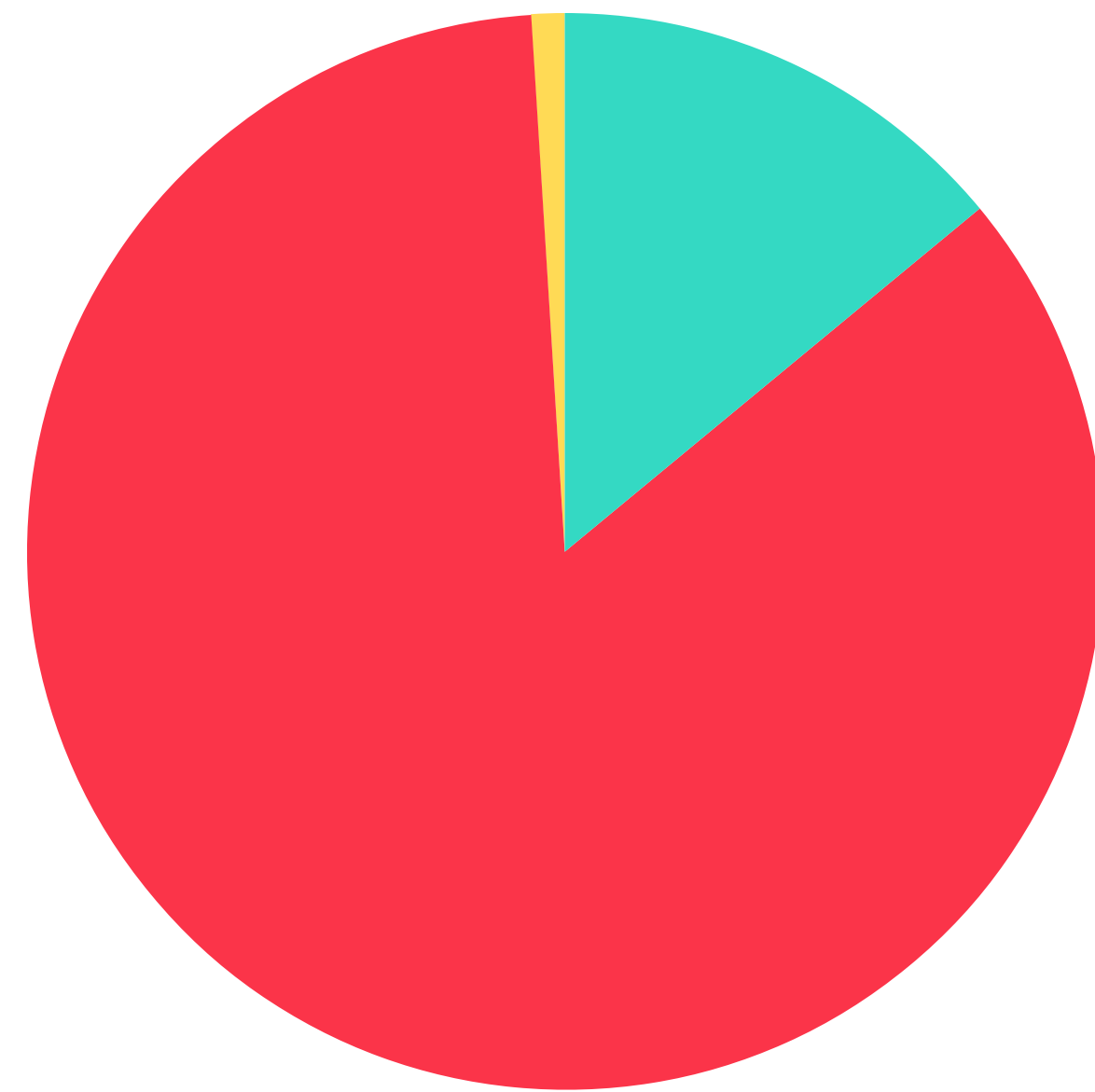
**2.45%**

**70-80**

4 out of 163



## Which gender do you identify as?



**14.11%**  
**Female**  
23 out of 163

**85.28%**  
**Male**  
139 out of 163

**0.61%**  
**Prefer not to answer**  
1 out of 163

## What is your relationship status?



**6.75%**

**In a relationship**

11 out of 163

**32.52%**

**Married with children**

53 out of 163

**50.31%**

**Married**

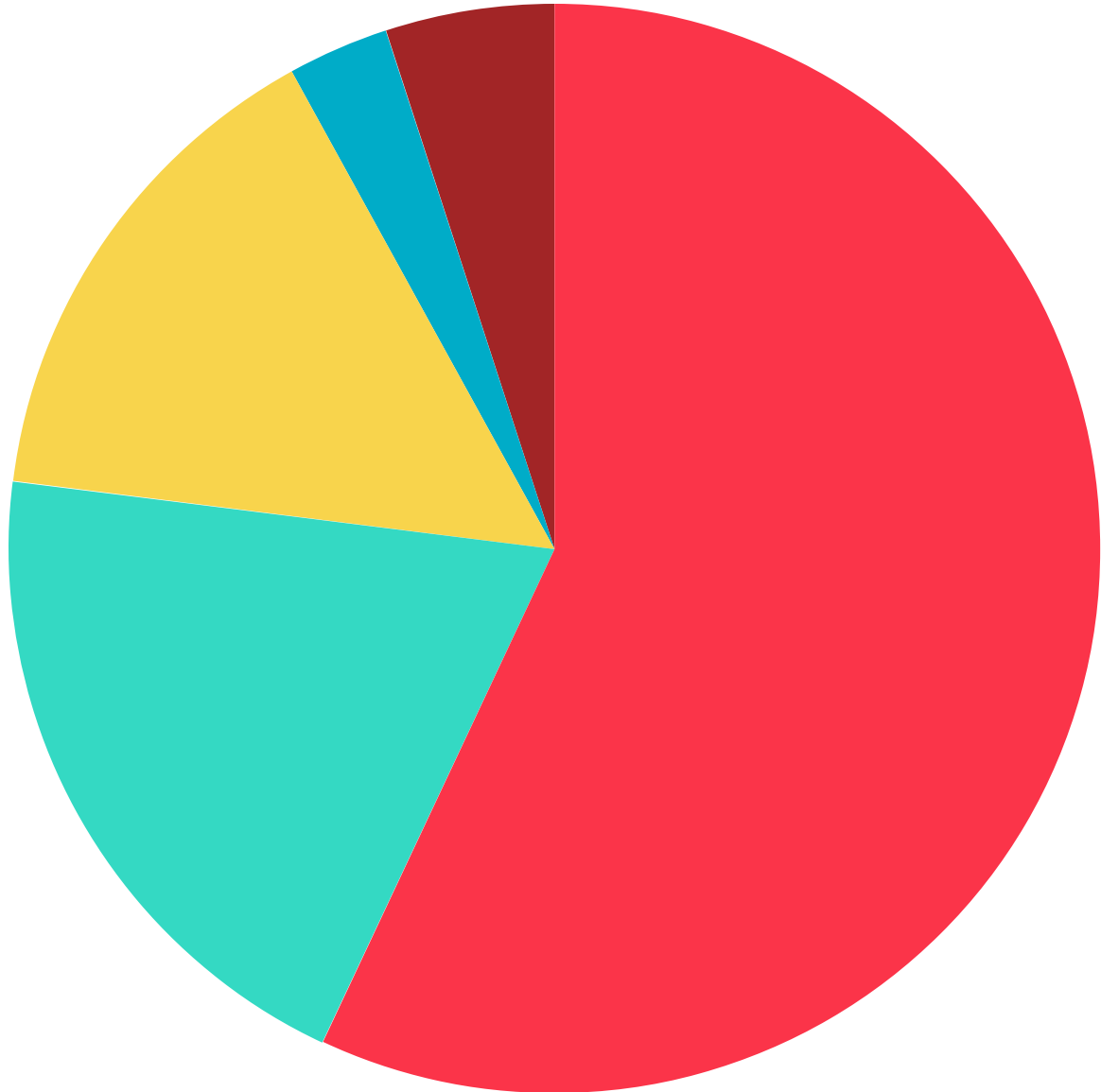
82 out of 163

**10.43%**

**Single**

17 out of 163

# For how long have you been in your current position?



**57.41%**

**1-5 years**

93 out of 163

**14.81%**

**11-15 years**

24 out of 163

**4.32%**

**20+ years**

7 out of 163

**19.75%**

**6-10 years**

32 out of 163

**3.70%**

**16-20 years**

6 out of 163

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## Why did you choose your profession?

**“To make a difference. To have a positive impact. I wanted to help build communities. Passionate about public service. Ability to make an impact.”**

*You are a passionate, purpose-driven group. You thrive on giving back and helping people. This drew you to a career in public service.*

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## What inspires you most about your work?

**“Being able to give back. Completing projects that transform communities. Building better communities. Doing work that actually matters to people. Getting positive results for people. Helping people. The citizens that I work for.”**

*You love seeing the results of your work. That is what you come back to. Tangible, real change that you can point to that makes people’s lives easier. We must find a way to capture and tell these stories.*

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## What frustrates you about your work?

**“Lack of understanding on behalf of the public. Frustration from people who don’t like DC or Lansing and taking it out on us. Complaints. Ignorance. The process can be slow. Lack of funding.”**

*There is a large lack of understanding on what City Managers do. You have to deal with a lot of complaints from a small group of people, and hate seeing change happen at such a slow pace. The last 10 years have also been hard from a revenue standpoint.*

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## **Title of the profession?**

*Many feel strongly that the term "Manager" is limiting and not representative of what you do, and does not carry the appropriate gravitas.*

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**What are the biggest issues you face related to public perceptions?  
Have these changed over time?**

**“People don’t like the pace of government. They want services but don’t want to pay for them. The media has been very bad to us. People think city employees are overpaid and don’t work enough. Government has become a dirty word.”**

*You are dealing with many of the same issues post 2008. People don’t trust government. They think people are lazy and that government is the problem.*



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**Tell us a story about one of your most memorable experiences (negative or positive) as a Manager. What made it so memorable?**

*You provided a lot of great stories here. This will be a vital resource as we create and disseminate content and roll out the plan. The vast majority of the stories were positive and reinforce the resilient, positive nature of City Managers.*

# Positioning

# Brand Shift

A job anyone can do	→ → →	only for a select and ready few
uninteresting, slow	→ → →	ever-changing, challenging
just another job	→ → →	a rewarding calling
Limited, constrained by the rules	→ → →	resourceful, inventive
Negative, detached	→ → →	optimistic, involved
not necessary, unimportant	→ → →	vital, more important than ever
misunderstood	→ → →	admired
A self-serving career	→ → →	a life devoted to others
vacant, unwanted positions	→ → →	in-demand career opportunities
stuck in the past	→ → →	leading change
Municipal/City Managers	→ → →	Municipal Executives

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## Brand Values

**We are Optimistic:** It is inherent to the profession. It's what keeps us going in the middle of a crisis. We see how things can improve and believe in our ability to help make it happen.

**We are Humble:** We don't care about the limelight. We care about street lights. We care about programs that save money, smart economic development, and improving the quality of life in our cities and towns.

**We Adapt:** Change. It happens a lot. Extreme weather, economic and social events. We keep the community running smoothly through it all. We deal with it. We are flexible. We embrace change because every day brings a new challenge.

**We are Driven:** We are passionate about our communities and the people in them. Other people arrive to work, we always show up. This passion for what we do makes us different. It's not just our day job, it's a public service.

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## Brand Personality

**Confident:** Our job sometimes requires tough decisions. We need to be confident that our actions are in the best interest of our communities.

**Outgoing:** City and county leaders can't be shy, the public has questions and we need to be able to provide answers—at meetings and in line at the grocery store.

**Informative:** The brand must be educational. Too many people have misconceptions and are misinformed. It will set the record straight.

**Positive:** The brand must be positive. It should highlight all of the good things done by men and women across Michigan.

**Proud:** The brand should emphasize the importance of municipal management. It shouldn't downplay what a difference good leadership makes in a city. It will be proud but not arrogant.

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## **Statement**

**Michigan's Municipal Executives are dedicated to keeping communities running smoothly. By doing all of the things large and small, we are stewards of our cities, working in the background to make sure your home is highly liveable, highly desireable, and built on a solid ground for the future. We make Michigan's cities go.**

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## Our Vision

“Municipal Executive” will be the broad umbrella under which city/township/county/village leaders will perform their work. It will allow everyone to unite behind one shared title and also offers the needed flexibility.

**Municipal Executive**  
City Manager

**Municipal Executive**  
County Administrator

**Municipal Executive**  
Township Manager

**Municipal Executive**  
Village Manager

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## Naming

We explored options for potential acronyms, but felt that none were compelling.

When referring to your organization it should be:

Michigan Municipal Executives



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## URL Options

The following are available URL options:

**.ORG**

mi-me.org

mme.org (if possible)

# Brand Panels



Ready for Anything.

MI-ME.ORG



I am  
ready  
for any-  
thing.

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**I TACKLE THE UNPREDICTABLE.**

I do it every day. It's what makes working in city and county government so different. Solving the unseen problems that suddenly require your full attention. Broken water main? Fixed. Flash flood? Dealt with. Potholes? Filled. Communities have a thousand moving parts. We're responsible for them all. And we do what it takes to keep it running well. We're Municipal Executives.

**WE'RE READY FOR ANYTHING.**



I am ready for  
the unexpected,  
so you can  
experience  
the best.



I stop floods before they happen. By making sure our dams and levees are secure. I worry about congestion, affordability and how to bring in more jobs. I tackle the unpredictable every day. I am a Municipal Executive. I've seen it all and I am ready for anything.





I am ready  
for floods,  
fires, and  
budget  
crises.



I stop floods before they happen. By making sure our dams and levees are secure. I worry about congestion, affordability and how to bring in more jobs. I tackle the unpredictable every day. I am a Municipal Executive. I've seen it all and I am ready for anything.

I am ready for floods, fires, and budget crises.



JOE SMITH  
CITY MANAGER, LANSING

I create places people want to live. By doing everything from making sure we're prepared for everything. I tackle the unpredictable every day. I am a Municipal Executive. And I am ready for anything.

Ready for Anything.



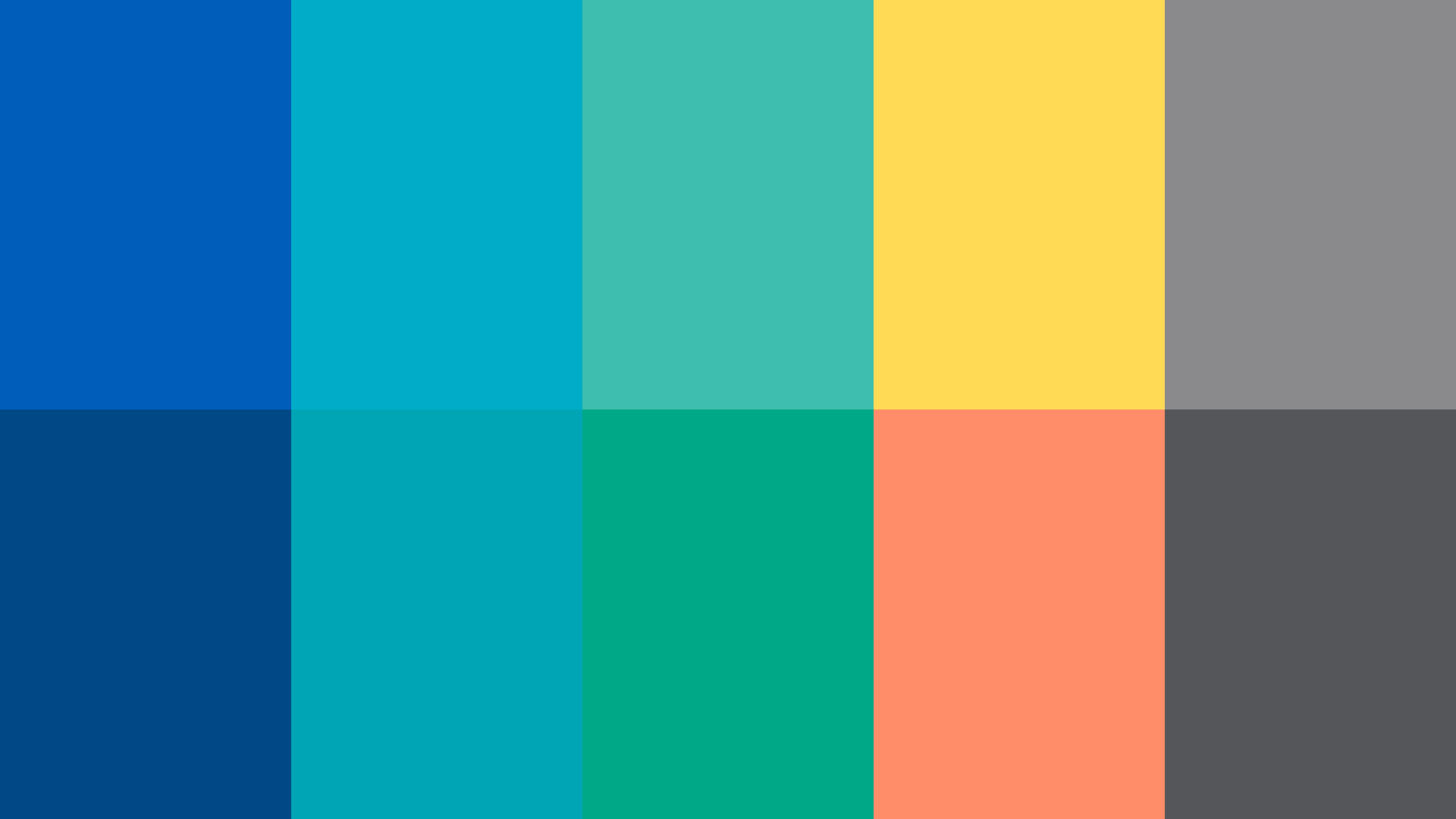
I am ready for the unexpected, so you can experience the best.



I stop floods before they happen. By making sure our dams and levees are secure. I worry about congestion, affordability and how to bring in more jobs. I tackle the unpredictable every day. I am a Municipal Executive. I've seen it all and I am ready for anything.



# Brand Colors



**Website**

I am ready for anything.



LATEST

EXECUTIVE PROFILE



JOHN SHAY  
MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE, LUDINGTON

COMMUNITY PROFILE



FEEL THE ZEEL  
CITY OF ZEELAND

BLOG



LATEST EVENTS AND NEWS

GENERAL INFORMATION

PH: 734-662-3246  
FAX: 734-669-4223

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES:  
MEMBERSHIP@MLGMA.ORG

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION:

BOARD & COMMITTEES  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
COUNCIL-MANAGER PLAN  
MLGMA CONSTITUTION

2016 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

SHARE



EMAIL NEWSLETTER



I am ready for anything.

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**STRENGTH THROUGH PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT**

The purpose of MLGMA is to foster and encourage the personal and professional development of its members in order that they may better serve their communities and to promote, encourage, and preserve high ethical standards for municipal administrators.



JOHN SHAY  
MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE LUDINGTON

SCOTT JOHNSON  
MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE GRAND RAPIDS

JOE SMITH  
MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE LANSING

# Video Story Board



# MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVES

**VO:** Leading sustainability initiatives. Building affordable housing. Balancing the budget to make sure there are enough police and firefighters. Michigan communities are places where things happen. And Municipal Executives are the ones leading the charge.



**VO:**

We work together, find the common ground and move forward.





**VO:**

We don't wait for solutions, we find them on our own.



**VO:**

As city and county leaders, we devote every day to improving the places we call home.



**VO:**

When other forms of government seem stuck, we move toward a brighter future, through collaboration and strong leadership.



**VO:**

It takes a dedicated team to keep a community running. Emergency teams, utility workers, and road crews.



**VO:**

But, we take the lead on organizing it all—from disaster planning to filling potholes, to economic development initiatives.



**INTERVIEW:**

Municipal Executives are hard at work all across Michigan, improving communities, and planning for the future.



**INTERVIEW:**

We don't care about the limelight, we care about streetlights. Other people people arrive to work, we always show up.



## **INTERVIEW:**

A career in municipal management is for those people who care about giving back, ...





**INTERVIEW:**

... who want to make a tangible difference in a community, for those driven individuals who want a purpose driven career.



**INTERVIEW:**

Municipal Executives take the lead. We always root for the home team.



# MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVES

Ready for Anything.

[MI-ME.ORG](http://MI-ME.ORG)

## INTERVIEW:

We're ready to make a difference. We're ready for anything.

## Video Storyboard/Script for MLGMA (voice over)

Leading sustainability initiatives. Building affordable housing. Balancing the budget to make sure there are enough police and firefighters.

Michigan communities are places where things happen. And Municipal Executives are the ones leading the charge.

We work together, find the common ground and move forward.

We don't wait for solutions, we find them on our own.

As city and county leaders, we devote every day to improving the places we call home.

When other forms of government seem stuck, we move toward a brighter future, through collaboration and strong leadership.

It takes a dedicated team to keep a community running. Emergency teams, utility workers, and road crews.

But, we take the lead on organizing it all—from disaster planning to filling potholes, to economic development initiatives.

## Video Storyboard/Script for MLGMA (interviews)

Municipal Executives are hard at work all across Michigan, improving communities, and planning for the future.

We don't care about the limelight, we care about streetlights. Other people people arrive to work, we always show up.

A career in municipal management is for those people who care about giving back, who want to make a tangible difference in a community, for those driven individuals who want a purpose driven career.

Municipal Executives take the lead. We always root for the home team. We're ready to make a difference. We're ready for anything.

ALL IMAGES ARE FOR PLACEMENT ONLY.



**VO:**  
Leading sustainability initiatives. Building affordable housing. Balancing the budget to make sure there are enough police and firefighters. Michigan communities are places where things happen. And Municipal Executives are the ones leading the charge.



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