

To: Michigan Municipal Executives Board of Directors

From: Emily Kieliszewski, Asst. Director, Member Experience & Learning, MML

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Subject: **16/50 Project Impact Report**

The 16/50 Project is transforming Michigan's municipal landscape by empowering women to lead. Since 2018, we've worked to eliminate barriers and equip a new generation of leaders through the Women's Municipal Leadership Program. This report showcases the program's impact and celebrates its graduates who are actively shaping stronger communities throughout Michigan.

Program Overview

As you know, the 16/50 Project is a Michigan Municipal League initiative launched in 2018 to address the underrepresentation of women in local government management positions. The WMLP is a core component of this project, providing a comprehensive 5-month curriculum that equips women with the knowledge, skills, and support to pursue leadership roles in municipal government.

Key Program Metrics

- **Applications:** Since its inception, the WMLP has received 458 applications, demonstrating strong interest and demand for this type of leadership development.
- **Graduates:** 135 women from diverse communities across Michigan have graduated from the WMLP. These graduates represent a growing network of skilled and dedicated public servants.
- **Current program:** The 2024 WMLP cohort, comprising 34 participants, marks a significant milestone as the first program to utilize the League's newly acquired learning management software. This platform provides a centralized hub for participants to access all session materials, resources, assignments, and a dedicated discussion forum, fostering enhanced engagement and connection. The WMLP is serving as a pilot program for this new technology, providing valuable insights into how we can optimize online learning experiences for future cohorts for this program and across League program offerings.
- **Impact:** The percentage of women serving as local government managers in Michigan has increased from 16% in 2018 to approximately 22.8% as of September 2024. This positive trend reflects the program's impact in promoting gender diversity in municipal leadership.

WMLP Graduate Career Placements

The WMLP has proven highly effective in helping graduates advance their careers. Below are lists of graduates who have secured manager/CAO and assistant manager roles since participating in the program.

Graduates in Manager/CAO Roles

- Kimberly Awrey, City Manager, City of Gaylord
- Ellen Glass, City Manager, City of Linden
- Haley Snyder, City Manager, City of Albion
- Katelyn Zeits, Administrator/Controller, Benzie County
- Kathryn Beemer, City Manager, City of Fennville
- Kate Hosier, City Manager, City of South Haven

- Ashley Latsch, City Manager, City of Grand Haven
- Mariah Walton, City Manager, City of Eastpointe
- Allison Watkins, Village Manager, Village of Newberry
- Kaitlyn Aldrich, Village Manager, Village of Kingsley
New position as of November 11, 2024: City Manager, City of Ludington
- Gretchen Gomolka, City Manager, City of Brighton
- Michelle King, City Manager, City of Flushing
- Megan Schubert, Village Manager, Village of Franklin
Official start date October 2024
- Rachel Witherspoon, Village Manager, Village of Pentwater
Official start date October 21, 2024
- Crystal VanVleck, City Manager, City of Berkley
Official start date Fall 2024.

Graduates in Assistant Manager/CAO Roles

- Melissa Fairbairn, Assistant City Manager, City of Birmingham
- LeighAnn Mikesell, Deputy City Manager, City of Muskegon
- Elle Getschman, Assistant City Manager, City of Saline
- Rebekah Kik, Assistant City Manager, City of Kalamazoo
- Laura Lam, Chief Operating Officer, City of Kalamazoo
- Kaitlyn Szczypka, Deputy County Administrator, Mason County

Conclusion

With 135 women graduates, the 16/50 Project and the WMLP are reshaping the future of municipal leadership in Michigan. The success of the program is clear, as more graduates secure leadership positions and make lasting impacts in their communities. Beyond Michigan, the program has become a national model, inspiring similar initiatives supported by the ICMA and organizations in states like Texas, Virginia, Georgia, and West Virginia. Thanks to the MME's continued support, these women are not only excelling but also setting new standards in leadership. Your investment is a direct investment in the future of Michigan's communities and in solidifying Michigan as a national leader in cultivating the next generation of local government leaders.