

W E L C O M E T O T H E



Michigan  
Municipal  
Executives

2026 Winter Institute



**The Way of the Municipal Leader:  
Lessons to Build Teams One Relationship at a Time**

**Building Trust, Legacy, and Resilient  
Teams in Local Government**

# Workshop Objectives



- Learn 7 relational based leadership skills
- Apply skills to leadership challenges
- Commit to actionable next steps
- Adapted from [The Way of the Shepherd: Seven Secrets to Managing Productive People](#)



# The Shepherd Metaphor



- Shepherds guide, defend, and care for their flock
- Municipal leaders steward public trust
- Municipal Leaders are scrutinized for their decisions.

**Think of a Leader...**

**What are words that describe them?**



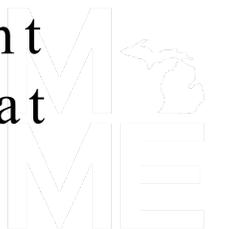
# Know the Condition of Your Team



- Staying Connected
- Understand Strengths and Struggles
- Monitor Morale

## Scenario

Morale is low at the Water Treatment Plant. Water Treatment Plant Director is 20-year employee, who knows their stuff. You notice their lone wolf demeanor and that their comments are generally negative and rife with skepticism. How do you balance trusting their expertise for capital improvement requests and improving morale at the plant?



# Discover the Shape of Your Team



- Identify Talents
- Align Strengths
- Develop Capacity

## Scenario

Summer help is critical to your labor needs. Your Park and Rec. Director is trying their best to coordinate city flower beds, sporty for shorty programs, and endless requests for the big pavilion next to the splash pad, which for some reason keeps breaking down. The general fund can't transfer as much as last year to parks. How do you help your talented but stretched thin Park and Rec Director?

# Help Your Team Identify with You



- Build Trust then Credibility Follows
- Model Integrity
- Share the Mission

## Scenario

The former City Manager was known to make deals. You inherit a bad deal with known real estate developer. After some time, you discover the deal compromises, at least optically, a member of Council, who is supporter of your ideas. How do hold the bad developer accountable and not lose the Council members support?



# Make Your Pasture a Safe Place



- Eliminate Fear and Gossip
- Encourage Open communication
- Promote Psychological Safety

## Scenario

Union contract negotiations are coming, and rumors fly they want raises, big ones. Behind closed doors whispers spread about the Union raising the black flag and going to war. They hear no raises and you're contracting out their work. The truth is it's less hostile than that. How do you eliminate the noise and focus on getting ink on the contract?



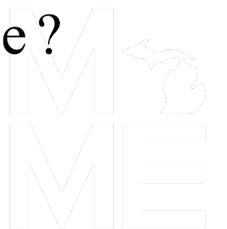
# Tools for Direction & Correction



- Provide Clarity and Direction
- Hold Staff Accountable
- Balance Guidance with Correction

## Scenario

At your last Department Head meeting, the clerk suspects timesheets are not being filled out properly by a department staffer. They are friends and she doesn't want to jeopardize softball carpool. Sure enough, a little unearned comp time is being used here and there. Who handles the discipline? What does the personnel report say?



# The Heart of the Shepherd



- Lead with Authentic Care
- Stewardship over Control
- Guide with Integrity

## Action Steps

- Who is 1 person you feel you need to connect with?
- Who is 1 person you need to learn more about?
- What forms of gossip can you eliminate?
- Who is 1 person outside your office that needs to hear your clear vision for your municipality?



# Leave a Legacy



- Develop Future Leaders
- Influence Organizational Culture

## Action Steps

- Who is 1 group or person you will invite to be celebrated at your public meeting?
- Who on your team will you commit to meeting with to discuss your vision for your municipality?
- What is 1 area of your organizational culture that you will commit to improving?





Thank You!

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