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Iowa State Association of Counties



March 2009
Strategies for Fiscal Health:
The Long Term Perspective

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To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

Strategies for Fiscal Health: The Long-Term Perspective

As counties cope with the challenges of our current tough economic conditions, considerable attention is focused on immediate, short-term budgetary issues. But it is equally important that counties also maintain a long-term outlook on their financial situation. The purpose of this article is to suggest several strategies by which counties can promote their long-term fiscal health.

Strategic Budgeting

Especially in periods of limited financial resources, policy makers should adopt a strategic approach to budgeting. Establishing priorities and developing benchmarks can provide direction to policy-makers and help local governments stay on course.

The National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting (NACSLB) recommends a goal-oriented approach to budgeting based on the following framework:

Principle I – Establish broad goals to guide government decision-making:

- Assess community needs, priorities, challenges and opportunities;
- Identify opportunities and challenges for government services, capital assets, and management; and
- Develop and disseminate broad goals.

Principle II – Develop approaches to achieve goals by:

- Adopting financial policies;
- Developing programmatic, operating, and capital policies and plans;
- Developing programs and services that are consistent with policies and plans; and
- Developing management strategies.

Principle III – Develop a budget with approaches to achieve goals by:

- Developing a process for preparing and adopting a budget;
- Developing and evaluating financial options; and
- Making choices necessary to adopt a budget.

Principle IV - Evaluate performance and make adjustments by:

- Monitoring, measuring, and evaluating performance; and
- Making adjustments as needed.

By: Jeff Schott

Program Director, Institute of
Public Affairs, University of Iowa



Reconciling Short- and Long-Range Planning

Recognize the longer-term financial impacts of short-term budget decisions. Capital projects, debt financing of such projects, and many annual budget decisions affect budgets far into the future. Identify the projected operating and/or personnel costs associated with providing current and anticipated services, projects, and programs (adjusted for inflation) before committing to the initial funding of that item.

Guard against making short-term budget decisions at the expense of longer-term needs. Examples of such situations are unfortunately quite commonplace: spending down fund balances accumulated over a period of time for designated purposes (such as specific capital projects or equipment/vehicle replacement), deferring maintenance projects, or transferring funds from the general fund to enterprise funds (or vice versa) solely to prop up the fund in question.

Financial Planning and Analysis

A variety of financial planning and analysis tools can provide counties – regardless of size - the necessary information base and guidelines for effective strategic budgeting and planning. They can help policy-makers to evaluate the short-and long-range impact of budget proposals. They can help elected officials see the “big picture” and prioritize proposals or projects at the same time, rather than on an individual or stand-alone basis.

Financial Trend Analysis

A county needs to know the state of its financial condition. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of financial data and trends, including multi-year forecasting of revenues and expenditures, can help elected officials think strategically about priorities and needs.

Financial Policies

Financial policies establish guidelines pertaining to key elements such as: revenues; operating expenditures; capital expenditures; reserve funds; fund balances; investments; debt management; enterprise funds; accounting; auditing; and reporting. Carefully developing and monitoring meaningful financial policies, such as establishing and maintaining fund balances as a percentage of fund expenditures or per capita debt service expenditures as a percentage, can provide very useful guidelines to assist elected officials in making difficult budget decisions.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

The CIP is a multi-year (typically three- to ten-year) program for the planning, scheduling, and financing of large construction, infrastructure and improvement projects, and purchasing of major pieces of equipment. The CIP helps prioritize capital spending needs and provides useful information about upcoming major expenditures.

Equipment/Asset Replacement Plan

Similar to the CIP, this is typically a five- to 20-year plan identifying the scheduled replacement of equipment, vehicles, facilities and other physical assets. Like the CIP, it helps policy makers anticipate and plan for upcoming major expenditures beyond the standard annual budget cycle.

Contingency Planning

During times of financial uncertainty, it can be quite helpful to develop budget contingency plans, especially for revenue shortfalls. Certain revenue sources, such as local option sales taxes, can be extremely volatile during these periods. Developing advance contingency plans allows for more deliberate and careful analysis of alternatives and options as opposed to “crisis mode” emergency response.

Stimulating Economic Growth

As discussed in the recent white paper, “Navigating the Fiscal Crisis: Tested Strategies for Local Leaders,” prepared by the Alliance for Innovation and ICMA, one of the best methods for counties to stimulate their local economies may be to maintain current expenditures and expand capital improvements, provided local revenues, reserves, interest rates and federal programs make it possible. Of course, these conditions rarely occur during economic downturns. It is more likely that county expenditures get reduced, which in turn may negatively impact economic development in the community.

The white paper suggests that periods of economic distress may offer the most opportune time to promote local economic development efforts. Private sector firms tend to be more sensitive to the impacts of economic development incentives, because their profit margins may be smaller and their cash flow more constrained.

Recognizing that direct cash outlay may be problematic for local governments during these downturns, the white paper identifies other opportunities to entice economic development,

including infrastructure, skilled available workforce, job training, educational institutions, and streamlining project reviews. Finally, the white paper points out that a period of resource scarcity is an appropriate time for jurisdictions in a region to share economic development incentives and benefits.

Citizen Engagement

Effectively dealing with long-term financial issues is not easy. Difficult decisions have to be made. It is crucial to develop strategies and methods to inform, listen to, and involve a broad base of community members in this process. Such an approach benefits both citizens and elected officials.

For citizens:

- They learn more about the issues and decision-making processes;
- An effective citizen engagement process can lead to creating partnerships for solving problems;
- The process allows citizens to provide real input on policy decisions; and
- The process can create a strong sense of buy-in and belonging.

For local officials:

- A citizen engagement process can demonstrate to citizens that certain public decisions are difficult and complex;
- The process helps citizens understand the financial pressures that affect services and programs;
- The process helps elected officials find out what citizens really think about important issues and policy decisions; and
- The process can help defuse tensions between groups of people and between citizens and government.

Of course, the citizen engagement process is not absolute. Elected officials are still responsible for setting policies and making decisions for the community - and the local elected leadership team is still ultimately responsible for the overall success and vitality of the community - with citizen guidance, input and engagement.

Has Your County Considered adopting a Building or Energy Code?

In early December, ISAC was asked to provide testimony before the Legislature's Energy Efficiency Plans and Programs Interim Study Committee about the county perspective on state energy and building codes. ISAC collectively wondered, "Do the counties actually have a perspective on this?" The answer is "yes," but it appears to be very little. According to the most recent information I have, only about one out of 10 counties have adopted and are enforcing building codes. Fewer have adopted energy codes. I picked the brains of knowledgeable sources in five of these counties, prepared testimony, and offered the county perspective to the committee.

The committee wanted to know why more counties haven't adopted building codes. Counties clearly have the power to adopt, administer, and enforce building codes pursuant to Iowa Code §331.304(3). They can choose the state building code or adopt a county code. All the counties I spoke with chose to adopt county codes based on the International Building Code and International Residential Code, as developed by the International Code Council.

One of the reasons more counties haven't adopted codes is because they don't want to take on the additional cost of operating a code enforcement program. This is despite the fact that those counties that have adopted codes find the programs to be largely self-sufficient from generating permit fees. Also, several of the county building officials wear other hats, such as engineer or zoning director, potentially making a code program more feasible. Still, in some counties a lack of any significant rural, residential or commercial development has not made adopting various codes a top priority.

Counties also have the power to adopt, administer, and enforce energy codes along with their building codes. Until recently, governmental subdivisions were free to adopt their own minimum energy standards for residential dwellings that were substantially in line with a nationally recognized standard. This was pursuant to Iowa Code §103A.8A. The state, according to the same section, was required to adopt energy conservation requirements for single-family and two-family residential construction based upon a nationally recognized standard or code for energy conservation—and it has, the most recent being the 2006 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC).

There were changes made to Iowa Code Chapter 103A during the 2008 session. Among them, governmental subdivisions lost the ability to adopt their own energy standards for resi-

By: Nate Bonnett

ISAC Assistant Legislative Counsel



dential dwellings, effective July 1, 2008. Instead, any governmental subdivision that had an energy code in place before that date would have the code superseded and replaced by the state energy code.

Another change was made to Iowa Code §103A.10, concerning thermal and lighting efficiency, which greatly expanded the scope and requirements of the state building code. Previously, thermal efficiency standards only applied to new construction owned by the state, an agency, or a political subdivision, and to new construction located in a governmental subdivision that had adopted a building code, and to new construction of more than 100,000 cubic feet of enclosed space that is heated or cooled. Now, thermal efficiency standards apply to all construction in the state intended for human occupancy which will contain enclosed space that is heated or cooled. Similarly, lighting efficiency standards used to apply to new construction owned by the state, an agency, or a political subdivision and to all new construction of buildings which are open to the general public during normal business hours. Now, lighting efficiency standards apply to all construction in the state intended for human occupancy and to new and replacement lighting in existing buildings.

None of these changes appear to be a big problem from the county perspective since so few counties actually have adopted their own energy codes and the ones that have use the same IECC. In areas where there are no local codes it is the responsibility of designers and builders to ensure that the state's energy efficiency standards are being observed. After all, counties and cities that haven't adopted codes wouldn't even have properly trained personnel to enforce the state energy code.

Because the state is curious why more counties and cities haven't adopted codes, the legislature passed a bill in 2008 (SF 2386) that created a Commission on Energy Efficiency Standards and Practices. The Commission, which includes Story County Supervisor James Strohm, along with the Iowa League of Cities, is in the process of developing an online survey for cities to complete. The requested information includes whether the particular city has adopted and enforces codes, which codes, and specifics on how they are enforced. Once the survey is finalized, ISAC will adapt it for county use, and provide you with information on how to complete it. The commission will compile this information, along with many other things I suppose, and report back to the General Assembly by January 1, 2011.

2009 Agricultural Property Assessments

By: Jay Syverson
ISAC Fiscal Analyst



2009 is the year of change. Because it's an odd-numbered year, one thing all property owners in Iowa can count on is a change in their assessment. New assessment notices will be mailed by April 15, and with the appeals process valuations won't be finalized until near the end of the year. But there are already indications that the 2009 reassessment will produce some very dramatic changes. This month's *By the Numbers* looks at perhaps the most dramatic change - the substantial increase in agricultural property assessments.

Agricultural property values will increase by about 50% statewide in 2009, according to preliminary estimates by the Department of Revenue (DOR). This follows an increase of about 15% in 2007. In 2007, the productivity formula generated a total assessed value of agricultural property (land and buildings) of about \$25 billion. This number will jump to near \$38 billion in 2009. (Remember, assessment year 2009 values will not affect budgets until FY 2011.) But that's assessed value - assessed agricultural value will increase 50%. By law, *taxable* agricultural value is limited to a 4% increase. Let's look back at 2007 to see how this will all shake out.

In 2007, assessed value increased by about 15%. Taxable value could only increase 4%, and the result was a substantial agricul-

tural rollback of about 90% - the first ag rollback since FY 2001. Agricultural property was not reassessed in 2008, so assessed value stayed constant. Taxable value increased another 4%, which will bring the ag rollback to 94% for FY 2010. But now comes 2009, and its 50% increase in assessed value. Because taxable value will only increase 4%, the agricultural rollback will drop to about 65% in FY 2011!

How will this impact your county? DOR says the increase in county ag values varies between 21% and 71%. To put it simply, if assessed ag values in your county increased by less than 50% (the state average), then taxable ag values in your county will actually decrease. Let's take the slowest-growing county as an example. Say that county has \$320 million of assessed ag value (\$300 million taxable at the 94% rollback) in 2008. Assessed value jumps to \$387 million in 2009, but taxable value plummets 16% to \$252 million. Try explaining this to farmers or any other citizens in your county: Even though your farm assessment rose 21%, your taxable value fell 16%. Welcome to Iowa's property tax system.

ISAC Legislative Tracking Tool

With the legislative session in full swing, remember to utilize ISAC's legislative tracking tool. This is an interactive web-based tool for viewing and printing legislative bills. The tool incorporates features such as listing ISAC's position, ISAC staff assigned to monitor the bill, steering committee, House and Senate status along with the Governor's status, and the affiliate(s) that would be interested in this legislation. You will also find hyperlinks to each of the legislative bills for easy retrieval. The end user can also filter and hide columns of information. Printing options are available to allow for printing on letter sized or legal sized paper. You are able to open up the legislative information into an Excel spreadsheet. This will allow for more printing options, such as the placement of headers and column titles on the top of each page. To use the legislative tool visit ISAC's website, www.iowacounties.org. If you have problems using the tool contact Tammy Norman at tnorman@iowacounties.org or 515.244.7181.

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County Exonerated In 'Walking Quorum' Lawsuit

By: David Vestal

ISAC General Counsel



For a gathering to constitute a “meeting” under the Open Meetings Law, there must be “deliberation.” But what is “deliberation?” In December 2008 the Iowa Court of Appeals addressed that issue in *Dooley v. Johnson County Board of Supervisors*.

The controversy arose from a plan to develop a new road through northern Johnson County to accommodate planned growth. In 2003, the Johnson County secondary roads department recommended developing the road. That recommendation was met with some resistance.

In 2004, the Board of Supervisors hired a consultant, Howard R. Green Company (Green), to provide a recommendation. On December 13, 2004, the board’s executive assistant emailed the five board members that Green representatives wanted to meet with two of the five supervisors on January 4, 2005, to present a draft report and discuss it. The email said: “The meeting is not designed to deliberate the draft report but to seek input.”

Two supervisors agreed to attend. When one other supervisor expressed an opinion about the report, the executive assistant informed the supervisors that Green would be willing to meet with the board members.

On January 4, two supervisors met with Green as planned. After they left, two other members entered and discussed the report with Green. Then, after those two left, the remaining board member met with Green.

Green then revised the draft report, and a final report was issued in February 2005.

Nine months later the plaintiffs filed suit. They alleged that the January 4 gathering was a “meeting” held in violation of the Open Meetings Law.

The district court held that there was no “meeting” and found in favor of the County. The plaintiffs appealed.

According to Iowa Code §21.2(2):

“*Meeting*” means a gathering in person or by electronic means, formal or informal, of a majority of the members of a governmental body where there is deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the governmental body’s policy-making duties. Meetings shall not include a gathering of mem-

bers of a governmental body for purely ministerial or social purposes when there is no discussion of policy or no intent to avoid the purposes of this chapter.”

There are two obvious issues raised here. One is whether what occurred constitutes a “gathering” of a majority of the members of the board. The other is whether what the board members did on that day constitutes “deliberation.”

The Iowa Court of Appeals first addressed the plaintiffs’ claim that this was a gathering of a majority of the board members because it was a “walking quorum.” The court noted that according to the plaintiffs these types of meetings “have been found to be in violation of open meetings laws in other states.” And the court noted that the plaintiffs cited one Attorney General’s opinion questioning the practice. The court also acknowledged failed legislative efforts to expressly outlaw this practice. But that was it, one paragraph in an 11 page decision.

Then the next paragraph starts with the following language, “Assuming a majority was present, next we much determine if deliberation or policy-making activities took place...” So the Court really didn’t dwell on the “gathering” issue at all.

Regarding whether there was deliberation, the Court said that the difference between a ministerial gathering and one that involves deliberation “appears to be whether members are gathering information or discussing opinions.” There is deliberation, according to the court, “if the information gathering evolves into discussion of member opinions...”

The appeals court upheld the district court’s conclusion that at the January 4 meeting the board members did nothing more than ask questions and elicit clarification about the draft report. Members sought to understand the report’s recommendations. The court said there was “no evidence showing debate or discussion of the recommendations among members.” Instead, the court said that Green “sought feedback, opinions and input from supervisors about the draft.”

The court said that this was “dangerously close to deliberation,” and said that the decision to meet in this fashion “was a poor one.” Nonetheless, said the court, “substantial evidence does support the district court’s finding that no deliberation occurred at the gathering and therefore we must affirm.”

Continued on page 13.

Data Will Set Us Free: Part 1

By: *Robin Harlow*

ISAC Technology
Project Manager



Last month I discussed the movement of data. This month I want to begin discussing how we can put large volumes of data to work for us. What story is the data telling? Over time, those entities that learn to listen to their “data story” will have a greater degree of success than those that don’t. Through a series of discussions over a period of time the hope is that a “data story” template will emerge that all counties can use.

As county officials, how can you tell how well your entire, or even certain aspects of your county, is functioning? How can you get a pulse of the operations? With the trend toward transparency, citizens will expect that officials at all levels of government be able to wave the magic data wand and pull the needed information out of the hat.

Athletics have introduced what is termed “key performance indicators” or KPIs to the general public. KPIs are simply the key statistics we are blasted with as we watch a game. How many times have we heard “if team x can gain 4.5 yards a carry on first down, they will be hard to beat.” This particular KPI gives the coaches and viewers feedback on how well the coach’s game strategy is playing out. Missing several KPIs during the game will most likely lead to a team’s defeat. So during the game the coach must interpret what the KPIs are saying and make adjustment where needed. This development of sport KPIs falls under the saying, “if you can measure it, you can manage it.”

So in general, the average citizen understands the use of KPIs. The challenge is to come up with meaningful KPIs that reflect your county’s particular strategies, goals and objectives.

What I want to explore in this and coming articles are: What key performance indicators are and what they are not; why they are important?; and how you can use them.

In this column, let’s start with what they are and are not. In David Parameter’s book of “Key Performance Indicators: *Developing, Implementing, and Using Winning KPIs*,” Mr. Parameter states that there are three types of performance indicators: 1) Key result indicators (KRIs) tell you what you have done; 2) Performance indicators (PIs) tell you what to do; 3) KPIs tell you what to do to increase performance dramatically.

KRIs are useful in that they tell you whether you are on course, but they do not tell what specifically you need to improve on. They also differ from KPIs in the aspect of the time intervals involved. KRIs are reviewed monthly/quarterly/yearly, while KPIs are reviewed daily/weekly/monthly.

Examples of KRIs for local government are:

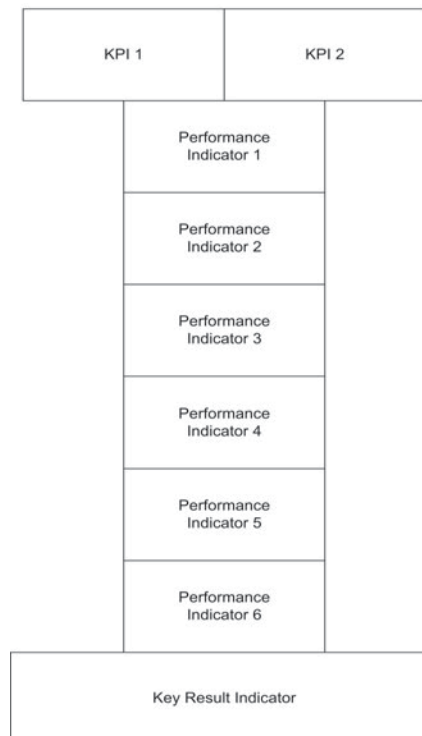
- Citizen satisfaction;
- County employee satisfaction; and
- Return on investment (savings).

PIs (Performance Indicators) are all the indicators for the organizations, including KPIs. Using the KRI examples above, some examples of PIs are:

- Departments that have a 95% citizen satisfaction level;
- Managers that have an 85% employee satisfaction level; and
- Projects that have a return on investment of less than 18 months.

So PIs tell you what you need to work on. KPIs are then a smaller subset of all PIs, hence the word ‘key.’ KPIs are those performance indicators that highlight areas of the county’s performance that are critical to operational success and effectiveness. KPIs will give the county official the data to reinforce the gut feeling that tells you things are going well.

Visually the relationship would look like this:



In Parameter’s book, he discusses that the exact ratio of KPIs to KRIs is widely discussed, but in general a sound ratio is 1:8:1 or one KPI to Eight PIs to one KRI.

Next month I want to examine the characteristics of a KPI and the tools associated with performance management.

technology center

Hulu

By: **Tammy Norman**

ISAC Office Manager



Q: What is Hulu?

A: If you tuned into this year's Super Bowl, you may have caught a commercial starring Alec Baldwin (who was actually an alien) discussing how TV is suppose to rot your brain, but it really doesn't - Hulu does. After seeing this commercial I was curious as to what Hulu really is. Okay, this may not help you in your role as a county official but it is kind of fun. Plus, we need to keep up with the latest technology. Last summer I wrote an article about Slingbox, which enables you to access your TV via your laptop or PDA. Now we have something a little different in Hulu. Where Slingbox enables you to view everything that you are able to see if you were sitting in your living/family room at home, Hulu will enable you to view whatever NBC and New Corp and their partners allow. Some of their current partners include MGM, Warner Bros., and Sony Pictures Television. Keep in mind, you must purchase Slingbox to allow their service but Hulu currently is free. Who doesn't like something that is free?

What is currently available on Hulu?

Current and classic television shows ranging from *The Office* to old *Star Trek* episodes made in the 60's are available for viewing with Hulu. Television shows, feature films and movie trailers, to name a few, are arranged in a variety of categories such as home and garden, news and information, talk and interview, reality and games shows, which include television shows such as *Top Chef*, *Cops*, *The Biggest Loser* and *Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader*. There are sports channels that include feature films such as *Rocky IV*, *Rudy* and *For the Love of the Game*, as well as TV shows such as *The Westminster*

Kennel Club Dog Show and *WWE Monday Night Raw*. It seems that there is something for just about anyone and it is completely free. Hulu also has a search engine to enable you to search and find the show you are looking for. Some shows are set up to expire while others are set up on a more permanent basis. You are able to "subscribe" to your favorite shows, which mean you are alerted when the latest episode has been uploaded and available for viewing.

How difficult is it to access Hulu?

It is extremely easy to obtain this service. Simply type in the following URL: <http://www.hulu.com/> and create your account. Once you set up your account, you will be able to begin viewing some of your favorite shows. Here are a few things to keep in mind, you will need high speed Internet, Flash Player 9 or better, and a decent computer to receive the optimum viewing results. Hulu is simple enough for all of us to partake in and for now it doesn't cost a thing, so enjoy.

Website Note: We are tracking legislation of interest to counties via our ISAC Legislative Tracking Tool. To access this feature, simply type the following URL <http://affiliates.iowacounties.org/bills/>.

Have a question regarding new technology and would like it addressed in this column? Contact me at 515-244-7181 ext. 315 or via e-mail at tnorman@iowacounties.org. Until next month, keep clicking!

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and the Iowa State Association of County Supervisors

July 15, 2009

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An Opportunity to Focus on What Really Matters

Targeted Case Managers (TCM) serving persons with disabilities in our counties face many new challenges in 2009. One of these major challenges is on the horizon: moving from a monthly billing unit to a 15-minute billing unit for TCM services. As case managers and their supervisors know, this unique role doesn't lend itself well to 15-minute billable units. In coordinating and monitoring direct services, TCMs will see the person they serve and contact all members of that person's team a minimum of once every three months, and will have significant contact with or on behalf of that person monthly to obtain goal progress, identify areas of concern, assess the persons needs for services, or make referrals for additional supports and resources. These contacts are not scheduled in units of time, like direct supports are. Currently, case management agencies receive the same amount of reimbursement whether providing half an hour or 20 hours of billable support monthly. Despite our opinions about this change in billing, this change will occur in July. How TCMs and their county agencies adapt to this change will determine how much of a challenge and struggle it will be for them.

Like the economy, the more we focus on how bad it is and the fears of the future, the more our perception actually contributes to creating a worse situation. With the change in billing units for case management agencies, how we choose to think and talk about these changes affect our attitudes, level of energy and how we interact with those around us. The shift from negative to positive thinking is hard for most of us. Deciphering what we can and can't change about the situation is a start in reframing our perception about this issue. Acceptance isn't an admission that we like the situation, just an acknowledgement that we can not change it for now, and are going to focus on what we can change.

Members of TCM agencies that are able to successfully switch to a positive outlook are able to be present in the moment. Focusing on what they are doing throughout the day, instead of worrying about what they have to get done, or are not getting done for tomorrow, requires less energy. The ability to prioritize, set aside tasks that can be done in the future, and knowing what needs to be addressed now, are skills that TCMs, supervisors and support staff have a lot of opportunities to practice due to the nature of their jobs! Those working in case management agencies pursued work there to serve those with disabilities and their families. Remembering this and the reason for all the paperwork is ultimately so those served are able to get and keep the services they need, or that the agency can be paid to continue to provide case management, and funding for

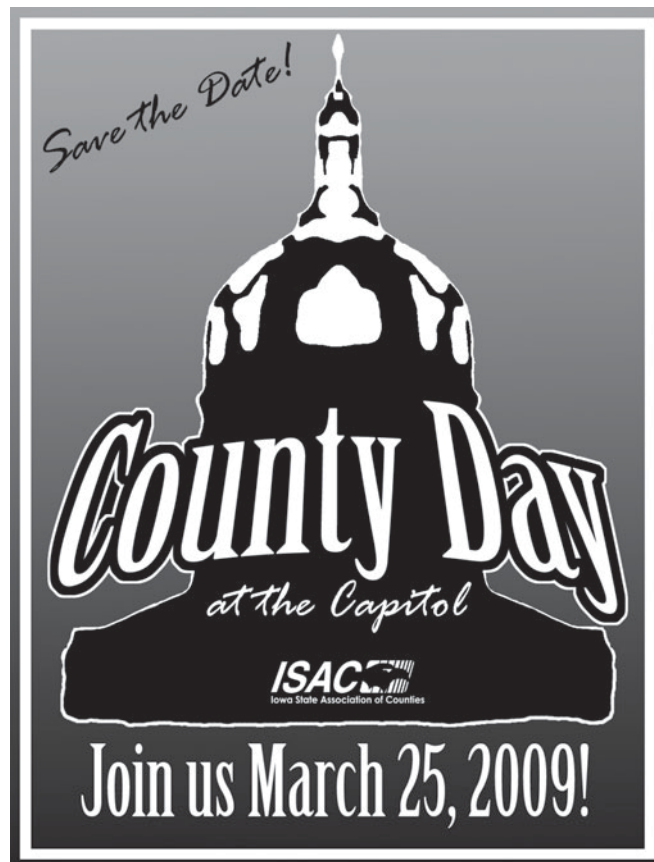
By: Jackie Olson Leech

ISAC Case Management Specialist



their direct services. It is so easy to let the hoops they have to jump through for Medicaid and state dollars cloud this simple perspective. Also remember that most of the rationale for the standards for case management paperwork is philosophically based in client-centered and client-driven theories, which we in the field embrace and want to uphold.

Although the role of Targeted Case Management essentially stays the same, the way we document that role and bill for that service continues to evolve. Change is imminent, and we will survive this adjustment from monthly billing to 15-minute billing for this service. This issue too shall pass, and there will be further challenges to address and opportunities to reframe our perspective, while keeping our eyes on what really matters – the people with disabilities that we serve.



ISAC meetings

Join Us for County Day at the Capitol

The Iowa State Association of Counties will be hosting its first County Day at the Capitol on Wednesday, March 25. Please plan to attend this event, which will be a great opportunity for you to participate in lobbying your state legislators. Registration is available online at www.iowacounties.org. The deadline to register is Friday, March 20. There is no fee to register, but this greatly helps the ISAC staff plan accordingly for the lunch and event materials.

The event will begin at 9:30 am at the Wallace Building Auditorium. At 10:30 am, the group will then travel over to the Capitol. Each affiliate will have a display in the Capitol Rotunda. This will give each individual affiliate the opportunity to introduce legislators and the public to your important roles in the effective administration of county government. Lunch will be provided for legislators and county officials from 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm in Room 116 of the Capitol. This will again give county officials the opportunity to interact with legislators.

In order to have the opportunity to meet with your legislators on this day, each county is encouraged to set up meetings with their legislators in advance. Most days of the session are extremely busy and having a scheduled time with your legislators is very important to make the most of your day.

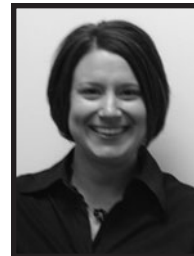
As an ISAC member county it is important to be involved in the legislative session and to work to promote ISAC's legislative priorities and objectives. The County Day at the Capitol will give our members an opportunity to support ISAC's efforts and work towards improving county government. It is our hope that by making a concentrated effort to focus on county issues on just one day, we will have a greater impact at the Capitol than in previous years of spreading the days among districts. Please mark your calendars now for March 25, 2009!

Take Advantage of ISAC Corporate Hotel Rates!

The Iowa State Association of Counties has signed corporate rate agreements with the following hotels for 2009. Please take advantage of these special rates throughout the year if you are visiting the Des Moines area. These rates are available for both business and pleasure. The more rooms that are reserved with the ISAC rate, the better the rates will be for 2010.

By: *Stacy Horner*

ISAC Meeting/Event Administrator



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Des Moines, IA 50321
515.309.4444
\$89/night (plus applicable tax)

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5291 Stoney Creek Ct
Johnston, IA 50131
515.334.9000
\$89/night (plus applicable tax)

The Sheraton West Des Moines

1800 50th Street
West Des Moines, IA 50266
515.223.1800
\$95/night (plus applicable tax)

Des Moines Marriott Downtown

700 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309
800.514.4681
\$112/night (plus applicable tax)

To get all of the details on these special ISAC corporate rates, please visit www.iowacounties.org for more information including each of the hotel's amenities and services. Please contact me at shorner@iowacounties.org if you have any questions. We hope that you enjoy your stay in the Des Moines metro area!

Nationwide and NACo Scholarships

Your high school senior can be awarded \$2,000 for college...

It's a difficult time to be saving for your retirement. 2008 was a tough year for the financial industry. But now more than ever, it's important for Americans to take responsibility for investing in their retirement. Nationwide and the National Association of Counties want high school seniors to look into the future and consider what actions are needed, now more than ever, to be ready for retirement.

Each year, Nationwide Retirement Solutions awards Nationwide/NACo college scholarships—each worth \$2,000—to four high school seniors whose parent or grandparent participates in NACo's 457 Deferred Compensation Plan. Deadline for applications is March 15. Throughout their 29-year partnership, Nationwide and NACo have been committed to helping you plan for your retirement as well as your family's future!

Terms and Conditions Consist of Three Items Described Below:

- 1) Eligibility
- 2) Judging Criteria
- 3) Notification

Eligibility requirements:

- Graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents are eligible to apply;

- Applicant's parent or grandparent must be enrolled in and contribute to the NACo 457 Deferred Compensation Plan;
- Applicants must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term of the 2009–2010 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college;
- Immediate family members of NACo employees, or members of the NACo Deferred Compensation Advisory Committee, or its governing board of directors, or Nationwide employees are not eligible to apply; this program is not offered outside the United States; and
- Application and entry must be submitted online no later than March 15, 2009.

Judging criteria:

- Scholarship entries will be reviewed by a committee of associates from both Nationwide and NACo; scholarship recipients will be chosen based on the content of their entry; and
- All entries submitted will become property of Nationwide and may be used for educational and/or marketing purposes; the original author will be credited.

How will scholarship recipients be notified?

- Scholarship recipients will be notified by April 15, 2009;
- Scholarship recipients will be mailed a check in mid-August 2009, payable to the institution and mailed to the student's home address; and
- The winner must enroll in an accredited institution by the fall term of the 2009-2010 school year.

To apply, please visit www.naco.org.

legal briefs

Continued from page 8.

The court concluded by saying that, "Given that there was no deliberation during the gathering, we need not decide whether a majority was present."

The discussion of what constitutes "deliberation" is spot on. If a majority of the board meets with a drafter of a report, and supervisors individually criticize the report or ask questions about what specific language means, that's not "deliberation."

But the language about whether this was a "gathering" is scary. After all, it would have been a lot easier to just affirm the district court's decision that a majority of members were not together at any one time on that day, instead of going into the details of who said what in the meetings with the Green representatives.

This decision should serve as a warning. Setting up serial meetings like this is not going to sit well with the public, and may result in allegations that you have violated the law.

Imagine That: "Cyclists are considered to be the "indicator species" of a healthy community." From the preamble to the "Cyclists' Bill of Rights, 2008."

Parting Ponderable:

Actual newspaper headlines:

Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half
 Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Experts Say
 Man Minus Ear Waives Hearing
 Kids Make Nutritious Snacks

NACo County Government Week: Greening our Future

National County Government Week (NCGW), held each year during the first full week in May, is an annual celebration of county government. First held in 1991, NCGW raises public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation's 3,068 counties.

This year, NCGW will be celebrated May 3 – 9. This is an excellent opportunity for your county to highlight effective county programs and raise public awareness and understanding about the various services provided to the community. This year's theme is "Greening our Future." Try to plan events around this theme.

Here are a few ideas on how to get started:

Establish a NCGW Planning Committee

The committee will plan, organize and coordinate all activities relating to NCGW. Committee members should include representatives from the county board, administration, school system and each county department. In addition, a public information officer or county official experienced in working with the local media should be included. All areas of county government and schools should be involved in the planning process.

Decide how extensive your activities will be

Plan week-long activities, or perhaps, just one or two days of events. Plan activities to reach different segments of your community, such as schools, community groups, business groups, and news organizations. Activities should be designed to bring residents to county facilities or send county representative to locations where residents are located. Several suggestions for activities include: holding open houses and public tours; issuing proclamations; scheduling tours of other county facilities; and bringing information to the people.

Your goal as a county official is to educate residents about county services by getting them to visit county facilities. Or you can plan outreach events where the people are already assembled. Keep in mind this year's "Greening Our Future" theme.

Involve the media

Be sure the local media are aware of NCGW and the activities your committee is planning. Proper media planning is essential to maximize public awareness of NCGW. Below are ways to help secure positive media coverage:

Educate the media: Inform local reporters, editors and broadcasters early and often about NCGW and your county's plans to celebrate it.

Plan to make news: Coordinate events or announcements to the newsworthy. You can launch new initiatives, announce plans for new programs or honor county employees for their good work. Keep in mind that newspapers want in-depth facts, television stations want good visuals and radio reports want snappy sound bites from knowledgeable and articulate interviewees.

Publish a calendar of events: Publish a calendar of NCGW events on the county's and/or ISAC's website. Ask the local newspaper to publish this calendar. Ask the local television, cable and radio stations to air public service announcements about county services or events.

Write media advisories: Prepare and send media notices well in advance for specific NCGW events, such as the open house, tour of the hospital or visit to a local school. Describe who, what, where, when, and why. Make it newsworthy.

Write news releases: Have news releases ready to distribute to the media the day of special county government week events. Highlight what's new, beneficial and cost-effective. Use lively, concise quotes from appropriate county officials. Provide contact information.

Take your message to the media: Do not just assume the media will cover your NCGW events. Ask for a meeting with the newspaper's editorial board; volunteer to stop by the television station for an interview; be an in-studio guest on a local radio program. Be accessible, proactive and enthusiastic about NCGW and the services provided to the community.

Your event in Iowa

ISAC wants to hear about your events. Please email rbicego@iowacounties.org if you are planning on holding an event/s to celebrate NCGW. I would love to hear about them and possibly even feature them in a future issue of *The Iowa County* magazine.

Please visit www.iowacounties.org or www.naco.org to download a full packet of information on NCGW.



Greening Our Future

About NACo – The Voice of America's Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.

miscellaneous

Save the Date! Ready to Run™ Iowa

Friday, April 3, 2009
Scheman Building, Iowa State Center, Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

Registration is underway for the 2009 Ready to Run™ Iowa campaign training school, which will be held on Friday, April 3, on the campus of Iowa State University. Registration is \$75 a person if postmarked by March 21, 2009, and \$100 per person after March 21. Support from sponsors keeps tuition below our actual costs, and scholarships may be available to help cover travel and registration fees.

Ready to Run™ Iowa is a one-day, comprehensive, bi-partisan campaign training workshop offered every other year by the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics and the Ames League of Women Voters. It is based on the very successful Ready to Run™ New Jersey campaign training for women initiated by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers Univer-

sity in 1998. Of the nearly 1,000 women who have attended Ready to Run™ New Jersey, more than 25% have run for office and more than 70% of those who ran won their elections!

We are hoping to have the same impact in Iowa, which is still one of only four states that has not elected a woman to the U.S. Congress. Iowa has not elected a woman as governor and it ranks below the national average of 24.2% with 34 women (22.7%) in the State Legislature.

Although Ready to Run™ Iowa addresses topics unique to women as they seek greater participation in the political process, the campaign school is open to anyone who is interested in running for elected office, serving on public boards and commissions, and/or working on a political campaign.

Please visit the Ready to Run™ link on the ISAC or Catt Center web site to learn more about the history and content of this program, download registration forms and information about scholarships, see who is serving on our bi-partisan Advisory Board, and check out Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.las.iastate.edu/CattCenter/readytorun.shtml>.

miscellaneous

Did Your New Year's Resolution Include Taking Better Care of Your Health?

When was the last time you had your cholesterol checked? Does your mom's medication interact with ibuprofen...or is it acetaminophen? When exactly *was* that surgery – 1992 or 1993? With a web-based personal health record (PHR) you can answer these questions anytime and anywhere you have access to the Internet.

Most people see more than one doctor and fill more than one prescription. They're treated in a doctor's office, outpatient facility or at a clinic – often for a single episode of care. Doctors may only treat you for one condition and may not know what other doctors have advised regarding your health. Remembering all the facts to share with your doctors can be confusing and difficult. A PHR can help you provide your doctors with a complete picture of your health and the information they need to give you the best care. It may lessen duplicate tests and medical errors. Taking control of your health is easier with a PHR.

A PHR keeps your medical information at your fingertips without the hassle of shuffling through papers. PHRs are a safe and confidential way to store and track your health history and other important medical information in one place. Once

you log on to your individual PHR account, you can fill in diagnoses, medications, test results, doctor visits – any health-related information you think is important. By printing information from your PHR, you can provide a more complete picture of your health when visiting your doctor – and possibly avoid duplicate tests. With a PHR, you choose whether to share access to your PHR account with your doctors, family, or other caregivers to help coordinate your health care and have vital information available in case of emergency.

A variety of PHRs are available on the Web. Some are free; others are available for purchase or by subscription. The features, security and privacy policies vary between PHR companies, so it is important to compare them carefully when selecting one so your information stays safe. Medicare provides information about PHRs, some things to consider when looking for a PHR and even links to special PHR projects sponsored by Medicare in certain states. Visit www.medicare.gov/phr to learn more.

PHRs make it easier to monitor your health and the health of a loved one. They can reduce paperwork and help your doctors provide the right care for you. And, if – like a lot of us – you're resolving to live healthier in 2009, you'll find that keeping this resolution is a whole lot easier when you start keeping a personal health record.

associate member highlight

Midland GIS Solutions Develops Application Interface with Iowa's Leading CAMA Provider

Midland GIS Solutions was awarded **Vanguard Appraisals' Technology Partner of the Year Award** in 2007 for the development of integrated software solutions for GIS and Vanguard users. Midland GIS and Iowa's leading CAMA provider have a working relationship to bring our valued clients the best in GIS and CAMA solutions. The most notable of these solutions is the development of Midland's unique integration software, CAMALink.

Midland GIS Solutions' CAMALink application allows a county to interface their CAMAvison® software with their GIS program. CAMALink gives the county the ability to simply click on the CAMALink button within their GIS program and immediately "jump" to the selected parcel in Vanguard's CAMAvison®. Similarly, Vanguard users can select a parcel in CAMAvison® and automatically "jump" to that same parcel in the GIS mapping program. The ability to move seamlessly between the two programs provides a quick and easy alternative to viewing parcel information within each program separately.

Counties with a Web GIS program can realize additional benefits from CAMALink. If the county has a Web based GIS site, the CAMALink application allows a county employee to locate a specific parcel in Vanguard and then click on a button that will automatically launch the county's Web GIS site and instantly zoom to the corresponding parcel.

CAMALink software requires no training and can be remotely installed on your GIS/Vanguard computer. For more details about CAMALink, Midland's user-friendly GIS and CAMA integration software, please contact Matt Sorensen, Vice President, of Midland GIS Solutions at 660.562.0050 or email gis@midlandgis.com.



MIDLAND
GIS Solutions

employment

Winnebago County, located in Forest City, Iowa, in North central Iowa, is seeking qualified applicants for the position of county engineer. The position requires a Bachelor's Degree in civil engineering and possession of or capability of acquiring licensure as a professional engineer from the State of Iowa within six months of employment. Five years' progressive experience in the transportation industry including supervisory or managerial experience is preferred, but not required. Work experience with county drainage districts is strongly preferred, but not required. The county engineer is directly re-

sponsible for planning, organizing, and managing the design, construction, and maintenance of the secondary roads and bridges. The county engineer is also directly responsible for managing the budget and the supervision of 23 full-time employees. Excellent benefits with salary commensurate with qualifications and experience. Submit cover letter with resume to: Winnebago County Board of Supervisors, 126 South Clark Street, Forest City, Iowa, 50436. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Winnebago County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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Past issues of The Iowa County can be viewed on ISAC's website, www.iowacounties.org, under news.

Editor's Note: For consideration of materials to be published in *The Iowa County* magazine, please submit before the first Friday of the previous month. (Materials for the April 2009 magazine are due on Friday, March 6.)

Thank you! Rachel

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calendar

March

- 4-6 ISAC Spring School of Instruction
(Marriott Downtown and Renaissance Savery, Des Moines)
- 4 CCMS Board Meeting
(Des Moines Marriott Downtown)
- 4 CRIS Board Meeting
(Des Moines Marriott Downtown)
- 7-11 NACo Legislative Conference
(Washington, D.C.)
- 25 County Day at the Capitol
(State Capitol, Des Moines)

April

- 14 CCMS Administrators Training
(Holiday Inn Northwest)
- 15 CCMS Cost Report Support Staff Training
(Holiday Inn Northwest)
- 30 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting
(ISAC Offices)

May

- 14 CCMS Advanced Case Management Meeting
(Holiday Inn Airport)

June

- 3 CCMS Supervisors Training
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)
- 10-12 ICIT Mid-Year Conference
(West Des Moines Marriott)
- 15-17 Assessing Officers (NCRAAO) Conference
(Coralville)
- 17-19 CCMS Fundamentals Training
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

July

- 15 ISAC Golf Scholarship Fundraiser
(Jester Park, Granger)
- 16 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)
- 24-29 NACo Annual Conference
(Nashville, TN)

August

- 5-7 Recorders Summer School
(Honey Creek Resort)
- 6-7 2009 Supervisors Executive Board Meeting
(Council Bluffs)
- 12-14 CCMS Annual Conference
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

September

- 17-18 ISAC Board of Directors Retreat
(Honey Creek Resort)

October

- 21-23 CCMS Fundamentals Training
(Courtyard by Marriott, Ankeny)
- 29-30 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)

November

- 18-20 ISAC Fall School of Instruction
(Coralville Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, Coralville)

December

- 7-10 Iowa County Engineers Association Annual Meeting
(Ames)
- 10 ISAC Board of Directors
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)

Please visit ISAC's online calendar of events at www.iowacounties.org and click on 'Upcoming Events.' A listing of all the meetings scheduled thus far in 2008, agendas and meeting notices can be found on ISAC's website. A majority of ISAC's meetings offer online registration. If you have any questions about the meetings listed above, please contact Stacy Horner at (515) 244-7181 or shorner@iowacounties.org.

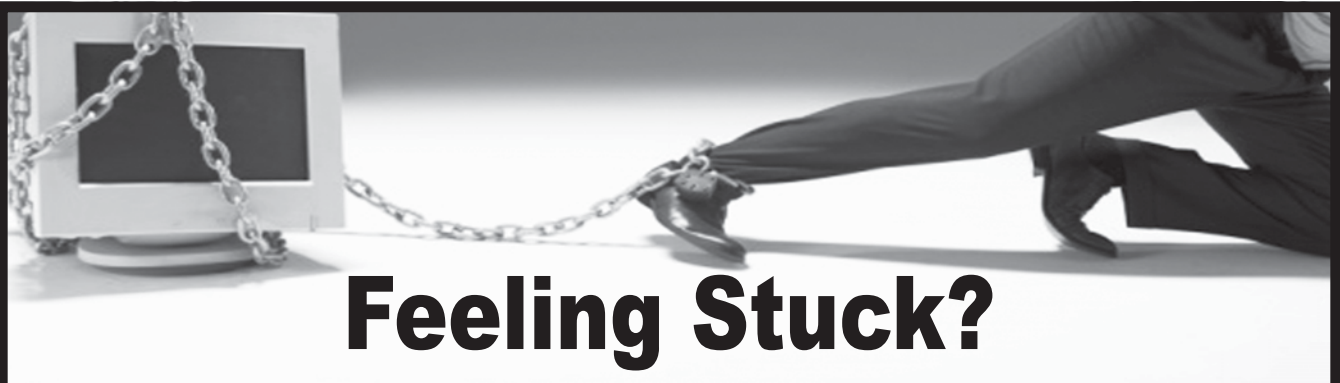


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- Complete and accurate proposals that allow you to evaluate more options, budget with precision, reduce risk and make better business decisions

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The National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIP), National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) and National Association of Fleet Administrators (NAFA) endorse the use of Life Cycle Costing as a preferred procurement method.

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