

Strategic Planning, Stakeholder Input & Goal Identification Initiative



For the City of Rochelle, IL

September 27, 2017

*Prepared by: NIU Center for Governmental Studies
DeKalb, Illinois*



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*Building stronger regions
through innovation and
collaboration.*

Jeff Fiegenschuh
City Manager
City of Rochelle
420 North 6th St.
Rochelle, IL 61068

RE: Project Proposal to Provide Strategic Planning Services

Dear Jeff, Council and Staff:

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the City on a strategic planning and goal setting process. We stand ready to assist the City's elected and appointed leaders and were pleased to learn that our approach fits with your aims for the project.

In response to the City's request for a project outline for a Multi-Year Strategic Plan, the following framework and conceptual approach has been prepared for your consideration. The proposal addresses the needs identified in our recent discussions:

- Enable the City to create a long-term vision, set organizational priorities and shape its strategic direction
- Provide a framework of analysis for the governing and community environment
- Develop clear priorities and measureable goals
- Assist with action planning of the consensus goals
- Provide a communicative summary document for use by the City Council and broader community

As our list of similar strategic planning projects in the proposal reflects, we have provided similar services to a variety of agencies and local governments in Illinois and the Midwest.

Thank you for the opportunity to be considered to assist the City of Rochelle with this important endeavor. We appreciated the time to review ideas with the City's administrative team and would be happy to meet again in person to review our proposed approach, and amplify and refine the outline for the project.

Sincerely,

Greg Kuhn, PhD
Assistant Director,
Public Management and Training
NIU Center for Governmental Studies

CGS provides expertise that helps decision-makers implement efficient, sustainable, and cost-effective approaches to economic, social, and information management issues

City of Rochelle, Illinois 2017 Strategic Planning Process Framework and Process Presentation September 27, 2017

direct questions to:

Greg Kuhn, Ph.D.
Assistant Director Public Management and Training
Center for Governmental Studies
Northern Illinois University

Strategic Planning

*"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order..." A.N. Whitehead*

Strategic planning, at its core, is leadership's expression of the future. Whether it be a private or public organization, the world in which all organizations operate continues to rapidly change and grow more complicated as witnessed by the changing dynamics of our region, our state, the nation, and the globe.

The following conceptual outline has been prepared as a follow-up to the City's RFP to initiate a comprehensive strategic planning process for the City of Rochelle. In response to the desires expressed in the RFP, the Center for Governmental Studies at NIU is recommending a multi-session participative format that will enable the City Council, senior staff, and key stakeholders, to gain insights on community views, share perspectives and ideas, and undertake an exploration of goals and priorities all within the context of current and anticipated environmental dynamics. The end result will be a thorough discussion of leaders and stakeholders' views resulting in the identification of the City's most critical strategic goals, objectives, and organizational arrangements for both the near and long-term.

Lead Project Coordinator and Facilitators:

Greg Kuhn, Ph.D., is Assistant Director of Public Management and Training at Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies. Dr. Kuhn is a former

Village Manager who now conducts research, teaches and consults to governmental units in Illinois and across the Midwest. Dr. Kuhn completed his doctoral studies mid-career with emphases in Public Administration at the Local Government Level, Organization Development, and Public Policy at Northern Illinois University. Greg served as Village Manager in Clarendon Hills, Illinois and Asst. to the Manager in Skokie, Illinois. Greg has also provided organizational and leadership services to governments on a consulting basis as Director of Local Government Management Services at Sikich, LLP., Managing Vice-President of the PAR Group, and Senior Associate in Governmental Services at Korn-Ferry International.

Greg has taught a variety of courses at both NIU and Northwestern including graduate courses in strategic planning, leadership, human resources, budgeting and public policy. In total, Dr. Kuhn has over 35 years of public management experience as an administrator, consultant, and instructor. Greg is a specialist in strategic planning, organizational development and design, governance, and training. He has conducted over sixty strategic planning projects for public and not-profit organizations. He will be joined by other senior members of the Center for Governmental Studies and the University in the execution of the exercises and data gathering portions of the strategic planning initiative.

Dr. Kuhn would serve as lead facilitator for the engagement

Melissa Henriksen, MPP, Research Associate-Center for Governmental Studies

Mel has a diverse background including economic and community development, technical assistance, strategic and comprehensive planning, and grant writing. She has provided staff support for several projects including strategic planning facilitation, focus groups, wage and benefit studies and asset/needs assessments. Melissa has co-facilitated strategic planning for elected officials, school districts, boards of directors, municipalities, foundations, and institutes of higher education. For the past eight and half years, she has managed funded projects for the Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN), the National Association of Development Agencies (NADO), the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as state and local organizations focused on economic and community development and health care. Most recently, she has worked on city and county-wide economic and community development planning. These projects included coordinating surveys, community focus groups, strategic planning to identify potential challenges and solutions, and distilling themes and findings from a variety of qualitative information to share with key stakeholders.

Melissa holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Communication/Public Relations and a Master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Northern Iowa. Melissa is a board member for the Illinois Rural Health Association and is the chair of its Research and Education and Conference Committee. In addition, she is a Kettering Foundation Research Fellow and recently received the ICAHN Service Award for her research in rural

health care and its economic impact on rural communities. She teaches Introduction to American Government at Kishwaukee Community College.

Ms. Henriksen will serve as a project facilitator, analyst, and collaborator.

Jeanna Ballard, MPA, Research Analyst- Center for Governmental Studies is a recent graduate of NIU's MPA Program and has joined the CGS team working with the Public Management and Training Group as a research analyst. Jeanna earned a dual MPA degree via her joint studies at both NIU and Renmin University in China. She's holds an undergraduate degree in Political Science from NIU. Jeanna served as a graduate assistant in NIU's MPA program last fall, an administrative intern in Algonquin in 2014-15, intern for Kane County Health Department in 2014, and a Congressional intern in the U.S. House in 2013. She was the recipient of the James M. Banovetz Fellowship Award and NIU Outstanding Women Student Award. Jeanna will assist with the project to coordinate surveys, strategic planning exercises, distill themes and findings from qualitative and quantitative information sources important to stakeholders.

Ms. Ballard will serve as a project facilitator, analyst, and collaborator.

Other Project Staff and Support - Dr. Kuhn, Ms. Henriksen and Ms. Ballard will also be joined and assisted by other staff members of the Center for Governmental Studies and the University for certain project elements or at critical junctures of the project.

PROJECT / PROCESS INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning initiatives are not a new phenomenon for progressive organizations. The value of such processes continue to be recognized by leaders at the policy and administrative levels in both private and public organizations. The world in which we all operate continues to rapidly change and grow more complicated. In turn, the challenges and choices that you face in establishing policies, providing vital services, and setting priorities are likewise more complex and challenging than ten years ago, five years ago--even two years ago.

As the community's and region's population dynamics evolve and change, the various services the City provides to meet its mission will continue to evolve, as a more challenging electorate critiques critical public services that are needed or desired. Consider some of the trends within and beyond your borders: changing demographics, value shifts, growth, economic contraction, development and re-development, changing attitudes, tax limitations, demands for service, mandates, economies of scale, technology changes, etc. These are just a representative listing of the many factors that impact on the how, what, when, where, and why's of operating the City's programs and services in today's environment.

The reality is this--the needs and demands on the City, and you as its leaders and decision-makers, far outstrip the available resources to tackle all of them. The answer is not to throw up your hands and guide the City's affairs issue by issue or crisis by crisis--but rather to set aside time to methodically---"strategically" determine where it is you want to go as a City and put in place the priorities and actions that will allow you to get there.

According to noted writer *John Carver*, governing and leadership challenges are not so much a problem of people as it is a problem of *process*. What makes the difference between effective and ineffective leadership groups is the ability to get beyond narrow issues and focus on the long-term vision, trends, and critical functions of the organization, and then **communicating** those consensus visions and priorities to the staff that execute goals and fulfill the mission.

As Carver states, the heart of governance is ***setting priorities, making policy, articulating the mission of the organization, and sustaining its vision***. Leaders need to commit themselves to effectiveness by learning to govern not only the City's affairs, but to govern themselves and lead by setting directions that are clear, concise, and focused on a defined future. Responsible stewardship and leadership is the essence of the considerable responsibility citizens place in their local governments and local service agencies.

The Conceptual Outline presented below is intended as a "discussion piece" that will introduce the City's leadership team to the core concepts and techniques that would be employed to undertake a holistic and futuristic examination of the City's future. A sound strategic planning process helps to focus leadership, energize the organization, and engage stakeholders. It should be seen as an avenue to not only map out the future, but as a means to foster a sense of ownership, and boost overall effectiveness in setting the course for the City and the community it serves.

OVERVIEW OF A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Although the word "planning" appears in the description, it must be emphasized at the outset that the end result of this process is not to create a "plan" that sits on a bookshelf like a trophy, rather, the primary outcome is to foster strategic thinking and communications among City Council members and senior staff. The end result of this process should be a viable listing of identified and prioritized goals that align with the overall vision of the City's near and long-term future.

Proposed Phases & Process

The following outline presents a general description of the key components of the planning process. A variety of steps and options are presented for consideration. No matter the eventual combination of components chosen, the core of the process will

be a series of discussion exercises that will include the City's Council members and senior staff in a final workshop and leadership retreat.

The format for all the discussion sessions outlined below is highly participative and interactive. The process relies heavily on a group discussion approach called *Nominal Group Technique* where participants are assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitator. During sessions, individuals will have an opportunity to generate and share individual ideas, work together as a group and in small teams to develop ideas, weigh alternatives, and further refine their thinking. As these ideas are shared and debated, the group will be working steadily toward a consensus of future directions and priorities.

The project team envisions a tri-part initiative that includes the key elements of an effective and holistic strategic planning process: Environmental Scanning, Visioning, and Goal Setting:

Part I- Taking Stock: Listening and Learning From the Organization

- City Senior Staff and City Leadership
 - Tier I-Organization Views
 - Mayor and Council (introductory interviews)
 - City Manager & Assistant (prep interview)
 - Department Heads/Management Team (2-3 hr. prep workshop)
 - Review of Previous Strategic Plan and Current Budget and Comprehensive Plan Data
 - Identify themes and key issues/topics
 - Tier II-External Views
 - 3-5 Stakeholder Interviews (e.g., advisory commissions, civic leader, etc.)

Part II- Strategic Planning Retreat Workshop: Bringing Together Ideas to Form Leadership's Expression of the Future

- Council and Senior Staff Retreat Sessions
 - Mission and Vision Exploration
 - What is our vision of the future?
 - 10, 15, 20 years from now?
 - Group SWOT Analysis
 - Identify Internal Strengths and Weaknesses
 - Identify External Opportunities and Threats
 - Group Goal Identification
 - Short-term and Long-term goals
 - Group Goal Classification

- Complex or Routine
 - Goal Consolidation
 - Council Goal Prioritization
 - Goal prioritization results sorted by time and complexity matrix

Part III- Organizational Implementation: Action Planning

- Converting Goals to Action
 - Shaping the Climate for Effectiveness, Efficiency, Adaptability, and Goal Execution
- Operationalizing the Goals
 - Structural Assignments
 - Scheduling
 - Action Steps/Work Plans
- Management Team Refinement and Development of an Overall Implementation Strategy

Cycle of Planning, Action, and Scanning

Taken as a whole, the strategic planning process that is envisioned and described here, can be represented in a model of the various steps and elements in a cycle of input, scanning, goal setting, prioritization, action planning, and re-examination.

An illustration of the strategic planning cycle described is presented below:

Strategic Planning Model*



* Model generally represents the steps that are taken for this type of initiative.

jbgk2010

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT COMPONENTS

Part I. Taking Stock: Listening and Learning from Stakeholders Inside and Outside of the Organization

Environmental Scan Data Gathering Overview

These pre-session components are important pieces of the process. “Listening” is vital to planning. There are various options available for gathering data ranging from “desktop” review of documents, interviews, focus groups and stakeholder surveys. These steps are an important part of “taking stock” by building stakeholders’ understanding and input, and gaining policy and operational perspectives, perceptions and preferences. Through these listening components, understandings, misunderstandings and pending or unresolved issues will be identified and categorized in preparation for the eventual workshop retreat with the leadership/management team.

Data Gathering Options

Three avenues are identified for collecting community data and involving stakeholders to gain the input and perspective of organization members, as well as others beyond the City government: interviews, focus groups and demographic data. The proposed work plan highlights the key stakeholder groups that should be considered for input for the City as a whole. The extent to which the “listening” component will be utilized will translate into the depth of data gathered, the time it will take to gather it, and the cost associated with the collection method or technique employed. Each technique has its own strengths and outcomes.

Interviews are a highly interactive approach that generate detailed/personalized input at a 1-1, or 1-2 level with a professional interviewer. It results in highly personalized participation and the in-depth sharing of ideas. It is the most labor intensive approach to gathering stakeholder input. A list of 5-6 key questions will be developed to help guide discussions. The focus of the interview sessions will be to gain a “balanced” and “informed” view of the City from each stakeholder’s unique vantage point.

Focus groups (optional analysis). are also a highly interactive approach that elicits participation and the sharing of ideas in a non-threatening group environment created by the facilitator. Participants are led through a structured but “informal” discussion that will focus on key areas of interest to City leaders. The advantage of focus groups is the efficiency of gaining multiple insights at one time, the dynamic discussion that takes place among multiple participants, and the robust

nature of the comments. Similar to the interview approach, the focus of the focus group sessions will also be to gain a “balanced” and “informed” view of the City from each stakeholder’s unique perspective. *NOTE: This option can be priced out separately for the City should there be an interest in this type of expanded environmental scan for the project.*

Demographic data gathering (optional analysis). Changing demographics play a crucial role in the service expectations of the community. Planning for facilities, programs, staff, and space are unavoidably linked to the socio-demographic character of a community. CGS’s community and economic development analytics team will compile a data profile for the City as a component of the Strategic Planning process’ environmental scan. The data are from both publicly available and proprietary sources.

➤ **Option 1: Basic Profile - \$1,050**

The basic profile provides information about the City’s residents, workforce, and tax base. Most of the information comes from publicly available sources.

- Current population and trend (change since 2010)
 - Total population plus breakdowns by
 - Age
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Education level
- Commuting profile
 - Profile of City resident workers
 - Work location
 - Demographic (age, race, gender) profile
 - Earnings profile
 - Industry profile
 - Profile of City workers
 - Home location
 - Demographic (age, race, gender) profile
 - Earnings profile
 - Industry profile
- Assessed Valuation trend
 - Residential
 - Commercial
 - Industrial

➤ **Option 2: Advanced Profile - \$1,850**

The advanced profile adds projections of demographic data and more detailed data about businesses in the City. The data in this section primarily comes from proprietary sources.

- All data listed in Basic Profile
- Five year projections of demographic variables
- Business profile (trends and projections)
 - Count of businesses by industry sector
 - Employment by industry sector

Part II. Strategic Planning Workshop: City Council and Senior Staff

The identification of strategic issues and goals is the aim of any strategic planning process. The process is designed to create an effective environment where leaders can spend sufficient time to identify what is truly important for the organization to accomplish given the breadth of circumstances and information (at both the policy and operational levels) that confront the City as a vital part of the community. Identifying strategic issues can be compared to pouring your assessment of all the issues and circumstances the City faces into a filtered funnel. What eventually emerges is a mix of “clarified” issues that will shape the future and demand the organization’s attention. The end result of the City Leadership workshop sessions will be a viable listing of identified and prioritized goals that mesh with the overall vision of the City’s near and long-term future.

Visions of the Future

Exploration and identification of the City’s desired future condition is the launching point once the framework of the organization mission has been explored.

Each participant will be asked to articulate what he or she perceives to be the preferred future state of the City one, three, five, and ten years down the road. What services, programs, staffing levels, capital needs, and general facets would or should be present in the City at these intervals? Participants will be asked to jot down their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group. This is a brainstorming exercise—any and all ideas about the City’s future are encouraged and shared.

Environmental Scan/SWOT Analysis

This exercise is a classic component of any strategic planning endeavor. It helps the group to focus on a realistic identification of the environmental factors within and beyond the City organization that can inhibit or assist in the achievement of the future vision.



What are the organization's strengths and weaknesses, in what areas do you regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What opportunities are on the horizon that can be used to your advantage? Conversely, what trends lay ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances? The group will be asked to discuss these issues in an open discussion format. Again, the group is not asked to focus on overcoming strengths or weaknesses, but only identify what they may be.

Given the futuristic statements of the preceding session, it is important for team members to identify and discuss what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered, or would make it difficult, to achieve the desired future state. These elements include both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc.

Review and Reflections on the Collected Listening/Stakeholder Data. City leaders will be presented with a synopsis of the data gathered via interviews, focus groups, or other means selected by the City. During this session, results on what stakeholders shared about the preferred future state of the City will be reviewed along with perceived challenges, strengths, opportunities, etc.

Nominal Group Goal Identification

The collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives is the focus of the next phase of the strategic planning retreat/workshop activities.

Each participating member will be allotted time to highlight the most important policy/program goals that he or she thinks the City should accomplish in the next two to ten years. Some should perhaps be accomplished immediately, others may be initiated but not completed for several years. For this reason, goals will be categorized as either short- or long-term. This process will continue as long as time permits which may include some refinement or consolidation of similar goal statements.

Identification of key issues of the future (as defined and anticipated by the City Council and senior administrative leaders) will also be part of this phase. This exercise takes advantage of the professional experience, perspective, and hands-on knowledge of the City's key management staff. Management team members are called upon to identify and explain three to four key issues that the City should be aware of and incorporate into their future goals and needs.

As part of this phase, the City Manager, as the appointed Chief Administrator, will be asked to identify additional constraints/opportunities in the administrative apparatus of the City as well as react to those presented by management team members and stakeholders.

Open Group Discussion and Classification

This phase of the discussion will serve as the forum for workshop participants to discuss, evaluate, and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants are asked to give their opinions, evaluations, and judgments of the worthiness and value of different policy objectives.

At the end of the open discussion, participants will be asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of complexity and time. Agreed upon criteria will be used to classify a goal as either short- or long-term and as either complex or routine. The purpose is to group goals roughly the same “type” together so that when prioritization occurs, the participants can avoid the problem of comparing “apples to oranges”.

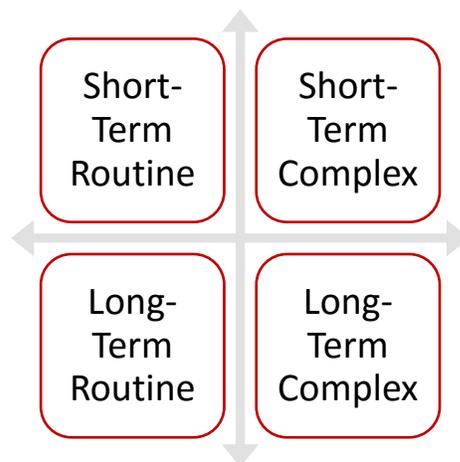
Prioritization

Following the classification exercise, the group will be asked, through a post-workshop exercise, to delineate why certain goals should be given high priority, why some should not be considered, and why some goals, although worthy, should receive low priority or be re-defined. Point values will be assigned to each goal in each quadrant by the group. The resulting consensus ranking of short- and long-term goals to achieve the future vision will be the final outcome of this phase of the process.

The final prioritized rankings will be presented in a 2x2 time and complexity matrix as illustrated below:

Goal Classification Grid

by G. Gabris



Part III. Implementation: Action Planning and Strategy Development Kick-off

Once an agreed upon grid of goals and priorities is developed, the focus must move to effective approaches for implementation. Action plans, scheduling, and structural assignments will produce the necessary levels of awareness and accountability that are necessary for success. The CGS project team will work with the group to help launch and frame the important element of implementation. The project team's efforts will be focused on 4-6 hours of group meetings to help launch the following strategies:

- Operationalizing the Goals: What does Goal X, X¹, etc., really mean from a day-to-day perspective?
- Structural Assignments: What person or work group will be responsible for working on a particular goal?
- Scheduling: What will be the key target dates, timelines, and follow-up schedules? How does this fit in with the overall schedule of needs and priorities in the City?
- Action Steps/Work Plans: How will we accomplish the goals? What resources do we need or have? What outside help is required? What are the approximate costs or magnitude of expense involved?

Establishing these mechanisms will result in the emergence of an overall implementation strategy that will enhance the probability of success and follow-through in the months and years to come. At the conclusion of this process, a draft tracking and action plan document will be prepared, in collaboration with the City's assigned senior staff, that includes initial objectives, timelines, assignments and action steps envisioned for addressing specific goals in the coming two years. Once the process is initiated and a draft document is prepared, the remainder of the action planning activities will be turned over to the City's leadership

Project Costs

Fees for the strategic planning initiative would result from the components selected and the number of estimated contact, preparation, analysis, and summation hours for the project.

Our estimate would place the project, for the base components described above, at a range of \$8,900 – 9,800*. The estimated costs presented here would include professional design, facilitation and analytical fees and project expenses for components, *exclusive of any of the optional elements described.

Proposed Timeline

The following is a projected timeline for the holistic process as outlined:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Project Startup (30 Days) | - Project Initiation Activities Including Advance Management Team Session & Interviews |
| Strat Plan Workshops (15-20) | - Leadership Strategic Planning Meetings |
| Action Planning (15-20 Days) | - Implementation Start-Up Session (s) |
| Final Report (15-20 Days) | - Final Report |

Approval/Acceptance:

An engagement letter between the Center for Governmental Studies and the City of Rochelle, with a final scope of services, proposed fees, expenses and terms, will be prepared upon City approval and acceptance of the final project framework and approach.

REFERENCES AND REPRESENTATIVE PROJECTS

Representative strategic planning projects in Illinois led by Greg Kuhn, in addition to previous work with the Village, include:

1. Village of Bartlett, IL
2. City of Elmhurst, IL
3. Village of Tinley Park, IL
4. Village of Long Grove, IL
5. Village of North Aurora, IL
6. Village of LaGrange, IL
7. Village of Woodridge, IL
8. City of DesPlaines, IL
9. Village of Coal City, IL
10. McHenry County, IL

Contacts:

Valerie Salmons, retired Village Administrator, Village of Bartlett, or Paula Schumacher, Village Administrator, pschumacher@vbartlett.org, 630-837-0800

Jim Grabowski, City Manager, City of Elmhurst, james.grabowski@elmhurst, 630-530-3010

Dave Niemeyer, Village Manager in Tinley Park, dniemeyer@tinleypark.org, 708-444-5050 (also former City Manager, City of DesPlaines)



Dave Lothspeich, Village Manager, Village of Long Grove,
dlothspeich@longgrove.net, 847-634-9440

Steve Bosco, Village of North Aurora, sbosco@vil.north-aurora.il.us,
630-897-8228

Katy Rush, Village Administrator, Village of Woodridge, IL (retired)
krushconnect@sbcglobal.net, 630-964-0193 (and former Manager of Riverside)

Bob Pilipiszyn, Village Manager, Village of LaGrange,
rpilipiszyn@villageoflagrange.com, 708-579-2318

Matt Fritz, Village Administrator, Village of Coal City, mfritz@coalcity-il.com,
815-634-8608

Peter Austin, County Administrator, McHenry County,
pbaustin@co.mchenry.il.us, 815-334-4226

Additional strategic planning initiatives in Illinois and southern Wisconsin led by Dr. Kuhn include projects for Carol Stream, West Dundee, McHenry County, Riverside, Streator, Northfield, Charleston, Barrington, Glen Ellyn, Pingree Grove, Sugar Grove, Western Springs, Berkley, Lake in the Hills, DeKalb Park District, Dixon, St. Charles, Geneva, Lake County, Livingston County, the Carol Stream Fire Protection District, the Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council, Burlington Wisconsin, Mequon Wisconsin, Catholic Central High School-Burlington Wisconsin, H.S. Dist. 99-Downers Grove, IRMA, ILCMA, IAMMA, and other not-profits and units of government.

QUALIFICATIONS & MISSION OF NIU AND CGS



ABOUT NIU OUTREACH AND NIU'S CENTER FOR GOVERNMENTAL STUDIES

NIU's Center for Governmental Studies, founded in 1969, is a public service, applied research, and public policy development organization. Its mission is to provide expertise that helps decision-makers implement efficient, sustainable, and cost effective approaches to economic, governance, social, public policy, and information management issues.

QUALIFICATIONS & MISSION OF NIU AND CGS

CGS' research and services includes work in community, workforce, and economic development; public management and training; association management; informatics, survey research, and health and technology engagement. Clients include municipal, county, state, and federal agencies, as well as nonprofit and for-profit organizations. For more information, please call 815-753-0914 or visit www.cgs.niu.edu.

NIU Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development was launched in 2002 to enhance connections between Northern Illinois University and the communities it serves. NIU Outreach is a center of excellence that emphasizes *engagement*, that is, partnerships that anticipate and support the *present and future* needs of the northern Illinois region. Working together with individuals, groups and organizations, NIU Outreach, including the Center for Governmental Studies, creates solutions by leveraging University and regional resources.