



2018 Local Government Innovation Conference

Summary of Sessions

Keynote - Stephen Keith "Steve" Benjamin, Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina

Steve Benjamin is serving in his third term as Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina. He is the current President of the US Conference of Mayors. Mayor Benjamin has made it his mission to create in Columbia the most talented, educated and entrepreneurial city in America.

Mayor Benjamin is the first African American mayor in the city's history. He is a native of Queens, New York, and returned to his parent's home state to attend the University of South Carolina to study Political Science. His service in Columbia started back in 1990 when he served as student body president at the University of South Carolina, later becoming the Student Bar Association President at the USC School of Law.

At 29 years old in 1999, Benjamin was appointed to Governor Jim Hodges' cabinet as director of the state's second largest law enforcement agency, the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services.

Mayor Benjamin has continued his service to the community in serving on numerous boards for nonprofit organizations such as the Columbia Urban League, Benedict College, the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce and as a founding board member of the Eau Claire Promise Zone. He also served as a founding member of Choose Children First and chief legal counsel for Midlands Crimestoppers.

Reelected by a 30 percent margin in November 2013, Mayor Benjamin's administration has been characterized by his firm belief in Columbia's potential and intense focus on job creation. In his first term alone, his leadership helped cut unemployment in the metro by roughly half and secured billions of dollars in new regional capital investment in the midst of a national recession.

Combined with the rebirth of Main Street, these accomplishments have drawn national attention and accolades including his being awarded an Aspen Rodel Fellowship and receiving an Honorary Doctor of Humanities from Francis Marion University. He has twice been named to





The Washington Post's "The Root 100 List" (2011 and 2013) as well as the 2014 GRIO 100 and was honored to receive a 2014 Triumph Award from the National Action Network as their 2014 Public Servant of the Year.

As part of his commitment to fostering a world class police department in the City, Mayor Benjamin introduced the "Justice for All" initiative in 2014, which implemented new training, competitive pay, diverse representation and community engagement to strengthen the foundation of trust and accountability that exists between our communities and law enforcement agencies.

Mayor Benjamin received a presidential commendation for his work on behalf of My Brother's Keeper (MBK). The city's MBK efforts, in addition to Mayor Benjamin's leadership, have led to Columbia being seen as a nationwide leader in implementing and upholding the missions of the program.

In addition to serving as Mayor of Columbia, Mayor Benjamin also serves as President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and as Chairman for Municipal Bonds for America. He teaches a class at the University of South Carolina Honors College and Columbia College titled "Columbia, South Carolina: Building a Great City" and is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi and Sigma Pi Phi fraternities.

Mayor Benjamin is married to the Honorable DeAndrea Gist Benjamin, Chief Administrative Judge (Common Pleas) for South Carolina's Fifth Judicial Circuit. The two are the proud parents of daughters Bethany (13) and Jordan Grace (10).

He is a firm believer in common sense bipartisan leadership and endeavors to implement policies and programming that provide the best course of action for city residents.

Joint Plenary - A Conversation with Leading Lights in Data-Driven Government Plenary Session

This panel brings together data management and performance executives from three upstate cities that have made transformational commitments to incorporate data into their management and decision-making processes. They are part of an emerging statewide community of practice around local government data management. Panelists will discuss their experiences incorporating new technologies, leveraging existing information streams, and building partnerships across traditional organizational boundaries to fulfill public their mayors' promises and control costs. They will answer questions from the audience about what works and where they can turn for help taking the next steps to seize control of their data and extract meaningful insights.

- 1) Sam Edelstein, Chief Data Officer - City of Syracuse
- 2) Kate May, Chief Performance Officer - City of Rochester
- 3) Kirk McLean, Director of Open Data - City of Buffalo

Track 1 – Utilizing Local Government Efficiency Funding for Shared Services and Consolidation

Local government officials have historically looked to their neighbors to support the delivery of services and reduce expenses, with great success. This track will provide examples of sharing in three functional areas and discuss new opportunities to leverage state resources to meet local needs.

Session 1 – County-wide Code Enforcement

New York counties and constituent local governments partner to deliver many forms of local government services, including building code enforcement. A potentially demanding job that requires technical knowledge and training, it can be difficult for many local governments to enforce the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code with part time code officials sometimes shared among several municipalities. A county code enforcement office can provide coordinated code enforcement where and when it's needed while allowing for the development of expertise among code officials, utilization of new technology and saving taxpayers money. This session will review what two counties are doing to support the code enforcement of partner towns and villages.

Moderator – Brian Tollisen, Deputy Director - NYS Department of State, Division of Building Standards and Codes

Panelists –

- 1) Don J. Roberts, Code Enforcement Officer - Wyoming County, NY
- 2) Alyssa N. Cutcliffe, Zoning Officer - Wyoming County, NY
- 3) Anthony Gentile, Code Enforcement Officer - Otsego County, NY
- 4) Joseph Roberts, Building and Fire Inspector - Otsego County, NY

Session 2 – Sharing Information Technology Services

Much like the county managed enforcement of the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, the sharing and consolidation of information technology services is an opportunity for local governments to build enhanced services by leveraging the capacity of the full-time IT services supported by larger local governments. Important to this service is data security, as it is estimated that over 15 percent of all cyber-attacks impact the public sector. These attacks can require the replacement of software and hardware, impact revenues and cause missing data. In addition, larger IT programs can provide new resources that smaller local governments do not have. This session will review the comprehensive sharing of IT services amongst local governments in Tioga County and the Town of Brookhaven.

Moderator – Kyle Wilber, Local Government Specialist - NYS Department of State, Division of Local Government Services

Panelists –

- 1) Douglas J. Camin, Director, Information Technology and Communication Services - Tioga County, NY
- 2) Matthew J. Miner, Chief of Operations/Director of Finance - Town of Brookhaven, NY

Session 3 – Shared Emergency Communications

The size of emergency dispatch and communications systems across New York State vary between regions, with many counties hosting consolidated Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs) and dispatch services, while in other places the services are more decentralized. Many of the consolidated systems have received financial assistance through the Local Government Efficiency Program at the Department to implement new management and organizational structures. This session will review current activity in shared emergency communications and dispatch, as well as discuss opportunities to meet emerging needs through the development of regional solutions.

Moderator - Kyle Wilber, Local Government Specialist - NYS Department of State, Division of Local Government Services

Panelists –

- 1) Mike Sprague, Director - Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications - NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
- 2) Ted Halpin, Director, Emergency Management Director - Madison County, NY

3) Bill Bleyle, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Communications - Onondaga County, NY

Track 2 – Utilizing Data Strategically

Session 1 – Access to data for little or NO cost

In Spring 2018, the Office of Local Government at the Department of State conducted a study of local government data practices. A common theme in responses was a concern that local governments simply do not have the data they need to achieve top goals like controlling costs or eliminating ineffective practices. In this workshop DOS staff will present some strategies and tactics local leaders can employ to obtain and analyze data. We will focus on tools that are free or low-cost and suitable even for small local governments that may not have any dedicated technology support staff.

Moderator - Ari Epstein, Special Assistant - NYS Department of State, Office of Local Government

Session 2 – What Works Cities (double-session)

This workshop explores the topic of data management capability and steps local leaders in New York can and should be taking to assure they have the tools and skills to make data-informed decisions. A variety of certification programs and communities of practice are available to help your local government take the next step no matter what level you are at. We will specifically examine the What Works Cities standard and certification program, which many cities and towns are eligible to pursue, as an example.

Moderator – Ari Epstein, Special Assistant - New York State Department of State, Office of Local Government

Panelists –

- 1) Lauren Su, Senior Program Manager - What Works Cities, Results for America
- 2) Andrew Nicklin, Director of Data Practices - Johns Hopkins University Center for Government Excellence

Track 3 – Current Topics and Project Development

Session 1 - Land Use Planning for Financial Sustainability

Sustainable land use planning refers not only to protecting the environment, character, and orderly development of a region but also to the financial viability of the local governments in it. Some local officials are rethinking how the land within their borders is zoned based on its potential value, factoring in the value of nearby existing development and infrastructure, and it turns out maximizing development potential for a local government's financial bottom line

often looks similar to encouraging development consistent with other elements of smart growth. Two local officials will explain what their local governments are doing to align land use planning with their communities' long-term financial viability. A third panelist will share with us the logic behind land-value taxation, which is used in several Pennsylvania municipalities but not currently anywhere in New York. When the value of land rather than buildings figures more prominently in property tax assessments, incentive is created to develop the most valuable land, which can result in a reduction of sprawl on greenfield sites.

Moderator - Christopher Eastman – Local Government Specialist, New York Department of State -Division of Local Government Services

Panelists –

- 1) Margaret Winship, Director of Strategic Planning - Town of Amherst, NY
- 2) Melissa Hartman, Supervisor - Town of Eden, NY
- 3) Joshua Vincent, Executive Director - Center for the Study of Economics

Session 2 –2020 Census

The Department of State has been partnering with municipalities to prepare for the upcoming decennial census in 2020. Rich Tobe, Director of Special Intergovernmental Projects, will lead discussion about how communities can organize planning and outreach efforts to achieve a full and fair count in the 2020 Census. There will be a question and answer period following presentations.

Moderator – Richard Tobe, Director of Special Intergovernmental Projects - New York State Department of Labor

Panelists –

- 1) Kathy Sheehan, Mayor - City of Albany
- 2) Dr. Warren Brown, Research Faculty and Director of Program on Applied Demography - Cornell University
- 3) Frank Winters, Geographic Information Officer - NYS Information Technology Services/Geographic Program Office

Session 3 - Regional Project Strategy Labs

The Department of State, Division of Local Government Services regional staff will be available individual discussions with local government officials about project development and other assistance. The discussions will be regionally based, enabling officials and DOS staff to focus on issues of local importance and opportunities to implement regionally significant projects. Topics for discussion include: how the Department of State may be able to assist them with technical expertise or as a liaison to other State agencies or potential funding and utilization of grant programs including the Local Government Efficiency, the Municipal Restructuring, the



Northern Border Regional Development program and the Appalachian Regional Development Program.

In addition, the Governor's Office - NYS Lean Program staff will be available to participate in project discussions to share an overview of the management philosophy known as Lean and how Lean can become the culture and mechanism to improve government efficiency and save money. Lean provides a structured approach to review processes and implement changes that increase the satisfaction of NYS citizens while improving efficiency and reducing cost.

Moderators: Staff from the New York State Department of State, Division of Local Government Services
Don Horan, Strategic Project Leader, Governor's Office - NYS Lean Program