

5-2010

## A Change management effort in one large public organization: An exploration of the perception of needed skills for managing change

Brian Paul Knudsen  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#), and the [Public Administration Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Knudsen, Brian Paul, "A Change management effort in one large public organization: An exploration of the perception of needed skills for managing change" (2010). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 834.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/2177034>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

A CHANGE MANAGEMENT EFFORT IN ONE LARGE PUBLIC ORGANIZATION:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF NEEDED  
SKILLS FOR MANAGING CHANGE

By

Brian Paul Knudsen

Bachelor of Science  
University of Utah  
2003

Bachelor of Science  
University of Utah  
2003

Master of Public Administration  
University of Southern California  
2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Science in Educational Leadership**  
**Department of Educational Leadership**  
**College of Education**

**Graduate College**  
**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
**May 2010**

Copyright by Brian Knudsen 2010  
All Rights Reserved



THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

**Brian Paul Knudsen**

entitled

**A Change Management Effort in One Large Public Organization:  
An Exploration of the Perception of Needed Skills for Managing  
Change**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Science in Educational Leadership**

Workforce Education and Development

Cecilia Maldonado-Daniels, Committee Chair

Dr. Yeonsoo Kim, Committee Member

Sterling Saddler, Committee Member

Lori Olafson, Graduate Faculty Representative

Ronald Smith, Ph. D., Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies  
and Dean of the Graduate College

**May 2010**

## ABSTRACT

### **A Change Management Effort in One Large Public Organization: An Exploration of the Perception of Needed Skills for Managing Change**

by

Brian Knudsen  
Dr. Cecilia Maldonado, Committee Chair  
Associate Professor of Workforce Education and Development  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Public managers are a key component of a bureaucracy. The reliance on a public manager by an elected official is high as is the expectations that these managers have the necessary skills to manage a public organization. The goal of this study was to explore what elected officials perceive are skills needed by managers to lessen the impact on the human resource, financial, and political challenges when faced with significant change efforts in order to meet their expectations and that of the citizens to whom the organization is responsible.

Findings indicate that managing upward and managing the political impacts are within the necessary skills required by a public manager as is the ability to manage interpersonal relationships to overcome the human resource challenges of a public organization. In addition to the human resource challenges, public managers face financial and political challenges (McGuire, 2002) to managing effectively. In order to overcome those challenges and accomplish any transformational changes (Rothwell et al., 2009) a public manager must hold themselves to a high standard of values that includes honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy. A public manager must also have, in addition to interpersonal skills, an ability to negotiate, act quickly and decisively, think strategically, and provide accurate data.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process from which this master's thesis was developed was supported by several individuals who deserve to be recognized. To my partner in life, Brian Eagan, you remind me that life is not that complicated and every minute is worth enjoying. You have taught me to disregard the analysis, because it is always the relationships that matter. To my parents, Dennis and Carolyn Knudsen, this project is just as much your effort as mine. Thank you for helping me meet a deadline while maintaining my sanity. You have taught me that hard work and dedication are more rewarding than laziness and complacency. And finally, to my brother Jeff Knudsen, you have taught me that there is always another perspective on life. If I can take the time to stop thinking that my way is right, there is more opportunity to learn. Thank you for helping me to value life and appreciate the opportunities ahead.

I would also like to thank my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Cecilia Maldonado-Daniels for supporting my efforts to try something new. Dr. Yeonsoo Kim also deserves recognition for her support of my education and her dedication to ensuring I produce a quality product. Special recognition for my colleague, Aileen Zaballero, whose guidance throughout the process allowed me to review the data from a different lens. Thank you for supporting my efforts as I pursued a different path and gained a new insight into the value of research and analysis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	IV
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Significance of the Study.....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions .....	4
Conceptual Frameworks .....	5
Muddling Through .....	5
Total Quality Management and New Public Management.....	6
Change Management .....	8
Summary .....	18
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	11
Public Administration .....	12
Public Organizations .....	13
Public Managers and the Organization .....	15
Management Practices in Public Organizations .....	17
Total Quality Management and New Public Management .....	18
Public Managers and Change.....	19
Summary .....	29
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY .....	30
Design of Study.....	31
Case Study Rationale .....	32
Case Selection.....	34
Participants.....	34
Secondary Data .....	36
Data Collection Procedures.....	37
Data Analysis .....	39
Study Limitations and Delimitations .....	41
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	42
Summary .....	55
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY .....	45
Background of the Case .....	47
The Organization .....	47
Change Initiative.....	47
Interview Findings .....	49
Theme 1: Economic Downturn.....	52
Category 1: Human Resource Considerations .....	53
Category 2: Financial Considerations.....	60
Category 3: Political Considerations .....	64

Other Relevant Key Findings.....	72
Summary .....	74
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	75
Summary .....	75
The Researcher’s Perspective .....	78
Discussion .....	79
Recommendations .....	82
REFERENCES .....	84
APPENDIX A SUMMARY OF KEY DATES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE [CHANGE INITIATIVE] PROCESS .....	90
APPENDIX B SUMMARY OF [CHANGE INITIATIVE].....	91
APPENDIX C INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/GUIDE .....	98
APPENDIX D INVITATION LETTER.....	100
APPENDIX E INFORMED CONSENT .....	101
APPENDIX F MEMBER CHECK FORM .....	104
VITA.....	105



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

During periods of financial security, managers and leaders in public organizations are confronted with human resource, financial, and political challenges resulting in limitations to providing the most efficient and effective service possible to the constituents in a manner that satisfies the priorities of the elected officials (McGuire, 2002). Those challenges are exacerbated during periods where revenues fall below expectations. Economic challenges, such as those that began in late 2008, are resulting in reduced resources and increased perceptions of failing government organizations (Newland, 2003).

Public managers across the country are expected to adapt to changing conditions and identify methods for achieving expected outcomes (Behn, 1998). Changes such as, reductions in workforce, labor negotiations, consolidation of government services, and reductions to the services provided are options that are discussed in a public format. Local newspapers from around the country in 2008 and 2009 printed public dialogue and debates between public managers and elected officials, which documented the gap between what was expected and what could be provided. Understanding that significant economic challenges are forcing local governments to modify their models of service delivery, public managers are placed in a dynamic role that is contrary to the expected.

Public managers rarely play a leading role in policy development, but they are not altogether missing either....rather the institution supports the enforcement decision that was made by an individual somewhere within the policymaking system (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009, p.14). Facilitating organizational changes in response to external

pressures, such as a downturned economy, requires the consensus of involved stakeholders and the reactions and perceptions of those involved and which can hinder any success (Saksvik, Tvedt, Nytro, Andersen, Andersen, Buvik, & Torvatn, 2007). Understanding those perceptions prior to implementing any change efforts may help to promote the success of future efforts.

Public managers are trained in public administration programs and through on-the-job training to motivate, enforce, and develop operational policy that supports the will of the elected in serving the community (Gergen & Kellerman, 2003). Public Administration programs vary from school to school (Wu & He, 2009). Core courses such as introductions to Public Administration and basic courses such as financial management are included in the curriculum but “the failure of government in maintaining economic stability...have led to a search for leadership and innovative solutions outside the public sector” (p. s21). Wu and He (2009), in their research also point out that “public sector administrators not only need to acquire knowledge about the field, but also need to develop professional skills that will enable them to carry out their tasks more effectively” (p. s26). Their analysis shows that “insufficient attention has been paid to this area” (p. s26).

Managers of large public organizations often deal with significant pressures relating to the expectations of the citizenry, the employees, and more pronounced, the elected officials (Behn, 1998). An economy which has downturned has the potential for exacerbating those pressures and creating an environment that either allows for facilitated change efforts or hinders the success of the public manager. The public manager’s response to those exacerbated pressures relies on conflicting expectations best

represented by one individuals' comment, "Keep your bureaucratic hands off of my Medicare" (Shalala, 1998, p. 284). Shalala (1998) goes on to characterize public management as "Managing a large organization is the art of the possible, the art of finding the possible within what might be viewed as impossible pressures" (p.285).

Comments made by researchers in the field of Public Administration indicate that public managers are a critical component in implementing the expectations of the elected officials and managing the organization (McGuire, 2002); however, the training involved in preparing public managers for those efforts may not be sufficient (Wu & He, 2009). The human resource, financial, and political challenges to managing a public organization identified in the literature (McGuire, 2002) require skills that can be compared to managing "white water" (Kramer, 2007, p. 39) during times of normalcy.

Therefore, the goal of this study was to explore what elected officials perceive are skills needed by managers to lessen the impact on the human resource, financial, and political challenges when faced with significant change efforts in order to meet their expectations and that of the citizens to whom the organization is responsible.

### **Significance of the Study**

A review of the literature revealed there is little study on the capacity and skills needed by public managers to implement change efforts quickly and in response to a financial recession and which meets the needs of affected stakeholders. Additionally, there is an apparent lack of research relating to the study of success, or lack thereof, of a local government manager when implementing a change effort. Instead, there appears to be a barrage of public opinions expressed in the news that is critical of government organizations, the bureaucracy of government, and the elected officials. Neil Boyd, in his

article, *Implementing Large-Scale Organization Development and Change in the States* (2009), presented the exact need for study, “due to the fact that large-scale OD interventions are a relatively new phenomenon in general, there is also a lack of large-scale change findings in the broader fields of organization development and public administration” (p. 234). Bruce (2007) states that, “There will be demands from the community for more services, which will require changes in the platforms from which services are delivered to the community” ( p. 94). There is a body of research on public management initiatives and the strategies by which public managers can respond (Wu & He, 2009). However, the methods by which public managers can develop a successful change management initiative considering the human resource, financial, and political implications are not a significant finding in the literature. The significance of this study includes the potential for identifying the needed skills of public managers to further the goals of the selected organization based on perceptions of the elected leaders during a time of financial insecurity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. The researcher solicited information from elected officials about what they perceived were critical skills for leaders within the organization for instituting change. To fulfill the purpose, the following questions guided this study.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question and sub questions guided this study:

1. What skills are perceived to be the most critical for leaders in a large public organization to have in order to implement change during times of economic recession?
  - a. What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the impact on human resources during a change initiative?
  - b. What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the financial resources during a change initiative?
  - c. What skills are perceived to be the most critical for navigating the political environment during a change initiative?

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Three models guided the research as an interrelated conceptual framework. The main models from which this study will be operating include consideration of the points made by Charles Lindblom (1959) about “muddling through;” the concepts identified in the practices of Total Quality Management and New Public Management (Noblet, Rodwell, & McWilliams, 2006); and the concepts of change management . These three models provide the conceptual framework used to better understand how to approach the study.

#### **Muddling Through**

Charles Lindblom (1959) identified the decision making model most commonly used in public organizations where “muddling through” (p.198) was a phrase used to describe how decisions are made and implemented. Additionally, he stated that muddling through or incremental change can have positive consequences. Decision making that allows for input from all stakeholders and consensus building prior to implementation is a necessary expectation of a leader. Contrary to incremental decision making by management in

times of positive economic growth, a negative economy may challenge a public manager to forego a thoughtful decision making process in lieu of short time frame in order to solve a problem or respond to a situation, such as decreasing revenue (Bohn, 2000).

Campbell (2007) wrote:

Those wanting greater responsiveness to societal needs within the public service often spoke of ‘iron triangles’ – intractable alliances of special interests, key bureaucrats, and congressional patrons that promoted incremental decision making and, in its worse forms, maintenance of the status quo. (Campbell, 2007, p.379)

Incremental decision making (Lindblom, 1959) plays an important role in managing a public organization. The need or obligation to satisfy elected officials, subordinates, and supervisors, labor representatives, and the overall public requires a great deal of political savvy and intentional and strategic implementation. The time needed to effectively implement good policy while supporting the needs of all interested parties takes a great deal of energy and moving a large organization towards a vision or even slightly modifying a policy direction requires a skilled leader (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004).

#### Total Quality Management and New Public Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) and New Public Management (NPM) (Noblet, Rodwell, & McWilliams, 2006) are practices of management identified first in the private sector and then translated for public sector managers. These researchers state that these practices of management have been “a prominent trend within public sector agencies over

the past 15-20 years” (p. 335). Groot & Budding (2008) describes the history and the correlation between NPM and change management in their article. It states:

The first New Public Management development began...in some municipal governments in the U.S. (e.g., Sunnyvale in California), suffering from economic recession and tax revolts. This makes NPM primarily a movement propelled by practitioners seeking to improve government and public administration practices.

(p. 2)

New Public Management (NPM) derived from a variety of sources that can be grouped into three categories, neo-classical public administration and public management, management sciences, and new institutional economics (Groot and Budding). NPM, relatively new to the field of Public Administration, has been recognized as not entirely appropriate for all countries (Yang, 2007). “Later in the decade, the New Public Management movement promoted the idea of privatization of public services” (Boyd, 2009, p. 235). “NPM requires mature market forces, nonprofits, civil organizations, and neighborhood committees to form partnerships and to contract out” (Yang, p.1387). “Where such institutions are not in place, NPM remains a theoretical application and difficult to implement” (p. 1387).

Total Quality Management has been widely accepted by both the private and public sector and surveys indicate that “it is not clear whether many of them have moved beyond the initial stages with a strong commitment to making quality a way of life on an on-going basis” (Furterer & Elshennawy, 2005, p.1181). These models of management, which under normal circumstances enable a public manager to make good business decisions and allocate resources appropriately, may impede a public manager when

managing during an economic recession where resources are not available and policy decisions by elected officials (and the public) are based on emotion rather than efficiency (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). During times of economic recession, resources may not be available or may be dwindling and expectations may be based on the needs of a few as contrasted with the needs of the many. Managing in times of economic recession requires an understanding of organizational culture and change and the extent to which a public manager can implement change in a large public organization in a timeframe that meets the needs of both the elected officials and the community (Chase, 1984).

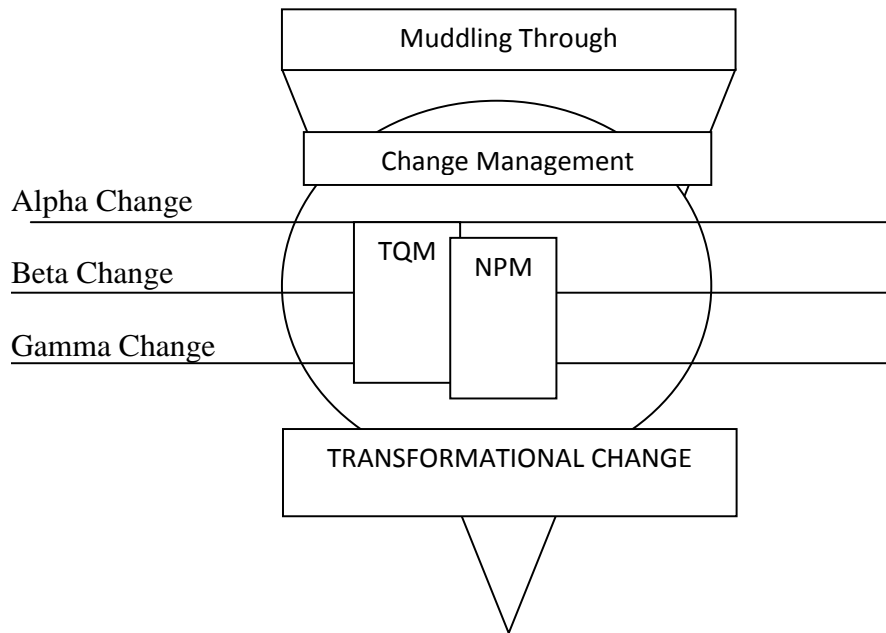
### Change Management

The concepts of muddling through and management efforts such as TQM and NPM can be included in the concept of managing change. “Change is the departure of the status quo” (Rothwell, Stavros, Sullivan & Sullivan, 2009, p. 23). Rothwell et al., cites Golembiewski (1990) who defines change as three different levels: Alpha change, most closely linked with incremental change efforts, including a state of constant progress. Beta change implies that change is progressive and includes a change of measurements and evaluations along the way as a result of those affected realizing the change effort while it is happening. Gamma change describes a significant departure from the beginning to the end of the change effort (cited in Rothwell et al., 2009). Rothwell et al. (2009) goes on to explain additional change effort descriptions identified by Anderson and Anderson (2001). Transitional change does not require a change but simply a different outcome. Transformational change, which is the change effort that is closest to the purpose of this study, involves “the most complex type of change facing organizations today” (p. 23). Transformational change requires the organization to



modify culture in order to realize a successful change effort (cited in Rothwell et al., 2009).

The following diagram (see Figure 1) depicts a visual representation of how the researcher approached the study utilizing the concepts of Change Management, Muddling Through, TQM, NPM, and their relationship. The model identifies common management and decision making strategies typically used in public management and how those strategies are interconnected.



*Figure 1.* The impact of identified concepts on the change effort in a public organization

## Summary

In chapter one of this study, the problem was identified; the purpose described; as well as the research questions, significance, and need for this study presented. Chapter two of the study provides a review of relevant literature. The methodology used for the

study is discussed in Chapter three and in Chapter four the findings of the study are discussed. Chapter five presents the conclusions of the research and connects the findings to the conceptual model identified in this chapter. The researcher found the theoretical model helpful in understanding different concepts the interviewed participants may be considering in their responses and then clarifies how skills identified may be applied to the concepts identified in the model. Conclusions of the study and recommendation for future analysis are also presented.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. The researcher solicited information from elected officials about what they perceived were critical skills for leaders within the organization for instituting change.

This chapter is organized in a manner that identifies in the literature, topics related to change within public organizations and the management's ability to manage that change. To ensure a broad depth of analysis was taken into consideration for this review of literature, the subjects of Public Administration, public organizations, Total Quality Management, New Public Management, and change efforts in public organizations were key terms used to better understand past research in this area of study.

To the extent that concepts of leadership, management, and the relationship with elected officials and the public directly influences the decisions a public manager makes are the areas of research on which this chapter will be focusing. Organizational change and change management initiatives appear to be an area of study in public organizations that has had a degree of attention. However, the subject of public organizations' response to a fiscal crisis does not appear to be a subject which has been widely studied in the past and therefore will not be included in this review of the literature. Additionally, the literature appears to be practitioner driven and not written from an academic perspective. For that reason, the practitioner driven reviews of public organizations will not be included in this chapter.

## **Public Administration**

Public Administration is a field of practice that has been active since the creation of government (Wilson, 1887). “Administration is the most obvious part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of government, and is of course as old as government itself” (p. 90). Public Administration, as a field of study, is continually evolving and adapting to different paradigms and practices. New paradigms are constantly emerging and transcending the field of study to include changing expectations (Wu & He, 2009). It is widely recognized that government’s role is to be responsive to both the minority and majority alike. With limited resources, this application of a service delivery model may not be appropriate or available and public managers have to balance the desires of the elected officials with their understanding of the role of government (Barzelay & Gallego, 2006).

Efficiency for public managers is a priority, but it may not be the only priority (Grandy, 2009). “Almost from the beginnings of the field, efficiency has been a source of contention in public administration” (Grandy, p. 1115). “And yet, fairly quickly in public administration’s history, challenges to efficiency as a primary public value were articulated by those acknowledging other values such as equity, citizenship, and public deliberation” (p. 1115). The role of a public manager may not be to choose efficiency over all other values but rather balance the ideal of efficiency with other values determined by their elected boards (Grandy, 2009). In this line of thinking, it is not the public manager who is valued for their ability to mobilize value-based decisions but instead, it is collectively the organization who is remembered for good or bad decisions (Skinner, 2004). The literature review of public organizations shows remarkably very

little analysis on public organizations in the United States. “Although the proliferation of professional training programs can potentially increase the global reach of theories...the apparent lack of concern for international development in U.S. teaching and research...may undermine its international standing” (Wu & He, 2009, p. s21). That is not to say that there is no research about public organizations in the United States.

### **Public Organizations**

As noted previously, much of the research compiled on organizational change efforts is conducted on private organizations or public organizations in Canada or the United Kingdom. That is not to say that the research cannot be applied to the U.S. but, there may be differences or similarities that are not evident. For the purposes of this research, public organizations in the United Kingdom and Canada will remain relevant as will the research conducted in public sectors with the exception of noted differences. In their article, Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, (2004) write:

Public and private sector organizations differ in their business environment, management practices, and staff attitudes. However, organizations in both sectors have experienced changes and while the content of uncertainty may differ, the psychological experience of uncertainty and its consequences for control and psychological strain should be generalizable across sectors. (p.527)

The public manager’s role in an organization is really dependent upon their personality and their relationships with their elected boards and their subordinates (Edwards & Gregory, 1998). There tends to be two types of managers if one was forced into categorizing. The first type of manager “manifests organizational professionalism by a discourse of control, used increasingly by managers in work organizations” (Evetts,

2009, p. 248). The second type of manager in contrast, “is manifested by a discourse constructed within professional occupational groups, one which incorporates collegial authority. It involves relations where in employees and clients trust practitioners” (Evetts, 2009, p. 248). “It is also the case that powerful professionals have often been resistant to managerial interventions and organizational controls” (Evetts, 2009, p. 248 ). The impact of the public manager on either a self-initiated change effort or an organization-initiated change effort is dependent upon the manager’s ability to respond to the organization and the organization’s response to managerial controls (Behn, 1998).

In the identification of appropriate skills needed to effectively implement change during times of economic recession, it is important to note that research shows that “75 percent of all change initiatives fail” (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005, p.10). Bunker and Wakefield (2005) identify twelve leadership skills needed to implement change. Those skills include: “catalyzing change, coping with transition, sense of urgency, realistic patience, being tough, being empathetic, optimism, realism and openness, self-reliance, trusting others, capitalizing on strengths, and going against the grain” (p.12).

To help understand the nuances of the position of public managers, a review of their relationship to the organization was necessary. According to Hicklin and Godwin (2009), “scholars often lump public managers, street-level bureaucrats, and agency-specific characteristics into a single entity known only as “the bureaucracy” (p.14). They continue stating that, “the question then becomes one of how political institutions enable or constrain the composite bureaucratic monolith to obtain policy outcomes” (p.14). Research indicates that leadership in organizations, which create policy for a specific purpose, does not necessarily have the capacity to implement policy decisions in a

manner that will allow for expected outcomes (Hicklin and Godwin, 2009). As public organization leaders or elected officials identify specific outcomes, the role of public managers is to develop implementation strategies and policies to facilitate reaching the intended goals of the leaders (Behn, 1998).

### **Public Managers and the Organization**

In an organization, such as a city government, where there are an array of services provided from municipal courts, parks and recreation, water treatment, police, and fire services, etc., public managers have the difficult job of utilizing leadership and management skills to make recommendations (Evetts, 2009). Sometimes those decisions affect public managers, such as Department Directors, who are responsible for a single function of government. When balancing the greater good of the organization with the recommendations from the professional Department Director, the expertise from an educated Department Director may be infringed upon (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009). “It is also the case that powerful professionals have often been resistant to managerial interventions and organizational controls” (Evetts, 2009, p.260).

A more accurate description of managing in public organizations is described by Vaill (1996), who uses the metaphor “white water” to describe the turbulent times that always exist in the career of a public manager (cited in Kramer, 2007, p. 39). It states that “a manager must know how to lead and a leader how to manage” (p.39). According to Vaill’s (1996) research, permanent white water has the following characteristics:

- Shocks and surprises
- Novel predicaments with no single correct solutions
- Wicked problems that are messy, ill-defined, unpredictable, and difficult to solve
- Large expenses
- Continual repetition of these characteristics (cited in Kramer, 2007, p. 39).

Earlier, it was discussed that most change initiatives usually have a failure rate of about 75 percent (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005) and “instead of a loyal, productive, and enthusiastic workforce, we face employees who are insecure, fearful, and skeptical, and we undermine our progress toward new goals” (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005, p. 10). The employees, an integral part of the organization’s success, can impede or enhance the progress of any initiative in an organization. Success depends on the ability for the public manager (in this instance public manager could mean the Department Director or the public managers) to convey a vision that solicits or maintains a degree of trust amongst the employees (Heugens & Schenk, 2004).

Evetts (2009) addressed the need for more research around the issues of trust and management in public organizations. She posed this question for future research to examine: “How important is trust, in any event, for knowledge-based service sector workers and for experts in societies which are modern democracies with complex divisions of labor” (p. 262)? This is an important question and research topic given the constant changes our society has experienced and which have yet to be answered.

To the extent that public managers have influence on policy is reliant upon their relationship with the elected officials in the organization (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009). Public managers may understand the operational implications of policy and may communicate the impacts of policy to the board; however the board, in most cases, is ultimately responsible to the public for the degree of success of any particular service delivery (Zeemering, 2008). As previously identified, skilled public managers are able to integrate policy with operations and influence the policy making process in a manner that allows for a successful approach to developing and implementing policy direction.



“The involvement of senior permanent officials in policymaking as a natural consequence of the leverage they enjoy through their expertise-be it strategic (mastery of how to pursue or thwart change within the system), technical, or a mix of each” (Campbell, 2007, p. 378). Public managers who operate close to the field of policy decision making with elected officials may benefit by the opportunity to provide expertise to aid in the elected official decision making process, but may lack the same enthusiasm for the policy decision (Campbell, 2007).

The role of the public manager in policy deliberation and development is unclear to the public and sometimes to the managers themselves. As mentioned earlier, it is often the personal relationships that allow a public manager to move between the lines of policy development and policy implementation. When discussing change management in organizations in context of a fiscal crisis, the degree to which a public manager is able to manipulate public policy is itself a measurement of success (Campbell, 2007).

### **Management Practices in Public Organizations**

To counteract the negative effects of good policy on bureaucratic implementation, government leaders across the world began identifying management practices that would allow them to move the organization in the same manner as a private organization. That is to say, management principles were adopted that allowed a public manager to conduct performance evaluations utilizing performance data as opposed to length of service, utilize performance based budgeting when directing public funds to public services, and utilize resources to ensure total quality in service delivery models (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The challenge to these management principles widely accepted among public managers, is that in more times than not, relationships with elected officials or other high-

ranking individuals determine the degree of performance. And, the need of the community in areas such as the demand for social services, is based on a service model delivery that is not based on good business practices, e.g. return on investment is not documented or is low because individuals using government subsidies may not return the investment (Piotrowski & Rosenbloom, 2002).

### **Total Quality Management and New Public Management**

As a result of the perception of failed or low-impact performance, public managers adopted the principles outlined in New Public Management in the late eighties. It “focuses on the principles behind the 5Es: Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Excellence, and Enterprise” (Hazlett & Hill, 2000, S515). “Trying to make administration more efficient, more powerful, sleeker and more citizen-oriented” is a common theme of New Public Management (Scharitzer & Korunka, 2000 p. s941). These management principles have not totally disappeared since they were introduced to government; instead, they have been adapted and modified to reflect individual needs of public managers.

“In recent years, TQM has been an important organizational trend in the context of change management. TQM is a person-focused management system with the main target of continually increasing customer satisfaction at the lowest possible cost” (Scharitzer & Korunka, 2000, p. s943). In the discussion about quality as it relates to the organization, it is important to also discuss the obligation of public managers to understand and respond to the needs of the workforce in order to ensure the best possible service delivery. The public manager, in their response to growing demands from the community and diminished resources during an economic crisis, must also take into

consideration the impact of any initiative on the workforce (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005). It is, after all, the workforce who will be responsible for the success of the service delivery to the public. “The removal or reduction of resources that are central to the fulfillment of human needs and work tasks can lead to increased strain, which in turn reduces the employee’s ability to achieve the performance improvements that the agency sets out to achieve” (Noblet, Rodwell, & McWilliams, 2006, p. 349).

Taking into consideration the impact of Total Quality Management (TQM) and the New Public Management (NPM), change management during times of economic crisis requires a great deal of understanding as it relates to molding an organization in a manner that is both effective at service delivery in a cost efficient manner (Coe, 2008).

### **Public Managers and Change**

Employees sometimes fail to see the need for change or adopt the skills necessary to ensure successful integration of the change. The reason is most likely due to the effect of a change on their personal fulfillment; including the impact of wages, benefits, and satisfaction with the work they are performing (Scharitzer & Korunka, 2000). “Negative occupational health effects are part of this equation. Individual reactions to ongoing change efforts are one of the reasons why change does not move as smoothly as intended” (Saksvik et al., 2007, p.243).

Denise Skinner (2004), in her article, *Primary and Secondary Barriers to Evaluation of Change: Evidence from Two Public Sector Organizations* writes:

The cases demonstrated that the sharing of information was important from the perspective of other stakeholders but that previous experience and history led to an expectation that the dominant management group would filter, restrict, and

suppress findings. This was perhaps the greatest failing and the one that should be of greatest concern to the public sector organizations if, as Kouzmin et al. (1999) argue, the values of public sector organizations are rooted in an individualistic, localized culture that reinforces short-term events and group heroes rather than collective learning. (p.152)

A study conducted in Norway (Saksvik et al., 2007) was designed to solicit input from over 90 public and private organizations to identify criteria for successful change initiatives in an organization. The intent was to clearly identify organizational change as a risk factor for the psychological work environment and further the study for identifying successful criteria. “There is no one, all encompassing, broadly accepted theory of organizational change and there are no agreed guidelines for action by change agents” (Saksvik et al., 2007, p.244). The researchers concluded that communication and relationships were a critical component to the successful implementation of a change effort. Through awareness of the impacts of organizational change, supervisors can empower employees instead of creating a sense of insecurity. The process of empowering employees leads to more job security and healthier gains towards implementation of the change effort (Saksvik et al., 2007).

Organizational change can take on a broad range of definitions from small changes to multi-dimensional organization wide changes with impacts to the workforce and the community (Scharitzer & Korunka, 2000). Research on change management in both public and private sectors recognizes that the environment by which change happens is situational. The literature does not indicate that there is one specific set of criteria that will work for every situation as successful change efforts are largely dependent upon

personal relationships (Saksvik et al., 2007). This concept is especially true in public organizations, as the relationships with elected officials and the community are dynamic and ever-changing (Behn, 1998).

“One place to start the planning of organizational change process is to examine local norms inherent in the organization” (Saksvik et al., 2007, p. 251). This condition is true of all organizations. Organizations settle into patterns and normal working conditions and it is incumbent upon the change agent to identify what norms are able to be shifted and to what degree (Jamison, 2001). “If during an organizational change process, external consultants suggest measures that conflict strongly with these norms, there is a probability for the beginning of resistance” (Saksvik et al., 2007, p. 251). Saksvik et al. goes on to indicate that change management efforts are largely dependent upon middle management. It is the middle managers that set the tone for the organization and define the culture, either because of their managerial abilities or because they have been engrained in a previous culture and have worked their way up through the command structure leaving behind a wake of cultural influences (Saksvik et al., 2007).

Change efforts during times of crisis, either financial or environmental, pose challenges to the operating norms of the organization and the thinking patterns and reactive behaviors of managers (Thompson, 1981). In areas where environmental disasters are common, such as earthquakes, floods and fire in California, and hurricanes in Florida, government managers have become exceptionally skilled at responding to and mitigating the effects of a disaster (Lester & Krejci, 2007). Others are not as adept. One example was the local government response to Hurricane Katrina on the Southern coast of the United States. This was an example of government managers who were not

equipped with dealing with large scale disasters – demonstrated by the chaos that ensued within the community (Donahue & O'Keefe, 2007). The financial crisis in the United States, which began in 2008, is influencing the need for a paradigm shift, which will require a different mentality and skill sets in order to appropriately respond.

These warning expressions indicate both implicitly and explicitly, that current world crises, including many organizational problems, can no longer be solved or managed through traditional approaches and methods; they require new ways of thinking and solutions, nonlinear complex models of action, and chaotic models to deal with chaotic situations. (Farazmand, 2003, p.340)

In Canada, an article written by working professionals in public administration identified some practical skills needed in order to deal with chaotic situations: Reality, relationships, readiness, training, and continuity (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005). The competencies necessary for change management are important to note because it is the framework that public managers are guided by and rely upon during times of upheaval (Edwards & Gregory, 1998). Similarly, the increased chance for external forces such as legislative actions from state or federal bodies, voter initiatives, and even unexpected initiatives from the public organizations elected board generate additional pressure and require a proactive stance from the local government managers (Behn, 1998). Len Nixon (2004), in the article *Change Management: Theory and Practice*, writes:

What is significant is that these types of changes may be either totally unforeseen or, if they are anticipated, it is their rate and duration that causes concern to a business or organization. Consequently, it presents owners and

managers with a dilemma in terms of when the change is coming, its size, and its effects. (Nixon, 2004, p. 1)

The impacts of these external change efforts from other regulatory authorities, such as decreased tax revenue from a state that changes laws to ensure state services are maintained or a federal government that reduces federal support for certain programs to cope with the effects of a recession is serious and requires creative and proactive responses (Bohn, 2000). When public managers are forced to make these types of decisions, they have to take into consideration the social, political, and economic impacts to their organizations, not including their own personal job security factors (Behn, 1998). Neglecting these social and political counter forces may lead to additional social costs, such as lowered stakeholder support and a general loss of organizational legitimacy, which can in turn, lower corporate performance and diminish the techno-rational basis for the restructuring transaction (Heugens & Schenk, 2004).

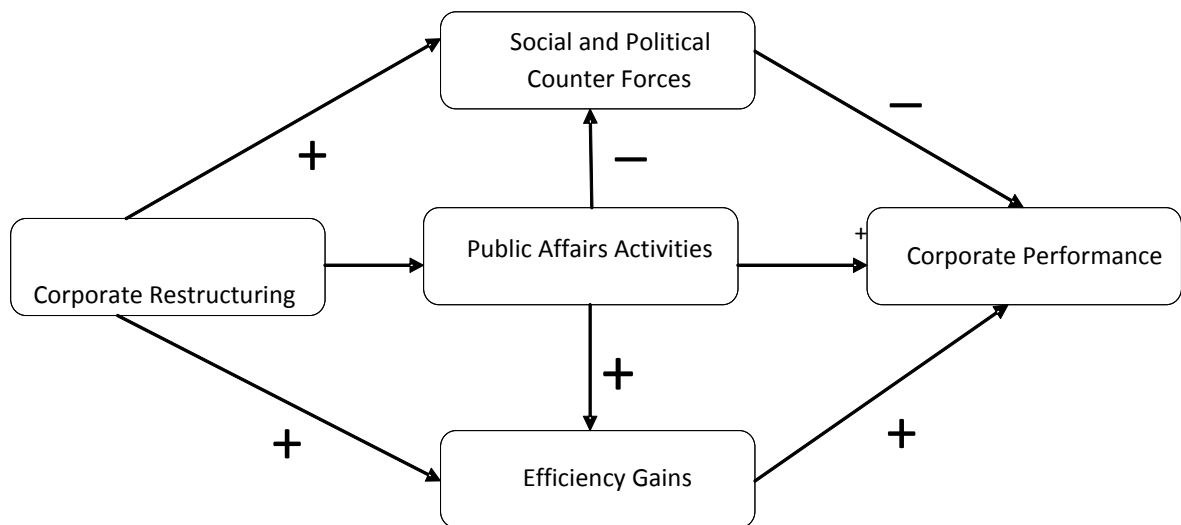


Figure 2. The crucial role of public affairs in corporate restructuring (Heugens & Schenk, 2004, p. 90).

The model identified (see Figure 2) helps explain some of the conclusions identified in Heugan and Schenk's article (2004). First, corporate restructuring transactions are often explained and justified in terms of the efficiency gains they are supposed to generate however, restructuring inevitably stirs up a lot of social and political dust. Second, these social and political counter forces threaten the potential of corporate restructuring transactions to realize the anticipated efficiency gains and they can sometimes be averted by means of professionally executed public affairs activities. Third, public affairs activities contribute not only to the non-market performance of restructuring corporations by managing and neutralizing the concerns of stakeholders whose motivations are not principally economic in kind, but also to their market performance by attracting the support of economically motivated stakeholders and by securing the efficiency gains associated with proficient restructuring (Heugens & Schenk, 2004).

Heugens and Schenk are documenting research associated with corporate restructuring - not public organization restructuring - but, the lessons learned are still valid and applicable. First, documenting the efficiency of a restructuring initiative in a public organization may include impacts to service delivery as opposed to increased ability to generate revenue (Bordia et al., 2004). Although government organizations are held accountable to a bottom line budget, public managers are also held accountable to an elected board that may value service delivery over budget reductions, which means that change efforts may not be identified as efficient in a business model (Barzelay & Gallego, 2006). Second, the use of public affairs activities, when identified as communication strategies with employees, managers, elected officials, and the public in



articles written about public organizations, plays a critical role in both public and private organizations. Educating the stakeholders about the change efforts prior to, during, and following any radical change efforts in the organization helps increase motivation by garnering support and ownership of the initiative (Heugens & Schenk, 2004). Finally, securing the support of key stakeholders and soliciting buy-in to the process and the proposed outcomes allows for a smoother transition. That is to say, elected officials may require the ownership of the initiative in order to further their own career and provide support for future initiatives (Bordia et al., 2004).

The problem faced by managers in public organizations can be summarized by what Hazelett and Hill (2000) writes:

Added to this skepticism [about implementing a business model] is the fatigue associated with so many initiatives, particularly so in the public sector. This has been noted by all of our respondents, who feel it is doubly difficult to try and ‘sell’ the benefits of the business excellence model when so many other seemingly ‘good’ ideas have previously fallen by the wayside once the initial enthusiasm has waned. (Hazlett & Hill, 2000, p. s518)

Hazlett and Hill (2000) are specifically discussing the implementation of business improvement strategies such as “continuous improvement” and “business excellence” strategies. However, the use of these types of management initiatives are typically associated with a large change effort in an organization and the process by which they are implemented is similar to that process utilized for change efforts in response to another stimulus.

The amount of change initiatives a public manager has to initiate, implement, and evaluate over the course of their career is high mainly because of the impacts of working in an organization where the elected board rotates depending on the vote of the public. (Behn, 1998). Also, the demands of the public change over time. Where there has always been and may always be demands for social services to provide to the underprivileged; recently, public managers have also had to move the organizations online with newer technology and even more challenging, find ways to incorporate technology into the open meeting laws in ways that do not violate statutory regulations (Bordia et al., 2004). Other changes have included expanded roles in dealing with non-English speaking individuals, increased ability to monitor and respond to terrorist activities, and overall changes in expectations of the workforce. These changes may seem similar to that of a private organization and in some instances are almost exact. The differences in how these types of initiatives are carried out, is in the details such as, the contracts that govern public employees; the elected officials desire to remain in office; and the outspoken minority of people who have the ability to drive public policy and the ultimate results of any change effort (Chase, 1984).

On a related subject to the manager's ability to effectively implement change is the employee's ability to manage the change efforts within the context of their workplace. The extent to which the manager is effective is largely dependent upon the employee's ability to accept change, implement change, and finally move forward in a manner that is supportive of both the manager and the organization. This ideal situation is not always the case (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005). Discussing the role of the employee, authors Scharitzer & Korunka (2000) write:

In general, a low level of passive (i.e. information) and also active participation measures was observable. In conformity with our earlier studies, employees less involved in the organizational redesign process reported higher strain and lower job satisfaction compared with those employees with more opportunities to participate. (p. s943)

In a large public organization where there are thousands of employees, the public manager may find it difficult, if not impossible, to engage employees in the process. In most instances, the change effort is communicated to employees after a decision has been made and the employees are faced with a series of questions about their own job performance, new expectations, and the impacts on their ability to maintain patterns in the workplace (Evetts, 2009). As most employees have gone through some type of organizational change or redesign, the feelings and attitudes associated with change efforts are not groundbreaking (Scharitzer & Korunka, 2000). What is important to note are the criteria available to help mitigate the effects on employees. Enhanced and increased communication, additional analysis on the impacts of the change efforts, and identification of specific and meaningful data to share with employees at all phases of the change effort is critical (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005). Although a majority of the research is conducted in private organizations, there are similarities to the feelings and attitudes of employees that cannot be dismissed. Also the impact on the employees' feelings and attitudes about their role in the organization and the ultimate impact on the success of the change effort is worthy of additional dialogue.

At this point in the review, we have discussed the primary reasons an organization may fail or hinder the success of a change initiative. The adaptability of the public

manager to a new situation, the political will of the elected officials, the reaction to a new situation, and the attitudes and feelings of the employees who are directly impacted by the change efforts are all influential factors. Additional factors to consider are the skills employed by the public manager in deliberating, identifying, and setting policy for the change effort (Behn, 1998). In the article, *Spontaneous Adaptation in Public Management: An Overview*, Colin Campbell (2007) writes:

Failures in policy development as manifest on the frontline of delivery often result in a re-absorption of initiative and discretion by the center with little or no additional investment in infrastructures and cultural adjustments required for effective policymaking - including anticipation of implementation difficulties - at that level. (p.396)

This point is particularly potent as this is the center of the research being conducted. The degree to which a public manager is able to communicate the vision, the details, and the impacts of a change effort is a major influence on the overall success of the implementation of the effort (Bunker & Wakefield, 2005).

As Skinner (2004) was evaluating the success of two organizations and their implementation of a change effort, she noted:

There was no evidence of a detailed or considered assessment of either the organizational need or the appropriateness of these particular strategies in these contexts before they were introduced. The unquestioned belief that there would be an inevitable benefit to the organization from introducing such initiatives also serves to reduce the perceived need to evaluate formally – those

responsible for its initiation already ‘know’ that its effect will be positive.  
(Skinner, 2004, p.142)

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. The literature reviewed for this study included academic journals and books related to the topic of study. Although, the researcher found an abundance of practitioner related materials relating to change management in public organizations, that information was not included. That does not mean the information was not valid; however, the researcher felt that the topic deserved additional academic rigor.

The research clearly indicated that successful factors to change management included a component of communication or public affairs strategies; garnering support from stakeholders; determining the psychological health of the workforce; and creating change that supports a healthy work environment and managing changes incrementally. However, research also clearly indicates that most change initiatives fail and additional research is needed as the training identified for public managers in the United States is insufficient. The following chapter will present the methodology for the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. This chapter outlines the design of the study, provides rationales for using the proposed methodology; describes the case, the study participants, and data collection process and techniques. This chapter also includes a description of the methods for analyzing the data while ensuring validity and trustworthiness of the data as well as addresses the biases of the researcher. The flowchart identified below is a graphical description of the study design (see Figure 3).

The following research question and sub questions were used to guide this study:

1. What skills are perceived to be the most critical for leaders in a large public organization to have in order to implement change rapidly during times of economic crisis?
  - a. What skills are perceived to be the most critical in minimizing the impact on human resources during a change initiative?
  - b. What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the financial resources during a change initiative?
  - c. What skills are perceived to be the most critical for navigating the political environment during a change initiative?

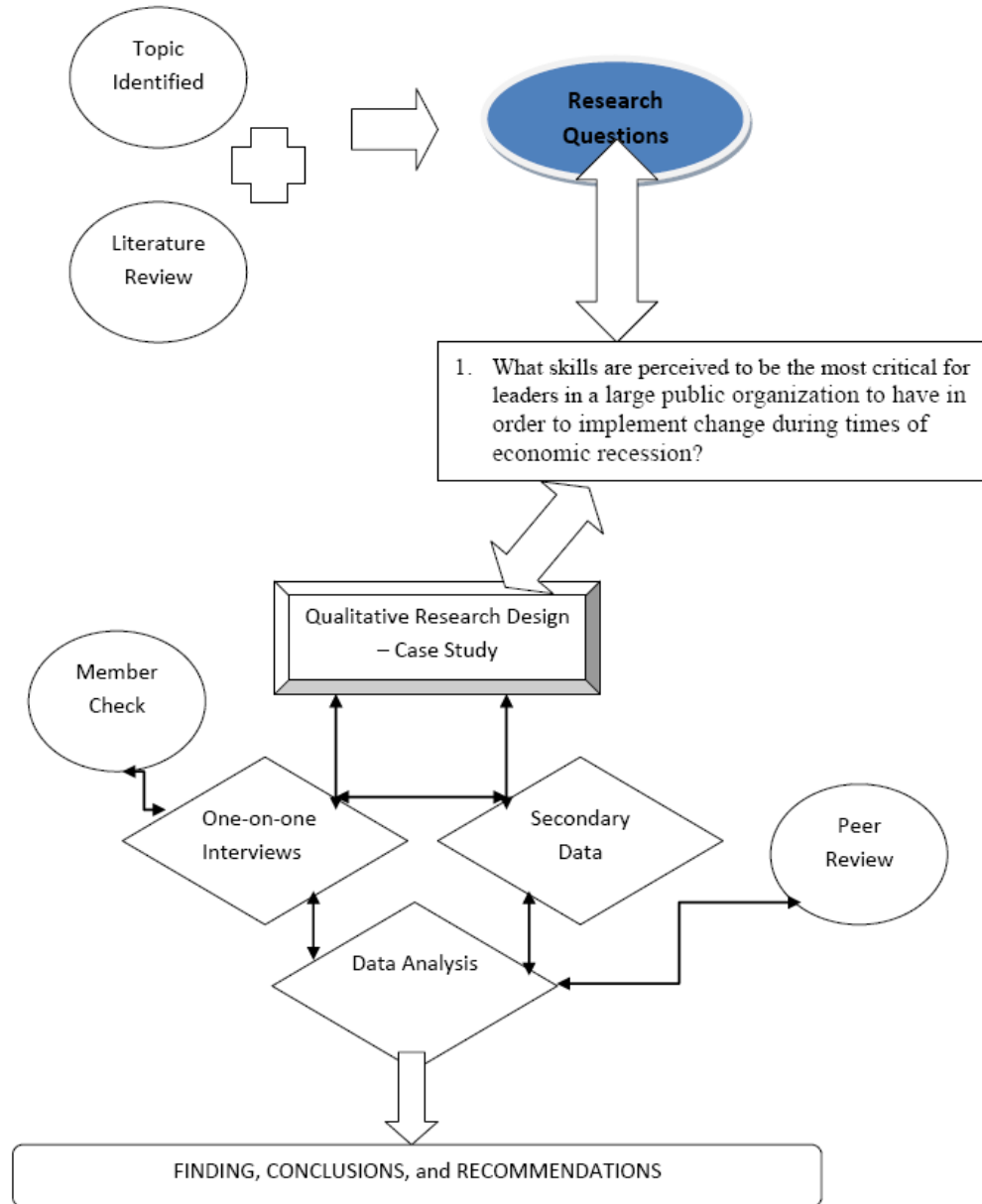


Figure 3. Qualitative Method Research Design and Process Flow Chart for this study

### Design of Study

A qualitative, case study approach was used to explore the attitudes and feelings about a large change effort in one large public organization from the perspective of those responsible for policy decisions. Case study research is a “qualitative research approach in which researchers focus on a unit of study known as a bounded system” (Gay, Mills &

Airasian, 2009, p. 426) in order to conduct a “detailed examination of one particular event” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.59). This process is defined as “sets of procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting text and image data to answer research questions by exploring participants’ views” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.180 ).

#### Case Study Rationale

The approach included, “relying on the views of participants; asking broad, general questions; collecting data consisting largely of words from participants; describing and analyzing these words for themes, and conducting the inquiry in a subjective manner” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p.66). This approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of the feelings and attitudes of those individuals responsible for the change effort. To aid in the qualitative process, the researcher utilized concepts identified by Bogdan & Biklin (2007), in which they indicate that the research approach “demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied” (p.5).

There are two paradigms of thought with regards to studying organizational culture. One paradigm allows a researcher to study quantitatively and apply results to other similarly situated organizations using statistical data as evidence of causation. The second paradigm explains that organizational culture is unique and cannot be understood without spending time with the organizational participants (Shearer, 1999). As the purpose of a qualitative study is to provide a rich description of the world uninterrupted (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) and to gain a deeper understanding of the human experience (2008), collecting data from organization participants seemed most prudent.



Qualitative methods of study are concerned with the implication of the world on an individual's feelings about a particular event. Qualitative studies use detailed descriptions of an individual's perceptions of a stimulus in an attempt to identify common themes amongst groups of individuals (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research draws upon techniques such as focus group interviews, one-on-one interviews, telephone interviews, e-mail interviews, questionnaires, observation, participant observation, and reviews of secondary data (1998). The different types of qualitative research include narratives, phenomenological studies, grounded theories, ethnographies, and case studies. This study will use an exploratory case study approach utilizing the interviewing technique with individuals within one large public organization.

A case study approach uses qualitative procedures to study a particular incident or case within a particular system (Plano, Clark & Creswell, 2010). These researchers state (2010) that the key characteristics of case study research include,

- The researcher's purpose is to study a case;
- The researcher collects multiple forms of data;
- The researcher analyzes the data for description and themes; and,
- The researcher reports description, themes, and lessons learned (p. 243).

To follow this model, this study was centrally focused on a change management effort at a large public organization and included a review and analysis of secondary data associated with the initiative and one-on-one interviews with some of the key stakeholders. The results of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed; sent back to interviewees for member checking and compared to secondary data reviewed to identify trends and themes found in the data. Finally, this study includes discussions about the

application of the results, shared outcomes with other research and the impact to the researcher as well as recommendations for future research on related topics.

### Case Selection

A case study includes a description about a particular event within a system. To meet that particular criteria, the following was used in the selection of the organization:

- The organizations initiated a change effort whereby the entire organization was aware of the change management initiative underway; and,
- The change efforts were directly related to the economic recession, which began in the Fall of 2008; and,
- The organizations is a large public organization with elected officials and a public manager with department directors; and,
- The researcher is an employee of the organization who has direct knowledge of the change management process and direct access to all data sources, including access to elected officials.

For this study, one public organization was selected based on the researcher's personal experience working in the organization and more specifically working as part of a team on the change management initiative.

### Participants

The participants selected for the interview were chosen because of their intimate knowledge of the goals and expectations of the initiative, as well as, their role in the overall success of the organization. The criteria used to select the individuals for the interviews were as follows:

- The individual must have been impacted by the change efforts; and
- The individual was responsible for either policy and/or operational decisions; and
- The individual played a role in the initiative.

The individuals who met these criteria include the seven elected officials, who are or were part the policy making board of the organization. The initiative was first initiated

by the Mayor and City Council of the organization in March of 2008. At the point of this study, the change efforts will have been underway for more than a year. Of the eight elected officials contacted for this study, seven participated in the interview. One participant was an elected official of another organization but was a prominent figure during the initial phases of the change initiative at the organization studied.

#### Rationale for Selecting Participants

Interviews were used for this study because of the political structure that envelops the public organization. The elected board members for the selected case each have a responsibility and a stake in the success of the change initiative. The interview component allows for a more trusting dialogue to take place whereby confidentiality can be assumed to the extent possible. In this instance, interviews are helpful in that they provide information, which will not be observable.

To elicit the most meaningful data from the participant, the interview questions were open ended, meaning that the questions allowed the participant to create their own options for responding and were not required to choose from a list of answers (Plano, Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 257). Plano, Clark and Creswell (2010) identify five aspects for consideration when conducting interviews:

- The reason for using interviews;
- The type of interviews;
- The questions asked during the interview;
- The record made during the interview; and,
- The information about the interview process is included in the report (p. 257).

The primary purpose for conducting interviews with the elected officials was that the researcher believed the data collected during the interview process would be most enlightening. This approach is not unique and was, in fact, mirrored after a very similar

research thesis (Martinet, 2007). The researcher's relationship with the participants yielded meaningful and valid data. The interviews were conducted one-on-one with each individual qualified to participate and avoided the possibility of group think or marginalization of those who fear repercussions by others in the group.

The participants interviewed for this study included seven elected officials. The participants ranged in age from mid thirties to seventies. Experience as an elected official ranged from one year to more than 11 years. Education levels varied with four of the participants responding with a bachelor degree or higher when asked about their educational background. Providing more specific information about the participants may degrade the researcher's ability to maintain confidentiality.

#### Secondary Data

To prepare for the interviews and for analyzing the data, secondary data sources were used to identify common themes, language, and any general understandings of the initiative (see figure 3). Marshall and Rossman (1999) refer to the collection of secondary data sources as a "historical analysis" (p. 119), whereby qualitative studies include reviewing what has happened using records and accounts to establish a baseline or background prior to participant observation or interviewing.

The documents that were used are those documents that were associated with the initiative. The organization has an Intranet website where all of the documents about the process and recommendations are stored. The documents include the following:

- Budget updates
- Elected Official updates
- Employee communications
- Email messages
- Policies

- Final report and presentation
- Multiple, single subject documents
- Financial forecasts
- Summary of the progress of the initiative

The data gleaned from interviews and secondary sources was used to draw conclusions about the expectations of stakeholders and how those expectations could be measured for future change efforts within this organization or others who wish to pursue a similar course. The process, described in figure 3, was determined to be the most appropriate for the organization selected in answering the research questions.

In most cases, the secondary data sources reviewed for this study are public records and available to the general public. Because of the researcher's role in the organization specific "draft" and "confidential" reports were also available for review that may not be available to a member of the general public. The data sources were relevant to the study as they directly relate to the efforts of the public manager, the elected officials, and the department directors. The role of the researcher in the [change initiative] process was as a staff analyst and facilitator of information. The researcher's role also included work products that impacted final recommendations to the elected board and eventual implementation of approved actions.

#### Data Collection Procedures

As an employee of the organization and as a direct participant in the initiative, the researcher had direct access to public and non-public documents relating to the decision making process and had access to all of the decision makers and those responsible for implementation. This particular situation would mean that the role of the researcher in the study is as a participant observer (Berg, 2001). Along a continuum of the observation

role, which includes being a non-participant, participant, and changing observational role; the role of participant observer appears to be the role that provided the most validity to this process. It may be considered that there is very little academic research conducted from within an organization because the data points are minimal and not descriptive of the processes that actually takes place. The researcher's role as an active participant in the initiative gave the researcher an insight, which aided in the research process and led to more meaningful findings and conclusions.

As interviews are the most common approach to qualitative studies (Plano, Clark & Creswell, 2010) the researcher chose to conduct interviews as “participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (p. 257). This process (see figure 3) allowed the researcher to collect personal data that would not otherwise be noted anywhere in the process. The extent to which participants in the change effort were satisfied or dissatisfied with the outcome and the reasons they felt the effort was either successful or not successful was best obtained through one-on-one interviews. Although focus group interviews may have yielded a group consensus, the researcher was concerned that the focus group panel would not allow the researcher to learn about sensitive topics, a concern addressed by Plano Clark and Creswell (2010). All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and the transcriptions were sent to the interviewees for final review and approval. However, prior to scheduling interviews, the researcher received approval from the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (See Appendix E). After IRB approval was received, interviews were scheduled with the participants.

Interviews can range from close-ended questions in a tightly-structured format to conversation-like dialogue, e.g. unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006). The format used in this study was semi-structured interviews. A series of open-ended questions was used to guide the conversation. Aversions to questions or misinterpretations were used to draw further understanding of the participant's feelings about the subject. The purpose of this format was to solicit information from the participants they may not otherwise divulge.

All interview participants represented themselves as elected officials. One of the elected officials is now an elected official of another organization but was an elected official of the organization studied, through 2008 and into 2009. The researcher reviewed public information about each of the elected officials prior to the interview. This information was available to the general public on the organization's website. Each of the elected officials has represented the organization for more than a year. The longest tenure as an elected official of the organization was close to twelve years or three terms in office. All but one of the elected officials had an undergraduate degree. Two of the elected officials have graduated with a Jurist Doctorate and two of the elected officials have graduated with a Ph.D. and one elected official was pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration. All of the interviews were conducted in the participant's work office, while two of the interviews were conducted with a member of the participant's staff sitting in.

#### Data Analysis

Emerging themes become apparent through data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher utilized transcripts from seven interviews, which were recorded and later

transcribed, to group data according to the common themes. The process was anticipated to yield a more precise representation of the beliefs of the interviewees and provide a response to the research questions (Creswell, 1998). The information collected from secondary data sources were also used to provide background information for the researcher and to substantiate potential themes in the interview data. During and following the data analysis, a peer reviewer was used to ensure the researcher was not making ungrounded assertions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The intent of this study and the process undertaken required a great deal of data. Data from the literature review, interviews, and secondary data sources. This amount of data required a system by which the data was coded, categorized, and sorted for easy retrieval. The system by which the data was processed was based on recommended coding systems identified by Bogdan and Biklin (2007) who state that, “As you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects’ ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out” (p. 173). The researcher used a system to code data that included a software package “NVIVO,” which supported the researcher’s process of categorizing data and sorting themes. Additionally, the researcher used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to document specific quotations from the transcriptions to highlight common words and phrases.

The data that was collected was coded by relevance to common themes and then sorted again into categories that would support a response to the research questions. The peer reviewer reviewed interview transcripts and coded references within a spreadsheet and further supported a coding effort by color-coding common words and phrases. These codes and themes evolved throughout the entire data collection process (Cresswell,



1998). To conduct formal member check the transcripts were sent back to the participants to ensure their thoughts were appropriately captured. No requests for modification were made. The data analysis process yielded responses to each of the research questions, which will be provided in the following chapter.

#### Study Limitations and Delimitations

The participants selected for interviews in the study may be considered a limitation because of their lack of experience in the field of public administration. Elected officials may or may not have experience managing a public organization, but instead are responsible for policy. The elected officials were chosen as the only interview participants because of time.

Initially the researcher's bias was considered a limitation because the researcher is an employee of the organization and is directly affected by the decisions of the elected officials and the public manager. Additionally, the researcher has been a part of the team that is responsible for the implementation of the change efforts which resulted from the economic recession. However, the researcher's role in the organization and thus the access to unfiltered information, which later aided in the credibility of the analysis, was gained. What was originally considered a limitation by the study's committee members, was later seen as an advantage. Additionally, the researcher has a background in public administration, which includes a graduate degree in public administration and more than ten years in the field of public administration, which aided in the researcher's ability to critically analyze the literature and responses from participants. The interview transcripts and study results were reviewed by a peer, with a similar background in change management, who ensured the bias of the researcher was limited to the extent possible.

## Credibility and Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity in qualitative studies are often tied to the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability or “trustworthiness” in qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the study and the degree to which the researcher feels confident in the study’s findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study are true beyond the bounds of the contexts or studies of the investigation. Dependability refers to the results of the study being replicated under similar conditions. Confirmability refers to the results of the study being the actual results intended by the researcher and not the results of unanticipated consequences of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Triangulation

Every attempt was made to validate the data so that the dialogue was based on meaningful and reliable data. Triangulation was used to assure the results of the analysis were described as valid and reliable. To ensure the trustworthiness of the results, the researcher employed methods for validation. “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research (Plano, Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 375). Miles and Huberman (1994) explained triangulation:

If you self-consciously set out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence, the verification process will largely be built into the data collection as you go. In effect, triangulation is a way to get to the finding in the first place-by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it

from different sources by using different methods and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be squared with. (p. 266)

#### Member Check

In order to utilize the triangulation concept, different interviews were conducted so as to minimize the effects of biases and improve the quality of data. Those interview transcripts were provided to the individual participant for verification and approval of the transcript prior to including the data in the study. If the researcher is able to report on the reconstructed data, the data must be verified and approved as truthful by the participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcriptions were sent to each participant following the interview with a request for review and request for any modifications. There were no requests for modification made. The member check form is included as appendix F.

#### Peer Review

The purpose of the peer review process was to support the credibility of the analysis by allowing a peer with similar experience the opportunity to review the data to establish trustworthiness of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The intent was to have an impartial peer facilitate a review process and dialogue about the results of the study in relation to the researcher's perspectives and values to ensure the results of the study were worthy, honest, and believable (1985). The researcher forwarded all interview transcripts and a table summarizing the researcher's findings to a colleague, who recently completed her own graduate research in a similar field of study. The colleague identified some discrepancies and forwarded to the researcher her own coding of the transcripts. A peer review is one way to increase reliability (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the researcher delved further into the analysis and discussed findings with the colleague until there was

a consensus. The resulting analysis was sent back to the colleague for further review and the subsequent analysis resulted in an agreement in findings.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher summarized the procedures by which the study was conducted. The methodology for selecting the organization, the participants, and the procedures for collecting data from interviewees and secondary data was discussed. Additionally, the researcher identified the limitations to the study and ways those limitations were addressed to maintain validity and academic rigor and using methods which included triangulation and verification processes for the analysis of the interviews.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. Chapter two includes the relevant research related to field of Public administration and on management practices in the public sector. The concepts used to derive a methodology of research for this study are discussed in chapter three. The results of interviews with seven elected officials are discussed in detail in this chapter, as well as, relevant secondary data sources, which support findings. The chapter is organized as follows: background of the public organization studied and relevant information on change, findings of the interviews, and related secondary sources. The chapter will conclude with a description of trends in the data and an analysis of those trends and how they relate to relevant models discussed in chapter two.

A summary of the information reviewed and analyzed for the study is detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1.  
*Summary Table of Information Resources*

Data Source	Description
Interviews	Interviews were conducted with seven elected officials. The interviews were conducted two to four weeks following the approval of a tentative budget hearing that included the reduction in force (lay-off) of [number] employees and the elimination of several programs and services that were offered by the organization.

Public Organization Intranet Board	<p>The organization has an Intranet site that is available to all employees; although there are groups of employees who do not have regular access to a computer. The Intranet site contains a link to a “budget update” page that includes a description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports provided to the elected officials</li> <li>• Public presentations</li> <li>• Communications to the employees via email</li> <li>• Video messages from the public manager</li> <li>• Budget information about the organization</li> <li>• Newspaper highlights from other organizations around the country related to their budget situations</li> <li>• Data related to the economic vitality of the surrounding area and the nation</li> </ul> <p>The Intranet site has data that dates back to March of 2008 when the elected official directed staff to begin a [change initiative]. All subsequent data are related to the [change initiative].</p>
Staff Meeting Agendas and Action Items	<p>Upon the direction of the elected officials to conduct a [change initiative] process, the public manager developed a bi-monthly meeting to discuss the initiative. Those bi-monthly meetings have been regularly held since 2008.</p>
Council Briefings	<p>On a weekly basis, the public manager conducts meetings with the elected officials. The content of those meetings is identified in an agenda that includes a general description of items. Approximately 10 percent of those items related in some way to the [change initiative] process.</p>
Employee Emails	<p>Emails that have been sent and received from the public manager, deputy public managers, department directors, elected officials, and employees related to the [change initiative]</p>
Confidential Reports	<p>Throughout the [change initiative] process, reports that were marked “confidential” and ‘draft” were provided to the public manager and the elected officials.</p>

*Note.* Secondary data sources obtained from the participating organizations Intranet.

## **Background of the Case**

### The Organization

The organization is a municipal government with a policy board of seven elected officials, including one Mayor who is elected at large. The organization is a form of government, in which the elected officials are responsible for hiring a public manager as a Chief Executive Officer to oversee the operations of the organization. The elected officials are also responsible for the Attorney and Auditor. The public manager is responsible for all operations of the organization, which include functions such as Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Public Safety, Judicial Services, and all of the internal services, such as Human Resources, Information Technologies, and Financial Services. The public manager directly oversees three deputy public managers. There are multiple departments in the organization. The organization has over 2,500 positions and operates hundreds of programs and services for the residents of the community. Approximately 10 percent of the organization is comprised of appointive and executive staff, who are not represented by any labor union. The remaining staff are represented by a labor union.

### Change Initiative

#### [Change Initiative] 2008

In March 2008, the Chief Financial Officer presented to the elected officials a revenue forecast that predicted a \$150 million dollar shortfall over a five year period. At that time, the elected officials directed staff to conduct a [change initiative], which included a review of all of the organization's programs and services to determine if they were still consistent with the organizations charter and mission. The public manager identified a department director to lead the effort and assigned two analysts to staff the

project. In addition, the organization hired an outside consultant to provide a report on those items that could be made more efficient in the organization and to help facilitate the information gathering process.

In October of 2008, the public manager presented to the elected officials in a facilitated session 106 recommendations in the following categories: 1) Organizational restructuring, 2) strategic service changes, 3) efficiencies that do not eliminate full-time employees; and 4) efficiencies that do eliminate full-time employees. The [change initiative] consultant submitted the report and requested that elected officials consider adopting all of the public manager recommendations, as well as, presented the critical need to work with the labor unions to negotiate a lower cost per unit of labor.

[Change Initiative] 2009

The public manager and Chief Financial Officer made subsequent presentations to the elected officials updating them on the status of the [change initiative] implementation and the organization's financial situation. In November of 2009, the Chief Financial Officer reported to the elected officials that the budget deficit over five years had grown to more than \$400 million dollars. The public manager presented to the elected officials a recommendation that the organization take immediate action to address a budget shortfall in the current fiscal year of eight million dollars and then begin a budget cutting effort that would result in a balanced budget for the organization's 2011 fiscal year.

In March of 2010, the public manager and Chief Financial Officer presented to the elected officials a plan to balance the 2011 budget that included the reduction of [number] full-time employees, eliminated additional vacancies, reduced staff support in all areas of the organization, and required the organization to stop providing specific



programs and services. The presentation included general comments about a reduction in services throughout the organization resulting in longer-lines, longer times to process, reduced or eliminated services, and a requirement to start the [change initiative] process for 2012. At the conclusion of this study, the elected officials had approved a tentative budget that balanced the budget with a reduction of staffing, reductions in services, and the elimination of certain programs; no labor concessions were included. The final budget for the organization is due in one month and the elected officials and management team indicated in a public meeting that the labor unions will not concede and the positions will not be restored.

### **Interview Findings**

The analysis of data resulted in a four main categories and themes within each category. Categories were created as a way to sort data that could best answer the research questions. Themes were considered if there were multiple occasions where a word, phrase, or topic of discussion in the transcription was repeated. Most noticeable in the findings, is the elected official's reliance upon a public manager and their expectation of specific value sets that include honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy relating to data. Those expectations of value sets remain constant throughout all themes.

To identify skills from the perspective of the elected officials, the researcher asked several questions related to the categories of human resource, financial, and political considerations. The categorization of considerations was based on McGuire's (2002) findings where he noted that human resource, financial, and political considerations where the primary challenge of a public manager in meeting the needs of the elected officials. The researcher found that the themes, identified above, could be appropriately

categorized by the challenges identified by McGuire (2002) as any skills identified would most likely need to be applied to overcoming the already identified primary challenges facing a public manager.

By analyzing the data, four categories emerged with multiple themes that were interrelated and impacted multiple categories. Figure 4 illustrates the categories and themes of the study related to the study questions. The first theme was the validation of the researcher's assumption the organization was facing an economic downturn. All seven elected officials validated the assumption and explained the economic downturn as a critical issue.

Categories were created to sort data in a manner that would facilitate a response to the research questions and which facilitated a grouping of data. For each sub-research question category, themes emerged. Themes were identified if there was more than one participant who iterated a word, phrase, or spent time discussing a particular topic. Three themes appeared during the analysis of the category created to answer research question 1a (What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the impact on human resources during a change initiative?): 1) Interpersonal skills; 2) negotiating; and 3) Taking action. The second category (What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the financial resources during a change initiative?) produced two themes 1) Accurate data; and 2) Strategic thinking. Finally, under the fourth category (What skills are perceived to be the most critical for navigating the political environment during a change initiative?) two themes emerged: 1) Managing upward; and 2) Acknowledging and Managing the Political Impacts.

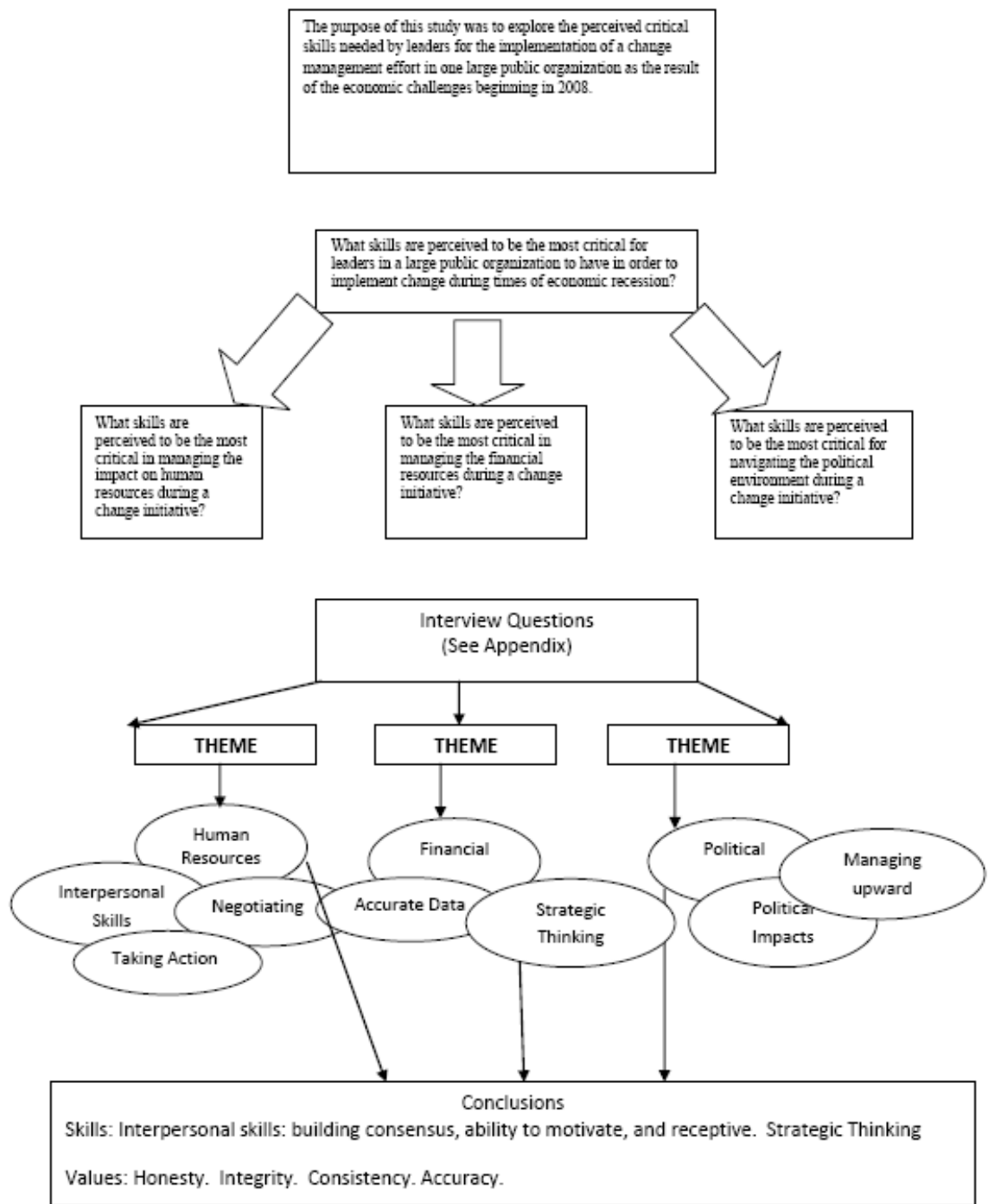


Figure 4. Illustration of Categories and Themes Identified

To maintain the confidentiality of the participants and the organization, any reference to an individual or aspect of the organization, which could be identifiable to a reader will be removed and replaced by a generic term in [ ].

## Theme 1: Economic Downturn

As the primary research question was based on the assumption the elected officials were leading a public organization during times of economic recession and the researcher made an assumption that the current economic climate would be impacting the responses from the elected officials, the researcher first confirmed the assumption by asking each participant what they felt was the most critical issued currently facing the organization. All seven participants confirmed that the most critical issue facing the organization was the impact of the downturn in the local economy or a decrease in revenues as expenditures were increasing.

*Participant 1:* We have reached the point where our **revenue's do not meet the needs of our expenses**.

*Participant 2:* The **lack of revenue** coming in and basically where to cut which is a complete departure from probably the last 10 to 15 years.

*Participant 3:* Today it is budget, **shrinking revenue** and escalating labor costs.

*Participant 4:* We **don't have as much money** as we did have. The likelihood is we will never again have as much money so we have to cut down in some areas we were able to show generosity in before that we can't now.

*Participant 5:* This **budget crunch** that we are going through right now is certainly, you've heard about in the past, in the 15 years I've been here this is the first one – we've always had good times.

*Participant 6:* Without a doubt, as a **result of a recession** which began in the fall of 2008, we like every community across this land are facing severe budget crisis, so I think the thing that is the most challenging to any elected official in this

country if not globally is how to handle the “New Age” if you will, that has been dropped on us by a recession.

*Participant 7:* Due to where we are nationally we have been affected locally due to the **decrease in tax dollars** that we receive into the [organization] general fund, by way of property taxes as well as “C” tax which is a consolidated tax that we receive from purchases of business services as well as tourist taxing dollars that we also receive and we have noticed that those revenues that traditionally come in- in double digit numbers have been minimized to one digit numbers.

All of the participants recognized the impact of the local economy on the organization. This validation of the researcher’s assumption allowed the researcher to ask topical questions related to the skills perceived by the elected officials to manage during an economic downturn.

#### Category 1: Human Resource Considerations

The analysis of data revealed three themes under the category of skills most critical in managing the impact on human resources during a change initiative. Interpersonal skills related to the relationships with the elected officials, management team, employees, and the general public was a consistent message from each of the participants. Participants placed different emphases on the application of personal skills. Most noticeably, one of the participants placed high importance on the relationship between the elected officials and the public manager; whereas another participant placed high importance on the public manager’s relationship with front line employees.

*Research question: What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the impact on human resources during a change initiative?*

## Theme 2: Interpersonal Skills

The differences noted in the application of interpersonal skills supported a follow-up question with two of the participants in which the researcher asked about their relationship with the public manager and other members of the management team. The researcher noted the differences in the expressed expectations of the participants may be directly related to their perceived role in the organization and their expectations of their relationship with the public manager. Essentially, the researcher determined that if the participant felt the public manager was the primary point of contact, the relationship from their perspective was most important. If the participant felt that the public manager and all of his/her management team were all points of contact, the public manager's relationship with the management team was equally as important.

The researcher also noted that during the period of interviews, the public manager was involved in contract negotiations with the organization's unions. The impact of those negotiations on the participants may have influenced their response to include a stronger emphasis on the relationship between the public manager and the union representative or front line employees. The public manager also recently completed an extensive public outreach effort to explain the organization's response to the economic downturn, which may have influenced two participants' responses to include a higher emphasis on the public manager's relationship with the public.

*Participant 1:* So he/she has to have very **good interpersonal skills**.

*Participant 2:* You have to listen to them but you also have to listen to the public and you also have to take your own interpretations from your own background on what's important and what is not important.

*Participant 2:* The people at kind of the top have to listen to everybody that has to include mid-level managers. It has to include them also and you take all that information and you have to make a decision.

*Participant 2:* Talk to them about what they think is important so that back and forth has to occur over a fairly long period of time. You have to get in front of this early and I think that one thing [public managers] have done is get in front of this thing early so you can have constant dialogue, so people can have a complete understanding of what's going on and they feel like they have had some input in what occurred.

*Participant 2:* I think another part of that is you have to have a [public manager] that people trust.

*Participant 3:* Honesty in how he/she delivers the message to his/her senior staff and his/her key department heads as well as union leadership has to be consistent, honest, accurate. So I would say that integrity and all the rest is probably the most important coming from a manager's standpoint, and maybe a strong communicator.

*Participant 3:* Communication has to be firm, it has to be forceful, the public managers and the CEO, so that direction has to (not to be repetitive) but has to be consistent, accurate.

*Participant 4:* I think obtaining trust, and when you obtain trust you have to have the ability to work with the individual, know where they are, have empathy, and you have to be neutral in how you use the data that you collect.

*Participant 4:* He/she should consider he/she is going to make changes; he/she has to consider the diversity of the people by that diversity I mean how long different people have been here.

*Participant 6:* An ability to make hard decisions, ability to consider the sensitivity of the fact we are dealing with human beings and families and mortgage payments but at the same time being able to do what is best for the organization.

*Participant 6:* So you have to be sensitive to the human part of this.

*Participant 7:* The [public manager], number one, would need to be an orator in the sense of communicating in a clear decisive and precise manner that sends a message to the organization that the shift is moving in another direction.

#### Summary of Theme 2

Strong interpersonal skills are a consistent message from each of the participants. Although individual participants placed emphasis on different aspects of interpersonal skills and focused their dialogue on different relationships, the researcher determined from the interviews and a review of secondary data sources, primarily the first public meeting in which the 2009 [change initiative] results were presented to the elected officials, that the value of relationships is paramount to a public managers success. In the public presentation reviewed, several comments were made about establishing and maintaining positive relationships with elected leaders of union organizations, as well as, the importance of open dialogue with front line staff. Included in the broad category of interpersonal skills is, strong communication, ability to motivate, consistent messaging, and values such as integrity, honesty, and accuracy in communication.



### Theme 3: Negotiating

Negotiating was not a term that was used consistently in the interviews; however, the concept of working with union representatives and front line employees was explored by two of the participants during the interviews. Additionally, as the researcher was concluding the study, significant changes in the status of union negotiations at the organization, from the perspective of the researcher, influenced the importance of negotiations as they related to human resource considerations. A public meeting was held in which the public manager reported on the status of union negotiations. During that public meeting, one participant indicated disappointment in the status and indicated a desire for a different outcome as the impact of negotiations affected hundreds of employees and services and programs for the community.

*Participant 1:* So it was up to him/her to **craft a plan** to be approved by the council and the elected that we could live with and support, and that is their job.

*Participant 2:* You have to get in front of this early and I think that one thing [public manager] have done is **get in front of this thing early** so you can have **constant dialogue**, so people can have a complete understanding of what's going on and they feel like they have had some input in what occurred.

*Participant 2:* They are going to be objective the people are going to look at and say you know what I believe that person is **trying to do the right thing**.

*Participant 3:* Try to **balance that direction with protecting their interests**, and that is currently going on.

*Participant 6:* We only have so much money to go around, some difficult decisions have to be made and if our bargaining units are not willing to accept

certain concessions that we have asked them to accept, then the organization **has no choice but to lay people off.**

### Summary of Theme 3

The status of current negotiations at the organization is the impetus behind any change initiative. The lack of success or inability to negotiate an adequate reduction in a combination of pay and benefits will result in more significant changes to the organization. The participants demonstrated an understanding of this concept during multiple public meetings where the public manager provided updates to the status of the [change initiative]. Included in the theme of negotiating, are some skills that have been identified, including interpersonal skills, such as building consensus, and strong communication. The participants also identified an expectation to be a strategic thinker. The expectations of values of a public manager are maintained in this theme.

### Theme 4: Taking Action

Taking action, as a theme, takes into consideration the role of the participants as part of an elected board of an organization. The participants may or may not have a background in Public administration and may have limited exposure to the operations of the organization. Each of the elected officials indicated a different level of experience and exposure to the organization. This sentiment was best characterized by a comment made by participant 1:

*“The Managers and the Deputy Managers and those that are in his/her department, they are professionals. The elected really are not professionals, and I think that is the distinction, we really are not trained to be an [elected official].”*

*I didn't know what a [elected official] was till I sat up here, then I wasn't sure what an [elected official] was until I adapted to it."*

The degree of reliance upon a public manager instills a level of responsibility that simply necessitates a philosophy of taking necessary actions in order to meet the expectations of the elected officials. Within the theme of taking action, several skills emerge that appear to be critical. Those skills include consensus building, ability to motivate others, and open and receptive to dialogue prior to making a decision and not being afraid to take necessary actions once a decision is made.

*Participant 1:* It takes a strong leader, one who is respected to **guide the ship**.

*Participant 1:* I just think as much **leadership**; General MacArthur and General Patton they walk into a room and under the Government of the Supreme Court Justice said it when he was trying to define pornography and obscenities. I can't give you diminutions but I know it when I see it, it is the same thing when MacArthur and Patten walk into a room they knew it when they saw it. I think that is the way we have to feel about the manager.

*Participant 2:* The people at kind of the top have to **listen to everybody's** information and you have to **make a decision**.

*Participant 2:* So you have to have people that are willing to sit down and **listen to people, open dialogue**, positive back and forth communication and not only listen to people and **answer their questions**.

*Participant 2:* You have to be able to sit down and spend a lot of time going through this; you just can't walk in and say we are going to cut everybody by

12%. **We are going to make the decision and you guys are going to have to live with it.**

*Participant 5: He/she has to lay the City around his/her shoulders* and I think he/she does a good job.

*Participant 6: An ability to make hard decisions*, ability to consider the sensitivity of the fact we are **dealing with human beings** and families and mortgage payments but at the same time being able to do what is best for the organization.

#### Summary of Theme 4

Taking action became a theme in much of the public meetings that were included in the research as secondary sources; however, it is apparent in the responses from the participants as well. The skills remain constant throughout this theme and result in a general expectation to have strong communication skills, including consensus building and an ability to motivate because the need to change is evident and the expectation is to make changes in a proactive and positive manner instead of in response to a negative stimuli. The sentiment of leadership was best explained by a comment by Participant 1, who referenced the leadership of General Patton.

#### Category 2: Financial Considerations

*Research question: What skills are perceived to be the most critical in managing the financial resources during a change initiative?*

There was not as much consistency in the dialogue related to the relevance of financial considerations. The researcher believes this finding is significant because it provides further data to affirm an assumption that an elected official may not have a

defined understanding of all of the skills needed to be a public manager. This affirmation places additional emphasis on the concepts of interpersonal skills or relationships. That is not to say that themes were not identified. Emphasis was placed by most participants on the value of strategic thinking and the accuracy of data. More specifically, emphasis was placed on the values a public manager should display, including, 1) honesty, 2) integrity, 3) consistency; and 4) accuracy. These value sets were also prevalent under the themes for human resources and political considerations and will be explored in more depth later in the chapter.

#### Theme 5: Strategic Thinking

A common theme amongst most of the participants included strategy as a key skill needed by a public manager during both good and economically challenging times. The public manager, in working with the Chief Financial Officer, or other department directors, needs to be able to identify appropriate recommendations that align the organization with the priorities of the elected officials. One participant referenced the ability to think outside of the box and be creative. Public meetings in which the public manager received his/her evaluation from the elected officials also substantiated the theme. Elected officials made it very clear in their evaluation that strategic thinking was a necessity.

*Participant 2:* I think an important skill set would be somebody who is very **strategic in their thinking.**

*Participant 2:* That's a big problem for the [public manager]. The [public manager] is going to have to **deal with the financial crisis** and **keep the [elected officials] behind him/her** that's tough to do in this situation.

*Participant 2:* When things are bad you are going to start saying no and how are you going to say, I mean what is going to be your way of **saying no without pissing everyone off**, cause that is what it is going to come down to.

*Participant 3:* But **critical thinking** that could be outside the box in attacking problems, traditional public sector problems in **new ways, creative financing, increased efficiency**, introduction of technology, partnerships with the private sector, I would put all those in that critical thinking characteristic that may not have been as critical or needed pre recession, but certainly are today.

*Participant 3:* Those are the things that we politically need to protect, beyond that, well those should always be evaluated for efficiency, but beyond the core function of government you have to start looking to see vertically how you can truly cut back and eliminating functions that have just ruined government.

*Participant 6:* He/she had to immediately start taking steps toward fiscal 2011 to do what was necessary to **balance the budget**.

#### Summary of Theme 5

The expectation of critical thinking is aligned with what was previously reported in the literature. Since public management was referred to “as managing white water” (Kramer, 2007, p. 39), a logical management tool is strategic thinking. The data from the interviews for this study show that the expectation remains for a public manager to identify solutions to problems and find creative opportunities to ensure the vitality and success of the organization.

## Theme 6: Accurate Data

This particular theme was of a great importance to the researcher in his role as a public administration practitioner, as the theme related to the elected officials' reliance upon a public manager. The message from most of the participants was clear. The data that comes from the public manager must be accurate and reliable. Their ability to trust and hold confidence in the public manager is tied to accuracy.

*Participant 1:* A manager or assistant manager, deputy manager, or department head they got through the ranks and they **know the way bureaucracy runs**. But they have to so the elected have public approval and probation by the public and without that they are not going to be re-elected and the managers won't have their jobs long.

*Participant 1:* ...but when you really get down to the nuts and bolts of it, it is the **manager who really provides all the information** and direction and certainly sways the decision that's being made.

*Participant 1:* Now we are **dealing with the nitty-gritty**, we are dealing with dollars and cents - every dollar every penny has to be carefully looked at as to whether it is being spent wisely as wisely as it can be spent.

*Participant 3:* Those **numbers have to be pure**; they have to be provided **without opinion** they have to be provided as **factual real numbers** as far as labor costs versus revenue.

*Participant 3:* You **can't manipulate the numbers**, there out in the public and they are accurate, so organizationally **everybody is looking at the same set of**

**numbers**, everybody is **hearing the same message**, everybody is taking the **same policy direction**.

#### Summary of Theme 6

It should be noted that conversations with two of the participants following the recorded interviews revolved around their ability to trust the integrity of the public manager and the criticality of integrity in character and in data expected by the elected officials. A separate participant followed-up with the researcher more than a week following the interview and wanted to ensure that this study included the importance of trust as it relates to the elected official's relationship with the public manager. These conversations substantiated for the researcher the assumption that elected officials are reliant upon the public manager. Although they recognize specific skills that are needed by a public manager, the participants are more familiar with their expectations of the values of honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy, to which they hold the public manager accountable. In addition, the dialogue during the interviews indicates that there is an expectation that the public manager is strategic in their thinking and again the value of interpersonal skills is addressed.

#### Category 3: Political Considerations

*Research question: What skills are perceived to be the most critical for navigating the political environment during a change initiative?*

The data from this question aligns with the previous data and further clarifies the expectations placed on a public manager and their role in the performance of the organization and the overall success of the elected officials. Dynamics that may have influenced the data related to this section are the impending announcement of candidacy



for one elected official and understanding that two of the elected officials would not be seeking re-election. Their current status may have influenced their perceptions. All of the elected officials, either during their recorded interviews or outside of their interviews, acknowledged the strenuous position of a public manager, consistent with Kramer's (2007, p.39) reference to "managing white water." One participant characterized the role of a public manager, with regards to their relationship with the elected official as "herding cats."

The themes identified in the research include a public manager's ability to manage upward, utilizing those skills identified previously. Also, the elected officials expect the public manager to understand the political implications of decisions and use that understanding to make the best recommendations and/or decisions. There was one participant who indicated that political considerations should not come into play when making decisions; however, that individual will not be seeking reelection and their perception may be different than others who may be interested in continuing their elected official status.

#### Theme 7: Political Impacts

The researcher noted that one conversation, in particular, was most telling about the political impacts relevant to the public managers position in the organization and his/her relationship with the elected officials. The participant commented on a potential of raising a [tax]. His expectation of the public manager was that he/she would educate the participant on the subject matter and inform him/her of potential political outcomes. Other comments made in the interviews indicated that the implication of political impacts

applied to both the elected official in terms of their upcoming elections, as well as, to the public manager and their ability to maintain a position with the organization.

*Participant 1:* Make it run in a fashion that **protects elected**.

*Participant 2:* You have to **listen to the public** from a political perspective so politically the [public manager] is **going to deal with seven elected officials** that's his/her politics because each [elected official] are going to have a certain interest that they think are important and that they think are not important based on their own interest and based on who they represent so **he/she will have to navigate that**.

*Participant 5:* There should be a political factor there's always to me a right way and a wrong way and then there is always the other person's way.

*Participant 6:* I think one of his/her most critical character traits was his/her **ability to work with elected officials**.

*Participant 6:* **When you mix politics in it nobody wants to do it.**

#### Summary of Theme 7

The political considerations are relevant and addressed by the elected officials. The data supports the finding that there is an expectation that the public manager be aware of the political implications of decisions and use that information in their decision making model. Again, there are consistent themes related to specific values that are expected, with regards to trust, integrity, consistency, and accuracy. The researcher also identified a common understanding amongst the participants: a recognition that the role of a public manager is challenging because of the role in which the elected officials place the public manager.

## Theme 8: Managing Upward

Most prevalent in the interviews was discussion about the public manager's ability to manage relationships with seven different elected officials. Each of the participants demonstrated an understanding and an appreciation for the role of the public manager in trying to ensure the expectations of the elected officials are met. One participant best referenced the skill of managing upward by referring to the public manager's position as responsible for "herding cats."

*Participant 1:* So we look to [public manager] to **guide us** and **provide accurate information to us**, to **give us suggestions** as to how we meet our challenges and then we give great **deference to the manager's position** and great deference to the managers information but we are ultimately responsible for making the decision,

*Participant 1:* Well as far as the elected, I think it is almost an impossible job, because he/she has to **become departmentalized what he/she is hearing from seven un-herded cats and** he/she has to protect the **confidentiality of the interchange** and at the same time has to be able to **shape a solution** based on reality and practicality to satisfy each elected official as a completely different personality than the other elected official, so **it is very difficult**.

*Participant 2:* I will have to say that [public manager] has done a good job of keeping the [elected officials] **corralled around him/her**. There is not any of the beating up of the [public manager] because you're doing this instead of this and you're helping this [elected official] more than this [elected official] that's not happening and **that's tough to do**.

*Participant 3: Their toughest role and today is no different is to manage upward.*

*Participant 3: More importantly is how he/she or the position manages upward.*

*Participant 3: How he/she handles different political backgrounds different public policy initiatives different attitudes from the board, how he/she can **build the consensus** and implement that downward is a very, very difficult challenge especially in today's recession.*

*Participant 4: He/she needs to consider and again I feel he/she has to be very careful he/she has to **collect the best data** he/she can he/she seems to be doing that and then he/she has to **present it in a way that people are trusting** that he/she is saying what really exists so he/she has to do that with **empathy** he/she has to do it with **transparency**.*

*Participant 5: He/she has to again **take seven opinions** from seven elected officials and try to dissect them and put them where the department heads can understand each and every avenue that's the ultimate goal. I think at this time he/she has had to put things together to come up with what he/she thinks the [elected officials] want to see done.*

*Participant 7: The political factors that we all must take into consideration is that the decisions we make as elected officials are decisions that impact not only the residential community but the business community as well and for that as we make adjustments in our revenue that ultimately will impact our end user.*

Summary of Theme 8

The concept of “herding cats” creates an interesting, but accurate description of the public manager’s role as perceived by the elected officials. Each of the participants recognized the difficulty of gaining a consensus and meeting each of their expectations. The elected officials recognized the value of taking each of their opinions, dissecting the opinions, implementing a policy decision, and then reporting back accurate and credible information. The interview data shows that the entire process begins with the public manager’s ability to solicit an agreed upon opinion from a majority of the elected officials.

Table 2: *Summary of Interview Data*

Category	Themes	Participant Data
Economic Recession	Budget - Most critical issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “During these tough economic times... The reality is we don’t have enough money to provide the services and to pay the employee based on the structure as we have in the past.”</li> <li>• “The lack of revenue coming in and basically where to cut which is a complete departure from probably the last 10 to 15 years.”</li> <li>• “It is budget, shrinking revenue, and escalating labor costs.”</li> <li>• “We don’t have as much money as we did have. The likelihood is we will never again have as much money, so we have to cut down in some areas we were able to show generosity in before that we can’t now.”</li> <li>• “This budget crunch that we are going through right now is certainly, you’ve heard about in the past.”</li> <li>• “Without a doubt, as a result of a recession which began in the fall of 2008, we like every community across this land are facing severe budget crisis...the most challenging to any elected official in this country ... is how to handle the “New Age” if you will, that has been dropped on us buy a recession.”</li> <li>• “Double digit numbers have been minimized to one digit numbers.”</li> </ul>
Human Resource	Interpersonal Skills, Taking Action, and Negotiating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “... has to have very good interpersonal skills.... I just think as much leadership.”</li> <li>• “The people at kind of the top have to listen to everybody that has to include</li> </ul>

Category	Themes	Participant Data
		<p>mid level managers it has to include them also and you take all that information and you have to make a decision.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...you have to have people that are willing to sit down and listen to people, open dialogue, positive back and forth communication and not only listen to people and answer their questions, but what are they looking for.”</li> <li>• “... Delivers the message to senior staff and key department heads as well as union leadership... Has to be consistent, honest, and accurate.”</li> <li>• “I would say that integrity and all the rest is probably the most important coming from a manager’s standpoint, and maybe a strong communicator.”</li> <li>• “An ability to make hard decisions, ability to consider the sensitivity of the fact we are dealing with human beings and families.... at the same time being able to do what is best for the organization.”</li> <li>• “You have to be receptive to ideas to making the City a better place.”</li> <li>• “So the leadership of those bargaining units are critically important to understand the manager and his/her implementation goals.”</li> <li>• “You have to make a decision.”</li> </ul>
Financial	Accurate Data and Strategic Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “If we get wrong information and act on the basis of that information that is unforgivable as far as I am concerned. It happens more often then what we think around here. It is not fair to us as elected officials and all we can do is stop talking to the people who are giving us the bad information and just hope the managers see that and make a change, that is the bottom line.”</li> <li>• “He/she needs to consider and again I feel she has to be very careful she has to collect the best data she can he/she seems to be doing that and then he/she has to present it in a way that people are trusting that he/she is saying what really exists so she has to do that with empathy he/she has to do it with transparency.”</li> <li>• “I think from a knowledge stand-point he/she has to make sure we have all the information at our disposal so that we can make the right decisions.”</li> <li>• “Now we are dealing with the nitty-gritty, we are dealing with dollars and cents. Every dollar, every penny has to be carefully looked at as to whether it is being spent wisely, as wisely as it can be spent.”</li> <li>• “Somebody who is going to take a look at the financial crisis and not just shoot off the hip.”</li> <li>• “The [public manager] is going to have to deal with the financial crisis and keep the [elected officials] behind him/her and that is tough to do.”</li> <li>• “So it was up to him/her to craft a plan to be approved by the [elected officials].”</li> <li>• “I think a very important skill set would be someone who is strategic in their thinking.”</li> </ul>

Category	Themes	Participant Data
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “He/she has to immediately start taking steps toward the fiscal 2011 to do what was necessary to balance the budget.”</li> <li>• “I feel he/she has to be very careful; he/she has to collect the best data he/she can.”</li> <li>• “I think from a knowledge stand-point he/she has to make sure we have all the information at our disposal so that we can make the right decisions.”</li> </ul>
Political	Political Impacts and Managing Upward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “And basically when you say the city is paying for it these people who are the voters out there, this is the political invitation of it whether they don’t understand [department] ---- general fund expenditure and the money being spent and they can’t understand how we can spend that kind of money and the manager is caught right in the middle of all of it.”</li> <li>• “Understanding the politics the politics of a governing board and how that governing board interacts with other local agencies, state agencies, federal agencies certainly the political side needs to be strong.”</li> <li>• “Well he/she has to consider political factors involved with the union, he/she has to consider the political factors with the public, because the public is going to wonder why we have to do this or my brother-in-law is working for you and you’re cutting back on him. He/she seems to be doing that and then he/she has to present it in a way that people are trusting that he/she is saying what really exists so he/she has to do that with empathy he/she has to do it with transparency.”</li> <li>• “But from a political stand point it is the death penalty, because I have been told and recognize that any politician that wants to promote the raising of taxes now on people is political suicide.”</li> <li>• “I don’t know that she necessarily needs to educate us on the political because most of us already know that, but I think in a practical real world it doesn’t hurt for her to remind us of the political ramifications.”</li> <li>• “Manager or Assistant Manager, Deputy Manager, or Department Head they got through the ranks and they know the way bureaucracy runs. But they have to make it run in a fashion that protects elected so the elected have public approval and probation by the public and without that they are not going to be re-elected and the managers won’t have their jobs long.”</li> <li>• “He/she has to be departmentalized, what he/she is hearing from seven un-herded cats.”</li> <li>• “The thing that is most important to him/her is to be honest with the [elected officials] individually and then when we get together collectively we know where he/she is coming from, and then we can make our decision.”</li> <li>• “I think the [public manager] has done a good job of keeping the [elected officials] corralled around him/her.”</li> </ul>

## Other Relevant Key Findings

### Change

“Change is the departure of the status quo” (Rothwell et al. 2009). The secondary sources and the interviews with the elected officials confirm that the public organization is going through a very significant change process in an effort to balance the budget of the organization. The change is intentional and necessary from the perspective of the elected officials. Rothwell (2009) explains that a transformational change that requires an organization to modify culture in order to realize a successful change effort in needed. Upon conclusion of this study, it appears that the organization is still at a gamma change level (2009) in which there has been a significant departure from the beginning to the end of the change process. This was most recently characterized by one of the elected officials who described the organization’s status as being “in serious and moving to critical condition.”

Secondary data sources, such as meeting agendas, PowerPoint presentations, and briefing documents, as well as, intimate knowledge the researcher had about the [change initiative] revealed that the public manager is using incremental approaches to moving the organization. Those incremental approaches (Lindblom, 1959) may not be moving fast enough for the organization to realize enough savings and may be replaced by transformational change efforts. The concept of incrementalism was demonstrated by a shift from implementing efficiencies in 2008 to reducing numbers of full-time staff in 2009. In 2010, and most likely in the future, budget cutting efforts and many more positions will be eliminated; forcing the organization to change to a different model of service delivery.



Concepts of New Public Management (NPM) and Total Quality Management (TQM) (Noblet, 2006) are apparent in many of the secondary data sources and in one of the interviews. The organization has made incremental approaches towards a performance management system (TQM) and minimally utilized performance data to make decisions. There are multiple examples of public-private partnerships (NPM) that can be regarded as successful but have multiple criticisms that were witnessed in several of the public meetings. There have been and appear to be a willingness to continue dialogue about outsourcing opportunities or shifting services to the private or non-profit sector. There is evidence in the secondary data sources that support the notion that outsourcing or entering into public-private partnerships creates efficiency by reducing the costs of labor.

Osborne & Gaebler (1992) suggest that elected officials often times make decisions based on emotion rather than efficiency. This concept was explored through the application of outsourcing opportunities. In multiple occasions, the public-private contracts were criticized by some of the elected officials in public meetings. The criticism was based on services but the savings associated with the contracts were never mentioned, suggesting that the services provided deserved review without thought of the efficiency gains to the public organization.

#### Public Organizations

The secondary data sources used for this study included a review of thousands of pages of materials related to potential change efforts identifying reductions, eliminations, or changes to services and programs offered by the organization. The team responsible for reviewing these changes were comprised of individuals with backgrounds in human resources, financial services, and general government. The data reviewed contained

information about every function and level of government, which may be considered as overwhelming. There was no one person who demonstrated an intimate knowledge about every available option. Hicklin and Godwin (2009) refer to the complexity of government as “the bureaucracy” (p. 14).

### **Summary**

This chapter presents the study’s findings. The researcher answers the research questions consistent with the themes identified in the literature review, specifically, McGuire’s (2002) discussion of the human resource, financial, and political challenges of a public manager. The researcher identifies specific skills within each theme and most skills overlap in each of the themes. Skills that were perceived to be the most critical, from the perspective of the elected officials include: interpersonal skills, including building consensus, ability to motivate, and receptive to others. Strategic thinking was also an identified skill. The data further identifies values the participants perceived as critical to implementing change during time of economic recession and in all other times. Honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy were discussed with high importance amongst all participants.

The researcher, utilizing concepts identified in the conceptual model described in chapter three of this study, utilized secondary data sources to demonstrate how concepts of TQM, NPM, incrementalism, and other phases of change may have played a role in the overall success of the organization’s change initiative in response to the economic recession of 2008.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. The researcher utilized a qualitative, case study approach to explore the attitudes and feelings about a change effort in one large public organization from the perspective of the elected officials. Chapter one of this study provided a general overview and introduction; chapter two, a review of related literature focusing on the field of Public administration and concepts of change and management. The methodological design of the study was described in chapter three. Interviews with elected officials and a review of multiple secondary data sources were used to validate data. The findings of the study were presented in chapter four and in this chapter; the conclusions, discussions and recommendations will be discussed.

As the researcher analyzed and coded the data through a process identified by Bogdan and Biklin (2007), the researcher was able to identify three categories relating to the human resource, financial, and political challenges. Such challenges, described by McGuire (2002) stand between a public manager managing change effectively and failing to meet expectations.

## Conclusions

Within each category, themes emerged. First, the researcher confirmed the assumption the organization was suffering from an economic recession. All participants recognized the economic recession as the most critical issue facing the organization. Within the category of human resources, three themes emerged: interpersonal skills, negotiating, and taking action. Strategic thinking and accurate data emerged as themes under the financial category. Finally, political impacts and managing upward were identified as themes under the category of political considerations. The researcher identified the perceived skills necessary to implement successful change efforts in response to an economic recession. The researcher also identified values, which were expressed by each of the participants as necessary expectations for successful relationships. Values each participant also identified included honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy. These values were consistent in all categories and themes.

The conceptual model used to guide the study in Chapter one identified different management strategies that could be utilized in a public organization as a public manager is maneuvering through a complicated experience, best described as “managing white water” (Kramer, 2007, p. 39). The skills and values identified by participants in this study align with those concepts identified in the model. A key component in NPM for example, involves an environment where “employers and clients trust practitioners” (Evetts, 2009, p. 248). Studies of NPM show that the introduction of change efforts to employees may result in feelings of threat and fear, as well as, a loss of control and inadequacy (Scharitzer et al., 2000) leading to an impetus for a public manager to utilize key interpersonal skills in order to manage relationships.

Within the concepts of incrementalism (Lindblom, 1959) and beta change efforts (Rothwell et al., 2009), the researcher identified a close connection to the participants' responses related to managing upward and strategic thinking under the categories of political and financial considerations respectively. Each of the participants recognized the difficulty in creating a consensus amongst the seven elected officials. Secondary data sources, such as briefing notes, and observations from private briefings showed that the public manager often gained consensus by managing upward and gaining consensus through incremental approaches. A good example of this is the reduction of force that occurred in the organization in 2009. The public manager moved deliberately over the course of several months to finally gain a consensus for approval of the reduction in force; a management action that may not have been possible without an incremental approach. This example (more clearly explained in appendix b (Summary of [Change Initiative])) also demonstrates a system or strategic approach to managing expectations.

Within the context of the case study, the researcher found a significant departure from expectations or a beta change (Rothwell et al., 2009). Secondary data sources, such as a memo from the public manager indicating a revenue shortfall moving from \$150 million to more than \$400 million generated a great deal of discussion in public meetings during the weeks and months preceding and following the public manager's presentation to the elected officials. The responses from participants in the interviews contrasted with public discourse in public meetings prior to the realization of the significant decrease in revenue proved that the participants had changed their expectations of government. Expectations that originally included a proactive response but a reluctance to change now included an expectation of a strategic approach or out of the box thinking that could have resulted in

privatization, an application of NPM (Evetts, 2009) of public services as was indicated by participant 3.

Gamma or transformational change (Rothwell et al., 2009) appears to be an expectation by at least two of the participants. One participant referenced negotiating and taking action skills to the fundamental shift of creating a new employee; an employee who would receive fundamentally different benefits than current employees. Another participant discussed the potential of outsourcing services, reducing staff, and changing the model of government. The participant referenced a departure from the current model of service delivery – a transformational change or a move from incremental change to a transformational change in a very short time period in order to manage the financial situation.

The results of this study are generalizable as certain aspects of the research may be applied to other public organizations with elected officials. Evers and Wu (2006) state that there are three important factors that exist that allow for generalization: “external factors such as language and culture, the researcher’s knowledge of the external factors and a trajectory of inquiry through time and changing circumstances” (p. 524). Although the information collected represents only one organization, it is during a time where most public organizations in the United States are identifying budget reduction strategies that require significant amounts of change.

#### The Researcher’s Perspective

The researcher was involved in the change initiative process from its inception. In the beginning, the team members (in house) looked at the process as a way to increase efficiency in government and focus on the priorities of the elected officials. The

intentions of everyone involved were to produce the best product possible that included recommendations that were best for the community and the organization. As the team is now moving into their third year of evaluative efforts, the sentiment has morphed into one of identifying options that will not damage the community and are politically and financially reasonable. The continued scrutiny from the media, the employees, and most prominently the labor unions seems to have a degrading effect on the team members and the overall process.

### **Discussion**

Elected officials were interviewed for this study. Results indicated that their primary focus was on the relationships with the public manager and on trust and relationships with leaders in the organization. Their subsequent expectations of performance were focused on values and relationships; expected strategic planning skills and interpersonal skills; such as building consensus, ability to motivate, and receptivity. Although there was discussion about strategic thinking, a more prominent theme was the public manager's ability to have positive relationships and the skills associated with maintaining those relationships. In the most basic terms, the elected officials relied heavily on the public manager and honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy became a consistent theme in interviews and throughout the secondary sources. One participant explained this sentiment.

The Managers and the Deputy Managers and those that are in her/his department they are professionals. The elected really are not professionals, and I think that is the distinction, we really are not trained to be an [elected official]. I didn't know what an [elected official] was till I sat up here, then I wasn't sure what an [elected

official] was until I adapted to it, whereas a manager or assistant Manager, deputy manager, or department head, they got through the ranks and they know the way bureaucracy runs. But they have to make it run in a fashion that protects elected so the elected have public approval and probation by the public and without that they are not going to be re-elected and the managers won't have their jobs long.

At the conclusion of this study, the data and results from researching the organization led the researcher to believe that the skills perceived by elected officials as critical for managing change still remain difficult to refine for further study. The impetus of discovery for this study occurred after the interviews had taken place and in a public meeting, when one of the participants referred to the organization as a "patient in critical condition." The participant was using the metaphor to explain how he/she felt the organization was moving from a serious to a critical condition based on the current status of labor negotiations.

This patient metaphor led the researcher to review literature outside of the identified scope of study to explore how expectations are translated into skills for physicians. This is not to assume that a public manager position is similar to that of a physician but that the experience of an elected official may be like that of an individual going to a physician to diagnose and provide relief from a symptom. The patient may not understand the various systems that make up the human body, but intuitively or because of a symptom they will go to a physician for help. The relationship between the patient and physician leaves the patient in a very vulnerable situation where they must trust the physician to take all of their skills, knowledge, and experience to cure the problem. A patient may not understand what skills were needed and may not care where the physician received



training; if the physician diagnoses and cures the symptom, a level of trust may be established.

The study suggests that unmet expectations may stem directly from how physicians communicate with patients regarding their requests for help. Quite simply, patients with an unmet expectation for medical information or a particular type of clinical resource usually had asked (or thought they had asked) unsuccessfully for that information or resource. This finding suggests that when patients make requests based on expectations that are not realistic or medically valid, the physician needs to address the underlying beliefs and worries that motivated the request in the first place (Hooper, R., Rona, R., French, C., Jones, M., Wessely S., Mar. 2005, p. 30).

Drawing reference to the metaphor of the organization moving from serious to critical condition, the elected officials have been given information that indicate the organization is continuing to see significant declines in revenue. They have already made decisions that effectively eliminate programs and services for which they will be held accountable to the public; and for which they are not necessarily educationally prepared to do. Those decisions impact a public organization that contains functions such as parks and recreation, courts, fire, police, public works, streets and sanitation, sewage treatment, etc. The various systems of a public organization may seem overwhelming to these elected officials much like the systems of a body may be to a patient with no functional experience or background. The elected officials, however, remain in a vulnerable position with expectations that the public manager will adhere to strict and defined core values of honesty, integrity, consistency, and accuracy in addition to demonstrated skills

of strategic thinking and interpersonal skills such as consensus building, ability to motivate, and receptivity.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the researcher's observations, the elected official's degree of reliance upon a public manager is high. The field of Public administration in the United States has not been widely studied and it was noted the development of professional skills has been given insufficient attention.

The concept of comparing a public manager to a physician may help to identify advances that can be made in the field of Public administration. For example, it was discussed earlier that a typical Public administration program in the United States includes coursework and academic study. Administrators of Public administration programs may consider moving to a different paradigm that includes clinical rotations in different areas of government in addition to coursework and academic study. The ability to maintain positive relationships with the elected officials and the related social skills may be addressed in an academic environment; however the level of detail needed to understand, explain, and change (if needed) any one of the programs and services offered by a public organization may require a more in-depth working knowledge of those functions and may facilitate a comprehensive approach to strategic thinking and impact a higher degree of accuracy and consistency. Based on the ambiguous nature of critical skills, the researcher recommends further research be conducted; more specifically a mixed methods approach, using qualitative and quantitative data that includes public managers from multiple jurisdictions. A study that includes soliciting data from

successful public managers and/or critical department directors may help to hone in on specific skills they have developed in their positions.

The public organization studied is dynamic and functions with hundreds of programs and services. The elected officials feel it is their responsibility to provide those programs and services to the public and they are reliant upon the information and recommendations provided by the public manager and/or the public manager's staff. The elected officials interviewed for this study suggested that the critical skills most needed by a public manager are interpersonal and strategic thinking skills, as well as, core values related to honesty and integrity. The results of this study would suggest that because of the complex nature of government, elected officials are in a vulnerable position that requires a public manager to diagnose well, communicate with integrity, and resolve problems with the least amount of impact. Those foundational traits may best be developed through an integrated training approach of coursework and practical application

## REFERENCES

- Barzelay, M., & Gallego, R. (2006). From "new institutionalism" to "institutional processualism": Advancing knowledge about public management policy change. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 19(4), 531-557.
- Behn, R. D. (1998, May/June ). What right do public managers have to lead? *Public Administration Review*, 58(3), 209-224.
- Berg, B. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bohn, R. (2000). Stop fighting fires. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(4), 82-91.
- Bordia, P., Hobman, E., Jones, E., Gallois, C., & Callan, V. (2004). Uncertainty during organizational change: Types, consequences, and management strategies. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 8(4), 507-532.
- Boyd, N. (2009). Implementing large-scale organization development and change in the states. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 33(2), 233-269.
- Bruce, F. R. (2007). *A shift in organizational culture* (Unpublished master's thesis). Royal Roads University, Ottawa, Canada.
- Bunker, K., & Wakefield, M. (2005). Changing workforce: Leading effectively when change is the norm. *The Public manager*, 34(4), 9-13.

- Campbell, C. (2007). Spontaneous adaptation in public management: An overview. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 20(3), 377-400.
- Chase, M. K. (1984). Bromides for public managers. *Kennedy School of Government Case Program*. President and Fellows of Harvard College. C16-84-586.0.
- Coe, C. (2008). Preventing local government fiscal crises: Emerging best practices. *Public Administration Review*, 68(4), 759-766.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Donahue, A., & O'Keefe, S. (2007). Universal lessons from unique events: Perspectives from Columbia and Katrina. *Public Administration Review*, 67(1), 77-81.
- Edwards, J., & Gregory, D. (1998). New executive competencies for leading change. *Public Manager*, 27(2), 41-44.
- Evetts, J. (2009). New professionalism and new public management: Changes, continuities and consequences. *Comparative Sociology*, 8, 247-266.
- Evers, C., & Wu, E. (2006). On generalizing from single case studies: Epistemological reflections. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40(4), 512-526.
- Farazmand, A. (2003). Chaos and transformation theories: A theoretical analysis with implications for organization theory and public management. *Public Organization Review*, 3, 339-372.
- Furterer, S., & Elshennawy, A. (2005). Implementation of TQM and lean Six Sigma tools in local government: A framework and a case study. *Total Quality Management*, 16(10), 1179-1191.

- Gay, L., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2006). *Educational research* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Gay, L., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Gergen, D., & Kellerman, B. (2003). Public leaders: Riding a new tiger. In J. Donahue & J. Nye Jr., *For the people: Can we fix public service?* (pp.13-28). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Grandy, C. (2009, December). The “efficient” public administrator: Pareto and a well-rounded approach to public administration. *Public Administration Review*, 69(6), 1115-1123.
- Groot, T. & Budding, T. (2008, February). New public management’s current issues and future prospects. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 24(1), 1-13.
- Hazlett, S. A., & Hill, F. (2000). Policy and practice: An investigation of organizational change for service quality in the public sector in Northern Ireland. *Total Quality Management*, 11(4/5&6), S515-S520.
- Heugens, P., & Schenk, H. (2004). Rethinking corporate restructuring. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 4(1), 87-101.
- Hicklin, A., & Godwin, E. (2009). Agents of change: The role of public managers in public policy. *The Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1), 13-20.
- Hooper, R., Rona, R., French, C., Jones, M., & Wessely S. (2005, March). Unmet expectations in primary care and the agreement between doctor and patient: A questionnaire study. *Health Expectations: An International Journal of Public Participation in Health Care & Health Policy*, 8(1), 26-33.

- Jamison, C. (2001). Passion and practice: Change agents living in an organization. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 24(1), 34-28.
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational reserach* (3rd ed.). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kramer, R. (2007). Leading change through action learning. *Public Manager*, 36(3), 38-44.
- Lester, W., & Krejci, D. (2007, December). Business "not" as usual: The national incident management system, federalism, and leadership. *Public Administration Review*, 67(s1), 84-93.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Lindblom, C. (1959). The science of "Muddling Through." *Source: Reprinted with permission from Public Administration Review* © 1959 by the American Society for Public Administration. 198-208.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1999). *Designing qualitative reserach*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Martinet, M. E. (2007). *Crisis management and local government*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach, CA.
- McGuire, M. (2002, September/October). Networks: Propositions on what managers do and why they do it. *Public Administration Review*, 62(5), 599-609.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Newland, C. A. (2003, September). The facilitative state, political executive aggrandizement, and public-service challenges. *Administration & Society*, 35, 379-407.
- Nixon, L. (2004, March). Change management: Theory and practice. Victoria police service. *Businessdate*, 12(1), 1-4.
- Noblet, A., Rodwell, J., & McWilliams, J. (2006). Organizational change in the public sector: Augmenting the demand control model to predict employee outcomes under new public management. *Work & Stress*, 20(4), 335-352.
- Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing government*. New York, NY: Addison West.
- Piotrowski, S., & Rosenbloom, D. (2002). Non-mission based values in results-oriented public management: The case of freedom of information. *Public Administration review*, 62(6), 643-657.
- Plano Clark, V. L., & Creswell, J. W. (2010). *Understanding reserach a consumers guide*. Boston: Merrill
- Rothwell, W. J., Stavros, J., Sullivan, R., & Sullivan, A. (2009). *Practicing organization development: A guide for leading change* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Saksvik, O., Tvedt, S. D., Nytro, K., Andersen, G. R., Andersen, K., Buvik, M. & Torvatn, H. (2007, July-September). Developing criteria for healthy organizational change. *Work & Stress*, 21(3), 243-263.
- Scharitzer, D., & Korunka, C. (2000). New public management: Evaluating the success of total quality management and change management interventions in public



- services from the employees' and customers' perspectives. *Total Quality Management*, 11(7), S941-S953.
- Shalala, D. E. (1998, July/August). Are large public organizations manageable? *Public Administration Review*, 58, 284-289.
- Shearer, C. (1999). *The evolution of organizational culture in the midst of leadership succession*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO.
- Skinner, D. (2004). Primary and secondary barriers to the evaluation of change: Evidence from two public sector organizations. *Evaluation*, 10(2), 135-154.
- Thompson, J. (1981, April). Helping line managers to be change agents. *Training and Development Journal*, 35(4), 52-56.
- Wilson, W. (1887, June). The study of administration. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2, 197-222.
- Wu, X, & He, J. (2009). Paradigm shift in public administration: Implications for teaching in professional training programs. *Public Administration Review*, 69, s21-s28.
- Yang, K. (2007). China's 1998 administrative reform and new public management: Applying a comparative framework. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 30(12-14), 1371-1392.
- Zeemering, E. (2008, July/August). Governing interlocal cooperation: City council interests and the implications for public management. *Public Administration Review*, 68(4), 731-741.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY TABLE OF KEY DATES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE [CHANGE INITIATIVE] PROCESS

March, 2008	The elected officials direct the public manager to conduct a [change initiative of all city operations based on a financial forecast of a [dollar figure] deficit over a five-year period.
March-October, 2008	A [change initiative] team is developed to review department recommendations for reducing the operating budget and determining opportunities to increase efficiencies in the organization.
October, 2008	The public manager and chief financial officer present to the elected officials a plan that incorporates organizational changes and efficiency options that do not eliminate full-time employees. The [change initiative] team maintains a vigorous meeting schedule to review implementation efforts and identify future efficiency options.
November, 2009	The public manager and chief financial officer present to the elected officials a five-year forecast with a deficit of over \$400 million. The presentation includes an immediate cost saving budget reduction strategy that includes the reduction of full-time positions. These efforts are still relating to the efficiency of the organization.
March, 2010	The public manager and chief financial officer present to the elected officials a balanced budget that incorporates the elimination of more than 140 full-time employees and significant reductions in most programs and services, including the elimination of some programs.
Future Dates	The organization

## APPENDIX B

### SUMMARY OF [CHANGE INITIATIVE]

[Change Initiative] 2008

In March, 2008 the Chief Financial Officer presented to the elected officials a revenue forecast that predicted a \$150 million dollar shortfall over a five year period. At that time, the elected officials directed staff to conduct a [change initiative], which included a review of all of the organizations programs and services to determine if they were still consistent with the organizations charter and mission. The public manager identified a Department Director to lead the effort and assigned two analysts to staff the project. In addition, the organization hired an outside consultant to provide a report on those items that could be made more efficient in the organization and to help facilitate the information gathering process.

The [change initiative] process included a review of the organizations operating budgets and all labor and non-labor costs associated with providing programs and services to the community. The review included a request to all Department Directors to identify and recommend:

- 1) Services and programs in their respective department that can be eliminated;  
and
- 2) Services and programs in other departments that can be eliminated; and
- 3) Services and programs throughout the City that can be made more efficient.

The request for information resulted in a significant amount of data that was provided to an [change initiative] Team, which was comprised of the following individuals:

- Public manager

- Deputy public managers (3)
- Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Director
- Director of Human Resources and Deputy Director
- [change initiative] Director and two analysts

Between June and October 2008, the [change initiative] Team reviewed recommendations from the departments, conducted focus panels with department staff to more critically analyze reorganizations and strategic service change options, and worked with the consultant to validate any conclusions. During this time period, the consultant conducted an independent review of the operating budget and submitted a report that indicated that labor costs was the primary source for the organizations financial challenges.

During this time at the organization, the public manager worked with staff in the Department of Human Resources to conduct focus panels with randomly-selected, line staff. The purpose of the focus panels was to solicit cost-saving ideas that could contribute to the overall [change initiative] process. The public manager also communicated to the organizations staff via “Meet the Manager” Meetings for all staff “Appointive Meetings” for appointive and executive staff, and “Management Team Meetings” for individuals in a supervisory position. Included in the outreach effort were multiple emails from the public manager to the general employee population. The public manager also directed staff to work with the respective labor organizations to negotiate a lower cost per unit of labor.

[Change initiative] 2008 Results

In October of 2008, the public manager presented to the elected officials in a facilitated session 106 recommendations in the following categories: 1) Organizational restructuring, 2) strategic service changes, 3) efficiencies that do not eliminate full-time employees; and 4) efficiencies that do eliminate full-time employees. The [change initiative] consultant also provided a report with recommendations that the elected officials adopt all of the public manager recommendations, as well as, presented the critical need to work with the labor unions to negotiate a lower cost per unit of labor.

Recommendations that were implemented included the consolidation of all public information functions, graphics functions, and the consolidation of two of the City's departments. No filled positions were affected by any of these actions. While the [change initiative] process was moving forward with implementation of the options approved by the Council, the organization offered early retirement incentives and worked towards reducing the amount of more highly paid employees. The elected officials adopted all of the public manager's recommendations and directed staff to report to the Council on bi-annual basis revisions, if needed, of a 5 year financial forecast, as well as, the status of implementation of the approved recommendations.

[Change initiative] 2009

The public manager and Chief Financial Officer made subsequent presentations to the elected officials updating them on the status of the [change initiative] implementation and the organizations financial situation. In November of 2009, the Chief Financial Officer reported to the elected officials that the budget deficit over five years had grown to more than \$400 million dollars. The public manager presented to the elected officials a recommendation that the organization take immediate action to address a budget shortfall

in the current fiscal year of eight million and then being a budget cutting effort that would result in a balanced budget for the organizations 2011 fiscal year. During that time, the [change initiative] team continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis and review the status of implementation efforts, directed continuing efforts to provide incentive for early-retirement, and identified strategies for moving forward into the next fiscal year.

In November of 2009, the public manager presented to the elected official a plan for balancing the 2010 budget, which included the elimination of many full-time positions. This particular round of reductions included 17 full-time employees. The total amount of positions that had been eliminated over the past two years was more than 300. The reduction effort eliminated positions primarily in the development functions of the organization as workload had been decreased and the reductions were attributed to the budget deficit and a reduction in workload.

The November presentation included a description to the elected officials of an official request that was sent to all labor unions to reduce their labor costs by [xx] percent. In this organization, the cost of labor for more than 80% of the workforce required the mutual consent of both the organization and the labor union. There are four labor unions working in the organization. The public manager indicated that the organization would be negotiating in good faith with all labor unions to reduce the cost of labor per unit; and if negotiations were unsuccessful, significant changes would be necessary for the organization to maintain a balanced budget. The public manager reiterated the stated goals of the [change initiative] process, which was to:

- Maintain fiscal integrity; and
- Sustain critical services; and

- Preserve jobs.

Over the course of the year, the [change initiative] process had been modified slightly to incorporate a changing model for collecting information and making decisions. The public manager directed a deputy public manager to lead the process and one analyst to assist. Included in the [change initiative] working group were a Financial Analyst and a Personnel Analyst. The [change initiative] Team continued to meet on a regular basis and was responsible for identifying appropriate recommendations for the elected officials to consider that would result in a balanced budget. At one point, the amount of reductions identified was more than \$70 million. The modified process included providing the Department Directors a budget that was significantly lower than what they had experienced in the past (equivalent to 2006 levels). The Department Directors were required to submit a budget that met their target as well as impact statements about the programs, services, and positions that would need to be eliminated as a result of meeting their budget.

While Department Directors were developing budgets and identifying potential impacts, the public manager conducted a communication campaign with employees. Employee communication consisted of “Meet the Manager” Meeting, for all employees, and “Management Team Meetings” for all supervisory employees. The public manager also conducted two Employee Town Hall Meeting (one of which was taped and posted to the Intranet) in which employees were provided opportunities to ask questions and provide suggestions for balancing the budget. The Employee Town Hall Meetings were attended by approximately 10% of the workforce. The public manager also posted video messages and included in a weekly update to the organization a description of the

organizations budget situation, newspaper clippings from examples of budget cutting in other organizations around the country, and the status of union negotiations and the impact of labor on the budget.

While the [change initiative] process was moving forward and employee communication was getting a higher than normal response, the public manager also began an extensive community communication and engagement process. The campaign consisted of a survey conducted by the local university to measure the general attitudes and feelings about the services the organization provides or should be providing. The second phase of the process included a focus panel process in which the local university met with five groups from geographically dispersed neighborhoods to discuss their attitudes and feelings about the services the organization should be providing. The final phase consisted of a series of town hall meetings in each of the wards of the elected officials. These town hall meetings provided a forum by which the public manager and the respective elected officials discussed the budget situation and asked for questions, suggestions, and/or concerns regarding the organizations response. Despite receiving some media coverage and being advertised in conspicuous locations, the majority of participants, by about 40% included employees who belong to the labor unions within the organization.

#### [Change initiative] 2009 Results

In March of 2010, the public manager and Chief Financial Officer presented to the elected officials a plan to balance the 2011 budget that included the reduction of 146 full-time employees, eliminated additional vacancies, reduced staff support in all areas of the organization, and required the organization stop providing specific programs and



services. The presentation included general comments about a reduction in services throughout the organization resulting in longer-lines, longer times to process, reduced or eliminated services, and a requirement to start the [change initiative] process for 2012 now as that budget was predicted to have a shortfall of close to \$70 million.

The discussion with the elected officials also included a description of the status of union negotiations, which up to that point had not yielded any offers that the elected officials has considered in their decision making process. The elected officials expressed their concern and disappointment that the labor unions would allow other employees to be laid off while maintaining a negotiated cost of labor. It was repeated many times in the public and private conversations that if the labor unions had conceded the requested reduction in the cost of labor, reductions in full-time staff may not need to occur.

At the conclusion of this study, the elected officials had approved a tentative budget that balanced the budget with a reduction of staffing, reductions in services, and the elimination of certain programs; no labor concessions were included. The final budget for the organization is due in one month and the elected officials and management team have lost hope that the labor unions will concede and the positions can be restored.

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/GUIDE

#### Participant Selection and Interview Process:

1. The participants selected for the study will be chosen because of their intimate knowledge of the goals and expectations of the initiatives, as well as, their role in the overall success of the organization. The criteria used to select the individuals for the interviews will be as follows:
  - The individual must have been impacted by the change efforts; and
  - The individual was responsible for either policy and/or operational decisions; and
  - The individual played a role in the initiative.
2. The individuals who meet this criteria include the seven elected officials, who are the policy making board of the organization.
3. The interviews will take place at a location of their choosing.
4. The interviews will be recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. The transcription will be given to the participant for member checking with a request to return with suggested changes in a week and prior to including it in the study.
5. After the participant agrees to the interview, a packet which includes a confirmation of the appointment; a general description of the study [A definition of change will be provided for context]; the consent form and the questionnaire will be sent several days ahead of the scheduled interview.
6. After general introductions, the researcher will provide an overview of the research study, its purpose and will read the consent form to the participant. After which the participant will be asked to sign it.
7. The researcher will determine if there are any questions/comments/concerns prior to turning on the recording equipment.
8. The researchers will begin the recording by asking the participant to state their name and position.

Following the interview, the researcher will turn-off the recording and thank the participant.

9. The transcript from the interview will be typed and forwarded to the participant with a waiver form and an approval form to be signed.  
The researcher will ask the following descriptive questions:

- a. **Can you describe your current position?**
    - i. How long have you been serving in this capacity?
  - b. **What is your educational background?**
1. **Please describe what you feel are the most critical issues your organization is/has been facing:**
    - a. What do you feel is your role in helping the organization solve these problems?

**[Based on the participant's answer, the researcher will ask these questions]:**

2. **With regard to the issues you described above, who [which positions] do you feel are the most critically needed to deal with the issues currently facing the organization?**
  - a. Why?
3. **Please describe the skills you feel are critical to solve [list individual issues] by [position]?**
  - a. By skills, you could describe educational background, experience in other organizations, personality, knowledge of general government, or other skills you think are important.
4. **What components of leadership do you feel are the most critical to any change effort (p.22)?**
  - a. How do you view relationships in the change process (p. 23)?
5. **What human resource factors should be considered while implementing change?**
  - a. Political?
  - b. Financial?
6. **What do you see as the role of the [public manager/department directors] in an environment where budgets are declining?**
7. **What skills do you feel are needed by the [public manager/department directors] to manage an organization where budgets are declining?**
  - a. How are these skills different from those skills needed in a time where there are relatively fewer financial challenges?
8. **What skills are needed by the [public manager/department directors] for implementing new policies?**

APPENDIX D  
INVITATION LETTER

Good morning,

I would like to request a one-hour interview with each of your bosses. I am finishing up a Masters Degree from UNLV and will be writing my Thesis on Managing Change. The title of my thesis is: *A Change Management Effort in One Large Public Organization: An Exploration of the Perceptions of Needed Skills for Managing Change.*

As part of my study, I have identified interviewing elected officials as a source of information. I have included the consent form that describes the interview process and identifies some of the information that may be important. Once I have a scheduled interview, I will follow-up with some additional information, including the questions I will be asking.

I'm hoping to get an interview sometime in the next couple of weeks. Please let me know if that is possible.

Thank you.

## APPENDIX E



### Department of Educational Leadership

---

**TITLE OF STUDY: A Change Management Effort in One Large Public Organization: An Exploration of the Perceptions of Needed Skills for Managing Change.**

**INVESTIGATOR(S): Cecilia Maldonado-Daniels (PI) and Brian Knudsen (Student Researcher)**

**CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 702-895-3410 (PI) or 702-575-7759 (Student Researcher)**

---

#### Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is designed to examine the perceived critical skills needed by leaders for the implementation of a change management effort in one large public organization as the result of the economic challenges beginning in 2008. Due to the influence and responsibilities you have with this organization, you are invited to participate in this study.

#### Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because we believe that you have direct influence in the change efforts taking place with this organization. We also believe that you have been or will be impacted by the change effort; you are responsible for either policy and/or operational decisions; and, you have and will continue to play a role in the change initiative.

#### Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Participate in a one to two hour face to face interview where the interviewer will ask you questions related to your perceptions of the skills that are needed by leaders in a large public organization who are currently implementing change initiatives during a financial downturn. We are also interested the role you play in that process.

### Benefits of Participation

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn the essential skill sets needed by leaders in public organizations to manage a large public organization during times of economic downturn. Furthermore, we hope to better understand how public officials influence this process.

### Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. While none of the interview questions are invasive, you may not want to answer some questions. I am available to provide additional detail about the reasoning behind the questions as well as clarifying any of your concerns. The risks associated with this study are no more than what you would normally experience in your position.

### Cost /Compensation

There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take no more than two hours of your time. You will not be compensated for your time. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas may not provide compensation or free medical care for an unanticipated injury sustained as a result of participating in this research study.

### Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Cecilia Maldonado-Daniels at (702) 895-3410. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.**

### Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

### Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for three years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be eliminated.

### Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Participant Name (Please Print)

***By signing below, I agree to be audio taped.***

---

---

Signature of Participant

Date

***Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approval Stamp is missing or is expired.***

APPENDIX F

MEMBER CHECK FORM

The attached document is a transcript of the interview you completed with me regarding my research about change management in public organizations. Will you please review and make any changes you feel are necessary. Any changes you make will be reviewed by the researcher. Also, if you feel there is additional information that you would like to include, please do so on a separate sheet of paper. If you have any questions or feel the transcript does not reflect our conversation, please let me know. Otherwise, please sign this form and forward back to me.

Thank you

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that this transcript is an accurate description of the conversation I had with the researcher.



VITA

Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Brian Paul Knudsen, MPA

Degrees:

Masters of Public Administration, 2004  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Bachelors of Science, Health Education 2003  
Bachelors of Science, Public Relations, 2003  
University of Utah, Salt Lake City

Thesis Title: A Change Management Effort in One Large Public Organization: An  
Exploration of the Perception of Needed Skills for Managing Change.

Thesis Examination Committee:

Chairperson Dr. Cecilia Maldonado-Daniels, Ph. D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Yeonsoo Kim, Ph. D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Sterling Saddler, Ph. D.  
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Lori Olafson, Ph. D.