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1. Project/Subproject Number

2. Contract/Grant Number

3. Publication Date

4. Document Title/Translated Title

Training for Senior Managers in Government
Local Government: An International Experience

5. Author (s)

1.
2.
3.

6. Contributing Organisation (s)

7. Pagination

8. Report Number

9. Sponsoring A.I.D. Office

10. Abstract (optional - 250 word limit)

11. Subject Keywords (optional)

1. 4.
2. 5.
3. 6.

12. Supplementary Notes

13. Submitting Official

14. Telephone Number

15. Today's Date

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Training for Senior Managers in Government

Local Government: An International Experience
Akims and Secretaries of Maslikhats from
Northern Kazakhstan, Karaganda, and Kostanai Oblasts

1 – 24 November, 2002
Tucson, Safford, & Flagstaff, Arizona
Washington, DC



Background

Over the past 10 years, more than 600 local government officials participated in week-long seminars conducted in Kazakhstan and more 120 senior city, rayon, oblast leaders, and staff of the Presidential Administration of Kazakhstan were selected for internship programs in government management conducted in the US. In the past, these local government training programs were funded through the US Department State (USIA). In this the 10th offering, USAID sponsored the program for first time using the same core expertise of the previous years. The seminar phase was held in Petropavlovsk in July 2002 with participants the three northern oblasts. Of those, 13 were selected for the internship phase covered in this report.



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Vladimir Kolomiitsev,
Presidential Administration,
and **Saule Burbayeva**
Deputy City Akim,
with **Congressman Jim
Kolbe**, Head of
Subcommittee on Foreign

Over the years participants from every oblast in Kazakhstan have participated in these training programs. The collaborating organization within the Government of Kazakhstan is the Civil Service and Personnel Policy Office of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Personal Policy Office coordinates the participation of government officials, authorizes leave from duty to attend, provides logistical support, provides financial support for lodging and domestic travel, and provides the training venue. The Personnel Policy Office is very supportive of these local government training programs and views the alumni collectively as a cadre of individuals targeted for promotion. This vast network of graduates is a potential force for positive change in the country.

Training Methodology

The model used for the internship program is based on extensive use of site visits, i.e., meeting with US colleagues holding similar positions and technical experts in their area of interest; adult-learning sessions focused on management and leadership skill development; experience America activities which provide a social and cultural context for the participants; and the development of Action Plans--a cycle of assessment, writing, and presentation skills development.

Report Format

The following section is a summary of this year's internship program. More detailed insight into the activities and affect each theme had on the thinking of individual participants is included under Action Plans, and the section "Final Thoughts" concludes with the promise of dynamic change through these dedicated government officials and the Foundation's recommendations for future programs.

"In a short time here I can see that each level of government knows what its role is and what it should do. Division of power is very important. We need more partnership and cooperation between different levels of government, rather than control from the higher levels"

Program Participant

Executive Summary

Training for Senior Managers in Government was conducted at sites in both Arizona and Washington, DC to reflect the needs of the participants. The interns in this year's program came from the three northern oblasts of Kazakhstan which represent the main agricultural areas of the country, in addition to several urban centers. The program began in Tucson, Arizona for content related to city management and social services; moved to rural farming communities throughout Arizona; and concluded with meetings in Washington, DC with Congressional staff, SBA, USDA, U.S. Wheat Associates, and the National League of Cities.



Vladimir Koloda and **Alexandr Nagaitsev**, both Rayon Akims meet with **Tucson Mayor, Bob Walkup** (center)

LEARNING ABOUT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT



City Ward services presented by City Council Representative and staff members



The Speaker of the State Senate covered the legislative process



Discussing Structures of Government in the U.S. Congress

Throughout the training program several philosophical threads were woven into the daily sessions. These included: government serving the needs of citizens, governmental accountability, democratic processes, separation of governmental powers, involvement of citizens in society, and local level response to local level problems. The main focus areas included:

- ❖ **Local Government Administration:** The entire realm of what city, county, and state officials do to meet local needs was covered through meetings with city managers, mayors, department heads and staff.
- ❖ **Transparency and Public Participation:** The participants observed open meetings, learned about contracting procedures, and how citizens are involved in nearly every area of local government.
- ❖ **The Roles of the Non-Governmental Sector and Associations:** The strength, diversity, and breadth of services provided by NGOs and associations reinforced their separate roles as players in civil society.
- ❖ **Budget, Finance, and Taxation:** The development of local budgets in Kazakhstan is a major concern of local government leaders. The budget process, use of local level bonds, and the administration of tax policies were covered in detail at the city and county levels.
- ❖ **Economic Development and Rural Issues:** Private business operation, government-business relations, and special rural interests were met through extensive time spent in rural America.
- ❖ **Action Plan Development:** The development of Action Plans by local government leaders a hallmark of the

"We were aware that division of powers between different levels of government was a nice theory. But we didn't know how it would look in practice. We could clearly see that division of responsibilities actually adds to efficiency and is an ideal structure. Having clear lines of budget, revenue, and expenditure authority at the local level was very

local government training programs since their inception. The participants were challenged to assess their own position in government, and to develop an Action Plan to address problems or critical areas where an impact can be made. The program culminated with the presentation of the participant's own Action Plans in seminars conducted for their colleagues in preparation for introducing change when they return home to their positions.

Local Government Administration

While the local government leaders from Kazakhstan had heard about the separate responsibilities of various government levels during the seminar attended in Petropavlovsk, and had known of this basic feature of American government from their studies, they were absolutely stunned by clarity of the division of power, responsibility, and taxing authority between government entities. Throughout the program the participants how different levels of government work together, cooperate, battle, and collaborate to obtain the resources they require and provide the services citizens.

The participants met with city managers of cities ranging in population 10,000 to 450,000 residents. The professional management of administrative functions and the separation of administration duties from legislative function were of great interest to the group. The role of the service in local government was also a topic of intense interest. The to protect departmental level officials from political administration changes imminent sense to the local level leaders from Kazakhstan. (One of the areas their administrations are dealing with is that of attracting and retaining highly qualified staff and department heads at the local levels of government in Kazakhstan).

A wide range of local government services were examined in detail including discussions of technical management as well as issues related finance of departments, departmental budgeting, personnel management, and the pervasive use of computer and information technologies. Of particular interest were city and county departments responsible for the functions of: potable water and wastewater treatment, solid waste management, electric power generation/supply, and rural road construction and maintenance.

The representative nature of city councils and of county supervisors provided a truly eye-opening how local governments understand and use their positions to represent their constituents. The fact these local level representatives have open-door and are willing to meet with any and all constituents extremely impressive. This look at grassroots representation of citizen concerns went a long way to modify concepts on local government administration. The fact that local governments must operate on balanced budgets and that voter approval for changing tax rates must be gained through a public vote was truly astonishing for the government leaders from Kazakhstan. The fact that local representatives are elected and not professionals at administration was also amazing. Examples of representatives they met included farmers, business owners, and a retired teacher.



Learning about the functions of local government, Tucson Solid Waste Department



Department Head, Eliseo Garza (wearing tie), has also participated in programs in

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"Each person who has come here on the AZ-KZ program can contribute to decentralization in Kazakhstan. We need to lobby for the right to solve local problems at the local level."
Program Participant

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Transparency and Public Participation

The transparency we observed during the City Council meeting was extremely impressive; in our system it would have been done very differently.
Program

Attendance at a Tucson City Council meeting was a tremendous awareness builder regarding the meaning of public participation as well as transparency in local government management. The legislative function of city government is undertaken in public, with attendance of interested citizens, and in front of television cameras. The fact that members of the City Council may not even gather in a quorum unless it is in the public forum of a City Council meeting was a surprise. The interaction of the mayor with citizens during the council meeting provided a positive example of the mutual respect vis-à-vis the public and local political leadership. Items of note in the operation of the Council meeting included: opening with a prayer offered by invited clergyman, reciting of the pledge of allegiance

("patriotism" and all that it entails is always of interest to government leaders from Kazakhstan), the use of a printed agenda which is available to the public, the process of voting, conducting hearings of opposing sides of issues (including public presentations by police officers), and the process of allowing public comment by anyone who wants to speak in front of the Council.

Discussions on the electoral process by both the former Mayor of Tucson and local head of county elections, observation of Americans voting at a local polling place, and participation in "victory celebrations" (whether the party candidates were victorious or not) highlighted the extensive degree of public participation in government. How integrated representative democracy is in American Culture was reinforced in the strongest terms by the participants' observation of some 15,000 local government elections held on 5 November, multiplied by the numbers of candidates, multiplied by the election committees and volunteers, and then the participation of city, county, and state elections agencies involved in the process.

The participants from Kazakhstan often mentioned and described in positive terms what they had learned about citizen participation from their visits, observations, and sessions conducted throughout the training program. On literally dozens of occasions the participants stated that they too would institute open budget hearings, modify their openness to the public, and interact more openly with the media in the future. These concepts--openness and citizen participation--did not strike the participants as alien, rather they reinforced and provided concrete examples of how openness can be a positive experience, rather than a confrontational one.

The Roles of the Non-Governmental Sector and Associations

The role of NGOs in American society made a powerful impact on the local government leaders from Kazakhstan. The means by which local governments contract for services from NGOs, and the means of releasing proposals and working with NGOs on a social partnership basis was of great interest and sparked many ideas and plans on how similar activities could be replicated in Kazakhstan. The participants observed associations at work in nearly every part of the American society, from volunteer firemen, to elderly assistance organizations, to domestic violence prevention



Observing the voting process, November 5 General Election



Clarifying the process, "just exactly who can vote,"



Meeting with the staff of the National League of Cities in Washington, DC

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Getting ready to tour and meet with the management staff of a rural electric cooperative

and women’s shelters, to associations organized to provide funding to disadvantaged segments of the society through micro-loans. Exciting discussions, debates, and assessment of “governments’ role in society” reinforced the separation of state and civil society.

The role of private non-profit corporations swept the imaginations of the members of the delegation. While much exposure to NGOs in the social sector occurred during the program, the participants were intrigued by the role of NGO cooperatives in the ownership and operation of small rural-based electric companies. Free association of individuals and groups as one of our basic guaranteed freedoms was reinforced time and again through the duration of the program. The participants demonstrated interest in the constitutional basis of “freedom of association” and in-depth

discussions of the First Amendment of the constitution took place.

Budget, Finance, and Taxation

“We saw that city governments have 100% budget independence, the budget must be balanced by law, and the city budget is open to the public. In our system only a limited number of people have access to the budget. Even some of our elected officials do not have access to the budaet in their reasion.”

Extensive review and reiteration of the separation of taxation authority among the different levels of government was reinforced as the program progressed. The concept that revenue sharing occurs from the top level of government to the lower levels was especially astounding when the participants came to understand that there are no payments made from lower forms of government to higher levels; i.e.,

the City of Tucson does not “pay into the budget of the State, nor does the State pay into the budget of the Federal Government.” Rather, revenue sharing from State and Federal funds account for approximately 15% of Tucson’s budget. Both the Operational and Capital budgets of two different cities were reviewed in depth, as well as one county budget. The participants learned about the bonding process for long-term obligations and learned as well of the primacy of the revenue taxation methodology (sales taxes) as the primary revenue source of cities with property tax as the primary source county funding.

The philosophical base of taxation from an American local government perspective was shared with the participants. The participants were to assess the tax system they inherited from the Soviet Union, and the assumption they held that taxation is a primary form of tribute-- a payment to be made without expectation for an explicit exchange of services. During the program the participants were able to observe a direct link between taxes collected and services rendered. The open reporting to the citizenry on budget issues was of interest, and was admired, by the participants. This program provided a strong initial exposure to budget, finance and taxation, however much more time to cover these subjects in fine detail would be needed to assist these communities change.



Graham County Board of Supervisors review county budget with Kazakhstan delegation

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Economic Development and Rural Issues



A model of local government and private developers working together to

Economic development was of paramount interest to the participants. Extremely high marks were given to the meetings and sessions dealing with a federally-recognized micro-loan program in Tucson and meetings with the Small Business Administration in Washington. Of particular interest were the revolving loan programs which continually reinvested financial resources in small and medium sized businesses. These loan programs demonstrated both federal and local funding contributions to business development loan programs.

Since this program was conducted for local government leaders from northern Kazakhstan, a portion of the program was devoted to issues common to leaders from rural areas. Visits were made to farms and food processing facilities. The participants were surprised how the farmers at the local level had

a wide discretion of what they could do on their own land. In addition, all of the farms visited included product marketing for the products they raised. The emphasis on production of high quality products was interest as well.



Askarbek Mustafin
Rayon Akim
Alfiya Solovyova
Secretary Maslikhat
Petropavlovsk City

While in Washington the participants met with leaders of U.S. Wheat Associates the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The participants were impressed with the steps that the growers association were undertaking to assist its members. complicated price supports and subsidies provided by USDA to a wide range of farmers and commodity groups was almost numbing (one comment from the participants suggest that; "you have developed the communism here that we tried to for so many years." It was agreed by the staff of USDA (the Farm Service Agency) that the "cheap food policy" of the US and the support programs of the EU are distorting the international marketplace for agriculture products and that it will make it difficult for Kazakhstan to compete on the world stage in the marketing of grains. (This year begins a six year program to support wheat prices in the U.S. with a direct subsidy of \$125/metric ton).

Another of the special issues of interest to the participants was education, particularly vocational education. A visit to a high school vocational-agriculture and vocational-work programs was most impressive and lead the participants to call for changes in some of their own educational programs at home.



Visiting a Primary School



With High School Vocational Students

Action Plan Development

As participants made site visits to governmental departments, private businesses, and the NGO sector, they also processed what they learned. assessment process focused on: "How can we apply what we learned at our own level of government administration?" Topics developed into Plans by the participants are listed below:



Kudaibergen Bexultanov leading an **Action Plan Seminar**

This home, at Action

Making Local Government Responsive To Citizen Complaints (focus on water, power and transportation) Kudaibergen Bexultanov Secretary Maslikhat, Karaganda City

Microcredit and Economic Development (as a means of decreasing social tension) in Altynsarinsky Rayon	Alexandr Borodin Rayon Akim, Altynsarynsky
Opening the Youth Center	Saule Burbayeva Deputy City Akim, Rudny
Increasing Citizen Participation in Public Governance	Nicolay Dyatlov Secretary Maslikhat, Shal Akyn Rayon
Water supply and Solid Waste Management (finding a solution to the problem)	Vladimir Koloda Rayon Akim, Shal Akyn
Eliminating Unnecessary Responsibilities and Duplication in the Work of Organizational Development in the Administration of the President of Kazakhstan (reevaluating the role of central and local authorities)	Vladimir Kolomiitsev Deputy Head Organizational Department Presidential Administration
Opening a Secondary Education Campus for Students from Small Rural Schools	Vladimir Leonov Secretary Maslikhat, Mendykarinsky
Water is Life, Potable Water Supply	Askarbek Mustafin Rayon Akim, Zhambylsky
Utilization of Local Tax Revenues to Fund Rural Public Utilities and Services	Alexandr Nagaitsev Rayon Akim, Denisovsky
Addressing the Roads Issues on the Local Level	Serik Shaidarov Rayon Akim, Zhanaarkinsky
Involving Citizens of the City to Develop Social and Economic Programs	Alfiya Solovyova Secretary Maslikhat, Petropavlovsk City
Issuing of City Bonds	Mussa Tanabayev Deputy City Akim, Zhezkazgan City
Development of a Support Center for Women's Initiatives	Almakul Userova Secretary Maslikhat, Zhezkazgan City

Final Thoughts

The emphasis throughout the program was always on identifying and investigating applications that can be made in Kazakhstan from what was gained through the training program. Prior to their exit from the program the participants were asked one last time; *"what applications can you make in Kazakhstan?"* The participants all mentioned the implementation of their Action Plans (listed above) as their primary focus of future activities. In addition, the following areas were noted as opportunities for positive change in their communities:

NGOs and Local Government

"Take advantage of NGOs to provide social assistance programs. Local government should be working with NGOs in a cooperative and collaborative model."

"Communicate with our citizens and government leaders on the role and value NGOs play in the U.S."

"We now have additional authorities at the local level; we need to take advantage of this power to work closer with NGOs and the people. We need to see this relationship grow and strengthen."

"I plan to work with citizens, principals, teachers to multiply the knowledge I gained about NGOs and the role of government in society."

"We need to work with NGOs to creatively provide programs for elderly people and pensioners."

Small Business Support

"I will advise Parliament that a committee on small business be created to pay attention to the barriers, problems, and issues faced by small businesses in Kazakhstan."

"We need to promote micro-credit to strengthen the economy through small business development."

"At the local level we need to shorten the business registration process."

"Utilize the model of management we observed at the rural electric cooperative."

Decentralization and Democracy at the Local Level

"We need to work on our interrelations between the local legislative and executive branches, we are boiling in our own juice; we need to learn from the experience we gained in the U.S."

"The government (central government) requires too many reports from Akims, these must be reduced so that the Akims can pay attention to getting their job done for their citizens."

"Reduce the number of visits by State Inspectors to the oblasts and cities. The State Inspectors should not interfere with local businesses or the management responsibilities of the Akims."

"I am going to take what I learned about local government in the U.S. and provide input to the committee on local government in Parliament."

Mass Media

"I need a training program to learn how to work with the media. We as local government officials need to learn how to work with the media as an ally and not the enemy. But it is something we need to learn how to do."

Agriculture

"Farmers need to organize, to have their own associations, to have better relations with government."

"Farmers need assistance on operating their farms and integrating food processing into their operations."

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report is an attempt to paint a picture of a very dynamic training process; one in which both the training staff and the local government leaders from Kazakhstan take a very serious look at where local government currently is, and where its leaders want to take it in the future. Many US local government training programs are relegated to one-way communication, i.e., "this is what we do in the US and this is how we do it in the US" However our training process began in Petropavlovsk and continued throughout the US portion of the program with an examination of "why we do things in the US" comparing this to "why we do things in Kazakhstan" and resulting in a set of Action Plans that project into the future, "what changes we plan to implement in Kazakhstan." This process leads to examination of numerous assumptions held by both leadership and management, and from this a search and commitment to improve the current situation. Therefore, when participants return home to implement changes, they are not returning home to implement an American model, they are returning home to implement a new Kazakhstan model. This approach, and this ownership of the Action Plan development process by the participants has taught us through the years to pay close attention to these participant Action Plans.

This year, possibly as in no previous years since the establishment of an independent Kazakhstan, the participants have made it powerfully apparent topics on the minds of local government leaders, the Parliament, and the Presidential Administration of Kazakhstan are directed toward:

that the

- A strong desire and commitment to decentralization,
- a need to clarify the roles and the boundaries of local, oblast, and national government responsibilities,
- establishment of budget and revenue authority at the local level, and
- a strong call for the election of local Akims.



Vladimir Kolomiitsev,
Presidential Administration,
Mussa Tanabayev
Deputy City Akim
Zhezkazgan, **Askarbek**
Mustafin, Rayon Akim
at a small city water plant

These goals are all consistent with USAID/CAR's strategic objectives. The Arizona-Kazakhstan Partnership Foundation recommends that USAID/CAR take advantage of achievements of the participants in this program to consider investigating/supporting the following initiatives:

- Maintain contact and investigate supporting the reorganization of the Presidential Administration detailed in the Action Plan: Eliminating Unnecessary Responsibilities and Duplication in the Administration of the President.
- Maintain an open dialog with the Law on Local Government Committee in the Parliament which is currently writing the new law.
- Conduct a follow-on assessment of this program to assist local government leaders implement their Action Plans and assist in integrating these participants into other USAID/CAR initiatives.
- Investigate the development of a Partnership Program in NGO – Government Relations. The governmental leaders in this training program strongly advocated bridging the current gap in NGO-Government relations.
- Investigate the development of an Electric Cooperative Partnership Program. The local government leaders cited the need for locally controlled power facilities as one of their main problems, and greatly admired the management, financing, and operation of a power cooperative visited during the training program.