Structures and Processes for Policy Development and Advocacy:

Cases Studies of International Municipal Associations and South African Non-Governmental Organizations

July 1999

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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary

At the request of the Chief Executive Officer of the South African Local Government Association, Mr. Shoots Naidoo, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducted a study of how SALGA's counterpart municipal associations in other countries and South African non-governmental organizations (NGOs) manage policy development and advocacy processes and functions. This study is meant to inform SALGA's efforts to develop its policy development and advocacy capacity.

The broad goal of the study is to compile a range of experiences, both within South Africa and internationally, of how organizations manage policy research, development and advocacy. This study includes information on models for policy development; effective advocacy tools and strategies; the organization of staff to fulfill policy and advocacy functions; and methods of communicating policy to its membership. In addition, networks, information sources, and internet resources are documented to serve as a resource for SALGA's new Policy Development and Advocacy Unit.

Rationale for Selecting Case Examples

In the international case examples, the study focuses on municipal associations. Special consideration was given to municipal associations expressly selected by SALGA, including the National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of Counties (NACo) and a few state league members of the NLC with a strong policy research and advocacy program. The U.S. models were of particular interest because of SALGA's past interaction with the National League of Cities and several state municipal leagues and the fact that many of these associations have a well-established capacity for policy research and advocacy. The study therefore documents the experiences of the following U.S. municipal associations:
- **National League of Cities (U.S.)**
- **Association for Washington Cities (U.S.)**
- **Georgia Municipal Association (U.S.)**
- **North Carolina League of Municipalities (U.S.)**
- **National Association of Counties (U.S.)**

In addition to the U.S. models, the study also includes research on the **National Association of Local Authorities (Denmark)**, which is known for its strong research capacity. To broaden the international scope of the study, NDI also included three additional models:
- **Association for Mexican Municipalities (Mexico)**
- **Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (Brazil)**[1]
- **Union of Towns and Communities of the Czech Republic (Czech Republic)**

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[1] It should be noted that the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration is NOT a municipal association but an educational/ technical research institution and therefore is an exception to the international case examples documented in this study.

The study also examines the experiences of select NGOs in South Africa because of the important role that NGOs have played in policy research and advocacy historically but particularly in the last five years.

The NGOs were selected for this study according to the following criteria:
- organizations that carry out policy development and advocacy as a primary activity
- organizations that have developed a strong capacity for policy research, policy development, legislative monitoring and/ or advocacy
- organizations operating as an umbrella or representing a group of member affiliates

The following NGOs were interviewed:
- **Black Sash Trust**
- **Institute for Democracy in South Africa-Parliamentary Information Monitoring Service (IDASA-PIMS)**
- **Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI)**
- **National Land Committee (NLC)**
- **Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG)**
- **Urban Sector Network (USN)**

In presenting the information, the study will rely primarily on a case study approach. However, the study also includes an analysis of procedural and structural options for SALGA in fulfilling its policy and advocacy functions. These options are drawn from a synthesis of the case studies.

"In the area of legislation, it is difficult to establish a policy position to advocate because of the diversity of our membership. It often takes considerable time, meeting and explaining the impact of legislation to reach consensus because of the different size considerations, geographic considerations and demographic variations of our members."
--Director of Research, National Association of Counties

II.   Summary and Synthesis of Case Studies

A.   Introduction

SALGA is a unique institution, in comparison to its counterpart municipal associations in other countries, in that it is a statutory body constitutionally mandated and representing local government as a sphere of government. The unique status of SALGA in intergovernmental relations is perhaps best captured in the words of the Minister of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, M. Valli Moosa when he spoke at the Annual General Meeting of SALGA in May1998: *"SALGA is more than just a local body, SALGA is an essential element of government of South Africa. It is part and parcel of government itself."*

In accordance with its constitutional and political status, SALGA has multiple points of entry in influencing the direction and content of the national policy debate on issues affecting local government. In the national policymaking process, SALGA participates in formal intergovernmental structures, such as MINMECs (policy forums between national minister and provincial ministers of corresponding portfolios) and the Intergovernmental Forum. Through its constitutionally-mandated membership in the second House of Parliament, the National Council of Provinces, SALGA has an oversight role of the impact of national and provincial legislation on local government and the communities it serves. Around budgetary issues, SALGA participates in discussions with the Ministers of Finance and Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development and provincial MECs of Finance in a structure called the Budget Forum. SALGA also sits on the Fiscal and Financial Commission (FFC), a statutory body that plays a consultative and advisory role around allocation of national revenue.

Therefore, SALGA does not have to convince other stakeholders in the policy arena that it is relevant because it is given that political space through the constitution, and as a statutory body. However, the level of impact which SALGA has on national policy will be determined by well-targeted and substantive inputs.

While none of the municipal associations documented in these case studies has a comparable status constitutionally or legislatively, there are commonalities in the challenges faced in effectively and representatively developing policy positions. One important factor is time. As indicated above in the quote by the Director of Research of the National Association of Counties, the mandating process for developing a policy position at national level on behalf of local government *"takes considerable time, meeting and explaining the impact of legislation to reach*

consensus". The time pressures with which to disseminate information, research, consult with and get a proper mandate from member associations--who in turn must get feedback from member municipalities to formulate a unified policy position -- remain quite a challenge for municipal associations around the world.

Other important factors determining what strategies are used for developing and advocating policy positions are the organizations' financial resources and staff capacity. The Association for Mexican Municipalities, for instance, relies on one staff member to conduct all policy research, disseminate information to member municipalities, and advocate the Association's policy positions. This is due to financial constraints.

The South African NGOs and international municipal associations examined in this study and the strategies that they employ, therefore, must be viewed within the context of their role in policy formulation (i.e. opportunities they have as organizations outside of government in the policymaking process); the financial resources at their disposal, and staff capacity. Many NGOs in the South African context, due to limited resources and staff capacity, typically have to prioritize a few policy themes and focus their efforts and inputs. The U.S. case examples of municipal associations, whether at the national level or state level, generally play a strong lobbying role and have lots of opportunities to impact change at the legislative stage. Here within a parliamentary system, one of the key strategic opportunities is to influence the policy framework. SALGA's critical point of impact is in influencing the direction and substance of the policy debate at MINMEC level. SALGA will need to take this factor, as well as the financial and human resources at its disposal, into consideration in developing an effective policy and advocacy strategy.

B.   Policy Development Process

In most of the international cases, municipal associations articulated two common challenges: the challenge of developing policy that is representative of its diverse constituency; the challenge of informing and consulting with members on policy and legislation under severe time constraints. One strategy for managing these challenges appears to be to develop a clear policy development process. For instance, many associations have developed a process that is mapped out into specific timeframes reflecting the amount of deliberation and time required to ensure proper research and consultation with its membership. Another important strategy is to proactively and regularly disseminate information on policy issues and impact of upcoming Bills on municipalities to members.

From a structural perspective, policy development is generally initiated in Committee structures, and forms the work program for the Committees during the course of the calendar year leading up to the Annual General Meeting of its membership. Members of Policy Committees are responsible for identifying critical issues facing municipalities both in the immediate and the long-term. They also establish guiding principles rather than legislation-specific statements so that the association can set forth clear positions and visions. Policy work is therefore intended to be anticipatory and proactive.

Initial policy research and drafting of policy positions are done at the Committee level with the assistance of staff. Committees are usually given specific timeframes for developing these policy proposals to give time for debate, review, approval, and amendments by the Board of Directors or Executive Committee. The revised or approved policy positions are finally submitted to the general membership at the Annual General Assembly or Annual Business Meeting for a vote before they are accepted as official policy statements of the Association. These policy statements become the basis for advocacy efforts.

C.   Consultation with Members on Policy:

Most of the Associations interviewed do not directly seek input from member municipalities in the development of policy proposals. Consultation and mandate from members are obtained indirectly through representatives from member municipalities who sit on the Association's Committee structures.

Some associations have developed mechanisms for direct consultation with member municipalities. These strategies are highlighted below.

Options for Direct Consultation with Municipalities

Regional Legislative Forums: The Georgia Municipal Association, one of 49 state member associations of the National League of Cities, also holds regional legislative forums as part of their policy development process. City officials and legislators in all regions of the state are invited to regional forums to review and discuss legislative priorities.

Surveys of Municipalities: Many of the associations interviewed cited the importance of conducting surveys of municipalities in providing critical information on the state of municipalities, getting a broad survey of opinions of city officials on a range of policy issues and providing important information used in advocacy (particularly media advocacy) efforts. The National Association of Counties, Georgia Municipal Association, National League of Cities, and North Carolina League of Municipalities conduct informational surveys of their members on particular legislative issues. For example, if there is a proposed collective bargaining bill for public safety employees, they might prepare a survey to find out how many cities have personnel policies and written grievance procedures. Another method that has been used is to survey cities to quantify the effects of proposed legislation on the financial condition of cities and towns. In addition, many of these associations conduct regular annual surveys on the finances of municipalities.

Special Task Groups: Another option, which the Georgia Municipal Association has used, is to create special task forces to review proposals for a particular issue. This strategy has been used to seek input from a broad group of city officials beyond the usual review process by representatives sitting on GMA's Committees. To a certain extent, the National Land Committee and the Urban Sector Network also use this approach to get focused input from experts within their membership.

D. Staff Organization—Policy Research, Information and Advocacy Functions:

In reviewing staff organization for research, information and advocacy functions, one finds varying models.

Option 1: Cross-Divisional Staff Organization Model

Georgia Municipal Association (GMA): GMA draws staff from multiple departments to provide support to GMA's policy development process. Committee Officers staffing the Association's six Policy Committees, are primarily responsible for conducting policy research for their respective Policy Committee. They also track bills relevant to his/ her Committee while the legislature is in session. On policy issues, the Committee Officers work under the direction, and are accountable to, the Director of Policy and Advocacy Services.

GMA's Advocacy and Policy Development Services Department provides advocacy and information services on policy issues. The department is staffed by a Director and three additional lobbyists. One of the key functions of staff in this department is to directly lobby state departments and the state legislature.

GMA also employs a Research & Information Manager under the Department of Communications and Education Services who is responsible for conducting research on legislative issues, local government operations, and best management practices. The Research & Information Manager is also responsible for responding to requests for information from city officials, state agencies, and other state associations. The Research & Information Manager does not have any staff members, however works closely with Committee Officers staffing the Policy Committees.

North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM): In general, NCLM separates research, information and advocacy functions into different departments. However, in practice, staff members usually work together in formal and informal work groups across departments to support policy development and advocacy efforts.

The Department of Legal and Legislative Services, headed by General Counsel, is primarily responsible for staffing NCLM's four Policy Committees. Under this Department, the General Counsel supervises a staff of three attorneys. Staff attorneys do significant research in support of the policy development process and legislative efforts. The Department draws on the expertise of other staff members as needed. The Director of Information Technology and Research also conducts research in support of policy development, in particular through fiscal research and conducting informational surveys among member municipalities. Written communications are handled primarily by the Director of Public Affairs, who is responsible for the monthly newspaper and assists with the weekly Legislative Bulletin. The General Counsel coordinates the organization's state legislative lobbying efforts.

The Policy Committee staff members handle logistics for the meetings, working with the Committee Chairperson, and assist the Committee members in anticipating and raising policy issues. As issues are identified, staff members assist the members with information and draft policy resolutions for the members.

Option 2: Separation of Research and Advocacy Functions

National Association of Counties: The National Association of Counties has one department that provides full support for NACo's advocacy work. Lobbyists, who fall under the Legislative Affairs Department, are responsible for tracking legislation, briefing Steering Committees on the impact of pending legislation on municipalities, and lobbying members of the legislature on key issues. The Legislative Affairs Department is also responsible for preparing and disseminating *Legislative Bulletins* and *Legislative Fact Sheets* to members. The research function around policy and legislation is shared with the Research Division. NACo has a separate Research Division falling under the County Services Department, but the coordination between the two departments is fairly ad-hoc. The Research Division focuses generally on research and technical assistance services to its members, collecting information from counties on a range of topics, researching best practices, and responding to requests for information from the public.

The **National League of Cities** follows a similar model. The NLC has two separate divisions, which operate independently. The Center for Research and Program Development conducts long-term research studies and surveys on state and local issues, while the Center for Policy and Federal Relations is responsible for the policy research, analysis and advocacy on national issues. Aside from cross-referencing when national policy coincides with issues covered in the Center for Research and Policy Development's studies, the two centers do not work together.

Recommendation:

A cross-divisional staff organization model for policy and advocacy would seem the most applicable to SALGA. SALGA has indicated that Committee Officers are intended to play a larger research support role to Committees. However, by placing the Committee Officers under the direction of the Policy and Advocacy Unit Manager, SALGA can ensure that adequate guidance on policy analysis occurs. If this is the direction that SALGA will want to follow, it would be strategic for SALGA, in hiring the three additional staff for the Policy & Advocacy Unit, to think about hiring staff with specific skills or specific functional expertise to complement the general policy research which the Committee Officers will undertake. Possible considerations may be hiring staff with:
- legal analysis background
- or researcher with specific expertise or understanding of rural issues
- or researcher with expertise in fiscal policy and/ or labour relations

In addition, coordination between the Policy and Advocacy Unit Manager, Public Relations and Media Officer, Committee Officers, Coordinator for NCOP Affairs, and

the Information Technology Officer will be very important. A task-oriented definition of roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to supporting SALGA's policy and advocacy work will be important. These cross-divisional linkages will need to be made in relation to skills and tasks, and the policy and information services needed by SALGA's primary clients in the policy and advocacy arena (i.e. Members of MANCO & EXCO; Chairs of Political Working Committees; 9 Provincial Local Government Associations; SALGA Delegates to the NCOP)

E. Communication with Members on Policy:

All of the organizations interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of communicating with their membership regularly on policy developments within the organization, policies being formulated within national departments and opportunities and timeframes for input, and the content and policy issues arising from pending legislation. A communication and information dissemination strategy around policy issues allows for members to be regularly briefed on policy issues. Communication on policy can be also used as a tool to ensure efficient coordination of advocacy efforts at the provincial level through intergovernmental forums and provincial legislatures. SALGA's most effective policy advocates are its members: local councillors. Therefore, one of the key services that SALGA's administration can provide is to coordinate their efforts and keep them informed about significant developments, opportunities and threats to local governments' interests in the policy arena.

Due to the current time constraints in which SALGA is required to input on policy, developing these methods of keeping members abreast of policy issues and legislative developments would be one mechanism for ensuring that SALGA can respond on issues both proactively and reactively, whatever the case may be, and substantively. SALGA staff have an important role to play here in contributing to the content and quality of information being distributed to members, by summarizing and analyzing bills and policy documents for the impact it will have on local government and highlighting important policy choices that need to be made. As the national body, SALGA's coordinating and information dissemination role is critical.

Various methods can be used to keep members informed of policy developments and legislation. The **National League of Cities (NLC)**, for instance, produces and distributes four different publications that keep members informed:
- *The Nation's Cities Weekly* is sent out to all NLC members to keep members abreast of what is happening with the policy process. Reports on resolutions taken in Steering Committee meetings are included. Updates throughout the year are provided on the policy process and how the membership can be involved.
- *The Policy Informer,* produced six times a year for Policy Committee members, analyzes key policy issues pending in Congress which need the attention of NLC's policy leaders and actions which should be taken to advocate NLC's policy position.
- *Issues and Options,* produced four times a year looks at specific issues of concern for municipalities, such as strategies for negotiating effective

intermunicipal agreements and broad survey information of how municipalities are dealing with key issue areas.

- *State League Legislative Update,* published on a biweekly basis by the Center for Policy and Federal Relations, informs leagues of key legislative initiatives and analyses of the impact of legislation on local government. In addition, the publication also contains talking points for leagues of the NLC's position and coordinates lobbying efforts among state leagues

NLC also maintains *Access Local Government,* a local government best practices database on the web exclusively for members, which provides examples of city programs, on-line information resource for local officials, and message boards to post questions, share ideas and get instant feedback from other local officials on the latest local government issues.

The **North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM)** distributes an information bulletin, *Legislative Bulletin,* by fax on a weekly basis. The *Legislative Bulletin* alerts members to upcoming legislation as well as provisions of recently passed legislations; regular updates on the status of Bills through a Bill Tracking Chart; status of Bills in relation to the Associations' stated policy priorities for the year and the Association's position on the Bill; and contact information for relevant Committee Chairpersons in the legislature.

The **National Association of Counties (NACo)** distributes a legislative bulletin by fax to its members every Friday (when Congress is in session), to give members a concise update of recent legislative action. The *Legislative Bulletin* is further available and archived on NACo's website. In addition, NACo also develops and distributes *Legislative Fact Sheets* on pending legislation before Congress that will impact counties. The *Legislative Fact Sheets,* researched and written by NACo staff, are concise briefings on the issues and NACo's policy position on the issue.

F.   Framework for Developing an Effective Advocacy Strategy

- *Prioritize Policy Issues:* Prioritizing policy issues is important for SALGA because of the human resource/ capacity constraints that it currently faces. It is important to have a clear process for prioritizing what issues. Prioritizing issues also ensures that the advocacy campaign can be targeted and more effective.

- *Develop a Strong Policy Research Capacity First and Foremost:* SALGA's status as a statutory body representing a sphere of government guarantees its voice and input will be sought, however, the substance of its input will determine to what extent it has an impact on national policy formulation. SALGA's policy research capacity is crucial for SALGA's ability to make informed policy choices.

- *Clearly Define What You Mean By Advocacy and Who is Doing the Advocacy:* It is important to clearly define from the outset what advocacy means to the organization, what the critical and strategic points of entry are for your organization to make an impact on policy, who your strongest advocates are within the organization. From there, it is possible to develop a strategy that

supports and targets their efforts. An important part of the strategy will be an assessment of how staff should provide support to these efforts.

- *Make a Strategic Choice on When To Work Within Government versus Working Outside*: SALGA will have to make political decisions on when to work closely to government and when to work from the outside.

- *Accessing Information and Building Networks:* One of the key components to <u>proactive</u> policy positions is to be <u>proactively</u> informed of developments in government Departments, national parliament and provincial legislatures, NGOs, academic and research institutions. Building communication channels and informal networks with individuals can facilitate SALGA's access to information and ability to anticipate issues. In addition, developing relationships with NGOs, academic and research institutions and keeping abreast of their research agenda will strengthen SALGA's research capacity. SALGA may want to consider how to align staff to develop these communication channels and networks and regularly monitor and keep SALGA informed of developments within these respective institutions.

- *Collection and Dissemination of information:* Information and access to information is the most critical tool to advocating positions. SALGA's strongest access to information is its membership and the organization needs to look at how to proactively gather information. Whether collected through surveys or phone interviews, this information can assist SALGA in not only determining the impact of policy and legislation on various constituencies that it represents (i.e. urban vs. rural) and making informed policy choices but also monitoring policy implementation. Acting as a clearinghouse and conduit of information is also an important advocacy tool because it allows one to frame the issues and the debate.

- *Media Outreach:* Using the media effectively can be a very strong public policy advocacy tool. The media can be used, not only to frame the issues (i.e. through letters to the editor and opinion pieces) and raise public awareness on key issues, but to promote local government's success stories.

- *Legal Advocacy:* Controversies and questions about municipal authority may end up in the courts. It would therefore be important to monitor court cases that have a bearing on the expansion or contraction of municipal powers. In some cases, it may be advisable to participate in those lawsuits.

G. Questions for SALGA to Consider

The following questions were compiled to serve as a guide for SALGA to view the case studies compiled in this study in relation to the specific challenges and strategic decisions confronting SALGA. In addition, they can serve as a framework for conducting an internal assessment of strengths and weaknesses in relation to SALGA's current policy development and advocacy capacity.

Political and Strategic Questions

- What does advocacy mean for SALGA?

- What are the critical points of access for SALGA to make an impact on policy and legislation? (i.e. MINMECs, IGFs, FFC, Budget Forum, National Bargaining Council, NCOP, Provincial Legislatures)

- How should these structures be prioritized? Who should be targeted within these structures to access information related to policy issues at an early stage?

- How can a proactive strategy for policy development and advocacy be developed in relation to SALGA's key points of entry?

- How should SALGA delegates be deployed to these structures to maximize expertise in given issue areas, provincial representation and rotation, and rural vs. urban representation? What should be the criteria for deployment, and should the criteria be different for each access point?

- What are the critical points of entry for provincial associations to make an impact on policy and legislation?

- What should be the criteria for prioritizing policy issues and legislation?

Questions for Staff

- What are core services that SALGA staff should provide to the development and advocacy of policies? How should staff be organized along these core services to maximize existing resources and capacity?

- Which staff, from a capacity and functional perspective, should be primary liaisons to national Departments, academic and research institutions corresponding to key policy theme areas, provincial associations to monitor developments, collect and synthesize information?

- How can coordination between staff and divisions be improved for information dissemination and reporting on policy developments?

Status Quo Questions

- What are the roles of the Political and Technical Working Committees with respect to SALGA's development and advocacy of policies that support local government?

- How can the role of Political and Technical Working Committees, respectively, be strengthened and expanded?

- Is there a link between Political and Technical Working Committees at national level and provincial association levels? What are some ways in which SALGA and provincial associations can explore the integration of policy development processes?

- What are some incentives which SALGA can provide to provincial associations for reporting back on developments within Political and Technical Working Committees at provincial level? What are key services that SALGA can provide to provincial associations in their development and advocacy of policies?

- Are there mechanisms within the policy development process to determine priority policy issues? How can these be strengthened?

- Are there mechanisms for communicating regularly with member provincial associations and municipalities about the process for SALGA policy development and opportunities for participation?

- What are the current obstacles to responding to legislation?

- What are the information needs of SALGA's policy leaders in developing policy? How do those needs differ in terms of reacting to legislation? How do those needs differ in terms of members of Political Working Group Committees, SALGA Delegates to the NCOP, Delegates to FFC, provincial associations?

- Given a piece of legislation what information would SALGA's policy leaders need to determine the impact on local government and how long would they need to make that determination?

The National League of Cities (NLC)

Background: The National League of Cities (NLC) is the United States' largest representative organization serving municipal governments. Founded in 1924 as the American Municipal Association by ten state municipal leagues, its current membership has expanded to include 49 state municipal leagues and more than 1,500 communities of all sizes. Through the membership of the state municipal leagues, NLC represents more than 18,000 municipalities. Although most of the nation's larger municipalities are members of the league, more than 75% of NLC's direct members have populations less than 50,000. These small cities, towns and villages play an equal and key part in the activities of the organization.

Political and Administrative Structure: The NLC holds two conferences annually which bring delegates from member cities and state municipal leagues to vote on NLC's policies: The Congressional City Conference and the Congress of Cities. Delegates provide input and vote on the NLC's legislative agenda called the *Action Agenda* for the year at the Congressional City Conference. Delegates meet at the Congress of Cities to take care of annual business of the association, such as election of officebearers and adoption of resolutions and amendments to their standing document of policy positions on a range of issues affecting local government.

The NLC is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of the League's officebearers --president, first vice president, second vice president, all past presidents still in elective office in a city--- and 40 other members appointed by a nominating committee at the Annual Business Meeting for two year staggered terms. All appointees must be approved by the general membership before they are given Board member status.

The NLC has a two-tiered Committee structure which develops the League's annual policies: Policy Committees and Steering Committees. Each of the NLC's 49 state member leagues nominate members to serve on the Committees during the Congress of Cities.   Each state league, depending on the size of the state's municipal population, has a quota of three to seven seats to fill in the Committees. The Chairpersons of Committees are then selected by members of the Committee. Policy Committees are large and generally have between 150-200 members. The Steering Committees are Working Groups of approximately 35-40 local councillors from direct member cities who are charged with studying the policy agenda set by the Policy Committees and determining what, if any, changes are warranted in the *National Municipal Policy*.

The Executive Director of the NLC is the secretary and treasurer of the League and generally oversees the League's day-to-day operations. NLC operates with a total staff of 80 who are organized into five centers that work directly with NLC's members and five offices that provide organizational support to the NLC centers:

- Center for Policy and Federal Relations
- Center for Member Programs

- Center for Public Affairs
- Center for Education and Information Resources
- Center for Research and Program Development
- Office of Conference Planning and Management
- Office of Financial Management
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of Administrative Services
- Office of Information Technology

Policy Development Process: The policy development process for the NLC begins during the annual Congress of Cities in December where the entire NLC membership meets and votes on policy recommendations for the NLC's *National Municipal Policy.*

December: During the Congress of Cities, Policy Committees meet to identify and prioritize issues to be placed on the annual policy agenda for further study within their corresponding Steering Committees.

Congressional City Conference: In March, each member city and state municipal league sends delegates to this legislative conference. Lobbyists and representatives from think-tanks give presentations on issues that they think will be significant in Congress. Finally after debate the membership sets the yearly legislative agenda by voting on which issues to select for the oncoming year.

With guidance from the Board of Directors and input from the state municipal leagues, the Policy Committees meet twice each year (at NLC's Congressional City Conference in March and at the annual Congress of Cities in December) to identify priority issues, and set the work agenda for their corresponding portfolio Steering Committees.

September and October: After the priority issues have been selected, the Steering Committees will then meet two more times in September and October to deliberate, develop, and make revisions on each issue. The research and drafting of the policy proposals is done by the Steering Committee members with the help of the Policy Analysts that staff the Committees.

Congress of Cities (December): . The Policy Committees meet to review the policy proposals developed by the Steering Committees during the year. The Policy Committees have the option of making final changes or additions to the text. Then the full committee votes on whether or not to adopt the Steering Committee's revisions before sending the issue to the Board of Directors. Once the Board of Directors approves the proposals, it is sent to the plenary for a vote by the membership before becoming NLC's official policy positions.

The NLC's full Committees (Steering and Policy combined) and their jurisdictions are:

- **Community and Economic Development (CED) Committee** is responsible for

national urban policy in local economic development, community development and community development block grants, housing and neighborhood development, land use, recreation and parks, and historic preservation.

- **Energy, Environment and Natural Resources (EENR) Committee** is responsible for policy on air quality, water quality, natural resources, wastewater treatment, energy, waste management, infrastructure, urban esthetics, and endangered species.

- **Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR) Committee** deals with national economic policy, general financial assistance programs, liability insurance, intergovernmental relations, municipal bonds and capital finance, municipal management, antitrust issues, citizen participation and civil rights, and labor relations.

- **Human Development (HD) Committee** analyzes and develops policy on such issues as employment and job training, social security and unemployment insurance, income support programs, immigration and refugees, health and education, equal opportunity, and social services.

- **Public Safety and Crime Prevention (PSCP) Committee** is responsible for policy in the areas of crime prevention, corrections, substance abuse, municipal fire policy, juvenile justice, and disaster preparedness and emergency response.

- **Transportation and Communications (T&C) Committee** is responsible for policy development on issues related to public transit, streets and highways, air transportation, railroads and waterways.

Staff Organization—Research, Information and Advocacy Functions: The NLC has two separate divisions, which operate as independent bodies of the NLC which provide research and information services to the membership to support NLC's advocacy efforts: the Center for Policy and Federal Relations and the Center for Research and Program Development.

The Center for Research and Program Development conducts long-term research studies and surveys on state and local issues, while the Center for Policy and Federal Relations is responsible for the research on national issues to support the NLC's policy development and advocacy efforts. Aside from cross-referencing when national policy coincides with issues covered in the Center for Research and Policy Development's studies, the two centers do not work together.

Center for Policy and Federal Relations

The Center depends upon NLC's six Standing Policy Committees to develop comprehensive positions on national issues directly affecting cities and towns. The Center for Policy and Federal Relations (CPFR) is responsible for providing general staff support to the Policy Committees and coordinating NLC's policy development and advocacy efforts. CPFR staff work with Policy Committees and the Board of

Directors to develop and implement an annual *Action Agenda*, a list of legislative priorities which serve as NLC's lobbying agenda for the year; and coordinate NLC's national advocacy efforts by working directly with legislators and staff in Congress and preparing testimony by NLC's leadership before Congress on key priorities.

In addition, the staff of the Center for Policy and Federal Relations are also responsible for fulfilling a number of information services to members around policy and legislative issues, such as:

- publishing a special newsletter on the policy development process, *The Policy Informer*, six times a year to inform Policy Committee members, Board of Directors, state municipal leagues and other key affiliates about the work of the Steering Committees
- publishing the updated *National Municipal Policy*, the NLC's broad statement of policy updated each year.
- publishing a bi-weekly *State League Legislative Update* to inform leagues of key legislative initiatives and coordinate lobbying efforts

The CPFR is headed by the Director/ Chief Lobbyist and the Director of Policy. The Director/ Chief Lobbyist oversees the lobbyists, while the Director of Policy supervises a staff of six Policy Analysts. Currently the Center employs seven lobbyists, but this number varies from year to year. Each of the Policy Committees has its own Policy Analyst, and the combined staff of the CPFR has three secretaries.

All lobbying in Congress is coordinated by the Director of the Center for Policy and Federal Relations. Due to the size of the NLC's lobbying force, its lobbying is usually reactive, and the state leagues handle the more pro-active lobbying. During the NLC's annual meetings, representatives from the state leagues frequently form lobbying coalitions for common issues.

Center for Research and Program Development

The Center for Research and Program Development acts as the "research think-tank" arm of the NLC. The Center's primary functions are to develop, conduct and report research on programs and issues of importance to cities and towns. In addition, the Center is also responsible for tracking state and local legislation; conducting research about development, local economies and regionalism; and developing funding proposals for programs that carry out NLC's priority agendas.

The Center conducts two important annual surveys of municipalities which are important tools in NLC's advocacy efforts : a survey of cities' fiscal conditions and an annual opinion survey of elected city officials. When each survey is completed, the NLC holds a press conference in order to announce its findings and increase public recognition of the NLC.

The Center also conducts on-going, foundation-funded research. Topics covered by this research include, issues relating to children and families, diversity and governance, economic development and urban poverty, and improving relations