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Collaborative Leadership and Effective Community Governance in the United States and Russia

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines effective community governance practices in United States communities and the early evolution of these practices in Russia, where progressive government leaders are beginning to make effective use of community assets to improve the quality of life through a more participatory and collaborative approach to governance. New roles for government leaders and professionals in a multi-sector, participatory environment are explored, where leaders increasingly serve as connectors and facilitators, not just decision makers, experts, and managers. These new leadership roles strengthen multiple roles played by citizens in improving communities (stakeholder, advocate, issue framer, evaluator, collaborator) and are important for strong collaborations. We analyze collaboration with citizens and organizations in U.S. communities with many years of experience of effective governance, examine post-Soviet origins of collaboration and engagement in Russian communities, and look for participative, collaborative leadership patterns emerging in Russian communities that are now attempting to implement effective governance practices.

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Introduction

One of the keys to making governance effective in today's world is for government leaders to take the expansive view of power. In particular, if leaders give power to citizens in a results-focused context, citizens in turn strengthen their leaders' power to guide the community towards citizens' priorities for improving the quality of life. This paper examines the growing movement towards government leaders playing a more facilitative role in community governance across multiple sectors, and the changing power relationships implied by effective citizen engagement.

This paper compares effective community governance practices in United States communities with the introduction and early evolution of these practices in Russia, where progressive government leaders are beginning to make more effective use of community assets to improve the quality of life through a more participatory and collaborative approach to governance. By analyzing cases of U.S. communities in which there have been many years of experience of effective governance, we compare the leadership roles that have emerged in a mature governance setting with newly emerging leadership roles in Russian communities attempting to implement collaborative, effective governance practices.

The U.S.-based portion of this work is drawn mostly from research conducted for the book *Results That Matter*, which introduces the Effective Community Governance Model and related ideas and describes communities across the U.S. using advanced governance practices to make quality of life improvements. The Effective Community Governance Model recognizes engaging citizens, measuring results, and getting things done as three "core community skills" that help people and organizations make decisions about what actions to take in a community and help them measure the community's performance in achieving results. Citizen engagement invests legitimacy in those decisions and performance measures. To be effective, a community—or community serving organization—will align two or all three of these skills to perform the "advanced governance practices" of the governance model as shown in Figure 1 (at the end of this paper). The book discusses four community improvement themes: the roles citizens play, the use of performance feedback, accountability and resource commitments, and collaborations. In this paper, we focus mostly on the first (citizen roles) and the last (strong collaborations) themes. In other words, we are focusing on leaders and professionals as empowerers of, and collaborators with, citizens and organizations.¹

This research revealed new roles for government leaders and professionals in a multi-sector environment, where they are increasingly serving as connectors and facilitators, not just decision makers, experts, and managers. These new leadership roles strengthen multiple roles played by citizens in improving communities (stakeholder, advocate, issue framer, evaluator, collaborator) and are important for strong collaborations. Updated U.S. case studies in which cross-sector collaboration have been prominent in Prince William County, Virginia, and Truckee Meadows Tomorrow—Washoe County, Nevada are used in this paper to illustrate new collaborative leadership roles. Experiences from Rochester, New York, and Hartford,

Connecticut, are also cited. More recent Russian community experiences from regions in Siberia follow, with some reflection back to the more mature U.S. experiences.

Leaders as Connectors, Facilitators, and Listeners, Not Just Decision Makers

Leaders of community institutions, be they government elected officials, non-profit board members, or chief executives of any community organization, have an important role connecting people to power and to each other. *Results that Matter* quotes John Nalbandian, Chair of Public Administration of the University of Kansas, and former Mayor of Lawrence, Kansas, about new roles for leaders. Nalbandian said, “The elected officials who are really effective are the connectors and facilitators.” He sees them facilitating the elected governing body as an effective decision making group, connecting elected policy officials with staff, and connecting citizens with government decision making. To effectively connect with citizens, Nalbandian says elected officials “have to be able to articulate the story of community.” When he was the mayor of Rochester, New York, William Johnson found that when he made personal connections with citizens, they helped him build the story of community by giving him *their* stories of the community. He said when he was “walking the city with residents, they not only point out problems, but what they’re proud of in their neighborhood.”²

Not all public officials agree that they should be sharing power with citizens. Mayor Johnson said, “When I tell my colleagues from other cities about Neighbors Building Neighborhoods,” Rochester’s citizen-empowering program, “they look at me cross-eyed. They say citizens elected us. They expect us to use our judgment for them.”³ But some, such as elected Prince William County Board of Supervisors member John Jenkins, share Johnson’s view. Johnson is an African American leader of an old (by U.S. standards) northern central city with a shrinking population. Jenkins is a white leader of a fast growing southern suburban-rural county of about 350,000 residents. But in many ways, they think alike. When asked if by empowering citizens the Prince William County Board of Supervisors gave up power, Jenkins exclaimed, “We’re not giving up power. We are empowered by the people.” When asked a similar question, Mayor Johnson said, “I gain as much as I give in the process.”⁴

Rochester citizens engaged in planning their own neighborhood improvements and Prince William County citizens engaged in strategic planning no longer expect elected leaders to make all community decisions for them. But these relationships don’t drain power from leaders, they add power by building a more trusting, active citizenry. An important source of a leader’s power is trust. As Prince William County citizen Paul Moessner said, “If you get a community that stays engaged in the process, they begin to trust the system. People realize, ‘This works’ their ... engagement, and their trust, increase.”⁵

Professionals as Conveyors of Knowledge, Not Just Experts

Nalbandian, who trains city and county managers, also discussed new roles for professional managers: “We’re way beyond the point where professionals are simply masters of knowledge. They must have the ability to convey that knowledge and get it used.” He especially means convey it to citizens by meeting groups in their own neighborhoods, where experts don’t just give citizens expert facts and opinions, but listen to them and engage in reasonable two-way

dialog, which does not happen when the group comes to a city council meeting and uses the limited time available for public comment to make demands.⁶

What Others Have Said About New Roles for Leaders and for Professional Experts and Managers

In *Coming to Public Judgment*, Daniel Yankelovich, long a leading figure in American public opinion research, discussed the importance of experts engaging citizens in dialog. Just as Former Rochester Mayor Johnson realized that citizen engagement enhances his role as a leader, Yankelovich argued that “engaging the public in dialogue adds to the expert’s role rather than diminishing it.”⁷

Stephen Goldsmith and William Eggers point out in *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector*: “The hierarchical model of government persists, but its influence is steadily waning, pushed by governments’ appetite to solve ever more complicated problems and pulled by new tools that allow innovators to fashion creative responses. This push and pull is gradually producing a new model of government in which executives’ core responsibilities no longer center on managing people and programs, but on organizing resources, often belonging to others, to produce public value.”⁸

Competencies Required for Leaders and Managers to Fill These New Roles

Goldsmith and Eggers say that “a government manager’s job used to be relatively straightforward—you managed a program or service ... you got ahead by advising on policy issues or by excelling at managing government employees. Professionalism meant applying rules in a systematic, standardized, and highly structured manner. By comparison, managing in a networked government environment demands an entirely different set of competencies and capabilities. In addition to planning, budgeting, staffing, and other traditional government duties, it requires a proficiency in a host of other tasks, such as activating, arranging, stabilizing, integrating, and managing a network. To do this, network managers must possess at least some degree in aptitude in negotiation, mediation, risk analysis, trust building, collaboration, and project management.”⁹

In *Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems in a Shared-Power World*, Barbara Crosby and John Bryson cite numerous competencies needed for cross-sector leadership, of which the following are illustrated by examples in this paper:

- Leadership in context: understanding the social, political, economic, and technological givens as well as potentialities.
- Visionary leadership: creating and communicating shared meaning in forums.
- Political leadership: making and implementing decisions in legislative, executive, and administrative areas.
- Policy entrepreneurship: coordinating leadership tasks over the course of a policy change cycle.¹⁰

How Leaders and Professionals Can Play These New Roles

In his chapter of *Creating a Culture of Collaboration: The International Association of Facilitators Handbook*, Roger Schwarz describes how traditional thinking about leadership and power get in the way of being able to lead in a collaborative environment. Like Mayor Johnson's cross-eyed colleagues, people tend to think that leaders either have to have complete control (what Schwarz calls the "unilateral control model") or give up their power (what Schwarz calls the "give up control model").¹¹ As an alternative, Schwarz provides the "Facilitative Leader Approach" to make collaborations effective. "The heart of this approach is the *mutual learning model*, which can generate long-term positive results that the unilateral control model or give-up-control model cannot. You do not have to be in a formal leadership role to be a facilitative leader; team members and even individual contributors serve as facilitative leaders by virtue of using core values and assumptions, principles, and techniques. In short, the facilitative leader approach enables you to lead collaboratively from any position. Although it can be easier to establish collaborative relationships when all parties understand the facilitative leader approach, it is not necessary."¹² The core values and assumptions of the mutual learning model presume that practitioners are willing to listen to others, just as political leaders such as Mayor Johnson and Supervisor Jenkins are willing to listen to citizens. For example, consider the following three "core values and assumptions:

- I have some information; others have other information
- Each of us may see things the others do not
- Differences are opportunities for learning."¹³

One leader who has put these new roles into practice is Louise Blalock, Chief Librarian of the Hartford Public Library. Blalock, the 2001 American Library Association's Librarian of the Year, not only plays these roles herself, but she has gotten many of her library's professional staff to play them, too, through the library's innovative "Neighborhood Teams." Blalock explained why and how they do it, saying, "Today's challenge is to reinvent the library to respond to community needs and aspirations, and yet to retain the core values of intellectual freedom, free and equitable access, and trust and mutual respect. The social change we are experiencing is as powerful as the technological change, and equally a driving force in the need to reinvent ourselves. How do we do that? By getting as close to the community as we can, paying attention to what they say, and participating in community organizations: *listening, learning, linking.*" [Emphasis added.] Blalock and the library's leadership team have shaped Hartford Public Library's transformation into a library that appears to be fully engaged with its community.¹⁴

Citizen Roles and Deliberative Dialog to Improve Communities

In the U.S. and other western democracies, managers have been taught since the 1980s to treat citizens as valued "customers" and provide them with high quality customer service. That's useful for focusing staff attention on providing good service, but it treats citizens as passive consumers of services, not people with interests and energy that can be channeled into community improvement. To develop an active citizenry that adds power to community improvement, engage citizens in a range of different roles and embed these roles in the

community's governance practices. "Engaging citizens" means giving them real opportunities to make a difference, including opportunities to influence decisions and actions that affect the community. That may happen, for example, because decision makers are listening to citizens from the beginning of a community process, or because after citizens have developed their own priorities or solutions, they effectively advocate to decision makers to implement desired community change.

Results That Matter describes five major citizen roles can be played in any order or combination. They are presented here in an order in which a typical citizen, or group of citizens, might encounter and work through a community problem:

- First as a **stakeholder** who is concerned about or directly experiences community conditions, existing or proposed projects or policies, or community service problems. Service "customers" are stakeholders, but so are people with other interests in community projects, issues, and policies.
- Then as an **advocate** for the community to act on the issue or problem. Actually, one may be an advocate during any or all parts of a problem solving process. As a role one can take on at any time, advocacy often adds fuel to the flame of citizen engagement.
- Next as an **issue framer** who helps get the issue on the community's agenda, and define the problem and possible solutions from a citizen's perspective. "Issue Framing" is an important role that can take many forms, from helping to develop a long-range vision or strategic plan, to influencing an annual budget, to solving a specific problem. A key to any form of issue framing is that it must involve two-way dialog, not just one-way communication. In other words, at least part of an issue-framing process must be deliberative, and citizens must be involved in that deliberative dialog.
- Next as an **evaluator** of alternative solutions, or of a service organization's explanation or response to a problem. A citizen may later be an evaluator of whether conditions or services have improved over time.
- Then as a **collaborator** in agreeing on solutions or implementing improvements.¹⁵

Public leaders who recognize that citizens add value to the community by playing many roles will encourage citizens to play different roles and support them in doing so. A few ways of supporting citizens in different roles include helping them organize and get their voices heard, providing technical and political assistance, issuing public performance reports, helping citizens become engaged in decision processes early especially through deliberative dialog, helping citizens recognize different interests to forge effective compromise, and helping them identify and leverage community assets.¹⁶ Supporting citizens in a full range of roles helps more people find their comfort zone of what they are willing and able to do, despite their different interests, knowledge, skills, and constraints; keeps citizens involved longer (e.g., from advocacy to getting things done); and helps organizations identify more ways to support citizens as effective community partners. As a result, more people contribute more time and energy to community improvement.¹⁷

While many ways of assessing citizen views can be used in the course of a community process (e.g., surveys, public comments), "deliberative" methods involving dialog among people are most desirable and should tend to be the most decisive methods of a process that uses

multiple methods. That is because deliberative dialog gives people a chance to listen to each other, learn from each other, modify their views, and reach creative compromises to satisfy multiple interests. Leaders who promote deliberation are being consistent with points cited by Goldsmith and Eggers (negotiation, mediation, trust building), Nalbandian (facilitation, connecting), Schwarz (facilitative leadership, mutual learning), and Blalock (listening, learning, and linking). They also demonstrate competencies cited by Crosby and Bryson (e.g., leadership in context, visionary leadership, political leadership, policy entrepreneurship). It is important that all potentially affected interests in an issue be represented in deliberations, which can sometimes be just those most likely affected (e.g., people who live near a proposed new building or facility), and other times should be a group that is demographically and geographically representative of the whole community, as when a community's strategic plan or government budget is being developed.

Citizen collaboration can go beyond reaching compromises on policies and plans, to collaborating in implementing change by volunteering their efforts or other resources to “co-produce” solutions or services. Citizens can also collaborate by acting as “asset leveragers,” as they do in Rochester, where they identify, map, and engage non-government assets (often “in kind” community resources such as donated equipment or time of skilled professionals, sometimes new sources of funds) to enable neighborhood improvements well beyond what the city budget could fund. Glenn Gardner, an active Rochester resident, said, “We know we have a budget. But it is more about our asset budget” than the city budget. “The city budget does not make or break what we do.”¹⁸ Gardner and his fellow citizens engaged in neighborhood planning feel jointly accountable with the city government for making improvement happen. Gardner said, “We are accountable and so are they” [city officials] for implementing planned improvements. When empowered citizens like Glenn Gardner are willing to be accountable and share responsibility for community improvement, they do, indeed, add power to public leaders such as Mayor Johnson.¹⁹

Citizen Engagement and Collaborations in Prince William County, Virginia

The importance of deliberation and dialog does not mean that non-deliberative methods, such as opinion or satisfaction surveys, formal public hearings, or written comments are not useful. They can be combined with more interactive, deliberative approaches of engaging citizens in a decision process to give citizens multiple ways to participate, and give decision makers multiple views of citizens' ideas, opinions, and priorities. A good example is Prince William County's major strategic planning updates every four years, where one form of engagement informs another, and processes that started with an opinion survey become more interactive as deliberating citizens work more deeply with issues until the Board of Supervisors approves a strategic plan.²⁰

When he chaired the Prince William County Board of Supervisors, Sean Connaughton took a long-term, strategic view of the Board's trade-off in sharing power with citizens in developing four-year strategic plans. “The price of this system can make some politicians leery. You are buying into, essentially, multi-year budgets and strategic decisions. Elected officials have to surrender their power to make major revisions in focus every year. But in the long run, it

gives us the power to govern better and make long-term changes—changes that matter.” Thus, Connaughton perfectly illustrates Nalbandian’s idea that elected officials who take a facilitative approach and connect with citizens become more effective decision makers, as their decisions can be more strategic and make a long-term difference in the community. He also clearly illustrates Crosby and Bryson’s “political leadership” and “policy entrepreneurship” competencies. Connaughton doesn’t mean that they never make major changes. Because Prince William County’s governance system is results-based, the board can learn from performance data between major four-year planning updates when large adjustments are needed, as they did in 1998 when they added a major human services goal to their strategic plan.²¹ In that case, the Board of Supervisors listened to citizens, such as Paul Moessner, who evaluated performance information showing social problems getting worse despite economic progress in the county.²² This example echoes Blalock’s point about the importance of listening to people in the community and learning from them.

In Prince William County, professional managers under the leadership of appointed County Executive Craig Gerhart make the results-based system work, using data on community outcomes and service performance measures in several feedback cycles to inform decisions involving strategies, policies, and operations. Gerhart and his professional staff also support citizens playing multiple roles in the community. Among other citizen support efforts, the county provides practical civic training to citizens through a community leadership institute and two public safety academies,²³ which help prepare citizens who want to be more active to play several roles, including advocate, issue framer, evaluator, and collaborator. Starting with the 2003 strategic planning update process, not only did citizens voice their priorities as stakeholders through surveys and as issue framers through deliberative focus groups and task forces, but the county government trained a group of active citizens to co-facilitate the focus groups with county staff,²⁴ taking on a new kind of collaborative leadership role, and proving, as Schwarz described, that one can be a facilitative leader from any position in a collaboration.

Citizen engagement in strategic planning drives the whole results-based process of community governance in Prince William County.²⁵ Recently, Gerhart started deepening the process by revising the employee evaluation system to create a “line of sight” from employee performance ratings and incentives to strategic goals and outcome targets identified by citizens and approved by the County Board in the strategic plan. Gerhart and the Board of Supervisors have also engaged a representative group of citizens in a community visioning process (involving citizens as long-term issue framers), something the County last did in the late 1980s (as opposed to “major updates” in the strategic plan, which occurs every four years), to provide new inspiration for succeeding strategic plans and results-based governance efforts.²⁶

Prince William County benefits from a wide range of collaborations, many of them results-based collaborations among organizations. For example, county managers and elected officials (including John Jenkins) collaborate with forty nonprofit social service providers in the Coalition for Human Services to coordinate needs assessment, planning, and services. The county government budgets resources and contracts for many of the planned services and then holds the nonprofit providers accountable for achieving targeted results just as they would county government agencies. By collaborating with the coalition, the county leverages other resources besides their own, such as funds from the regional United Way. The county also collaborates for results with the school district. Citizens were the initial drivers of that

collaboration, rating education as a high priority in the county's strategic planning process. The elected Board of Supervisors at first responded that education was not the county government's responsibility. When citizens rated education high again, the County Board listened and County Executive Gerhart stepped in as a negotiator with the school superintendent to build a strong collaboration. The county government and the school board coordinated their five-year financial and capital plans, enabling the opening of new schools and renovation of existing schools ahead of schedule²⁷ so the children of the county's fast-growing population would have improved facilities and not face overcrowded schools. The county's human services and school board collaborations provide good examples of Goldsmith and Eggers' new core responsibility of government executives in a networked or collaborative environment: to organize resources, often belonging to others, to produce public value.

Prince William County goes well beyond these kinds of organization-to-organization collaborations to foster citizen-citizen and citizen-organization collaborations. For example, citizens with different views on development have collaborated in reaching compromises to complete economic development plans and comprehensive land use plans. One collaboration combines aspects of collaborations among organizations and collaborations between government and citizen coproducers: the collaboration among the county government's paid career fire service and the volunteer fire companies in the county, including volunteer firefighters and volunteer chiefs. While it is not unusual for suburban-rural counties in the U.S. to provide fire safety services through a mix of paid staff and volunteers, Prince William County does so through a particularly strategic, performance-based collaboration. The volunteer fire companies' resources are planned together with paid career staff to meet service objectives such as the percentage of time emergency response targets are met.²⁸ In their role as initiators and facilitators of these and other collaborations, county officials display many of the important competencies outlined by Goldsmith and Eggers and by Crosby and Bryson, from competencies in negotiation and trust building, to carrying collaborative decisions through legislative, executive, and administrative processes and entire policy cycles. They also act as connectors, facilitators, and effective conveyors of information, roles Nalbandian describes as being vitally important.

Truckee Meadows Tomorrow and Washoe County, Nevada²⁹

In Prince William County, Virginia, the government reached out to engage citizens in long-range strategic planning. In Western Nevada, a non-profit civic organization, Truckee Meadows Tomorrow (TMT) has engaged citizens in measuring and improving the quality of life. A public-private task force that evolved into TMT began developing quality of life indicators for the region by reaching out and asking citizens about their concerns. The task force wanted participation from as broad and diverse a range of community members as possible, so they made sure to reach out to groups who were traditionally under-represented. For example, the task force conducted a "Youth View" event to get youth input on indicators. To add some fun to community meetings, the task force built on Nevada's gaming history by giving ten "quality-of-life dollars" to each participant to place "bets" on suggested indicators they felt best represented key regional issues. Approximately two thousand people from the region's communities eventually took part as issue framers in deliberative discussions and eleven hundred answered surveys. Their ideas enabled the task force to select sixty-six indicators of broad citizen interest

in 1993, and create the nonprofit TMT to oversee their implementation. TMT issued its first quality-of-life indicators report in 1994. TMT has done two major revisions of the indicators since then, most recently in 2006-07 after extensive community involvement efforts to determine what is currently most important to citizens.

TMT gets citizens active in playing many roles. TMT has helped citizens become co-producers of quality-of-life improvement through the “Adopt an Indicator” program, which encourages people to take responsibility for specific things they can do in their personal or work lives to contribute to desired improvements, such as parents agreeing to volunteer at their children’s school to increase parental involvement in education. Many TMT members are volunteers who are active citizen advocates and collaborators to build the quality of life. Through TMT’s quality of life reports with data for the indicators, some also are evaluators. TMT also takes a positive, motivating approach to advocacy. Every two years, TMT draws about fifteen hundred people to its “Accentuate the Positive” event to celebrate quality-of-life contributions of indicator adopters, TMT members, and about thirty award winners. Reno, Nevada resident Alice Heiman was first exposed to TMT at one of these celebrations. She called it “such an uplifting event, so inspiring. It showcased all the good stuff going on in the community. I just got so jazzed.” Heiman soon started adopting indicators. TMT also uses these events for public education purposes. Some of TMT’s most important partnerships help it communicate with the public. Every two years, TMT partners with the daily newspaper, the Reno Gazette-Journal, and the three local television stations, to feature award winners and their quality-of-life contributions. They also have many smaller events, meetings, and put out a newsletter and maintain a website to keep up a constant public drumbeat.

Government collaboration with TMT started with the city governments of Reno and Sparks and the Washoe County government becoming organizational members of TMT, and began to blossom when TMT started “quality of life compacts.” Through the compacts, organizations voluntarily accept accountability to make substantial, measurable commitments to improve the quality of life in the region. A leader in building a bridge between TMT and the county government has been Kathy Carter, a TMT board member and the Community Relations Director of Washoe County. She embodies Nalbandian’s leadership role as a facilitator and connector. Carter played a key role in developing TMT’s first quality of life compact, which was with Washoe County on the natural environment. Many of Washoe County’s 390,000 residents value the beauty of their mountain-and-valley environment, which is threatened by the growth the county has experienced. Later compacts have included private organizations and other government entities, such as the school board.

Eventually, the elected leaders of Washoe County came to see citizen energy and support leveraged by TMT, and the County started building on that strength more systematically. In 2005, the elected Washoe County Board of Commissioners decided to focus much of their strategic plan on longer term quality of life outcomes. TMT’s quality of life indicators and 2005 Community Well Being Report became an excellent resource for them to draw upon to set strategic priorities, goals, and community outcome indicators in the County Strategic Plan. In many instances, county commissioners used the same language as TMT when drafting their strategic goals. Examples include “reducing congestion and transportation system improvements,” “collaborating to enhance the quality and availability of the regional workforce,”

and "improving disease prevention and control." Commissioners were aware of the extensive citizen involvement with TMT and the interest TMT had generated around quality of life issues in the region. In 2006 Washoe County took the connection further by relating performance measures in the budget to those strategic goals and TMT indicators.

In 2005, a community-based growth management task force in which local governments collaborate started using quality of life indicators and began helping TMT update their indicators. TMT was also invited to help steer a regional planning update in 2006 to measure sustainable quality-of-life indicators in the region. With these developments, TMT's indicators are starting to be used for one of their original purposes: to measure the impacts of growth in growth management and regional planning.

By these actions, local government leaders, especially those of Washoe County, are taking advantage of the citizen trust and energy built by TMT to develop strategic and regional plans based on community priorities. County Manager Katy Singlaub is taking it further, by developing a managing for results system with departmental performance measures tied to the strategic plan, similar to what the county management team in Prince William County, Virginia, has already done.

Emerging Collaborative Leadership in Russian Communities

The National Civic League in the U.S. calls for today's community leaders to move away from autocratic hoarding of power, and "learn to share power and share the public agenda with their fellow community members."³⁰ This concept has evolved over 200 years in the United States, while Russia has had only 16 years to adjust to it.

While much attention in the West has been paid to increasing centralization of power at the federal level in Russia, at the local level decentralization has been proceeding apace and government leaders have had to simultaneously react to both the needs of an increasingly vocal citizenry and a growing level of personal accountability.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it was citizen leaders, not government leaders, who reacted first in addressing the immediate needs of the Russian people. While local government leaders were (and still are) saddled with the task of reforming Soviet administrative and legal code and focused on bureaucratic reforms and government restructuring, citizen leaders took advantage of their new freedoms and an uncertain regulatory environment to create organizations and initiative groups that could respond quickly and flexibly to problems in their communities. These "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) are similar to non-profit service provision and civic organizations in the U.S.

It is important to draw a distinction between these groups and the subsequent wave of advocacy NGOs funded mostly by western development aid. Whereas the latter were focused mostly on issues related to the "democracy-building" agenda of western donors, such as human rights abuses and freedom of the press, the former were primarily engaged in service-provision and grew in direct response to the needs of the community. The best of these grassroots, service-

provider NGOs grew into powerful advocacy organizations in their own right over time and began to make a policy impact at the local and regional level. These organizations, for the most part, had evolved over time to reach the stage of taking on policy issues, starting off by providing a limited number of services to their local constituents and scaling up as the popularity of their programs grew and they gained credibility with local policymakers. Advocacy activities weren't conducted as discreet projects but rather as an ongoing process, incorporated into and informed by the delivery of direct services. Lobbying efforts tended to grow in fits and starts as these nonprofit NGOs gained in membership and prominence, as they made valuable connections collaborating with their counterparts in government, and as elected officials came to recognize the voting power of the NGOs' constituents. The strength of NGOs' constituencies and extent of their credibility depended in large part on their ability to engage citizens in a wide range of roles, first as stakeholders and collaborators, and eventually as advocates, evaluators, and issue framers.

In the U.S., Prince William County, Virginia and Washoe County, Nevada, offer two different approaches local governments have taken to connect with citizens and community organizations. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian communities where similar collaborations have emerged have followed a path closer to Washoe County, where a non-profit organization, TMT, took the lead and local government became a strong collaborator. In the mid-to-late 1990s, as the newly-minted Russian nonprofit sector began to cohere, progress, and professionalize, government leaders began to see the benefits of large-scale collaboration with NGOs. The case of Talisman, an Irkutsk-based school and adult-living community for people with disabilities, offers an interesting example of how the state leadership came to embrace a new model for the education of developmentally challenged children created by a local NGO which had successfully engaged a parental constituency throughout the territory of the Oblast (state or provincial regional government).

The school initially operated out of the apartments of its parent-founders before it was granted classroom space at a state-run orphanage. However, over time, Talisman developed its own, unique education model and, increasingly, did not want to conform to the state's criteria for public education for the developmentally disabled. In 1995, thanks largely to a large private donation from a European donor, Talisman was able to purchase a building to house a private day school in Irkutsk city. The school thrived, making measurable, well-publicized progress in educating children the state had officially deemed "uneducable" using their own methodology. Talisman's clear and measurable track record in improving education results for the developmentally disabled led the Irkutsk Oblast governor to invest in the Talisman model. In 1999, the state donated 24 hectares of land just outside Irkutsk city for Talisman to expand its operations, creating an adult living community for its city school graduates. State support has no doubt contributed to Talisman's growth and helps ensure its long-term viability. Meanwhile, the state is better able to serve a once-marginalized constituency by leveraging citizen assets in the form of the school's strong parent volunteer corps who built and remodeled the buildings on the grounds, created a farm that produces nearly enough food to make the community self-sustaining, and provide instruction for community residents in topics ranging from carpentry to reading comprehension.³¹

New Collaborative Roles for Russian Government Leaders, and a New Law

The pattern of Talisman, in which NGOs build citizen engagement and get results, leading to government collaborating with them, has been evident in communities in many regions of Russia. Some NGOs have also become involved in measuring community or regional outcomes, particularly concerning the environment. Local Russian leaders have emerged who, like U.S. leaders Kathy Carter, William Johnson, John Jenkins, Craig Gerhart, and Louise Blalock, have become connectors and facilitators across sectors, across organizations, and with citizens. For example, it is not unusual in Russian communities for a leader of a community NGO to be elected to a local *duma*, equivalent to a city council or county board.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, legal and administrative reforms had expanded upon and solidified a framework for government and NGO collaboration. The outsourcing of public services to external private or non-profit groups, and state- and municipally-funded grant competitions were both codified and became common practice. At the same time, the Federal government also developed new laws that increased the autonomy and accountability of government at the local level. The most significant of these reforms was the enactment, in 2005, of Federal Law 131-FZ *On General Principles of Local Self-government Organization*, which mandates “an independent and responsible solution of local issues by the population directly and (or) through bodies of local self-governments based on the interests of the people.”³² Today, local government leaders in Russia face an unprecedented mandate to engage citizens in community decision-making, which means forging stronger ties with community-based organizations and developing systematic methodologies for both engaging citizens and feeding citizen input back into decision-making processes. Collaboration with community-based organizations offers Russian government leaders the following key advantages:

- Working with smaller, less bureaucratic organizations enables government to respond to citizen concerns faster, more efficiently and with greater flexibility;
- Grassroots organizations—especially service-provider NGOs with a volunteer base—provide access to key constituencies who are already engaged in one or more citizen roles across a broad range of sectors;
- After 16 years of independence, the NGO sector has developed a corps of professional managers with skills in areas such as grant-making, project development, program administration, and group facilitation, that government leaders can learn from.

A number of governments across Russia took advantage of the window of opportunity offered by enactment of law 131 to launch new initiatives that engage citizens and NGOs in a more deliberative and systematic fashion, namely through the implementation of Effective Community Governance.

Emerging Russian Applications of Effective Community Governance

In 2005, the two lead authors of this paper co-developed a project in Russia in collaboration with the Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Center (SCISC) to help communities from the Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Altai Republic, and Kemerovo regions. Each community’s effort is led by a collaborative team representing local government, an NGO, and media. And each is required, in its own way, to engage citizens and measure results of citizen-identified

priorities, and to attempt to implement improvements addressing these priorities. SCISC, based in Novosibirsk city, works with a network of community building NGOs in most regions of Siberia, and has engaged a regional coach from its network to assist each participating community team. The authors' effort, through Epstein & Fass Associates, is supported by a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The Mott Foundation provided the initial support to SCISC for this pilot program and continues to support SCISC which has also obtained support for the program from the U.S. Agency for International Development and from several major regional (i.e., state) governments to enable a community from their state to participate.

This pilot project is based on the Effective Community Governance Model, described earlier in this paper (see Figure 1 at the end of this paper) which focuses on relationships among engaging citizens, measuring results, and getting things done to improve the community's quality of life. Related Effective Community Governance ideas described earlier, such as the four major community improvement themes and the use of multiple citizen roles, are also essential to the program. The project concept did not specify which sector would lead each community effort. However, local government interest in satisfying Law 131 has resulted in each community collaboration being a government-led effort, perhaps making these cases closer to the Prince William County, than to TMT-Washoe County and Talisman-Irkutsk. Participating local governments see this initiative as an opportunity to meet Law 131 mandates while improving their governance practices and developing the foundation for a system of community indicators. The program started in 2006 with six communities. After a year, the original six are still participating, and SCISC and its network members have begun reaching out to engage additional communities in Effective Community Governance practices.

These Russian community experiences are still new and evolving. The measurement component of the project is just getting underway, but efforts to engage citizens have proceeded for over a year. So, while changes in measured results will not be known for some time, new citizen engagement processes and collaborative leadership roles are already emerging in some participating communities, as befits the accelerated learning environment that Russian local public officials find themselves in.

Sources and Limitations of the Following Report on Early Russian Effective Community Governance Experiences

The sources of information for this report on the early Russian experience with Effective Community Governance are:

- The two lead authors' observations of pilot community teams' participation in two intensive 3-day workshops (called "seminars"), and reviews of work products and plans produced in the seminars;
- Progress reports from the community teams and some reports from coaches of the teams, and other interim products of pilot teams, such as survey results.
- Written and oral updates to Epstein & Fass from the SCISC project managers.

Two key limitations of this report are:

- The authors have not observed pilot team practices in their communities, but only observed the community teams at centralized seminars held in Novosibirsk, Siberia.

- At this writing, the pilot communities have only been working with Effective Community Governance ideas and practices for about 10–11 months, so any “conclusions” must be considered preliminary and impressionistic, at best.

Broad Observations

The communities selected to participate in this program by SCISC for the most part already have had experience with government-NGO collaborations, through such mechanisms as competitive grant processes to fund NGOs to implement community improvements. What has been most interesting to observe so far in the first year of this project has been variations in the level of collaboration that has emerged between local governments and citizens. Some broad observations from the first two project seminars (in May and October 2006) and interim progress reports are:

- The Effective Community Governance Model and related ideas have been well received by pilot community teams, but the extent to which team members have shown they understand and can use some of these ideas has varied greatly across communities;
- The key idea of multiple citizen roles appeared to be accepted by the pilot community teams from the start, and they all participated in assessing citizen roles in their community and opportunities to support citizens in new roles or better support them in existing roles;
- The idea of “deliberative dialog” with citizens seemed difficult for most community team participants to grasp; it appeared to be a new to all or most team participants, very foreign to their experience.

Facilitative Leadership Emerging in at Least Two Communities

Between May and late October 2006, while all community teams undertook activities to inform citizens of the program and obtain citizen input on priorities, in this period only two communities embraced the idea of real dialog with citizens. The others fell back on one-way approaches of citizen-government communication with which they appeared more comfortable, including citizen surveys, citizen complaints (which one team analyzed to determine priorities), and public hearings. SCISC and Epstein & Fass did not discourage “one-way” approaches to obtain input, such as surveys, but we emphasized making dialog with citizens a key form of engagement. We suggested that, as in Prince William County’s strategic planning process, a mix of survey data and information from citizen dialogs could be particularly effective.

Based on the initial plans they prepared at the end of the March 2006 seminar, the two community teams that emerged as most collaborative with citizens started out with very different mindsets. The team from Maima, a town of about 17,000 residents in the rural Altai Republic, set ambitious targets for the number of people to involve and the percentage of youth to engage (the Maima team started out focusing on youth). The leading government member of the Maima team, Olga Zyablitskaya, an elected deputy and Chair of the Deputy Council of the Maima municipality, was particularly outspoken about engaging the youth of the town in determining priority youth issues and how to address them.

By contrast, the team from the Krivoshienskyi Raion, a rural local regional jurisdiction (similar to a county) with about 16,000 residents in Tomsk Oblast, started with a more bureaucratic approach. While they planned to *inform* the population about the program through the media, their initial plan focused on passing a local law on citizen engagement before actually trying to start a community dialog. Their initial plan was also anything but collaborative, with responsibility for most tasks assigned to Nicolay Lipukhin, elected Head of Administration of the Krivoshienskyi Raion. Epstein & Fass commented to the team, through SCISC, that they should not wait to pass a law to start engaging citizens in dialog. The SCISC network coach, from the Center for Community Development in Tomsk, similarly urged the team to begin engaging citizens. The team got the message, and proceeded to launch an aggressive program of citizen participation well beyond their initial plan. For example, between May and October 2006, the Krivoshienskyi Raion team held over 20 public discussion forums in various formats (e.g., roundtables, focus groups, negotiation forums including one on the raion budget and one bringing government, business, citizens, and youth together) in addition to public hearings. They did not hold all their meetings in the village of the seat of the raion government, but reached out to hold discussions in other agricultural settlements so more citizens could participate. They also held training sessions in Effective Community Governance for settlement leaders and other officials to extend the reach of their team, and identified new community leaders.

In the October 2006 seminar, the Krivoshienskyi Raion team developed a plan for measurement and improvement for two of the highest priority issues to emerge from the public discussions: grounds and common area maintenance of housing developments, and youth development and employment. Their intentions of continuing collaboration with citizens are clear in their plans, as they included citizens playing all major roles in the plan, including evaluators who would help measure and analyze the performance of housing maintenance companies, and collaborators who would negotiate improvement targets with the companies based on the data. Their plans include supporting citizens in these roles by helping to organize them in new groups, such as resident associations and a “youth parliament.” Their plans also include developing new community leaders, especially among youth.

Meanwhile, the Maima team also demonstrated a collaborative, facilitative approach, engaging youth throughout the town in discussion forums and a survey to identify problems and possible solutions, including actions the youth might take on their own, as well as solutions requiring resources from government. They also engaged adults of the town in discussions, and found priorities very similar to those voiced by youth, suggesting good potential for support of solutions by voters. They followed the discussions by organizing active youth into working teams to develop presentations of problems and potential solutions, which they presented in a meeting with local government leaders, including the head of administration, who were impressed with the understanding of the issues displayed by youth. The administration was impressed enough to send the vice chair of administration to be part of the Maima team at the third program seminar in Novosibirsk in March 2007. During their initial citizen and youth organizing period, the Maima team and an Altai regional NGO, Vozrozhdenie (Revival), developed an effective collaboration. Vozrozhdenie, a Siberian Center network organization whose chair serves as SCISC’s coach for the Maima team, helped organize a discussion forum and some of the youth activities.

In this period, Olga Zyablitskaya and the Maima team and Nicolay Lipukhin and the Krivoshienskiy Raion team took on leadership roles referred to as important by U.S. experts and practitioners cited earlier in this paper, including roles of listeners (Blalock) and facilitators and connectors (Nalbandan). They were also demonstrating competencies of negotiation, trust building, and collaboration (Goldsmith and Eggers) as well as “leadership in context” (Crosby and Bryson). Lipukhin and the Krivoshienskiy Raion team appeared to make a particularly rapid transition from bureaucratic, controlling leadership to a more facilitative style (as advocated by Schwarz). Because they appeared to start with so little understanding of how to engage and collaborate with citizens, the Siberian Center referred to the Krivoshienskiy Raion team as having “a breakthrough level of growth.”³³

In March 2007, the Siberian Center held another seminar in Novosibirsk. Based on the plan of the Mott Foundation grants, Epstein & Fass did not attend this seminar, but contributed exercises and materials for parts of it. Initial reports by the Siberian Center after this seminar indicate:

- The Maima and Krivoshienskiy Raion teams have been continuing on their participative, collaborative paths. The Krivoshienskiy Raion team believes they are making citizen engagement a sustainable process and developing more trust of the government among citizens. Nickolay Lipukhin reported developing a regular series of meetings to report to citizens and engage them in discussions. The Maima team reported having engaged youth, adults, and the town government in developing youth policy and a program of youth-focused improvements, which the town government has funded.
- Other community teams appear to be overcoming some of their reluctance to reach out and actively engage citizens, though they are clearly taking longer to “get there” than the teams from Maima and Krivoshienskiy Raion. In particular, the team from Mejdurechinsk, a city of 103,000 people in Kemerovo Oblast, had earlier been skeptical about citizens having enough expertise or knowledge to participate in problem solving. In the third seminar, the Mejdurechinsk team said that they have learned from a survey and community discussions that citizens are more knowledgeable about local issues than they expected, and that the local administration has come to understand that citizen engagement has value and what citizens say are problems are most important to attend to.

Barriers to Change and a Compensating Collaborative Role for Capacity Building Organizations

The Siberian Center and community teams have, from time to time, cited barriers that have to be overcome to implementing Effective Community Governance practices, and particular new approaches to engagement and collaboration. For example:

- A barrier to successful engagement raised by all community teams at the start, and raised again and again by some teams, was the “passivity of the population.” As one team articulated this problem, “In the USSR many things were prohibited; people were used to being led. And when freedom was given, many don’t know what to do with it.”
- Resistance to open representative participation in at least one community, where the local administration tried to pressure the pilot team to ensure that community discussions mainly involved citizens well known to the administration, that the administration could trust.

- Limited time by government officials, who are already overburdened, to attempt new practices.

What is interesting about all three barriers is that they are strikingly similar to ones raised by local government officials in the U.S. who have been resistant to more results-oriented, participative approaches to governance. It doesn't take 80 years of an authoritarian dictatorship to cause some local officials to complain (as many have in the U.S.) that citizens are not interested in local government policies because, for example, only the "usual suspects" of complainers and narrowly-focused interest groups show up at public hearings, even on important policy documents such as the budget. And we have also met public officials in the U.S. who try to be sure most participants in an "open" process will be friendly, and who complain about not having the time to try new practices. We think the actions of the teams from Maima and Krivoshienskiy Raion, just as those of officials from Prince William County and Washoe County in the U.S., demonstrate that it is possible to overcome those barriers. To overcome these barriers, public officials need to accept two key ideas: (1) if they show trust to citizens through open, active engagement, it will help citizens to come to trust the government, and (2) these new practices should not be seen as extra projects they never have time for, but as practices to integrate into their regular everyday activities. The Siberian Center has been trying to impress these ideas on the community teams, and spent time during the second and third seminars engaging community teams in discussions about how they can make these practices part of their regular governance processes. The teams have responded that the budget process is one opportunity—an opportunity the Krivoshienskiy Raion team has already started to take—and another opportunity are "socio-economic development plans" that the local governments all develop periodically, which teams have said can benefit from more active citizen engagement.

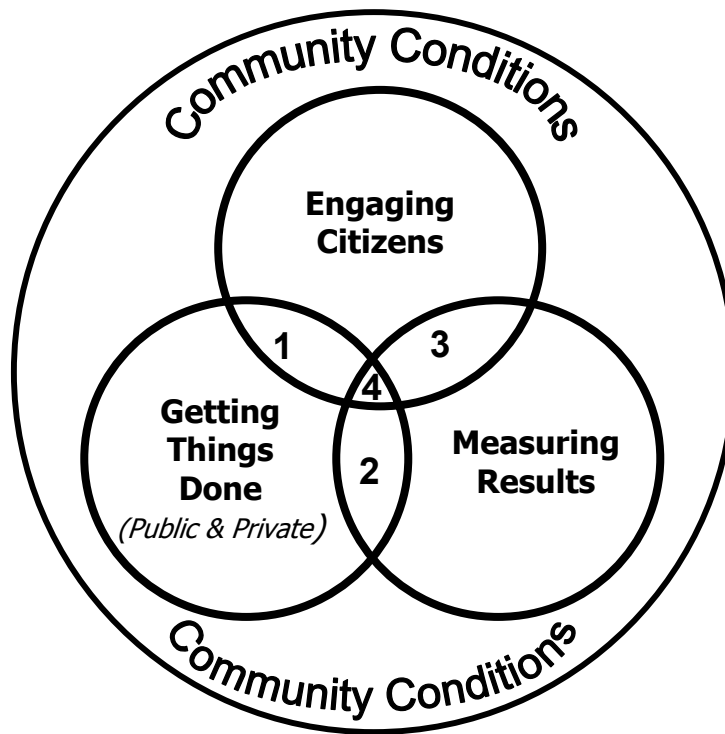
Another barrier cited by the Siberian Center, and apparent to the two lead authors of this paper (at least for the participants we have observed), is a lack of facilitation skills among participating local government organizations. Indeed, without careful meeting planning and skilled facilitators, open citizen engagement can easily degrade into unproductive gripe sessions. Unlike the three barriers noted above which we found similar to barriers in the U.S., in our experience, U.S. local government organizations have come to value facilitation skills in the last ten to fifteen years—even if only for internal use—and are likely to employ some staff with those skills. But this deficiency may represent an organization development need of Russian local governments. The Siberian Center and its network of NGOs are well positioned to fill this need. We have witnessed a high level of facilitation skills among staff of the Siberian Center and its network, and facilitation training is one of the Siberian Center's services. This suggests that mediating capacity building organizations, such as the Siberian Center, have important skill development roles to play to help local organizations make facilitative leadership styles work.

Too Early for Conclusions, but Early Experiences Are Encouraging

The Siberian Center-Epstein & Fass project with six Siberian communities is too new and too small to draw any sweeping conclusions about effective leadership styles in Russia or more generally in emerging democracies. And of course, there are many other governance improvement efforts in emerging democracies in general, and in Russia in particular.³⁴ But the Siberian project was designed to encourage the use of many of the same practices as those

documented earlier in U.S. communities. So, it is interesting to examine the Siberian community experiences in the same light as we examined the U.S. cases. People mentioned earlier from U.S. communities who have exhibited engaging, collaborative leadership styles, such as William Johnson, John Jenkins, Louise Blalock, Kathy Carter, and Craig Gerhart, have done so over periods of ten years or more. Russian local government leaders in the Siberian project, such as Olga Zyablitskaya and Nickolay Lipuhkin, are only just beginning to demonstrate these collaborative, facilitative approaches—at least to outside observers. But early experiences in their two small Siberian communities are encouraging. We can only say, “stay tuned,” as all six initial communities in the Siberian Center’s program build on their early experiences (and some or all eventually add measuring and improving results to their efforts with citizens), and the Siberian Center and its network engage more communities in practices of effective governance.

Figure 1. Effective Community Governance Model



The four “Advanced Governance Practices” are represented by the overlapping areas in the figure, which represent alignment of “core community skills” as follows:

- 1. Community Problem Solving:** Aligns “Engaging Citizens” and “Getting Things Done.”
- 2. Organizations Managing for Results:** Aligns “Measuring Results” and “Getting Things Done.”
- 3. Citizens Reaching for Results:** Aligns “Engaging Citizens” and “Measuring Results.”
- 4. Communities Governing for Results:** Aligns all three core skills.

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- ¹⁹ Ibid, 164.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 194.
- ²¹ Ibid, 193.
- ²² Ibid, 149.
- ²³ Ibid, 203.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 154.

²⁵ Ibid, 140–145.

²⁶ Follow-up interview of Craig Gerhart by Paul Epstein and Alina Simone, February 2007.

²⁷ Epstein, Coates, and Wray, *Results That Matter*, 151–153.

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²⁹ The Truckee Meadows Tomorrow and Washoe County experiences are drawn from Epstein, Coates, and Wray, *Results That Matter*, 114–121, and updated information available at [http://www.resultsthatmatter.net/site/model/tmt_summer.php]. Also see the Truckee Meadows Tomorrow website [<http://www.truckeemeadowstomorrow.org/>] and the Washoe County Strategic Priorities at [<http://www.washoecounty.us/bcc/priorities.html>].

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³¹ The Talisman case, and others like it, were documented by Alina Simone in her field research in various regions of Siberia in 2004.

³² Law 131-FZ *On General Principles of Local Self-government Organization* of the Russian Federation, 2005.

³³ Siberian Civic Initiatives Support Center's 2006 Narrative Report to the Mott Foundation (February 2007).

³⁴ We had also hoped to report on a World Bank program for rural communities in other parts of Russia that shared some of the citizen engagement and measurement aspects of the Mott-funded SCISC-Epstein & Fass project. However, that project's concluding conference, to which we have been invited, has been delayed until after the deadline for submitting this paper.