

# TRACKDOWN

## MANAGEMENT SERVICES

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## Women Leading Government Working Together For the Future

Cal-ICMA has embarked on a “Women Leading Government” initiative. Women fill leadership roles throughout government, including many City Managers and department heads in California cities.

**Women Leading Government (WLG)** was established by a group of California leaders who share a strong commitment to encouraging women to excel, and to developing appropriate opportunities for training and talent growth.

The Founding members of WLG include Huntington Beach City Administrator **Penelope Culbreth-Graft**, Yorba Linda City Manager **Tamara Letourneau**, and Santa Ana Assistant City Manager **Cathy Standiford**. Other are: **Roberta Burns**, CEO in Imperial County; **Jenny Haruyama** of the Town of Los Gatos; City of Orange’s **Irma Hernandez**; **Debra Rose** of the City of Lake Forest; former Fremont City Manager **Jan Perkins**; **Sarona Vivanco** of Santa Clarita; and **Nancy Hetrick** of Management Partners.

Mike Busch and the Cal-ICMA leadership are commended for this effort. Those wishing to contact the Women Leading Government group may email: [pgraft@socal.rr.com](mailto:pgraft@socal.rr.com) Telephone contact may be made by calling 714-536-5575.

This is a wonderful program that deserves support.

Please visit their website at:

[www.womenleadinggovernment.org](http://www.womenleadinggovernment.org)

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## California’s Women City Managers

It is appropriate to focus on California women city managers as Cal-ICMA kicks-off its’ “Women Leading Government” effort. We have attempted to spotlight as many of our women city managers as possible, and some of our past women city managers.

Of course, we are bound to miss someone in this list, but we have tried to be as inclusive as possible. Those who are not members of ICMA are on a memory basis only. Please forgive our faux pas in advance, and please recognize our space restrictions.

### Women City Managers in California

When appointed La Mirada City Manager **Andrea Travis** was the youngest member of the city’s management team, prompting a local newspaper to dub them “the mod squad.” She was the fifth City Manager in the City’s history, and the first woman. The community is currently finishing one of the most ambitious municipal aquatic center projects in California history.

Vista City Manager **Rita L. Geldert** has earned an ICMA 25-year service award. She is the President of the California City Management Foundation Board, and serves on the Cal-ICMA Board as well. Rita began her public service career in the Vacaville Personnel Department. She also worked in Merced and Dana Point before joining the Vista staff as the Assistant City Manager in 1995.

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## Women City Managers in California

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Artesia City Manager **Maria Dadian** is the current Chair of the Gateway Cities' City Managers' Group. She started her municipal career in Hawaiian Gardens prior to moving on to Artesia as the Assistant City Manager.

**Debbie Kurita** started her municipal career as an intern in Los Angeles. She worked her way up in the Santa Ana organization to Assistant City Manager before her selection as City Manager of the City of Alameda. Debbie is a West Coast Representative on the ICMA Board, and a past Board member of the California City Management Foundation (CCMF). She holds an MPA from U.S.C. Her BA was earned at the University of California.

**Beth Pollard** started her city government career in San Anselmo before going to Albany as the City Administrator. Beth got her MPA from CSU but is probably one of the only California managers to earn a B.A. from Connecticut College.

**Katie E. Lichtig** is currently the Assistant City Manager in Beverly Hills. However, just prior to joining City Manager Rod Wood's staff, Katie served as the City Manager of the City of Malibu. She actually got her government career start in Washington, D.C. before her first California position in Santa Monica.

**Donna C. Landeros** is the City Manager of the City of Brentwood. Donna got her start in Los Angeles before moving north to Butte and Yolo Counties. She then served as the City Manager of the City of Ventura. Donna's Brentwood Assistant City Manager is **Karen L. Chew**. Karen is a former Town Manager in the Town of Moraga, California.

*"Where'd all the good people go?"  
Lyric in song by Jack Johnson*



Join California's premier City Manager support organization: CCMF.

Burbank City Manager **Mary J. Alvord** began her municipal service career in Burbank in 1984. She steadily worked her way up through the Parks and Recreation Department where people skills are at a premium.

Clovis City Manager **Kathy Millison** is a 25-year local government veteran. She start as a planner for a county in Washington State and then moved to The Dalles in Oregon. She moved to Clovis in 1983 as the Assistant City Manager. Kathy earned a Bachelor Degree from Michigan State University.

Colma City Manager **Diane McGrath** earned her B.A. degree from Cal State Long Beach. She started her local government career, however, as a planner in Breckenridge, Colorado before moving to Foster City and then Colma as Assistant City Manager.

**Linda Kay Olivieri** is the Acting City Administrator in the City of Commerce.

With experience in Lake Elsinore as Assistant City Manager, **Marlene Best** is the current City Manager of the City of Imperial.

**Mary L. Strenn** retired as the City Manager of the City of El Segundo. The University of Wisconsin graduate, had a career that started in the Planning Department of Peoria, Illinois. Mary worked her way to Assistant City Manager in Peoria before she moved to Bakersfield as a Deputy City Manager and then the Assistant City Manager. Mary was appointed City Administrator in San Fernando before coming to El Segundo. She earned a 25-year ICMA service award.

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## Women City Managers in California

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Though Concord City Manager **Lydia E. Du Borg** has worked her way up in her organization since 1977 when she started in Concord as an Assistant Planner, she began her city government career as a planner in Monterey, California.

Corona City Manager **Beth A. Groves'** first local government position was as an Executive Policy Manager for the Orange County Board of Supervisors. She began working her way up in the City of Corona organization in 1996, and became Assistant City Manager in January 2002.

**Terry L. Stubbings** has been the City of Cotati City Manager since November 2003. Previously she worked in Santa Rosa, and in Palmdale, where she began working her way up to Assistant to the City Manager in 1988. Terry is a graduate of the University of Redlands.

Starting her local government career in the Inglewood engineering department, **Patricia "Pat" Martel** moved north to South San Francisco where she served as Assistant City Manager and Interim City Manager. The U.S.C. graduate has held the very prestigious position of General Manager in the City and County of San Francisco. She was appointed City Manager in the City of Daly City in 2005.

El Cajon City Manager **Kathleen "Kathi" Henry** began her municipal government career in El Cajon in 1981. The San Diego State University graduate served as the El Cajon Assistant City Manager for eight years prior to being appointed City Manager.

Fairfax Town Manager **Linda Kelly** started her municipal government career in 1990 as an intern in Pasadena. She has served in Long Beach, La Puente, where she was City Clerk, Whittier, Sunnyvale and Atherton, where she was the Assistant to the City Manager.



*Paramount City Manager  
Linda Benedetti-Leal*

**Linda Ruffing** is the City Manager of the City of Fort Bragg. Linda began her career as a Planning Consultant and then became a planner in Mendocino before moving to Fort Bragg as the Community Development Director.

Half Moon Bay City Manager **Marcia Raines** is a former Assistant City Manager and City Manager of Martinez. She grew up in Glendora and went to Cal Poly Pomona. She worked in Laguna Beach, Ontario and West Covina before heading north to Martinez. Marcia is a new member of the California City Management Foundation Board.

**Laura G. Fischler** is the City Manager of the City of Holtville. She holds an M.B.A. from San Diego State University. Following a school district position, Laura worked in the Public Works Department in El Centro. She was a Utility Rate Analyst for the Imperial Irrigation District prior to her City Manager appointment.

Huntington Beach City Administrator **Penny Culbreth-Graft** earned her Doctorate at the University of Laverne. She began her local government career in Montclair, Monterey Park and Chino where she became the Assistant City Manager. Penny was City Administrator in Grover Beach before moving to be the Assistant City Manager in San Diego. Penny then worked as a Tribal Government Manager for the Viejas Indian Reservation before being appointed Assistant City Manager in Riverside.

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La Mesa City Manager **Sandra L. Keri** started her local government career as an intern in San Luis Obispo. She went to work in the La Mesa organization in 1987 and has worked herself up to the City Manager position. Sandra earned an M.B.A. degree from the University of Redlands.

Graduating from Cal State Santa Barbara and earning an M.P.A. at Notre Dame de Namur University, **Debra Auker** began her career in Finance with a consulting firm that serves public agencies. She worked in Belmont and Half Moon Bay, and served as the Half Moon Bay City Manager between 2004 and 2006. She is currently the Finance Director in the City of Hayward.

Livermore City Manager **Linda M. Barton** began his government service career in Colorado with the State and Lakewood, Colorado. She then moved to positions in Oregon and Minnesota. She was City Manager in Burnsville, Minnesota and later Bedford, Texas. Prior to her appointment in Livermore she served as Deputy City Manager in Bellevue, Washington.

**Luci Romero Serlet** began her local government career as an intern in the City of Coronado. Since then she has served in Encinitas, Carlsbad, Temecula, Newport Beach, Solana Beach, and Goleta. She is currently the City Manager of the City of Los Alamitos. Luci holds both B.S. and M.P.A. degrees from San Diego State University.

*"Many California women city managers have had long, distinguished and diverse careers!"*

**Debra J. Figone** received a 35-years ICMA Service Award in 2004. The Los Gatos Town Manager started her career as a Recreation Leader in San Jose. She worked her way up in that organization and served as the Acting City Manager of California's third largest city. Debra also served as the Town Manager of Los Gatos between San Jose positions in the late 1980s.

One of the few who began a city management career in library service, Mill Valley City Manager **Anne Montgomery** was an Administrative Librarian in San Mateo and the City Librarian in Mill Valley before moving into the City Manager's office. Anne has a B.A. degree from the University of Michigan, and an M.L.S. from Kent State University.

Oakland is the 8th largest of California's cities, and **Deborah Edgerly** is the City Administrator. She was listed among the 30 most influential African-Americans in the Bay Area by CityFlight Media Network and State Farm Insurance.

City Manager **Janet S. Keeter** comes to Orinda from Lodi where she served as a Deputy City Manager, and for a time acted as the Interim City Manager. She started her career with San Joaquin County, and spent time working for Tracy. Janet has a 20-year ICMA service award.

Pasadena City Manager, a 25-year ICMA service award recipient, **Cynthia J. Kurtz** began her public service career in Portland, Oregon before joining the staff at the home of the "Tournament of Roses" and the Rose Bowl. Cynthia earned a B.S. degree from Pennsylvania State University and an M.A. from the University of Iowa. Cynthia is a past-President of the City Managers' Department of the League of California Cities. She has served as Pasadena City Manager since 1998.

**Amy Chan** has a 25-year ICMA service award. She is currently the City Manager of the City of Sunnyvale where she started her public career in the accounting office in 1981.

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Another 25-years ICMA service award recipient, **Belinda B. Espinosa** is the City Manager of the City of Pinole. She earned her M.S. degree at St. Mary's University in Texas where she began her career with San Antonio. She worked in Grand Prairie, Texas prior to being appointed City Manager in Soledad, California.

Starting her public service career in Josephine County, Oregon is Pomona Assistant City Manager **Linda C. Lowry**. She began her California service in the "Friendly City" of Bellflower in the Finance Department, as Linda had earned her CPA certification. She worked her way up in the Bellflower staff to become the City Administrator. Then she worked for a time as Assistant City Manager in South Gate prior to being appointed City Manager in the City of Diamond Bar.

Rancho Cucamonga Deputy City Manager **Pam Easter** began her career in San Juan Capistrano in 1976. Since then she has work experience Los Angeles County, Phoenix, Hemet, and Moreno Valley prior to her appointment as City Manager of the City of San Jacinto. Following six years in San Jacinto Pam worked for Southern California Edison Company before joining the Rancho Cucamonga staff. Pam has an M.P.A. degree from the University of Southern California. She is a past Regional Vice President on the ICMA Executive Board.

City Manager **Suzanne H. Bragdon** of Suisun City was previously the City Manager of Pismo Beach and the Assistant City Manager of Napa. She is a University of Washington graduate.

**Cathy Standiford** is the Assistant City Manager in the City of Santa Ana. She spent more than five years as City Manager in the City of La Palma prior to taking her current job. Cathy started her public service career in Garden Grove. She is a past Board member of the California City Management Foundation. Her M.P.A. is from the University of California at Irvine.

**Noelia F. Chapa** is the City Manager of the City of Soledad. Noelia has a 25-year ICMA service award. Her M.P.A. degree is from the University of Southern California. She started her public service career as an intern in Glendora and then moved to Paramount, and La Habra Heights. She served as City Manager in La Habra Heights. Before moving to Soledad she was the Finance Director and then Assistant City Administrator in the City of Pomona. Noelia is a past President of the Hispanic Network.

Santa Clara City Manager **Jennifer D. Sparacino** is a recipient of the ICMA Award for Career Excellence in Honor of Mark Keane. She has a 30-year ICMA service award. She is a member of the Board of the League of California Cities' City Managers' Department. Jennifer started her Santa Clara career in Recreation in 1976.

Another 25-year ICMA service award recipient is **Linda J. Pappas Diaz**. Linda is currently the Assistant City Manager of the City of Thousand Oaks. The Whittier College graduate started her city career in Downey in 1980, and since has had assignments in Costa Mesa, Cerritos, and Buena Park. She served Colma as City Manager and Antioch as Assistant City Manager.

**Linda Benedetti-Leal** is the City Manager in the City of Paramount. She served as Assistant City Manager prior to her appointment to the top spot.

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**Susan E. George** is the Town Manager in the Town of Woodside. Susan began her local government career in the County of Santa Clara in 1974. She worked at various county positions until she took the Deputy City Manager position in San Jose, California's third most populous city. She also worked as the Assistant City Manager in Hayward before her appointment in Woodside. Susan has earned a 30-year ICMA service award.

Yorba Linda City Manager **Tamara S. Letourneau** began her career as an intern in Arcadia. Since then she worked in a full-time position in Arcadia, and Claremont, where she became the Assistant to the City Manager. She served as the City Manager in Sierra Madre before taking her current assignment. She is a past-President of Municipal Management Assistants of Southern California (MMASC)..



Move over Jack Johnson!  
This is 4-year old Tyler...one of our grandsons.

## Thank You for your professional service!

Trackdown Management Services salutes all those who practice the difficult craft of city management. This publication, dedicated to the women of California city management, omits many fine professionals practicing at the assistant, department head and other levels. We recognize the invaluable service you all lend to the democratic process, the Council-Manager Plan and cost-effective local government.

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