
Avoiding the “I Wish I’d Known That!” Moments

A guide for new clerks

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Presenter



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*Former Director for the Iowa Municipal
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Icebreaker



- Turn to your neighbor. Introduce yourself with:
 - your city
 - your position
 - how long you've been in your position

Then answer the following question:

- What interested you most about your position before you took it? What concerns you most now that you have the position?

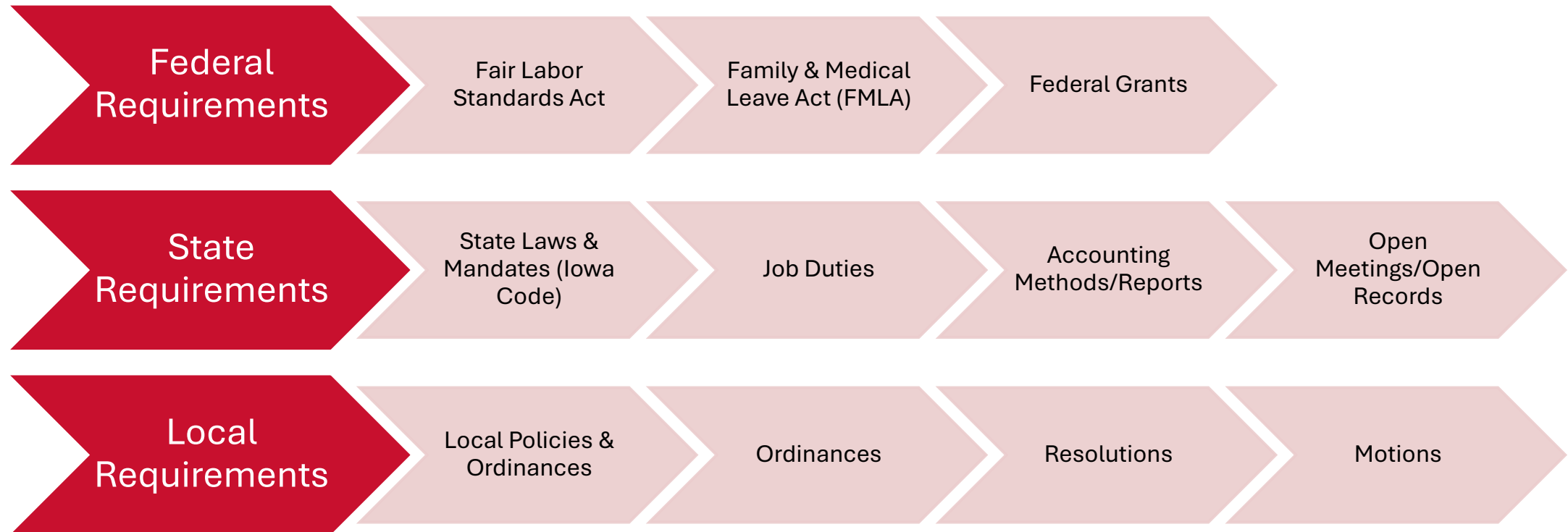
The Reality of Municipal Professionals

Meetings • Records • Finance • Elections • Publications • Public Service

The Ultimate Municipal Juggler

- **Information hub** for residents, staff, & elected officials
- **Master calendar keeper, official custodian of records, and deadline tracker**
- **Juggler of meetings, elections, licenses, budgets, & public requests**
- **Asked to do the impossible...preferably by 4:30p.m.**
- **Question for you:**
 - **What task takes up more of your time than people realize?**

Federal, State, and Local Law Overviews



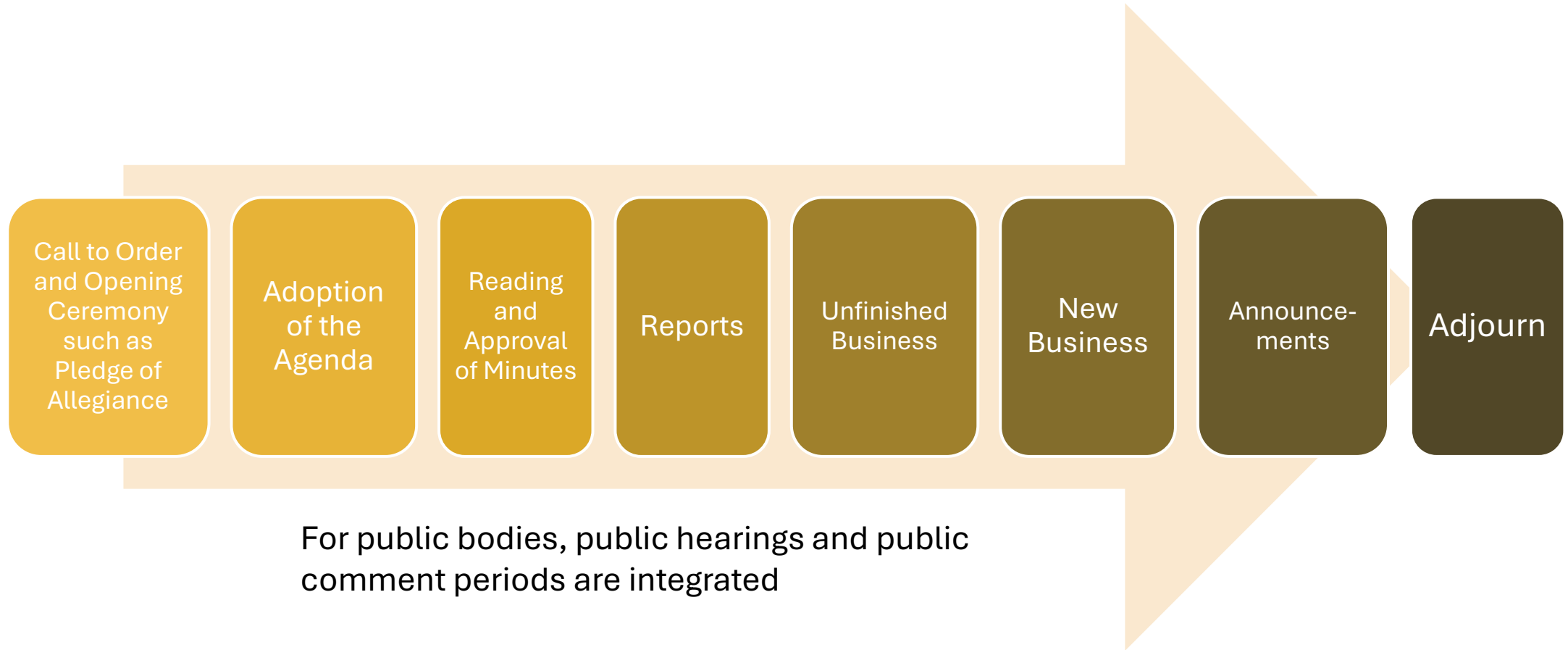
Before a Council Meeting

- Agendas
 - Public Hearings should offer the specifics of public hearings (guidelines, time limits)
 - Title & Heading should be comparable to council minutes in format
 - Should state it's an agenda
 - Name the municipality
 - Show date/time/place
 - Council Procedures
 - Consult your council procedures for specific details

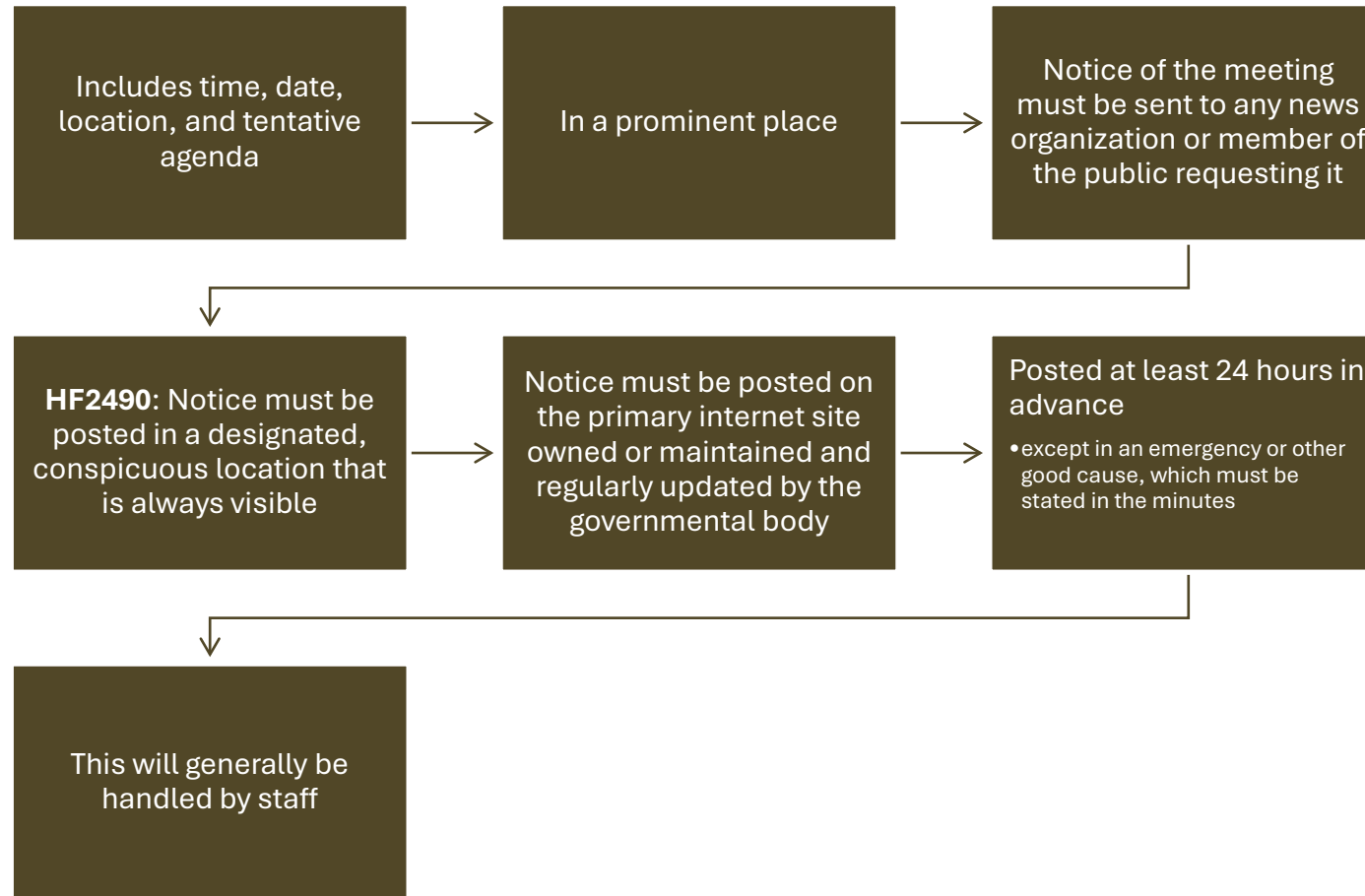
Agenda Requirements

- Agendas with minimal information such as “approval of old minutes, old business, new business” would not be sufficient, nor would using the same agenda for meeting after meeting. The information on the agenda must be reasonably sufficient to alert interested people as to the subject matter to be considered.
- Minimum requirements include:
 - Time, date, location, and tentative agenda.
- The tentative agenda can be subject to change under certain circumstances.
- The law allows discussion and action on emergency items,
 - ***but if action can reasonably be deferred to a later meeting, it should be.***
- The agenda must specifically state any issues the board intends to discuss in open or in closed sessions.
- **HF2490 CHANGE:**
 - An agenda that had been previously posted may be amended by posting a revised agenda not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting, marked with the word “AMENDED,” and identifying the amended provisions. The government body must provide notice of the amended agenda in the same manner required for the original agenda, discussed above.

Standard Agenda



Public Notice (21.4)



Discussions on Agendas

- Review a sample agenda and identify missing items or posting concerns.

Public Comment Policies



Legal Framework (Iowa Code Ch. 21)

- **Right to Observe**
- **Mandatory Hearings**
- **24-Hour Notice**



Standard Decorum & Guidelines

- **Speaker Sign-Up**
- **Time Limits**
- **Podium Protocol**



Forum & Comment Types

- **Agenda Item Input:** Targeted remarks delivered immediately before the council discusses and votes on a listed item.
- **Open Citizen Forum:** Dedicated general comment period (start/end of meeting) for topics not on the official agenda.
- **Local Autonomy:** Each municipality adopts its own standing rules of order (e.g., Ames, Ankeny).

Meeting Foundations

-
- A chalkboard with the text "CODE OF CONDUCT" written on it in white chalk. The chalkboard is surrounded by school supplies: a red notebook, a black pen, a pair of glasses, and a white chalk.

Professional Conduct

- [illegible]

Ethics & Accountability

- IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**
Extension and Outreach

Closed Sessions

- Closed sessions will only happen for specific reasons
- Requirements
 - There are 12 specific reasons that a meeting is allowed to go into closed session. These are listed in Ch. 21.5

Requirements for Closed Sessions



Pass a motion by a vote of two-thirds of members



State in the minutes the reason for the closed session



Keep minutes during the closed session with details of all discussions, persons present, and actions taken



Record audio or video of the closed session, and retain for at least one year after the date of the meeting



Discuss only what is on the agenda



Vote on the issue discussed in the public session

Minutes, Resolutions & Ordinances

Minutes document discussion/action; resolutions act; ordinances create law.

Custodian of Records

Custodian of records

Most often the City Clerk is the designated custodian.
Iowa Code Chapter 22 covers Open Records

Key Responsibilities

Receive & respond to records requests
Locate and provide access to records
Protect confidential records

Fees

Fees can be charged for the fulfillment of requests
Can't charge fees for ordinary expenses

Supervision

Provide space for supervision of copying or photographing in onsite
Cannot require the request to be in-person

Response to Requests

Response to routine requests should be immediate
Good faith delays can be allowed

Best Practices

Define what is public, private, or a mix
Create processes for records requests and confidential records

Minutes

Publication requirements

Requirements for publication are listed in Iowa Code 372.13(6)

Minutes must be published within 15 days of the meeting. For communities under 200, you may opt to publish but it is not required.

Publish accounts payable and revenue and expenditures by fund.

Minutes Must Include

date, time, and place
members present, who
presided (mayor/mayor pro
tem)

Actions taken

Results of each vote taken

Resolutions

- A formal expression of policy, opinion or intent
- Examples include setting wages, establishing council rules, adopting the annual budget, approving a scholarship application for MPI
- Can be passed by a majority at one meeting

TITLE OF RESOLUTION IN ALL CAPS. CENTER ALIGNMENT IF ONE LINE; JUSTIFIED ALIGNMENT IF MORE THAN ONE LINE

WHEREAS, Insert text; and

WHEREAS, Insert text; and

WHEREAS, Insert text. Add more 'Whereas' statements as needed; and

WHEREAS, final whereas statement ends with a period.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
NAME OF CITY, IOWA THAT:

Section 1. Insert text.

Section 2. Insert text. Add more sections as needed.

Passed, approved, and adopted this __ day of _____.

Ordinances

- City law that is permanent
- Covers broad rules such as zoning, utility rates, and public offenses
- Passed by a majority at three separate readings/council meetings
 - Councils can waive the requirement by approval of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the council.
- Annual Codification
 - Index if no codification available



Records Request Scenario

- Resident requests all emails about a project. What steps would you take?

Notary Responsibilities

- Many city clerks are also notaries for their city.
- Role is to prevent fraud by witnessing signing of documentation.
- Always require a Driver's License or ID to provide identity
- Keep a Journal of Notarial Acts
 - Vital legal protection
 - Fraud prevention
 - Resolves lost documents
 - Permanent chronological records of transactions

Annual Audit/Examination

- All Iowa cities are subject to financial oversight requirements. The type of review depends primarily on the size of the city and the budgeted expenditures.

City Size / Budget	Requirement
Population over 2,000	Annual Audit
Population 2,000 or less and \$1M+ budgeted expenditures for 2 consecutive years	Annual Examination
Population 2,000 or less and under \$1M budgeted expenditures	Periodic Examination (at least once every 8 years)

Annual Audit/Examination

Before the Audit

Ensure financial information is complete, organized, and accessible.

Maintain accurate financial records throughout the year

Retain supporting documentation for revenues, expenditures, payroll, and contracts

Ensure annual financial reports are prepared and submitted timely

Monitor compliance with state reporting requirements

During the Audit or Examination

Assign primary point of contact for the auditor.

Coordinate requests for records and supporting documents

Answer questions about city financial processes

Assist staff and elected officials in gathering information

Track requests and deadlines to keep the process moving

After the Audit

Audit reports are only valuable if findings are addressed.

Review findings and recommendations with city officials

Help develop corrective action plans

Monitor progress on unresolved findings

Maintain records of actions taken for future reviews

Internal Audit Committees

- Provides independent review and oversight over your city's reporting process, internal controls, and independent auditors.
- Committee should be formally established by resolution or a part of a financial management policy.
- Members should have or be able to receive a high understanding of governmental budgeting, accounting, and the reporting and auditing requirements.
- Council member(s) should be a part of it.

Annual & Recurring Reporting

Budget

Due by April 30th of each year

2 Public hearing notices needed (not fewer than 4 days & not more than 20 days before the public hearing)

Must enter max tax levy by March 5 at 4pm in the DOM website

Street Finance Reports

The SFR is released in mid-July and due on December 1st for all cities in the State of Iowa.

It is a summary of all revenues and expenses that are related to roads, streets, bridges, etc., for the previous FY.

Instructions, including a step-by-step book and training videos, are available on the INSTRUCTIONS link located on the left side of the SFR page and can be accessed without logging in.

Annual Financial Report

Must be filed by December 1 of each year

Report provides a summary of the fiscal year ending on June 30

Must be filed **electronically** with the Iowa Department of Management

Clerk Resources

Who to call and where to go

Resources

Local & State Resources

City Code

State Code

Iowa Department of Management

Iowa Department of Revenue

League of Cities Resources

League Calendar

League Weekly

Records Retention Manual

City Clerk Handbook

Mentorship Program

IMFOA Resources

ClerkNet

Membership

Regional Clerk Groups

Certification Dashboard

Iowa State Extension & Outreach

Grant writing

Strategic Planning and Goal Setting

Critical Governance

Planning & Zoning

Training and Development



Iowa State Extension & Outreach

Iowa Municipal Professionals
Institute/Academy

Grant writing

Goal Setting/Strategic
Planning

Planning & Zoning



Iowa Municipal Finance Officers Association

IMFOA Conference

Certification



League of Cities

League Conference

Small Cities

Clerk Office Hours

Budget Workshops



Iowa DOT

Street Finance Reports

Certification Requirements

**HERE WITH
*YOU***

Iowa State Extension & Outreach

Iowa Municipal Professionals
Institute/Academy

Grant writing

Goal Setting/Strategic Planning

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IOWA
LEAGUE
of CITIES

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Iowa Municipal Finance Officers Association

IMFOA Conferences

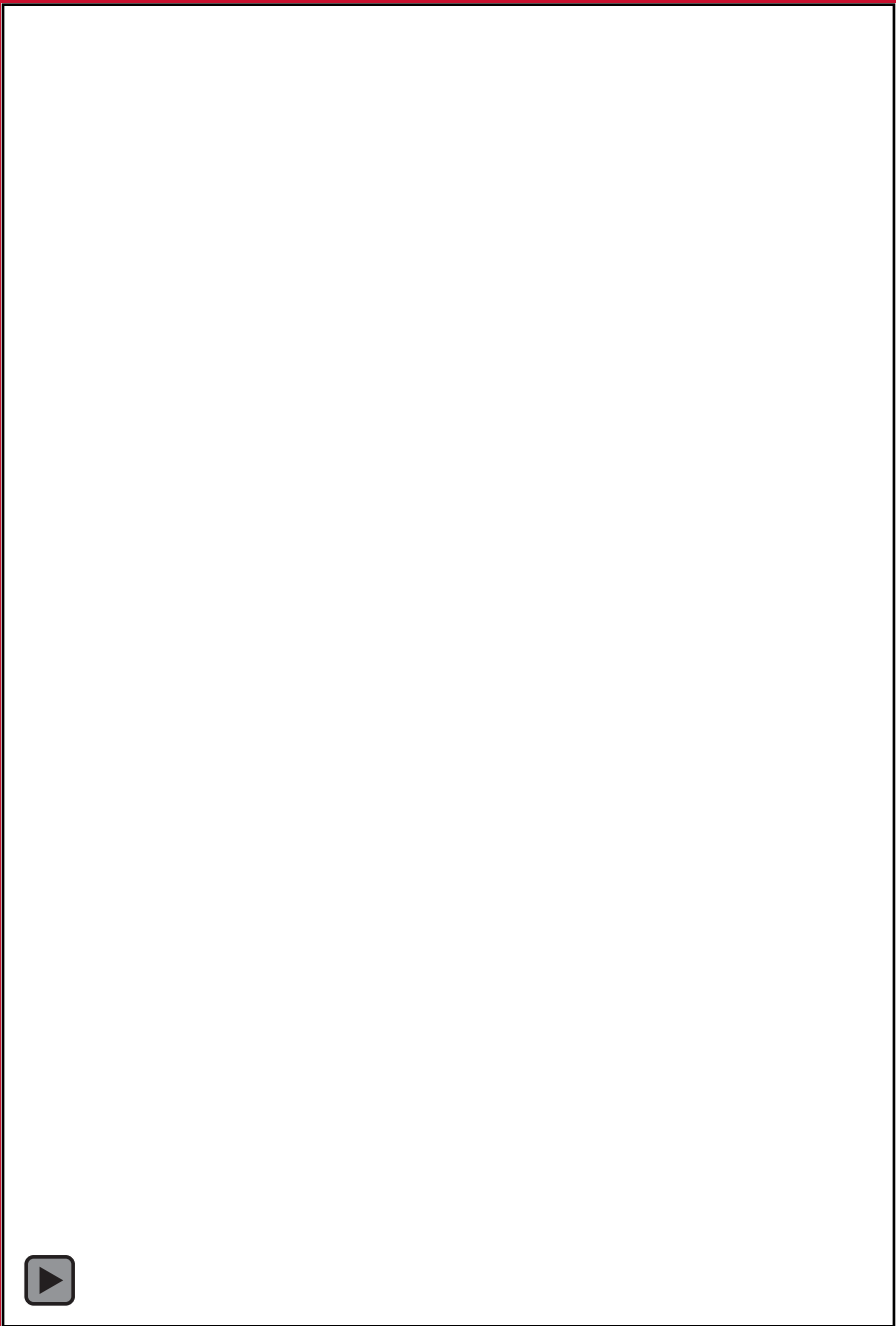
April and October

Clerk & Finance Officer
Certification

Recertification

Evaluation Slide





Who Do You Call?

- Build your network:
 - League,
 - IMFOA,
 - County and state auditor
 - Your city attorney,
 - IDOT
 - Iowa State Extension & Outreach
 - Mentors

One thing learned, one action
item, one remaining question.

Wrap Up
