THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WISCONSIN

IS THE SKY FALLING OR IS THE SUN RISING?
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wisconsin’s local elected officials feel beleaguered. State support has been slashed, we’re financing more debt, our aging residents require more services, it’s hard to find people to run for office, and in many cases, our schools are shrinking.

In spring 2016, the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin surveyed over 40 subject matter experts about their predictions for the future of local government in Wisconsin. The survey was part of a year-long project to explore the future of local government in our state. When subject matter experts were asked, “What’s the highest potential for local government?” Half responded, “Maintain existing services levels.”

For many, the sky is falling.

The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin (LGI) is not satisfied with this grim, potential future. We believe we have a choice: we can continue to bemoan our current existence, or we can take a cold, steely look at the future and ask, “How can we reinvent ourselves? How can we rethink and refresh our organizations to work better for a new era?” The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin has chosen the latter road, with some inspiring and positive outcomes.

START IN THE FUTURE

In his June 2016 article in The Municipality, Carl Neu identified ten habits of effective local government leaders. At the top of his list? Thinking and acting strategically. Neu’s advice perfectly captures the spirit of LGI’s 2016 project:

 Strategic thinkers and leaders always come at you from the future [...] Leadership starts with vision, and evolves to defining the strategic issues that must be mastered to achieve the vision. Living from one annual budget to another, and from one meeting to the next, condemns your community and its future to happenstance and reactionary decision making and policy creation. Citizens expect leadership, sound thinking, decisive action, and accountability for results.

GETTING ABOVE THE CLOUD LAYER

LGI used the process of strategic foresight to get beyond the day-to-day, budget-to-budget, crisis-to-crisis mode of running our cities, counties, towns, and villages. In a one-day session in Stevens Point on June 28, 2016, 125 people gathered to explore the question, “What is the 20-year future of local government in Wisconsin?”

We challenged attendees — which included electeds and municipal staff, Millennials and Gen-Xers, Baby Boomers and Silents, graphic designers and artists, entrepreneurs, new residents and students — to think about their children and grandchildren. Working in diverse teams, participants assessed over 40 trends affecting local government, prioritizing them based on the impact they’d have on future generations. Then we assigned 15 teams to create short movies about our communities’ possible futures, including these trends.
This was the most dynamic and diverse group ever to assemble to tackle this question from multiple points of view. Thirty-eight percent were women, about a third were under 40, and rural communities were about as equally represented as suburban and urban communities.

The results were inspiring. Unlike the subject matter experts who predicted sustained (and worsening) conditions for local government, our participants predicted futures that made the most (or at least more) out of constraints. For them, difficulties created the conditions for reinvention.

It wasn’t all Pollyanna either. Most of the stories included a disruption: a large local employer that’s put out of business because of a natural disaster, a state mandate that forces regionalism, and more. But what the participants learned — from listening to each other and working together — is that Wisconsin communities have the raw material to make even our most disruptive scenarios a prompt for long term good.

Reflecting on the event, Jeffrey S. French, the Barron County Administrator said:

“Yesterday restored my faith in young people. The ‘under35er’s’ at my table got it. They were articulate, engaged, understood the need for looking into the future and understood the need for change. They want to get it done and they want the generation behind them to have a real and tangible world.”

Another anonymous participant shared:

“I was thinking about how to find or cultivate potential partners where I live. I’m excited to meet local elected officials, planners, or executive directors in my area who want to dream big and take charge of the city that currently is putting out fires as they arise.”

THE FUTURE DOESN’T JUST HAPPEN TO US. WE ALSO SHAPE THE FUTURE.

The key insight from our June 28th “Futures Lab” is that the future doesn’t just happen to our communities. Our communities can be proactive and shape the futures they want. We don’t have to wait for the other shoe to drop. We don’t have to believe that the sky is falling. We can choose to make the sun rise. And common among the scenarios developed in Stevens Point were these three levers of change, which all local governments have a role in and some control over:

1. Effective collaborations between the nonprofit, education, public, civic, and business sectors. This is more than traditional “public private partnerships” which too often simply relegate public services to the lowest private sector bidder. True collaborations put the public good at the center of the project, and assemble stakeholders and operations around it.

2. Engaging people beyond “the usual suspects”. Wisconsin communities are changing and we need to engage more people in our future. We can’t expect residents to come to us; we may have to go to them and use different strategies to reach them. Communities that work across jurisdictions and also engage Millennials, techies/“hackers”, new residents, upstart business, and others will be more resilient in the long term.
3. Accountability. Citizens want to know what they can expect from their local governments, and good governance will clearly state its goals and report progress in an open and transparent way.

WE NEED MORE FUTURE-FORWARD THINKING

In biology, we know that plants grow towards the sun. The same is true of people. President Reagan’s “shining city on a hill” and President Obama’s first presidential campaign message of “Hope” demonstrate that positive and ambitious visions stir the hearts of those who hear them.

Regardless of our politics, we all want our kids and grandkids to have it better than we did. Those who’ve participated in LGI’s “Future of Wisconsin” initiative are stirred. They know we need more future-forward thinking and acting, and they are ready. As one participant at the Futures Lab said:

"My first reaction was that we need more of these. The 6 hours we had (in Stevens Point) was too short a time. It felt like I only got to eat one potato chip from the bag."

Mr. French added:

"[The LGI Future of Wisconsin event] proved, to me, that: Good people, with good motives, will work together to develop good things, for the good people they live and work with, through good motives and doable solutions."

The LGI Board of Directors is intent on giving all Wisconsin communities the opportunity to use future-forward thinking in their communities. This document is one important first step. Included here are a list of over 50 trends that will impact Wisconsin communities in the next 20 years, plus instructions for how to have a future-forward conversation in your community.

We also encourage you to visit the LGI website to find more tools and resources to help your community be future ready.

THE MINDSET SHIFT

Yes, we are working in an era when local governments are being asked to do more with less. And if we believe that we’re simply the silent actors working to keep the roads plowed and the water potable, we are destined to feel beleaguered. For us, the sky really is falling. But for the rest of us — those of us who believe that no challenge should be unmet, that crisis produces fresh, new possibilities — we have an opportunity to reinvent local government for current and future generations. We have an opportunity to help the sun rise on local government.

This Executive Summary was featured in The Municipality, a production of the Wisconsin League of Municipalities. It was written by Rebecca Ryan, the lead consultant on this project and Gary Becker, the Executive Director of the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin.
STEEP TRENDS IMPACTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WISCONSIN

WHAT ARE STEEP TRENDS?

STEEP is an acronym for Society, Technology, Economy, Environment and Politics. The STEEP trends in this document have been selected specifically because they will impact the future of local governments in Wisconsin.

Not all trends will impact all cities, towns, villages, and counties in the same way, but most local governments will be impacted by many of these trends.

WHY ARE STEEP TRENDS USEFUL?

A STEEP analysis helps identify and evaluate external factors that will impact our future. In addition:

- **STEEP trends are not opinions**; they are based on facts and projections that can form the basis for good decisions.
- **STEEP trends help you make more informed, strategic decisions.** Let’s face it, many people don’t consider STEEP trends when making decisions or forming strategy. Instead, they default to their own personal experiences (which are subjective and limited), or to the opinions of constituents or the “squeakiest wheel.” This tendency can lead decision makers to neglect reality or refuse to recognize critical changes around them.
- **STEEP trends are useful because many people have a hard time imagining the future.** Our brains are wired to recognize patterns from our past, so the future seems beyond our reach. STEEP trends help us see beyond our experience, into the future that our children and grandchildren will inherit.
**SOCIETY TRENDS**

Society is the “who” of Wisconsin. Who will our future resident be? If we want to be future ready, we must understand how demographics, family structure, living preferences, etc. are changing.

One warning about societal trends: they tend to move so slowly—like the drip-drip-drip of a slowly leaking faucet—that they are nearly undetectable. For example, today there are more women than men in the workforce. This didn’t happen overnight. It started as a drip-drip-drip in the 1950s. Because these trends move so slowly, local governments are often late to respond.

The societal trends facing Wisconsin include:

### 1. WISCONSIN IS GETTING OLDER

- The elderly population—age 65 and over—will increase rapidly in every five-year interval, from 777,000 in 2010 to 1,544,000 in 2040, nearly doubling in 30 years.¹
- As a percent of population, those ages 65+ were 14% in 2010 and will be 24% in 2040. One in four Wisconsinites will be age 65+ in 24 years.²
- The very elderly population—age 85 and over—will rise steadily from 118,500 in 2010 to 144,000 in 2025, then double to 287,000 in the following fifteen years. From 2010 to 2040, this age group will increase 142%.³
- The state’s population of centenarians is expected to increase from approximately 1,200 in 2010 to 3,900 in 2040.⁴
- Wisconsin’s average age is increasing faster than the national average.⁵
2. **WISCONSIN’S SCHOOLS WILL CONTRACT, AND THEN EXPAND TO 1M KIDS**
   - As a total share of the population, kids age 0–17 were 23% of Wisconsin’s population in 2010 and will be 21% in 2040.
   - From 2020–2035, the school aged population (ages 5–17) will grow from 965,000 to 1,000,000.

3. **THE PERCENTAGE OF WORKING WISCONSINITES WILL FALL**
   - As a total share of the population, Wisconsinites age 18–64 were 63% of the state’s population in 2010, and will fall to 55% by 2040.

4. **WISCONSIN’S POPULATION IS GROWING, SLOWLY**
   - Wisconsin’s population growth of 1.48% between 2010 and 2015 ranked 39th among the states, according to the University of Wisconsin Applied Population Lab.
   - In 2040, Wisconsin will have 800,000 more people (+14%) than 2010.
   - 2020–2030 will be Wisconsin’s largest decade of growth, adding 370,000 to the state’s population.
5. **Wisconsin’s Population Growth Will Be Unevenly Distributed**
   - Urban areas will continue to grow, while rural areas will hold steady or shrink, e.g. Price County’s population will shrink 17% while St. Croix County increases 41%. 

![Figure 3. Wisconsin total population growth (2000–2030)](image)

6. **Wisconsin’s Traditional In-Migration Is from College Students from Other States and “Young” Families**
   - In Wisconsin, recent decades have been marked by net gains of young people ages 0–4 through 15–19 (the latter group being affected by the influx of out-of-state students attending Wisconsin’s many universities and colleges). 
   - Gains in “young families” cohorts starting with ages 30–34 or 35–39.

7. **Young, Educated Singles Will Continue to Leave the State**
   - On average the state lost roughly 14,000 college graduates per year between 2008 and 2012. Almost half of those who left were young adults between the ages of 21 and 24 who recently obtained degrees.

8. **Most Rural School Districts Will Have Fewer Children and Higher Costs**
   - 73% of rural districts have seen enrollment decline. 
   - Nearly 78% of rural school districts have seen per-pupil costs rise, compared to about 53% of urban districts. 
   - Nearly 42% of school districts in Wisconsin are small and rural, and those districts serve about 23% of the state’s students. 
   - Declining student populations over the next 30 years portends continued workforce shrinkage over the next 50.
9. OVER HALF OF URBAN AND SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE INCREASING ENROLLMENT
- Enrollment has increased in 65% of urban districts and 53% of suburban districts.\textsuperscript{19}

10. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT DIFFERS BY RACE
- Statewide for 2013–14, just over 15% of black students tested proficient on statewide exams in math, compared to 43% of white students (see figure 4 below).
- Only 66% of black WI students graduated high school in 2013–14, compared to 93% of white students (see figure 5 below).

**FIGURE 4.** Whites still outperform blacks on exams. Wisconsin standardized test scores, 1990–2015

**FIGURE 5.** Racial gaps persist in graduation rates. Selected Wisconsin school districts, 2009–2014
11. AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO RESIDENTS EXPERIENCE WISCONSIN DIFFERENTLY THAN THEIR WHITE NEIGHBORS

- In a comparison of 46 states, Wisconsin’s black residents ranked as the worst in four of 12 indicators including delayed childbearing, young adults who are in school or working, children who live in two-parent households, and adults who have completed at least an associate's degree, the report found.\textsuperscript{20}

- As of 2014, 49% of Wisconsin’s black children were living in poverty, compared to 11% of white children, according to data compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count project.

- Thirty percent of Wisconsin’s white children live in households below 200% of the poverty level, while nearly 80% of African-American children experience that level of economic insecurity. Meanwhile, about two-thirds of Wisconsin’s Latino and American Indian kids live in households below 200% of the poverty line.\textsuperscript{21}

- White adults ages 25 to 29 are three times as likely to have an undergraduate degree or higher than their African-American or Latino peers.\textsuperscript{21}

12. WISCONSIN COUPLES ARE WAITING TO GET MARRIED AND START FAMILIES

- The median age for people marrying for the first time in 2014 was 27.5. In 1960, the median age at first marriage was 21.6.\textsuperscript{23}

- For the past 20 years fertility rates have decreased among women ages 10–29 and increased in women aged 30–34.\textsuperscript{24}
02
TECHNOLOGY
TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

Technology is anything that helps make life easier. The technology aspect of STEEP focuses on technological advancements. I.e. innovation, communication, energy, transport, research and development, patent regulations and life-cycle of products. Some of these trends overlap with other trends, e.g. economic, social, etc.

13. DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP INCREASING AMONG MILLENNIALS

- Those who use the internet regularly and effectively qualify as digital citizens. They don’t want to show up at local government meetings; they want to Skype in. And they want to vote and engage online in real time.23

> Citizens are talking to their governments using 21st century technology. Governments are responding using 20th century technology, giving 19th century answers.

— Madeleine Albright

> Why do I have to vote in person at a polling place on a Tuesday? I can apply for a $500,000 mortgage online anytime day or night. Why can’t I vote online?

— Millennial

14. THE SHARING ECONOMY CONNECTS SUPPLY AND DEMAND WITHOUT OWNERSHIP

- Peer to Peer (P2P) networks eliminate the middleman and share resources, products, and services via technology. For example, Uber created technology that linked drivers with cars (supply) with travelers needing a ride (demand). Airbnb supplies people with extra rooms or homes (supply) with people who need a place to stay (demand).26

> **FIGURE 7.** The Rise of the Sharing Economy*

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*based on an online survey among 30,000 consumers in 60 countries conducted in Q3 2013.
15. TECHNOLOGY DISRUPTS EDUCATION DELIVERY

- Technology will enable new models of teaching and learning that will transform education, i.e. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that are open to any learner, anywhere, giving rural and inner city schools access to courses and resources previously unavailable.27
- Many K-12 systems are experimenting with the “flipped classroom” in which students watch lectures at home and come to school for collaboration, discussion and problem solving.28

16. OPEN INNOVATION BRINGS MORE CREATIVITY “INSIDE” 29

In October 2006, Reed Hastings of Netflix announced a $1M (USD) prize for anyone or any team that could develop an algorithm to improve the accuracy of movie predictions for its customers. The “Netflix Prize” would go to the first team that could improve predictions by at least 10%. It was a three-year competition among data geeks, mathematicians, statisticians and software engineers. It attracted more than 40,000 teams from 186 countries. It was a roll of the dice for Hastings, who’d been wrestling for years to develop a better algorithm. Other companies including Apple, Toshiba, Texas Instruments, BASF, GE, the BBC, US AID and Nokia are also embracing “open innovation,” a way to bring outsiders and their ideas inside the corporate walls.

Kevin Desouza and Akshay Bhagwatwar surveyed 38 communities and determined four “technology-enabled participatory platforms” that engage the public in solving community issues:

- **Citizen-centric, citizen-sourced data.** Citizens offer data about themselves, and other citizens analyze the data and offer insights.
- **Citizen-centric, government open data.** In this model, the government provides data, e.g. crime details, and the public is invited to analyze and assess the data, and share insights with the community and/or the city.
- **Government-centric, citizen-sourced data.** At its broadest, the government is asking for ideas from citizens.
- **Government-centric and citizen-developed solutions.** The government provides data and solicits citizens for solutions or helpful applications.
17. BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS ENABLE BETTER CITIZEN BEHAVIOR

The great majority of people in your local area pay their tax on time. Most people with a debt like yours have paid it by now.

These two sentences written on tax letters in Britain caused a 15% increase in on-time payments. The reason, according to Britain’s Behavioral Insights Team, is that we’re wired to behave as others do. Other behavioral insights show that things like how government forms are designed impact outcomes, e.g. Dan Ariely has shown that when organ donation is the default option, organ donation increases.

In the next twenty years, behavioral insights, coupled with big data, will have a huge impact on local governments. Bloomberg Philanthropies is spearheading the What Works Cities initiative to apply behavioral economics to help 100 mid-size U.S. cities deliver better services and become more transparent. Seattle, Boston, Louisville and San Francisco are already putting Bloomberg’s behavioral insights to the test and reaping rewards.

18. UNMANNING DECREASES NEED FOR HUMAN WORKERS

At home, Roomba vacuums your floors. Siri, Alexa, or Google Voice respond to voice commands. Amazon is aggressively pursuing authority to deliver packages by drone. At work, robots do precision manufacturing and medical surgeries. IBM’s Watson can read all the medical journals ever printed in the time it takes you to drink your first cup of coffee. These technologies make our lives easier. They also eliminate the need for human workers.

- As robots and artificial intelligence (AI) take over jobs that humans once did, there will be possible long-term, structural unemployment. Oxford researchers estimate that by 2–35, nearly half of all occupations in America could be automated.
- Autonomous vehicles—which most experts agree will be on our roadways within a decade—are less accident prone and more rule-compliant than their human-driven counterparts. This could impact revenue local governments collect from car-related fees and violations.
- Robotics, AI and smart technology could supplant or transform many jobs currently conducted by local government employees. We already see machines replacing garbage handlers and security cameras replacing patrol personnel. Using Big Data, cities and counties could predict likely tax evaders. Property could be assessed using more indicators, resulting in more fair assessments. And routine requests for filings and forms could be handled online or via kiosks at municipal buildings.
19. DECENTRALIZED MANUFACTURING & 3D PRINTING ENABLE DISTRIBUTED PRODUCTION

Imagine being able to print at home what you want to buy. You could print a new doorknob or a part for an appliance. Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center’s Institute for Regenerative Medicine is collaborating with others to 3-D print bones, skin, muscle tissue, cartilage, and kidneys. The airline industry has 22,000 parts flying through the skies, printed on 3-D printers. At a commercial scale, 3-D printing enables manufacturers to quickly prototype new designs and build extremely agile production facilities.

How will 3-D printing and decentralized manufacturing impact your community’s sales taxes, industrial parks, and employment? What about 4-D printing, which adapts the object over time, based on feedback?

20. BLOCKCHAIN INCREASES NEW FINANCIAL PAYMENT MODELS

You’ve heard of bitcoin, right? Bitcoin is a global, digital currency that has several highly desirable features:

- It moves from sender to receiver instantly
- It is hard to dupe the system due to its cryptography and open, public ledger (called the “blockchain”)
- It is cheaper than traditional payment systems because it is exchanged free of a central authority (like a central bank) or middlemen

Whether bitcoin survives as the world’s first digital currency or not, the blockchain and related technology has the potential to transform how assets are transferred and fees are collected. The state of Vermont, for example, is undertaking a study to determine if blockchaining could be used for its general ledger. Banking and the music industry are also studying applications of the blockchain.

21. PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION DEMANDS ARE CHANGING

Helsinki, Finland conducted research and found that the next generation “no longer considers cars as a distinctive social marker or object of emancipation.” General Motors’ research has reached similar conclusions: the next generation is waiting longer to get their drivers’ licenses, and many prefer to use public transportation or car sharing over car ownership.

As a result, Helsinki set an ambitious goal: to eliminate private cars and create a public, on-demand mobility system by 2025. The system will operate through mobile apps which will be used to book and pay for any multi-modal trip (bus, train, taxi, bicycle and car-sharing) within Helsinki in one click. While Helsinki’s model may not work for all cities, the trend towards fewer next-geners buying cars is global, and future-ready cities will be prepared to mobilize citizens without private cars.
22. INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS REPAIR

Every four years, the American Society for Civil Engineers grades America's infrastructure. In the most recent (2013) report card, they looked at 16 infrastructure categories and gave an overall grade of D+. America's infrastructure is failing. How does Wisconsin fare? See figures below for further details.

**FIGURE 8.** What you should know about Wisconsin's Infrastructure.

![Diagram showing Wisconsin's infrastructure needs with various statistics like 188 high hazard dams, $7.1 billion needed for drinking water, etc.]

**FIGURE 9.** Key facts about Wisconsin Infrastructure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVIATION</th>
<th>BRIDGES</th>
<th>BRIDGES</th>
<th>DAMS</th>
<th>DAMS</th>
<th>DRINKING WATER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87 public-use airports</td>
<td>1,198 of the 14,088 bridges are structurally deficient</td>
<td>$18.30 million in bridge funds came from the Federal Highway Bridge Fund in 2011</td>
<td>79% of the state regulated dams have an Emergency Action Plan</td>
<td>198 high hazard dams</td>
<td>$7.1 billion in drinking water infrastructure needs over the next 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENERGY</td>
<td>HAZARDOUS WASTE</td>
<td>INLAND WATERWAYS</td>
<td>LEVERS</td>
<td>PORTS</td>
<td>PUBLIC PARKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,906 gigawatt-hours of renewable energy every year, ranking 27th</td>
<td>28 sites on the National Priorities List</td>
<td>220 miles of inland waterways, ranking 29th nationally</td>
<td>134 miles of levees</td>
<td>31.6 million short tons of cargo in 2012, ranking 24th nationally</td>
<td>$332 million of unused roads for its parks system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAIL</td>
<td>ROADS</td>
<td>ROADS</td>
<td>SCHOOLS</td>
<td>TRANSIT</td>
<td>WASTEWATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 freight railroads covering 3,387 miles across the state, ranking 14th nationally by mileage</td>
<td>13,539 of the state's 119,995 public roads are major roads, and 21% are in poor condition</td>
<td>$2.8 billion a year in costs to maintain bridges from 2000 to 2009, 2% of roads in need of repair, which is $5603 per motorist</td>
<td>$8.4 billion in estimated school infrastructure funding needs</td>
<td>79.1 million annual unlinked passenger tripmiles via transit systems including bus, transit, and commuter trains</td>
<td>$6.4 billion in wastewater infrastructure needs over the next 20 years</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
23. NEW FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS REQUIRED

- To fund infrastructure—and to account for long lead times for planning and construction—new investors including insurers, pension funds, endowments and sovereign wealth funds are entering the markets, while PPPs (Public Private Partnership) are aggregating a wider pool of global investors. For example, Denver’s high speed rail included investors from Spain and China, and Dallas light rail system is owned by Japanese investors.

- Crowdfunding is being used to fund civic projects. Research shows that local government’s embrace of this platform contributes to its success in serving the common good.

24. ELECTRICAL SUPPLIES WILL BE BOOSTED BY MICROGRIDS

Microgrids are self-contained energy grids that ensure a community has a reliable electric supply when access to their normal supply is disrupted, which could be caused by extreme weather events, physical, and/or cyber attacks. Microgrids ensure that a community has a few buildings that will remain operational no matter what; this gives residents the opportunity to come in for a warm shower, a warm meal, and will allow them to charge their phones and computers. Milwaukee’s “Century City” on the site of the former A.O. Smith Corporation will experiment with microgrids to revitalize Milwaukee’s power industry.

**FIGURE 10.** Timeline of natural disasters and state microgrid initiation.
25. OFF-GRIDDING USES RENEWABLE RESOURCES LIKE WIND, SOLAR & NATURAL GAS

Local communities will generate more of their energy from renewable sources like wind and solar, or natural gas fuel cells. Local communities will also store more of their own electricity. In some locations, they may detach from a shared electric grid.

It is anticipated that for rural locations, it will be cheaper for the utility to install distributed generation (DG) with a storage device than to continue to maintain long distribution lines. Local municipalities will need to address how to ensure that low-income populations continue to have universal access to electricity — this may involve the municipalities subsidizing the installation of DG and storage in low-income households.

26. ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVS) INCREASE

In the near term, we will see more electric vehicles (EVs) in urban areas. In the long term, the entire transportation fleet may switch to electric. It is anticipated that residents will charge their EVs at home at night. Public stations will be used only used to “top off” the battery during the day. Businesses may install charging stations so that employees can charge for free during the day.

In addition, EVs will be used as energy storage, which can be called upon to assist the electricity grid when more supply is needed. To put this in perspective, an 85 kWh Tesla battery can store the equivalent of almost three days of power for the average U.S. household.

What is the future role of the Electric Utility?

Due to distributed generation (DG) in many parts of the U.S., the role of community-owned or public utilities may significantly diminish. And when cost-effective energy storage is available, utilities’ role will be minimized even further. It’s possible that utility companies will try to buy or block cost-effective storage or on-site renewables to maintain viability.

27. INCREASE IN WATER RECYCLING

Due to higher temperatures and water insecurity, in 20–50 years we won’t be using drinking water to flush our toilets. We’ll be recycling our gray water for use in our gardens and toilets, and flushing only sewage to the local wastewater treatment plant. This will require a change in many state and local plumbing laws, challenge infrastructure retrofitting, pricing dynamics, impact revenues, change water treatment protocols, and re-use/disposal of sludge as a resource.”
28. INCREASE IN NANOTECHNOLOGY

Chippewa Valley Technical College, the University of Wisconsin, and K-12 educators around the state offer courses and applied research in nanotechnology to solve some of our most complex challenges.

Nanotechnology is a broad term that covers many areas of science, research and technology. In its most basic form, it means working with things that are small—really small; things so tiny that they can’t be seen with a standard microscope.

Nanotech is used in everything from sunscreen to carpet stain resistors to medicine.

Scientists working in the field estimate that it could have a transformative effect, not only on what is developed through nanotechnology—the new transformational products—but how we manufacture things. Atomically precise manufacturing, or “APM,” could replace enormous, exhaust-belching factories with cleaner, smaller and more agile supply chains. Think of it as highly precise 3-D printing in a box.

29. TECH-ENABLED HEALTHCARE INCREASES

Health care in Wisconsin is undergoing a transformation. Now and in the near future:

- Many patients do not have to visit their doctor for routine medical exams. Telemedicine (see figure 11) is offered across the state, which enables patients and doctors to “meet” over the phone or video conference to discuss patient’s health conditions.

![Figure 11](image-url)
• Wearable health monitors (like a Fitbit) can share patient data directly with their health care team.

• Big data, or “bioinformatics” as they’re called in health care, will be used to discover more about diseases and effective treatments.

• Patient health records can be shared between hospitals and emergency response teams, so that when the EMTs get to a patient (who may be unconscious), the EMTs know all the drugs the patient is taking, their health history, allergies, etc.

• As medicine becomes more precise and computers are relied on more for diagnosis and treatment protocols, doctors-in-training are being required to learn better bedside manner. Technology can do a lot to improve patient outcomes, but research also shows that caring personnel improve outcomes.

30. BIOMIMICRY

I think the biggest innovations of the 21st century will be at the intersection of biology and technology. A new era is beginning.

– Steve Jobs

What can a pile of termites teach us about keeping our government buildings cool during the summer? Turns out, a lot. HVAC systems based on termite mounds are one example of biomimicry, the study of nature to solve human problems. The Eastgate Building in Harare, Zimbabwe was inspired by the natural design of termite mounds. The building has no conventional air conditioning, yet stays regulated year-round, using less than 10% of the energy of a conventional building its size.

Local governments are also benefiting from the Lilly Impeller, which circulates municipal water tanks with minimal energy to prevent stagnation. Its design is based on the geometries repeatedly found in nature, which are known to reduce friction and drag.
03
ECONOMY
ECONOMIC TRENDS

A 1980’s presidential campaign slogan was “It’s the economy, stupid.” The following economic trends are important because they are predictive of how many government services will need to be provided, and the size of the tax base supporting these services. We also include some education trends, as they impact workforce skills and therefore income.

31. BABY BOOMER RETIREMENTS STALL WISCONSIN’S WORKFORCE AND ECONOMY

- The impending retirement of the baby-boom generation will have significant effects on Wisconsin’s economy over the next 30 years. As this large cohort retires, the size of Wisconsin’s workforce will stall, and consumer demand for goods and services may shrink, as Boomers live off retirement savings.43

32. GENERATIONAL SUPPORT RATIO WORSENS

- Social security was founded on the ratio of 41 workers supporting one retiree. In 2010, Wisconsin that ratio had fallen to four workers supporting one retiree. By 2040, that figure will fall again to about two workers supporting each retiree.44

![Figure 12: How Many Workers Support One Social Security Retiree?](image-url)
33. WISCONSIN’S JOB GROWTH FUELED BY LOW WAGE JOBS

Since 2000, Wisconsin’s low-wage jobs grew at a larger rate than any other category, a problem made worse by the Great Recession.

– Scottie Lee Meyers, Wisconsin Public Radio

Marc Levine, senior fellow and founding director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, found that the state’s job growth has been dominated by jobs paying $12.50 an hour or less, or about $26,000 annually as the tables below show.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs in Very Low Wage Occupations (Under $10/hr)</td>
<td>+69,820</td>
<td>+17,150</td>
<td>+84,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs in Remaining Low Wage Occupations (Between $10.01–$12.50/hr)</td>
<td>-14,770</td>
<td>-23,350</td>
<td>+46,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs in Middle Wage Occupations</td>
<td>-35,300</td>
<td>-121,330</td>
<td>-16,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs in High Wage Occupations</td>
<td>+69,960</td>
<td>-7,080</td>
<td>-19,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs in All Occupations</td>
<td>+89,710</td>
<td>-134,610</td>
<td>+95,010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 14. 15 Occupations in Wisconsin with Most Projected Job Growth: 2010–2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2020 Projected</th>
<th>Growth Openings</th>
<th>Median Hourly Wage $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation/Serving</td>
<td>61,400</td>
<td>76,760</td>
<td>15,360</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>57,760</td>
<td>71,540</td>
<td>13,780</td>
<td>30.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Home Care Aides</td>
<td>31,130</td>
<td>42,600</td>
<td>11,470</td>
<td>10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Drivers</td>
<td>45,460</td>
<td>54,950</td>
<td>9,490</td>
<td>18.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Clerks</td>
<td>70,190</td>
<td>79,480</td>
<td>9,290</td>
<td>14.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiters and Waitresses</td>
<td>43,340</td>
<td>51,920</td>
<td>8,580</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Salespersons</td>
<td>75,930</td>
<td>84,260</td>
<td>8,350</td>
<td>9.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Reps</td>
<td>49,930</td>
<td>57,690</td>
<td>7,760</td>
<td>15.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Aides</td>
<td>37,980</td>
<td>44,270</td>
<td>6,290</td>
<td>12.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers/Movers</td>
<td>47,800</td>
<td>53,210</td>
<td>5,410</td>
<td>12.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartenders</td>
<td>28,070</td>
<td>33,250</td>
<td>5,180</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitors and Cleaners</td>
<td>47,240</td>
<td>51,710</td>
<td>4,470</td>
<td>11.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping/Groundskeeping</td>
<td>21,440</td>
<td>25,880</td>
<td>4,460</td>
<td>12.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant Cooks</td>
<td>16,170</td>
<td>20,180</td>
<td>4,030</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Secretaries</td>
<td>13,670</td>
<td>17,630</td>
<td>3,940</td>
<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
34. WISCONSIN’S MANUFACTURING SECTOR EXPECTED TO GROW “SLOW AND STEADY”

In Wisconsin, the manufacturing sector accounts for about 19% of the state’s economic output and employs almost 475,000 people at more than 7,900 companies, according to the National Association of Manufacturers. Wisconsin is second in the nation in terms of percentage of employment tied to manufacturing, which makes manufacturing a “driver” in the state’s overall economy.

Yet, compared to comparable states, Wisconsin has room for improvement in gross state product, employment, and productivity as the table below shows.45

![Figure 15. Wisconsin performance, eight competitive states, and the United States](Source: Wisconsin Economic Future Study; Moody’s Economy.com)

35. RURAL WISCONSIN FACES GREATER POVERTY

Rural poverty is often hard to see, because it is spread out over a larger area, not concentrated in a single, blighted or under-served neighborhood. In Wisconsin:

*In 2000, the average poverty rate for rural counties was 9.6%. For the 2006–2010 period, poverty had grown to 12.6%. Poverty increased similarly in the state’s urban counties (7.2% in 2000 and 10.1% in 2006–2010). However, the level of poverty was consistently lower among urban counties compared to rural counties.*46

A major cause of rural poverty is the lack of consistent, family-supporting jobs. Jobs in rural areas tend to be seasonal, low-wage, and have worse benefits.
36. IMPACT OF WISCONSIN’S CUTS IN EDUCATION SPENDING STILL UNKNOWN

- As of 2015, the state has reduced the amount of money it spends on each student by more than $1,000 since 2008, according to the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. That is the second largest drop in per-pupil funding of any state.

37. RURAL COMMUNITIES SPREAD THIN

- More than 60 northern districts have fewer than five students per square mile, making school transportation costly. Of these, more than 40 districts are “small”, meaning they enroll fewer than 500 students. Small districts lack economies of scale that allow them to reduce costs. Further enrollment declines will exacerbate these challenges.47

- From 2010–2040 the school-age population will drop more than 30% in Bayfield and Price counties and more than 20% in Ashland, Lincoln, Pepin, and Rusk counties. This will have both short- and long-term consequences and raises critical questions about how to educate children in sparsely populated areas.48
ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

Our physical landscapes have incredible impacts on individuals and our communities. Understanding environmental trends is important to prepare us for both new opportunities and limitations resulting from shifts in resource access. As a Chinese proverb wisely says, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

38. WORLDWIDE, ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ARE GROWING

- By 2040, the world population is projected to reach 9 billion people. Two-thirds of those will be in areas suffering from water stress.49
- The world may face a 40% shortfall in water availability by 2030.50
- Desertification is a global concern. Some two billion people depend on ecosystems in dryland areas, 90% of whom live in developing countries. Drylands are already fragile. As they become degraded, the impact on people, livestock and the environment can be devastating. Some 50 million people may be displaced within the next 10 years as a result of desertification.51

FIGURE 17.

Source: University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR)
39. **Wisconsin is Becoming Warmer and Drier.**

- In the coming decades, Wisconsin’s climate is expected to become warmer and drier, especially in the summer. By 2030, Wisconsin summers may resemble those of Illinois in terms of average temperature and rainfall, as shown in the figure below.  

- While annual average precipitation may not change much, the state may grow drier overall because rainfall cannot compensate for the drying effects of a warmer climate, especially in the summer. Seasonal precipitation in the state is likely to change, increasing in winter by 15–30% and decreasing in summer by up to 20%.  

- The Midwest’s agricultural lands, forests, Great Lakes, industrial activities, and cities are all vulnerable to climate variability and climate change.  

- There is also an upside - the growing season in Wisconsin increased by 5 to 20 days from 1950 to 2006, with the greatest change in the central and northern part of Wisconsin.  

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**FIGURE 18. Winter Temperature Projections.** (Temperature projections for Wisconsin show winter temperature increases as great as 1°F by 2100 and summer temperature increases as great as 18°F.)

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40. **Aging Infrastructures Are Ill Prepared to Handle Shifting Climate Needs**

- Many Wisconsin cities have aging infrastructure and are particularly vulnerable to climate change related flooding and life-threatening heat waves. For example, the increase in heavy downpours has contributed to the discharge of untreated sewage due to excess water in combined sewage-overflow systems in a number of cities in the Midwest.  

- Supply chain disruptions could exacerbate grain and other shortages resulting from extreme weather events.  

- Between 2007 and 2030, traffic on Wisconsin’s roadways is expected to increase 34%.  

41. **AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES NEED TO MEET NEW CHALLENGES**

- Crop and supply chain diversification at the regional level has the potential to add resilience to our food system in the face of unpredictable weather and markets.\(^{59}\)
- While the increased growing season can be beneficial for farmers, it also opens the door for crop and tree pests that haven’t historically been seen in Wisconsin.\(^{60}\)

42. **WISCONSIN FARMERS ARE AGING**

- The average age of a Wisconsin farmer is 60 — nearly 17 years older than the average worker. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, almost 30% of U.S. farms are run by people who are 65 or older.\(^{61}\)
- In Wisconsin, 99% of all farmers and 98.5% of organic farmers report their race as white.\(^{62}\)

43. **ORGANIC FARMING CONTINUES TO GROW**

- The number of organic farms in Wisconsin has grown 77% since 2005.\(^{63}\)
- Twenty-nine percent of Wisconsin’s organic farmers are younger than 45, and nearly one in four have been operating a farm for fewer than ten years.\(^{64}\)
- Organic sales are increasing at a rate of nearly 12% per year, and 81% of U.S. families are choosing organic food at least sometimes.\(^{65}\)

**FIGURE 19. Demographics on organic farms, 2012.**

X.1 Percent of farms, U.S. and Wisconsin, all farms and organic farms, with a primary operator under the age of 45.

X.2 Percent of farms, U.S. and Wisconsin, all farms and organic farms, with a primary operator who has been operating a farm for less than 10 years.

X.3 Percent of farms, U.S. and Wisconsin, all farms and organic farms, with a primary operator who is a woman.

X.4 Percent of farms, U.S. and Wisconsin, all farms and organic farms, with a renewable energy system.

44. CONSERVATION NEEDS CONTINUE TO CHANGE

- The DNR expects the total number of hunters in Wisconsin to decline over the next 20 years, along with the number of hunters as a percentage of the population. The impacts on deer and pheasant populations are unknown.66

> The deer herd in the state of Wisconsin is largely kept in check by private hunters who purchase licenses and kill deer each fall. Not only is hunting vital to wildlife management efforts and as a WDNR revenue stream, but it is also an important cultural activity through which people become intricately connected to the natural world. However, the number of gun deer hunters in Wisconsin declined from 645,047 in 2000 to 600,787 in 2007 (or almost 7% in eight years). This sudden and dramatic decline has caused concern about the future of the herd and the sport.

—Richelle Winkler, Jennifer Huck, Keith Warnke, Deer Hunter Demography

- Wisconsin has 15,057 lakes totaling 982,155 acres. Degradation of nearshore and shoreline habitat is increasing with the pace of development, particularly in northern Wisconsin where, since 1960, two thirds of the larger lakes have been developed, the number of home sites has doubled, and the annual number of permits for sea wall construction has tripled.67

- The 1985 Wetland Inventory estimated that there were 5.3 million acres of Wisconsin wetlands which is only 53% of the state’s original wetland acreage. Over 75% of the wetlands are in private ownership. During the next six years (2021) the DNR expects current protection, permitting, and restoration programs to hold the line against direct wetlands loss.68

45. ACCESS TO CLEAN AND SAFE DRINKING WATER MAY BE THREATENED

- In Wisconsin, 70% of residents and 97% of communities rely on groundwater as their drinking water source.69

- As the state’s population grows, projected changes in rainfall, evaporation, and groundwater recharge rates will affect all freshwater users in the state.70

- Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, also known as polluted runoff, is a leading cause of water quality problems in Wisconsin. Polluted runoff is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground picking up natural and human-made pollutants, depositing them into rivers, lakes (90% of them, in fact), wetlands and groundwater.71

- Pressure to increase water extraction from the Great Lakes will grow, exacerbating an already contentious debate in the region.72
46. EXTERNAL RELIANCE FOR WISCONSIN’S ENERGY SUPPLY

- Over 80% of Wisconsin’s energy supply derives from fossil sources like coal, petroleum, and natural gas. Because none of these are natural resources in Wisconsin, nearly all the fuel we use to generate electricity, heat and cool buildings, and drive our vehicles comes from out-of-state sources.73
- In 2011 we sent $15.9 billion out of WI for energy—around $2,700 for every person in WI.74

**FIGURE 20.** Wisconsin energy consumption by end-use sector, 2014

Source: EIA, Wisconsin State Profile and Energy Estimates.
47. DECLINING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS

The “layer cake” of government—in which the federal government has the money, states have the power, and cities, counties, villages and towns have the problems—has been cut into pieces. The federal government has less money, the states have become ideological battlegrounds, and local government? It still has the problems.

National governments are “failing” in the eyes of their citizens, who see them as remote and removed. Or as one city manager explained, “Nations don’t have residents. Cities do.”

Further proof? Large international corporations no longer have “national strategies.” They are implementing city or regional strategies instead.

FIGURE 21. Percent who trust the government in Washington always or most of the time

The main political challenge of the next decade will be fixing government.
—John Micklewait and Adrian Wooldridge, The Fourth Revolution
How did we get here?
Messages from the Executive branch may help explain it:

"Government cannot solve our problems, it cannot set our goals, it cannot define our vision. Government cannot eliminate poverty or provide a bountiful economy or reduce inflation or save our cities or cure illiteracy or provide energy. And government cannot mandate goodness."

- Jimmy Carter, State of the Union Address, 1978

"Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

- Ronald Reagan, Inaugural Address, 1981

"The era of big government is over."

- Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, 1995

"I trust people; I don't trust the federal government."


"Change doesn't come from Washington. Change comes to Washington."

- Barack Obama, DNC speech, 2008
48. INCREASING TRUST IN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Trust in local government creates a competitive advantage for those local governments with the vision and ambition to reinvent and become more relevant to citizens. Research shows that trust between citizens and their government is an important and independent predictor of support for government policies, more important than partisanship or ideology alone.

49. INCREASED INNOVATION AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

In the absence of innovative leadership at the national or state levels, local governments are taking matters into their own hands, e.g. the Mayor of London announced the “London, England Visa” program, which would enable the City to authorize Visas for the brightest and best, part of a talent strategy that works around Members of Parliament and the national government.

50. INCREASED COLLABORATION AMONG LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Community leaders (elected and staff) are increasingly forming their own global or regional coalitions to address their most pressing issues, e.g. the C40 includes forty of the world’s largest cities committed to mitigating climate change. They tackle joint research projects, share best practices, and have committed to each other to reduce carbon emissions.

These types of issue-based, city-to-city collaborative networks are already reaping rewards for members and may supplant traditional professional state or national associations.

I talk more with the mayor’s office in Barcelona than I do with my own state and national representatives.

—Jim Keene, City Manager of Palo Alto, California
51. EMERGENCE OF “VUCA” LEADERSHIP AT LOCAL AND STATE LEVELS

A common term used when training military leaders is “VUCA,” an acronym for Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic and Ambiguous. This is precisely the environment that local government leaders are inheriting as tax revenues fall, staff retire or leave early, citizens’ expectations increase, and more of the “problems” in society fall to local governments to solve.

This VUCA environment is not likely to diminish soon, and local leaders can either bury their heads and try to continue to make things work, or they can embrace this opportunity to reinvent local government.

Nathan Bennett and G. James Lemoine suggest that each of the four conditions in VUCA require their own, appropriate response.
52. Citizen Engagement

How do you engage citizens in rich discussions that have long-term importance to the community?

Over the next twenty years, next-generation citizens will become the majority of our citizens. They don’t “show up” to place-based events in traditional ways. Citizen engagement—how it’s planned, executed, incorporated and measured—will be key.

Future-ready communities will experiment with a broad range of citizen engagement techniques. To date, participatory budgeting has been shown to have the highest levels of reach, productive actions, and feedback loops, based on research conducted by Code for America (see figure below).

![Figure 23. Rankings for Engagement (show highest to lowest for overall engagement)](source: The Sunlight Foundation)
53. INCREASE OF CORPORATE AND SPECIAL INTERESTS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In January 2010 the Supreme Court issued Citizens United, which allows companies and unions to make unlimited contributions to pay for political ads and other election tools. Since then, concerns about the ruling’s impact on public policy began to escalate. More money is now flowing into elections as the figure below shows.

The results aren’t limited to the federal level. Of the 200 largest corporate donors, state and local governments awarded subsidies to 174 (87%) of them, according to Good Jobs First, an organization that tracks economic development programs.

FIGURE 24. All Money Flowing Into Elections

_There are two things that are important in politics. The first thing is money, and I can’t remember what the second one is._

—Mark Hanna, 19th Century Industrialist and US Senator
54. **FISCAL UNCERTAINTY**

As nations and states transfer more responsibilities to local governments, we have the challenge of “too little money chasing too many needs.”

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) predicts that, “at current rates total tax revenues for the (state and local government) sector would not return to the 2007 historical high until 2058.”

The GAO estimates that:

“...closing the fiscal gap would require action to be taken today and maintained for each year equivalent to an 18% reduction in the state and local government sector’s current expenditures. Closing the fiscal gap through revenue increases would require action of similar magnitude through increases in state and local tax revenues. More likely, closing the fiscal gap would involve some combination of both expenditure reductions and revenue increases.”

Some local governments in the United States are overwhelmed by debt. Nine cities, towns and counties have filed for Chapter 9 bankruptcy since January 2010.

The two primary drivers of local governments expenses are pensions and health care costs. State and local Medicaid expenditures and the cost of health care compensation for state and local government employees and retirees generally grow at a rate that exceeds GDP, which runs local budgets deeper and deeper into trouble. Many cities and counties rely on their state governments to grant them authority to address their local fiscal uncertainty. States must therefore be responsive to their communities’ needs and avoid a one-size-fits-all solution.

![Figure 25](source: Government Accountability Office)
THE BIG SORT

HOW TO USE THE STEEP TRENDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Each of the trends in this document could impact your community. What other trends will impact your community that aren’t listed here? And how do you prioritize? The BIG SORT activity will help.

HERE’S HOW IT WORKS:

1. Convene a three-hour meeting to think strategically about your community’s future.
   - We suggest you include public and private sector, nonprofit leaders, young professionals, even students! Try to get beyond the “usual suspects” who make decisions in your community. The diversity of perspectives will enrich the process...and you may earn more engagement from people you don't always work with.
   - We also suggest you offer food and beverages.

2. A week or more before the meeting, email everyone a copy of this document (PDF), and ask them to read through the STEEP trends on the previous pages. In your email, remind them the date/time/location of the meeting and let them know that food and beverages will be available.

3. At the meeting, offer some welcome or introductory remarks including:
   - Why we’re here (to talk about the trends that will impact the future of our community)
   - What’s expected (nonpartisan, put the community first, leave your ego at the door, listen closely to what others have to say, turn your phones off)
   - What we’re doing (working in small groups to discuss and prioritize trends that will impact our future)

4. Divide into small groups of 6-8 people, ideally sitting at round tables. Each group should have a stack of post-it notes and a sharpie marker. You may want to print one copy of the STEEP trends for each table, in case people leave their PDFs at home.

5. Assign each small group to ONE section of the STEEP report, e.g.
   - Group 1: Society
   - Group 2: Technology
   - Group 3: Economy
   - Group 4: Environment
   - Group 5: Politics
   Ideally, you’d have at least five groups, one for each trend area. If you have more than 5 groups, you can assign more than one group to a topic or you can assign “wild card” groups, who’ll identify trends that aren’t in the STEEP document.

6. Give groups 60 minutes to discuss all the trends in their category. Within those 60 minutes, they must decide:
   - Is this a trend that will have a HIGH or LOW impact on our community in 20 years?
   - Is this a trend that we are HIGHLY CERTAIN will happen, or do we have LOW CERTAINTY it will happen?
   Ask teams to write each trend on a post it note and place it on the appropriate place on their table, to indicate its impact and certainty. (See step seven for an example).
7. Create a large X/Y diagram on a wall like the image below. You can use blue painter’s tape to create the axis lines. Then label the X-axis “Impact,” and label the Y-axis “Certainty”.

![X/Y diagram](image)

8. At the end of 60 minutes, ask all groups to affix their post-its to the large X/Y diagram on the wall, based on their assessment of the trends’ impact and certainty. When you’re done, you’ll have a wall that looks similar to this:

![Wall of trends](image)

9. Give attendees some time to look at the distribution of the trends independently. You might give them the assignment: “For the next 15 minutes, I want you to look carefully at our collective assessment of the trends that will impact on our community in the future. Get very curious. What do you notice? Give everyone a chance to get up close and personal with the trends. If you want to talk with someone about what you’re noticing, please do it in a way that won’t disturb others from reading the wall of trends.”

10. In a large group, facilitate a conversation among attendees, and take notes on responses on flip chart paper:
   - What does this distribution of trends tell us about community?
   - Looking at the upper right hand corner of High Impact/High Certainty trends, what did you notice here? (You may want to read some of these trends out loud.) Who’s working on these trends? (In many communities, no one is working on those trends; they’re seen as too big or too far in the distance.)
   - Based on this exercise, what opportunities are present in our community? What would you like to do, to build on this exercise?
   - Someone (or a very small group) should offer to take the next steps, based on this exercise.

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**LGI has a network of facilitators and others who can assist your community in this work. Please visit our website, localgovinstitute.org for more tools and information.**
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- **Mark O’Connell**, Executive Director, Wisconsin Counties Association

ABOUT LGI AND THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN WISCONSIN PROJECT

The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin, Inc. is a not-for-profit, non-partisan corporation representing all citizens of Wisconsin at the local level and created to conduct research, enhance collaboration, and educate the public and policymakers on ways to improve local government’s ability to serve the people. In 2016, LGI initiated a dynamic project to help local governments proactively address their futures. With the assistance of Rebecca Ryan, a Wisconsin-based economist and futurist, LGI is bringing the tools of foresight to your community.

*Learn more about LGI at: localgovinstitute.org and learn more about Rebecca Ryan at: rebeccaryan.com.*
END NOTES

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