

**Contra Costa Leadership Academy
Session #7 – Political astuteness**



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**Political Astuteness
&
Graduation**

**Contra Costa
Leadership Academy**

**Session #7
April 2, 2025**

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Reconnection & Reflection



Reconnect and share:

As a result of your Academy experience, what is one key insight, ah-ha, take-a-way, or new skill you have, and how do you plan to use that?

Overview

Team 5 presents



Debrief article



Politics in local government



Policy maker vs. administrator worlds

Overview

Nalbandian community values

Political values activity – case study

Leadership Academy take-a-ways

As a leader I believe...

Next steps & graduation 😊

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Team 5 Presentation

Community Gardens

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Article debrief

*Leadership and Political Savviness:
A Valuable Combination*

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“Politics”

What are the images that immediately come to mind when you think “politics”?



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Politics is all about. . .

- ❖ Getting things done in a messy world
- ❖ Different groups with often different interests competing for resources & attention

influence
activities and
politics. noun
governance
improving

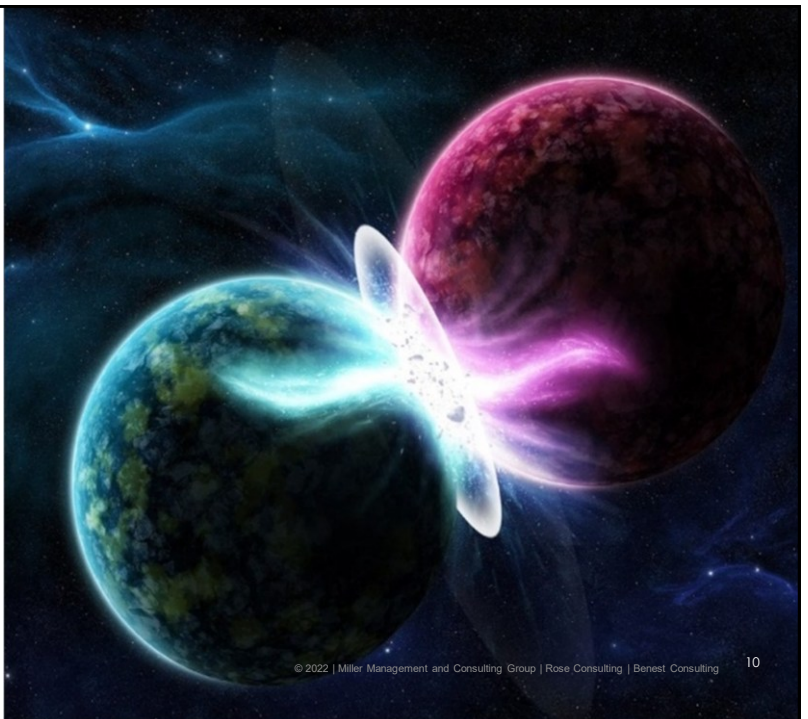
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Policy vs. Administration

Two different worlds

Two different mindsets



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Dimensions in the Political & Administrator World

- ❖ How they are *SELECTED*
- ❖ What their *ROLE* is
- ❖ *ISSUES* of importance
- ❖ *INFORMATION* they seek to make decisions
- ❖ *ORIENTATION TO CHANGE*



Dimensions in the Political & Administrator World

- ❖ Focus of *ATTENTION*
- ❖ Consideration of *TIMEFRAME*
- ❖ *DECISION MAKING FOCUS*
- ❖ *To whom they are ACCOUNTABLE*
- ❖ “*REWARDS*” sought



Exercise

Identifying dimensions for policy-makers
and administrators



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Groups



- ❖ Group #1 = **Information**
- ❖ Group #2 = **Orientation**
- ❖ Group #3 = **Attention**
- ❖ Group #4 = **Timeframe**
- ❖ Group #5 = **Focus of decision making**
- ❖ Group #6 = **Accountability**
- ❖ Group #7 = **Rewards**

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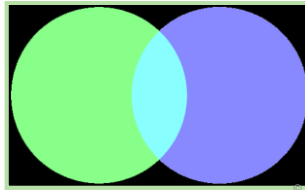
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Two Different Worlds

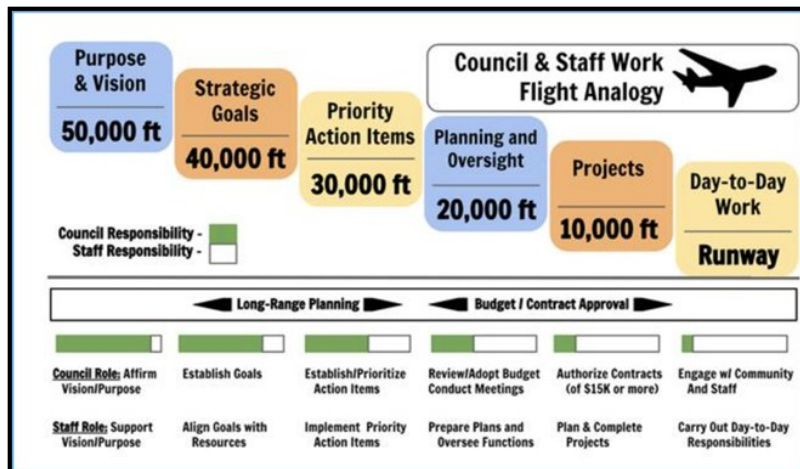
- ❖ Two mindsets
- ❖ The overlap
- ❖ The role of senior managers in navigating the relationship

Key question:

How do we become more effective in playing in a policy world?



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Community Values in Decision Making



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Based on the Work of John Nalbandian

- ❖ Efficiency
- ❖ Representation
- ❖ Individual Rights
- ❖ Social Equity



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Efficiency



-  Ensuring fiscal stability
-  Interagency collaboration and services consolidation
-  Efficient and accountable government systems and procedures
-  Long-range planning and master plans
-  Consideration of cost-benefit studies in decision making
-  Focusing resources on priorities







Representation



-  Listening & responding to community concerns including specific groups
-  Developing future leaders
-  Surveying citizens as to needs & concerns
-  Empowering neighborhoods
-  Having a clear vision shared by the community
-  Providing for & encouraging public involvement







Individual Rights



-  Priority on public safety to protect property & people
-  Concern that employees not lose their jobs under privatization
-  Minimal gov't regulations, especially regarding land use
-  Willingness to grant zoning variances to accommodate individuals' needs
-  Business friendly
-  Concern that arbitrary gov't decisions not hurt individuals

Social Equity



-  Workforce layoff plans which avoid greater impacts on minorities
-  Same quality infrastructure & services for all areas of the City
-  Enforcement of federal & state laws prohibiting discrimination
-  Affordable housing for families & seniors
-  City facilities & programs accessible to disabled
-  Bilingual or multi-lingual staff & written materials



Connecting How Values Directly Influence Decision Making

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It's Time To Discuss & Vote



- ❖ Your task as the governing body is to discuss and vote on the issue
- ❖ Refer to the handout and identify which community values are in play in this scenario
- ❖ You either approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application for rezoning and development
- ❖ If approved with conditions, identify the required conditions

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Let's Debrief

- ❖ What community values did you identify that are at play?
 - ❖ For the group?
 - ❖ For each voting member?
- ❖ What supported you in coming to an agreement, or what values were in conflict if you did not have unanimous agreement?



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Think Politically



Act Non-Politically



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Think Politically / Act Non-Politically

Thinking politically

- ❖ Practice “positive regard” - acknowledge values, goals, desires, & reference groups of politician
- ❖ Debrief governing board meetings
- ❖ Develop rapport with political actors
- ❖ Ask policy-makers why they voted the way they did
- ❖ Start with the “why”
- ❖ Frame the issue



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Think Politically / Act Non-Politically

Thinking politically

- ❖ Tie ideas to larger agendas
- ❖ Identify & use language that resonates
- ❖ Engage reference group members & constituencies
- ❖ Consider the “best” communicators & presenters
- ❖ Tell the story
- ❖ Know when to push forward or pull back
- ❖ Get political guidance



Think Politically / Act Non-Politically

Acting Non-Politically

- ❖ Treat all governing board members equally
- ❖ Provide info to all - elected officials & interest groups
- ❖ Respect political views of governing board members & acknowledging their interests
- ❖ Provide professional analysis & options



Think Politically / Act Non-Politically

Acting Non-Politically

- ❖ Make professional recommendations in the best interests of the community & organization
- ❖ Avoid taking of sides in policy disputes
- ❖ Accept & support political decisions



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Option For Responding to “Political” Ideas

“Sure”

“No”

“Yes but. . .”

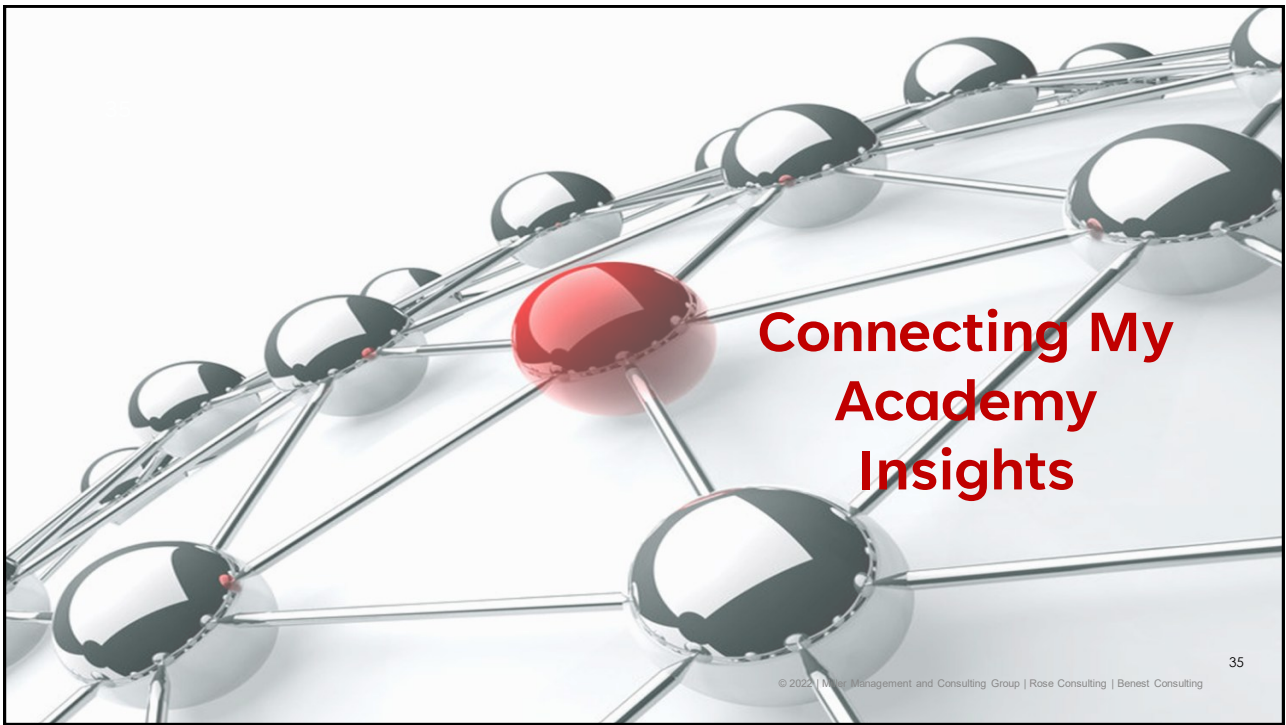
“Yes and. . .”



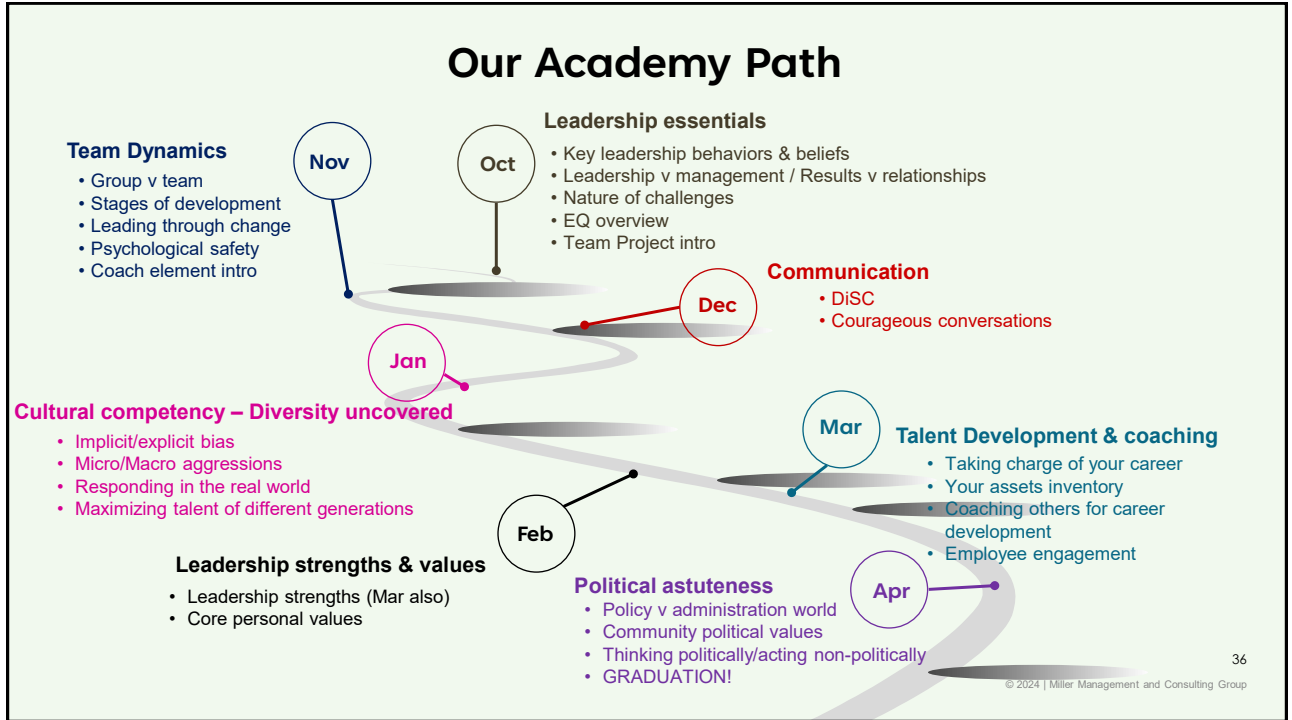
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Academy Reflection

- ❖ What does what I learned in the Academy mean to me as a local gov't professional?
- ❖ What am I doing with this insight to move me forward & allow me to show up as my best & highest self?

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As a Leader I believe...

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Resources

- ❖ Benest, Frank. *Career Compass #31: Political Savviness*. March 28, 2013.
- ❖ *Dichotomy and Duality: Reconceptualizing the Relationship Between Policy and Administration in Council-Manager Cities*. *Public Administration Review* 45. 1985. 228.
- ❖ Duggan, Kevin. *Leadership Without Appearing Political*. Feb. 1991.
- ❖ Michail, Jon. *Leadership and Political Savviness: A Valuable Combination*. Forbes Coaches Council Post. Nov. 29, 2022.
<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2022/11/29/leadership-and-political-savviness-a-valuable-combination/>
- ❖ Nalbandian, John & Oliver, James. *City and County Management as Community Building*. May 1999.
- ❖ Why we vote with Dr. John Nalbandian
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZRzaZzOFsg&feature=youtu.be>

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Final Team Presentation Schedule

April 10

Project Presentations:

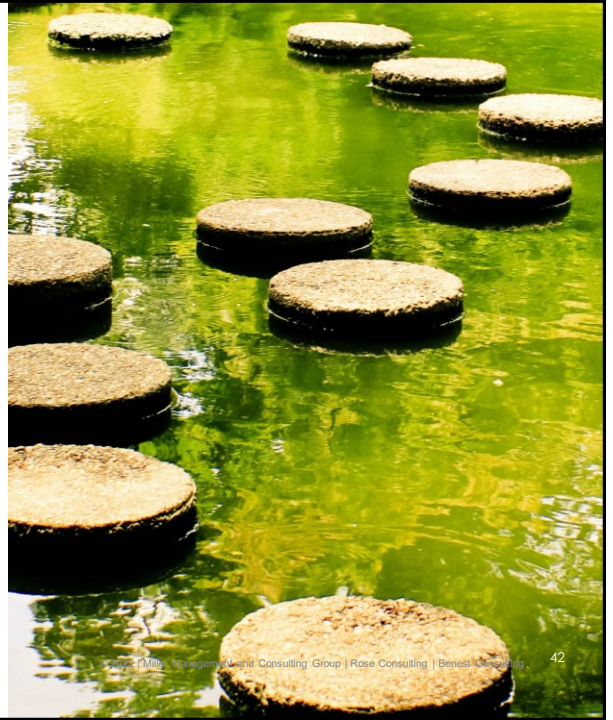
- ❖ **Team 1:** 11:45 AM – 12:15 PM
- ❖ **Team 2:** 12:20 PM – 12:50 PM
- ❖ **Team 5:** 12:55 PM – 1:25 PM

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Next steps

- ❖ Final project presentations
- ❖ CGL program
- ❖ Final coaching conversation
- ❖ Academy survey
- ❖ Academy resources
- ❖ Staying connected
- ❖ Supporting future Academies
- ❖ ICMA coaching program & resources



**Thank you for a great Academy
journey with you!**

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***Congratulations to the Class of 2024-25
of the Contra Costa Leadership Academy!***

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