Compiled by Mary Ellen Shoup

Smart Thinking

Making cities smarter and more resilient to the effects of climate change and extreme weather efforts with new technologies is a growing trend across the nation, for good reason. *SWS* Assistant Editor Mary Ellen Shoup spoke with Jen Crozier, IBM's vice president for global citizenship initiatives, on how cities and municipalities can become smarter—and how they can pay for it.

Mary Ellen Shoup: How can cities, counties and regions become smarter?

Jen Crozier: It doesn't take very much for local government to do things in a smarter way, resulting in greater efficiencies and effectiveness. One pitfall IBM has seen in many municipalities is a fragmented approach to data and collaboration. Data can be thought of as a natural resource that needs to be managed and maximized, almost like water. Data can give decision makers great insights and help them make better decisions. Very often, data that can help shed light on a problem already exists but isn't shared between departments or analyzed rigorously. Simple mechanisms to share that data need to be in place so that decision makers can anticipate or respond faster and more strategically to events. We often recommend that a municipality appoint someone to use technology to connect the dots and harmonize the goals of multiple municipal agencies. A good starting point is examining the mechanisms and processes that stakeholders use to coordinate with one another.

Shoup: How can cities work around constraints like tight budgets and resource scarcity to become smarter?

Crozier: In many instances, the costs and downside of not investing in a particular resource can be greater than making that initial investment. Adopting new approaches, new frameworks or new technologies can pay for itself over time. Oftentimes, there needn't even be a large expenditure; it may simply be a case of tweaking a process or enlisting the support of the right citizens and stakeholders. Cities have a lot to learn from each other, and [IBM] works hard to share best practices across projects.

Shoup: How can cities secure funding for upgrades?

Crozier: When it comes to funding, it's important to remember that it doesn't necessarily come entirely from the public sector; there are private grants that might be secured. Cities that are able to demonstrate the data behind their decisions and planning can make a strong case for funding. Using data instead of anecdotes, combined with a strong vision and plan, reflects the community's commitment and is a big plus for funders, [both public and private].

Shoup: What role can water utilities and municipalities play in making cities smarter?

Crozier: Clean water is not optional, so managing this most precious of resources is essential. IBM has [helped] municipalities become more strategic about their water management. Tucson, Ariz., is already vigilant about its water footprint—existing initiatives include reuse of nonpotable water, protection of key aquifers and reduced consumer use. With the installation of advanced metering systems, the city wants to continue its role as a leader in water conservation globally, and wants to demonstrate the benefits of advanced metering for reduced labor cost, better leak detection and planning. [IBM helped] the city leverage data-driven management to improve customer service; upgrade systems to capture failures, leaks and water usage; and reduce the cost of energy. **SWS**

Jen Crozier is vice president for global citizenship initiatives for IBM. Crozier can be reached at jen2u@us.ibm.com or 914.499.6142.

Mary Ellen Shoup is assistant editor for *SWS*. Shoup can be reached at mshoup@sgcmail.com.

Jen Crozier

Making cities more efficient & effective