

**CAST Survey**  
**Town Manager-Recommended Skill Set & Expertise**  
**Fall 2022**

**1. What is/are the most important skill set/s a manager should have in a mountain town/resort community?**

- Listening; building relationships, trust and confidence with everyone (elected officials, employees, citizens, 3rd party partners); a public service mind-set.
- Being somewhat new to serving in mountain towns, I have learned a new manager can serve the town with management experience from non-mountain towns, but must also be flexible and interested in learning the differences that occur in mountain towns. I have found the biggest to be employee housing, but have also learned that mountain towns seem far more active than many towns and cities in addressing climate issues. I know Glenwood Springs has a local group very involved in addressing homelessness, but this does not seem to be as much of a focus in other towns.
- Ability to quickly build relationships with the ski resort, lodging industry, other business, community non-profits – especially the Community Housing Trust - and the other public sector partners (school district, County, any special districts) – because nothing good happens in a mountain town without partners. Ability to quickly build trust with city staff. They are the single most precious resource a Town Manager can have. Understanding how to optimize the limited tax stream in Wyoming (with super low property tax and modest state & county taxes)
- Be a problem seeker, not a problem solver. Having all the answers is a warning sign to me. Very good communication skills especially being able to sincerely listen and acknowledge.
- The ability to build strong relationships with individuals, businesses and non-profits in the community in the interest of advancing the Town's goals and objectives. Understanding the value of state and federal relationships and interaction. A strong representative of and motivator of the town's workforce. Ability to equally communicate and organize the processes of the elected body
- From Estes Park, similarly situated with regard to proximity to significant natural resource draws and visitor impacts (i.e. Yellowstone to Rocky Mountain National Park). A) An ability to work equally well with a wide range of people and interests that span the full range of income and life experiences. B) Strong team-builder and leader. C) Understanding of the unique challenges of popular mountain resort communities that abut natural resource attractions, including, but not limited to: workforce housing, childcare, economic opportunity, wildfire/flood mitigation and response, and interactions with diverse federal agencies (especially the National Park System and the Forest Service). D) Understanding of the financial flows of a mountain resort community (seasonal shifts, reliance on sales and use tax for the vast majority of sales tax dollars, potential financial impacts of natural disasters).

**2. What area(s) of expertise, in addition to public admin, would an ideal candidate have?**

- Leadership, personnel management, land use and urban planning, environmentalism, climate action, housing, police, and local/state/federal government.

- As I wrote in #1, a new manager must pay attention to the particular needs of the community. Mountain Towns vary as much as towns and cities in general. For instance, in some towns, the public has a stronger interest in being involved in public decision making. Boards operate differently. New Managers must be willing to work with staff and the elected officials to learn what is needed in the community and what things have been put off. Listening and learning skills are necessary.
- A track record of hiring great people. A passion for some type of outdoor pursuit. Embracing the “Stockdale Paradox” of ski towns in a post-COVID era: ability to confront the brutal facts related to lack of housing and employees (and wildfire, while having steadfast faith that you and your team can prevail in even the toughest of situations).
- It is helpful if they have positive experience or expertise in at least one area of the local government’s strategic plan. A servant leader, empathetic or outward mindset form of leadership. A teacher, building the next generation of leaders in the community
- Specific experience in managing mountain resort communities would be ideal. Understanding of the dynamics of a visitor-based economy (financial, economic, and social). Partnership development and success with adjoining jurisdictions (county, state, and federal).

**3. Is there anything you pay specific attention to when interviewing potential managers (i.e., good indicators, red flags, etc.)?**

- The ability to be a confident leader without arrogance and while respecting council and the citizens. Green Flags: humility, ability to acknowledge and discuss mistakes and learning experiences with ease, examples and passion for learning, demonstrated ability to improve organizations, ability to gain respect of employees, awareness and appreciation for value of public process. Red Flags: bragging, “I did this and that” versus “We did this and that”, over confidence, any sense of dictating to elected officials, and (my favorite) any past lawsuits against municipal employer.
- Unless the new manager comes from a mountain town, it is doubtful they will bring the skills necessary to address employee housing, STR’s, working with ski resorts, etc... That does not mean they are unable to be successful. Success is determined on how much the person is willing to listen and learn.
- Read/listen to these two books – they have all the answers: <https://www.tablegroup.com/product/ideal-team-player/> & <https://www.amazon.com/Asshole-Rule-Civilized-Workplace-Surviving/dp/1600245854>
- Are they a listener and especially an active listener. Do they like to develop people in service of the community.
- Good indicators include A) Successful background in working with diverse interests to build effective partnerships. B) Specific experience in working with mountain resort communities, especially those that are similar to Jackson (e.g. Aspen, Sun Valley, Ketchum, Telluride, Park City). C) Recognition of specific challenges associated with mountain resort communities (not just another "small" town). D) Growth mindset (constantly learning, doesn't assume that past experiences can be transferred to Jackson with a "cut-and-paste" approach).

#### **4. Bonus Suggestions**

- I have experienced extremely low success in hiring anyone who has not lived in a mountain resort area previously. Occasional ski vacations don't cut it. In leadership positions I often see applicants late in their career looking for an early retirement in a resort area. The experience on paper is attractive, but they are rarely, if ever, a good fit for mountain resort communities and lifestyle.
- NO fixed ideas. All TOWNS are NOT ALIKE. They have similarities and differences and one must see both to truly see the Town.
- Communication lags in the interview process send up a warning sign to me. I desire genuine frank clear answers, not computed ones. Any time there is a pause in communication I find concern.