CGR at 100:
A Remarkable Story
It is an incredible story of an idea that grew to change the Greater Rochester community for generations, and now is impacting communities across the nation.

CGR's centennial is more than an impressive milestone. It is an incredible story of an idea that grew to change the Greater Rochester community for generations, and now is impacting communities across the nation. It begins in 1915, when George Eastman established in Rochester, N.Y. the independent organization that became CGR.

To understand Eastman’s motive, one needs to know what the community faced in the early 20th century. Like many growing cities, Rochester was a machine-dominated town. The party machine was successful, dirty, and headed by a boss battling reform groups inside and outside the party.

Eastman Kodak’s founder wanted better management and more efficient government as the city faced pressing demands linked to growth, infrastructure, service delivery, and taxes.

An inveterate reader, he learned of a private, New York City-based, nonpartisan nonprofit set up to research and investigate the management of municipal government. Within its first years, the NYC Bureau of Municipal Research gained national attention for shining a light on ill-founded public policy and helping bring down the Tammany Hall machine. In 1915, Eastman wrote a friend:

_I have gone into a new activity lately… I could not resist the temptation to start something in the efficiency line. It is the organization of a Bureau of Municipal Research, like the one in New York._
Eastman wrote he would fund the Bureau for its first few years, and listed the highly respected leaders in Rochester he recruited as trustees. Unlike most reform groups of the time, the Bureau’s approach was not to “throw the rascals out.” The trustees believed corruption and waste were due as much to lack of knowledge of effective management techniques as to outright intent.

Instead of fighting government, the Bureau would serve it. Eastman advised the first director that when a plan or recommendation was adopted that credit be given to the official in charge of the department, with no attempt to give our new organization credit.

Bureau leaders (including some trained as engineers) built our reputation through very technical, detailed studies of municipal government, while emphasizing objectivity and nonpartisanship. Soon we were touching virtually all facets of Rochester government – from operation of the central garage, to improving snow removal and street-cleaning services, to sparking dramatic cost-saving changes involving municipal bonds.

Our first landmark project hit in 1925 when we researched and recommended an overhaul of the city charter. Adopted in 1928, the new charter introduced the City Manager form of government to Rochester under which it operated for more than 50 years, elevating its status as a professionally run government.

The next nine decades brought significant changes to our organization, including new names (Center for Governmental Research, now CGR), but the quality of our work, the trust leaders place in us, and the mostly quiet, behind-the-scenes nature of the work we do have always remained distinguishing characteristics. As one of our board members is fond of saying, “CGR is the ‘Intel Inside’ many of the community’s toughest decisions.”

Our 100th anniversary is an occasion for celebration, and we take this opportunity to pull back the curtain to show some of the imprint we’ve left on the Greater Rochester community. George Eastman would be proud of what’s been accomplished!
Evolution of Monroe County Government

Today it is hard to imagine Monroe County not having a countywide library system, consolidated public health department, county parks system, centralized public safety communication system, pure waters system, or administering welfare services, but our work—often with generous funding from the Gleason Foundation—played a major role in shaping these and other key structural aspects of Monroe County government.

Beginning under the leadership of the late Craig M. Smith, who served the Bureau/CGR for 43 years, including 27 as director, the structure of Monroe County government evolved significantly. Friedrich J. Grasberger, who worked for Smith from 1957 until succeeding him in the top position as president (1983-1990) participated in many of the consolidation studies Smith led.

In a centennial year interview, “Fritz” Grasberger recalls, “One of my first projects was consolidating all welfare programs. When I started, each town had its own. Each also had its own health department. For police communication systems, each (police operation) had its own. When it came to parks, Durand-Eastman used to be a city park.” He adds that when the Bureau first began looking at sewer treatment departments in Monroe County “there were 60 of them, and now there is one.”

Patricia K. Malgieri, a former staff member and president (1993 – 2005), also underscores the wide-ranging work CGR did related to consolidating services under the county. “Between 1955 and 1970, there was one service after another that was looked at,” such as tax assessment, purchasing, human services, libraries, and youth services.

Malgieri adds, “The whole evolution of the role of county government would never have happened without CGR. It always required CGR’s data to get it done. It was the overwhelming impact of the data.”
Creation of Monroe Community College

Since Monroe Community College was founded in 1961 as a unit of the State University of New York, more than 487,000 students have attended. But back in 1960, when CGR was asked to look at the higher education network in the Rochester region, the concept of community colleges in the state was still new.

At the request of a joint city-county planning committee, CGR (then known as the Bureau of Municipal Research) assessed the need for additional college spaces, what areas of study would be needed, whether local government should participate in providing fiscal support, and if a community college was an appropriate approach. We concluded a community college offered a promising solution to growing demand.

Following the study, and a companion project completed in 1961 in which we laid out the implementation plan, Monroe Community College was established. In the fall of 1962 the first 720 students arrived. Not quite 20 years later, CGR also did the study that led to creation of MCC’s downtown Damon Center.
Morin-Ryan Act ‘Saves’ Rochester

By the late 1970s it was clear the City of Rochester was in dire short- and long-term financial straits. A series of taxpayer lawsuits in the 1970s determined that Rochester and other upstate cities had exceeded constitutional tax limits. In essence, Rochester lost the ability to tax for some services. The city’s longer-term problems were tied to having a large number of exempt properties; seeing new development happening almost exclusively outside its boundaries, and experiencing declining overall property values.

Looking back in a centennial year interview, longtime CGR staff member and former president Friedrich (Fritz) Grasberger recounts that the root cause of the city’s financial problems actually dated back some five decades earlier to when the state passed a “stringent annexation constitutional amendment.” Unlike cities such as Houston, “Rochester was unable to spread the financial support of its tax-exempt base to the suburban areas also benefitting from it – which required higher and higher taxes in the city, and drove more people to the suburbs, lowering city valuations, making it the port of entry for poor newcomers without the resources to pay for needed services.”

Grasberger says that as the city’s fiscal problems worsened over time, CGR discussed many options, and also studied the most up-to-date municipal management practices in the country and beyond. Business and government leaders were particularly opposed to two possible solutions – a city sales tax or a city income tax. An alternative, suggested by CGR, ultimately resulted in the Morin-Ryan Act of 1985, a solution that was then, and remains today, cutting edge in municipal finance.

The Morin-Ryan Plan alters the distribution of shared funds generated through the first 3% of local sales tax, giving the city more while also holding school districts and villages in the county harmless. The Morin-Ryan Plan, former CGR staff member and president Patricia Malgieri points out, “really did save the city in the ’80s and ’90s and its importance can’t be overplayed.” Though she joined the CGR staff in 1979 and was part of the internal team that designed the formula, tested variations, proposed how it could be used, and helped implement it, she says, “It took many years of CGR work to lead to Morin-Ryan. CGR was very much behind the scenes, and it never would have happened without Fritz (Grasberger).”

In those years there was close collaboration between the county and city, and Grasberger, as CGR president, talked often to officials from both. The county’s top leader, Lucien Morin, a Republican, staunchly supported a “Community of Monroe” and had told Democratic City Manager Thomas Ryan the county would help. But CGR knew local governments and school districts receiving shares of the local sales tax wouldn’t want their own revenues to drop.

Grasberger recounts talking to the late Alex DiPasquale, then assistant county manager, and telling him “people would vote against anything where they would lose revenue. What about a lesser share of the increase (since sales tax receipts were then rising)?” A short time later, “Alex called and said ‘Go ahead.’ I worked with him and Rochester Budget Director Ed Doherty. The three of us ran numbers for hours and days and days until we had something Lou and Tom were comfortable with.”

Asked how the plan was named, Grasberger says he was walking with Morin and Ryan out of a meeting, when “one said, ‘What should we call it?’ I said it was obvious. It should be the Morin-Ryan Plan. They said, ‘Great!’ I said it sounds better than Ryan-Morin, it flows better and they agreed.”
Strengthening Early Childhood Education

The on-going effort to strengthen early childhood education in Rochester dates back more than 25 years when the Ford Foundation provided a grant to the Rochester Area Community Foundation, which used it to engage CGR. Dr. Donald Pryor, who has headed CGR’s wide-ranging efforts in early childhood ever since, remembers that first study included a survey of what programs existed, breaking them down by neighborhoods. “It was clear then how the city was way behind the suburbs in terms of high quality programs.”

Today the story has changed dramatically. According to Community Foundation President and CEO Jennifer Leonard, the Early Childhood Program here ranks “at the top nationally” in terms of quality. Many progressive steps have happened in the community since that first report, says Leonard, including a push for a Pre-K program in Rochester that today serves 2,000 children. About half are served within Rochester city schools and half by community organizations. “In just nine months, the developmental gains of children in these programs range from 18 to 24 months.”

Pryor says there have been numerous local participants in the on-going effort to maintain and improve early childhood education in Rochester over the years, but that “our data and credibility were critical in framing what ultimately became a very well respected program. Our work helped transform, shape, and streamline the early childhood system. We also helped keep related issues in the forefront, including access to subsidies for child care, after school programs, summer learning, and extended day offerings. “Early childhood education is a great example of how important community partnerships can develop and be shaped by enlightened funders, comprehensive research and analysis, and community leaders willing to be guided by data.”

Jacqueline Cady, chair of the Early Childhood Development Initiative, formed 25 years ago to maintain and improve pre-school education in Rochester and Monroe County, agrees. She adds, “In terms of progress in early education, CGR is big.”

CGR: Significant Changes Over Time

**Name Changes** The Bureau of Municipal Research became the Center for Governmental Research in 1972, and in our centennial year simply CGR.

**Clients** Include governments of all shapes, sizes and structures; school districts, educational institutions; nonprofits; business-civic groups, and foundations.

**Geographic Reach** Initially focused on one city, our boundaries expanded over time to one state, then the northeastern U.S., and now the nation.

**Funding** George Eastman, who presided over 97 of the first 121 board meetings, single-handedly funded operations for our first 17 years (with investments totaling about $9 million in 2015 dollars). With his death in 1932 the Bureau began an evolution from relying entirely on philanthropic support to a hybrid model in which philanthropy exists alongside entrepreneurial contract services.
Targeting Lead Paint Prevention Efforts

In summer 2015, Rochester media reported the number of county children under age six newly diagnosed with elevated levels of lead in their blood had dropped 85% over a decade’s time. The achievement is incredibly important since children are particularly susceptible to lead poisoning, which can cause irreversible, devastating developmental damage. Few communities in the U.S. have made such remarkable progress.

Most residents don’t realize this achievement is attributable to an extensive and collaborative effort by a host of government agencies, community organizations, educators, elected leaders, and committed citizens. Fewer still know the key role CGR played in changing how our community targets lead poisoning. Dr. Andrew Doniger, retired director of the Monroe County Department of Public Health, and Bryan Hetherington, Chief Counsel of the Empire Justice Center, do know.

Today, Dr. Doniger says, it is well known that the “formula for lead poisoning is to live in property that is old and also poorly maintained,” where lead paint chips off and can be ingested by children. “There was funding in the 1970s from the feds but the big issue was we were basically waiting for kids to get sick to identify where the lead hazards were. Our goal was to find homes before they poisoned the children.”

That goal led to CGR being asked to do a 2002 study that looked at housing data and identified which geographic areas had the greatest probability of having hazards. The most important finding in CGR’s report, Hetherington says, was that “90% of kids being poisoned were recipients of public assistance. Tax dollars were being used to provide housing that was poisoning them.” In addition, he says, CGR’s report recommended targeting preventive efforts to high risk housing. “CGR helped us take a preventive approach,” rather than a secondary remedial approach “after a kid was poisoned.”

Dr. Doniger says CGR’s study “created the framework on which the entire community changed its strategy and became mobilized to eliminate lead poisoning.” That drive, led by the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning, culminated in the 2005 passage of a city ordinance requiring inspection for lead paint hazards in rental housing as part of the city’s certificate of occupancy process. To pass inspection, a pre-1978 residence must have intact paint inside and out, have no bare soil around the edge of the house and – if it has intact paint but is located in a high-risk area – pass a test for lead in dust.

CGR conducted two subsequent evaluations prior to 2009 that were funded by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation. Both showed a positive impact of the new law, and they were used by the Coalition as a basis for disseminating Rochester’s model to other cities.

Hetherington describes Rochester’s achievements in fighting lead paint poisoning as “a huge community win.” He adds, “The 2002 report was a really critical piece. It was the right report at the right time and people made really good use of it. That speaks to the quality of the report and how people used it effectively.”

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ACT Rochester: Tracking the Region’s Well Being

CGR’s partnership with the Rochester Area Community Foundation has given rise to ACT Rochester, a community indicators vehicle for tracking the nine-county region’s health with real-time and accurate data, and aligning collective resources around driving impact on key policy areas.

ACT Rochester (www.actrochester.org) launched in 2009 after more than 200 local organizations provided input into its development. It also received funding support in its startup years from the United Way of Greater Rochester. Statistics show how much people are using the site. In 2014 there were nearly 71,000 pageviews logged by more than 19,000 users.

According to Community Foundation President and CEO Jennifer Leonard, “ACT Rochester has created a vehicle for centralization of important civic data, including deeper dives on education, race, and poverty.”

Our Fund for the Public Interest

Through our Fund for the Public Interest, we remain focused on the community. As our organization transitioned over time from a philanthropic funding model to a more entrepreneurial, fee-for-service consulting model, we’ve retained this special fund.

“In a lot of ways, it is the nexus between the organization we are today and the organization that Eastman brought to life 100 years ago,” says President and CEO Joseph Stefko. “Since 2000 alone, through our project revenues and our corporate and individual supporters, the Fund for the Public Interest has committed nearly $2 million to projects in Greater Rochester that our team has identified as key initiatives – addressing major issues, informing critical decisions, and deepening our capacity as a region.”

He adds, “In the past five years those issues have included veterans services, economic development efforts, child nutrition, public libraries, urban education, school evaluations, and community planning, to name a few.”

Stefko emphasizes, “The Fund for the Public Interest has given us the flexibility to retain the public interest legacy Eastman left us. Those issues that are so broad, so fundamental, so vexing, that they may not have a single ‘paying client’ in the truest sense of the word. But those are the issues that Eastman created CGR to address. It’s right there in his comments at the first board meeting in 1915. He said then, ‘Get things done for the community.’ A century later we still heed those words.”
Where We’re Headed Now

Eastman Kodak – the greatest manifestation of George Eastman’s global vision – made Rochester one of the nation’s leading exporters. It is fitting that today our Eastman-inspired organization is exporting expertise, knowledge, and innovation to help great communities become even greater. We now serve local clients and clients across the U.S. in four practice areas.

**Government & Education:** At a time when the economic, fiscal, service, and competitiveness demands on community institutions are greater than ever, CGR’s work is yielding modernized structures, greater capacity, and better outcomes. We are partnering with governments and educational institutions to confront fundamental challenges of service and economic stability and sustainability.

**Economics & Public Finance:** In a highly competitive environment for jobs and economic development and growth, we are providing regions with the “intel” they require to plan strategically, measure precisely, and vie aggressively for growth. For industrial and economic development agencies to state and municipal economic development departments, we are putting actionable, mission-critical information in the hands of key decision makers.

**Health & Human Services:** Whether dealing with issues focused on poverty, social services, public health, or criminal justice, our analytical support is informing government and nonprofit leaders’ decisions on service delivery strategy – identifying what’s working, what’s not working, and what needs to change to build a stronger and healthier community and region.

**Nonprofits & Communities:** At a time when nonprofit resources are limited, communities’ need for them is greatest. We’re focused on expanding the capacity of nonprofits, empowering them to more precisely measure and track the impact of their work, and helping them plan strategically for their futures.

Exporting expertise, knowledge, and innovation to help great communities become even greater.
### 100 Projects for 100 Years
*Sample project from each year of CGR’s century of service.*

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1966 Considerations for Dealing with the Problems of Local Government in a Metropolitan Area

1967 A Suggested Framework for Governmental Reorganization for Chautauqua County

1968 Proposed Pilot Program for the Development and Evaluation of a Pre-Trial Release System for Monroe

1969 An Estimate of Total Retail Potential & Department Store Potential of Great Eastern Mall

1970 Attitudes Toward Unified Police, Monroe County, NY

1971 A New Zoo? The Importance of Environmental Education in Monroe County

1972 A Comparative Salary Study of School Administrative and Professional Personnel in Monroe County

1973 Alcohol Abuse and the Criminal Justice System


1975 Two Tiered Government in Monroe County, New York

1976 City Finances in Perspective: Rochester, Buffalo, and Syracuse, NY 1975-1976

1977 County Finances in Perspective: Monroe, Erie and Onondaga, NY

1978 A Report to the Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority on Selected Administrative Matters

1979 Compensation Rates at the Monroe Community College in Perspective

1980 An Elected Mayor for Rochester: A Plan for Amending the Rochester City Charter to Permit the Direct Election of the Mayor

1981 Parents Anonymous: A Service Aimed at Preventing Neglect, Abuse or Exploitation of Children


1985 Assessing the Effectiveness of Curriculum Advisory Committees in Two-Year Post Secondary Educational Institutions within New York State

1986 Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Strategy (FLREDS)

1987 City School District: Socio-Economic Indicators Project

1988 City of Auburn: Study of Organization and Procedures for Property Code Administration

1989 The Rochester Technopolis: Science, Technology, and Industrial Competitiveness

1990 Tax Burdens and Governmental Spending in New York State

1991 Evaluation: Niagara Falls Geropsychiatric Demonstration (Niagara County, NY)

1992 Restructuring the NYS Personnel/Civil Service System

1993 The State of a Greater Rochester

1994 Toward Greater Efficiency and Cost Savings (Broome County, NY)

1995 Privatization Possibilities for Human Resources Administration Income Support Centers (NYC)


1997 No Handout, No Bailout - A Plan to Re-Engineer Service Delivery to Buffalo

1998 CHANGE Collaborate: Neighborhood Outcomes and Indicators (Rochester)

1999 Implementing Welfare-to-Work for the Hard-to-Serve in New York State

2000 Return on Investment: Options for Organizational Change among Human Services Agencies

2001 Assessing Urban Catholic Education: The Rochester Diocese WIN Voucher Program

2002 Lead Poisoning Among Young Children in Monroe County - A Needs Assessment, Projection Model, and Next Steps

2003 Transforming Medicaid: Options for New York

2004 Balance of Revenue & Expenditure Among NYS Regions


2006 Implications of Oneida Indian Nation’s Trust Lands (Oneida and Madison counties, NY)

2007 Access to Subsidized Child Care in Monroe County, NY

2008 Voices Together: Priority Needs/Solutions for Veterans Reintegration

2009 Strategies for Effective Crisis and Financial Stability Services: UW Blueprint for Change (Rochester)

2010 Baseline Measures and Investments: Community Action Plan for Greater Rochester’s Children

2011 Consolidation Options for Princeton Borough/Township (Mercer County, NJ)

2012 Economic Impact, U of Rochester: Regional Stimulus of New York State’s 7th Largest Private Employer

2013 The Future of County Nursing Homes in New York State

2014 Reducing Poverty - A Review of Policy Options (Rochester)

2015 Community Profile: State of Delaware
Figures 1 and 2 courtesy George Eastman Museum
Figures 3 and 4 from the Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY.
Figure 5 Rochester Images: From the Collection of the Rochester City Hall Photo Lab
Figure 6 Rochester Images: Town of Brighton