Letter of Recommendation

I am Ki-cheol Nam, Professor of Social Welfare at Dongduk Women’s University in Korea.

The ideal of the modern nation is a welfare state that takes responsibility for the people’s lives and ensures sufficient opportunity for full social participation. In modern society, people’s desires are increasing and social issues are becoming more diverse. It is imperative that we move beyond financial burden, bureaucratic rigidity, and market-centeredness of the current welfare states. People are now participating in public administration and are looking for ways to resolve issues by becoming active in their communities. As a result, there is a growing demand for social innovations to mediate various interests and seek solutions for problems using new values of trust and cooperation in all areas of social and civic need, yet have been left unresolved by the state and the market.

With the civil communities’ increased experience and participation in public policy, and desire to take the lead and intervene, cooperative governance has emerged as an alternative public system that improves on state-led and market-centered systems. People began to speak up about what they need from public policy and take actions to resolve issues they are facing.

Cooperative governance is an issue of the era that most countries face. In this changing trend, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has set “cooperative governance and innovation” as the pillar of its administration and is making efforts to realize their goals. A major initiative that illustrates the city’s efforts is the Seoul Welfare Governance.

Seoul Welfare Governance, created in 2014, began with the demands of social workers working for private institutions, who make up an important part of the welfare delivery system. Breaking away from unilateral implementation of policies that cannot take into account the problems people face in the field and the demands of the workers, Seoul Welfare Governance was an attempt to create an always-open communication in the welfare area that establishes and enforces welfare policy.

After its establishment, the Seoul Welfare Governance succeeded in improving the management of welfare facilities as well as the treatment of social welfare workers in the private sector, thanks to the active and independent participation of the members. In this process, both the public and private sectors improved their mutual understanding of, while broadening understanding between private organizations and facilitating communication.

But above all, the reason that the Seoul Welfare Governance is considered a meaningful cooperative governance organization is in its innovative management. One, the Seoul Welfare Governance opened the path for social welfare workers to actually participate in decision-making, which previously had been the sole responsibility of politicians. SWG has been acting a bridge between the government and the people so that the people can participate, and has been continuously expanding their participation. Two, the Seoul Welfare Governance well understands that cooperative governance is not the conclusion but a process and principle and an issue for democracy; it is working continuously to improve itself through training and education for democratic operation and communication, and also negotiating on the principles of operation.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government aims to provide welfare not as benefits but as a right for the people, and the Seoul Metropolitan Governance plays an important role in this process. As a scholar studying and always thinking about ways to improve Seoul’s welfare system, I am proud of the Seoul Welfare Governance and its expansion throughout the country. And I hope that the people of the world can also benefit from Seoul’s efforts.

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