



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees

January 2016 • Volume 1 • Number 11

MMA Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration Best Practice Recommendation: Sharing Municipal Services

BEST PRACTICE: Evaluate opportunities to save money and improve local government services by sharing municipal service delivery with other cities, towns and governmental entities. This could include equipment-sharing arrangements, contracts for sharing municipal and school services, and group purchasing. Collaboration could take the form of inter-municipal agreements (IMAs), contracts, special acts, or the formation of districts or regions.

Cities and towns across the Commonwealth routinely look for opportunities to lower costs and improve local services by sharing services or equipment with other municipalities, regional organizations, or state government. These agreements offer substantial savings and efficiencies, yet should be framed so that all participating communities have common understandings, goals and commitments. Examples include:

- Adopting a shared services model for underutilized capital equipment via an inter-municipal agreement, such as having one community purchase a sewer flusher truck and renting it to surrounding communities to significantly offset the purchase cost.
- Sharing a Veterans' Services Officer among municipalities, with rotating office hours at community or senior centers.
- Forming a Regional Housing Services Office to monitor affordable housing compliance and other housing opportunities more broadly than in a single community.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) suggests that inter-municipal agreements should include provisions that establish the legal basis of the agreement, specific provisions for service delivery levels and performance measurement, a structure for governance, finance and dispute resolution, and a time period.

Resources

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Inter-Municipal Agreements Resource Guide
www.mapc.org/resources/intermunicipal-agreements#things

Sharing Municipal Services - continued

Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies:
Regionalization: A Guide for Sharing Public Services in Massachusetts
www.regionalbestpractices.org/right-for-you/what-is-regionalization/laws-for-regionalization

Massachusetts Shared Services Manual
www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/2013-shared-permit-manual-web.pdf

Massachusetts Municipal Association:
Understanding and Applying the New Inter-Municipal Agreements Law
www.mma.org/resources-mainmenu-182/doc_view/163-understanding-and-applying-the-new-inter-municipal-agreements-law

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA):
Alternative Service Delivery: Shared Services (approved by GFOA's Executive Board, October 2007)
www.gfoa.org/alternative-service-delivery-shared-services