



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

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

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MMA Policy Committee on Personnel and Labor Relations

Best Practice: Municipal Employment and Demographic Data Collection

Local officials are effective advocates in expressing the successes and shortfalls of the intersection between state and local government, especially the involvement of state agencies in municipal labor management. However, having adequate and consistent data can improve the stories that cities and towns can provide on who works in local government and what they do. Filling out surveys and requests for information received by a community can be time-consuming, but prioritizing all forms of data collection helps all municipalities.

This is particularly important regarding public safety personnel and those interacting with the Civil Service system in Massachusetts. For example, those who have exited Civil Service should collect data on demographics (including veteran status) for the years preceding a Civil Service exit (or potential exit) and for at least five years after exiting Civil Service. Regular data collection should continue indefinitely.

In order to collect this necessary data, the following best practices are recommended:

- Create systems to collect demographic data of municipal employees, which would include ethnic background, veteran status, gender, disability, etc. This is particularly important to collect relative to Civil Service, including information before, during, and after Civil Service departure.
- Leverage existing data collection for necessary federal Equal Employment Opportunity reporting requirements to be useful human resources data that can be updated on a regular basis.
- Use forms to collect data upon initial hire, but also consider attempts to collect information regularly through a re-census process to ensure information is accurate.

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- Collect and store data for all employees in a centralized database, as opposed to at the department level, in order to more easily analyze and aggregate. Consider using the payroll system, if applicable.
- Complete data requests from the MMA and other regional requests, including surveys and feedback forms.
- Consider collecting demographic data for municipal boards and commissions, as part of a voluntary process and report out findings.

Resources

- [Comcate: Common Data Management Problems in Local Government](#)
- [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Data Collections](#)
- [Philly SHRM: Why is Data Collection Important for HR?](#)