## 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.

• 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?](#)

## MMA Policy Committee on Personnel and Labor Relations

## Best Practice: Municipal Remote Work Policies

While local government has an inherent responsibility to be available and physically present for residents, the workforce is changing and municipalities will need ways to compete, especially with the private sector. Like many sectors, jobs across local government are inherently different, and some may not be able to accommodate remote work at all, or as much.

Remote work and flexibilities catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic now force municipalities to compete against many full-time, remote-only work options throughout the labor market. For municipalities interested in offering remote or tele-work to employees, establishing a policy is strongly recommended.

Unclear and unsatisfactory policies regarding remote work may cause municipalities to lose out on significant portions of the workforce, further complicating efforts to recruit and retain the talent they need to serve residents. This could also risk significant liability or morale issues for a municipality through inefficient or inequitable enforcement and administration of remote work policies and programs.

To remain competitive, municipalities choosing to offer remote/telework should develop a fair and equitable policy and process to determine the availability and viability of remote work allowances.

The following best practices are recommended:

• Use employee engagement and surveys to regularly determine employee preferences regarding remote, in-person, and hybrid work.

• Review all jobs to analyze the feasibility of remote or hybrid work, including how often.

• Create a remote work policy that has consistent application across departments or divisions to the extent practicable, and include a comprehensive application, review, approval and appeals process.

• Define metrics for success, including an evaluation process to adapt for all modalities of work.

• Develop a system of intentional check-ins for supervisors and managers to adequately support employees, regardless of where the work is performed.

• Clarify time and on-site commitments in writing at the start of the arrangement. Some remote work options may have flexibility in the time of day worked, while others may require a set schedule to be available.

• Develop a clear revocation process for when a supervisor/employer wants to end a remote work arrangement. Ensure this is communicated to employees ahead of time.

• Allow separate options for remote work specific to medical emergencies, which can articulate length of time, evaluations, and any return to on-site circumstances.

• Consider flexible schedules if it meets the needs of departments and the municipality, but clarify the process in any policy.

• When applicable, post public office hours on municipal websites for departments with frequent telework, in order to provide a reliable and understood service level to the general public.

• Include necessary rules around IT training, equipment, IT use, return of equipment, any cost-sharing arrangements, etc

> Municipal examples
> • [City of Cambridge Telework Policy](#)
> • [Town of Dudley Remote Work Policy](#)
> • [Town of Wellesley Remote Work Policy](#)
> • [City of Worcester Telework Policy](#)

> Resources
> • [Hybrid Work for Commonwealth Employees](#) (Executive Office for Administration and Finance)
> • [Telework Policy for State Executive Branch Agencies](#) (Human Resources Division, August 2021)

## MMA Policy Committee on Personnel and Labor Relations

## Best Practice: Conduct and Civility of Public Officials

Local leaders remain at the forefront of democratic governance, addressing the public's concerns, developing and implementing policies, and setting the tone for civic engagement. Whereas the concerns of constituents are often diverse and divided, maintaining a public forum where people can disagree through civil debate remains at the core of a healthy democratic process. By listening, respecting people's opinions, remaining open to new ideas and points of view, and disagreeing constructively, local leaders can refine ideas and reach common ground to create meaningful policy. This means preserving civility in all discussions and debates, while protecting the rights to free speech. Poor behavior by local officials impedes the democratic process, encourages hard feelings and divisiveness, contributes to voter alienation and aversion to government, and creates a liability for cities and towns. Fostering a climate of respect among public officials and with residents is at the heart of work performed in the public interest.

Elected and appointed officials must understand that, regardless of their intentions and whether they are an appointing authority, their interactions with municipal staff can expose the city or town to liability and lead to serious legal consequences for the city or town. Even good-faith actions by elected or appointed officials could violate collective bargaining agreements or other policies or laws. Respect and professionalism in all public and private dealings with municipal staff and other elected and appointed officials is essential.

The following are recommended items to include in a code of conduct:
• Conduct at public meetings.
• Use of parliamentary procedure.
• Responsibility and behavior toward fellow members of a public body.
• Responsibility and behavior toward municipal administration.
• Responsibility and behavior toward employees and volunteers of the city or town.
• Responsibility and behavior toward members of the public and their rights, including public comment policies adhering with the recent SJC Barron case.

• Communication expectations.
• Conflict of interest and standard of ethics of members of a public body.
• Adherence to the city or town's social media policy.
• Statement of commitment to and understanding of the code of conduct and an acknowledgment of receipt.
• Reporting mechanism (e.g., report to chair of Select Board), including the procedure for filing a complaint, and a process for resolving conflicts, which could be a city or town's harassment policy.
• System of communication among members of the governing body regarding incidents of misbehavior and complaints, and communication to the chief executive officer.
• Enforcement of the code of conduct. This may include a decision by the governing body to publicly reprimand or not to indemnify an individual who acts inappropriately.

Municipal Examples:
• [Town of Carver Select Board](#)
• [Town of Harvard](#)
• [Town of Holden](#)
• [Town of Littleton](#)
• [Town of Wellesley](#)

Resources
• [MIIA Code of Conduct Guidelines](#)
• [Robert's Rules of Order](#)
• [Beyond Civility: From Public Engagement to Problem Solving](#), An Action Guide for City Leaders, National League of Cities Center for Research and Innovation, January 2011
• [The Institute for Civility in Government](#)
• [The Civility Center](#)

Note: This Best Practices recommendation builds on and updates a recommendation from 2020: [Conduct and Civility of Public Officials](#).

2025 • Volume 7 • Number 4

## MMA Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment

### Best Practice Recommendation: Municipal Solid Waste Diversion and Recycling Programs

BEST PRACTICE: Explore opportunities to reduce solid waste tonnage and promote sustainable alternatives to waste disposal.

Municipalities providing municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal services face many challenges. The combination of several factors — limited landfill capacity, limited number of Municipal Waste Combustors (MWCs), reliance on out-of-state MSW transfers, and the lack of climate resilient infrastructure — leaves Massachusetts communities vulnerable to backups, delays and disruption.

Cities and towns have seen the costs for hauling, disposal, labor, and equipment rise sharply over the past several years. Increasingly, municipal officials must work independently and in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to explore alternatives to reduce solid waste tonnage in their communities and lower costs, while ensuring compliance with rules and regulations.

Municipalities have undertaken several new and growing responsibilities to manage solid waste, maintain health and sanitation standards, and financially support investments in waste management. These responsibilities include compliance with MassDEP's waste disposal bans. In November of 2022, MassDEP enacted new waste bans on mattresses and textiles, and placed stricter limits on food waste. By helping to divert these materials from the waste stream — in addition to materials previously covered by waste bans — through reuse, composting or recycling, municipalities can realize positive benefits both for the environment and their bottom line.

The following best practices are recommended:
• Ensure local practices are in compliance with MassDEP's waste bans, including the new bans for mattresses and textiles.

• Consider adding options for residents to divert food waste from the trash, including encouraging backyard composting with subsidized compost bins, accepting food waste at a municipal drop-off site, and gradually implementing a curbside program.

– See more information about the City of New Bedford's [Food Waste Drop-off Program](#) and the Town of Lexington's [composting efforts](#), including a [free curbside composting pilot program](#).

• Pursue opportunities to support food waste diversion in municipal buildings and within local schools.

– See [this report from Franklin](#) for information on local school food waste diversion programs, with more recent results indicating the diversion of food waste has led to a 38% reduction of school waste going to compactors in one fiscal year.

• Frequently communicate rules and expectations for waste and recycling to the public, and keep need-to-know information in an easily accessible format and in the languages spoken by residents.

– Municipal examples include the town of Egremont's [Recycling Rules webpage](#) and [Transfer Station & Recycling Center webpage](#), as well as the city of Newburyport's [2024-2025 Environmental Health, Recycling, and Trash Information Guide](#).

– Use free resources, including RecycleSmart's [Smart Recycling Guide](#) (translated in several languages) and [Recyclopedia widget](#), which can be embedded into municipal websites.

• Engage with local and state partners to prepare for future municipal solid waste contract negotiations:

– Create a cross-functional team within municipal government to better understand the challenges and opportunities that could be addressed through a stronger contract and to enable information sharing within departments, boards and commissions.

– Employ the help of MassDEP's Municipal Assistance Coordinators (MACs) to prepare for upcoming contract opportunities and become better informed on region-specific developments regarding trash and recycling services.

• Evaluate opportunities for progress toward local and state waste reduction and climate goals in each review of MSW contracts, such as:

– Implement trash limits by adjusting or reducing trash and recycling barrel sizes.

– Consider implementing a Pay-As-You-Throw program to draw attention to the amount of waste individual households contribute and to better represent the costs of waste management by volume and weight.

– Consider what outreach and educational efforts will be necessary to strengthen community acceptance and understanding, and whether such a program fits your municipality's needs.

• Don't forget about Chapter 30B: Though contracts for the collection, transportation, receipt, processing or disposal of solid waste, recyclables or compostable materials are exempt from the Uniform Procurement Act, a formal, competitive bidding process may be in the best interest of the municipality and allow for potential cost savings or service improvements.

Resources
• From the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection:
– [Recycling & Waste Reduction Help for Cities & Towns website](#)
– [Municipal Assistance Coordinators](#) (including districts and contact information)
– [Solid Waste Management Contracts & Contracting website](#) and [Best Practices Checklist](#)
– [Waste Disposal Bans webpage](#), [Mattress Recycling website](#) and [Clothing and Textile Recovery website](#), and [Accompanying Communications Toolkit](#)
– [Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)/Save-Money-And-Reduce-Trash (SMART) website](#)
• RecycleSmart's [Smart Recycling Guide](#) and [Recyclopedia widget](#)
• [Tackling Trash: A Comprehensive Overview of Municipal Solid Waste Issues and Recommendations for Massachusetts Communities](#), with additional materials provided through [Attachment A](#) and [Attachment B](#)

2025 • Volume 7 • Number 5

## MMA Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment

## Best Practice Recommendation: Ensuring Compliance with Municipal Aggregation Guidelines, Strengthening Program Operations

BEST PRACTICE: Adopt a municipal electric aggregation program to use bulk purchasing power to negotiate electric supply on behalf of residents and businesses.

As volatility affects energy costs across Massachusetts communities, municipal officials can advocate for methods to ensure that residents have steady, stable, and affordable access to critical electric services. Municipal aggregation programs, also called community choice aggregation, are a tool to provide electric supply through the aggregation of customers' electrical load to procure a competitive supply of energy.

Aggregation enables cities and towns to take proactive steps to:
• Navigate the complicated relationships between electric utility companies, brokers, residents, the municipality, and local businesses
• Provide rate stability through longer term contracts and greater flexibility in the timeline for electric supply procurement
• Purchase energy with a higher renewable content than the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard

Steps for Municipal Aggregation Implementation
1. Engage Consultants and Prepare for Launch:
– Retain licensed consultants familiar with Massachusetts aggregation guidelines.
– Notify the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) when engaging new consultants.

2. Obtain Local Approval:
– Secure majority votes from town meetings or city councils.
– Gain formal approval from city mayors or managers where applicable.

3. Consult with key stakeholders:
– Collaborate with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER).
– Review DOER-recommended best practices and ensure compliance with clean energy goals.

4. Develop a Draft Plan:
– Address universal access, reliability, rate setting, customer class equity, and opt-in/opt-out options.
– Organize draft plans using DPU templates to streamline review processes.

5. Submit for Public Review and Feedback:
– Facilitate at least 30 days of public feedback using diverse communication channels such as local websites, social media, and public meetings.

6. File Plan with the DPU:
– Include all required elements (e.g., petition, plan evidence, local approval documentation).
– Standard 120-day review period.

7. Operationalize the Plan:
– Notify the Electric Distribution Company upon final approval.
– Initiate customer enrollment with transparent opt-out procedures and ongoing updates about renewable energy options.

Additional Best Practices for Successful Aggregation

Community Education: Use multimedia campaigns to inform residents about the benefits and options under municipal aggregation programs.

Energy Management Sustainability Fund: Establish a fund to finance sustainability initiatives like electric vehicle infrastructure and energy efficiency projects, or to support an energy management position.

Performance Monitoring: Regularly report program outcomes, including renewable energy content, rates, customer participation metrics, and cost savings compared to Basic Service. Inform both residents and elected officials to increase awareness.

Opt-Out Awareness: Inform residents of their ability to opt out of the municipal aggregation program at any time.

Indicative Pricing: Engage consultants to periodically obtain energy pricing. Update your community's internal team to consider potential increases to renewable energy content. The volatility of the energy market requires communities to continually monitor energy prices (every three months or when market conditions change significantly) to determine the potential to blend or extend their current contracts. This is critical when the current term of the contract is set to expire for community evaluation.

Resources
• Department of Public Utilities [Municipal Aggregation Guidelines](), [website](), and [list of Approved Municipal Aggregation Programs]()
• Department of Energy Resources [Recommended Best Practices for Advancing Clean Energy in Municipal Aggregation Plans]()
• Massachusetts Sierra Club's [Community Choice Energy Program]()
• [Energy Switch Massachusetts website]()
• The city of Beverly's [Program Overview]() and the [Beverly Community Electric Launch Mailing]() (including a cover letter from the mayor and program notification)
• [Municipal Aggregation Implementation Overview, created by the MMA Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment]()