



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 Recommendation: Human Resources Professionals

BEST PRACTICE: Hire a human resources professional in order to increase compliance, defray costs and reduce risk. Human resources responsibilities are often split among a variety of positions leading to fractured and inconsistent processes, lost time and legal issues. Recruitment, training, orientation, performance reviews, benefits administration, policy creation and enforcement, labor relations, conflict resolution, employee discipline, and retaining a competent and motivated workforce can all be delegated to a human resources professional familiar with best practices and personnel laws.

Municipal leaders are advised to delegate the management of human resources issues to a human resources professional so they may focus on their own leadership while maintaining a dedicated focus in the municipality on human resources administration. Municipal school districts should also consider hiring a dedicated human resources professional.

The following are recommended best practices in hiring a human resources professional:

- A human resources professional should be a member of a municipality's central administration team and work closely with department heads.
- A human resources professional should direct a comprehensive human resources program, including recruiting, onboarding, developing and retaining a talented and diverse workforce, managing a compensation and benefits system, collective bargaining, employee relations, maintaining personnel records, and ensuring compliance with local, state and federal personnel laws.
- A human resources professional should maintain continuous relationships with municipal employees in order to support municipal officials in their efforts to provide cost-effective, high-quality services to their communities and to attain adequate oversight.
- A human resources professional should remain in close contact with legal counsel to minimize liability in all human resources areas. A human resources professional can manage workplace complaints and conduct prompt

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investigations or advise those conducting investigations to yield timely outcomes and decisions.

- Municipalities should try to align with the industry-recommended best practice of maintaining one human resources professional for every 100 employees. Municipalities with smaller departments may consider sharing a human resources professional with another municipality.
- Municipalities should consider creating a personnel bylaw or charter provision that will allow human resources policies to be created and implemented. This bylaw or charter provision would ideally include the addition of a human resources professional.

Resources:

- Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association: www.mma.org/members/mmpa
- MMA website Labor and Personnel Resources: www.mma.org/resources/labor-and-personnel