



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: Professional Development for Municipal Officials**

**BEST PRACTICE:** Municipal officials, including members of elected and appointed boards, benefit from professional development that is specific to their job and increases their exposure to knowledge of local government and beyond. Equally important is the development of cross-functional skills in order to develop a more well-rounded view of their mission as leaders, managers and collaborators in local government. By developing both skill sets, municipal officials may grow personally and professionally to improve services and leadership, which improves the overall development and resiliency of the local government entity, enhances professional relationships, supports the strategic direction of the municipality, contributes to succession planning, and serves the public good. Municipalities should provide, prioritize and actively support professional development for municipal officials.

The MMA recommends that municipalities adhere to the following best practices:

- Municipal officials should create a strategic plan for the professional development of both functional and cross-functional skills. Development of a plan should begin with an understanding of the local government's needs and the overall work environment, then training should be prioritized. The plan may include mentoring, observation, assessment and high-quality training, including conferences, workshops, seminars, trainings offered by law firms and professional organizations, networking opportunities, professional reading, distance learning, and leadership development programs.
- Professional development for municipal leaders should be impactful, sustained, in-practice, and evaluative.
- Municipal officials should also consider training prior to embarking on a new project or endeavor. This helps to establish a vision before commencing the project and leads to better, more sustainable, outcomes.
- Municipalities should include a line item for professional development in the budget and ensure that individual departments devise professional development budgets for department heads. Professional development can also be a part of compensation packages to attract and to maintain highly qualified personnel.
- Commit to ongoing learning and professional development.

(continued, next page)

**Resources:**

- MMA workshops and meetings: [www.mma.org/event](http://www.mma.org/event)
- International City/County Management Association conferences, professional programs and online support: <http://icma.org/events>