MTAS History

10-1977

Problem Solving for Tennessee Municipal Officials: An Expert Team Approach

MTAS

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Recommended Citation
http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_mtashist/36

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Problem Solving for Tennessee Municipal Officials

An Expert Team Approach
What MTAS Is

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) has been part of the "team" in many Tennessee cities since 1950. Created by the 1949 General Assembly at the request of cities through their Tennessee Municipal League, MTAS quickly established itself as "the place to go" for practical, individualized, professional solutions to technical problems in municipal government and administration.

The MTAS mission is to aid city officials in establishing goals, objectives and policies; weighing alternate courses of action; allocating resources effectively to meet the needs of all citizens; evaluating programs for achieving objectives; improving governmental systems and operations such as budgeting and using federal revenue sharing funds; and devising methods for obtaining effective public participation in policy decisions.

MTAS maintains a staff of municipal management consultants who have worked directly in municipal government, and they are backed up by specialist consultants—together they constitute your "management team." Individual success in their career fields, combined with the extensive accumulated experience of the organization, provides a rich store of knowledge and practical know-how over a wide range of municipal affairs.

MTAS' position as an agency of The University of Tennessee's Institute for Public Service, operating in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League, gives it an advantage enjoyed by few, if any, similar technical assistance organizations. Staff members may draw on the expertise of a large, well-respected university faculty on campuses throughout the state. The close relationship between TML and MTAS assures the agency of a continuing awareness of and dedication to the vital concerns and needs of municipal governments.
General Municipal Management

PURPOSE: To assist municipal officials in finding practical solutions to both day-to-day and long-range problems by applying modern techniques of municipal management, based on a study of each particular situation, and to help strengthen the general management capabilities of municipal officials as they undertake to improve community facilities and deliver public services to all citizens.

STAFF: Eight municipal (district) consultants, backed up by specialist consultants in finance and accounting, personnel administration, engineering and public works, municipal law, public relations, and intergovernmental affairs. One consultant is assigned to each state development district, except that one serves both the Memphis-Delta and Southwest districts.

TYPICAL SERVICES

☐ Municipal Organization
  Feasibility of incorporations and annexations □ procedures for incorporation or annexation □ drafting of charters and amendments □ internal organization and management studies □ preparation of administrative rules and regulations □ intergovernmental relationships □ use of advisory and administrative boards and commissions □ establishing effective lines of communication with citizens.

☐ Financial Planning and Controls
  Analyzing, recommending and evaluating fiscal policies, internal control procedures, accounting systems □ budget preparation and administration □ use of the budget as a management tool □ estimating revenues and expenditures □ general and special fund accounting, records and reports □ tax records □ utility accounting and records □ debt administration □ internal control procedures □ design, preparation and presentation of financial reports for both city officials and the general public □ federal and state financial assistance.

☐ Insurance
  Evaluation of existing coverages □ ways to effect economies □ factors affecting coverage □ assessment of liabilities.
☐ **Personnel Administration**
   Establishing merit systems or civil service
   □ employee recruitment, selection and orientation
   □ fringe benefits
   □ wage and salary surveys
   □ job evaluation and position descriptions
   □ personnel record forms
   □ records management system
   □ personnel rules, policies and practices
   □ staff promotion plans
   □ management by objectives
   □ morale improvement
   □ employer-employee relations
   □ internal communications programs
   □ retirement plan analysis
   □ employee attitude surveys.

☐ **Purchasing**
   Centralized purchasing
   □ use of specifications
   □ bidding procedures
   □ inventory controls.

☐ **Municipal Utilities**
   Comparative rate and operating cost data
   □ joint building for electric system and municipal government
   □ tax equivalent payments
   □ relations with general government.

☐ **Citizen Information and Involvement**
   Devising methods for obtaining effective citizen participation in policy decisions
   (including not only informing citizens but providing opportunities for them to help initiate plans and react to proposals)
   □ establishing long-range public information programs
   □ special-purpose information material
   □ citizen newsletters
   □ citizens' handbooks on city services
   □ central complaint and information centers
   □ community attitude surveys
   □ methods for involving residents in determining budget priorities and in other problem-solving activities.

☐ **Community Development**
   Role of municipal government
   □ development strategies
   □ how to involve community's leadership personnel
   □ explanation of *Tennessee Community Progress Guides*
   □ assistance in implementing all or any part of action programs outlined in guides.

☐ **Intergovernmental Affairs**
   Assist in developing TML's state and federal policy positions
   □ interpretation of state and federal legislation
   □ post-session summary of legislative acts affecting municipalities
   □ liaison with state and federal agencies
   □ information on state and federal programs.
PURPOSE: To assist city officials in developing programs and techniques to increase police efficiency and effectiveness.

STAFF: Two specialist consultants who are experienced law enforcement officers, plus assistance from other MTAS staff members on such matters as legal interpretations, personnel policies, management, and public relations.

TYPICAL SERVICES

- **Organization and Management**
  Analysis of needs (surveys, evaluations) □ manpower utilization □ administrative, supervisory and operational procedures □ budgeting requirements □ functions of special units.

- **Personnel**
  Standard for recruitment and selection □ compensation and fringe benefits □ job classification □ use of auxiliary or civilian employees.

- **Records**
  Comprehensive review of system with recommendations for improvement □ centralization and/or controls □ data utilization □ available equipment and record forms.

- **Communications**
  Radio, teletype and telephone systems □ dispatching procedures.

- **Equipment**
  Types and maintenance of vehicles □ evaluation of existing equipment □ personal and specialized equipment □ available law enforcement equipment.

- **Departmental Buildings**
  Physical facilities □ building security □ provisions for health, care and handling of prisoners.

- **Police-Community Relations**
  Organization and administration of programs □ evaluation of existing or proposed programs □ provisions for citizen complaints □ news media relations.
Municipal Law

PURPOSE: To provide consulting service on legal matters to municipal officials, especially city attorneys, and assist them in the preparation of ordinances, codes and charters. (MTAS consultants do not represent cities in litigation or otherwise act as practicing attorneys.)

STAFF: Three qualified attorneys with extensive experience in local government matters.

TYPICAL SERVICES

☐ Legal Opinions
Authority and procedure to perform municipal functions □ liabilities of the municipality in specific actions □ powers and limitations of municipal governments.

☐ Charters
Assist in preparation of new or revised charter □ amendments to charter □ copies of existing charter.

☐ Ordinances
Sample ordinances from other cities (the MTAS library includes a large collection of such ordinances on almost any aspect of municipal government) □ preparation of draft ordinances □ review of draft ordinances.

☐ Code of Ordinances
(There is no charge for the consultant's services; a city pays only for reproduction and delivery costs.)
Preparation of code of ordinances from existing ordinances, eliminating obsolete, conflicting and ambiguous provisions (including integration of private acts into single, up-to-date charter) □ updating codes prepared by MTAS in the past.
Special Studies

PURPOSE: To assist city officials in making decisions by providing in-depth, impartial information and recommendations.

STAFF: All MTAS consultants, working together or separately as the specific problem may require. Other UT faculty resources may be utilized on major projects.

TYPICAL STUDIES

☐ Utility Acquisition Feasibility
Development of new systems □ takeover of existing systems now being operated by other agencies such as utility districts.

☐ Consolidation of City and County Services
Cooperative administration of specific services □ metro-type form of government for city and county.

☐ Annexation of Fringe Areas
Analysis of advantages and disadvantages for both the city and residents of the area under consideration □ plan of service for annexed area.

☐ Governmental Reorganization
Analysis of existing structure □ recommendations for necessary changes □ assistance in implementing changes.

☐ Information Storage and Retrieval Systems
Analysis of needs □ design of systems □ assistance in implementation.

☐ Management Systems
Organization and staffing □ use of computers □ integration into existing governmental structure □ financing.
Other Services

PURPOSE: To provide information, in printed form, to city officials on specific subjects; to serve as a clearing house for model materials and data in all phases of city administration and operation; to help promote professionalism of city personnel; and to make a full range of technical services easily accessible to city officials.

STAFF: All MTAS consultants and a qualified librarian, assisted as appropriate by faculty of The University of Tennessee and staff of the Tennessee Municipal League.

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES

- **Special Publications**
  

- **Professional Development**
  
  Providing staff and secretarial support for TML affiliate organizations such as the Tennessee Municipal Finance Officers Association, Tennessee City Management Association, Tennessee Chapter of the American Public Works Association, and Tennessee Municipal Attorneys Association in cooperation with the Center for Government Training in assessing training needs and promoting use of training programs.

- **Information Collection and Dissemination**
  
  MTAS library operation, which includes continuing additions of materials on municipal affairs in-person exchanges of information, between individual consultants and city officials, about approaches other cities or units of government have found successful in specific areas in participation in annual TML conferences by entire MTAS staff and offering consultative services during such conferences.
We Are Always at Your Service

For assistance or further information, contact one of the MTAS offices listed below:

KNOXVILLE: (Headquarters)
205 White Avenue Building
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee 37916
Phone 615/974-5301

NASHVILLE:
160 Capitol Hill Building
Seventh and Union
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Phone 615/256-8141

JACKSON:
212 N. Highland, Suite 2119
P. O. Box 2784
Jackson, Tennessee 38301
Phone 901/423-3710

COOKEVILLE:
124 South Madison
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501
Phone 615/528-5518

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We would like to have technical assistance or information on the following:

City of ____________________________ By _______________________

Date ____________________________ Title _______________________

__________________________
BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
First Class Permit No. 611, Knoxville, Tennessee

Municipal Technical Advisory Service
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee 37916