



# DLS

DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES  
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

*Supporting a Commonwealth of Communities*

# Meet DLS

March 11, 2024

# DLS Overview

Sean Cronin

Senior Deputy for Local Services

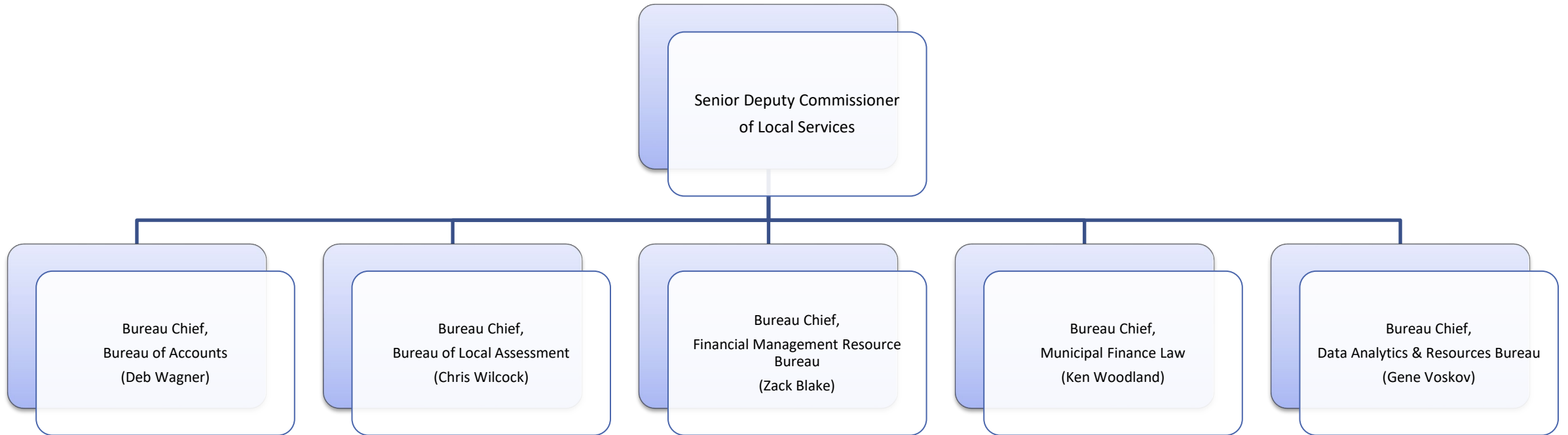
[croninse@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:croninse@dor.state.ma.us)

# Mission

- ❑ **The Division of Local Services (DLS) promotes sound municipal finance management practices and supports local officials by providing guidance, training and oversight**
  
- ❑ **DLS is responsible for:**
  - The accuracy and quality of local accounting and treasury management
  - Ensuring the fairness and equity of local property assessment and taxation
  - Distributing local aid
  - Maintaining a comprehensive databank on local finances
  - Interpreting state laws that govern local finances
  - Providing Technical Assistance & Training

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4x7qq\\_dbklQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4x7qq_dbklQ)

# Organization





# Goal

- ❑ Good balance between regulatory functions and technical assistance/guidance
- ❑ Ultimate goal is to assist municipalities with financial management



***Supporting a Commonwealth of Communities***

# Bureau of Accounts (BOA)

Deb Wagner, Director of Accounts

[wagnerd@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:wagnerd@dor.state.ma.us)

# Bureau of Accounts

The Bureau of Accounts has been assisting, teaching, regulating and overseeing the financial management of Massachusetts' local governmental entities for over 100 years. Every municipality has a field representative assigned to assist and oversee them.

The Bureau offers advice and instruction to local officials in:

- ☐ Sound accounting practices
- ☐ State Laws, regulations and requirements
- ☐ Procedures for borrowing, especially through our State House Note Program

**BOA Assignments and contact information:**

[Bureau of Accounts Page](#)

[BOA Municipal Field Representatives](#)

[BOA Field Representatives for Districts](#)

[Bureau of Accounts Directory](#)



# Tax Rate

## The Tax Rate Recapitulation (Tax Recap)

- ❑ The Tax Rate Recapitulation is a summary of a municipality's spending plan and proposed funding sources.
- ❑ The Recap, itself, is a four-page form that is accompanied by many support forms depending on financial make-up of the municipality.
- ❑ The Bureau reviews the document, its compliance with Prop 2½ limits, and then certifies resulting tax rates for residential, open space, commercial, industrial and personal property.

### Related Links:

- [A Detailed Look at Setting the Tax Rate: Interactive video](#)
- [Completing the Tax Rate Recap Forms Webinar](#) (Video)

Jurisdiction: Shrewsbury - 271 Fiscal Year: 2021 Go

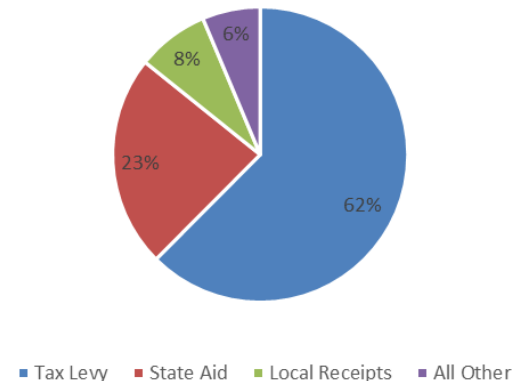
PAGE 1 PAGE 2 PAGE 3 PAGE 4

**I. TAX RATE SUMMARY**

Ia. Total amount to be raised (from Iie)	146,086,847.37
Ib. Total estimated receipts and other revenue sources (from IIIe)	60,369,137.00
Ic. Tax Levy (Ia minus Ib)	85,717,710.37
Id. Distribution of Tax Rates and levies	

CLASS	(b) Levy percentage (from LA5)	(c) Ic above times each percent in col (b)	(d) Valuation by class (from LA-5)	(e) Tax Rates (c) / (d) x 1000	(f) Levy by class (d) x (e) / 1000
Residential	87.3654	74,887,620.54	5,677,608,595.00	13.19	74,887,657.37
Net of Exempt Open Space	0.0000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Commercial	8.3600	7,166,000.59	543,293,005.00	13.19	7,166,034.74
Net of Exempt Industrial	2.7135	2,325,950.07	176,339,300.00	13.19	2,325,915.37
SUBTOTAL	98.4389		6,397,240,900.00		84,379,607.48
Personal	1.5611	1,338,139.18	101,448,286.00	13.19	1,338,102.89
TOTAL	100.0000		6,498,689,186.00		85,717,710.37

FY2024 Revenue Sources



# Balance Sheet / Free Cash

## The Balance Sheet

- A balance sheet identifies a municipality's assets, liabilities and fund equity balances and illustrates financial position as of June 30.
- The Bureau reviews the document and certifies general fund surplus ("free cash") or enterprise fund surplus ("retained earnings") from it.
- Once "Free Cash" is certified it becomes an available fund that can be appropriated by the legislative body for any legal purpose

### Related Links:

- [Introduction to Free Cash](#) (Video)
- [Webinar: Free Cash Upload & Certification Process](#) (Video)

Jurisdiction

Shrewsbury - 271

Fiscal Year

2021

Go

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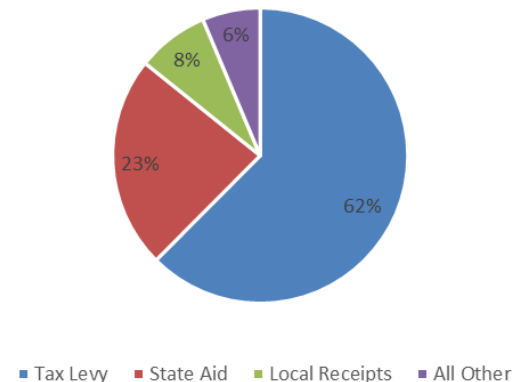
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FY2024 Revenue Sources



# Schedule A

## The Schedule A or “the annual report”

- Schedule A is a statement of revenues, expenditures, other financing sources and uses, and changes in fund balance for all funds as of June 30. It is, basically, an annual profit and loss statement for a City or Town.
- The Bureau approves the report, the data from which is added to the DLS Databank, reported to the U.S. Census Bureau, and used by many State agencies and the State Legislature.
- Schedule A is required to be submitted by November 30th every year. Municipalities that have not submitted by February 15th will have their local aid withheld by the State beginning with the February payment and continue until the Schedule A is received

Jurisdiction		Shrewsbury - 271		Fiscal Year		2020	Go
	Item Description	General	Special Revenue	Capital Projects	Enterprise	Trust	Total
1	Total Revenue	119,013,648	20,181,267	8,970,680	67,275,628	1,709,360	217,150,583
2	Total Expenditures	122,036,356	21,438,663	34,320,386	54,165,083	27,896	231,988,384
3	<b>TOTAL EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES (LINE 1 - LINE 2)</b>	-3,022,708	-1,257,396	-25,349,706	13,110,545	1,681,464	-14,837,801
4	Transfers From Other Funds	4,074,615	416,873	825,000	2,970,116	259,576	8,546,180
5	Other Financing Sources			53,660,206			53,660,206
6	Transfers To Other Funds	3,296,890	1,269,255	700,000	3,231,846	48,189	8,546,180
7	Other Financing Uses						
8	<b>TOTAL OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES) SUM OF LINES 4 AND 5 MINUS LINES 6 AND 7</b>	777,725	-852,382	53,785,206	-261,730	211,387	53,660,206
9	<b>TOTAL EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES AND OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES) (SUM OF LINES 3 AND 8)</b>	-2,244,983	-2,109,778	28,435,500	12,848,815	1,892,851	38,822,405
10	Fund Equity (Retained Earnings) Beginning of Year	17,322,873	37,132,374	5,901,273	38,732,278	9,513,598	108,602,396
11	Other Adjustments						
12	<b>TOTAL FUND EQUITY (RETAINED EARNINGS) END OF YEAR (SUM OF LINES 9 THROUGH 11)</b>	15,077,890	35,022,596	34,336,773	51,581,093	11,406,449	147,424,801



# Audit

## The Independent Audit or “audit report”

- These statements are the product of an independent audit firm hired by the municipality.
- The audit report may include findings and opinions, financial statements, schedules and statistical tables.
- The Bureau reviews the report for consistency with unaudited reports received by the Bureau and to monitor financial management from an independent perspective.



[Related Links:](#)

[Overview of Municipal Audits Webinar](#) (Video)

# Debt

## Municipal Debt

- State House Notes Program - First established in 1911, this Program is a convenient, no-cost Note certification procedure for the issuance of short-term debt and long-term Serial and Refunding notes by a governmental entity and provides an alternative to the certification of Notes procedure by commercial banks.
- The Qualified Bond Program - This Program allows cities, towns and regional school districts to issue general obligation bonds with the state paying the debt service directly from the municipality's or regional school district's local aid. They benefit from the strength of the state's credit rating which results in lower interest rates on debt issuances than might otherwise not.



### Related Links:

Video series: A Deeper Dive Into Municipal Debt

[View the full video](#) (26 minutes)



# Bureau of Local Assessment (BLA)

Chris Wilcock, Bureau Chief

[wilcockc@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:wilcockc@dor.state.ma.us)

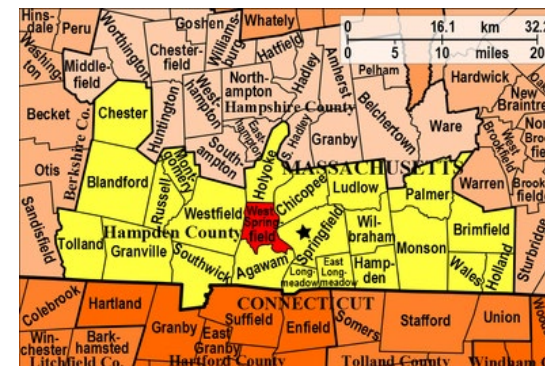
# Bureau of Local Assessment

## The Bureau of Local Assessment is responsible for:

- ✓ Regulation
- ✓ Oversight
- ✓ Assessor training
- ✓ Technical assistance in the areas of real and personal property valuation

## Guidance is provided for:

- ✓ Classification of property
- ✓ Fair cash valuations
- ✓ Qualifying assessing personnel to classify property
- ✓ Tax mapping
- ✓ Capturing new growth
- ✓ Personal property valuations





# Subject to Taxation

**A**ll property, real and personal, situated within the commonwealth, and all personal property of the inhabitants of the commonwealth wherever situated, unless expressly exempt, shall be subject to taxation...

**Massachusetts General Laws**

**Chapter 59 Section 2**

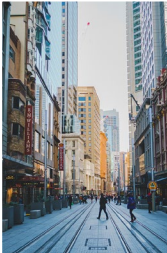
# Classification of Property



Class 1 - Residential



Class 2 - Open Space



Class 3 - Commercial



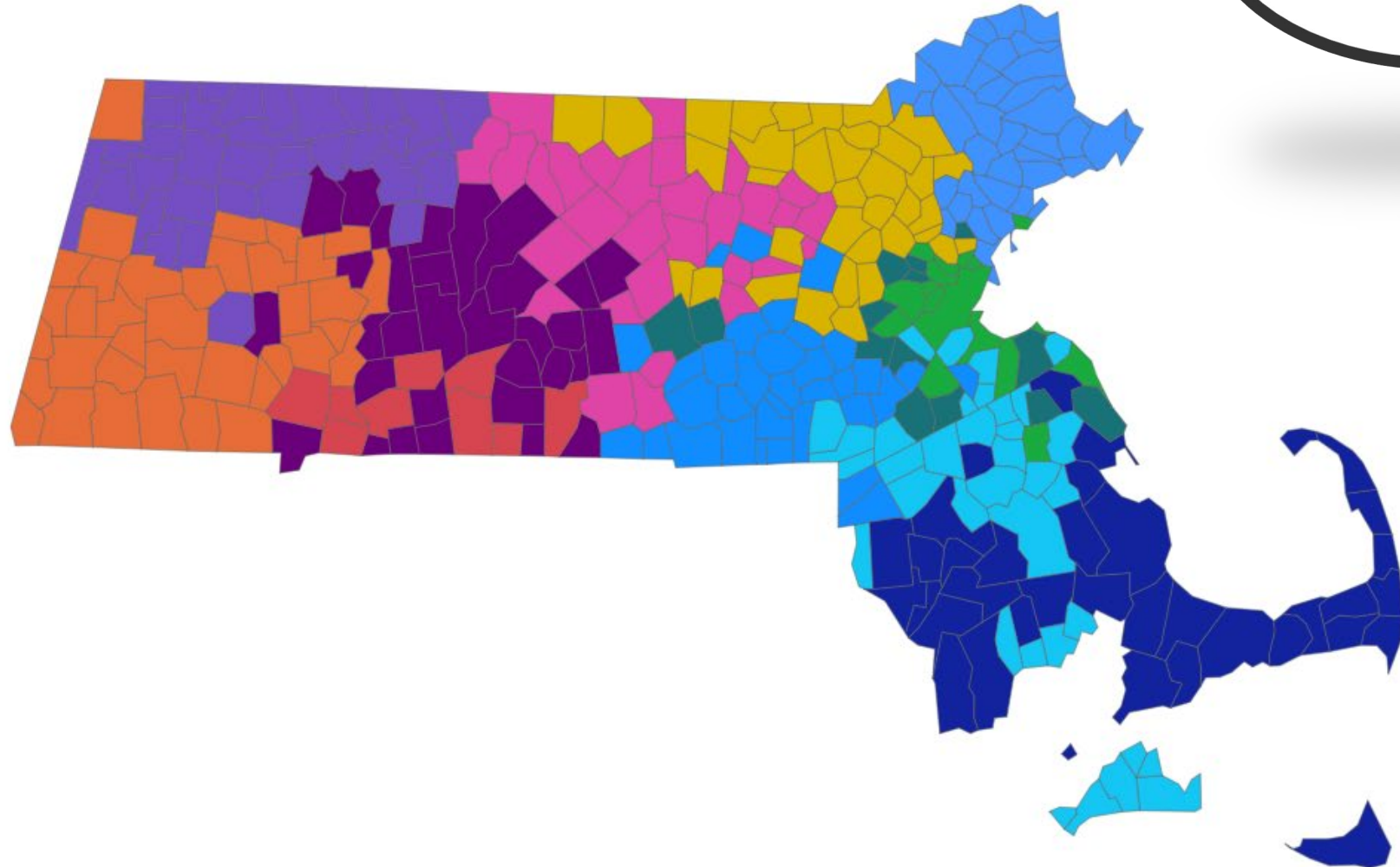
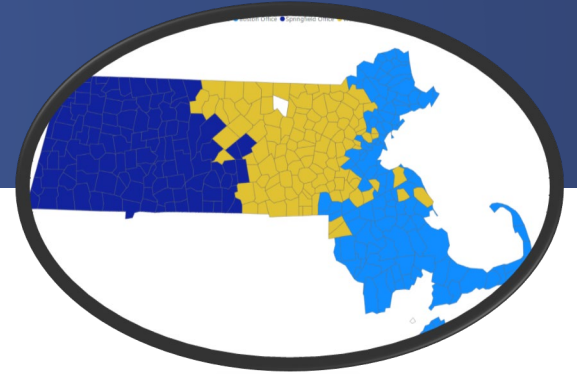
Class 4 - Industrial



Class 5 - Personal Property



# Field Staff

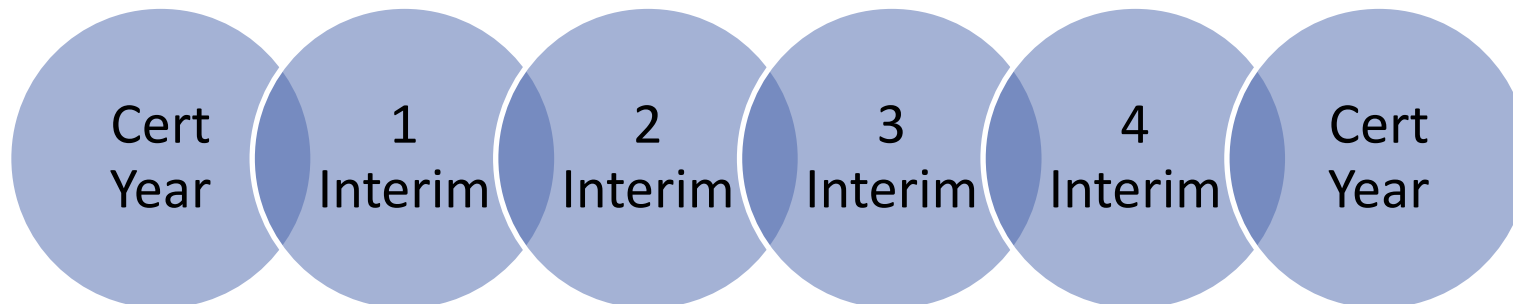
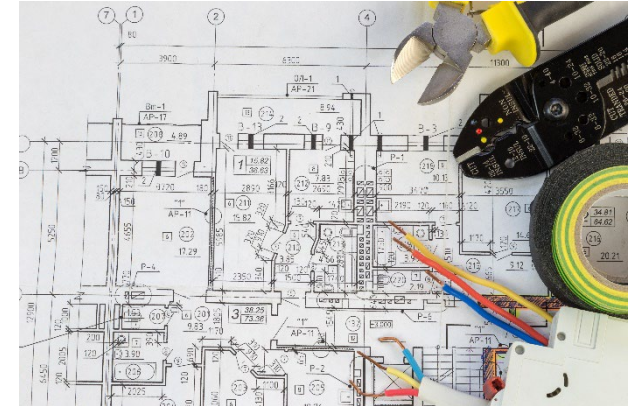


## BLA Advisor

- Gerard Creen
- Jennifer Williams
- Joseph Barbieri
- Lauren M Aldrich
- Mary Oliver
- Paula King
- Rebecca Boucher
- Sandra Bruso
- Scott Santangelo
- Stephen Sullivan
- Steven T McCarthy
- Thomas Dawley

# Bureau of Local Assessment

An assessment is the value placed upon all real and personal property for the purpose of local property taxation. An analysis of market conditions along with the assessment level and uniformity must be performed annually as of January 1 whether for the five-year certification or for an interim year adjustment.



# Assessment Year Types

## Interim Year

Analyze market conditions   Insure assessment uniformity   Review assessment level



## Certification Year

### Interim Review Steps

Analyze market conditions

Insure assessment uniformity

Review assessment level

### Certification Items

Review data quality

Review all cost and depreciation tables

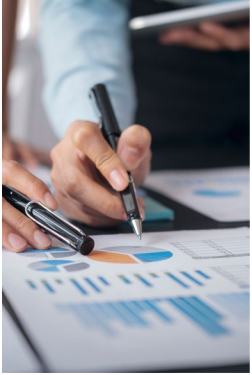
Review Income Data

Review Personal Property Tables

Land Schedules and More....



# BLA Programs



Equalized Valuations (EQV)



Farmland Valuations



State Owned Land Valuations



Centrally Valued Utilities





Bureau of Local Assessment

# Course 101

## Directory

### Introduction to Assessment Administration

DOR's Course 101, *Introduction to Assessment Administration: Law, Procedures and Valuation*, is required of all newly elected or appointed assessors.

Click the links below to access the course modules and learning assessments. You do not need to complete the entire course at once and you can view the material in any order. Gateway will automatically update your Course 101 Status as you progress through the course and send you a confirmation email when you have completed the entire course. The learning assessment link is only available for those learning modules that you have completed.

Module	Module Name	Module Content		Learning Assessment	
		Launch Link	Completed	Launch Link	Completed
0	101 Introduction	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	10/26/2022	--	10/26/2022
1	Assessment Administration	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	10/26/2022	<a href="#">Take Assessment</a>	--
2	Mass Appraisal	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	10/26/2022	<a href="#">Take Assessment</a>	--
3	Proposition 2 1/2	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--
4	Property Tax Classification	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--
5	Setting The Tax Rate	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--
6	Property Tax Abatements	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--
7	Property Tax Exemptions	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--
8	Personal Property	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--
9	Motor Vehicle Excise	<a href="#">Take Module</a>	--	--	--

# Municipal Finance Law Bureau (MFLB)

Ken Woodland, Bureau Chief

[woodlandk@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:woodlandk@dor.state.ma.us)

# Mission

The Municipal Finance Law Bureau provides legal and policy advice to DLS/DOR managers and staff, and other DOR Divisions, on the municipal tax and finance laws within the regulatory purview of DLS.

Its attorneys:

- operate an “Attorney of the Day” service for local officials
  - Email: [dlslaw@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:dlslaw@dor.state.ma.us)
- operate an “[Ask the Chief](#)” Webinar service for local officials (live every Wednesday from 10 am – 12 pm)
- draft advisories, opinions, guidelines and other public written statements that interpret municipal tax and finance laws
  - IGRs, LFOs, Bulletins, Taxpayer Brochures, Course 101, FAQ’s, etc.
- review legislation
  - c. 102 of the Acts of 2021 §§ 20-29 for example
- participate in training programs for local officials
  - What’s New in Municipal Law, MCTA, MMAAA, MAAO, MMLA, etc.

# Statutory Duties (among others)

1. Local tax bill form and content (annually) and other local tax forms as necessary (G.L. c. 58, § 31; G.L. c. 59, §§ 5, 29, 45, 54 & 69; G.L. c. 60, §§ 3A & 105; G.L. c. 61, §§ 2 & 3; G.L. c. 61A, §6 & G.L. c. 61B, § 3)
2. Abatement Authorizations (G.L. c. 58, §§ 8, 8C)
3. Property Tax Exemption Social Security Deduction and COLA Determinations (G.L. c. 59, § 5)
4. Owner Unknown/Cluster Development/Present Interest Assessment Authorizations (G.L. c. 59, § 11)
5. Land of Low Value Foreclosure Affidavits (G.L. c. 60, § 79)
6. Minimum Bond Amounts for Clerks, Collectors & Treasurers (G.L. c. 41, §§ 13, 13A, 14, 18, 19, 20, 35, 37, 39A & 40 & G.L. c. 60, §§ 13, 14 & 92)

# Financial Management Resource Bureau (FMRB)

Zack Blake, Bureau Chief

[blakez@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:blakez@dor.state.ma.us)

# Who We Are

**FMRB advises cities and towns on opportunities to improve their financial management operations:**

- Our project management team brings real-world experience and practical advice to every assignment
- We collaborate with other DLS bureaus and state agencies (like MassIT) to provide comprehensive guidance and tools
- Whether your community is facing a particular issue, would like to implement a best practice, or could benefit from a general assessment of its financial condition, we can assist



# Mission



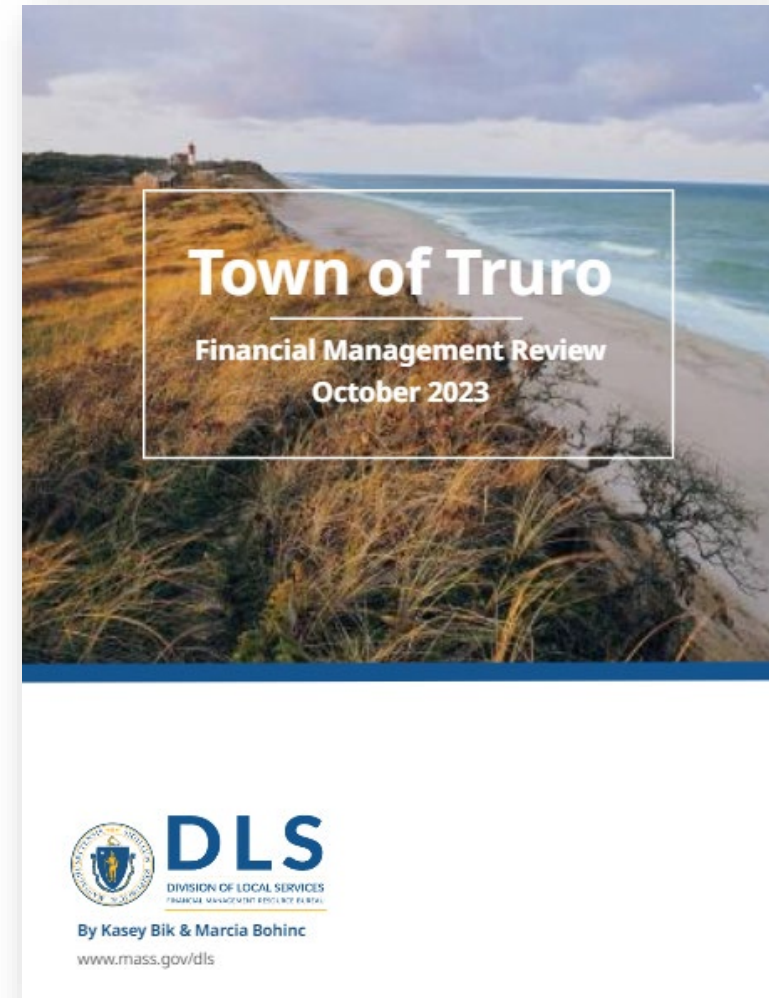
**We strive to provide cities and towns with the support and resources they need to strengthen core financial management competencies and operate more efficiently and effectively.**

- Conduct in-depth Financial Management Reviews and study individual finance office practices and procedures
- Produce tailored financial planning guidance, including financial policies, forecasts, capital planning analyses, budget documents and financial trend monitoring indicators
- Develop and circulate financial management best practices and tools
- Provide hands-on financial management training and assistance



# Financial Management Reviews

- Town government structure in the context of the duties and responsibilities of financial officers
- The town's capital planning, forecasting and budget processes
- The degree of coordination and communication that exists between and among boards, officials and staff involved in financial management operations
- The general efficiency of financial operations as measured by the town's success in maximizing resources and minimizing costs





# Financial Planning Guidance

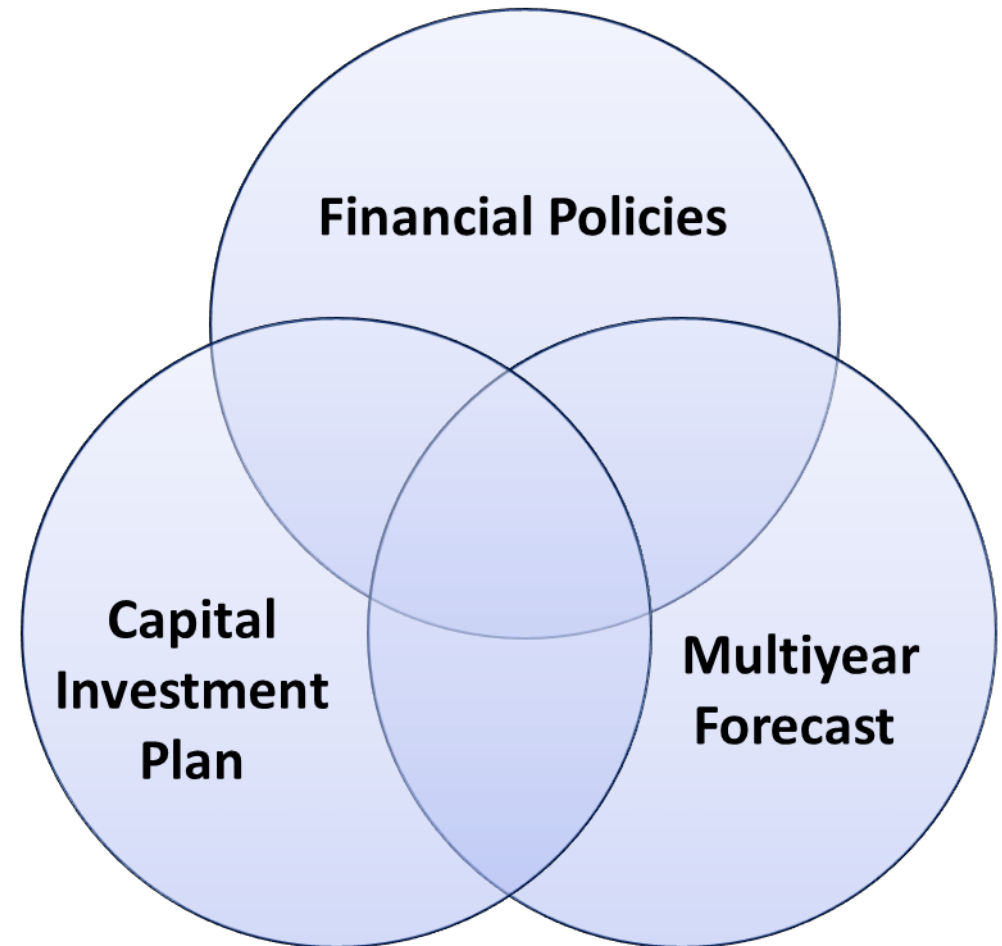
**Financial Forecasts:** develop assumptions, project revenues and expenditures, offer policy recommendations

**Capital Planning Analyses:** project financial capacity, offer policy and process recommendations

**Financial Policies:** define purpose, applicability, policy, procedures and references on reserves, debt, investments, indirect costs, reconciliations, etc.

**Budget Documents:** outline framework as a policy document, financial plan, operational overview and communication device based on GFOA essential criteria

**Financial Trend Indicators:** offer a snapshot of the community's fiscal health by illustrating trends in key revenue, expenditure and demographic categories



# Financial Management Training

- Roles and responsibilities of municipal finance officials (i.e., accountant, treasurer, collector and assessor)
- Financial management processes and procedures (i.e., reconciliations, cash book, debt schedules, tax title/receivables, chart of accounts, etc.)
- Other municipal 101 like Proposition 2½, best practices



# Our Work Across the Commonwealth

**FMRB has conducted reviews in 227 communities over the last 10 years**

All our reports are available on our website at:

[mass.gov/financial-management-resource-bureau](https://mass.gov/financial-management-resource-bureau)

## Financial Management Resource Bureau Projects

FILTER BY TOPIC

- ☒ - Any -
- ☐ Capital Planning
- ☐ Financial Policies
- ☐ Financial Management Reviews
- ☐ Forecasting
- ☐ Government Operations
- ☐ Peer Comparison
- ☐ Shared Services
- ☐ Other Reports

FILTER BY KEYWORD











Sort by

Alpha by title - ascending ▼

APPLY

Clear All

DISPLAYING 1 - 10 OF 349

-  [Lanesborough Financial Management Review March 2023](#) (PDF 705.33 KB)
-  [Abington Financial Management Review January 2002](#) (PDF 276.42 KB)
-  [Acushnet Department of Public Works January 2014](#) (PDF 197.98 KB)
-  [Adams Fiscal Evaluation and Management Review June 2017](#) (PDF 560.15 KB)
-  [Amesbury Financial Management Review June 2001](#) (PDF 312.63 KB)
-  [Andover Town and School Finance Study May 2010](#) (PDF 356.18 KB)
-  [Aquinnah Financial Management Review March 2006](#) (PDF 141.04 KB)
-  [Arlington Town and School Finance Study January 2012](#) (PDF 567.77 KB)
-  [Ashburnham Financial Management Review February 2009](#) (PDF 162.2 KB)
-  [Ashby and Townsend, March 2010 Police and Communications Regionalization Analysis](#) (PDF 560.02 KB)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Next >

# Data Analytics & Resources Bureau (DARB)

Gene Voskov, Bureau Chief

[voskovg@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:voskovg@dor.state.ma.us)

# What We Do





# DLS Gateway & Support

<https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/gateway/Login>

Division of Local Services Gateway



**LOG IN**

Enter your User Name and Password.

User Name

Password

Password is case-sensitive

[Forgot password?](#)

[Forgot user name?](#)

System times out after 30 minutes without use. Login again to continue.

Want to Become an Authorized User?

DLS Gateway is restricted to elected and appointed municipal officials. To learn more about how to become an authorized user, please [click here](#)



**Public Reports and Database**

- ▶ Municipalities with Approved Tax Rate
- ▶ Municipal Fiscal Year Recaps
- ▶ Municipal Proforma Recap
- ▶ Municipal Levy Limit
- ▶ Districts with Approved Tax Rate
- ▶ District Fiscal Year Recaps
- ▶ District Pro Forma Recap
- ▶ Local Officials Directory
- ▶ LA3 - Parcel Search
- ▶ LA-19 Equalized Valuation Report
- ▶ Corporation Book On-line Search
- ▶ Search DLSLAW Library
- ▶ Search FMRB Projects

**Free Cash Calculations Beginning in FY14**

- ▶ City & Town Free Cash
- ▶ District Free Cash
- ▶ Regional School District Excess & Deficiency

**Division of Local Services**

- ▶ DLS Web Site
- ▶ Contact Gateway/IT Support
- ▶ DLS Databank Analytics & Reports
- ▶ Bureau of Local Assessment
- ▶ Bureau of Accounts

[Certification](#) [Taxrate](#) [Balance Sheet](#) [Schedule A](#) [District Taxrate](#) [District Balance Sheet](#) [LA-3](#) [Misc Forms](#)

**Support: [DLSGateway@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:DLSGateway@dor.state.ma.us)**

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dls-gateway-user-guides-and-templates>

# Mass.gov/DLS

← → ↺ 🏠 📄 mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services ☆ 📁 📄

An official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [Here's how you know](#) ▼

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Mass.gov Search Mass.gov

## Division of Local Services

(DLS)

Most requested Featured Resources Videos Bureaus & Services Search this

DLS promotes sound municipal finance management practices and supports local officials by providing guidance, training and oversight.

## Latest DLS news

Division of Local Services

OFFERED BY Division of Local Services

## Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center


General information for local officials and others interested in municipal government.

DLS' Municipal Finance Training & Resource Center provides a wide array of interactive and on-demand materials intended to assist new local officials, seasoned municipal finance professionals, and residents alike. Our videos, guides, DLS publications, tools, templates, and other resources provide both introductory and more thorough approaches to key topics in local financial management. Be sure to bookmark this page and check back for updates, as we regularly add new content.

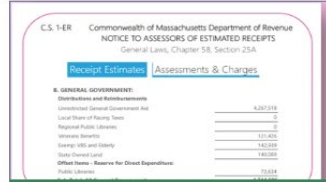
## Most Requested




Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center ➔



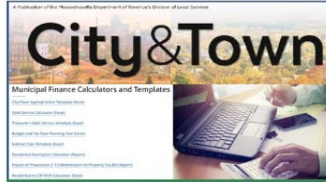
Bulletins, Guidelines and Opinions (IGR/BUL/LFO) ➔



Cherry sheet & state payment reports ➔



Data Analytics & Visualizations ➔




DLS Publications and Financial Tools ➔

# Data Analytics


← → ↻ 🏠 📄 mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services

An official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [Here's how you know](#)


**Menu** [Select Language](#) [Contrast Settings](#)

 **Mass.gov**


## Most Requested



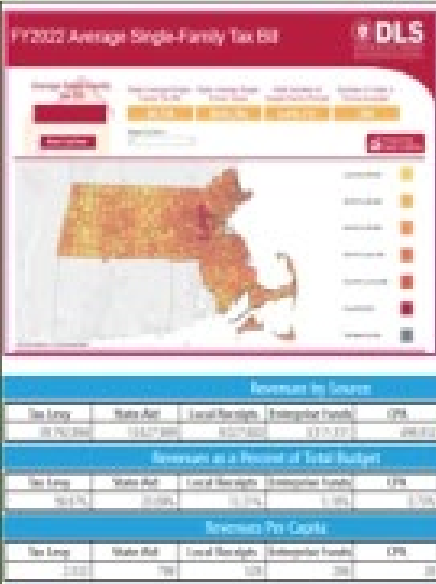
**Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center** →



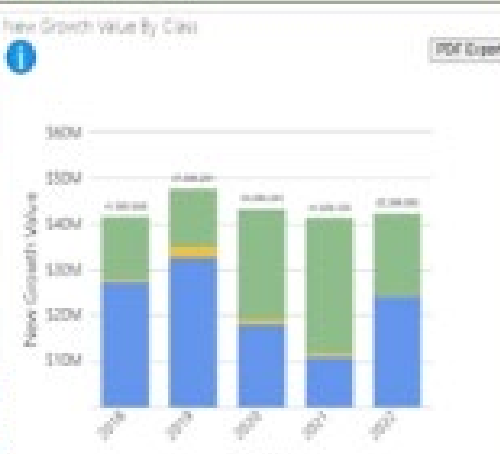
**Bulletins, Guidelines and Opinions (IGR/BUL/LFO)** →



**Cherry sheet & state payment reports** →



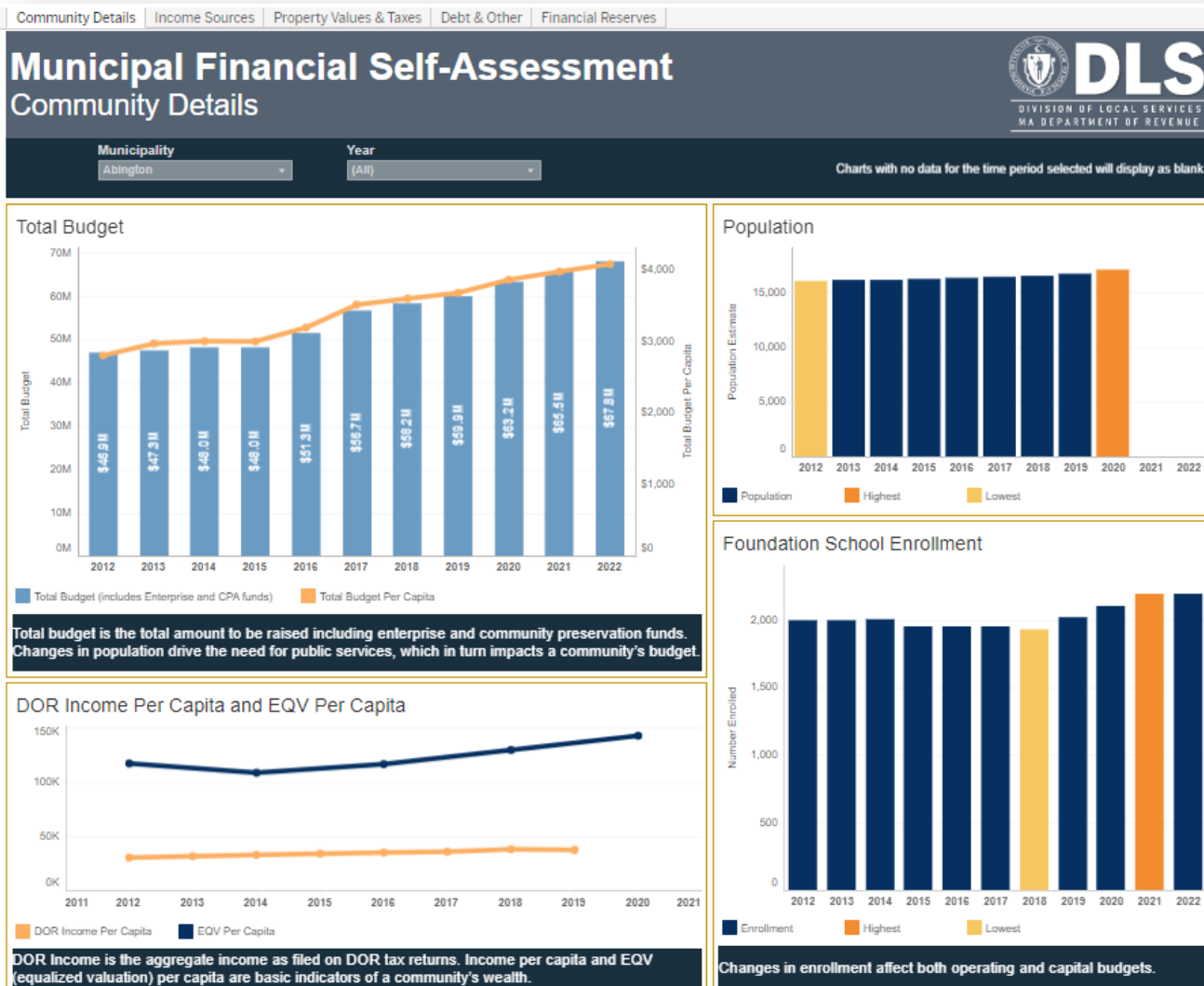
**Data Analytics & Visualizations** →



**DLS Publications and Financial Tools** →



# Data Analytics



## Massachusetts FY2024 Average Single-Family Tax Bill



State Average Single-Family Tax Bill

\$7,405

State Average Single-Family Value

\$665,993

State Number of Single-Family Parcels

1,434,940

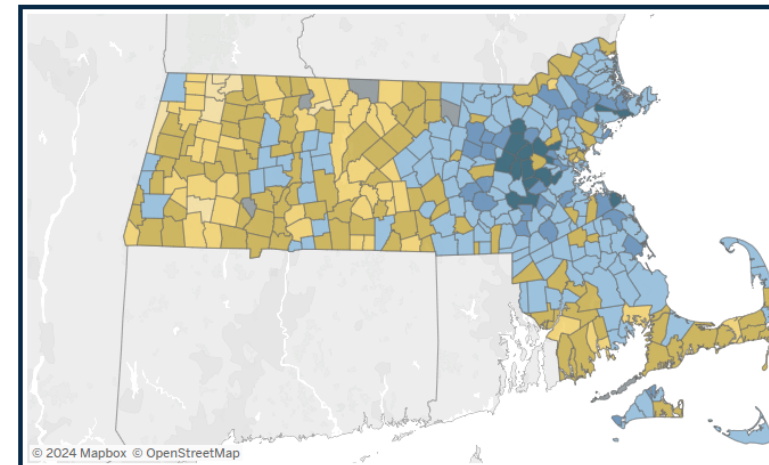
Number of Cities & Towns Included

346

Municipality



351 Report



Legend

Tax Bill Range

Less than \$3,000

\$3,000 to \$4,499

\$4,500 to \$5,999

\$6,000 to \$10,499

\$10,500 to \$14,999

Over \$15,000

No Tax Rate Set

Cities/Towns with the Highest and Lowest Average Single-Family Tax Bill

Number of Cities/Towns in Tax Bill Range

# State Payments (Local Aid)

← → ↺ 🏠 🔍 mass.gov/cherry-sheet-estimates

🏠 > [Division of Local Services](#) > [Municipal databank \(data analytics\)](#) > [Cherry sheet & state payment reports](#)

🏛️ OFFERED BY [Division of Local Services](#)

## Cherry sheet estimates

Reports reflecting annual cherry sheet estimates including trends and preliminary estimates.

LOG IN: [DLS GATEWAY](#) ➔

### FY25 Cherry sheet estimates - preliminary


[Municipal](#) ➔

[Regional school](#) ➔

### FY24 Cherry sheet estimates - final

[Municipal](#) ➔

[Regional school](#) ➔

 **DLS**  
DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES  
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

MA Department of Revenue  
Division of Local Services  
Preliminary Municipal Cherry Sheet Estimates  
Data current as of 1/24/2024

[Return to Previous page](#) [Click for all Municipalities by Program](#)

Select a Fiscal Year: 2025 Select a Municipality: All Municipalities [Submit](#) [Export Table](#)

### FY2025 Preliminary Cherry Sheet Estimates

All Municipalities

[Estimated Receipts](#) [Estimated Assessments & Charges](#)

PROGRAM	FY2024 Cherry Sheet Estimate	FY2025 Governor's Local Aid Proposal	FY2025 House Budget Proposal	FY2025 Senate Budget Proposal	FY2025 Conference Committee
<b>Education Receipts:</b>					
Chapter 70	5,719,689,410	5,963,895,768			
School Transportation	319,330	254,181			
Charter Tuition Reimbursement	213,810,741	183,181,441			
Smart Growth School Reimbursement	750,000	750,000			
<b>Offset Receipts:</b>					
School Choice Receiving Tuition	56,904,703	56,870,033			
<b>Sub-Total, All Education Items:</b>	<b>5,991,474,184</b>	<b>6,204,951,423</b>			
<b>General Government:</b>					
Unrestricted Gen Gov't Aid	1,270,595,793	1,308,713,668			
Local Share of Racing Taxes	910,000	1,050,000			
Regional Public Libraries	4,179,400	3,019,888			
Veterans Benefits	30,301,475	29,119,128			

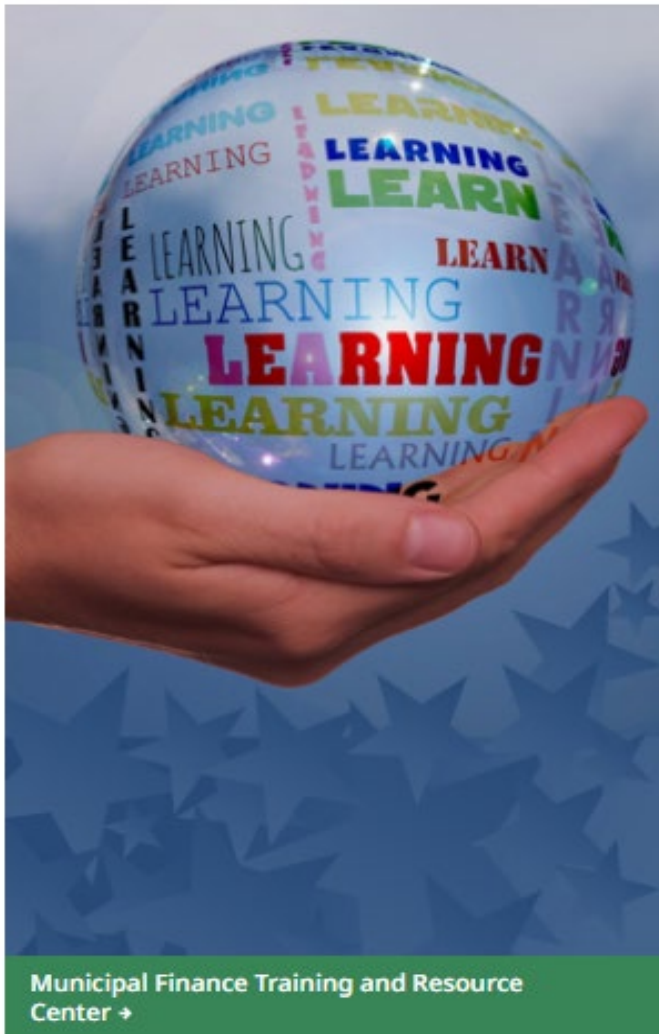
**Receipts** = Local aid  
**Assessments** = Charges for services provided by the Commonwealth

# Training & Resource Center

Jennifer McAllister, Director of Special Initiatives

[mcallisterj@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:mcallisterj@dor.state.ma.us)

# Municipal Finance Training & Resource Center



Massachusetts Division of Local Services

@malocalservices 623 subscribers 124 videos

Welcome to the Division of Local Services (DLS) YouTube page! >

[mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services](https://mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services)

HOME

VIDEOS

LIVE

PLAYLISTS

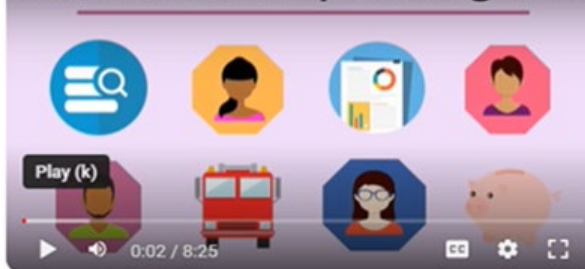
COMMUNITY

CHANNELS

ABOUT



## Overview of Municipal Management



## Overview of Municipal Management

1,439 views • 1 year ago

For more information, please visit

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-local-services>

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<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

READ MORE

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/municipal-finance-training-and-resource-center>

<https://www.youtube.com/@malocalservices/videos>



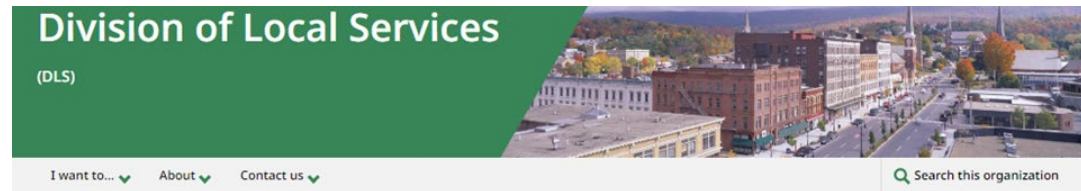
# Municipal Finance Training & Resource Center

## 250+ individual resources

- DLS guidance
- Manuals
- Best practices
- Videos
- Webinars
- Hands-on tools/calculators

## What's new

- Seasonal Updates
- Resource page for Clerks
- Role of Collector Webinar
- Adopting Local Option Excise Taxes Training Video

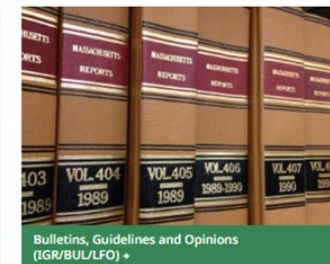


DLS promotes sound municipal finance management practices and supports local officials by providing guidance, training and oversight.

## Most Requested



Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center



Bulletins, Guidelines and Opinions (IGR/BUL/LFO)



Data Analytics & Visualizations

The image is a screenshot of a document titled "C.S. 14R Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Revenue NOTICE TO ASSESSORS OF ESTIMATED RECEIPTS General Laws, Chapter 58, Section 25A". It includes a table with columns for "Receipt Estimates" and "Assessments & Charges".

Receipt Estimates	Assessments & Charges
GENERAL GOVERNMENT:	
Distributions and Refund Payments	
Unrestricted General Government Aid	\$,000,000
Local Share of Planning State	\$
Regional Public Library	\$
Various Services	\$10,000
Energy, R&D and Safety	\$10,000
State Council on Labor	\$10,000
Other Services - Reserve for Direct Expenditure	\$10,000
Public Library	\$10,000
Sub-Total, All General Government	\$,000,000

Local Aid/Cherry Sheets



DLS Publications and Financial Tools

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/municipal-finance-training-and-resource-center>

# Municipal Finance Training & Resource Center

## Popular Resources

[View our video library →](#)

[Publications →](#)

[Tools and calculators →](#)

[Expand all](#)

### Resources by topic

(10) +

### Resources by position

(5) —

[Accountant/auditor →](#)

[Assessor →](#)

[Clerk →](#)

[Collector →](#)

[Treasurer →](#)

### Resources by process

(12) +

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/municipal-finance-training-and-resource-center>



# Resources for New Officials

## Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center

General information for local officials and others interested in municipal government.

DLS' Municipal Finance Training & Resource Center provides a wide array of interactive and on-demand materials intended to assist new local officials, seasoned municipal finance professionals, and residents alike. Our videos, guides, DLS publications, tools, templates, and other resources provide both introductory and more thorough approaches to key topics in local financial management. Be sure to bookmark this page and check back for updates, as we regularly add new content.



First time? Start here.



First time? Start here.

GUIDE: Resources for  
new officials →



## New Officials Playlist

Massachusetts Division of Local Services

14 videos 1,338 views Last updated on Jul 18, 2023



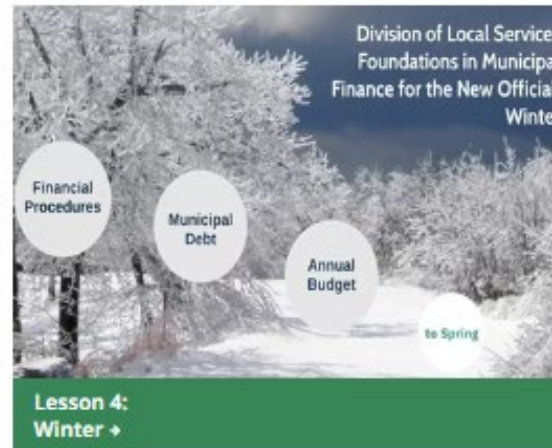
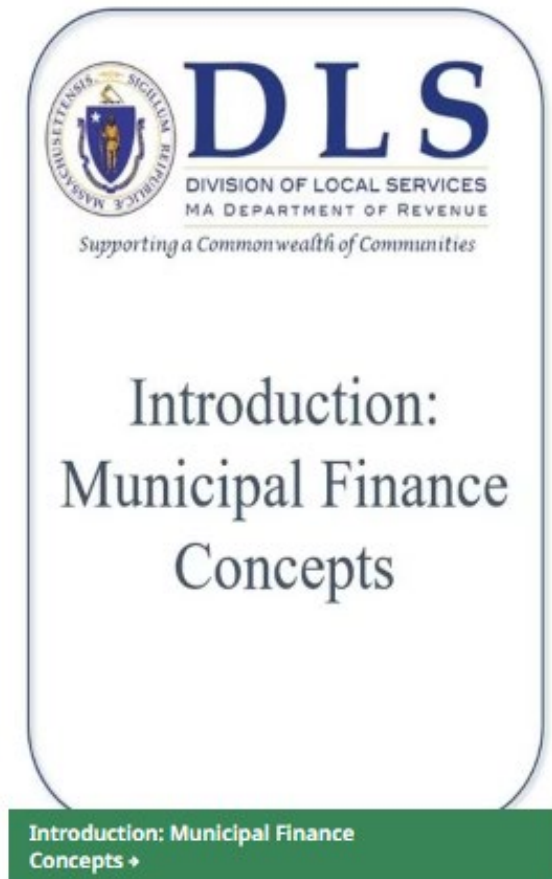
▶ Play all

↺ Shuffle

As a new official, it can be overwhelming to figure out where to start when trying to understand local government. To help, we developed a playlist of videos to help you get started!

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/municipal-finance-training-and-resource-center>

# Foundations in Municipal Finance



# DLS YouTube Channel

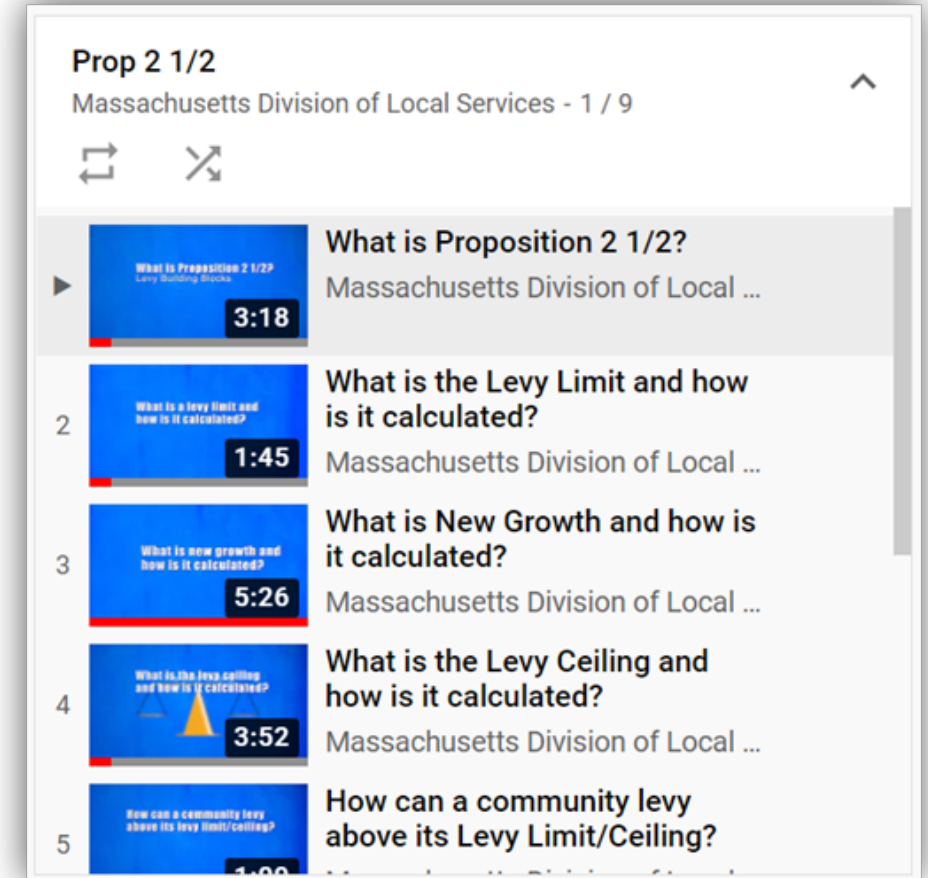
## Most popular:

- Introduction to Proposition 2 1/2
- Overview of Municipal Management
- Introduction to Free Cash
- Mass Appraisal: Valuation Methodologies
- Role of the Finance Committee



Overview of Municipal Management

434 views • 6 months ago



<https://www.youtube.com/@malocalservices/videos>

# Tools and Templates

Tools developed by DLS for analyzing data, forecasting, tracking, managing workflow and more

- Capital planning
- Forecasting
- Financial Indicators Analysis
- Prop. 2 ½ Referendum impacts
- Calculator
- Debt Service Calculator
- Cash Book Template
- Process Workflows (turnovers, accounts payable, payroll)
- Residential Exemption Calculator

## Tools

- [Residential to CIP Shift Calculator](#) (Excel)
- [Sample Town Budget Calendar](#) (Excel)
- [Sample City Budget Calendar](#) (Word)
- [Budget and Tax Rate Planning Tool](#) (Excel)
- [Residential Exemption Calculator](#) (Interactive Report)
- [Impact of Proposition 2 1/2 Referendum on Property Tax Bill](#) (Interactive Report)
- [Cash Flow Analysis](#) (Excel)
- [Debt Service Calculator](#) (Excel)

## Templates

- [City/Town Appropriation](#) (Excel)
- [Capital Targets](#) (Excel) The Capital Targets Template helps local officials monitor capital spending goals by providing an easy means to track annual and projected spending on maintenance, equipment, and infrastructure.
- [Financial Forecasting](#)
- [Financial Forecasting - Instructions](#) (PDF) This PDF is the instructional guide that accompanies the Financial Forecasting Template.
- [Financial Indicators](#) A series of videos explaining how to use this template can be found here: [Municipal Finance Best Practices Training and Resources](#)
- [Indirect Cost](#) (Excel)
- [Treasurer's Debt Service Schedule](#) (Excel)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-finance-tools-and-templates>



# DLS Publications

DLS alerts



City & Town



<https://www.mass.gov/forms/subscribe-to-division-of-local-services-mailings>

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/city-town-bi-weekly-newsletter>

# Worst and Best Practices

Tony Rassias, Deputy Director of Accounts

[rassias@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:rassias@dor.state.ma.us)



# Best Practices



- Professional procedures that have been accepted as correct
- Have consistently shown superior results than by other means
- May generally be used as a standard for others to follow

# Worst Practices

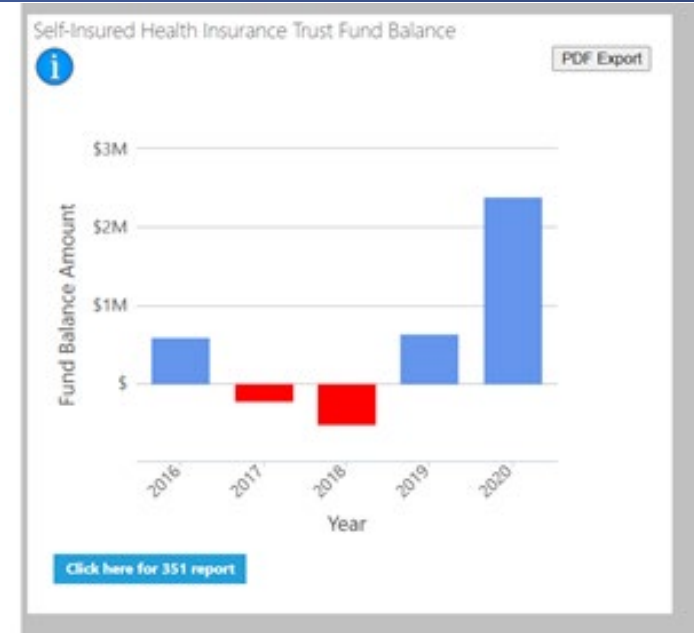


- Are bad to do
- Often show results that land the government in a mess
- Should be avoided

# 10 Worst Practices

## 1.) A self-insured health care trust fund that no one knows how to manage

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/municipal-finance-trend-dashboard>



## 2.) An accounting software package that no one knows how to use

- Budget controls
- Internal controls

# 10 Worst Practices

## 3.) A computer system requiring a simple character password

- Loss of confidential data or ability to access critical systems
- Ransomware



## 4.) The belief that reconciliation of cash and receivables is just a waste of time

- For better internal control
- Hinders balancing the books at year-end
- Reconciliations are a responsibility

# 10 Worst Practices

## 5.) A town accountant that never read M.G.L. c. 41, § 58

“Whenever any appropriation shall have been expended or whenever, in the judgment of the town accountant, it appears that the liabilities incurred against any appropriation may be in excess of the unexpended balance thereof, he shall immediately notify the selectmen and the board, committee, head of department or officer authorized to make expenditures therefrom, and no claim against such appropriation shall be allowed nor any further liability incurred until the town makes provision for its payment.”



## 6.) Relying on one-time revenues to fund annual operating costs

- Match on-going expenses with on-going revenues
- Use one-time revenue for one-time costs
- Includes Free Cash and reserves
- DLS Best Practice

(<https://www.mass.gov/doc/forecastrevenuesandexpenditurespdf/download>)

# 10 Worst Practices

## 7.) Quick! Hide the Audit!

- Conducted to assure the public that an independent authority is reviewing financial health and practices
- Identifies areas for improvement
- Reviews internal control procedures to minimize the risk of errors or fraud
- [Overview of Municipal Audits Webinar \(Video\)](#) - DLS Training & Resource Center



## 8.) An accounting software conversion in mid-June

- Regularly glitches
- Need time to determine if everything is running as expected
- Don't do at the end of the fiscal year when the books are closing
- Any software conversion should be scheduled timely



# 10 Worst Practices

## 9.) Balancing the budget by stretching the estimated receipts and clipping the overlay

- View local receipt historical act vs bud
- Overlay must be sufficient to cover abatements and exemptions
- [Guidelines Related to Overlay and Overlay Surplus \(IGR2017-23, PDF\)](#)



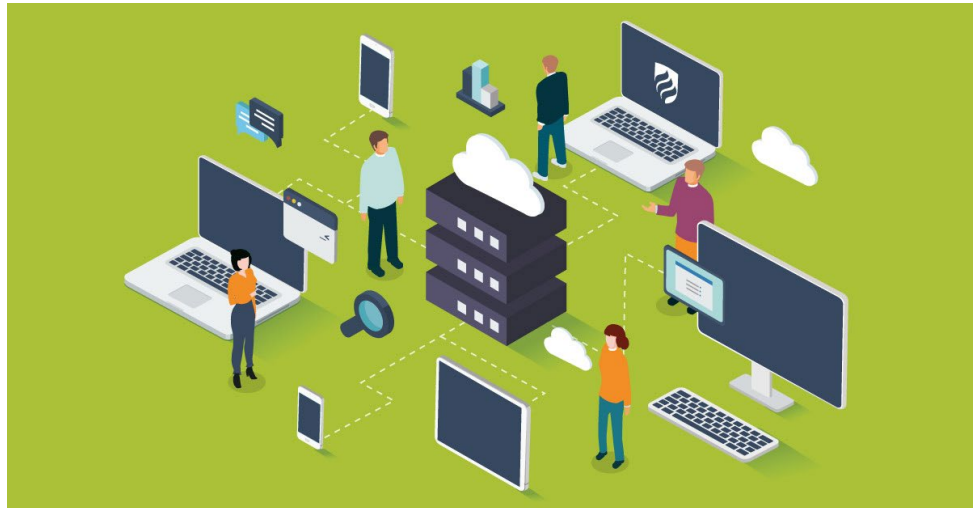
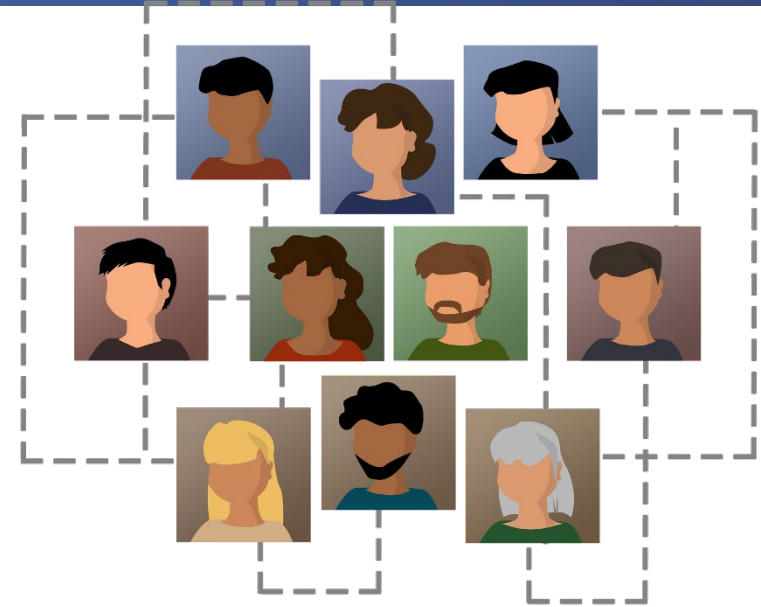
## 10.) Foregoing the money because the paperwork seems too difficult to complete by the deadline

- State and Federal grants

# 10 Best Practices

## 1.) Ensuring that a Financial Team is in place and communicating effectively.

- Manager/Mayor, accountant/auditor, collector/treasurer, assessor, clerk, IT
- Communicate collectively and cooperatively
- Operate together as a unit



## 2.) Maximizing use of technology and managing systems effectively

- Nearly all daily functions rely on IT
- Safeguard public and confidential data
- Protect against malware and ransomware
- Keep system operations up-to-date

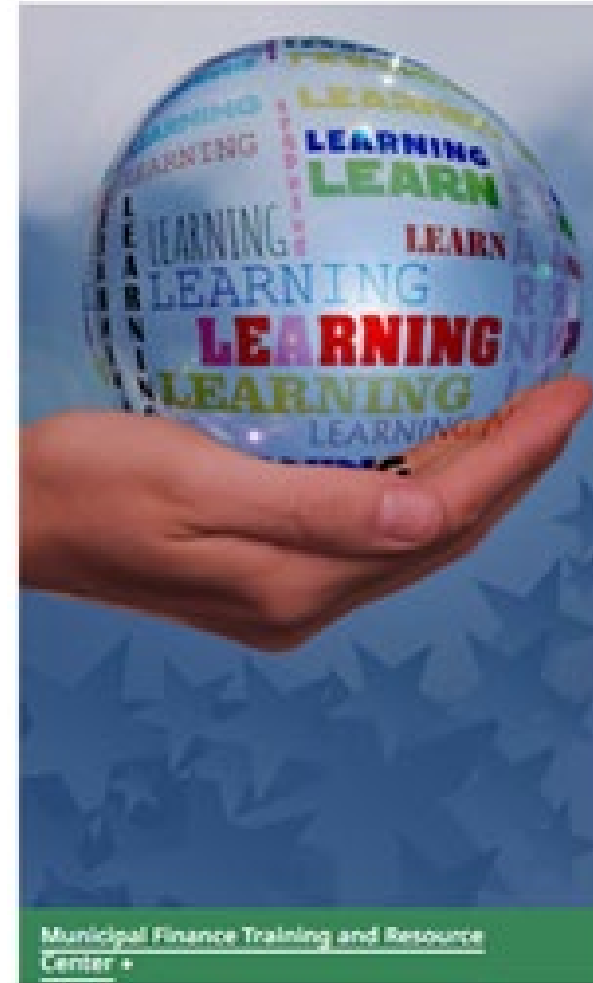
# 10 Best Practices

## 3.) Staying educated in your profession

- Be active in professional associations (e.g., MMA, MMAA, MCTA, MAAO)
- Watch for DLS guidance
- Advocate for professional development funds in budget
- Keep staff educated
- Sharpen professional skills

## 4.) Identifying and reducing risk factors

- Finance
- Workplace safety
- Data security
- Deferred maintenance
- Emergency Prep
- Legal judgments



# 10 Best Practices

## 5.) Performing a fiscal wellness check-up

- Trend data over multi-FY's
- Use standard financial metrics
- May discover inefficiencies
- Contact DLS's Financial Management Resource Bureau
- <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/municipal-finance-trend-dashboard>
- <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/municipal-financial-self-assessment>

## 6.) Using realistic revenue and expenditure assumptions for operating and capital budget forecasts

- Provides short-term budget stability and long-term capital planning
- Ensures accuracy, transparency, accountability in data and cooperation among departments
- Lessens possibility of “surprises”

### Municipal Finance Trend Dashboard

#### Key Municipal Fiscal Health Indicators

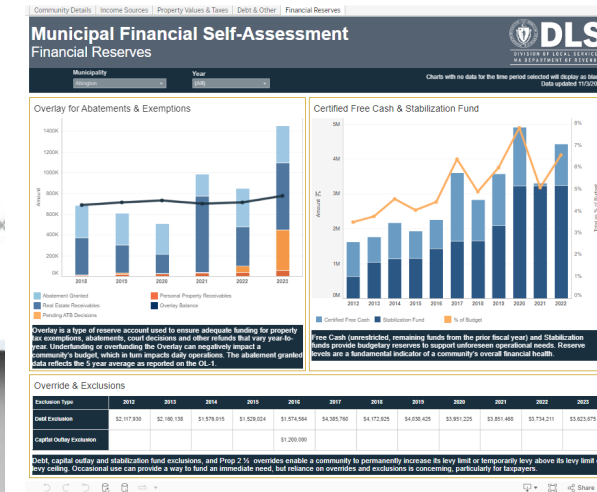
Dashboard data is compiled from required municipal submissions to DLS, annual financial statements, state agency databases, and the US Census. Within each dashboard panel, we identify the source for the live data point and make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information presented.

Looking to create a list of comparable communities? I would suggest using the Community Comparison report found [here](#). This report allows you to narrow the group of communities based on socioeconomic trends (population or size), financial indicators, county, or select your own group.

For guidance with any of the pages found under the Municipal Databank (Data Analytics) contact the Municipal Databank at [databank@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:databank@dor.state.ma.us).



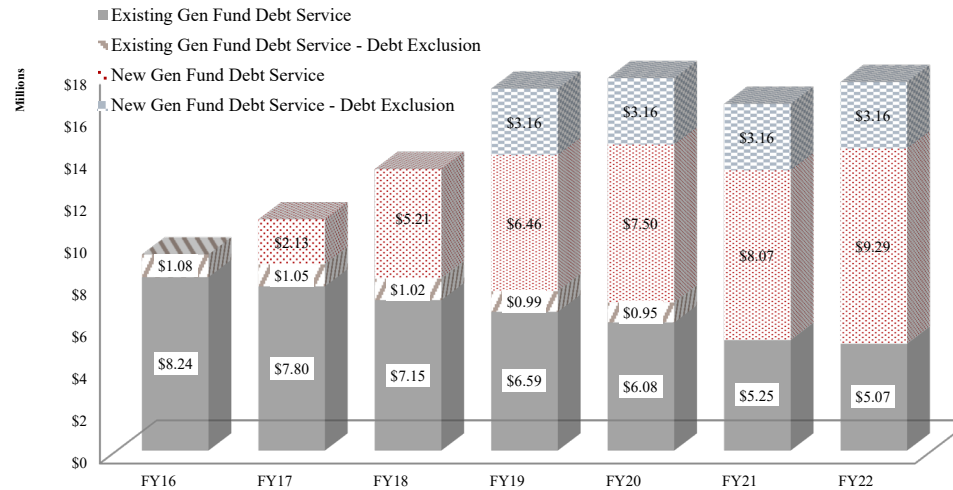
### Municipal Financial Self-Assessment



# 10 Best Practices

## 7.) Developing and following a set of financial policies

- Using and replenishing reserves
- Save for capital investment
- Managing debt levels
- Use of Free Cash and Stabilization Funds
- <https://www.mass.gov/municipal-finance-best-practices>





# 10 Best Practices

## 8.) Providing strong leadership

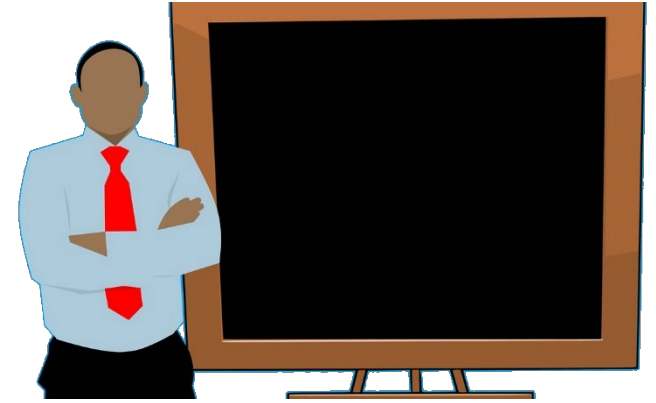
- Serving as an example
- Hiring the best people (offer salaries commensurate with position and ability)
- Following the rules of law and procedure
- Encouraging new ideas and innovations
- Listening to feedback
- Providing accurate information timely
- Acting professionally



# 10 Best Practices

## 9.) Managing personnel

- Largest cost center
- Need employees to deliver core services
- Develop human resource guidelines
- Provide resources for cross-training to avoid “single points of failure”
- Evaluate benefit structure balancing ability to pay with need to attract



# 10 Best Practices

## 10.) Contacting the Division of Local Services for further guidance

- Subject matter experts
- Publications
- Website/Training & Resource Center
- List of BOA and BLA field reps

### Division of Local Services – Bureau of Accounts



☐ Provides oversight of municipal financial management operations

- Approve tax rates
- Review Balance Sheets and certify free cash
- Approve Schedule A
- Administer State House Notes program
- Each community is assigned a BOA and BLA field representative

The Bureau of Accounts oversees the financial management of municipalities within the Commonwealth.

### Informational Guideline Release

Bureau of Municipal Finance Law  
Informational Guideline Release (IGR) No. 22-14  
July 2022

Supersedes IGR 02-101 and Inconsistent Prior Written Statements

#### PROPOSITION 2½ DEBT EXCLUSIONS

(G.L. c. 59, §§21C(a) and 21D)

This Informational Guideline Release explains the policies of the Commissioner of Revenue regarding the borrowing amount covered by an approved Proposition 2½ debt service exclusion. It also includes new procedures and forms to be used by cities and towns with approved debt exclusions for obtaining a determination about the inclusion of cost increases.

#### Typical Index Key:

Borrowing  
Proposition 2½

#### Distribution:

Assessors  
Treasurers  
Accountants/Auditors  
Mayor/Selectmen  
City/Town Managers/Exec. Secs.  
Finance Directors  
City/Town Councils  
City/Selectmen/Town Councils  
Municipal Regional School Superintendents



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4x7qq\\_dbklQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4x7qq_dbklQ)

# Conclusion

**So those are my lists. Are there more best practices? For sure! Are there more worst practices, unfortunately. So, find more good ones and get rid of the bad ones and be a good public servant!**

**Thanks for watching and listening!**

**Thank You!**