

A publication of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services



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Training Highlight: Tax Rate Setting Resources

In this edition:

- **Training Highlight: Tax Rate Setting Resources**
- **Understanding Financial Health: A Key Tool for Cities and Towns**

Important Dates & Information

DLS Fall Update

Given the seasonal nature of certain reporting requirements, municipal responsibilities, billing processes and regulatory functions, DLS has updated our website to provide helpful resources, tools and guidance you might find useful for the time of year.

Earlier this week, we issued a DLS Alert highlighting the fall installation of our seasonal updates for the months of September, October and November. The *Fall Update* provides timely resources for certifying free cash, submitting balance sheet details, and setting the tax rate. Bookmark our fall resources [here](#).

2024 Municipal Conference Registration Now Open

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and the Division of Local Services (DLS) invite you to join your fellow municipal leaders and staff at the 2024 MARPA and DLS Conference at The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester on Tuesday, October 8th at 12:30pm.

Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll and a

Tax rate setting requires teamwork and the cooperation of multiple local officials. A municipality's tax rate is the amount of its annual property tax levy stated in terms of a unit of its tax base. To set a tax rate, a municipality must submit a "Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet", also called "the recap", to DLS' Bureau of Accounts. The recap displays a municipality's entire budget plan for the fiscal year. It summarizes all anticipated expenditures.

Click below to find resources to assist your community's financial management team in the timely completion of the annual tax rate process.

[Tax Rate Setting Resources](#)

[Tax Rate Setting YouTube Playlist](#)

Be sure to bookmark the [Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center](#) page and subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) to stay updated on new items added. Is there something you would like to see added? Please email DLSTraining@dor.state.ma.us. We would love to hear from you!

Understanding Financial Health: A Key Tool for Cities and Towns

panel of Cabinet members - to be announced - will be in attendance to get the conference started. We will then break into sessions focused on a wide array of issues and opportunities facing the Commonwealth, facilitated by subject matter experts from across Massachusetts.

[Click here to learn more and register.](#)

Annual Fiscal Year Waivers to Education Reform Spending Requirements and Minimum Local Contributions

The Division of Local Services has posted the Annual Fiscal Year Waivers to Education Reform Spending Requirements and Minimum Required Local Contribution Bulletin 2024-04 [click here](#) for the bulletin.

Cities, towns and regional school districts may apply for various adjustments in their FY25 minimum required contributions to schools under the Education Reform Act. Municipalities may seek adjustments if (1) non-recurring revenues were used to support FY24 operating budgets and those revenues are not available in FY25, (2) they have extraordinary non-school related expenses in FY25, or (3) their FY25 municipal revenue growth factor is at least 1.5 times the statewide average and is deemed to be excessive. See Section A-3 of [IGR 16-301](#).

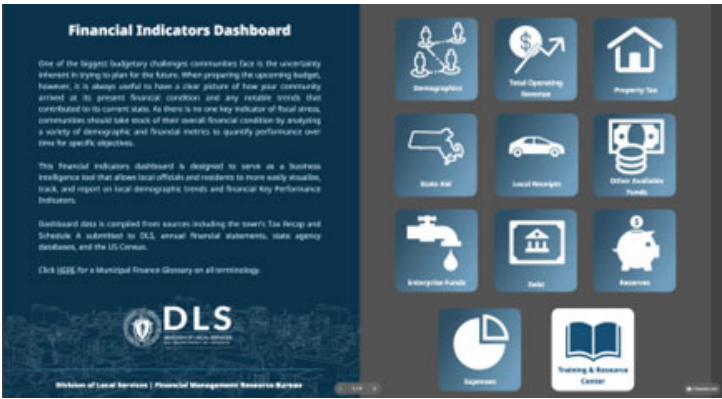
Regional school districts that used non-recurring revenues in FY24 that are unavailable for FY25 must seek waivers if a majority of the selectmen in a town, the city council in a Plan E city or the mayor in all other cities in a majority of the member municipalities requests them. If a regional school budget has already been approved by the members and a waiver is granted of any member's minimum required local contribution to the district, the use of that waiver must be approved by the selectmen, the city council in a Plan E city or the mayor in all other cities of a majority of the member municipalities.

Requests for waivers must be emailed by October 1st, 2024 to ordway@dor.state.ma.us. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this process, please email Melinda Ordway at ordway@dor.state.ma.us.

**Cyber Resilient
Massachusetts Grant
Program**

Zack Blake - Financial Management Resource Bureau Chief

Cities and towns often face the challenge of planning for the future amid financial uncertainties. To effectively prepare budgets and ensure long-term financial stability, it's critical to understand how past trends have shaped the current financial landscape. The "[Financial Indicators Dashboard](#)" developed by the Financial Management Resource Bureau offers a powerful solution, providing a comprehensive business intelligence tool that allows local officials, residents and other stakeholders to visualize, track, and report on key financial and demographic trends.



This resource compiles data from various sources, including the annual Tax Recapitulation report and Schedule A submitted to the Division of Local Services, along with other state and federal databases, offering a holistic view of a community's finances and demographics. Key features include tracking property tax revenues, operating expenses, state aid, local receipts, and other critical indicators such as debt service and enterprise funds.



The MassCyberCenter at Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MassTech) is currently accepting applications to the Cyber Resilient Massachusetts Grant Program from municipalities across the state to boost their cybersecurity infrastructure. Cities and towns that apply to the program are eligible for up to \$25,000 to fund narrowly focused cybersecurity technology upgrades, which will be identified through a cybersecurity vulnerability assessment.

The grants may fund capital equipment, technology and infrastructure for cybersecurity improvement projects including vendors/contractors or IT related staff costs of the municipality performing the upgrades. Applications are open and reviewed quarterly. The next review deadline is September 30th.

Grants will build up municipalities' defenses against cybersecurity threats. [A total of \\$1.4 million in funding is available.](#)

Latest Issue of *Buy the Way* Now Available

Don't miss [Issue #27 of Buy the Way](#), the official magazine of the Operational Services Division (OSD).

[Click here](#) to get news and updates from OSD delivered to your inbox.

DLS Links:

[Events & Training Calendar](#)

[Municipal Finance Training and Resource Center](#)

[Local Officials Directory](#)

[Municipal Databank](#)

[Informational Guideline Releases \(IGRs\)](#)

[Bulletins](#)

[Tools and Financial Calculators](#)

The dashboard is essential for local officials and residents alike, enabling them to:

- **Analyze Financial Performance:** It provides a clear understanding of income sources and expenditure patterns, empowering decision-makers to identify potential areas of fiscal stress or growth.
- **Inform Policy Decisions:** By examining trends in population demographics and school enrollment, municipalities can make informed decisions about resource allocation, ensuring services are aligned with community needs.
- **Plan for the Future:** The tool helps local officials set realistic financial goals and allocate resources effectively, based on past performance and current trends.



Ultimately, this dashboard equips cities and towns with the knowledge to make data-driven decisions, enhancing their ability to plan strategically and maintain fiscal health.

If you are interested in having the Financial Management Resource Bureau build a Financial Indicators Dashboard for your community, please reach out to Zack Blake at blakez@dor.state.ma.us.



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Contact *City & Town* with questions, comments and feedback by emailing us at cityandtown@dor.state.ma.us. To view previous editions, please [click here](#).

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