

Shared Service Agreements

The following information addresses questions regarding shared service agreements. It is provided from a shared service agreement provider, the Institute for Building Technology and Safety (IBTS), and two Missouri local government officials who use the service. Contributors are Curt Skoog, Kansas City branch manager at IBTS; Brad Ratcliff, city administrator, city of Peculiar, Missouri; and Leslee Rivarola, city administrator, city of Lake Lotawana, Missouri.

What is a shared service agreement?

Governments of all sizes face financial challenges and difficulties in securing the resources needed to provide important services. A shared service agreement is a collaborative service delivery approach that allows municipalities to share the cost of services, maximize building department efficiencies, and hire or retain certified staff to provide professional services in a cost-effective manner. In short, shared services provide affordable access to experienced staff.

How can my community take advantage of a shared service agreement?

MML signed a master service agreement with the Institute for Building Technology and Safety (IBTS) last fall, enabling interested member municipalities to contract building department services on a full-time or as-needed basis. Once jurisdictions sign a service agreement, they are able to request services and only pay a fee for the services that have been provided. This flexibility gives communities the opportunity to share resources and provide quality services for an affordable cost.

What services are provided under the agreement?

MML members gain access to IBTS's building department service offering, including:

- Planning and zoning;
- Permitting;
- Plan review;
- Inspections;
- Floodplain management;
- Stormwater services;
- Property maintenance;
- Accessibility reviews;
- Fire code reviews; and
- GOVmotus™ permitting software.

Are any other municipalities in Missouri currently utilizing this agreement?

Mr. Ratcliff: The city of Peculiar has utilized IBTS's plan review and construction inspection services the past four years.

Ms. Rivarola: The city of Lake Lotawana signed a service agreement with IBTS in June 2016 and has been actively utilizing the full suite of building services, with the exception of accessibility and fire code reviews.

What were the motivations behind your communities signing a shared service agreement?

Mr. Ratcliff: The shared service agreement provides augmented inspection and plan review services as needed. Peculiar has experienced a significant growth in single-family dwelling construction, and IBTS has provided the inspectors necessary to keep pace with this construction. Additionally, experienced and certified plan review personnel are available for large projects; a recent 120,000-square-foot addition to the Raymore-Peculiar High School took advantage of this.

Ms. Rivarola: Lake Lotawana is a small community whose primary challenge is retaining and recruiting qualified personnel. However, this does not mean that service expectations are any different. The agreement allows the City to provide exceptional services without the full financial burden of hiring the necessary inspectors.

What challenges has the agreement helped your communities overcome?

Mr. Ratcliff: The agreement ensured our construction inspection capability, and response time has kept pace with the surge in single-family dwelling permits we have issued the past three years.

Ms. Rivarola: We are a very active community with a variety of building projects occurring at any given time. The agreement has allowed us to access services on demand and schedule inspections at times that are mutually convenient.

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What responsibilities does a municipality take on when signing a shared services agreement?

Mr. Ratcliff: The municipality is responsible for appointing a program manager (to coordinate services for the IBTS service agreement) who shall be the principal point of contact on behalf of the jurisdiction. The municipality remains responsible for enforcing its municipal code and adopted building codes, to include taking administrative and legal action to enforce compliance if necessary.

Ms. Rivarola: As an early adopter of the shared services agreement, Lake Lotawana had to analyze how our municipal codes interacted, or possibly even competed with, building codes. Our team worked with IBTS to ensure that both sets of code were enforced. Additionally, the City has enjoyed the use of the GOVMOTUS permitting software and were able to customize the screens that the end user sees in order to keep certain information private.

What guidance can your communities provide on entering into a service agreement?

Mr. Ratcliff: A variety of building code, planning, zoning and property maintenance services are available to a municipality

to provide and/or augment municipal services as needed. The advantage of entering into a service agreement is that the selected services and capabilities are readily available should the need arise.

Ms. Rivarola: The agreement works well for providing a service and building a partnership with IBTS, but it is not intended to replace the need for City oversight. Communities that are interested in signing such an agreement should still ensure that a program manager is on site to help coordinate efforts.

Who can I contact for more information?

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