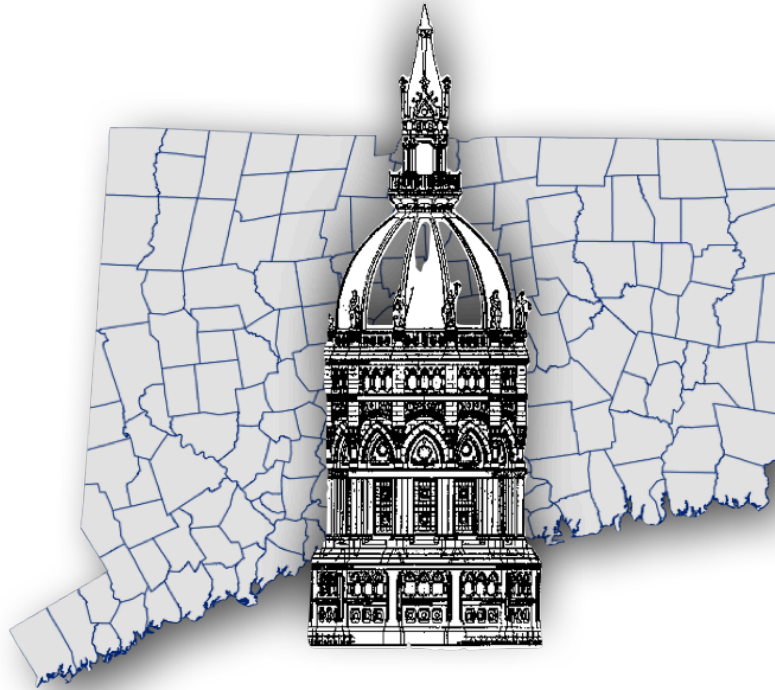


CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

A Multi-jurisdictional Agency of Connecticut State Government



Reports of the Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee and Workforce Development, Special Education & Governance Subcommittee

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Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

The [Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations](#) (ACIR) is a 25-member agency of the State of Connecticut created in 1985 to study system issues between the state and local governments and to recommend solutions as appropriate. The membership is designed to represent the state legislative and executive branches, municipalities and other local interests, and the general public. The ACIR meets on a monthly basis, and the meetings are open to the public. Agendas, recordings, and minutes can be accessed on the ACIR website.

The role of ACIR, as detailed in Section 2-79a of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), is to: (1) serve as a forum for consultation between state and local officials; (2) conduct research on intergovernmental issues; (3) encourage and coordinate studies of intergovernmental issues by universities and others; and (4) initiate policy development and make recommendations to all levels of government.

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Executive Summary

Connecticut's municipalities and school districts continue to confront escalating and interconnected challenges that affect their capacity to deliver high-quality public services. The ACIR Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee and the ACIR Workforce Development, Special Education, and Governance Subcommittee have, over the past nineteen months, identified persistent structural constraints that strain local operations, hinder innovation, and threaten long-term stability across both municipal government and K–12 education.

At the same time, the continued work of the ACIR Municipal Research and Innovation Working Group has provided initial findings that reinforce and contextualize these challenges at a statewide level. The working group's research demonstrates that Connecticut lacks a dedicated resource with capacity to provide municipalities with applied research, technical assistance, and best-practice guidance—an absence that contributes to many of the pressures documented in the subcommittee reports.

Together, these attached bodies of work reveal a consistent narrative: local governments are expected to meet increasingly complex demands without the workforce, governance flexibility, or structural supports needed to do so sustainably.

Rising Pressures Across Local Government and Education

Across both municipal and educational sectors, staffing shortages and capacity constraints have reached critical levels. Municipalities, particularly small and mid-sized towns, struggle to recruit and retain qualified personnel due to constrained budgets, limited pathways into public service careers, and competition from larger public and private employers. In many towns, essential functions rely on a single staff member or on individuals juggling multiple part-time roles without benefits, creating fragile operational systems vulnerable to turnover or burnout.

School districts face parallel challenges. Teacher shortages persist statewide, particularly in special education, STEM, and early childhood roles. The Subcommittee's findings underscore that without stronger workforce pipelines, reduced administrative burdens, and more effective pathways for new educators, including diversified recruitment and streamlined certification, districts will continue to be unable to meet the needs of all students.

These workforce challenges are occurring against a backdrop of rising service delivery costs, increasing statutory requirements, and heightened public expectations for transparency and data-driven decision-making. The Innovation Working Group's preliminary research confirms that municipal leaders are being asked to navigate a governance environment of growing complexity—often without the analytical support, technical resources, or policy infrastructure available in other states.

Governance Structures and the Limits of Existing Models

Rigid governance models in education inhibit districts' ability to respond flexibly to demographic and fiscal shifts. Many Connecticut towns face declining enrollment coupled with rising special education expenditures, yet current regionalization statutes often limit creative solutions. The Education Subcommittee report emphasizes the importance of expanding cooperative agreements or options that allow communities to pursue shared efficiencies while maintaining local autonomy.

Similarly, municipalities lack standardized frameworks and political support for long-term shared service arrangements, despite demonstrated successes in areas such as animal control, inspection services, land use planning, and business office consolidation. The Subcommittees recommend greater use of interlocal

agreements and expanded access to the Regional Performance Incentive Program to support sustainable collaborations.

The Innovation Working Group's ongoing research reinforces this need. Its initial findings show that Connecticut is one of the few states without a centralized entity to provide municipalities with research, training, and implementation assistance support that could bolster local capacity for regionalization, shared services, performance management, and long-term planning.

Special Education and Regional Capacity

As highlighted by this recent legislative session, special education is one of the most significant cost pressures for local school districts. Rising outplacement expenses, staffing shortages, and increasing student needs create fiscal and operational strain, particularly for small districts. The subcommittee's report recommends strengthening regional special education options to expand local programming capacity and address costs through shared expertise and economies of scale.

Proposed incentives include adjustments to the Excess Cost threshold for regional special education programs and reimbursement bonuses for collaborative facility development. These concepts highlight the importance of shared technical capacity and specialized regional services as core components of a sustainable municipal ecosystem.

Municipal Workforce Development

The Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee's report underscores the urgent need for succession planning and building new pipelines, including internships, apprenticeships, trainee programs, and intermunicipal mentorship networks, into municipal careers. Borrowing from proven state-level workforce development models, these programs should combine classroom instruction with practical training and leverage the role of Councils of Governments (COGs), Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs), and workforce development boards.

These recommendations dovetail with the Innovation Working Group's preliminary findings, which identify workforce shortages and succession issues as major threats to municipal stability. Municipalities need access to centralized resources—including recruitment support, classification and compensation studies, executive search assistance, and human resources modernization—to strengthen long-term workforce capacity.

Civility, Public Trust, and Retention

Both Subcommittees raise concerns about increasing incivility toward public officials, educators, and frontline employees. Rising hostility, harassment, and confrontational behavior erode civic engagement, deter qualified individuals from entering public service, and accelerate attrition among those already serving. Recommended strategies include training for public officials, conducting public awareness campaigns promoting civility, and developing regional supports such as shared ombudsperson models. Emphasizing the importance of public engagement and community trust as fundamental components of modern governance systems highlights the need for municipalities to have access to tools, data, and training that support constructive public interaction and transparent decision-making.

Breaking Down Silos and Strengthening the State-Local Partnership

A central conclusion shared across all ACIR Subcommittee efforts is that Connecticut's long-standing siloed approach between education and general government, among municipalities, and across state

agencies limits efficiency and innovation. Both subcommittees call for stronger alignment in technology, data systems, back-office operations, workforce initiatives, and long-term strategic planning.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings of the Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee, the Workforce Development, Special Education, and Governance Subcommittee, and the preliminary research of the ACIR Municipal Research and Innovation Working Group present a unified and compelling vision for strengthening Connecticut's local governments and public schools. Their findings demonstrate that without flexible governance models, robust and diverse workforce pipelines, expanded regional collaboration, and a strengthened infrastructure for research and technical assistance, municipalities and school districts will continue to struggle under growing pressures.

Implementing these recommendations will require coordinated action and engagement across state government, regional partners, municipalities, school districts, higher education institutions, and workforce organizations. The combined work of these ACIR Subcommittees provides a roadmap toward a more resilient, efficient, collaborative, and sustainable future for Connecticut's communities.

The ACIR welcomes suggestions and questions regarding the work this report describes or proposes, especially any that can help guide future activities. Please feel free to contact us at ACIR@ct.gov.

Sincerely,



Matt Hart, Chair designate



Stephen Stephanou, Vice Chair

Workforce Development, Special Education and Governance Interim Report and Recommendations

Approved by ACIR - January 16, 2025

Introduction

Connecticut's towns and cities are nearing a crisis point in their ability to deliver essential services. In large part this is due to the challenges of recruiting and retaining qualified people to fill the many positions necessary for delivering services in (general government and education). The problem is exacerbated by the state's disproportionate reliance on an already high and regressive property tax system.

The [Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations](#) (ACIR) believes that our recent experiences necessitated by the pandemic with town hall closures and reduced staff availability have shown Connecticut residents, government staff and elected officials that the traditional means of providing local government services can be performed in different ways without an appreciable impact on their everyday lives. The change opportunities present today, as a function of our recent experience as well as the well-considered concepts that have been developed over the years, are ones that must be acted on while the opportunity for change exists - in short, **we must seize the moment.**

While ACIR's work on workforce development, special education and governance is not yet complete - our members have decided that the urgency for the attached recommendations is warranted for immediate action.

"On the municipal level, the shortages of teachers, police officers and volunteer firefighters have been duly noted. What hasn't gotten nearly as much attention is the shortage of town hall workers, the assessors, zoning specialists, planners and others who deliver many of the services that town governments exist to provide... Thus they rely on poaching, overtime, retirees, part-timers from other towns and consultants."

- CT Mirror: CT towns, desperate to fill technical jobs, scramble for workers
by Tom Condon October 15, 2023

ACIR Work Plan

To address the pending crisis identified above, ACIR set its FY 2025 work plan to inform and advise the Governor, General Assembly, State Agencies, Municipalities, Regional Organizations and the Public by establishing two working groups: (1) **Municipal Workforce Development** and (2) **Special Education, Education Governance and Workforce Development**.

The **Municipal Workforce Development Work Group** was put in place in recognition that Connecticut's towns and cities are nearing a crisis point in their ability to recruit and retain qualified persons to fill positions to deliver essential municipal services. According to a recent report by the National League of Cities: "The current municipal labor shortage will negatively impact local governments' ability to deliver for their communities unless local leaders take the necessary steps to rebuild staffing capacity." The Municipal Workforce Development working group's charge was to:

- Explore and recommend actions regarding non-education public-sector hiring challenges, training, diversity, and retention that have put local government's ability to deliver services at risk; and,
- Examine (expand on the Governor's Bill on Regional Services - House Bill 5056) opportunities and barriers for shared and regional approaches to address the public sector workforce challenge.

The **Special Education, Education Governance and Workforce Development Work Group** was put in place in recognition that education is the major obligation and cost for cities and towns and that, similar to the general government side - recruitment and retention of educational staff is a breaking point; as recently demonstrated by the [Connecticut Department Education's annual identification of education shortage areas](#). A 2021 New England Public Policy Center Report concluded that Connecticut's heavy reliance on the property tax for funding public K-12 education systems creates a cost-capacity gap between the funding needed to provide public education and the capacity to raise those funds. Added to this is Special education - which is by far the most volatile and costly burden on local taxpayers. Without a significant resolution, education costs - especially those driven by Special Education - will continue to play havoc with local budgets and drive the property tax. The Special Education, Education Governance and Workforce Development working group's charge was to:

- Examine recent actions to address the varied needs of Special Education and make recommendations as warranted;
- Explore alternatives - including school governance, regionalization and shared services-to ease the cost-capacity gap for education; and,
- Explore and recommend actions regarding public-education hiring challenges, training, diversity, and retention that have put local government's ability to deliver services at risk.

Both work groups, which were open to the public to participate, met during 2024 and have prepared multiple recommendations that ACIR puts forth for consideration in this report. Importantly, their work continues and will form the focus of ACIR's work for 2025. **ACIR welcomes feedback and the opportunity to discuss our interim recommendations.**

Summary: Interim Recommendations

ACIR's list of interim recommendations are divided into three categories: (1) Workforce Recruitment and Retention; (2) Innovation; and (3) Research and Outreach. Additionally, during the course of the work, to date, of the two working groups multiple issues evolved that were common to both.

1) Workforce Recruitment and Retention

- A. Enable municipalities to post jobs with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) employment website;
- B. Recruitment of special education teachers must be enhanced through financial incentives, improvements in respect and work conditions, and reducing paperwork to focus more on student interactions - including a study of educators who currently hold special education certifications but do not teach in special education programs;
- C. Identify opportunities to reduce administrative burdens, increase employee autonomy, and provide robust professional development opportunities;
- D. Recruitment and retention of educators and the public sector workforce generally, especially from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, must remain a priority;
- E. Develop and expand apprentice and related training programs for the public sector - including vocational and technical skills for students must be a focus for developing student skills for non-college pathways; and,
- F. Identify and test options for improving the public sector work climate.

2) Innovation

- A. Identify and pilot regional public employee training opportunities to share teacher training and mentoring resources and training programs for core municipal functions and services.;
- B. For Education
 - i) Remove impediments that discourage efforts to provide education programming or staffing cooperatively or regionally;
 - ii) Empower towns to establish cooperative schools and share those schools to be able to exist as separate LEAs or as part of an existing LEA based on the community's needs. If districts are required to create a separate LEA in all situations, they would also have to create a separate governance system. That would deter many districts from attempting this;
 - iii) Waive existing education space standards when renovating facilities for regionalized or cooperative programs;
 - iv) Enable existing regional districts to initiate studies for dissolution or reconstitution based on a majority vote of involved towns, rather than the currently required unanimous consent; V. Grant statutory authority for the establishment of regional finance boards for communities

within regional school districts by region-wide majority vote to oversee regional school budgets, ensuring fair fiscal oversight while reducing redundancy;

- v) Incentivize districts to build local special education programs to reduce outplacement, and leveraging regional service centers (RESCs) to increase capacity and quality of services across multiple towns; and,
- vi) Increased funding for early intervention programs to reduce the number of children who ultimately require formal special education.

3) Research and Outreach

- A. Restructure and repurpose multiple existing state assets resulting in a dynamic public center focused on research, problem solving and outreach for Connecticut's towns and cities.

Interim Recommendations Background and Detail

1) Workforce Recruitment and Retention

As noted, the public sector is at a crisis point in its ability to fully and properly provide educational and general government services. At the core of this is the scarcity of people choosing to pursue and/or continue a career in the public sector. Municipalities are competing with both the private sector and the state. Connecticut has significant numbers of position openings (about 73,000), competitive compensation and benefits, including remote work, all at a one-stop site - greatly enhancing recruitment. However, even with that advantage, the state still finds it difficult to attract new employees. The public sector is not alone in the challenges to recruit and retain people for needed jobs. The Connecticut Business and Industry's (CBIA) 2024 Survey of Connecticut Business mirrors the issues confronting our cities and towns. That report noted, as two of its key findings that: "78% report difficulty finding and retaining workers and 46% list employee recruitment and retention as their top investment priority [and] The lack of skilled job applicants (33%) and the state's high cost of living (21%) are the main factors hampering growth."¹

"The negative stereotypes of government employment are ubiquitous. It is portrayed as stagnant, redundant work for inadequate compensation in an environment that discourages growth and innovation. The term "bureaucrat" is far more pejorative than empowering. All too often, the realities and benefits of public service are overshadowed by this perception. When these commonly held views are filtered through a lens of political division and argument, it is understandable why many young people and experienced professionals prefer to avoid a career in government altogether."

The Local Government Skills Gap Report, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2018

The Connecticut Department of Education's most recent report on staffing needs in public schools identifies three categories of educators in short supply: "Teachers of Special Populations (Special Education PK-12, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) PK-12 and Bilingual Education PK-12); General Education Teachers (Mathematics 4-12, Science 4-12, Social Studies 7-12, Technology Education PK-12 and World Languages 7-12); and for high-need districts, School Support Personnel (School Library & Media Specialists, School Psychologists, and Speech & Language Pathologists)."² The report notes that "Total public-school enrollment in Connecticut has been decreasing over time... enrollment of students of color, students eligible for subsidized lunch, special education students, and English language learners has increased in recent years, representing a growing need for educators to support the state's most vulnerable students."³ Persons seeking employment in education can utilize CTREAP, a nationwide education job search platform that is supported in Connecticut through the six RESCs as a one-stop to conduct such a search. Connecticut's towns and cities do not have a similar service or a regular report analyzing local government employment needs. Our towns and cities do not have a comparable system identify labor shortages and a single point of contact for job seekers and municipalities seeking workers. Compounding this is the fact that there has not been any research

¹ CBIA 2024 Survey of Connecticut Business, pg. 2

² Staffing Shortage Areas in Connecticut Public Schools, Boston University - Wheelock Educational Policy Center (WEPC) and the Connecticut Department of Education, Executive Summary, Page A

³ IBID, Executive Summary, page A 3

conducted as to what compensation is appropriate for specific positions in town government. In fact, many towns lack current position descriptions - further hindering them when they are in need of workers. To address the workforce recruitment and retention needs of our towns and school districts, ACIR puts forth the following interim recommendations for consideration:

“When governments hire apprentices, returns to the public sector are especially high. Apprentices hired from the local community reduce the need for other training programs. As with private employers, government agencies can use apprenticeships to fill job openings and those vacated by retiring employees, maintaining staffing and service continuity. Public sector apprenticeships can attract and expose young people to diverse career opportunities in government. Engaging and training young people for public sector careers can upgrade the quality and quantity of public services, thereby benefiting all residents.”

Public Sector Apprenticeship: Improving Work for Governments and Residents Diana Elliott, Andrew Campbell, and John Marotta Urban Institute - www.urban.org

- A. **Enable municipalities to post jobs with the [Department of Administrative Services employment website](#).** This addition would place all public sector jobs in one location - creating a simplified applicant system. It would also enable towns with limited recruitment resources to enhance their recruitment needs.
- B. **Recruitment of special education teachers must be enhanced through financial incentives, improvements in respect and work conditions, and reducing paperwork to focus more on student interactions.** Incentivizing students from diverse backgrounds, including those who may have benefited from special education services themselves, could help diversify and strengthen the workforce. Pathways to educator preparation in this area, and all areas, should be streamlined within the work the CSDE and The CT Educator Preparation and Certification Board are doing and plan to do moving forward. (*Legislative Action*)
 - i) **A study, if one is not already in pace or planned, of educators who currently hold special education certifications but do not teach in special education programs** could provide a better understanding of how to improve the assignments of these educators and encourage them to work in these areas.
- C. **Identify opportunities to reduce administrative burdens, increase employee autonomy, and provide robust professional development opportunities.** Teachers need sufficient support to grow professionally while avoiding burnout, which is a major cause of workforce attrition. Additionally, highly specialized teachers involved in cooperative agreements face challenges if regional needs shift. They often find new employment but they can lose their tenure and years of service when starting in a new district.

“This combination of growing demand and stagnating supply indicates that teacher shortages will persist in these subject areas unless significant action is taken.”

Staffing Shortage Areas in Connecticut Public Schools, Boston University - Wheelock Educational Policy Center (WEPC) and the Connecticut Department of Education, Executive Summary

“Would you counsel a young person you cared about to choose a career in education? These days, most of us wouldn’t. The systemic issues in education are becoming too massive to continue ignoring. Burned-out teachers, embattled administrators, overburdened counselors and support staff stretched to the breaking point: it’s a recipe for disaster. And it’s catching up with us. The problem is not just current teachers exiting the field. It’s that there are fewer people entering the profession to replace them.”

No More Teachers: The Epic Crisis Facing Education In 2024
Mark C. Perna Contributor FORBES, Jan 3, 2024

- D. Recruitment and retention of educators and the public sector workforce generally, especially from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, must remain a priority.** There needs to be a sustained focus on building pathways from high school to college to education certification and for careers in general government, particularly for students of color and other marginalized groups. In addition, enhancements such as increased salaries and other benefits must be supported by the State to draw the best candidates to a declining pool of high school and undergraduate students interested in education and public sector careers.
- E. Develop and expand apprentice and related training programs for the public sector.**
- i) **Engage the Office of Apprenticeship Training** to add public sector apprenticeships
 - (1) Programs like the National League of Cities (NLC) [Apprenticeship for Cities](#) to meet the employment needs of municipalities and foster careers should be pursued.
 - (2) The RESCs and COGs should partner with their respective Workforce Development Boards and the CT Department of Labor to foster local public sector career development.
 - (3) Partner with [ReadyCT](#), an affiliate of CBIA, to foster public sector career paths for Connecticut students.
 - ii) **Vocational and technical skills for students must be a focus for developing student skills for non-college pathways.** Workforce readiness programs that emphasize technical skills, certifications, apprenticeships, and partnerships with local businesses should be expanded to align education with Connecticut’s economic needs. Post Secondary Entrance should be removed as one of the [12 metrics used in the Next Generation Accountability Standards](#)⁴ as this disincentivizes creative pathways for students.

⁴ According to the Connecticut Department of Education “Connecticut’s Next Generation Accountability System is a broad set of 12 indicators that help tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, careers and life. It provides a holistic, multi-factor perspective of district and school performance. Districts/schools earn points on a broad set of 12 indicators (achievement, growth, chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness, high school graduation, postsecondary entrance, physical fitness, and the arts). Performance on each indicator is measured against a target. Student group performance receives additional weight in the system. The Accountability Index is the percentage of points earned across all available indicators.”

- (1) **Public Sector Certificate Programs** - Community colleges should offer associate degrees and certificate programs for common public sector functions such as educational support, education para-professionals, administrative staffing - including budget, land use enforcement, building inspection, fire marshal, animal control, assessment, town clerk and taxation.
 - (2) **Create flexible pathways for educator certification, cross-endorsement, and educator preparation programs**
- iii) **Establish Regional Programs and Training Opportunities.**
- (1) **Regional efforts to share teacher training and mentoring resources** should be encouraged, particularly in fields where there are significant workforce gaps, such as special education, STEM, and early childhood education. RESCs, district cooperation and educator preparatory programs should play roles in this work. This is especially important as professional development mandates increase. Find means to scale the many educator preparation, cross endorsement and additional training programs being piloted by the State and others to enhance opportunities across the State and to deepen the educator pool.
 - (2) **Regional training programs for core municipal services** (inspections, enforcement, public works, assessment, budget, taxation, voting) should be facilitated by the regional COGs individually or on a shared/collective basis to enhance the knowledge base and quality of municipal services.

F. Improve the Public Sector Work Climate.

During the work of both working groups the challenges of working in the public sector (both general government and education) in the age of social media and increased access due to platforms like ZOOM making meetings and events accessible as never before to the public was discussed at length. While all agreed that having meetings streamed live was a positive advancement - the use of social media to harass and sometimes threaten local elected officials and employees makes governing more challenging and places particular stress on the recruitment and retention of employees. In fact, one ACIR member noted that the threats from social media were now more of an issue than pay and benefits. According to recent work from the National League of Cities, “While more than 8 in 10 surveyed local officials have experienced some form of harassment, threats and violence, fewer than half work in an office with a strategy to handle these incidents.”⁵

- i) ACIR should work with the [Reil Center for Public Service](#) to **develop civility training for public sector employees and elected officials as well as the public in their interactions with local government and education.**

Working with the Connecticut Bar Association, ACIR should develop guidelines/ recommendations that towns and schools may utilize Dealing with Harassment and Threats Towards Local Government Officials and Employees

⁵ On The Frontlines of Today's Cities: Trauma, Challenges and Solutions, National league of Cities, <https://www.nlc.org/resource/on-the-frontlines-of-todays-cities-traumachallenges-and-solutions/>

2. Innovation

To address the challenges of workforce recruitment/ retention and explore opportunities (as well as barriers) for shared and regional approaches to provide needed services, there should be an **open door to innovation**. To make clear, at the local level it is not the case of being adverse to innovation - rather it is the reality that alternatives to current practice must work. ACIR's approach to innovation is that it new approaches to service provision will more likely be the result of pilots. The changes to public sector operations resulting from the pandemic (for example - remote meetings, online transactions for licensing and permits, voting and remote work) were unique and out of necessity - however, it did demonstrate that differing approaches work. "It might sound counter intuitive, but the Coronavirus pandemic has provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for local authorities to radically rethink how they deliver services to their citizens...The status quo is hardly sustainable, so is it time for a more radical approach? Might a joined-up view help to make delivery of services more efficient and cost-effective?"⁶

"Innovation takes many forms in cities, [and] towns... Whether driven by data and emerging technologies, meaningful resident engagement, or empowered employees, it's about finding new approaches to persistent challenges."

ICMA

Towns and cities routinely amend or create new processes and procedures, and incorporate new technologies to achieve efficiencies (innovation) in the ongoing effort to best serve the taxpayers and people of their respective jurisdictions. They have also used, to meet the needs of their municipalities, an array of shared or regional services that take the form of inter-municipal arrangements (some formal and others not) and services provided other organizations - including non-profits such as the nine [Community Action Agencies](#), the [17 Community Health Centers](#), multiple [911 regions](#), various statutorily authorized providers like the [15 public transit districts](#) and [73 health districts](#) and a range of regional services provided by the six [Regional Education Service Centers](#) (RESCs) and the nine [Regional Councils of Governments](#) (COGs). Importantly, the decision to use or not use an outside organization for needed services is a decision left to each municipality.

Most recently the coronavirus global pandemic necessitated immediate changes to carry out governmental functions including those provided by our 169 towns and cities. Prior to the pandemic remote meetings, conducting inspections online, issuing permits online, remote registration/voting and remote work were very much the exceptions and for many were totally unknown. However, out of necessity these and other accommodations to the pandemic were made and things worked - in fact, many things improved to the point that to go back to how things were pre-pandemic is simply not an option. Plato had it right - "Necessity is the mother of invention."

While the pandemic did accelerate innovation for local government - it also resulted in some very large challenges. Municipalities realized an increase in retirements and with a very tight job market many employees took their skills to the private sector and the state to take more lucrative jobs in terms of wages and benefits. Municipalities discovered that their compensation plans were not at all competitive with the

⁶ Local government in a post-COVID-19 world — supporting the shift in citizen behaviours and public service culture, Solace Blog - <https://solace.org.uk/local-government-in-a-post-covid-world/>

private sector and the state. The traditional means of filling vacancies is not working leaving many towns - especially small and medium sized ones - with the dilemma of how to provide required services. Town hall functions such as tax collection, assessment, police, fire, EMS, inspection/enforcement, support staff, planning, public works and on the education side teachers and education support staff are all facing challenges - making them candidates for innovation.

“Government organizations must change to take advantage of the opportunities in the Post COVID-19 future. Most importantly, how government manages information and effectively leverages information technology will have a major impact on the ability of government organizations to emerge from the pandemic with improved services to citizens and a more motivated and engaged government workforce... Government leaders must embrace the fact that the future will be very different than the past; it is not possible to go back to “normal”. The near term need for many government employees to operate virtually, as well as the longer-term implications on how government work gets done, will result in lasting changes. This provides a unique opportunity to leverage information technology, not just to support current virtual operations, but to help effect fundamental changes in how government operates... Now that we have “broken” old patterns and practices, there is an opportunity to implement long overdue changes by rapidly leveraging technology to modernize government processes.”

Transforming Government to a Post COVID-19 World The Partnership for Public Service

One area where innovation has not occurred, despite a number of studies and initiatives since 2000, is with the property tax. Each of the studies conducted on the property tax in Connecticut have identified that our almost- exclusive reliance on the property tax locally contributes a list of problems that result in poor land use decisions, unnecessary economic competition between towns, racial inequities and more. Put another way, if our towns had other ways to raise revenue, property taxes would not need to be so high. What these studies have also pointed out is that Connecticut relies less on local service fees and user charges than most other states. Connecticut towns are not currently permitted, statutorily, to diversify their income streams as they see fit through the use of fees and charges that local residents are comfortable imposing on themselves and other users of their town’s services. The fees that towns can collect are required to approximate the cost of services provided. Additionally, to the extent the State of Connecticut relies on town clerks and other local agencies to collect and remit fees on its behalf, the percentage of fees a town must remit to the state could be revised or eliminated to provide more revenue options to our towns.

To enhance of opportunity for innovation for our towns and school districts, ACIR offers the following recommendations for consideration:

- A. Identify and pilot regional public employee training opportunities to share teacher training and mentoring resources and training programs for core municipal functions and services.**
 - i) Regional efforts to share teacher training and mentoring resources** should be encouraged, particularly in fields where there are significant workforce gaps, such as special education, STEM, and early childhood education. RESCs, district cooperation and educator preparatory programs should play roles in this work. This is especially important as professional development mandates increase. Find means to scale the many educator

preparation, cross being piloted by the State and others to enhance opportunities across the State and to deepen the educator pool.

- ii) **Regional training programs for core municipal services** (inspections, enforcement, public works, assessment, budget, taxation, voting) should be facilitated by the regional COGs individually or on a shared/collective basis to enhance the knowledge base and quality of municipal services.

COG Regional Service Examples

NVCOG - Regional Brownfields Partnership
CRCOG - Capitol Region Purchasing Council
CRCOG - IT Shared Services Program
CRCOG - Nutmeg Human Resources Portal
WestCOG - Western Connecticut Public Safety Training Facility
NHCOG - Northwest Hills Community Health Network of CT
NHCOG - Rural Independent Transportation System
NECCOG - Regional Animal Services Program
NECCOG - Regional Property Revaluation Program
NECCOG - Regional Paramedic Intercept
NECCOG - Shared Town Administrator Program
CRCOG/NECCOG - Crumbing Foundations CRCOG/RiverCOG/NECCOG/SCCOG -
Regional Election Advisor Program COG Regions - Comprehensive Economic Development
Strategies/ Federal Economic Development Districts
COG Regions - Human Services Coordinating Councils COG/MPO Regions -
Transportation Planning and Project Assistance

RESC Regional Service Examples

ACES - Health Insurance Collaborative
ACES - Adult Career & Community Empowerment Services ACES - West Haven
Collaborative
CES - Regional Assistive Technology Center
CES/EDadvance - WorkspaceCT CES - Regional Center for the Arts
CREC - Cooperative Purchasing Program CREC - Resource Group's Professional
Learning Services
CREC - Head Start and Early Head Start Program
EDAdvance - Data Services
EASTCONN - Technology Solutions Services
EASTCONN - Psychological & Behavioral Consultation
EASTCONN - Facilitates Collaborative, Regional Approaches To School Operations
LEARN - Teaching and Learning Hub RESC's - Special Education Services
RESC's - Adult Education RESC's - Food Service Programs
RESC's - Grant Procurement/Administration RESC's - Transportation Services

B. For local education:

- i) **Remove impediments that discourage efforts to provide education programming or staffing cooperatively or regionally.**

- ii) **Empower towns to establish cooperative schools** and have those schools recognized as LEAs
- iii) **Waive existing education space standards when renovating facilities** for regionalized or cooperative programs. This can facilitate the reuse of existing buildings and offer incentives such as increasing the construction reimbursement bonus to 20% for regionalized or jointly operated programs.
- iv) **Enable existing regional districts to initiate studies for dissolution or reconstitution** based on a majority vote of involved towns, rather than the currently required unanimous consent. Simplify the process for towns wishing to exit a regional arrangement to better reflect shifts in local needs.
- v) **Grant statutory authority for the establishment of regional finance boards** for communities within regional school districts by region-wide majority vote to oversee regional school budgets, ensuring fair fiscal oversight while reducing redundancy.
- vi) **Incentivizing districts to build local special education programs to reduce outplacement, and leveraging regional service centers (RESCs)** to increase capacity and quality of services across multiple towns.
- vii) **Increased funding for early intervention programs** to reduce the number of children who ultimately require formal special education.

3. Applied Research with Corresponding Outreach

Connecticut lacks a government supported nonpartisan policy center to provide policymakers - at both the state and local level - with timely, high-quality research and analysis on important public policy issues. Such centers provide, which many states have, provide policymakers and the public with valuable information. Our state also lacks a coordinated system to provide outreach to inform and enhance the work of policymakers. Despite the lack of a nonpartisan policy center and outreach - Connecticut has, if properly coordinated and re-purposed the elements to support such a center and outreach.

For towns, cities and school districts, Connecticut has a great deal of data regarding municipalities and school districts. Access to data, with the exception of education, is fragmented and incomplete - lacking a one-stop approach. In terms of research and policy guidance, there are multiple public and private entities engaged in this - unfortunately, often the topics examined are not based on local needs and lacks coordination in terms of research, data and outreach.

The primary point of contact within state government for towns and cities is the [Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division](#) (IGPP) of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). IGPP “functions as a conduit for intergovernmental communications by gathering and disseminating information concerning the needs of local governments and Council of Governments, the programs of assistance available to them, and legislative activities affecting them. IGPP also coordinates state efforts to revitalize cities, preserve the unique charm of our state, and build livable, economically strong communities while protecting our natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations. The IGPP Division includes two units - the [Office of Responsible Growth](#) (ORG) and the Assessment, Data Collection and Grants Management Unit.”⁷ While IGPP, amongst its varied responsibilities, administers more than 20 municipal grants, represents OPM on multiple committees, provides administrative support to at least two statutory entities (including ACIR) and is responsible for the every five-year update of the Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut (C&D Plan), it has limited research and data maintenance capacity. IGPP has limited research and staffing capacity which ACIR has explored and recommended in previous work to enhance “to provide the bandwidth needed to implement and foster collaboration at each level of government.”⁸

“Good data, when thoughtfully collected and analyzed, can help governments at all levels set more effective policies and give officials the tools to gauge whether programs are meeting their objectives.”

How Local Governments Can Use Data to Better Serve Residents Experts discuss past, present, and future of government performance management,
The Pew Charitable Trusts - ARTICLE June 22, 2023 By: Larry Eichel,

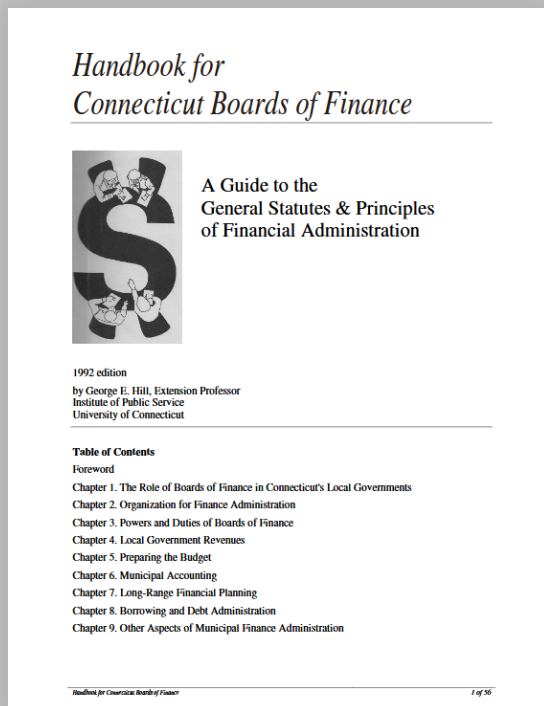
For public sector research, there are several sources. Notably, [The Connecticut Open Data Portal](#) provides access to more than 700 data sets covering all state agencies. Additional data are found through multiple state agencies. The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) maintains a [listing](#) with links to a variety of data including Census, Population, Housing, Distressed Municipalities and Town Profiles. [Town Profiles](#), which are two page demographic profiles for each

⁷ OPM Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division (IGPP) Home Page, <https://portal.ct.gov/opm/igpp/igpp-home>

⁸ Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services Prepared by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations Work Groups, February 7, 2020 - page 16

municipality, are used routinely by municipalities and others - Town Profiles are a product of the [Connecticut Data Collaborative](#), [AdvanceCT](#). The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has a variety of data including a statewide registry of [vital records](#) and [annual population estimates](#) that our towns, cities regions and others use routinely. The Connecticut Department of Labor has and [Office of Research](#) which “gathers, analyzes, and disseminates information on the economy, workforce and careers that is used to evaluate the economic health of Connecticut, to support and promote state workforce development activities, and to assist students and job seekers in making career choices.”⁹ The Office of Fiscal Analysis has a “[dashboard](#)” that “displays major sources of state aid to individual towns from FY 20 through FY 25. It also contains descriptions of the various state aid programs and details recent legislative changes.”

“State leaders make policy and budget decisions that directly impact important outcomes for residents—such as public safety, health and well-being, transportation and educational attainment. Using the best available research and data to guide those decisions is the key to evidence-informed policymaking. Evidence can help officials from all branches of government strategically target resources to programs and policies that are effective, promote innovation, improve transparency in budgeting, and build and sustain a culture of continuous learning and improvement... Policymakers need access to reliable and meaningful data and program evaluations to make the best use of public resources.” The ABCs of Evidence-Informed Policymaking, September 23, 2020,
Kristine Goodwin - National Conference of State Legislatures



For researching economic issues on their implications for Connecticut there is the [Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis](#) (CCEA), at the University of Connecticut School of Business. “CCEA specializes in economic impact and policy analysis studies, as well as advising clients regarding business strategy, market analysis, and related topics. CCEA focuses particular attention on the economic and business dynamics of Connecticut... CCEA was created at the request of Governor Weicker in 1992 to serve the state’s citizens by providing timely and reliable information regarding Connecticut’s economy and to evaluate the potential impacts of proposed policies and strategic investments.”¹⁰

The General Assembly has two research offices: [The Office of Fiscal Analysis](#) (OFA) and the [Office of Legislative Research](#) (OLR). Both, on a routine basis, provide analysis and research concerning municipalities - local including education. Both OFA and OLR review legislation and express

⁹ About the State of Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research, <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/aboutus.asp>

¹⁰ CCEA website, About - <https://ccea.uconn.edu/about/>

estimations as to the impact of pending legislation on municipalities. Unfortunately, the nature of the legislative process does not allow either to conduct a comprehensive analysis as to actual impacts - especially the variances that may exist depending on the capacity of a given municipality or school district.

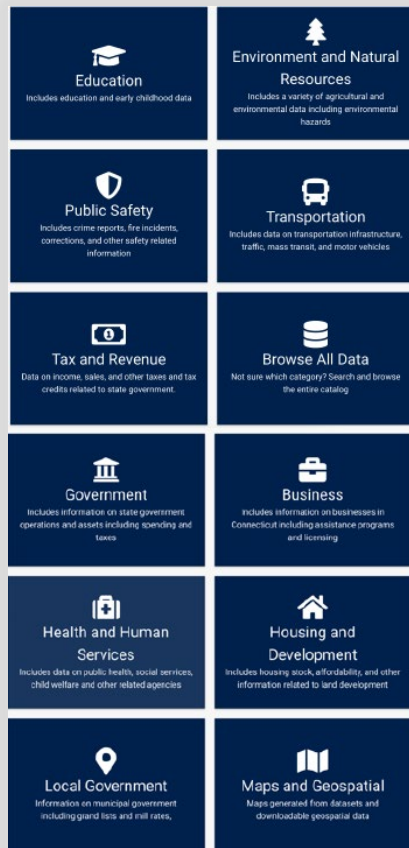
The General Assembly had, until 2017 when it was removed, the [Program Review and Investigations Committee](#) (PRI) which conducted “deep dives” on a range of topics - including many related to municipalities. Examples include “Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education,” “Apprenticeship Programs and Workforce Needs,” “Connecticut’s Regional Planning Organizations” and, “Connecticut’s Tax System.” PRI, while praised for its work, ultimately was not nimble enough to be of value to the realities of the legislative calendar.

There are many private and non-profit organizations that provide research that contribute to our understanding of the challenges and condition of our towns and cities. [The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM) provides ongoing research, information and training to their members (which is essentially every municipality in the state). CCM has staffing in place to conduct research and outreach to towns and cities. CCM also has the resources to retain consultants to take deeper dives into issues such as [property tax reform](#), [flooding mitigation](#), and the [119K Commission](#) initiative. CCM’s [Municipal Career Center](#) contains videos that encourage residents to consider municipal government as a career -- from Connecticut municipal officials a listing of municipal job openings, as well as information about municipal internships. CCM’s affiliate insurance company, the [Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency](#) (CIRMA) offers [on-line](#) and on-sight training covering dozens of municipal and education topics - plus an extensive resource library. The [Connecticut Education Association](#) (CEA) is key resource for information for Connecticut educators. Research from the [Federal Reserve Bank of Boston](#) has produced multiple studies focused on Connecticut, such as its 2015 report regarding [municipal fiscal disparities](#), 2021 report [Reforming Connecticut’s Education Aid Formula](#) to [Achieve Equity and Adequacy across School Districts](#), and a 2013 report [The Quest for Cost-Efficient Local Government in New England: What Role for Regional Consolidation?](#) providing valued information for policy deliberations. Similarly, there are multiple private organizations that conduct research specific to Connecticut local government - including the [School and State Finance Project](#), [Connecticut Voices for Children](#), and the [Yankee Institute](#). The [CT Data Collaborative](#), provides a one-stop data center covering a range of topics derived from Census and Connecticut data - enabling users to conduct their own research and [DataHaven](#) provides data at the local, regional and state level regarding wellness and equity. [AdvanceCT](#), an economic development organization working in close collaboration with DECED, provides a range of data for persons and business. The [Connecticut Business and Industry Association](#) (CBIA) additionally provides research and analysis related to the state’s business condition and employment.

For several decades towns and cities benefited from the Institute of Public Service (IPS) at the University of Connecticut, which faded away in the early 2000s. IPS produced recurring reports and guidebooks focused on the issues and operations of local government. This work included reports on Grand Lists & % Tax Rates of Connecticut Towns and Cities, Handbook for Connecticut Boards of Finance: a Guide to the General Statutes & Principles of Financial Administration, Handbook for Connecticut Selectmen: a Guide to the General Statutes and Specific Powers of Selectmen Together with Statutory Citations, and a Handbook for Connecticut Tax Collectors. IPS essentially covered all aspects of local governance and additionally provided outreach education to towns and cities on their work. This is the same model that the UCONN Cooperative Extension System has in place of agriculture, land use and various environmental concerns.

For educational research within Connecticut government there is the [Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration](#) (CCERC) which is a relatively new research initiative started by the Connecticut

CT OPEN DATA PORTAL



State Department of Education (CSDE) in collaboration with eight of the state's public and private colleges and universities. "The mission of CCERC is to address pressing issues in the state's public schools through high quality evaluation and research that leverages the expertise of researchers from different institutions possessing varied methodological expertise and content knowledge."¹¹ Current research projects (14 in progress) include: [Teachers and Leaders Turnover and Supply](#), and [Categorizing and Understanding Facilities and Long-term \(Capital\) Investments](#). Structurally, "CSDE sets the agenda, identifies projects, and allocates funding for CCERC. The University of Connecticut manages funding and provides an administrative team. A Steering Committee composed of researchers from various Connecticut institutions guides the administrative team in developing and approving research projects and reports."¹² Additionally, CSDE maintains robust state education data with [EdSight](#) - an "interactive data portal for Connecticut's public districts, schools, and programs."¹³ CSDE additionally has its [Performance Office](#) which pulls together a range of sources to better understand and evaluate Connecticut's education system.

Specific to municipal and regional research and outreach in Connecticut is the [Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy](#) (IMRP) within the School of Public Policy at the University of Connecticut. IMRP is a "non-partisan organization based at the University, dedicated to improving local, state, and national public policy by addressing complex issues, ensuring the best outcomes for individuals and communities. By bridging the gap between academia, policymakers, practitioners, and the

community, we champion fair, effective, and just public policy through applied research and community engagement."¹⁴ The focus, however, has almost exclusively, been on matters related to criminal justice.

There are several examples in other states of organizations focused on local government. Massachusetts has the [Division of Local Services](#) which has many of the same functions as the Intergovernmental Unit at OPM. DLS, amongst its duties, has a bureau dedicated to "providing training, support, and consulting services to local government" and offers other programs including [Local Finance Commonwealth Fellowship Program](#) - which is designed to foster new finance professionals for municipalities. Several state cooperative extension systems - notably [Wisconsin](#) - address local governance. Their stated mission:

"... is to provide focus, coordination, and leadership to ... educational programs supporting local government, and to expand the research and knowledge base for local government education.

¹¹ Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration, Connecticut State Department of Education, Home Page - https://portal.ct.gov/ccerc?language=en_US

¹² US Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC), About Page, https://portal.ct.gov/ccerc/about-us?language=en_US

¹³ US Connecticut State Department of Education, EdSight Home Page - https://public-edsight.ct.gov/?language=en_US

¹⁴ <https://imrp.dpp.uconn.edu/about/>

- To help new officials understand their roles and responsibilities as public officials in Wisconsin
- To develop the abilities of new and continuing officials to fulfill their roles and responsibilities
- To enhance the ability of Extension educators to establish relationships and work with local officials in their area
- To help officials keep current on topics and practices which affect their communities
- To help officials fulfill requirements when specific instruction is required by statute (such as Board of Review).

This instruction is usually in one of five forms:

- in-person workshops presented statewide in the spring and fall of each year
- teleconference programs on individual topics offered live and in recorded form
- video accompanied by written materials
- the Local Government Education website
- the Certified Public Manager Program group colleague cohorts and public classes

We research questions about local government in Wisconsin to gain insight into trends and solutions to problems.”¹⁵

There is a non-profit in Washington State - the [Municipal Research and Services Center](#) (MRSC) that “is an independent, nonpartisan, and educational nonprofit organization that helps local governments across Washington State better serve their communities by providing legal and policy guidance on any topic.¹⁶” Topics covered by MRSC include training, research, publications library, electronic bidding, and more. Also in Washington State is the [Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#) (WSIPP) “a team of multidisciplinary researchers who conduct applied policy research ...to carry out practical, non-partisan research—at legislative direction—on issues of importance to Washington State... in Education, Criminal justice, Children and adult services, Health, [and] General government.”¹⁷ They are further charged by their legislature to “identify “evidence-based” policies. The goal is to provide Washington policymakers and budget writers with a list of well-researched public policies that can, with a high degree of certainty, lead to better statewide outcomes coupled with a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.”¹⁸

Connecticut has the elements for a robust research (basic and applied) and corresponding outreach. What is missing is the coordination of these elements and a focus on the key issues challenging Connecticut’s municipalities. ACIR offers the following recommendations for consideration:

¹⁵ Local Government Education University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, About - <https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/about-the-local-governmentcenter/>

¹⁶ MRSC, About Page - <https://mrsc.org/about/mrsc-services>

¹⁷ Washington State Institute of Public Policy website - <https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/>

¹⁸ Washington State Institute of Public Policy website <https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost>

A. ACIR will establish a Center for Connecticut Local Government Collaboration (CCLG) to replicate and complement the Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC).

- i) ACIR would serve as the lead or coordinating body for the CCLG;
- ii) ACIR will form a working group of the public and private research and educational organizations to establish the Center for Connecticut Local Government Collaboration (CCLG);
- iii) Once established, ACIR will facilitate a formal agreement by and between CCERC and CCLG to ensure coordination;
- iv) ACIR will examine and recommend funding options for the CCLG as well as delivery options for municipalities and school districts, and;
- v) A new website (perhaps modeled after the [Municipal Research and Services Center](#) (MRSC), as an extension of the current ACIR website, would be established as a one-stop for information and links to public and private resources for municipalities and school districts for information generated by CCLG, CCERC and other appropriate sources.

*There are risks and costs to action.
But they are far less than the long range risks
of comfortable inaction.*

John F. Kennedy

Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee Report

Approved by ACIR – March 2026

The [ACIR Interim Report 2025](#), approved by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) in January of this year, charged the Workforce Development Subcommittee to explore opportunities and recommend actions to resolve the challenges of municipal hiring, training, diversity, and retention that have put local government's ability to deliver services at risk. Additionally, the commission asked the subcommittee to examine and provide recommendations to enhance the use of shared services and regional approaches to address the identified public sector workforce challenges.

As part of its research the subcommittee acknowledges a shared focus between the two ACIR workgroups, 1) Municipal Workforce Development and 2) Special Education, Education Governance and Workforce Development. This focus assisted in addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining non-certified school staff.

In addition to research, the Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee spent the balance of the year engaging with subject matter experts and guest speakers to inform the subcommittee's recommendations in coordination with the full ACIR.

The goal was to establish best practices that support workforce recruitment and retention in local and municipal government; and to create a strong and viable workforce pipeline for medium and small municipalities.

To support this work the subcommittee acknowledges the challenges of municipal compensation and the impediments to developing new staff in what might be a single-person municipal department. Budget constraints do not allow for such succession planning, especially in small municipalities in which positions requiring specific training and experience commonly are part-time. Additionally, municipal budgets often cannot pay for mentorship programs, internships or career trainees.

In many municipalities, employees in certified positions cover multiple part-time roles, often with no benefits. Regional resources would support resolving this issue, and discussions continue to identify a broad legislative solution. The subcommittee recommends the full ACIR continue to examine the barriers and expand on the opportunities to use shared and regional approaches to address the public sector workforce challenges.

This report covers:

- **Recommendations for:**
 1. Municipal Internships programs
 2. Municipal Trainee programs
 3. Municipal Apprenticeships programs
 4. Explore an Intermunicipal Mentorship Program
- **Continued Work Promoting Shared Services**

- **Civility in the Work Environment**
- **Compensation and Hiring Practices**
- **Additional Recommendations**

Recommendations

1. Municipal Internship Program

Create a municipal internship program to develop a candidate pipeline from schools of higher education to full time employment at the municipal level.

Example positions: Financial management, human resources, municipal management, public health administration, human services

To address the shortage of positions requiring municipal certification or degrees, work with schools of higher education to develop an internship program. This would create a program with salary progression for people earning certifications with educational components. This model would be similar to the state's [Connecticut Certified Trainee](#) (CCT) program which currently supports pathways to state employment or state supported employment for recent university/college graduates with relevant bachelor's or master's degrees ranging from Health Care Professional, Planning Analyst, to Financial Examiner. The program has a set training schedule ranging from 1-2 years specified by the role leading to full state employment and benefits.

Next Steps: Explore potential legislative funding. Engage with General Assembly committees of cognize and higher education public policy organizations.

2. Municipal Trainee Program

Create a trainee program to seek candidates with potential and lived-work experience to expose them to the opportunities at the municipal level.

Example positions: Clerical, public works, administration, public safety, parks, recreational

The Town of Windsor is in a conceptual development stage of creating a Workforce Development – Municipal Apprenticeship Program. The focus is “on-the-job training with both hands on and classroom instruction to expose participants to jobs and careers within local government where they can develop their technical and interpersonal skills while building a talent pipeline for both the town and private sector. The program would provide temporary part or full-time employment lasting 6 to 9 months in length. Examples of positions recommended for the program range from public works, library, administrative service, public safety, marketing/public information, and recreation.”¹⁹

Next Steps: Explore funding opportunities to support trainee programs at the municipal level, especially for the medium and small municipalities with limited budgets and staff to oversee a program.

3. Municipal Apprenticeship Program

Create a pipeline for people reentering the workforce or the next generation of the municipal workforce to support a professional base of qualified candidates and the training and compensation to attract and maintain staff for positions requiring certifications.

Example positions: wastewater operator²⁰, fire marshal, assessors, tax collectors, land use officials, and sanitarians

¹⁹ <https://townofwindsorct.com/app/uploads/2022/01/01-31-22-TC-agenda.pdf>

²⁰ <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/municipal-wastewater/wastewater-treatment-plant-operator-certification-fact-sheet>

- i) The program could be administered through the Councils of Governments (COGs) and Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to support smaller municipalities with a coordinator responsible for overseeing and acting as a liaison between the town/school and trainee. The apprentices could start the program within the structure of the COG or RESC as employees and then transition to municipal/school employment.
- ii) The regional workforce board could be the facilitator of a municipal apprentice program like the state program or as a partner to the State Apprentice Training program for paid employment that combines on-the-job training with classroom education. Depending upon the trade, apprenticeship programs may last 1-4 years. Through the Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training apprentices receive portable training credentials that make them eligible to take the occupational license exam. The CareerConneCT workforce development program through the CT Office of Workforce Strategy available through the state's workforce development boards offers free, short-term training working with a career coach offering stipends, transportation childcare, and job placement assistance.

The state recently announced the Registered Apprentice Program inaugural class of nine Transportation Maintainers who completed 2,044 training hours over 12 months and are now CDL licensed Transportation Maintainers doing critical highway work such as snow plowing, construction, landscaping, and highway maintenance. The program is conducted under the umbrella of the CT Department of Labor. A stipulated agreement of the terms is part of the process and signed off on by the labor partners, the CT Department of Transportation, and the CT Office of Labor Relations along with several agencies agreed to by the CT Department of Labor and CT Department of Administrative Services.

“Registered Apprentices will train from one to four years—including thousands of classroom hours and on-the-job learning—before being credentialed as an expert in their field. Upon completion of their program, a Registered Apprentice is ready for any state or industry licensing exams. Currently, there are more than 6,500 Registered Apprentices working across 50 occupations for approximately 1,800 Connecticut employers.”²¹ Many of these positions have opportunities where the apprentice's experience may be applied toward a portion of the education requirement or in office hours are applicable towards certifications.

Next Steps:

- Review recommendations from [Apprenticeships & Training Programs for Building Code Officials Working Group](#) Report.
- Invite Workforce Boards to the table for a discussion on feasibility and member interest.
- Explore what is required under the state process and regulations to set up a program.
- Explore funding potential from the Regional Performance Improvement Program (RPIP), the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, and the Department of Labor (DOL) Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund.

²¹ <https://portal.ct.gov/dot/ctdot-press-releases/2025/ct-state-agencies-recognize-first-ctdot-transportation-maintainer-registered-apprentices?>

- Engage with organized labor to develop a contract template or MOU to ensure internship programs do not conflict with terms of collective bargaining agreements.
- Engage with COG and RESC membership to assess interest in participation and to identify labor partners for collective bargaining issues.

4. Explore an Intermunicipal Mentorship Program

The members of the General Assembly represent one or more municipalities which creates the natural fit for an intermunicipal internship program. The program could resemble the General Assembly internship program, which engages high schools in Connecticut and participates in job fairs with the Department of Administrative Services. This resource could inform the next generation of workers about the benefits of municipal employment, focusing on technical skills which are acquired outside of the pathways of higher education. This initiative would function similar to trade school pathways and funding sources.

Along the same line there is a potential partnership between the General Assembly and the [Connecticut Youth Employment Program](#) overseen by the CT Department of Labor and administered by the state's five workforce development boards to increase youth exposure or career awareness to municipal employment while providing leadership and job readiness skills. The workforce boards currently provide recruitment, screening and preparation tools which can assist small municipalities who do not have that capacity. The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board highlighted the success of programs in Waterbury providing peer tutoring within the school district as a means to fund a teacher pipeline, environmental cleanup with parks and recreation, and summer internships working with local law enforcement.

Additionally, The19K Commission plan outlined in the Young People First: A Bold Plan to Address Connecticut's Statewide Crisis²² to address the crisis of youth disconnected from education and employment should be reviewed as part of the discussion on a collaborative approach "to reconnecting young people through educational opportunities and career pathways."

²² <https://www.ccm-ct.org/youngpeoplefirst>

Continued Work Promoting Shared Services

With respect to shared services, the subcommittee recommends that councils of governments (COGs) and regional education resource centers (RESCs) continue to promote opportunities and pollinate relationships for shared services for their members. Many of our state's COGs and RESCs are actively engaged in this work. The [South Central Regional Council of Governments](#) (SCRCOG), for example, has initiated a study of shared services that could prove instructive. Also, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) has prepared a [Shared Services Toolkit](#) that provides a variety of tools and resources.

Shared services can provide municipalities, school districts, councils of governments, and other public agencies with the ability to pool their resources to provide a higher level of service, while taking advantage of economies of scale to utilize taxpayer funds more efficiently and effectively.

In terms of the legal framework, C.G.S. §8-31a authorizes COGs to provide a wide variety of regional services to their member municipalities. Similarly, C.G.S. §10-66a and subsequent statutes authorize RESCs to provide various services to member school districts. Municipalities can share services with another town or other entities by utilizing the state's interlocal agreement statute, codified under C.G.S. §7-339a. This statute provides municipalities with the ability to perform any function jointly that state law requires or permits them to perform individually. Furthermore, C.G.S. §7-339m allows municipalities to establish a "special services district" for a variety of purposes. This statute is commonly used to fund a discrete service (e.g., public water and wastewater) to a set of property owners within a defined geographic area.

Service sharing is often used to provide administrative and support services, such as financial management, information technology, and facilities maintenance. Within the CRCOG region, the municipalities of Mansfield, Plainville, and West Hartford all share administrative and support services with their respective school districts.

The shared services model is also effective for community-based services, particularly those requiring a specialized professional or technical skill set such as animal control, building inspection, waste management, and public health. The Town of Bolton, for instance, manages a regional building inspection program that serves four other communities – Andover, Ashford, Marlborough, and Willington. As another example, the municipalities of Windsor and Bloomfield have shared a landfill and transfer station for many years.

COGs and RESCs offer a wide variety of services to their members, including planning, cooperative purchasing, and curriculum development. In terms of shared municipal services, the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) has managed a regional animal control program for several years that now serves 20 municipalities in eastern Connecticut. More recently, NECCOG established a regional town administrator program to provide its smaller towns (population of 5,500 or less) with operational, financial management, and budgeting services. In addition, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SECOG) provides municipal land use planning, zoning enforcement, and building inspection services to some of its members.

Good governance, communication, and collaboration are all essential components to a successful shared services partnership. Interlocal agreements or other collaborative agreements are recommended as a governance tool to detail how the participating entities will fund, manage, and provide shared services. Regular meetings and interaction between the principals are also encouraged to foster communication and collaboration, and to track performance.

The State of Connecticut supports service sharing by statute and through various grant programs. The [Regional Performance Incentive Program \(RPIP\)](#) administered by the Office of Policy & Management (OPM) offers an opportunity to lower barriers of entry for shared services. Grant recipients can use the program to fund staff and support infrastructure to start up a new shared service venture. Both COGs and RESCs are eligible to apply to the RPIP on behalf of their members. Recent RPIP awards include:

- \$325,000 to CRCOG to support a regional animal control program serving three municipalities
- \$335,000 to Area Cooperative Educational Services to provide business office support services to school districts
- \$1,295,941 to LEARN Regional Educational Service Center to provide office, information technology, and human resources services to school districts
- \$2,205,066 to South Central CT Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) to develop a regional cybersecurity program for 15 municipalities

Civility in the Work Environment

The subcommittee recommends that the ACIR explore opportunities highlighted in the [Workforce Development, Special Education and Governance Interim Report and Recommendations](#) and to continue the conversation, help establish and publicize best practices, and build bridges to effectively address incivility in the work environment. Incivility is proving to be highly detrimental to succession planning, recruitment, and the retention of the municipal workforce.

Best practices in Human Resource Management recommend organizations provide a third-party ombudsperson to hear issues raised by employees. The ombudsperson is familiar with the organization's operations, policies and procedures but is not allied with labor or management. Providing this impartial service can lead to improved morale, better working conditions, and increased retention rates.²³

Next Steps:

Develop partnerships with the Rell Center for Public Service and Braver Angels to create in-depth strategies for local government officials and communities. Secure funding to establish a regional program to share Human Resource services, such as an HR Director and ombudsperson shared regionally or among two or more municipalities.

Compensation and Hiring Practices

The subcommittee has received commentary that municipal salaries, particularly for employees working in small towns, are not adequate to compete for talent with other larger municipalities and the private sector.

A comprehensive state-wide database of pay and benefits compensation would provide policy makers at the state and local level with a clear picture of the compensation structures of communities across the

²³ "Human Resource Essentials for Public Service: People, Process, Performance" by Mary E. Guy and Jessica E. Sowa, 2022.

state. For years, CCM and CRCOG have collaborated on an online salary survey database but have faced decreasing participation by municipalities. New strategies are in the works to find solutions to make it easier for municipal offices to complete the survey, with the goal of yielding a more thorough and useful body of information.

The members recommend that the General Assembly create a legislative working group in partnership with CCM and CRCOG to engage with municipal leadership and labor to research municipal salaries to obtain a full picture of current trends and what changes are needed to ensure that local government compensation is competitive.

Additional Recommendations

The ACIR Innovation Subcommittee's mission is to consider options to establish an entity that would be responsible for providing training, innovation, and research to identify process improvements, technologies, and best practices to support local governments. The Municipal Workforce Subcommittee recommends expanding upon these recommendations to form a dynamic local government center that is focused on research problem solving and supporting our municipalities. The center could operate as a training institute for practical research and consulting to help with local government shared services implementation since many municipalities do not have the capacity to research and collaborate.

The ACIR subcommittee further recommends municipalities explore the barriers to employment by:

- Examine flexibility in hiring practices by looking at other pathways such as second chance populations.
- Consider utilizing “functional titles” when advertising for municipal jobs similar to the program adopted by the state. Often titles utilized in labor contracts fall short of conveying the actual role. The Department of Administrative Services' Talent Solutions initiative utilizes “functional titles” to match the industry in job postings as opposed to “official titles.” This practice strengthens searchability for attracting talent whether it is based on the candidate's interest or their qualifications.
- A similar consideration would be for municipalities to work with collective bargaining units to identify positions that may have commensurate skills or experience to allow permissive or flexible language instead of solely requiring a degree to meet the job qualifications.
- Increase coordination through the support of the [National Governors Association Service-To-Career Pathways Initiative](#). The National Governors Association, in cooperation with the State of Connecticut and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), has an initiative among state and local partners to meet community needs while providing career development opportunities to service members, particularly for young adults from underrepresented and diverse communities. A preliminary Connecticut report is due in December 2025.

In Summary

Further ACIR study and engagement is needed to build out the recommendations and next steps. The members of the Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee appreciated the opportunity to explore these topics in some detail. We look forward to discussing our observations, findings, and recommendations with our ACIR colleagues.

Resources

[South Central Regional Council of Governments – Work Local](#)

[Jobs.CT.gov - Training and education](#)

[CT Department of Labor - Office of Apprenticeship Training](#)

[ReadyCT – Education - The Engine of Opportunity](#)

[DRAFT: Summary of Survey on Recruitment and Retention Challenges](#)

[National Governors Association – Service to Career Pathways](#)

[Essential Considerations for Young People First Report](#)

[2020 Report of the Task Force to Promote Municipal Shared Services](#)

[Report to the Connecticut General Assembly Planning and Development Committee](#)

[Apprenticeships and Training Programs for Building Code Officials Working Group - January 2023](#)

[Rell Center for Public Service](#)

[Braver Angels](#)

[HB 5056, An Act Facilitating The Expansion of Shared Municipal Services](#)

[A Report from the Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement](#)

[The Center for Government Innovation](#)

Publicly available reports on State Job vacancies:

[Monthly Filled Vacancies at Executive Branch Agencies by Bargaining Class | Connecticut Data](#)

[Monthly Filled Vacancies at Executive Branch Agencies by Employee Type and Agency | Connecticut Data](#)

[Monthly Filled Vacancies at Executive Branch Agencies by Agency | Connecticut Data](#)