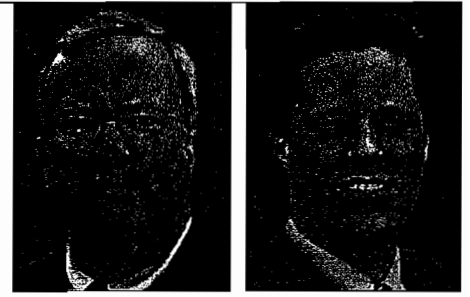
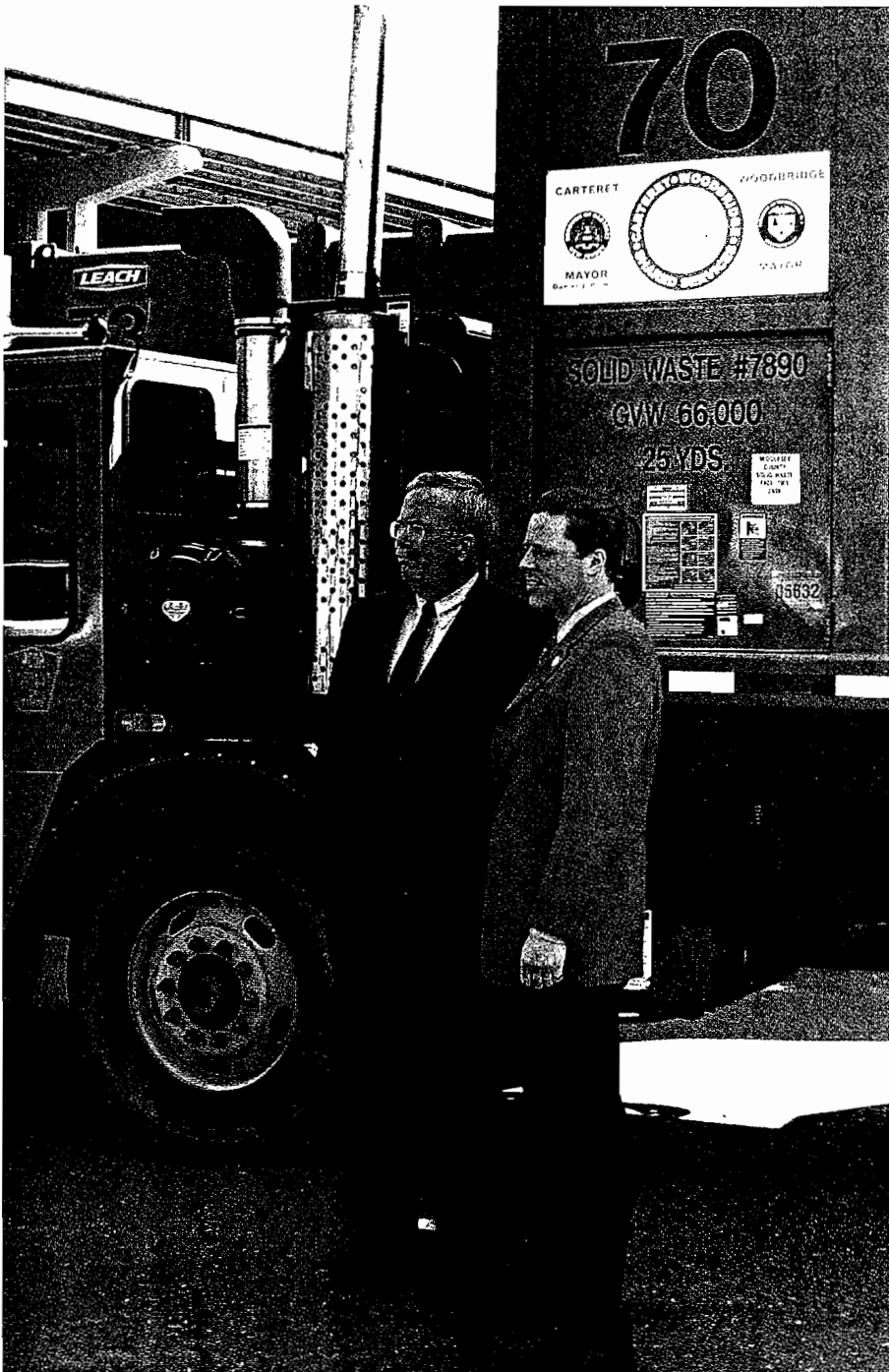


# TRASH TRUCKS DRIVE SHARED SERVICES



By John E. McCormac  
Mayor, Woodbridge Township  
& Daniel J. Reiman  
Mayor, Borough of Carteret



Carteret Mayor Daniel J. Reiman (right) and Woodbridge Mayor John E. McCormac "seal the deal" at the Woodbridge Public Works yard. The two municipalities entered into a shared services agreement whereby Woodbridge will collect Carteret solid waste.

The concept of municipalities sharing services is alive and well in the Middlesex County communities of Woodbridge Township and neighboring Carteret Borough.

In February, Woodbridge Mayor John E. McCormac and Carteret Mayor Daniel J. Reiman announced an innovative and cost-effective shared services plan whereby the Township of Woodbridge will provide trash collection and disposal services to the Borough of Carteret for a three-year period. The agreement will add \$1.8 million dollars to the Woodbridge Township treasury and save Carteret taxpayers nearly \$500,000 during the first three years of the contract.

The long-term, interlocal agreement—one of the first and largest of its kind in the state—is geared to maximize the municipal resources of both communities while maintaining the current level of trash collection services to Woodbridge and Carteret residents. At the same time, the shared-service agreement represents a significant step toward maximizing municipal resources by combining public services while continuing to implement efficiencies in public works operations and in the delivery of critical services and programs.

In the wake of the successful agreement to share trash collection services, Mayors McCormac and Reiman are continuing the shared-service dialogue by taking a hard

look at identifying areas where their municipalities can continue to cut costs without cutting services and programs. Several areas ripe for Interlocal agreements to share services include joint community library operations and the sheltering and care of abandoned pets and animals at the newly constructed Woodbridge Township Animal Shelter & Pet Adoption Center. (Woodbridge Township recently entered into a shared-service agreement

dents while also reducing the cost of government. Last year Carteret expanded the senior meals on wheels program through Middlesex County to accommodate Woodbridge residents, and we are now completing studies that will potentially enable both towns to share additional resources. This latest partnership with Woodbridge has not only enabled us to improve the efficiency of Carteret's sanitation services, but will allow us to save our taxpayers

does not impact Woodbridge Township's current trash collection schedule—each Woodbridge community still receives twice-weekly trash pick-up and consolidated curb-side recycling collection every Wednesday.

Additionally, the collection of Carteret's residential solid waste does not require any increase in Woodbridge Township Public Works staff, vehicles or equipment—the agreement uses existing Public Works resources. And, even more importantly, Woodbridge Township did not have to confront the painful determination to lay-off sanitation workers in the wake of a reduction of more than \$500,000 in state aid.

The interlocal agreement to share services not only represents a partnership between the mayors and residents of Woodbridge and Carteret, but the respective Municipal Councils. In moving to maximize the opportunity to consolidate, both the Woodbridge Township Municipal Council and the Carteret Council unanimously approved Resolutions authorizing the shared services agreement during public council meetings in January.

Woodbridge Council President Rick Dalina noted that, "On behalf of the entire Woodbridge Township Municipal Council, we are extremely pleased to secure a shared service agreement with Carteret that benefits the residents of both communities. Our goal as a council is to explore any and all opportunities to share services within the township and with neighboring communities. The agreement with Carteret is a great starting point and serves our commitment to maximize tax dollars and municipal resources."

**A Shared Roadway** Yet another effective joint venture between Woodbridge Township and Carteret was the long-awaited opening of the Industrial Highway truck route into Woodbridge. The 1.4 mile extension was approved by the Borough of Carteret and Woodbridge Township as part of the Port Reading Industrial Park Redevelopment project in May of 2004. Mayor McCormac and Mayor Reiman heralded the new roadway as a solution to the excessive truck traffic that has

THE AGREEMENT WILL ADD \$1.8 MILLION DOLLARS  
TO THE WOODBRIDGE TOWNSHIP TREASURY AND SAVE  
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THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF THE CONTRACT.

with the City of South Amboy to provide kennel services for lost and abandoned animals from South Amboy. Under that shared-service agreement, South Amboy will pay a minimum of \$4,000 per year to house abandoned and stray animals at the Woodbridge Animal Shelter & Pet Adoption Center.)

Shared-services and inter-local agreements with neighboring communities stand as a viable alternative that will help Woodbridge Township and partnering municipalities stabilize taxes at a time when the state is reducing aid to municipalities. New Jersey municipalities are facing difficult financial times which demand innovative and creative solutions. The public demands—and deserves—their trash collected and their neighborhoods clean and free of debris. The agreement with Carteret is a perfect example of what two communities can achieve when they have the same goal and are able to work together, using existing municipal resources to benefit the taxpayers of both communities. This agreement is a win-win for the residents of Carteret and Woodbridge...a win-win for shared services...and a win-win for our environment.

Shared services have become an important element in the ways we're improving programs for area resi-

dents while also reducing the cost of government. Last year Carteret expanded the senior meals on wheels program through Middlesex County to accommodate Woodbridge residents, and we are now completing studies that will potentially enable both towns to share additional resources. This latest partnership with Woodbridge has not only enabled us to improve the efficiency of Carteret's sanitation services, but will allow us to save our taxpayers

close to \$500,000 in the first three years of the agreement. It's a win-win for both communities—trash collection services for Carteret at a reduced price over the private sector. How does the shared service plan work? As a result of operational efficiencies established in the Woodbridge Township Department of Public Works, the township was able to implement the shared service program with Carteret. With the implementation of "Route Smart"—a computer-based software program that efficiently plans collection routes to maximize manpower, time on the street, and municipal resources, along with readjusting township-wide recycling collection schedules to Wednesday (instead of a staggered four-day-a-week collection schedule), the Department of Public Works was able to effectively implement the Carteret trash collection program.

The Department of Public Works assigned 12 sanitation employees, four rear-load trash trucks and one front-end load truck to collect and dispose of Carteret's residential household trash (Type 10 solid waste that includes garbage, refuse and bulk waste.) Woodbridge sanitation crews collect Carteret trash on Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday each week. The collection of Carteret trash

plagued the residential and light commercial areas of Port Reading in Woodbridge Township and Carteret for decades. The extension project has already served to minimize truck traffic through the area, with an estimated 1,200 trucks a day being diverted from Port Reading and Roosevelt Avenues.

Shared services with neighboring communities is not the only economy that has been put in place in Woodbridge Township. In reviewing municipal operations, Mayor McCormac noted that one of the more significant recurring costs was the maintenance, repair and repaving of municipal and school district infrastructure such as streets, parking lots and public areas.

**Public Works Consolidation** In 2007, Mayor McCormac initiated an overhaul of the Township Department of Public Works, Sanitation & Sewer and the Parks and Recreation Department. The re-tooling resulted in the consolidation of operations and the creation of a "street paving and resurfacing crew." The strategy of the consolidation produced tangible results in mid-2007, as paving crews from the Department of Public Works began the "in-house" resurfacing and repaving of neighborhood streets, parking lots and public areas at municipal facilities, libraries and school district buildings.

The most significant outgrowth of the Public Works consolidation was the implementation of a shared service agreement with the Board of Education to "mill and pave" school district streets and driveways, parking lots, walkways and recreation areas. Notwithstanding the initial outlay of \$529,000 in new and upgraded construction and paving equipment for the Department of Public Works, the joint, shared services program to maintain and resurface school district and township infrastructure is saving taxpayer dollars.

Shared services represent the best, most efficient way to approach rising costs and reductions in funding at a time when municipalities across the state are struggling simply to maintain day-to-day operations. ▲



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# How to Make Municipalities More Efficient



By Marc Hölzer  
Dean, School of Public Affairs  
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University's Newark Campus

*Editor's note: In light of the challenge the Governor's Budget has made to New Jersey's smaller municipalities, the following authors weigh in on the merits of consolidation.*

**M**any cities and towns in the U.S. that are considered well run have less than ten thousand, six thousand or even one thousand residents. Are New Jersey's municipal governments as well run as their many small counterparts across the country, sharing services and adopting efficiencies when possible? Or are they so small as to be inherently inefficient, and therefore must be consolidated in order to control property taxes and state aid?

These questions have long been on the agenda in New Jersey. Dialogue over the last decade or two has been characterized by the rhetoric of: "Doing More With Less," "Coping with Decreasing or Stagnant Resources," and "Achieving Efficiency and Effectiveness with Limited Resources." Most recently the claim of "Small, Inefficient Municipalities" has characterized the Governor's policy initiatives to penalize cities and towns that do not consolidate or share services, assuming that they are inherently inefficient.

There are at least three strategies for achieving municipal efficiencies: consolidation, shared services, and management capacity building. As matters of public policy, New Jersey is dancing around the first, has attempted the second, and has not systematically addressed the third.

**Is Municipal Consolidation a Viable Cost-saving Strategy?** The Governor has proposed financial penalties as motivators for consolidation of the smallest municipalities. The assumption is that consolidation will help reduce costs, and therefore property taxes. But will it?

That "economy of scale" argument implicitly holds that bigger is better, that a larger municipality will more efficiently serve the public by pooling resources, enhancing administrative capabilities, introducing operational efficiencies and combining back-office services.

Specific data, however, may or may not support that argument. The costs of consolidation may exceed projected savings for the first few years. And the per capita cost of municipal services may actually be lower in smaller jurisdictions.

Smaller municipalities may make more extensive use of volunteers—a volunteer fire service is the most obvious—but may also "broad band" the few paid positions

they have to the extent that one official does a multitude of tasks that would be parceled out to several employees in larger municipalities.

Smaller municipalities may also have higher levels of civic engagement, an intangible but valuable characteristic that is often less evident in larger entities. What dollar value can be attributed to volunteerism, participation, or a sense of belonging? In terms of quality of life, citizens may value small, more intimate communities, volunteerism in their administration, and citizen engagement over economies of scale.

IN TERMS OF QUALITY OF LIFE,  
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The most important counter argument to consolidation is a subject that has not yet been addressed in Trenton—property values. Officials who argue that every municipality deserves to have a mayor, a police chief, and a fire chief, each with their own perquisites, are arguing not necessarily for personal power or status, but also for community identity. Consolidation would certainly threaten or obliterate the identity of many towns, and by extension their school districts. Property owners have made very conscious decisions to live in communities with particular attributes of character, and are often willing to extend themselves financially to do so. Although no one knows the extent to which consolidation would upset property values, there would certainly be winners and losers. Some municipalities would resist diluting their "property pool," and almost all would resist losing their historical identities. Until we can fully and objectively assess this "800 pound Gorilla," consolidation initiatives should be set aside pending a thorough study lest New

Jersey accidentally cause homeowners to seek small town options in other states. And the last thing we need is to accidentally stumble into a threat to property valuation that might precipitously lower the tax base in some communities.

**Could Shared Services Deliver Major Cost Savings?** Probably, but we cannot be certain. Random experiments with shared services are widespread in New Jersey, are often favorably viewed by participants, but are poorly documented as to direct cost savings and possible hidden costs.

New Jersey's municipalities have experimented with a wide range of shared services or inter-local agreements, often in response to incentives provided by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

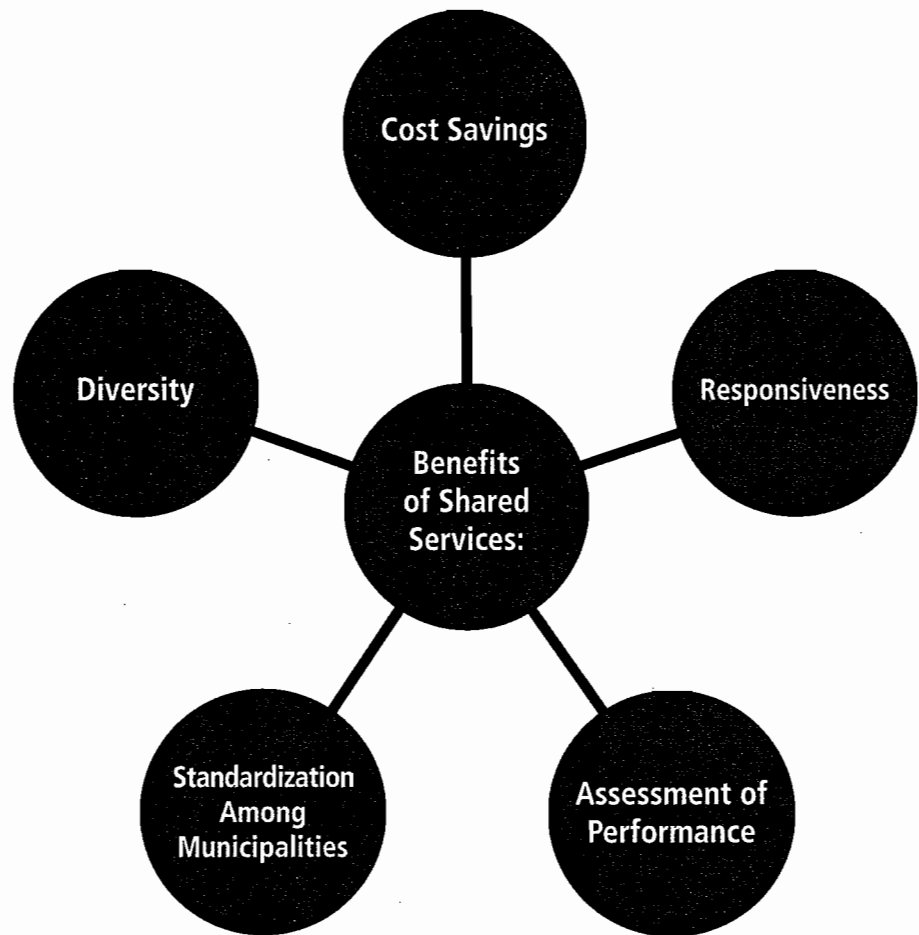
Overall, studies supported by DCA have consistently found that:

- Officials view such agreements positively, claiming that they reduce costs, increase savings and quality of service, and reduce duplication.
- There is a lack of good information about the financial or service-delivery benefits of sharing services.
- Obstacles to more inter-local agreements include organizational gridlock, particularly the desire to protect specific employees, and multiple, conflicting personnel policies and pay schedules.
- Informal, trusting contacts by municipal administrators are key to more shared service projects.

Municipalities in New Jersey are ready to implement shared services, but require more financial incentives and best practice models from New Jersey and beyond. The incentives are in place to some extent and may be expanded if shared service savings can be documented. Those models are part of a capacity-building strategy that the state has essentially ignored.

**Can Capacity Building Lead to Municipal Efficiencies?** New Jersey's best options for controlling municipal costs may well be to simply build the problem-solving, cost-cutting capacities of its 566 local units. This is not as dramatic as consolidation. Nor is it the "quick fix" that shared services appears to promise. But it is the time-tested strate-

## Benefits of Shared Services



gy of the most efficient public agencies and private businesses: dozens of small and simultaneous innovations that amount to a few percentage points a year and are cumulative over time.

The largest payoff may come from investing in a search for best practices—for the models, exemplary programs and good ideas that can break the logjam of traditional patterns of municipal decision making. Putting those examples in front of elected and appointed officials, as well as citizens and the media, could quickly foster a vigorous dialogue about many more options in the budget and planning processes.

Searching the Internet is a good start. But Google-type searches with millions of "hits" can quickly become frustrating. More sophisticated and useful searches for best practices could utilize one or more of the following options, and such expenditures should be considered necessary investments rather than discretionary costs:

First, require each municipality and local library to form an "Innovation Partnership." Trained librarians could search for models in one designated service area a month, culling ideas not only from ICMA, but from awards programs, professional organizations and service-specific networks.

1. The State could develop a centralized databank of such models, publishing that information monthly for all stakeholders.
2. DCA could convene quarterly conferences to present case studies of the most promising models for New Jersey.
3. Municipal officials could be encouraged to travel to conferences where good ideas are on the agenda (even out of state!), to subscribe to publications that highlight those ideas, to participate in online seminars ("webinars") that highlight specific possibilities, etc.

For example, a search for models of shared services and other municipal efficiencies would turn up some intriguing possibilities around the country, such as:

1. A statewide Shared Municipal Services Incentive Program
2. A County-wide Shared Services Summit
3. A County Efficiency Report
4. A Town's Operational and Efficiency Review
5. A City-Town Shared Services Consolidation Meeting
6. A Municipal Performance Measurement Program
7. A Canadian Municipal Efficiency Program

Searching worldwide, for example, the Southland, New Zealand Shared Services Initiative stands out. In 2001, four local councils decided to explore shared services. A combined investment of \$60,000 netted savings of \$1.3 million in the first two years. Innovations included joint purchase of software operating systems, creation of a rural fire authority, a combined economic tourism organization, adoption of a protocol on

shared planning policy, and the establishment of a regional landfill and joint waste management system.

A second and parallel efficiency strategy is performance measurement. A performance measurement data collection system could collect, display and report key indicators of government performance to all stakeholders. Tracking progress over time would encourage:

- Benchmarking against a municipality's own accomplishments.
- Benchmarking against comparable municipalities in the state.
- Benchmarking against national data.

That comparative data would certainly drive the dialogue on efficiency and effectiveness.

Legislation passed last March mandates such a system, but only if it is triggered by DCA, which has not done so. Yet a relatively modest statewide investment in performance measurement on the order of hundred of thousands of dollars could likely return millions of dollars in municipal efficiencies.

Third, the state might proactively initiate technology-oriented projects that would avoid excessive municipal

expenditures for cutting-edge systems such as non-emergency 311 call in capacities. Several dozen cities across the country are now implementing such systems, diverting calls from overburdened 911 dispatchers and responders, and tracking the results of requests for services. Before New Jersey's municipalities pursue hundreds of parallel 311 projects, we should establish a statewide system that would certainly deliver economies of scale.

Fourth, New Jersey should become the national leader in Special Improvement/Business Improvement Districts, known as SIDs or BIDs. Those emerging organizations, with separate tax and revenue streams, enhance the provision of basic municipal services and open up external funding possibilities. Relatively modest investments in SIDs and BIDs could:

- Tap separate tax/revenue streams.
- Supplement provision of basic services.
- Open up external funding possibilities.

#### Next, Best Steps

Municipalities will resist consolidations. Both short-term and long-term savings are questionable. Our energies are better spent on more promising alternatives.

Shared services offer some of those promising possibilities, but only if there is much more financial support, models are continuously showcased to all stakeholders, technical assistance is available, and up front investments do not bump up against municipal CAPs.

Capacity building is a promising set of municipal performance strategies that offer long-term, compounded savings: innovation partnerships that search for best practices, performance measurement systems, statewide technology-based projects, and widespread establishment of SIDs or BIDs.

New Jersey has the capacity to become the national leader in efficient, effective municipal governance. Does it have the imagination to make the necessary investments? ▲

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# Bringing Fairness to Compensation



By Reagan Burkholder  
Principal, Summit Collaborative Advisors, LLC



**M**uch of a municipality's effort goes toward providing equity and fairness in its services. Public safety services are allocated fairly and equitably. So are public improvements and recreation programs. No matter how good your town's services are, people will be unhappy if the services are offered in an unfair manner.

Employees are no different from residents in their desire for fairness. That great 20th Century researcher into employee motivation, Frederick Herzberger, found that unfair or inequitable administration of policies can poison the atmosphere for employees. If you are seen as an unfair employer, your efforts to motivate your employees will fail. Herzberger found that fairness was far more important to employees than their actual salaries, as long as those salaries keep a roof over their heads and food on their tables.

This article outlines the elements of a fair and equitable pay plan, shows how municipalities can evaluate their current systems, and suggests ways of initiating a new plan or adjusting an old one.

**Elements of a good pay plan** A good pay plan has four key characteristics. Any municipality can evaluate its current pay plan against these standards.

- It is based on a comprehensive set of job descriptions. Good job descriptions allow you to classify positions into salary groups. Classification requires analysis of such factors as education and experience; level of responsibilities; technical, intellectual and interpersonal skills; and physical demands of the job, all of which should be covered in your job descriptions.
- It is internally fair. Jobs that require similar knowledge, skills and abilities should be paid at similar rates. This is often done using a point system, with various levels of education, experience, responsibilities, use of equipment and tools, reasoning, language skills, physical demands, etc, being assigned a set number of points. Jobs that score similarly—regardless of whether the points are based on physical or intellectual effort, use of heavy equipment or office machines—are assigned to the same salary group. This is called "point factor job evaluation." A web search on that phrase will yield a lot of good information.
- It reflects the marketplace. Jobs need to be compensated at a rate similar to what is being paid by other employers for similar work. A typical first step is to identify comparable municipalities—and, perhaps, local businesses—for a salary survey. "Comparable" includes such factors as geography and demographics, community character, and so forth. A small, rural, middle-income town does not want to compare itself to a large, suburban, upper-income community. Because it is impractical to survey all possible salaries, towns must identify "keystone" positions from which they can extrapolate salaries for other jobs.
- It is reviewed periodically. A plan that was fair ten years ago may no longer be internally fair or reflect the marketplace; pay plans need frequent attention. It is important to have a process for reviewing both salaries and job responsibilities, in order to make adjustments on a regular basis.

**Philosophy** There are important principles underlying a good pay plan. You need to sort out the philosophical underpinnings before you get down to the details.

One common principal of the good pay plan is that you are compensating the job, not the person in the job. How much should a highly skilled departmental secretary be paid? Too often, pay plans get out of kilter because the person in the job is not as skilled as the job requires, or because a well-connected employee is compensated too well. But the salary scale for the job should be based on the value of the job to the town, assuming it is filled by a skilled person.

**Pay for performance** There is a burgeoning desire to pay municipal employees based on their performance. The reasoning is simple: The better work a person does, the more that person should be paid. And vice versa.

This is an attractive idea, and there are not many philosophical arguments against it. But, in the practical realm, there may be issues. It's not difficult to imagine a Wall Street investment banker working harder in hopes of a multimillion-dollar bonus. But how large a bonus can a municipality afford to dole out to its best employees? Even if you do have an employee who deserves an extra \$10,000, could you really offer that kind of bonus?

At the more realistic level, why not give a high-performing employee an extra 1 percent increase? If the employee makes \$40,000, 1 percent is an extra \$400. Divided into 26 biweekly paychecks, it's \$15.38. After deductions, call it ten bucks every two weeks. Does \$5 a week either buy or reward better performance?

Doubters like Robert Behn at Harvard's Kennedy School argue strongly that pay-for-performance in the public sector is impractical and counterproductive. (See [www.ksg.harvard.edu/thebehnreport/January2004.pdf](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/thebehnreport/January2004.pdf)) Nonetheless, some thoughtful municipalities have developed such plans, although none is believed to offer multimillion-dollar bonuses! Some offer a faster trip through the salary scale. Others offer one-time bonuses tied to specific accomplishments. One large Virginia county has an elaborate goal-based system that awards salary increases by melding personal performance with work-group and overall departmental performance.

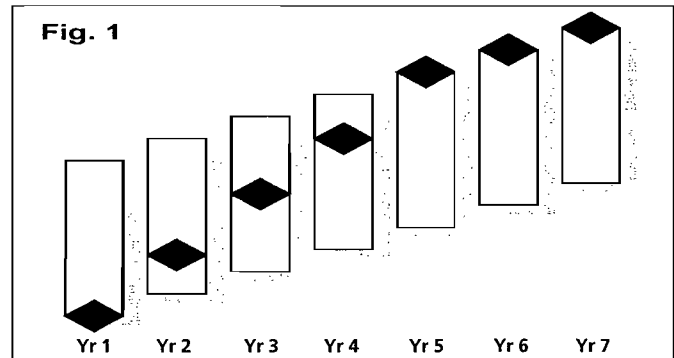
**Relationship to the average** Where does your municipality want to stand relative to average pay for a position? "Within 5 percent ± of the average" is a very reasonable answer. Some towns may want to be well above average, to attract and hold the most talented employees. Others may deliberately want to be well below average, thinking they are saving money. However, those towns risk attracting only below-average employees or those who leave for better-paying positions. But, whatever the result, each town should have a consistent answer to this question.

**Types of pay plans** Municipalities should resolve in advance how employees' increasing skills and experience will be rewarded.

Virtually all union agreements provide for progression through the pay scale, generally over five to seven years. But some municipalities have no scale for non-union employees. Their salary ordinances list titles or employees'

names, and set individual salaries. The only way an employee can get anything other than a standard cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is to beg—or have good contacts.

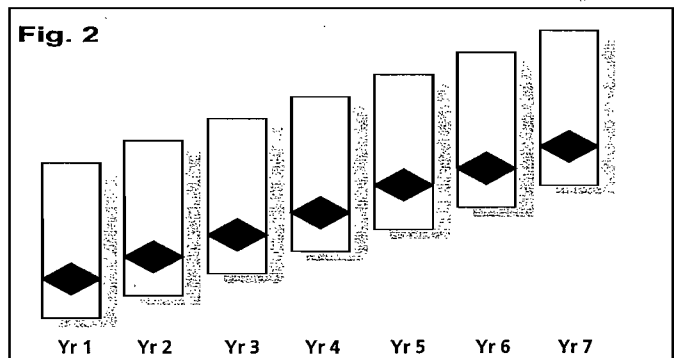
Here are three common approaches to employees' movement through the pay scale.



**Figure 1** shows a pay progression typical of a civil-service system or a union agreement. Employees generally start at the low end of the pay scale and progress annually toward the top. Each year, they benefit from both a "step" increase and the cost-of-living adjustment. Once at the top, they get only the annual COLA.

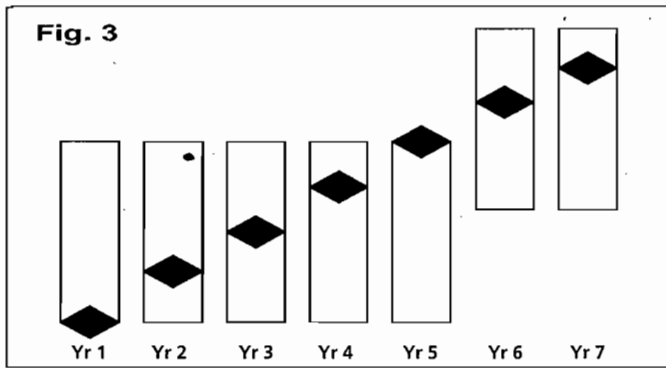
This system assumes that the top of the pay scale represents the top value of the job to the municipality. This traditional system also assumes that employees' knowledge, skills and abilities improve during their first few years on the job, and that those improvements should be rewarded.

This system fits well into the pay-for-performance concept, because advancement through the pay scale can be based on observed improvements in knowledge, skills and abilities. (Unfortunately, advancement is too often based more on an employee's continued breathing than on improved performance. In many cases, the average employee, the laggard, and the superstar receive the same reward.)



**Figure 2** shows a type of pay plan used by some municipalities. The entire scale increases annually based on an approved COLA, but the employee's place within the scale remains static. This costs the town less than the traditional plan because it withholds any premium for improvements in an employee's knowledge, skills, or abilities.

Each employee, then, must negotiate increases with management, subject to the governing body's approval. Those well known to elected officials may have a better chance of getting an increase, while the excellent but quiet employee in the back office may remain unnoticed and unrewarded.



Finally, **Figure 3** illustrates a private-sector plan used by a few municipalities. In this system, the salary ordinance is amended only every few years. Meanwhile, employees move through the scale (based on either time or performance) with an annual COLA increase.

Based on a corporate model, this system assumes you have a professional human-resource staff. This staff tracks the progress of individual employees, makes sure they stay within the scale, and ensures that the scale reflects the marketplace. Staff conducts salary surveys on a regular and frequent basis. Elected officials still need to approve annual COLA increases.

Towns using this "businesslike" system may find that elected officials are reluctant to update a five-year-old salary scale with double-digit increases, or that they must make adjustments for individual employees whose salaries no longer fit within the adopted scale.

**From data to policy** At this point, you have worked out job descriptions, allocated titles to salary groups, and conducted a salary survey. Now you need to develop a salary ordinance, which should include these elements:

- A set of salary grades, each with a minimum and a maximum salary. There should be a set percentage difference—say 25 to 35 percent—between the minimum and the maximum.
- Classification of each job into a salary grade.

- A clear statement of how employees move from the bottom to the top of the salary grade.
- Conditions under which an employee can be appointed above the minimum salary for a certain grade.

**Periodic reviews** With all these studies and the salary ordinance in place, there should be a system for periodic review. Job descriptions should change when conditions change. Twenty years ago, only high-level secretaries could use a computer. Now it's an assumed part of entry-level office positions. Stenography, on the other hand, is all but unknown these days, yet remains in many job descriptions and titles.

Sometimes, an employee's job title needs to be changed, not the job description. Periodic review of employees' classifications is also a good idea. Is a laborer spending a lot of time driving trucks? Perhaps a reclassification from laborer to truck driver is appropriate. A few towns offer employees an annual opportunity to make their case for reclassification, based on changes in their duties or responsibilities.

**How to do it** Municipalities often claim that employees are their most important resource. Careful attention to this valued resource takes time and consideration. The municipal administrator or manager could undertake the studies and do the analysis, but this will surely detract from other duties. Ground-up development of job descriptions for two dozen positions could easily take 80 hours of intense work. A similar commitment would likely be needed to develop a classification plan, conduct a salary survey, and translate everything into a comprehensive salary ordinance for consideration by elected officials.

Consultants can be a valuable resource in this area, having done this complex work before and, in many cases, already having the necessary methodologies and forms that you would otherwise have to develop locally.

Regardless of who does the actual work, creating fair and equitable policies and conditions for your employees will help foster fair, equitable, quality services for all. ▲

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