



The Research Bureau

“MORE Bang for the Buck”

What do you do when your business faces rising costs, shrinking revenue, greater competition, or some combination of the above? You undoubtedly try to reduce expenditures, innovate to improve the product and reduce the cost, merge with your competitors or buy them out. As we know from recent budget debates and failed Proposition 2 ½ overrides across the Commonwealth, local governments are experiencing rising costs and shrinking revenues. Shouldn't they replicate sound business practices? Of course. Implementing such measures should be expected by all residents and businesses whose taxes pay for public services.

One way in which local governments in Central Massachusetts are responding to these fiscal challenges is through membership in MORE (Municipalities Organized for Regional Effectiveness), a regional collaborative first proposed by The Research Bureau about a decade ago. It grew out of the Bureau's research following the demise of county government in the Commonwealth and a recognition that many government responsibilities such as water and sewer infrastructure, transportation networks, and environmental quality cut across the traditional political boundaries that were established as much as 300 years ago. These issues can be better addressed with the participation of the entire Central Massachusetts region. In the Commonwealth, town boundaries are fixed because all the land is incorporated preventing annexation into larger units of government such as the metropolitan governments established in Indianapolis in 1970 and more recently in Louisville. MORE is an informal arrangement to achieve some of the benefits that other areas of the nation are able to do through legal changes.

MORE enables towns to enter into agreements for joint purchasing, including goods such as office products or fuel, and sharing of personnel who perform similar functions including public health, code enforcement activities, and veterans' services, thereby reducing cost per town and increasing the level of service. Member towns are also discussing joint delivery of services that many towns do not have the resources to provide on their own e.g. animal control. Finally, MORE is developing a regional legislative agenda that would enable the voice of Central Massachusetts to be heard more clearly on Beacon Hill.

After a false start in the late 1990's, MORE is now up and running within the administrative framework of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), a multi-purpose, government-funded planning and technical assistance agency for 40 (including Worcester) of this region's cities and towns. For a modest assessment, 20 local governments in the region are working with a team of staff from CMRPC on joint purchasing of goods and services, grant writing, lobbying, and special projects suggested by the members to meet regional needs such as removal of solid waste and expansion of water and sewer capacity.

To realize the full potential of this collaboration, MORE members are interested in establishing a dialogue with the private sector to promote economy in municipal operations, improve their management, and strengthen the region's business climate – all of which affect the bottom lines of both government and businesses. To contribute your business expertise and policy suggestions to this effort, please contact Roberta Schaefer at The Research Bureau 508-799-7169, or Wendy Steinhilber at CMRPC 508-459-3315.

To read The Research Bureau's history of MORE, go to www.wrrb.org.

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