



# Municipal Capacity

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Key Metrics and Strategies to Increase Performance

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## **Summary**

The Council of Government (COG) assigned Etminan, Greenwood, and Viso Consultants (EGV) with the task of increasing municipal capacity. The COG wanted EGV to develop policy solutions for member organizations to implement the recommended policies for complex issues related to networked problems. The COG provided EGV with a great amount of latitude in defining the meaning of municipal capacity and recommended implementation processes.

## **Analysis**

The primary issue for EGV was to define “municipal capacity” as the basis for future recommendations. Research was conducted with the goals and objectives of the COG as a guide to identify the definition that will best suit the needs of the COG. EGV focused on studies and information that was related directly to the COG location in the Chicago Metropolitan area. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) issued a strategy paper in 2017 and defined municipal capacity as:

the ability of a municipality to ensure services are provided on a sustained basis in pursuit of local and regional objectives. These objectives could involve public services, community identity, and regional and local economic development (CMAP; MPC 2017).

EGV concurs with the definition as offered by CMAP and supports this as the basis for our future work with the COG. CMAP identified the importance of not only defining municipal capacity but also the incorporation of metrics, assessments of current capacity, and programs used in other states. Three themes are focused on expertise building, network building, and capability building. A strategic framework focuses on enhancement of technical offerings and resources, training of officials and staff, shared support service and consolidation, infrastructure sustainability and enhancement, as well as addressing financial conditions (CMAP; MPC 2017).

EGV also researched best practices from other sources in developing an assessment framework and guidance toolbox. Implementation of recommendations from research will allow EGV to provide the COG with a prioritization matrix and to identify recommendations for the COG (Pearson 2016). Research provided strategies to overcome institutional challenges through municipal collaboration which has a positive effect on political, financial, technical, and social capacity (Alm, Paulsson and Jonsson 2021).

## **Selection of Key Performance Indicators**

EGV Consultants went through a rigorous procedure to create KPIs that reliably measure the capacity of member organizations as part of our work to assess and improve municipal capacity in the Chicago Metropolitan area (CMA). We carefully have chosen KPIs based on their application, relevance, and practicality, drawing on academic research and industry literature.

## **Informed by Relevant Sources**

Our method for choosing KPIs was informed by knowledge from a wide range of sources, such as academic journals, government documents, and empirical research. Notably, studies conducted by prestigious organizations like the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) offered fundamental understandings of the complex nature of municipal capacity (CMAP; MPC 2017).

## **Criteria for Selection**

The KPIs that were selected were carefully picked since they were in line with the concept of municipal capability and could offer member organizations useful information. The selection of indicators was focused on their potential to accurately reflect crucial facets of municipal performance, such as the user satisfaction, financial sustainability, and environmental impact. To further support evidence-based decision-making, we gave priority to indicators that provided measurability, enabling thorough data gathering and analysis.

## **Selected KPIs**

### **User Satisfaction:**

The level of which businesses and residents are satisfied or dissatisfied with different facets of waste management serves as a crucial gauge of a municipality's ability to manage garbage efficiently and fulfill the demands of the community. An important Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that measures the municipality's capacity to provide quality services and provide a good atmosphere is resident satisfaction. For example, timely and consistent garbage collection not only keeps the neighborhood clean, but it also shows how well the town can manage providing basic services. Effective recycling initiatives that provide easy access to recycling bins and clear guidelines not only support environmental sustainability but also highlight a municipality's ability to produce creative solutions for trash management. Clean streets and public areas are guaranteed by initiatives that prioritize community cleanliness through systematic waste management techniques, which also demonstrate the municipality's ability to provide efficient services. On the other hand, inconsistent collection services or missing pickups indicate possible gaps in the municipal capacity to meet service needs, which in addition to causing frustration. Inadequate infrastructure and limited recycling alternatives not only discourage participation but also draw attention to regions where municipal capability for infrastructure development and resource allocation may be deficient. In addition to harming the aesthetics of the community, illegal dumping and littering highlight the need for strict enforcement strategies as well as teamwork to overcome institutional weaknesses and improve municipal capability. Initiatives for proactive trash reduction, including composting programs, not only support sustainability but

also give towns the chance to interact with the community and improve their ability to manage garbage efficiently. Municipalities can improve their total capability for governance and service delivery, leading to a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable society, by addressing issues and giving priority to projects that increase citizen satisfaction (Ikiriko et al., 2023).

### **Financial Sustainability:**

Financial sustainability is yet another important Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for evaluating a municipality's ability to effectively oversee waste management while also maintaining economic responsibility. The municipality's allocation of financial resources for waste management projects demonstrates its commitment to resource management and environmental protection. Allocating a portion of the city's budget, specifically for enhancing the recycling system, demonstrates the financial viability of the project and contributes to long-term environmental goals. More financially sustainable are tactics that generate money and ensure the continuous provision of waste management services while maintaining a balance in operational costs. Two strategies for the management of solid waste are volume-based fees and landfill tipping fees. Garbage pickup rates from households and businesses must cover the daily collection price and the capital costs of waste management infrastructure. This guarantees that the municipality will have the capacity to manage trash in an environmentally friendly manner and construct and upkeep the necessary infrastructure and facilities for future use. Insufficient funding for waste management programs can hinder the municipality's ability to address new challenges and develop creative solutions. Local governments that prioritize financial sustainability and careful resource allocation can protect their budgets, advance environmental sustainability, and strengthen their ability to provide exceptional waste management services (Bartolacci et al., 2018).

### **Environmental Impact:**

Assessing the environmental impact is a crucial Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that measures the effectiveness of municipalities in managing waste while reducing environmental damage. Assessing the consequences of waste management activities is essential for measuring the sustainability of local operations and their contribution to broader environmental goals. Monitoring indicators like as greenhouse gas emissions from garbage collection and disposal methods offer useful insights into the municipality's carbon footprint and its impact on climate change. In addition, monitoring the diversion of garbage from landfills through recycling and composting activities helps evaluate the municipality's success in reducing landfill waste and conserving natural resources. Municipalities with robust waste management infrastructure and comprehensive sustainability initiatives demonstrate a greater capacity to address environmental issues and foster ecological resilience. By designating environmental impact as a crucial metric for evaluating performance, municipalities can effectively integrate environmental

considerations into their decision-making procedures for trash management. This will enhance their capacity to achieve environmental sustainability goals while delivering essential services to their people (Deus et al., 2020).

## **Strategies**

The lack of garbage collection services and sustainable recycling options has become a growing concern for neighboring communities. Municipalities are tasked with addressing these issues brought on by their residents but often lack the capacity to do so. These strategies aim to increase municipal capacity to enhance the municipal government's ability to implement policies and services designed to solve the lack of garbage collection services in their communities and sustainability practices. The strategies will help increase the capacity of local governments that are dealing with these concerns and highlight the benefits that the strategies will bring to communities.

### **Establish a Joint Waste Management Department**

One strategy to increase municipal capacity for garbage collection services is to establish a joint waste management department. Poor solid waste management in developing countries poses a major threat to public health and environmental quality and reduces the quality of life, particularly for the poorer residents in both urban and rural areas. In a policy research paper titled "Municipal Solid Waste Management in Small Towns," the paper shows that joining forces to provide waste management services is a cost-effective solution for small communities. A joint department would be responsible for providing waste management services to all participating municipalities (Wang et al., 2011). Having these municipalities combine their resources, the joint department could ensure adequate staffing, equipment, and training, which would help improve the garbage collection services for the small communities involved. Funding for this joint department can come from various revenue channels that these municipalities gain from residents. According to an analysis conducted by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, most local government recycling programs in the state are funded in whole or in part through household fees, property taxes, or a combination of the two. The department could also have charges for landfill tipping fees and volume/weight-based fees for solid waste. This will help keep costs low for residents but provide enough revenue for the program. The joint department could also centralize administrative functions, such as record-keeping and billing, which would reduce costs and improve efficiency internally between the municipalities. Having a joint department will also help the selection of technology used for collection as well as maintaining a shared landfill site, which will help optimize dumpster locations (Fadda et al. 2018).

### **Create a Joint Recycling Program and Event**

The next strategy to increase municipal capacity for the issues within these municipalities is to create a joint recycling program and event. The program would serve all participating municipalities and would include a range of recycling services, including curbside pick-up and drop-off locations. This will help the participating municipalities with Illinois's Climate Action

Plan and have them reach the goals to reduce carbon emissions to zero. Having the convenience of having curbside pickup for recycling services will increase the likelihood of a resident to participate (Park and Berry, 2013). By combining resources, the regional program could ensure consistent and comprehensive recycling services across all communities involved. Both joint programs could also centralize administrative functions, such as marketing and outreach, which would reduce costs and improve efficiency. Regional recycling programs are more effective than local programs due to economies of scale (Wan et al, 2015). Through this program the municipalities can create an event for residents that will help them achieve sustainable goals within their communities. This will be a recycling event for paper shredding, electronic recycling, paint, batteries, and other household objects that can be recycled. Each of the communities will help fund this sustainable event and it can be held twice a year or every season depending on the cost. The joint program will work on finding recycling vendors who can commit to the dates and will provide bins, trailers, and other places to place residents recycling objects into. The event will be a free event and the program can reach out for sponsors to help cover any costs associated with the vendor fees.

### **Internal Administration**

Consolidating administrative functions is a strategy that could benefit both garbage collection services and sustainability practices. Consolidating administrative functions can lead to cost savings and improved efficiency. Inter-municipal cooperation might allow the cooperating jurisdictions to benefit from each other's economies (Bel and Warner, 2014). By consolidating administrative functions, such as accounting, human resources, and procurement, participating municipalities could reduce costs and improve efficiency. Additionally, consolidating administrative functions could free up resources, for instance, by consolidating accounting functions, participating municipalities could reduce the need for duplicate staff and software, which would result in cost savings. Sharing staff and equipment is another strategy that could benefit both garbage collection services and sustainability practices. By sharing staff and equipment, participating municipalities could ensure adequate staffing and equipment for critical services, such as garbage collection and recycling. Staff can also share their experience and can learn from one another on the best practices for sustaining the community through the joint garbage and recycling program. Sharing staff and equipment could reduce costs and improve efficiency. For instance, by sharing equipment, such as garbage trucks or recycling bins, participating municipalities could reduce the need for duplicate equipment and maintenance costs. To fund this joint program, the municipalities should seek grant funding through Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. This will help with the initial costs for the programs and can help reduce costs put onto the municipalities as soon as they join. Securing grant funding for the garbage and recycling programs, participating municipalities could reduce the need for local funding and redirect those resources to other resources that could benefit the programs.

Increasing municipal capacity for garbage collection services and sustainable recycling is critical for the well-being of the surrounding communities. Combining communities under one service for garbage collection services and sustainability practices is a strategy that can increase capacity

and enhance services. Strategies such as establishing a joint waste management department and a recycling program, consolidating administrative functions, sharing staff and equipment, and pursuing grant funding can all contribute to increased municipal capacity. By implementing these strategies, our communities can ensure adequate garbage collection and sustainable recycling services, which will enhance the quality of life for our residents.

## **Recommendation**

EGV was tasked by the COG to define municipal capacity to develop policy solutions for member organizations of the COG. EGV has identified municipal capacity through research that is applicable to the COG as it is in the Chicago Metropolitan area. Key Performance Indicators were identified and were based on empirical data and research. Strategies were identified to increase capacity for the member governments with minimal impact on the key performance indicators.

EGV is dedicated to using these KPIs going forward to support Council of Government member organizations as they strive for excellence in governance and service delivery.

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