



Hire a Shared Energy Manager

Capacity issues—whether funding or staff time—are a recurring obstacle for local clean energy efforts. The additional responsibilities and specialized knowledge necessary to pursue such efforts can be overwhelming for busy facilities managers or town administrators. However, it can also be hard for cities and towns to justify hiring a full-time staff person devoted to energy, especially for smaller towns. Sharing an energy manager’s services can be a convenient way to improve services and reduce costs. This strategy outlines how communities with part-time or intermittent energy-related staffing needs can collaborate to hire a shared position and/or contract for energy manager services.

Program Implementation Steps

1. Discuss needs.

Meet with other communities that are interested to discuss interests and needs regarding energy staff, as well as resources to pay for a new position. This may take multiple meetings to explore. An effective way to find other communities interested in energy staffing is by reaching out to your Regional Planning Agency (RPA). An RPA will have the resources to connect communities with similar needs and facilitate any potential partnerships.

Generally, energy managers provide technical assistance in baselining energy use, creating energy policies and strategies, and implementing projects. Some communities may have already done more energy planning than others, so it is important to identify what each town expects from the energy manager. Typical tasks that communities may need help with include grant writing and reporting, project design, managing HVAC equipment, and overseeing retrofit projects.

2. Determine responsibilities and salary.

Based on shared needs, decide what the energy manager will do for each town, and draft a job description. Based on municipalities’ requirements, research similar positions in Massachusetts and across the country to identify a reasonable salary range. Do not hesitate to contact communities who have a similar position to inquire about how much they pay.

3. Draft Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA).

[IMAs](#) are popular tools for sharing resources between municipalities. [View a copy of the agreement](#) that was signed between Arlington and Bedford. Issues to consider while drafting the IMA include:

- **Position details**
 - Responsibilities
 - Division of time
 - Start date
 - Provisional period
- **Lead municipality or agency**
 - Who administers the benefits?
 - Who oversees the position?
- **Overhead costs**
 - Travel
 - Equipment
 - Retirement/FICA
- **IMA Language**
 - Term (or length) of the agreement
 - Fee structure and payment
 - Process to amend and/or terminate the agreement
 - Terms for dispute settlement
 - Indemnification

Arlington and Bedford Shared Energy Manager

With the help of MAPC, the towns of Arlington and Bedford negotiated an IMA to share a part-time energy manager. After five months spent identifying each community's energy staffing needs and negotiating the terms of the agreement, the two towns signed an IMA on September 4, 2012. Arlington led the hiring process and bills Bedford for the energy manager's services on a yearly basis, with the energy manager spending roughly 16 hours per week working for Arlington and 8 hours per week working for Bedford.

It is important to note that there is no requirement for the towns involved in the IMA to have the same project focus, as long as the towns are organized with their efforts and are aware of how much time they will be getting from their shared manager in a year. In the case of Arlington and Bedford, the shared manager has allowed them to learn about opportunities available in each others' towns, which has proven to be valuable when considering future projects.

4. Approve IMA.

The IMA must be approved separately by each town involved. While IMAs can be approved by boards of selectmen, any appropriations for the IMA must be approved by town meeting. **Remember that once the Board of Selectmen approves the IMA, the town is liable to the terms of the agreement, regardless of whether or not the funds are approved at town meeting.** This is why it is always important to get all the respective parties (Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Finance Committee, etc.) involved early on in the process of hiring a shared energy manager so that there is a reasonable expectation for the funds to be allocated.

In the case of cities, both the Mayor and City Council have to approve an IMA. Since the City Council is responsible for the budget anyway, the process is slightly more straightforward.

5. Post and fill position.

Keep in mind that the new hire must be able to:

- Understand each municipality's focus and culture and be able to easily transition between different types of work and work settings, while staying on task.
- Be able to work under more than one organizational structure. For example, in one community the position might be supervised by a Facility or DPW Director and in another community the position might be supervised by the Town Administrator or Planner.
- Develop a methodology for handling two or more communities that have more than 20 projects combined in different phases.

- Be organized but flexible. How will the person organize notes, emails, and phone calls between multiple communities and projects?

6. Train new hire and establish work structure.

Make sure that important items have been discussed with the new hire, including:

- When will the shared energy manager work with each community?
- Who do they report to in each community?
- How do they keep track of hours worked?
- Are they provided with a computer and/or phone? If so, which community is responsible for providing these technologies?
- Will the shared energy manager have one common email address or multiple email addresses for each community they represent?

References

“Inter-Municipal Agreements Resource Guide.” Metropolitan Area Planning Council. (2009)

<http://www.mapc.org/resources/intermunicipal-agreements>

“Banding together to conserve resources.” Fluke Corporation. (2011)

<http://www.fluke.com/fluke/usen/community/fluke-news-plus/ArticleCategories/HVAC-IAQ-News/banding-together-to-conserve-resources.htm>