

Public Administration Expertise at Municipal Governments

—Based on research from the Japan Municipal Research Center—

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Since FY 2009, the Japan Municipal Research Center has pursued research on “public administration expertise” at municipal governments, releasing a total of eight reports by March 2016. This paper seeks to provide a general overview of these reports, organizing our summary from a unified perspective.

With ongoing administrative decentralization in Japan and citizens’ increasingly complex and varied needs, there is a need for municipal governments to take on a comprehensive role suited to the actual circumstances of their local communities. This further entails a need for both “field-specific expertise,” as well as the “organization management expertise” required for public administration professionals to smoothly conduct comprehensive administration services.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways for municipal governments to acquire this sort of expertise: by acquiring it within the municipal government itself, and by utilizing external resources where necessary. The former entails the training of current staff and/or the hiring of external talent, etc., whereas the latter entails the use of external experts and/or outsourcing, etc.

For child consultation services and other services requiring comprehensive, integrated initiatives by various diverse entities, it is not only necessary for professionals to acquire expertise individually but also for experts to collaborate with one another to acquire expertise for the organization as a whole. In other words, for such services, both personnel utilization and organizational system-building are important.

Introduction

The human resources system that has been used at Japanese municipal governments is called a closed career system. This system is characterized by the simultaneous, periodic hiring of new graduates as well as long-term employment to a determined retirement age.

At British and American municipal governments, an open career system is used that is based on a role-focused approach in which personnel are hired as they are appropriate for the vacant role. Under this system, personnel expertise is acquired by the organization at the time of hiring. By contrast, Japanese municipal governments use a closed career system based on a people-focused approach in which new graduates are hired as completely blank slates, trained internally, and utilized in a variety of different posts. Under this system, a major question facing personnel administration has been how to build expertise in personnel.

Since FY 2009, the Japan Municipal Research Center has pursued research on “public administration expertise” at municipal governments. With ongoing administrative decentralization and citizens’ increasingly complex and

varied needs, there arose a need for municipal governments to go beyond the formulaic services of the past and take on a comprehensive role suited to the actual circumstances of their local communities. On the other hand, municipal governments' financial and personnel resources are tremendously limited, and they have begun to make use of personnel from outside their organization in addition to outsourcing some administrative services. In this context, a series of studies was conducted on "public administration expertise" to investigate what expertise is required for municipal government administration.¹

First, from FY 2009 through FY 2010, the "Research Group on Expertise in Municipal Government Public Administration" (chaired by Waseda University graduate school professor Hiroaki Inatsugu²) was established to perform general research on that topic. Within this period, in FY 2010, an "Investigative Committee on Expertise" (chaired by Senshu University associate professor Yukiko Fujita) was established to thoroughly explore the actual state of expertise in specific fields of public administration. In FY 2010 the commission studied child consultation services, and in FY 2011 it studied tax administration.

Next, in FY 2012, the "Research Group on Expertise in Public Relations at Municipal Governments" (chaired by Tokai University professor Takayoshi Kawai) was established to study municipal public relations work. In FY 2013, the "Research Group on Expertise (public assistance / poverty program) in Public Administration at Municipal Governments" (chaired by Tokyo Metropolitan University graduate school professor Taku Okabe) was established to study public assistance services and assistance for the poor and needy. In FY 2014, the "Research Group on Expertise (medical care, nursing care, health and sanitation) in Public Administration at Municipal Governments" (chaired by Tokyo Medical and Dental University graduate school professor Koichi Kawabuchi) was established to study community-based integrated care systems. In FY 2015, the "Research Group on Expertise (industrial human resource development and entrepreneur support) in Public Administration at Municipal Governments" (chaired by Bunkyo University professor Hitoshi Umemura) was established to study industrial policy. In this way, each of these groups was established to study its respective topic.

The results of the above research were collected in the following reports published by the Japan Municipal Research Center.³

- 1) "Investigation into Expertise Acquisition in Public Administration at Municipal Governments" (2010)
- 2) "Expertise in Public Administration at Municipal Governments: What is Required of Parties Responsible for Comprehensive Administration Services" (2011)
- 3) "Child Consultation Services: Operations and Expertise" (2011)
- 4) "Tax Administration: Human Resource Development and Expertise" (2012)
- 5) "Problems and Expertise in Public Relations at Municipal Governments" (2013)
- 6) "Public Assistance and Independence Support for the Poor and Needy: The Role of Municipal Governments and Coordination with Local Communities" (2014)
- 7) "The Key to Success of Community-based Integrated Care Systems: Improvement of Health Literacy and

¹ Edited by Japan Municipal Research Center (2010); *ibid.* (2011a)

² Titles are as of the time that the study was conducted. The same applies hereinafter.

³ Reports published in 2012 and afterwards (#4 through #8) can be downloaded in full and free of charge from the Japan Municipal Research Center website (only in Japanese).

Cross-Field Coordination on Visibility among the Medical Care, Nursing Care, and Health and Sanitation Fields” (2015)

- 8) “Industrial Policy at Municipal governments Moving Forward: Personnel and Jobs Cultivated by Cities” (2016)

This paper seeks to provide a general overview of these reports and to reorganize this summary from a uniform perspective.

Chapter 1 is a general summary of the meaning of “expertise” in public administration at municipal governments, based on reports 1 and 2 above. Section 1 of this chapter provides a general overview of the current state of expertise acquisition based on a questionnaire survey of municipal governments. Section 2 discusses the meaning of “expertise” in public administration. Section 3 discusses how public administration expertise is acquired.

Chapter 2 organizes information on expertise in each field of public administration, based on reports 3 through 8 above. Section 1 of this chapter discusses “Child consultation services”. Section 2 discusses “Tax administration”. Section 3 discusses “Public relations”. Section 4 discusses “Public assistance and Independence Support for the poor and needy”. Section 5 discusses “Community-based Integrated Care Systems”. Section 6 discusses “Industrial policy”. Each of these sections discuss what type of expertise is needed in each field, as well as the context and background of that state of affairs, methods of acquiring expertise, and other topics.

1. Summary: The meaning of “expertise” in public administration

(1) Current state of expertise acquisition at municipal governments: Based on a questionnaire survey

From October to December 2009, the Japan Municipal Research Center conducted the “Questionnaire Survey on Expertise Acquisition in Public Administration at Municipal Governments”. This questionnaire focused on human resources departments at 806 organizations in all cities and wards throughout Japan as of October 2009 (responses received from 411 cities and wards, a 50.9% response rate).

This section is a summary of the results of that questionnaire based on reports on those results, in addition to organizing human resources departments’ attitudes toward “expertise in public administration.”⁴

A. Attitudes at Municipal governments Regarding Expertise Acquisition

(a) Operations requiring expertise

In response to a question directing respondents to select and rank⁵ three general administration work operations by the degree to which they require a particularly high level of proficiency, the following fields of work operations received the most high-ranked responses: 1) Legal affairs; 2) Information technology management (IT); 3) Finance / accounting; 4) Tax affairs; 5) Public assistance (casework); and 6) Planning / research.

Next, regarding these fields of work operations, another question directed respondents to select and rank⁶ three

⁴ For more information, refer to Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2010).

⁵ There were eight choices offered on the questionnaire: legal affairs, planning / research, information management (IT), tax affairs, finance / accounting, land management, public assistance (casework), and other.

⁶ There were seven choices offered on the questionnaire: on-the-job training, self-development support, specialized practical work training in the local city or ward, training by job rank in the local city or ward, work training on a national or prefectural scale, training at large-area training institutions on a national or prefectural (etc.) scale, and other.

initiatives that they believed to be effective personnel training tools from the perspective of building operational proficiency. The following types of initiatives received the most high-ranked responses: 1) On-the-job training; 2) Training at large-area training institutions; 3) Specialized practical work training; 4) Self-development support; and 5) Work-related study. There was a large gap separating the third (“Specialized practical work training”) and fourth (“Self-development support”) most common responses.

Viewed separately by field, “training at large-area training institutions” was more common than “on-the-job training” among respondents working in the “legal affairs” and “planning / research” operational fields, suggesting that they believe it is difficult to cultivate such expertise at their organization alone. In the “Information technology management (IT)” field, “self-development support” was a considerably more common response than in other fields. This can be interpreted to mean that such skill cultivation and training is difficult to accomplish in the public sector altogether, whether such training is sought at one’s own organization or at other organizations, and that there is no other option but to expect individual staff to pursue improvement of their own volition.

(b) Effective methods of expertise acquisition

In response to a question directing respondents to select and rank⁷ five “methods of acquiring expertise in the execution of administrative duties” for each of seven operational fields⁸, the following methods received the most high-ranked responses overall: 1) Personnel training; 2) Coordination with external experts; 3) Personnel transfers; 4) Self-development support; and 5) Establishing an organizational structure with (intensive) resource concentration. However, aggregating only the top-ranked (#1) choices in each operational field, the most common top methods were: 1) Personnel training; 2) Establishing an organizational structure with (intensive) resource concentration; 3) Personnel hiring; and 4) Personnel transfers. In particular, there is an overwhelmingly large gap between the top-ranked method (personnel training) and the second highest ranked method, indicating that municipal governments’ first choice when seeking to acquire expertise is to cultivate expertise internally through internal training.

Finer trends are clear when the data is viewed separately by operational field. For the “legal affairs / compliance,” “finance / accounting / revenue generation,” and “planning / research” fields, “personnel training” is considered effective at relatively high proportions, just as in the data overall. However, for the “social welfare, health, and sanitation” and “urban planning / building regulations” fields, “personnel training” accounts for a somewhat low proportion of top responses, whereas “personnel hiring” ranks higher than in other operational fields. Similarly, for the “IT management” field, “personnel hiring” and “outsourcing of operations” account for a high proportion of top responses. In other words, there is a tendency to seek solutions outside of the public sector when it comes to occupations that require specialized qualifications or licensing, or to newly created

⁷ There were seven choices offered on the questionnaire for personnel management methods: personnel hiring, personnel transfers, promotion examinations/selections, performance evaluations, personnel training, self-development support, and other. There were six choices offered for organizational management methods: large-area collaboration with other local government bodies, outsourcing of operations, establishing an organizational structure with (intensive) resource concentration, establishing a “horizontal” organization, coordination with external experts, and other. Thus, there were thirteen choices in total.

⁸ These seven fields were: legal affairs / compliance; IT management; finance / accounting / revenue generation; planning / research; tourism / regional development; social welfare, health, and sanitation; and urban planning / building regulations.

operational field types for which there is no expert staff present within the organization.

B. State of expertise-acquisition initiatives at municipal governments

In order to acquire expertise, it is necessary first to clarify what sort of expertise is required in each type of operational work. However, just 2.4% (10 organizations) of respondents stated that they create materials analyzing operations and the capabilities required by operations from an “expertise” perspective.

One concrete method of acquiring expertise is the hiring of external expert personnel. Hiring is increasingly common for occupations requiring credentials and licensing, such as public health nurses and nursery teachers, as well as technical fields such as civil engineering and architecture/construction. It was widespread practice to hire personnel with private-sector experience who will serve as an immediate asset to the organization, and around half of responding organizations conducted mid-career recruitment of such experienced personnel. Several organizations also hired fixed-term employees.

It is also necessary to improve the expertise of current employees in order to acquire expertise for the organization. 88.6% of organizations had established “basic guidelines on personnel development” to serve as guidelines for such training, and many organizations stated that they “now conduct personnel development in a systematic way as an organization.”

Even when viewed in terms of proportions of time spent, this personnel development primarily takes the form of on-the-job training (OJT) conducted on-site at the workplace itself, although some is also conducted via off-the-job training as well. For OJT, personnel transfers become important, including the question of how long to assign personnel to which departments.

In response to a question regarding what positions require especially long-term assignment from a work proficiency-building perspective, respondents responded with departments responsible for the aforementioned work operations that require a particularly high level of proficiency: legal affairs, tax affairs, social welfare (including public assistance), Information technology management (IT), etc. Moreover, many organizations conducted personnel transfers based on the desires of the personnel themselves. Most organizations utilized a “self-assessment and application system” (82.5%), and there were not many organizations that utilized systems such as “open recruitment-type personnel transfers” (15.6%), “voluntary (free agent) personnel transfers” (2.4%), and “multiple-track personnel management system” (3.2%).

In terms of career development support for personnel, some organizations conducted “career design training,” but many provided support for personnel’s independent, voluntary efforts, such as through “promotion of independent research activities,” “financial subsidies for certification acquisition by personnel,” and “work leave systems / cost subsidies for personnel attending graduate school or similar.” However, it was also clear that these support measures were not much used for personnel transfers.

C. Issues and problems in expertise acquisition

One issue that is clear from the results of the questionnaire survey is that there are municipal governments that are aware of the importance of expertise acquisition even if they only vaguely recognize what that “expertise” actually is. That vague recognition may also differ slightly from one municipal government to the next.

Previously, § 23 of the Local Public Service Act outlined a position classification system. If there was a position

classification system in place, it should have been clear what duties and responsibilities were assigned to what positions as well as what skills and abilities were required for what positions. However, § 23 has long gone unenforced in the present day, and it was abolished altogether by the Revised Local Public Service Act⁹ established in April 2014.

In discussing the acquisition of expertise, it is necessary first to clarify what sort of expertise is required in each field of operational work. Further, it is also necessary to determine such questions as whether “expertise” refers solely to expert knowledge in the relevant field, or whether it has a broader meaning that also includes work processes unique to that municipal government, distinctive local circumstances, etc.

(2) The meaning of “expertise” in public administration

A. Transformation of expertise in public administration

As society and citizens’ values and lifestyles change over time, citizens’ needs have become more advanced, diverse, and complex in nature. In order to conduct public administration suited to these changing conditions, there is a need for not only more advanced knowledge and ability than was necessary in the past, but also for knowledge and ability that are comprehensive rather than compartmentalized.

Additionally, with ongoing administrative decentralization, there arose a need for municipal governments to go beyond the formulaic services of the past and take on a primary role in comprehensive administration suited to the actual circumstances of their local communities. In cases in which a transfer of authority resulted in an organization being responsible for new operations and duties, a need was also created for knowledge and ability pertaining to this new operational field. For example, when a municipality rises to the level of being designated as a “core city,” responsibility for public health center operations is transferred from the prefectural government to the municipality. The management and operation of public health centers requires specialists including physicians, pharmacists, public health nurses, clinical technologists, and nutritionists. Additionally, “core cities” have been able to establish child consultation centers since 2006, but such centers require specialists such as physicians, social workers, child welfare officers, and child psychologists.

In this way, personnel at municipal governments in recent years are required to have both expertise in terms of advanced knowledge and ability in a specific field, as well as the expertise of a “public administration professional” (such as, for example, the knowledge and ability for policy formation and managing/operating organizations¹⁰) that enables personnel to problem-solve in an intersectional manner across fields.

B. The meaning of expertise in public administration

How can “expertise” in public administration at municipal governments be shown in more concrete terms? In the report produced by the “Research Group on Expertise in Municipal Government Public Administration,” group chairman Hiroaki Inatsugu discusses¹¹ this point as outlined below.

The expertise of personnel at municipal governments includes both “field-specific expertise,” i.e. specialized

⁹ Entered into effect on April 1, 2016.

¹⁰ Inatsugu (2008), Ito (2011).

¹¹ Inatsugu (2011a).

knowledge and ability in the field of public administration for which they are responsible; as well as “organization management expertise,” which includes the broad knowledge required to execute comprehensive public administration duties and coordination / production skills, etc.

“Field-specific expertise” is very diverse and the extent of expertise is not uniform across the board. These types of expertise can be categorized (i.e. graded) as follows:

- 1) Expertise for which there is national licensing that is sufficient alone to enable a change of occupation.
(Examples: Physicians, pharmacists, veterinarians, lawyers, etc.)
- 2) Expertise for which there is national licensing but with which such licensing alone it is still difficult to change occupations.
(Examples: Social education supervisors, food sanitation inspectors, etc.)
- 3) Expertise for which there is no national licensing but which is still valid even outside of municipal governments (i.e. in the private sector).
(Example: IT skills)
- 4) Skills and knowledge that can be called “expertise” within municipal governments (or which is also valid in other municipal governments), but for which there is no national licensing and which is also not valid outside of municipal governments.
(Examples: Legal affairs at municipal governments, public accounting, etc.)
- 5) Occupations simply treated as specialist “expert” positions.
(Examples: Job titles called specialist / professional / expert.)

Municipal governments, the primary entities that conduct comprehensive administration services, require both this “field-specific expertise” as well as “organization management expertise” that is needed for public administration professionals to smoothly conduct comprehensive administration services. “Organization management expertise” required of municipal government personnel include the following types of capabilities:

- 1) The ability to understand the organization’s shared objectives (aims of the organization and/or department) and set proper objectives by oneself.
- 2) The job performance abilities to achieve those objectives.
- 3) The interpersonal skills to complete objectives in cooperation with others.
- 4) The problem-solving skills to overcome problems that occur during the completion of objectives.

In summary of these points, Inatsugu defines “expertise” at municipal governments as “both specialized knowledge and ability in a specific field of public administration, as well as knowledge and ability that enables the municipal government as a whole to operate effectively and effectively.” In other words, what is needed is “a comprehensive ability to not only understand one’s own area of expertise, but also to know which municipal government department to work with to resolve the immediate tasks that one faces.”

(3) Methods of acquiring expertise at municipal governments

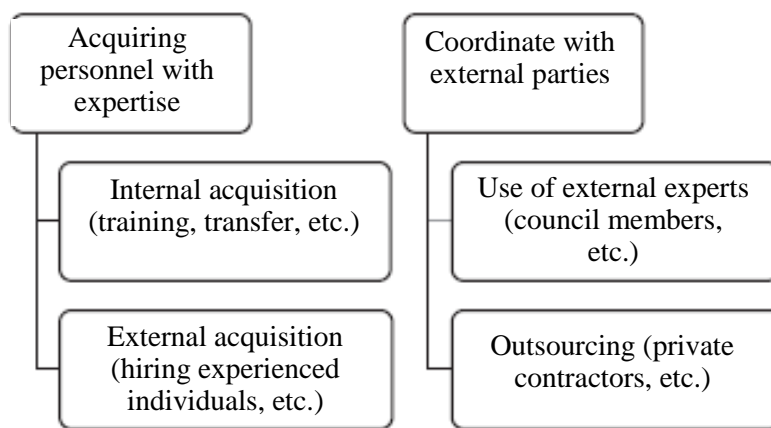
How can a municipal government acquire “field-specific expertise” and “organization management expertise”? The report released by the Research Group on Expertise in Municipal Government Public Administration contains many case studies on this topic, but here the author will introduce methods of acquiring expertise for an organization

in his own way.

Of these types of expertise, “field-specific expertise” raises the question of whether to acquire that expertise within the municipal government or outside of it. In other words, the question is whether to acquire that expertise by acquiring personnel who have it or by coordinating with external experts. For the most part, the former is accomplished by hiring or training personnel, whereas the latter is accomplished by utilizing external experts or the through outsourcing of operations.

Methods of acquiring personnel with expertise can be separated into two perspectives: acquiring the personnel internally or externally. Internal acquisition refers to the various methods of cultivating existing “personnel without expertise” into “experts with expertise” (e.g. through training, transfers, etc.). External acquisition refers to the various methods of newly hiring expert personnel (e.g. hiring experienced individuals, fixed-term hiring, etc.). (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1: Methods of acquiring “field-specific expertise”



Source: Compiled by the authors

The other type of expertise, “organization management expertise,” is the ability to smoothly conduct comprehensive administration services, and for that reason it is needed internally within municipal governments. Therefore, this type of expertise can be understood to be acquired via the left side of Figure 1, “Acquiring personnel with expertise.”

What follows below is an overview of each of the methods as per the categories in Figure 1.

A. Methods of acquiring expertise within the public government

(A) Internal acquisition of expert personnel

It is typical for municipal governments to hire new graduates on a periodic basis and to employ personnel through to retirement age. Except for certified occupations (veterinarians, pharmacists, etc.) and technical occupations (civil engineering, architecture/construction, etc.), most municipal government personnel—especially standard administrative personnel—do not have any particular “field-specific expertise” at the time of hiring.

These personnel without “field-specific expertise” can be made to acquire expertise through post-hire training

and job rotation via transfers that has the personnel experience a variety of different jobs.

1) Training

Training can be separated broadly into two types: job level-specific training and objective-specific training. Job level-specific training is held for personnel of a certain rank(s) regardless of the field in which they work, e.g. new personnel training, subsection chief training, managerial-level training, etc. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on the acquisition of “organization management expertise” rather than “field-specific expertise.”

Objective-specific training serves to equip personnel with the knowledge and abilities required for some specific objective. This includes training centered on a particular field of operations, such as legal affairs, tax affairs, accounting, land acquisition, and public assistance. While some of this training focuses on the objective of acquiring “field-specific expertise,” other types of this training may focus on “organization management expertise” such as policy-making training, interpersonal negotiation training, etc.¹²

Although this training may sometimes be conducted independently by the municipal governments, it is also often contracted out to training institutions established by the prefectural government. In recent years, there are also locations where the prefectural and municipal governments cooperate to jointly establish prefecture-level training institutions. More advanced, nation-wide training is primarily conducted at the Local Autonomy College, a Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications affiliate; as well as at the Japan Academy for Municipal Personnel (JAMP) and the Japan Intercultural Academy of Municipalities (JIAM), both established by Japan Municipal Training and Research Foundation.¹³

2) Personnel transfers

It is customary practice for municipal governments to periodically conduct personnel transfers. The purpose of this practice is to “put the right person in the right place, thereby utilizing individual ability, improving motivation, and simultaneously strengthening the organization as a whole.”¹⁴ In the past, this practice strongly implied “job rotation” for the purpose of cultivating and selecting management personnel, with transfer patterns tending to cultivate generalist skillsets, but there is recently a shift underway toward transfers for the purpose of discovering and developing individuals’ areas of expertise.

In this case, periodic transfers into various different fields will be conducted for the first ten years after hiring to determine an individual’s aptitudes. The next ten years will focus on deepening expertise in the field for which the individual was found to have an aptitude in the first ten years, and transfers will be conducted to that end. After this second ten-year period, the individual will be rotated within field(s) that they have experienced in the past in order for them to make use of the expertise they have developed.

In recent years, this sort of transfer rotation has been deliberately systematized, and in some cases personnel individuality has been emphasized to the extent of allowing individuals to select their own field of specialization.¹⁵

(B) External acquisition of expert personnel

¹² In addition, personnel evaluations, on-the-job training, and other types of training in knowledge and skills necessary for personnel and organization management are also a type of objective-specific training.

¹³ For more information, refer to Ishikawa (2007).

¹⁴ Inatsugu (2011b), p. 56-57.

¹⁵ One representative example is Kanagawa Prefecture’s “career selection” personnel management system. For more information, refer to Inatsugu (2011b).

Municipal governments do not contain expert personnel for operational fields for which such organizations have become newly responsible, such as IT, fields brought about by changes in society, and fields arising from new needs on the part of citizens. Of course, it is also not easy to cultivate personnel internally. In such cases, the simplest and quickest method is to hire experts from outside of the municipal government who can be immediately effective at the workplace. The three primary methods of this are as follows:

1) Hiring experienced individuals

One method is to hire mid-career professionals from the private sector who have the specific set of knowledge and abilities needed. Assuming employment through to retirement age, this sort of hiring is conducted for reliably long-lasting operational fields such as tourism and data processing. Although this type of staff is immediately assigned to a workplace at which they can make use of their expertise, some municipal governments eventually put such personnel on a job transfer rotation along with all other personnel due to concern that their expertise may become obsolete over time.

2) Fixed-term hiring

If an expert's knowledge and abilities that cannot be found within the municipal government will only be used for a certain amount of time, an expert is hired on a fixed-term basis. As government decentralization proceeds ahead in Japan, local regional administration has become increasingly sophisticated and specialized. As a result, there are now situations in which it is necessary to make strictly temporary use of private-sector personnel who possess advanced expertise that is difficult to attain within the municipal government itself. This led to the establishment of this system in 2002. There are numerous cases of the system being used in fields such as IT, urban development, public relations, and healthcare.¹⁶

3) Hiring of part-time personnel

On the basis of the Local Autonomy Law § 3(3) iii, expert advisers, consultants, researchers, temporary workers, and other personnel with specific knowledge and experience are sometimes hired as necessary to engage in municipal government operations. Because such personnel are part-time, they are understood to work no more than three-fourths the hours of full-time personnel. Such part-time personnel are utilized when individuals with expertise are necessary but there is not enough of a workload involved in the relevant operations to justify assigning full-time personnel.¹⁷ For example, in some cases investment promotion advisers and risk management advisers have been hired as part-time personnel in this way.

4) Personnel exchange with the national government or other municipal governments

The private sector is not the only external source of personnel available for hiring. Expert personnel sought from the national government or other municipal government are sometimes first dispatched to the municipal government for a set period.

Personnel dispatching from the national government is typically conducted at the management level, such as deputy mayors and department directors, for the purpose of utilizing field-specific policy-making skills and other skills held by national government employees. There are no special legal provisions for such hiring, and typically municipal governments will employ individuals as convenient who have temporarily resigned from the national

¹⁶ Otani (2016 [forthcoming]), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications publication. "Status of hiring, etc., of fixed-term personnel at local public bodies." (As of April 1, 2014.)

¹⁷ Otani (2016 [forthcoming]).

government.

Personnel dispatching from other municipal governments is conducted based on Local Autonomy Law § 252-17. Such dispatching is generally conducted at a practical working level; for example, when there is a transfer of authority from the prefectural government to a municipal government, in some cases personnel with knowledge and experience in the relevant operations may be dispatched to the municipal government for several years.¹⁸ Additionally, such dispatching is also often used in disaster situations when there is a lack of personnel in certain specialized fields such as civil engineering and architecture. One example of this in recent memory was the restoration and reconstruction work following the Great East Japan Earthquake, wherein large volumes of personnel were dispatched to disaster-affected municipal governments from other municipal governments.¹⁹

B. Methods of coordinating with external parties to acquire expertise

(A) Utilizing external experts

There are costs involved in acquiring personnel with expertise internally within a municipal government. Therefore, such municipal governments utilize external experts for their knowledge as necessary on a regular basis. For example, municipal governments will appoint experts as members of councils, research groups, and other groups, or invite them to serve as instructors at staff training, etc.²⁰

(B) Outsourcing of operations

Another frequent practice is the outsourcing of operations that require expertise to a company or other organization familiar with that field. Although outsourcing itself had been practiced to a considerable extent before the 1990s, it was in the 1990s that it became gradually more common with the rise of New Public Management (NPM) approaches. In the 2000s, the practice of outsourcing spread rapidly under calls to move operations from the public to the private sector. This was done due to a belief that utilizing private knowledge and skills by opening up the work of government offices to the private sector would help to improve the quality of public services and improve efficiency. This was primarily accomplished through the contracting out of operations to private companies, through private finance initiatives (PFI), through designated administrator system, and other methods.

2. Item-by-item: Expertise in each field of public administration

(1) Child consultation services²¹

A) Background for the demand for expertise

Child consultation centers were established as central institutions for the administration of child consultation services. Prefectures and designated cities are required to establish child consultation centers, and since 2006 they can also be established in “core cities”.²² Established just after the end of the Second World War, the role of these

¹⁸ For example, in some cases towns and villages may be legally merged to create an official city, requiring the local government to establish a new welfare office and begin offering public assistance services.

¹⁹ Inatsugu (2015), Inatsugu / Otani (2015).

²⁰ Ito (2011).

²¹ Except where indicated, this chapter is based on the following sources: Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2011b), especially Fujita (2011), Tezuka (2011), and Murakami (2011).

²² Child Welfare Act, § 12 and § 59-4. However, as of April 1, 2015, the only “core cities” that have established child consultation centers are Yokosuka and Kanazawa. In the revised Child Welfare Act enacted in May 2016, Tokyo’s 23 wards were also given the new power to establish child consultation centers, and the revisions stipulate that the national government will provide financial

centers changed from an initial focus on handling war orphans to handling delinquent, handicapped, and truant children, and its handling of child abuse has been an important issue since the 1990s.

In 2004, the Child Welfare Act was revised to clearly establish municipalities as a primary contact point for child consultation services. This was the result of an increase in everyday childcare consultation needs surrounding a steep increase in child abuse cases, anxiety about child-raising, and other issues, such that it was no longer possible for child consultation centers alone to handle the massively swelling number of incoming consultations. Therefore, the role of child consultation centers was made to be to prioritize cases that require expert knowledge and skills as well as logistical support for municipalities. Meanwhile, the municipalities closest to the citizens came to be expected to actively engage in the prevention of abuse, early detection, and the provision of continuous support for more minor childcare cases.²³

In order to facilitate early discovery of children in need of protection and the provision of proper care, this revision to the Child Welfare Act also established rules on local municipal networks comprised of healthcare centers, daycare centers, schools, medical institutions, police stations, commissioned welfare volunteers, commissioned child welfare volunteers, and other relevant organizations and parties. Municipal governments were given the role of coordinating and managing such networks.

B) Skills and abilities in demand

The abilities required in child consultation service administration are as follows. The first necessary skill is the ability, after receiving a report or consultation, to “accurately grasp all of the facts of a case and accurately judge the case’s level of urgency.” In the next phase, initial research, it is necessary to have the “skills to collect information on the relevant child(ren) using networks built up with related organizations throughout daily operations.” In the field work phase, necessarily skills include “the skills to observe and understand children on a mental and physical level,” as well as “the communication skills to build relationships of trust with children and parents/guardians.”

In the next phase, the determination of aid and assistance policy regarding a case, it is necessary for personnel to have “expert knowledge in psychology and similar subjects” as required to make accurate judgments and provide guidance and assistance. In addition, there are also sometimes social diagnoses conducted by child welfare officers, psychological diagnoses conducted by child psychologists, medical diagnoses conducted by doctors, behavioral diagnosis conducted by child guidance workers and nursery teachers, as well as diagnoses conducted by physical therapists, speech-language-hearing therapists, and others. Build on this is the next phase, in which aid and assistance are actually implemented. Necessary skills in this phase include “interpersonal communication skills” and, in cases requiring coercive action, “legal knowledge” as well.

C) Methods of acquiring expertise

In reports, three aspects are presented as underlying expertise: 1) Building networks with related organizations; 2) Building organizational structures; and 3) Improving personnel’s skills and competences.

Regarding aspect (1), building networks with related organizations, the key to improving expertise in child

support to promote the establishment of child consultation centers in “core cities.”

²³ For more information on the role of municipal governments, refer to the “Municipal Guidelines on Child and Family Counseling and Support” established by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

consultation services administration overall amounts to whether it is possible for municipal governments to build good networks with related organizations inside and outside of themselves, utilizing those resources to collaboration in the provision of consultation and support services. For example, including many related civilian organizations as members of a legally-established “regional council of countermeasures for Children Requiring Aid” is considered an effective means of expanding a municipal government’s network.

Aspect (2), building organizational structures, requires the proper placement of expert personnel.²⁴ More than individual ability and skill, child consultation services require expertise on the part of the group or organization as a whole, and thus the effective placement of as many different types of experts as possible is thought to lead to the improvement of expertise in the municipal government. Other effective methods of increasing expertise in individual personnel and entire teams include creating a workplace environment that facilitates cooperation between personnel, and placing supervisors that can provide appropriate advice to staff.

Regarding aspect (3), improving personnel’s skills and competences, it is the skills and abilities of individual personnel that underlie the expertise produced by organizations and the municipal government’s network. Due to the nature of child consultation services administration, there are many cases in which it is necessary for personnel to take an ad hoc response suited to the relevant parties. Practical knowledge and experience are important in such situations, expanding the role played by on-the-job training. Personnel also often participate in external training, taking courses offered by related organizations that conduct expert professional training and building practical experience at prefectural child consultation centers.

Particularly distinctive in comparison to other fields is the acquisition of the expertise that makes use of the networks in (1). The mutual utilization as necessary of knowledge and experience that exist externally to the municipal government is extremely efficient. In other fields, as well, this is one effective method of collaboration between municipal governments.

D) Issues, etc.

Child welfare officers play a central role in child consultation services, including case research, guidance, and support. The child welfare officer certification is issued by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, but in municipalities only a small proportion of personnel satisfy the qualification requirements²⁵ to become child welfare offices. Similar, when expert personnel are placed at the municipal level, they are often part-time staff. One of the key issues here is whether it is possible to acquire personnel with expertise on a permanent basis. The best way to accomplish this is fresh hiring of experts, but where that is difficult, another effective method is to systematically promote personnel such as nursery teachers and public health nurses who have a close connection with children’s services, supporting their acquisition of the credentials required for appointment as child welfare officers.

Meanwhile, one problem encountered in utilizing networks with related organizations is with personnel transfers. When personnel are transferred away despite having taken the time to build up connections, the breadth and depth of those connections is reduced even if the relationships are inherited by successors. However, from a personnel development perspective, personnel transfers are indeed necessary. One possible solution to this problem is to create

²⁴ It is standard for child consultation centers to be staffed with a variety of expert professionals including child welfare officers, child psychologists, psychiatrists, consultants, etc.

²⁵ Refer to Child Welfare Act § 13(2).

a deeper roster of such personnel by increasing the number of personnel with experience participating in such networks.

(2) Tax administration²⁶

A) Background for the demand for expertise

Tax administration is even more important in municipal governments than in the past. In a difficult time for municipal government finances, collection from tax delinquents is extremely important to both securing stable revenues and ensuring tax fairness. In particular since the shifting of tax revenues to the local level as part of decentralization efforts, independent revenue sources (i.e. not reliant on the national government) have grown, and tax administration is expected to reliably fulfill the role of properly utilizing such revenue sources.

However, local personnel are not tax specialists to the same extent as personnel in the national government, and it is difficult to acquire that expertise at municipal governments. As a result, the reality is that such local bodies collect on unpaid tax bills at a much lower rate, and hence an important task facing those bodies is to improve their rate of tax collection by acquiring the required tax administration expertise.

B) Skills and abilities in demand

The primary operations involved in tax administration are as follows: 1) Notification; 2) Property audits and collection; 3) Garnishment; 4) Public auctions and realization; and 5) Stays of execution and the processing of uncollectible account defaults.

The execution of these operations requires the following types of skills: knowledge of local tax systems (etc.), property audit skills, skills for communicating with tax delinquents, and the skills to determine the propriety of compulsory garnishment procedures and stays of execution. The majority of these operations are administrative work, such as creating notifications and garnishment documentation, meaning that the skills to smoothly execute formulaic clerical work are also necessary.

C) Methods of acquiring expertise and related issues

At municipal governments, tax personnel are not hired as expert professionals in the same way as they are at the national level. Instead, regular administrative personnel are simply assigned to the tax administration department. In reality, it is not uncommon for municipal governments to transfer their personnel around within the tax affairs department to build expertise, but this is not an official system so much as merely a method of personnel management.

Therefore, a key question is how to transform personnel without specialized tax-related knowledge and experience into specialized professionals. At many municipal governments, the personnel cultivation process is that immediately upon assignment personnel are given training on topics such as local tax systems and systems for disposition of delinquency, after which they are further developed through guidance received from more senior personnel in the course of performing their duties.

²⁶ This chapter is based on the following sources: Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2012), especially Tezuka (2012) and Murakami (2012).

Expertise is also increased within municipal governments by receiving tax experts dispatched from the national and prefectural governments, and by dispatching personnel to the national and prefectural governments. Further, personnel are also dispatched to tax organizations established jointly by multiple municipal governments working together, where personnel teach one another knowledge and skills from the prefectural government and other municipalities. A key issue in this case is how the organization will make use of the knowledge and skills brought in or brought back to the organization by dispatched personnel.

(3) Public relations²⁷

A) Background for the demand for expertise

Municipal governments became increasingly independent with ongoing decentralization of national government. As a result, each region assumed its own unique qualities and there emerged competition between cities. In this context, public relations has become increasingly important as a means of promoting the appeal of cities and of building trust between municipal governments and local citizens, both of which serve to encourage the smooth operations of the governments as well as cities' survival despite the competition.

The nature of public relations has changed dramatically over time. In the past, it was sufficient to communicate municipal government information via public relations magazines, but in the present it is increasingly commonplace for municipal governments to conduct strategic communication using a variety of media including the internet and SNS. As a result, today such bodies frequently hire experienced personnel external to themselves and appoint them to specialized professional PR positions.

B) Skills and abilities in demand

There are three types of municipal public relations: 1) Administrative services PR, 2) Policy PR, and 3) Local regional PR. The first type pertains to the proper use and provision of administrative services. In the second type, the municipal government presents local regional issues and works to help create policies to resolve those issues. The third type aims to promote the appeal of a city to audiences inside and outside of that city.

Further, there are three types of skills that are required for municipal public relations operations: "Strategic planning skills," which are used to strategically conduct municipal public relations; "Operational support skills," in which the public relations department serves as a leader of PR operations for the entire municipal government, supporting public relations efforts on the behalf of the individual operations departments; and "PR assessment skills," which are used to accurately assess the effectiveness of municipal public relations operations and manage the strategic development of such efforts.

Recently in particular there is an increasing number of municipal governments that are concentrating on "city sales," a subfield of local regional PR. "City sales" entails the active advertisement of a city through exposure in the mass media and elsewhere, making its goals vastly different from traditional administrative services PR that aims to accurately communicate information on public administration services to local citizens. "City sales" PR entails "selling" information using marketing-style approaches, which requires the skills to ascertain the target

²⁷ This chapter is based on the following sources: Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2013), especially Kawai (2013) and Kawajiri (2013).

audience, render the information in a way that will grab the target audience's interest, and finally putting the PR strategy into action using a medium that will easily reach the target audience.

C) Methods of acquiring expertise and related issues

According to a Japan Municipal Research Center questionnaire focused on public relations department chiefs at 810 organizations in all cities and wards throughout Japan as of April 2012 (responses received from 478 cities and wards, a 59.0% response rate), over 50% of responses stated that “there is insufficient cultivation among personnel overall of the knowledge, skills, and other expertise required for public relations operations,” while nearly 30% of responses stated that “there is insufficient cultivation among standard personnel in public relations positions of the knowledge, skills, and other expertise required for public relations operations.”

Despite these attitudes, efforts to acquire expertise using training and civilian experts remain insufficient. PR training for personnel in operational departments outside of public relations positions is only conducted in around 30% of all responding cities and wards, with the majority of those receiving such training once per year. Additionally, fewer than 10% of cities and wards employed personnel with private-sector PR experience or similar in PR positions.

To improve expertise in the public relations field, municipal governments must utilize a fixed-term hire system or similar and appoint individuals with private-sector PR experience in key public relations positions. Next, municipal governments must conduct on-the-job training, etc., based around personnel in such key positions in order to increase the expertise of personnel in public relations positions. Moreover, municipal governments must conduct training and similar to improve the PR skills of personnel in all operational departments, in addition to building mechanisms by which key PR personnel can actively participate in operational departments' PR activities.²⁸

(4) Public assistance and Independence Support for the poor and needy²⁹

A) Background for the demand for expertise

The Financial Crisis of 2008 saw a rapid increase in the number of public assistance recipients and households. With the changes in the employment environment in recent years and Japan's rapidly aging society, the number of public assistance recipients remains at its highest level through to the present, though the growth of such recipients has slowed down somewhat. Moreover, as is apparent from the focus in the news on the working poor and individuals unqualified for public pensions, there are also many people other than public assistance recipients who are also suffering in poverty in Japan.

In this context, the Japanese national government took steps to enact policies that would strengthen support for public assistance recipients and others in economic need in finding employment and achieving economic self-reliance, as well as build a comprehensive consultation system for such individuals and put a stop to the cycle of poverty. 2013 saw a series of relevant developments in this area, including revisions to the Public Assistance Act,

²⁸ There is no discussion in Japan Municipal Research Center reports of specific methods of improving expertise. As a result, this portion is purely the personal opinion of the authors.

²⁹ This chapter is based on the following sources: Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2014), especially Okabe (2014) and Yamaguchi (2014).

revisions to the standards for receiving public assistance, the establishment of the Law on Independence Support For Poor and Needy People, and the establishment of the Law on Measures to Counter Child Poverty.

However, most municipal governments are in a tough financial situation and are not able to provide services at the desired level due to severe labor shortages. To use the example of case workers in charge of public assistance administration, one standard case worker is technically responsible for 80 households receiving public assistance, but in reality they are often responsible for many more. Moreover, most case worker positions are filled by general administrative personnel, with few being social workers or having some similar qualifications. Instead, case workers tend primarily to be trained on-site through on-the-job training.

B) Expertise in demand and how it is acquired

For public assistance and Independence Support for the poor and needy, it is necessary to acquire expert personnel in both quality and quantity in a variety of fields, including welfare, employment assistance, and educational assistance. However, considering the difficult financial situation faced by municipal governments in Japan, it is not easy for such bodies to acquire large numbers of such expert personnel.

The reasons why individuals fall into poverty and come to require public assistance are not just economic but also heavily related to physical, mental, and social problems. Single individuals often face complex employment-, health-, housing-, education-, and family-related problems that require a comprehensive and unified response. It is difficult for one individual staff member or one administrative body to address such problems alone.

Therefore, for reasons of both quality and quantity, it is necessary to acquire necessary expertise by having welfare offices and other administrative bodies collaborate with relevant organizations, and thereby to promote administration of public assistance and Independence Support for the poor and needy. Both the 2013 Law on Independence Support For Poor and Needy People and the 2013 revisions to the Public Assistance Act aimed to have many various service-providing entities working on many various livelihood-related issues. Relevant organizations are expected to collaborate and cooperate on measures to help low-income individuals by creating a broad local safety net and supporting them in rebuilding their lives and achieving self-reliance.

Specifically, welfare offices collaborate and cooperate with relevant groups including welfare-related internal departments, child consultation centers, women's consultation centers, rehabilitation centers for the physically and mentally handicapped, other consultation-oriented organizations, children's shelters, women's shelters, other types of protection-oriented organizations, and social welfare councils. They may also collaborate with organizations outside of the welfare field in areas such as public health and healthcare, labor, education, housing, and justice and law enforcement, as well as with the community itself including social workers / commissioned child welfare volunteers, citizens' associations, neighborhood associations, families, and nearby citizens.

(5) Community-based Integrated Care Systems³⁰

A) Background for the demand for expertise

As the Japanese population ages, there is a heavily growing demand for healthcare and nursing services. In particular, once the baby boomer generation hits age 75 in 2025 and beyond, the demand for such services is

³⁰ This chapter is based on the following sources: Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2015), especially Ishiyama (2015).

expected to grow even larger. Therefore, to enable individuals to continue living out the ends of their lives as they wish in the local communities with which they are familiar, there is a drive to build comprehensive assistance- and service-providing systems in local communities by 2025. These systems that provide integrated assistance for residences, healthcare, nursing, disease prevention, and livelihoods are called “Community-based Integrated Care Systems.”

Community-based Integrated Care Systems are built by local regional governments based on community individuality and independence, and in a way suited to each community’s distinguishing characteristics. Many municipal governments have already begun working to promote in-home healthcare through collaboration with the healthcare and nursing fields, in addition to promoting health-building among local citizens through collaboration with the local community and related organizations. Some of these local bodies have produced a certain level of real results. However, it is also true that a lack of expert personnel and local resources have left some places struggling to handle these initiatives.

B) Expertise in demand and how it is acquired

Community-based Integrated Care Systems are comprehensive assistance- and service-providing systems for a local community, built by the municipal government to suit the community’s distinguishing characteristics based on population makeup, financial resources, disease patterns, resident attitudes, and other factors that change from community to community. Therefore, the construction of such systems require the collaboration and cooperation of relevant parties in a variety of fields, including primarily healthcare and welfare.

As Japan’s population ages in the modern era, collaboration and cooperation in the fields of health, healthcare, and welfare are essential, and there is also a need to promote multi-occupational collaboration between the healthcare and nursing experts who work in those fields. Of particular urgency is improving the skills of care support experts and other nursing professionals.

To that end, interprofessional education (IPE) is an effective method of bringing a variety of different occupations in a local community together to learn the background, theory, and specialized knowledge and skills of Community-based Integrated Care Systems. There is nothing more important here than creating opportunities for experts from a variety of related occupations to trade their frank opinions and learn from one another, created a shared understanding among all relevant parties.

(6) Industrial policy³¹

A) Background for the demand for expertise

Industrial development is essential to developing a local area. If there are no jobs in an area, local citizens cannot establish a livelihood for themselves and they will flow into another areas in pursuit of work. Depressed areas with declining populations generally display trends such as these.

“Regional revitalization” aims to break communities out of these circumstances. Regional revitalization is described as focusing on “towns, people, and jobs,” establishing a virtuous cycle in which jobs bring people, and

³¹ This chapter is based on the following sources: Japan Municipal Research Center (ed., 2016), especially Umemura (2016a), Umemura (2016b), and Sudo (2016).

those people then bring in new jobs. Through this, regional revitalization aims to restore vitality to the towns that sustain that virtuous cycle.

In the past, industry support was primarily conducted by the national government. However, in this modern era of growing disparity between regions, what is needed is not uniform industrial policy led by the national government, but rather localized industrial policy conducted by municipal governments based on the distinctive characteristics of their own community. In regional revitalization, as well, what is needed are self-directed initiatives within the community.

However, as a result of the long tradition of industry support led by the national government of Japan, it has been typical for municipal governments to often simply accept the policy menu provided by the national government without changes or to imitate the policies of the national government. As a result, it has been suggested that municipal governments lack industrial policy-making skills, and the acquisition of such skills is taken as a matter of urgent priority.

B) Expertise in demand and how it is acquired

Due to the increasing industrial complexity, sophistication, and diversity, as well as increasing cuts to budgets and staff at municipal governments, there are limits to the extent to which such local bodies can directly implement industrial policy. The important role of municipal governments in this context is to collaborate and cooperate with industry, academia, and other external partners, sharing the latest information and knowledge with local communities and creating new value through such dialogues. In other words, municipal governments must function as a focal point for networks of information and personal connections, creating a community in which to engage in deep mutual exchange.

To that end, it is essential to first be very familiar with the job site itself. It is also necessary to have a wide network. Knowledge and skills such as these cannot be attained through classroom learning alone. Personnel with the same goals should come together and learn through experience and repeated field work. Although municipal governments must initially provide training, there must also be a way of eventually pushing participants toward independent, voluntary learning as well. Networks will not expand through a passive approach. Instead, it is important for personnel to be cultivated to be proactive and self-motivated, with personnel development systems and a workplace foundation in place that will enable personnel to cheer each other on in their work without becoming isolated.

Conclusion

Municipal governments, the primary entities that conduct comprehensive administration services, require both “field-specific expertise” in specific operational fields, as well as “organization management expertise” that is needed for public administration professionals to smoothly conduct comprehensive administration services. To rephrase this in more detail, “expertise” at municipal governments refers to “expert knowledge, ability, and skills in a specific field of public administration, as well as the knowledge, ability, and skills to understand the local community’s needs and issues, to develop countermeasures that address these needs and issues, and finally to effectively and efficiently implement these measures throughout the entire municipal government.”

There is a wide array of methods for acquiring this sort of expertise. It is not strictly necessary to acquire all of

this expertise internally within the municipal government, and it is possible to utilize external experts as required via outsourcing and similar methods. When expertise is to be acquired internally within a municipal government, possible methods include cultivating expertise in existing personnel through training and transfers, and hiring experts anew from outside the municipal government.

For child consultation services and other services requiring comprehensive, integrated initiatives by various diverse entities, it is not only necessary for professionals to acquire expertise individually but also for experts to collaborate with one another to acquire expertise for the organization as a whole. In other words, for such services, both personnel utilization and organizational system-building are important perspectives.

The 2014 revisions to the Local Autonomy Law established two new systems: “Cooperation agreements” that establish cooperative relationships between municipal governments across a broad region, and “substitute execution of administrative duties” whereby prefectural governments supplement and complement the work of municipalities. These systems aim to enable small-scale municipal governments, which face difficulty providing full administrative services alone, to work with other municipal governments to create systems by which to provide public administration services to their communities. Through these systems, it is potentially also possible for multiple municipal governments to share a limited pool of experts by collaborating or substituting for one another in the execution of their administrative work.

It is by no means a simple task for municipal governments to acquire high-quality expert personnel. Even if such a local body were to successfully hire such experts, there are not many options available for transfers at such small organizations, and over time the personnel may lose motivation or their expertise may become obsolete as they remain in the same post over an extensive period. At present, with the exception of short-term dispatching, personnel transfers are almost never conducted between municipal governments, as per the Local Autonomy Law, § 252-17. If multiple local bodies were able to share their expert personnel, it is expected that the small number of such experts could be utilized more efficiently and effectively.³² On this point, the authors will take careful note of trends moving forward.

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³² At the 30th Professional Subcommittee of the 30th Local Government System Research Council (Mar. 28, 2013), there was a discussion conducted on how small-scale local government bodies acquire expert personnel. One proposal there was to establish a special public corporation consisting of experts in technical fields to which municipal governments could contract out certain operations.

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