Dynamic and Representative Government
Improve local capacity and service delivery
Action Area: Dynamic and Representative Government

Recommendation:
Improve local capacity and service delivery.

Strategy 1
Enable local government to attract and retain a creative, adaptive, and inclusive workforce.

► **Action 1.1:** Create more effective pathways to local government. Local leaders should work with area colleges and universities to support student interest and opportunities in municipal government. Cities and towns should partner with each other to offer paid apprenticeships to local students interested in local-government careers. Building on the concept of ‘citizen academies,’ municipalities should create ‘youth academies’ in the K-12 school system.

► **Action 1.2:** Modernize the municipal hiring process. Adopt comprehensive affirmative action plans. Include workforce and hiring analyses to give municipalities the information they need to improve workforce diversity.

► **Action 1.3:** Provide competitive, flexible benefits that are valued by today’s job seekers, including more flexible retirement benefits. To conquer the large and growing amount of unfunded pension liability, and provide valuable flexibility for our region’s public servants, municipalities could consider consolidating their individual pension plans and joining the Massachusetts State Employees Retirement System (MSERS).

► **Action 1.4:** Update workforce policies, foster professional growth, and build local government careers. Municipalities should offer opportunities to work from home without limiting accessibility to residents. This should be paired with resources for cities and towns to upgrade their information technology infrastructure.

Strategy 2
Invest in information technology infrastructure to expand service offerings and enable communities to use and share data more effectively.

► **Action 2.1:** Ensure that all municipalities have the resources needed to update their information technology (IT) systems and have the infrastructure to expand service offerings. The Commonwealth should provide resources and technical assistance to ensure cities and towns can make long-term investments in IT infrastructure and find opportunities to work regionally.

► **Action 2.2:** Create more platforms for IT knowledge, sharing, and collaboration. Local government IT professionals and municipal leaders should partner to share knowledge and best practices for IT management. Shared platforms for municipal officials to find information on IT costs, performance and value should also be created to help them make informed choices on IT.

► **Action 2.3:** Move towards a collaborative open-source software procurement model. Open-source platforms would allow communities or groups of cities and towns to work together to configure solutions over time and could be built around common standards to enable comparative data analysis.
The Commonwealth should provide assistance for cities and towns to help rewrite software, potentially through partnerships with local colleges and universities.

**Action 2.4:** Create data standards for municipal departments and functions. The Massachusetts Legislature should create an Office of Data Standards to identify data standardization opportunities and create resources for state government and municipal functions, including finance, purchasing, public safety, public works, and land use.

**Action 2.5:** Examine whether privatized services offer good value by comparing performance and cost information across municipal governments. Develop common benchmarks and metrics for evaluation in certain core services to weigh cost of service delivery against performance.

**Strategy 3**

Catalyze creative collaboration, problem solving and partnership within and between municipalities and with other sectors.

**Action 3.1:** Break down silos within municipal governments. Local governments need to hire for, train and expect staff to be more able and willing to work across silos, and possess and develop skills in coordination, facilitation, and engagement. The Commonwealth should provide technical assistance for municipalities to build their capacity to work in this manner.

**Action 3.2:** Encourage shared learning and inter-municipal partnerships. Grant programs should be utilized as a catalyst for collaboration between local governments by incentivizing regional collaboration and creative partnerships with the Commonwealth, professional organizations, regional planning agencies, and other relevant entities.

**Action 3.3:** Direct and commission private and non-profit actors to support municipal priorities. Local governments should inventory community-based assets to understand local capacity and to determine areas in which they are underserved. The Commonwealth should make assistance available to fill these gaps and strengthen relationships between cities, towns and community-based organizations.

**Action 3.4:** Enable inter-municipal collaboration to build capacity. The Commonwealth should allocate funds and create financial incentives for new service sharing agreements. Criteria for awarding grants to local governments should encourage regional collaboration.