

THE UNIVERSITY *of* TENNESSEE 

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

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SERVICE PRIORITY SURVEY

Summary of Findings

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) is interested in learning more about the needs of Tennessee cities and about how MTAS can best serve these needs. In an effort to systematically collect this information, MTAS implemented a multi-mode survey of city officials. A multi-mode approach was utilized to improve cooperation and response and to reduce respondent burden by allowing city officials and stakeholders to respond in the survey mode that was most convenient and comfortable. The Center for Applied Research and Evaluation (CARE) conducted a web-based survey of city officials and MTAS stakeholders and MTAS was responsible for administering a paper survey. The initial email introducing the survey and soliciting participation was sent out on 10/6/2010 and a final request for responses was mailed on 12/7/10.

The sample for this survey was comprised of city officials and stakeholders. More than one official in some cities was included in the sample because experiences and perceptions might not be consistent within a city and MTAS believes that it is important to receive as much feedback as possible. The sample for the web-based survey included 472 individuals; 433 city officials and 39 stakeholders. MTAS staff members were responsible for the distribution and tracking of paper copies.

The web-based survey was completed by 195 individuals and 53 individuals completed and returned a paper copy of the survey for a total of **248 responses**. These responses represent **189 cities** – 37.5% from the eastern grand division; 32.3% from the middle; and 30.2% from the western division. Two lists of cities are attached based upon whether or not a response was received from that city.

One of the points of interest for MTAS is to determine if the needs of the cities differ by population size and by their region in the state therefore it is important to note if there is any non-response bias for these two characteristics. The cities in the eastern division of the state were slightly overrepresented and the cities in the middle region were slightly underrepresented. Additionally, cities with a population of 2,000 to 4,999 were overrepresented and towns with populations under 2,000 were underrepresented. Please see Figures 1 and 2 and Chart 1 below.

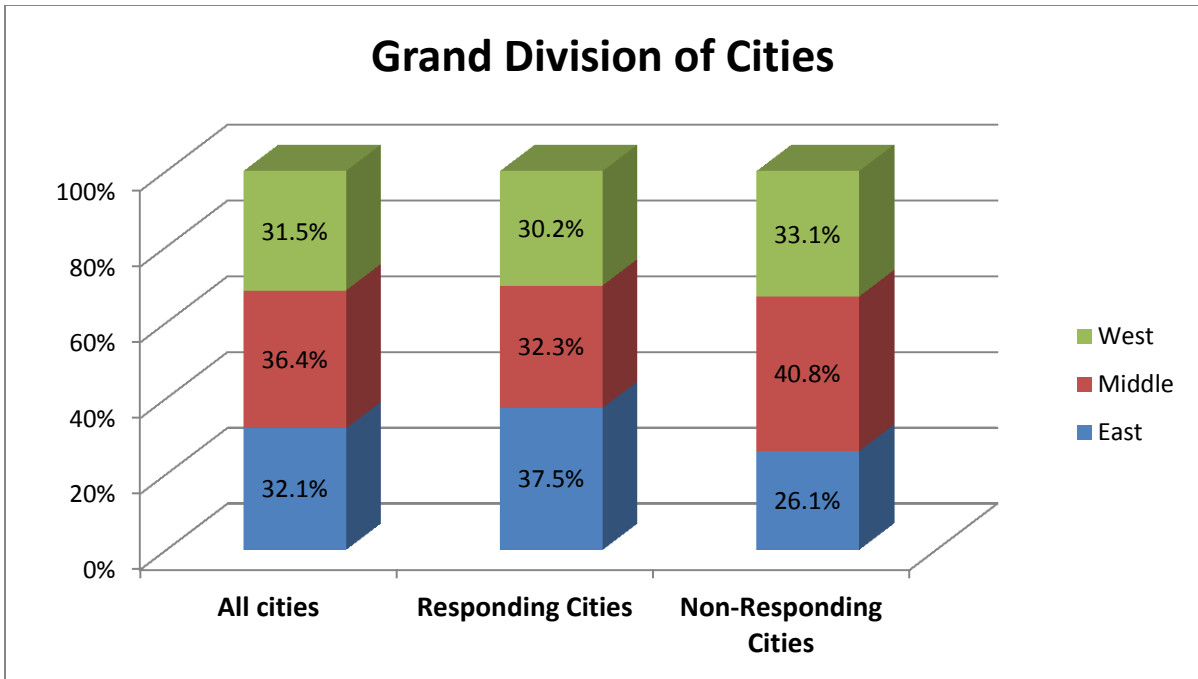


Figure 1

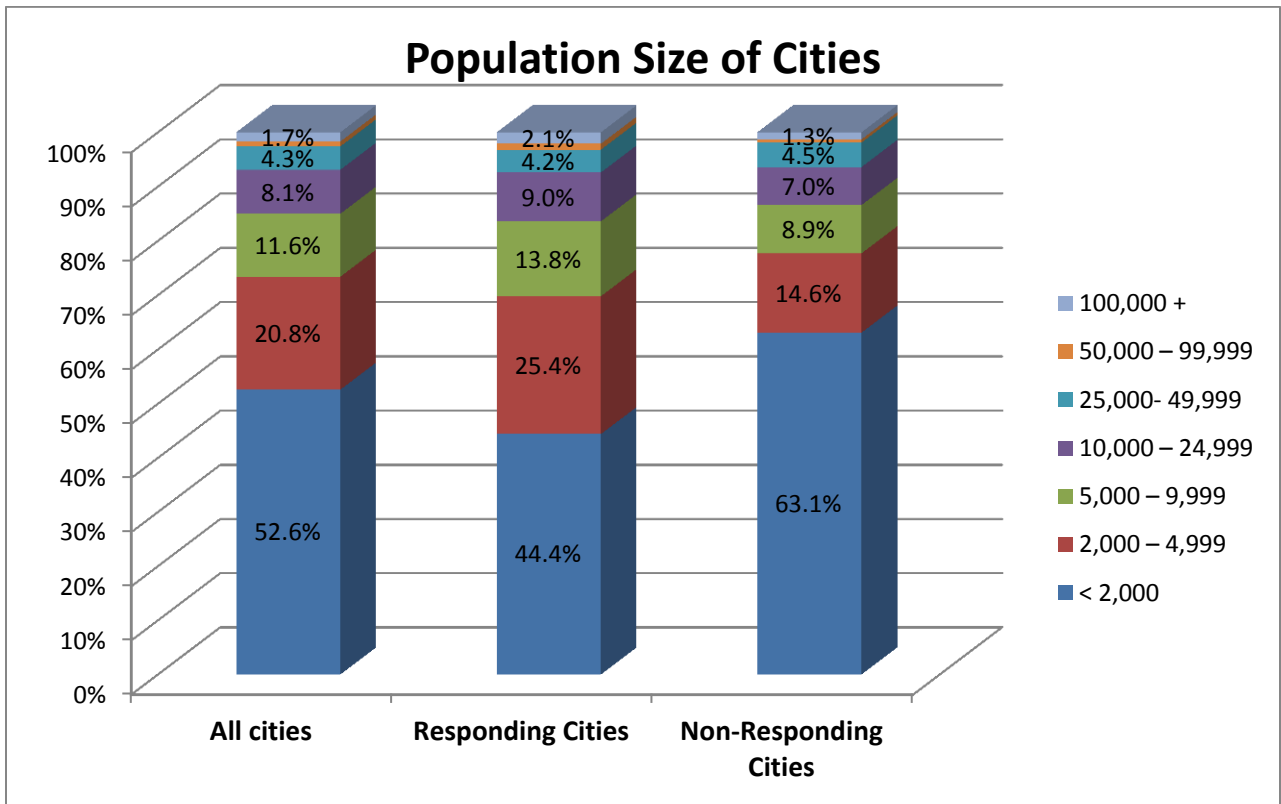


Figure 2

There is a wide range of population sizes in cities and towns across Tennessee therefore looking at the numbers as opposed to percentages may be a better method of displaying this information.

City Size	All cities	Responding Cities	Non-Responding Cities
< 2,000	182	84	98
2,000 – 4,999	72	48	24
5,000 – 9,999	40	26	14
10,000 – 24,999	28	17	11
25,000- 49,999	15	8	7
50,000 – 99,999	3	2	1
100,000 +	6	4	2
Total	346	189	157

Chart 1

MTAS was particularly interested in learning which of their services were most heavily used.

- Virtually all respondents reported using MTAS services in the past two years and 96.6% rated the service as either “Good” or “Excellent”.
- MTAS services reported to be used most frequently are municipal management; legal and court services; and finance and accounting.
- Cities in the west are more likely to report using MTAS for consulting on legal issues and water and waste water service than their counterparts in the middle and east regions.
- Fire management is reported to be the least utilized service, with cities between 5,000 and 25,000 being the most likely to use this service.

Please see Charts 2 and 3 below for a detailed summary of the services used by respondents within the three grand divisions and by city size.

SERVICES USED BY GRAND DIVISION

<i>Services</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>West</i>
	(n = 84)	(n = 68)	(n = 71)
Overall	98.8%	95.6%	95.8%
Finance & Accounting	77.4%	76.5%	80.3%
Fire Management	50.0%	45.6%	45.1%
Human Resources	76.2%	77.9%	84.5%
Legal/Court	84.5%	73.5%	90.1%
Codes and Charters	72.6%	72.1%	63.4%
Municipal Management	82.1%	85.3%	88.7%
Police	72.6%	58.8%	73.2%
Public Works	60.7%	50.0%	59.2%
Water Service	54.8%	52.9%	71.8%

Chart 2

SERVICES USED BY CITY POPULATION

Services	< 2,000	2,000 – 4,999	5,000 – 9,999	10,000 - 24,999	25,000 - 49,999	50,000 - 99,999	100,000 +
	(n = 93)	(n = 58)	(n = 33)	(n = 21)	(n = 10)	(n = 3)	(n = 5)
Overall	93.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Finance & Accounting	74.2%	82.8%	87.9%	85.7%	70.0%	66.7%	20.0%
Fire Management	30.1%	48.3%	75.8%	81.0%	30.0%	66.7%	40.0%
Human Resources	68.8%	87.9%	87.9%	90.5%	90.0%	100.0%	40.0%
Legal/Court	79.6%	86.2%	87.9%	85.7%	100.0%	100.0%	20.0%
Codes/ Charters	60.2%	79.3%	81.8%	71.4%	60.0%	100.0%	40.0%
Municipal Management	79.6%	86.2%	93.9%	95.2%	90.0%	100.0%	60.0%
Police	57.0%	74.1%	75.8%	85.7%	90.0%	100.0%	40.0%
Public Works	44.1%	62.1%	69.7%	76.2%	80.0%	66.7%	20.0%
Water Service	60.2%	65.5%	72.7%	38.1%	50.0%	.0%	40.0%

Chart 3

RELIANCE ON AND IMPORTANCE OF SERVICES

In addition to learning which services are most heavily utilized, MTAS is also interested in knowing which services respondents relied on for their primary source of assistance beyond their current city staff.

- Overall, respondents reported relying heavily on MTAS as their primary source of assistance with municipal management and codes and charters.
- Cities with populations below 25,000 are more likely to rely on MTAS for assistance with codes and charters than cities with larger populations.
- Legal assistance from MTAS is reported to be a primary source of assistance for cities with a population below 50,000.
- Reliance on MTAS for fire management services is predominantly reported to be a primary source of assistance for cities with populations between 5,000 and 50,000.

To further help MTAS discern what services are most important to their cities respondents were asked to indicate the top five services to their cities in order of priority.

- Financial Assistance is the most important service provided by MTAS for towns with a population size under 5,000.
- Municipal management is the most important service provided by MTAS for cities and towns with a population between 5,000 and 50,000.
- Human Resources service was equally important as municipal management for cities with a population between 10,000 and 24,999.

Please refer to the following charts for additional reporting of findings.

**RELIANCE ON MTAS AS PRIMARY SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE BEYOND CITY
STAFF**

	< 2,000	2,000 – 4,999	5,000 – 9,999	10,000 – 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 – 99,999	100,000 +
Financial Assistance							
#	77	49	25	15	5	1	1
%	32.3%	39.7%	36.4%	52.4%	50.0%	33.3%	20.0%
Fire Management							
#	45	32	24	15	2	1	1
%	48.4%	55.2%	72.7%	71.4%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%
Human Resources							
#	72	51	25	16	7	2	0
%	77.4%	87.9%	75.8%	76.2%	70.0%	66.7%	.0%
Legal Assistance							
#	76	45	25	15	8	1	0
%	81.7%	77.6%	75.8%	71.4%	80.0%	33.3%	.0%
Codes & Charters Assistance							
#	76	53	29	19	6	2	0
%	81.7%	91.4%	87.9%	90.5%	60.0%	66.7%	.0%
Municipal Management Assistance							
#	80	52	29	20	7	3	1
%	86.0%	89.7%	87.9%	95.2%	70.0%	100.0%	20.0%
Police Assistance							
#	61	43	23	15	6	3	0
%	65.6%	74.1%	69.7%	71.4%	60.0%	100.0%	.0%
Public Works Assistance							
#	57	39	23	11	5	1	0
%	61.3%	67.2%	69.7%	52.4%	50.0%	33.3%	.0%
Waste Water Assistance							
#	62	41	21	8	4	0	0
%	66.7%	70.7%	63.6%	38.1%	40.0%	.0%	.0%

MOST IMPORTANT SERVICE OFFERED BY CITY SIZE

	< 2,000	2,000 – 4,999	5,000 – 9,999	10,000 – 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 – 99,999	100,000 +
Financial Assistance							
#	44	26	8	4	0	0	2
%	47.3%	44.8%	24.2%	19.0%	.0%	.0%	40.0%
Municipal Management Assistance							
#	14	9	10	5	3	0	0
%	15.1%	15.5%	30.3%	23.8%	30.0%	.0%	.0%
Training							
#	12	4	5	3	2	0	2
%	12.9%	6.9%	15.2%	14.3%	20.0%	.0%	40.0%
Legal Assistance							
#	8	3	4	2	3	0	0
%	8.6%	5.2%	12.1%	9.5%	30.0%	.0%	.0%
Codes & Charters Assistance							
#	4	10	3	1	0	0	0
%	4.3%	17.2%	9.1%	4.8%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Human Resources							
#	5	2	2	5	1	1	1
%	5.4%	3.4%	6.1%	23.8%	10.0%	33.3%	20.0%
Water							
#	5	4	0	1	0	0	0
%	5.4%	6.9%	.0%	4.8%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Fire Services							
#	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
%	1.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	10.0%	33.3%	.0%