



Municipal Technical Advisory Service
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

MUNICIPAL E-NEWS

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New Materials in MRLn

[Defending communities against scrap metal theft](#)
(article)

[Essentials of business communication](#) (book)

[Fire department time keeping solutions survey](#)
(survey)

[A resolution establishing new rules of decorum
for the commission of the city of Charleston,
Tennessee](#) (resolution)

**MTAS Offices Closed:
December 23, 2024-January 1, 2025**



**VIEW OUR CURRENT
TRAINING CALENDAR**

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How Does MTAS Fit into the University of Tennessee?

Did you know this is MTAS's 75th year of serving Tennessee municipalities? The agency was created by state law and signed by the governor on April 15, 1949. You likely know that MTAS is a part of the University of Tennessee (UT), but have you ever wondered how it fits in?



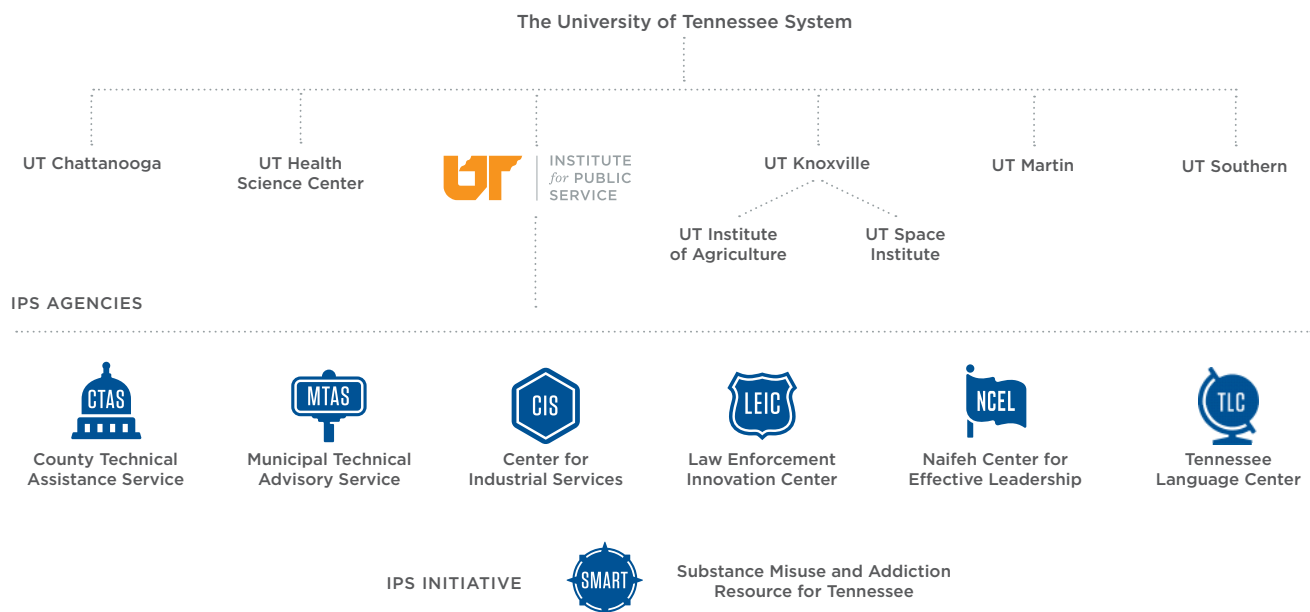
Margaret Norris
MTAS Executive Director

MTAS is housed within the Institute for Public Service (IPS). MTAS is one of six agencies within IPS. Sister agencies include the County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS), the Center for Industrial Services (CIS), the Law Enforcement Innovation Center (LEIC), the Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership (NCEL) and the Tennessee Language Center (TLC). Also housed within IPS is the Substance Misuse and Addiction Resource in Tennessee (SMART initiative), which addresses the opioid crisis.

IPS is the university's only stand-alone institute. The Institute of Agriculture used to be independent, but it is now part of UT Knoxville. IPS is on the same level of the UT organizational chart as the academic campuses: Knoxville, Chattanooga, Health Science Center, Martin and Southern.

So, what does MTAS have to do with UT other than through an organizational chart? UT is part of the land grant system originally adopted in the mid-1800s to establish institutions of higher education. The federal government gave, or "granted," states federally owned land to sell to generate funds that would create colleges and universities. The benefit of doing this was to educate students and the future workforce. It also took knowledge from the universities and distributed it to the state's communities through research and outreach.

Outreach is where IPS fits into the picture. IPS agencies, including MTAS, help the university achieve its mission of "Serving all Tennesseans and beyond through education, discovery and outreach that enables strong economic, social and environmental well-being."



Meet Our Newest Employee!

Please join us in welcoming the newest member of the MTAS family, Laura Kidwell! Laura joins MTAS as a legal consultant in the Nashville office. She comes to us from the office of the Tennessee Attorney General where she worked since 1997 in a variety of roles, including most recently in the office of the solicitor general.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Furman University in Greenville, SC, and her juris doctor from Wake Forest University (NC) School of Law.

Welcome, Laura!



MTAS Response to Hurricane Helene

In the aftermath of historic flooding caused by Hurricane Helene in late September, MTAS mobilized its resources to support cities and towns affected by the devastating storm.

Together, MTAS's finance and legal staff assisted in documentation procedures and compliance for FEMA relief. MTAS attorneys also provided guidance on emergency powers and purchases and worked with fellow public works consultants to advise on floodplain evaluation processes, procedures for rebuilding roads in a floodplain, and potential financial assistance.

The municipal management team conducted numerous on-site visits to upper East Tennessee municipalities, lending an ear for city officials to share their concerns, while giving advice on matters such as records management and FEMA documentation. In addition, management and legal

staff worked with Public Entity Partners (PEP) to host an information session for municipal leaders.

Regarding technical matters, MTAS fire and police consultants contacted their respective chiefs' associations to discuss departments' needs and possible ways for the agency to assist them. Public works consultants helped city leaders with GIS data and analytics, traffic routing, and questions related to debris management, among other issues.

Throughout their work in response to Helene, MTAS staff have witnessed the remarkable resilience and dedication of Tennessee city officials. The agency stands ready to continue supporting affected municipalities as they build back in 2025 and beyond.

West Tennessee Mayors Tour Blue Oval, TCAT Training Facilities

Ford Motor Company invited the West Tennessee Mayors Association to view progress on the construction of their new plant, Blue Oval City. This plant will be home of the Tennessee Electric Vehicle Center, which will produce the next generation all-electric truck. This plant, and the adjacent battery plant, will eventually employ 6,000 people.

Designed to be carbon neutral, the plant will be capable of producing 500,000 electric trucks per

year at full production. Ford and partner SK are investing \$5.6 billion in this project.

The state of Tennessee has built a new state-of-the-art training facility, the Tennessee Center for Applied Technology, in Stanton to help train students for opportunities being created by Ford and SK.

The mayors were given a tour of the new TCAT and Ford plant currently under construction.



Gleason Mayor Charles Anderson; Deborah Yeager, Public Entity Partners; Anthony Haynes, Tennessee Municipal League Executive Director; and Justin Hanson, Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund.



West Tennessee Mayors Association touring the new Tennessee College for Applied Technology in Stanton, Tennessee. This facility will train employees for the Ford plant and the adjacent battery plant at the Blue Oval City complex currently under construction.



Ford officials brief the West Tennessee Mayors Association on construction progress and plans for Blue Oval City.

Have you heard about the Tennessee Retail Alliance?

The Tennessee Retail Alliance (TRA), supported by the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, is providing a means to assist communities in promoting economic development through retail recruitment to increase jobs and their sales tax revenue. MTAS strives to improve the lives of Tennesseans by providing the best customer service to our cities. We have identified a need for additional support for cities and towns as they work on retail recruitment efforts.

The TRA, with its founding members, has just wrapped up its first year with Placer.ai software. The data and reports available to our members through the software are impactful in attracting the right businesses for the community.

Here is a sampling of the helpful reports TRA members have access to through Placer.ai.

- **Property Report:** identifies the unique attributes of the population in your trade areas through Census data, including demographics, economic trends, household characteristics and other variables like health insurance, transportation and travel time to work.
- **Market Outlook:** analyzes data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey, Census of Retail Trade, and Economic Census to provide estimates of retail supply, consumer demand and unmet demand for more than 70 different product and business categories. This report will help your cities discover areas of unmet consumer demand and higher revenue opportunities for businesses such as apparel, home improvement, food and beverage, automotive, and hobby.
- **Mosaic:** a consumer lifestyle segmentation system that provides a wide view of consumers' characteristics and preferences.

Derived from multiple data sources such as U.S. Census, consumer surveys, retail purchase data and mobile apps, Mosaic clusters U.S. households into detailed behavioral segments. This application empowers businesses to understand their audiences and make consumer-conscious business decisions.

- **Retail Leakage:** report provides insight into the categories and specific stores residents frequently visit outside their local area to highlight potential gaps in local retail offerings. The report also incorporates data from [STI Market Outlook](#) to quantify the amount of unmet demand in various categories. Use these insights to decide on the best economic development initiatives that will help increase local consumer spend and tax revenue.
- **Void Analysis:** allows users to easily determine which retail chains would be a good fit for multiple vacancies across your portfolio, using one interactive report. It delivers a list of ranked retail chains based on the parameters that reflect your tenant strategy. The report also helps users understand a shopping center's strength to attract the right tenants and maximize leasing deals.

Have you heard about the Tennessee Retail Alliance? (continued)

Here is what some of the members are saying.

"This software is WORTH EVERY PENNY!!! We have used it numerous times to complete data requests from retailers and retail brokers. We now have a shopping center with 9 store fronts and 5 outparcels in the works! We couldn't have accomplished all of this without Placer.ai! I hope more and more cities jump on board."

Kim Foster, Paris City Manager

"The Tennessee Retail Alliance has been so beneficial to Thompson's Station. As a small community, getting the specific information we need to make our case to retailers can be challenging. The resources available to us as members of the Tennessee Retail Alliance have been invaluable"

Micah Wood, Thompson's Station Town Administrator

"The access to Placer provided with the membership to the Retail Alliance has been a great benefit. The data is a great tool for commercial center owners and local economic development staff to assist with recruitment."

Addam McCormick, Goodlettsville Director of Planning & Development Services

If you would like to be more intentional about recruiting retail to your community, or even provide your existing businesses insightful data to market customers, contact Angie Carrier, MTAS municipal management program manager, to discuss the city's options.

Angie Carrier

1610 University Ave. | Knoxville, TN 37921

Phone: 865-974-9063

Email: angie.carrier@tennessee.edu

ANNUAL DUES BASED ON POPULATION

City population	Annual dues
Under 2,000	\$1,000
2,001-5,000	\$1,500
5,001-10,000	\$3,000
10,001-20,000	\$5,000
20,001 and up	\$7,500



Statewide Court Operations Reference Data

Recently, MTAS conducted a comprehensive, statewide municipal court operations survey. Leading the survey for MTAS were Municipal Court Specialist John Eskew and Librarian Frances Adams-O'Brien. All municipal courts in Tennessee with an email address were invited to share information on topics ranging from type of court, size, court costs, software and other general practices.



John Eskew
MTAS Municipal
Court Specialist

This survey will be useful to municipal courts in Tennessee as they work to improve court operations in their communities. For instance, if a municipal court is examining topics such as common court costs, what software other courts are using, or staffing, the results of this survey will provide unique, useful reference data to study their own operations.

MTAS would like to thank the Tennessee municipal court clerks who took the time to respond to this survey!



CMFO News: New Online Testing Program Rolls Out January 2025

The Certified Municipal Finance Officer (CMFO) program is excited to announce the rollout of Questionmark, a new online testing platform, in January 2025. Designed to enhance the certification process, Questionmark offers a secure, streamlined assessment environment that aligns with the CMFO curriculum.

Implemented in 2008, the CMFO program continues to evolve with the student base to offer a premier municipal accounting and finance certification program.

To ensure the integrity of the program and certification, Questionmark will integrate with Proctorio's advanced video recording security, which will monitor assessments and help maintain fair testing standards by detecting suspicious and unauthorized activities during exams.

Questionmark's analytics offer insights into candidate performance, providing data on accuracy rates by learning objectives and topics, guide page references, and trends over time. This allows instructors to pinpoint specific areas for improvement and helps identify common challenges across groups, enabling targeted support. These analytics empower participants and instructors to make data-driven decisions, enhancing study focus and preparation strategies to optimize program success.

These changes reflect MTAS's commitment to improved technology and a secure, efficient and user-friendly testing and certification process. We strive to ensure a smooth and successful certification experience for all participants.



Kari Bates
MTAS Municipal
Finance Training
Specialist

The [2025 class schedule](#) is now available to view.

The Tennessee Comptroller's office will continue to provide reimbursement to cities for enrolling employees and the \$1,000 stipend to CMFO graduates in 2025. [Additional information, policies and procedures](#) are available for review.



Steering the Future of MTAS Training

The MTAS training team launched its biennial training needs assessment this fall, and the results are in!

Major themes in the responses include:

1. Leadership and regulatory/compliance training topics are most important to you.
2. Growth is the top issue municipalities currently face, and expect to face, over the next few years.
3. Awareness of training opportunities is a top barrier to attendance.

Though MTAS just started working through the survey results, training staff is already considering new approaches and ways to meet customer needs. In the meantime, the [Municipal Leadership Program](#) will return next year, [additional training offerings for 2025](#) are already being scheduled, and they are reviewing our communications strategy to increase awareness of training opportunities.



Johanna Owenby
Training and Development
Program Manager

As they plan for the next two years of training, they will look to your input and continue to keep your needs and interests a top priority.

MTAS thanks the 745 municipal employees and elected officials across the state who took time to provide their feedback. MTAS hopes to receive even more responses in 2026 when we launch the next needs assessment.

Until then, contact us anytime to share your thoughts on MTAS training! Email us at mtas_training@tennessee.edu.



Are Goals Enough?

"Goals are good for planning your progress and systems are good for actually making progress."

-James Clear

As another year draws to a close and we look forward to a new year, it is natural to reflect on our personal and professional goals. Goals that you've accomplished, goals that are in progress and nearing completion, and those that are seemingly perennial. You know, those goals that we add to our list every year but still haven't been accomplished (maybe it's just me).

When we think about those perennial goals, there is the familiar cycle of setting the goal, getting frustrated when setbacks occur and then putting the goal on hold (again, maybe it's just me). If you're like me, setting goals is simple, but mastering or sustaining the habit required to achieve the goals is where we encounter challenges.



Yolanda Dillard
MTAS Training and
Development Consultant

In one of his blog articles (which is an excerpt from his book), James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, shares that our results have little to do with the goals we set and everything to do with the system we follow. According to Clear, we need two things to achieve our goals. First, we need to implement a system, a process of continuous, incremental improvements. Secondly, we need to commit to this system and that will determine our progress.

Next year, I will focus on implementing a system (I already have one identified!) and committing to it to achieve new and perennial goals! If you want to learn more, visit [Clear's curated list of articles on goal setting.](#)



It's a Wrap on MTAS's 75th Anniversary Celebration for 2024!

We have been honored and pleased to celebrate our 75th anniversary this year. It was fun celebrating in-person across the state at our three receptions, one in each grand division. We started in April in Jackson, next was June in Nashville, and then October in Knoxville. We enjoyed seeing customers, staff, retirees and partners at each event. A highlight of the receptions was testimonials from attendees on what MTAS has meant to them over the years. Presentations, swag and refreshments were plentiful at each reception.

Margaret Norris, MTAS executive director, spoke about our anniversary and its significance at meetings across the state, and she even had a chance to share our story at the annual conference of the International City/County Management Association!

With the participation of many retirees, municipal officials and staff, and partners, we produced a video looking back at MTAS over the years, as well as messages for MTAS on how it can succeed in the next 75 years. That video is available on [YouTube](#). Please give it a look and let us know what you think!

As we finish celebrating, and come to the end of the calendar year, we are excited to greet 2025 and get started on the next 75 years of service to the municipalities of Tennessee.

Here are few photos from our anniversary reception. Enjoy!

JACKSON



It's a Wrap on MTAS's 75th Anniversary Celebration for 2024! (continued)



NASHVILLE



KNOXVILLE



Officials Participate in Rural Community Development Initiative

Participants from eight towns in rural East Tennessee recently participated in the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI), a joint venture with the UT Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) and the UT Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership (NCEL).

RCDI was made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Community Development Initiative. Twenty-nine municipal staff and officials participated in the program, representing Bluff City, Caryville, Friendsville, Harriman, Niota, Sweetwater, Tellico Plains and Wartburg. The program's goal was to provide

education and training resources to municipal staff and elected officials to help them lead their communities in economic and community growth.

The training sessions included topics on municipal leadership, service innovation, community growth and community resilience to the adverse effects of environmental pollutants in Tennessee communities.

Learn more about the [Municipal Technical Advisory Service](#) and the [Naifeh Center for Effective Leadership](#).



Cities Get to Know MRLn

The MTAS Research and Information Center (RIC) recently hosted a series of webinars to introduce city officials and staff to the MTAS Research Library online (MRLn). From Memphis to Morristown and dozens of cities in between, over 50 participants joined MTAS librarians Frances Adams-O'Brien, Desiree Eldridge and Lyndy Wibking, to learn how to make the most of the MRLn database.

This innovative platform improves the ability to discover and access print and electronic information resources for city officials and staff in Tennessee. Thanks to MRLn, it has never been easier for customers to obtain MTAS-authored resources such as reports, legal opinions, surveys, sample job descriptions, resolutions and

ordinances, as well as a growing collection of e-books and articles about emerging issues and trends in local government. Together with MTAS's many other tools and services, MRLn enables city officials across the state to empower their decision-making with relevant information more efficiently than ever.



Lyndy Wibking
MTAS Technical Services
Librarian

[ACCESS MRLn](#)



TREEDC Hosts Conference, Recognizes Leaders in Renewable Energy

The Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council (TREEDC) held its annual conference in Cookeville in November. Attendees learned about clean energy opportunities, heard from Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs on the economic benefits of renewables, and networked with colleagues.

The afternoon focused on community resiliency. The conference concluded with an awards ceremony honoring individuals for their contributions to renewable energy and economic development. UT Institute of Agriculture Senior Vice Chancellor and Senior Vice President Dr. Keith Carver received the prestigious Dr. Joe Johnson Award for his longstanding collaboration with TREEDC and dedication to its mission.



Left to right: Warren Nevad; Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs, MTAS Executive Director Margaret Norris.



Left to Right: Warren Nevad, MTAS management consultant/TREEDC executive director; Dr. Keith Carver, UT Institute of Agriculture senior vice chancellor and senior vice president; Dwain Land, TREEDC president

Join Our Team at MTAS!

MTAS is seeking dedicated professionals to fill various consulting roles across the state.

Current Openings:

- [MTAS IT Administrator](#), Knoxville
- [MTAS Finance & Accounting Consultant](#), Nashville
- [MTAS Public Works Consultant](#), Nashville
- [MTAS Training & Development Consultant](#), Knoxville
- [MTAS Utility Management Consultant](#), Knoxville

Why Work with Us?

- Impactful work: make a difference in Tennessee's municipalities.
- Professional growth: opportunities for advancement and professional development.
- Supportive community: join a team committed to excellence and service.

Apply Now: To view detailed job descriptions and apply, [visit our employment page](#).

Contact Us: For questions regarding the application process or specific vacancies, please reach out to [Wes Fernandez](#), MTAS hiring and business manager.

We encourage all interested candidates to explore the opportunities and become a part of our mission to enhance the governance of Tennessee's municipalities. We look forward to your application!



Conferences & Meetings for Municipal Staff and Officials

MTAS Training Coming in 2025

Elected Officials mark your calendars for the winter virtual session of our Elected Officials Academy, January 21-23, 2025. The Elected Officials Special Topics Series returns with four new sessions.

The IMPACT Series returns as well as MTAS utility training and so much more! Visit the [MTAS training calendar](#) to register for upcoming sessions. Sign up for our [weekly training email](#) to stay up to date on MTAS training.

Conferences (January-April 2025)

[MTAS Court Clerks Conference](#)

April 10-11, 2025 | Franklin Embassy Suites

[Tennessee Building Officials Association](#)

April 13-16, 2025 | Gatlinburg

[Tennessee Personnel Management Association](#)

April 22-24, 2025 | Franklin

[Tennessee City Management Association Spring Conference](#)

April 30-May 2, 2025 | Franklin

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