Hiring Your First Town Administrator or Selectboard Administrative Assistant

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Establishing a Town Administrator or a Selectboard Administrative Assistant Position

Benefits of Hiring an Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard

Hiring an administrative assistant can significantly enhance the efficiency, organization, and effectiveness of the Selectboard, allowing members to focus on strategic decision-making, policy development, and community engagement.

The role of an administrative assistant to the Selectboard is integral to the smooth operation of local governance. Here are several key benefits that demonstrate the value of this position:

Improved Efficiency: An administrative assistant can streamline communication and scheduling for Selectboard members. By managing calendars, organizing meetings, and handling correspondence, they enable board members to maximize their productivity. For instance, rather than spending time coordinating logistics, board members can dedicate more energy to policy discussions and community projects.

Documentation and Recordkeeping: Keeping accurate records and documentation is vital for transparency and accountability in local government. An administrative assistant can maintain meeting minutes, prepare agendas, and ensure that all documents are properly filed and accessible. This not only meets legal requirements but also fosters trust

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

within the community.

Enhanced Community Engagement: An administrative assistant can serve as a point of contact for residents, addressing inquiries and facilitating communication between the Selectboard and the community. This role helps to create a more responsive government, as residents feel heard and valued. For example, by managing social media or community newsletters, the assistant can actively promote town events and initiatives, leading to increased participation and support.

Support for Projects and Initiatives: With an administrative assistant handling routine tasks, Selectboard members can focus on long-term projects and strategic initiatives that drive community development. An assistant can help with research, grant applications, or organizing special events, which can lead to innovative solutions and enhanced services for residents.

Benefits of Hiring a Town Administrator

Small-town governance can be both rewarding and challenging. In Vermont, selectboards of small towns often play a central role in overseeing the day-to-day operations of the town. However, these elected officials also often have other professional responsibilities and may not have all the time and expertise needed to manage the town's complex affairs. Hiring a town administrator can help bridge this gap, making town operations more efficient, organized, and responsive to the needs of the community. Here are several key reasons why hiring a town administrator is beneficial for a Vermont

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

selectboard.

1. Efficient Operations and Management

Town administrators are professionals who generally have experience in municipal management to help the local government operate smoothly. With a town administrator in place, the selectboard can delegate day-to-day administrative duties such as overseeing daily operations, monitoring town employees, managing expenses, coordinating with department heads, and complying with state and federal regulations. This allows selectboard members to avoid getting bogged down in operational minutiae and instead focus on making decisions that are theirs to make, pursuing large scale improvements, and planning for their town's future.

2. Expertise and Professionalism

Town administrators often have education and/or backgrounds in public administration, municipal law, or business management. Their expertise provides a level of professionalism that can be critical for ensuring that the town's operations are carried out efficiently and legally. This professional guidance helps avoid common pitfalls such as mismanagement of funds, legal oversights, and inefficient allocation of resources.

In smaller towns, where selectboard members may have limited experience in municipal governance, an administrator can provide much-needed

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

knowledge and counsel. Administrators are also capable of navigating Vermont's unique regulatory environment – invaluable for adhering to state laws, federal regulations, environmental codes, and more.

3. Improved Coordination and Communication

Town administrators primarily ensure that information flows efficiently to and from their selectboard. They gather information, prepare reports, summarize meeting discussions, and help prioritize issues for the board's attention. This ensures that selectboard members are fully informed and able to make decisions based on accurate and timely information.

Another significant advantage of hiring a town administrator is the improvement in communication and coordination between town departments and external entities. As the primary point of contact for town employees, contractors, and citizens, a town administrator is ideally positioned to facilitate smooth communication across all sectors.

Moreover, administrators can act as a liaison between the town and state or regional agencies, ensuring that the town is kept up to date on new regulations or funding opportunities that could benefit the community.

4. Long-Term Planning and Stability

A town administrator provides continuity in local governance, which is particularly valuable in a small community where leadership may change

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

frequently. Selectboard members may serve for only a few years, and their tenure may be limited by various factors including personal circumstances. In contrast, a town administrator is typically a long-term position that offers consistent leadership, stability, and institutional knowledge.

Having a town administrator can also help the selectboard by carrying out long-term plans effectively. An administrator can work with the selectboard to develop and implement comprehensive plans for matters such as infrastructure, economic development, and community services. With continuous professional oversight, towns can better align their short-term actions with their long-term goals.

5. Increased Accountability and Transparency

Accountability is a cornerstone of good governance, and hiring a town administrator helps improve the transparency of a small town's activities. The administrator is responsible for managing day-to-day operations and reporting back to the selectboard. This creates a clear line of accountability, where the selectboard can assess performance, review progress on goals, and determine whether town policies are being implemented as intended.

Additionally, the administrator helps ensure that public meetings and documents are properly managed, promoting transparency in town decisions. With a conscientious professional in place to oversee administrative functions, residents can have more confidence that their concerns are being addressed and that town resources are being used effectively.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

6. Better Resource Management

In the face of budgetary constraints, efficient resource management is critical to ensuring that public services remain effective without overburdening taxpayers. A town administrator can help the selectboard make informed financial decisions, develop balanced budgets, and monitor spending. Their expertise in municipal finance enables them to identify cost-saving measures and ensure that funds are allocated appropriately across departments.

Additionally, administrators can help secure funding through grants, loans, and other state or federal programs. Their familiarity with grant application processes and eligibility requirements can help towns tap into financial resources that might otherwise be overlooked.

7. Enhanced Public Relations

Town administrators also play a vital role in fostering positive relationships with the public. They can serve as a point of contact for residents who have questions or concerns, ensuring that their voices are heard and their issues addressed. By maintaining open channels of communication, administrators help build trust between the town government and its residents.

Furthermore, administrators can manage the town's public relations efforts, including handling media inquiries, issuing press releases, and keeping the community informed about town initiatives or challenges.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

In Summary

Hiring a town administrator can provide significant benefits to a Vermont selectboard. Entrusting daily management tasks to a skilled professional allows board members to focus on broader policy issues, long-term planning, and the larger needs of the community. The result is generally improved efficiency, accountability, and governance – which ultimately enhances the quality of life for residents and enables the continued success of Vermont's small towns.

If you like the idea of adding a town administrator but are unsure if it is right for your town, VLCT can help. Meet with VLCT's Municipal Operations Specialist by scheduling a time(opens in a new tab) to discuss the considerations.

Guide to Establishing a Town Administrator Position

Step 1: Assess the Need for a Town Administrator

1. Conduct a Needs Assessment

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Gather input from Selectboard members, town employees, and community members.

- Identify specific administrative challenges the town faces (e.g., budget management, project oversight).

2. Define Key Responsibilities

- Based on the needs assessment, outline the responsibilities of the Town Administrator, such as:

- Managing day-to-day operations

- Overseeing budgets and financial reports

- Coordinating with other departments and community organizations

Step 2: Create a Comprehensive Job Description

1. Include Essential Elements, such as

- Job title: Town Administrator

- Summary of the position

- Key responsibilities and duties

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Required qualifications — education, experience, skills
- Desired attributes — leadership, communication, problem-solving

2. Example Job Responsibilities

- Prepare and manage the municipal budget.
- Supervise town staff and coordinate departmental activities.
- Serve as the primary point of contact for residents and businesses.

Step 3: Determine Compensation and Benefits

1. Research Comparable Salaries

- Investigate salary ranges for similar positions in other Vermont towns.
- Consider the town's budget and financial capacity.

2. Develop a Benefits Package

- Outline benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off.
- Ensure benefits are competitive to attract qualified candidates.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Step 4: Create a Recruitment Plan

See VLCT PACIF's Steps to Hiring Well(opens in a new tab)

1. Plan Ahead to Ensure Consistency

- Treat applicants in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner by following the same steps for all.

2. Prepare a Timeline for the Recruitment Process

- Establish deadlines for posting the job, reviewing applications, conducting interviews, and making a hiring decision.

3. Attract a Pool of Well Qualified Candidates

- **Select Recruitment Channels.** Post the job description on:
- Town website
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns website
- Local newspapers and community boards
- Professional organizations and job boards (e.g., ICMA)
- **Let current employees know about the opening.** Current employees could be interested in the position and/or help spread the word of the opportunity

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Step 5: Review Applications and Conduct Interviews

1. Review Applications

- Create a scoring rubric to evaluate candidates based on qualifications, experience, and fit for the community.

2. Conduct Interviews

- Schedule interviews with shortlisted candidates.
- Prepare standardized questions to assess their skills, experiences, and vision for the town.
- If a quorum of a legislative body or a duly appointed subcommittee will conduct the interviews, be sure to comply with Vermont's Open Meeting Law. Individuals generally expect that their job application will be kept confidential, especially if they are currently employed. Plan a confidential process so you don't breach that trust.

Step 6: Make an Offer

1. Select the Final Candidate

- Based on interview performance and committee discussions, choose the most suitable candidate.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Check references before extending an offer of employment. Once you decide whom to hire, always check at least three professional references before extending an offer.

- For certain positions, it makes sense to hire a firm to conduct a more in-depth background check before making an offer. When doing so, it is important to follow legal notification and sign-off requirements.

2. Extend a Job Offer

- Present a formal job offer that includes salary, benefits, and starting date.

- Make the offer of employment contingent upon the candidate providing relevant certifications or other necessary credentials.

Step 7: Onboard the New Town Administrator

1. Develop an Onboarding Plan

- Create a structured onboarding program that includes:

- Introduction to town staff and key stakeholders.

- Overview of town policies, procedures, and organizational culture.

- Training on specific software or tools used in town administration.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

2. Set Initial Goals

- Work with the new Town Administrator to establish short-term and long-term goals within their first 90 days.

Shape

Step 8: Ensure Ongoing Support and Retention

1. Provide Regular Feedback

- Schedule regular check-ins to discuss performance, challenges, and support needed.

- Offer constructive feedback and recognize achievements.

2. Facilitate Professional Development

- Encourage attendance at workshops, conferences, and training programs relevant to town administration.

3. Foster a Positive Work Environment

- Promote open communication and collaboration among staff and the Town Administrator.

- Create a supportive culture that values input and innovation.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Conclusion

By following this step-by-step guide, a Vermont Selectboard can successfully establish a Town Administrator position and effectively recruit, onboard, and retain a qualified candidate. This process will contribute to improved governance and service delivery in the community.

Guide to Establishing a Shared Town Administrator

The following guidelines outline a structured approach for two Vermont Selectboards to collaborate effectively in sharing a Town Administrator. This collaborative model aims to enhance operational efficiency, promote resource sharing, and maintain clear communication between the two towns.

1. Establish Clear Objectives

Define Purpose

- Identify the primary goals for sharing a Town Administrator. Examples might include cost savings, improved administrative services, or enhanced community engagement.

Set Goals

- Create specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals that the shared Town Administrator should aim to

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

achieve within a specified timeframe.

2. Develop a Shared Agreement

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- Draft an MOU that outlines the terms of the shared arrangement. Include:
- Duration of the agreement
- Responsibilities of each Selectboard
- Funding arrangements (salary, benefits, office space)
- Performance evaluation criteria

Legal Considerations

- Consult legal counsel to ensure compliance with state laws and regulations regarding shared employment agreements.

3. Define Roles and Responsibilities

Town Administrator's Role

- Clearly outline the responsibilities of the Town Administrator, including specific tasks for each town, such as:

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Budget preparation
- Policy implementation
- Community outreach

Selectboard Responsibilities

- Specify the roles of each Selectboard in supporting the Town Administrator, such as:
- Providing resources
- Facilitating communication with residents
- Assisting in policy direction

4. Establish Communication Protocols

Regular Meetings

- Schedule regular joint meetings of the Selectboards (e.g., monthly) to discuss progress, challenges, and updates regarding the Town Administrator's work.

Reporting Structure

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Create a structured reporting system where the Town Administrator provides updates to both Selectboards. This could include:
- Bi-weekly reports
- Quarterly performance reviews

Public Communication

- Develop a unified communication strategy to inform residents of both towns about the shared arrangement, ensuring transparency and community engagement.

5. Create a Budget and Funding Plan

Budget Allocation

- Determine how the shared salary and benefits of the Town Administrator will be funded. Consider:
- Equal split of costs
- Proportional allocation based on population or service needs

Additional Expenses

- Identify other potential expenses such as office supplies, travel, and training. Decide how these costs will be shared.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

6. Performance Evaluation

Establish Evaluation Criteria

- Develop metrics for evaluating the performance of the Town Administrator, focusing on:
- Efficiency in managing both towns' needs
- Feedback from community members
- Achievement of agreed-upon goals

Periodic Reviews

- Schedule regular performance reviews (e.g., annually) to assess the Town Administrator's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments to the arrangement.

7. Conflict Resolution

Establish Protocols

- Create a clear conflict resolution process for addressing any disagreements or challenges that arise during the shared arrangement.

Regular Check-Ins

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Facilitate regular discussions between the Selectboards and the Town Administrator to address any emerging issues proactively.

8. Assess and Adjust

Feedback Mechanism

- Implement a feedback mechanism for both Selectboards and community members to share their experiences and suggestions regarding the shared Town Administrator.

Review and Adapt

- Periodically review the shared arrangement's effectiveness and make adjustments based on feedback and changing needs of both towns.

Conclusion

By following these guidelines, the two Vermont Selectboards can create a successful partnership that maximizes the benefits of sharing a Town Administrator. This collaborative approach not only enhances administrative efficiency but also fosters stronger community ties and better service delivery for both towns.

Recruitment Strategies and Sample Job Postings

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Tailoring recruitment strategies to the different levels and compensation packages of Town Administrator and Administrative Assistant positions is key to attracting the right candidates.

For the Administrative Assistant position, the focus should be on attracting local candidates with transferable skills. Leveraging local networks, such as community bulletin boards, local newspapers, and partnerships with local businesses, is crucial. Highlighting the work-life balance and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the community might be more effective than emphasizing career advancement. Word-of-mouth referrals from existing town staff can also be a powerful tool. Finally, consider partnering with local training programs or offering opportunities for professional development to attract candidates looking to upskill or transition into municipal government.

For the Town Administrator role, a broader, national search is likely warranted given the higher salary and executive-level responsibilities. A compelling video showcasing the town's beauty, amenities, and community spirit is an excellent starting point, followed by targeted advertising on professional networks and job boards frequented by municipal managers. Highlighting opportunities for professional development and career advancement would also be attractive. Networking with relevant professional organizations and attending conferences to directly connect with potential candidates is worth the effort. Emphasizing the unique challenges and rewards of managing a Vermont town can attract candidates who seek a fulfilling career in public service.

Administrative Assistant

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Some Tailored Strategies for the Administrative Assistant Position

- Local networks and community outreach
- Word-of-mouth referrals
- Highlight work-life balance
- Partnerships with local training programs

Job Posting Tailored to Attract Candidates for Selectboard Administrative Assistant

Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard – [Town Name], Vermont

About [Town Name]: [Town Name] is a thriving community seeking a detail-oriented and highly organized Administrative Assistant to support our Selectboard. This is a fantastic opportunity to contribute to the heart of our local government and make a real difference in our community.

Responsibilities: [List key responsibilities, including preparing agendas and minutes, managing correspondence, scheduling meetings, and handling

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

administrative tasks].

Qualifications: [List specific qualifications, including relevant experience, software proficiency, and organizational skills.]

Compensation & Benefits: [State competitive salary and benefits package.]

To Apply: [Provide detailed instructions for applying, including deadline and contact information.]

Notice how the language and emphasis differ. The Town Administrator posting emphasizes career advancement and relocation, while the Administrative Assistant posting focuses on community involvement and work-life balance.

Town Administrator

Some Tailored Strategies for the Town Administrator Position

- National job boards and professional networks
- Vermont League of Cities & Towns classified ads
- Video showcasing town and lifestyle

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- Networking at conferences

- Emphasize career advancement

Job Posting Tailored to Attract Candidates for Town Administrator

Town Administrator – [Town Name], Vermont

About [Town Name]: Nestled in the heart of Vermont, [Town Name] offers a vibrant community, stunning natural beauty, and a welcoming atmosphere. We are seeking a highly motivated and experienced Town Administrator to lead our team and guide our town into the future. [Optional: Include brief overview of recent accomplishments or upcoming projects].

Responsibilities: [List key responsibilities, including budget management, strategic planning, personnel management, and community engagement.]

Qualifications: [List specific qualifications, including relevant experience, education, and certifications.]

Compensation & Benefits: [State competitive salary and benefits package, including health insurance, retirement plan, and paid time off]. Relocation assistance available [if applicable.]

To Apply: [Provide detailed instructions for applying, including deadline and contact information.]

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Onboarding

Onboarding an Administrative Assistant

A structured onboarding plan for a new Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard ensures a smooth transition and helps them quickly become a productive member of the team.

The plan should be a phased approach, starting with administrative tasks and gradually introducing them to the nuances of the role. The initial phase should focus on introductions and familiarization with the office environment. This includes meetings with the Selectboard members, other town staff, and a tour of the town hall. They should receive access to necessary computer systems and software, along with training on the town's internal communication systems (email, phone).

Next, they should receive training on the town's recordkeeping systems. This includes learning how to use any relevant software and understanding the filing systems for town documents. They should also begin to familiarize themselves with the town's policies and procedures, including meeting protocols and communications guidelines. The third phase involves shadowing the Selectboard during meetings and learning the process of preparing meeting agendas and minutes. They should also be trained on handling incoming correspondence and managing the Selectboard's schedule.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Finally, they should receive ongoing training and mentorship. This includes regular check-in meetings with the Selectboard chair or a designated supervisor, opportunities for professional development, and access to resources for improving their skills.

Here are some key steps.

- **Create a detailed checklist:** Outline all tasks and training needed during the first month.
- **Assign a mentor:** Pair the new assistant with an experienced staff member for guidance.
- **Establish clear communication channels:** Ensure easy access to the Selectboard and other staff.
- **Schedule regular check-in meetings:** Provide opportunities for feedback and address any questions.

Examples of training materials or resources that could be used during the onboarding process.

Effective training materials and resources for an Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard should be tailored to the specific needs of the town and the assistant's role.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

These resources should cover both technical skills and the soft skills needed to interact effectively with the Selectboard, other town staff, and the public. For technical skills, training materials might include tutorials on the town's record-keeping software, email management systems, and meeting scheduling tools. Hands-on practice and mentorship from experienced staff members would be beneficial here.

For soft skills, training materials might cover effective communication techniques, including written and verbal communication, active listening, and conflict resolution. Role-playing exercises or shadowing opportunities could be valuable here. Materials explaining the town's policies and procedures, including meeting protocols and communication guidelines, should also be provided.

Access to relevant town documents, such as the town charter, meeting minutes, and policy manuals, is crucial for understanding the context of their work. Finally, access to online resources, such as templates for agendas and minutes, and guides on best practices for administrative assistants in municipal government, could be beneficial.

Here are some practical steps.

- **Create a comprehensive training manual:** Include step-by-step instructions, screenshots, and contact information.

- **Develop a mentorship program:** Pair the new assistant with an experienced staff member for guidance.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

- **Provide access to online resources:** Share websites, templates, and other helpful tools.

- **Schedule regular training sessions:** Offer opportunities to practice new skills and ask questions.

Onboarding a Town Administrator

A comprehensive onboarding plan for a new Town Administrator ensures a smooth transition and sets them up for success.

The plan should be a detailed, multi-stage process spanning the first few months of employment. The initial phase should focus on introductions and administrative tasks. This includes meetings with key personnel, including the Selectboard, department heads, and other key staff members. The new administrator should receive a comprehensive tour of town facilities and be introduced to the town's IT systems and software. Essential paperwork, such as employment contracts, benefit information, and access credentials, should be completed promptly.

The second phase should focus on learning the town's operations. This involves reviewing town documents, including the town charter, budgets, strategic plans, and recent meeting minutes. The administrator should shadow department heads to understand their responsibilities and the challenges they face.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

The third phase focuses on community engagement and relationship-building. This includes attending town meetings, community events, and meetings with local organizations and stakeholders. The administrator should also begin developing relationships with neighboring towns and regional organizations.

The final phase involves developing and implementing a short-term work plan. This plan should outline the administrator's initial priorities and how they plan to achieve them, aligning with the town's overall strategic goals. Regular check-in meetings with the Selectboard should be scheduled to provide updates on progress and address any issues.

Here are some key steps:

- **Develop a detailed timeline:** Outline key milestones and responsibilities for the first few months.
- **Create a comprehensive orientation package:** Include relevant documents, contacts, and resources.
- **Schedule regular check-in meetings:** Provide opportunities for feedback and support.
- **Establish clear performance expectations:** Outline key performance indicators (KPIs) and goals for the first year.

This content was created in part with artificial intelligence and was reviewed by a human subject matter expert.

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026

Disclaimer: This resource was created by Municipal Operations Support (MOS) staff of non-legal professionals with expertise of the subject matter. It is only intended to provide information and does **NOT** constitute legal advice. Readers with legal questions are encouraged to contact an attorney. The use or downloading of this resource does **NOT** create an attorney-client relationship and will not be treated in a confidential manner. Non-legal questions about this resource can be directed to MOS staff at mos@vlct.org.

Publication Date
05/19/2025

Copyright Vermont League of Cities and Towns
Current as of: 11/9/2026