



Bridgewater Operational Review Summary

Key Findings and Recommendations for Town Leaders

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Introduction and Purpose



Purpose of the Operational Review

- Comprehensive assessment of all Bridgewater town departments
- Identify staffing, resource, and process strengths and gaps



Objective for Town Leadership

- Support data-driven decisions for resource allocation
- Guide strategic planning for current and future needs



Scope of the Review

- Covers public safety departments, human services, regulatory departments, community and economic development departments, public works divisions, finance, and administration, Information Technology Department and Town Clerk



Methodology and Approach



Stakeholder Engagement

- Conducted in-depth interviews with all department heads



Data-Driven Analysis

- Reviewed operational data from 2022-2024 for trends and challenges



Comparative Benchmarking

- Benchmarked Bridgewater against similar communities for context



Town-Wide Observations

Highly dedicated, professional and effective staff

Rising Service Demands

Departments face increasing requests without matching resource growth.

Leadership Continuity

Succession planning is recommended for long-term operational stability

Proactive Investment Needed

Modernization in staffing, equipment, and technology is critical for sustaining high-quality services.





Police Department

Rising Service Demands

- Call volume increased by **17%** from 2022 to 2024
- Motor vehicle stops and medical emergencies are top call types

Staffing and Resource Challenges

- Staffing levels are below peer communities
- Resource strain is evident as demand outpaces capacity

Strategic Recommendations

- Expand staffing and equipment to meet growing needs
- Improve traffic management to address high incident rates
- Enhance community engagement and advanced training



Fire Department



Rising Emergency Call Volume

- Calls increased to **5,077** in 2024, with frequent dual-call incidents.



Staffing Below Safety Standards

- East Side Station operates with crews below recommended guidelines.



Operational Strain and Mutual Aid Reliance

- Frequent dual calls leave stations without staff, increasing dependence on outside help.



Key Recommendations

- Increase staffing, conduct cost analysis, and reduce reliance on mutual aid.



Dispatch Operations



Current Dispatch Structure

Police and fire dispatch are separate, staffed by uniformed personnel.



Operational Benefits

Frees up sworn police and fire staff for field duties, maximizing their specialized training.



Recommended Change

Establish a combined civilian dispatch division or join a regional center.



Efficiency and Service Quality

Improves efficiency, reduces staffing gaps, and supports modern public safety demands.



Community Services

Council on Aging



Rising Senior Demographics

- Bridgewater's elderly population is growing rapidly, increasing demand for services.



Service Demand Outpaces Resources

- High participation in health, wellness, and social programs strains current capacity.



Staffing and Funding Challenges

- Department relies heavily on grant-funded positions, creating operational risk.
- Limited staff and only one handicap-accessible van restrict transportation services.



Behavioral Health Needs

- Rising mental health and behavioral challenges with only one social worker available.



Strategic Recommendations

- Expand staff, especially in transportation and behavioral health roles.
- Secure sustainable, town-funded positions to reduce reliance on grants.
- Enhance wellness and behavioral health services for seniors.



Veterans Services



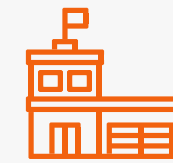
Veteran Population and Benefit Gaps

- Bridgewater has a 51% higher veteran density than the state average, but only 22% of veterans receive VA monetary benefits, compared to 32.1% in neighboring towns.
- Average monthly benefit is \$430.77, significantly lower than the \$679.42 average in peer communities.



Key Challenges

- Low awareness and participation in state and federal benefit programs.
- Historical lack of advocacy and trust issues among local veterans.



Strategic Recommendations

- Expand outreach and education to inform veterans about available benefits.
- Provide hands-on support for benefit applications and increase administrative staffing.
- Explore regional partnerships to enhance service delivery and share resources.



Public Library

Expanding Programs & Community Engagement

- Events for all ages drive strong community participation.
- Innovative partnerships support literacy, STEM, and cultural programming.

Collection & Facility Improvements

- Physical and digital collections grow each year, with access to **3.6M+ items** via SAILS network.
- Recent renovations enhance local history access and exhibit space.

Staffing & Capacity Challenges

- Operates with **10 employees**—lowest FTE among peer towns.
- Limited staff hours restrict programming and service expansion.

Circulation & Usage Trends

- Total circulation is lowest among comparable towns, despite high staff productivity.

Strategic Recommendations

- Expand staff and hours to boost capacity and service quality.
- Invest in programming, facility upgrades, and digital resources.





Parks and Recreation



Maintenance-Focused Operations

Department currently maintains parks and fields without offering community programs.



Uneven Facilities and Field Quality

Amenities are concentrated in a few parks; several fields lack irrigation and need upgrades.



Lack of Community Programming

No active recreational or enrichment programs for residents, which is unusual for a town of this size.



Strategic Recommendations

Establish community programming, upgrade non-irrigated fields, and enhance amenities in underutilized parks.



Regulatory Departments Overview



Rising Complexity in Regulatory Departments

Departments face increased inspections, permits, and project demands.



Operational Strain and Resource Gaps

Staffing and resource constraints limit efficiency and responsiveness.



Strategic Recommendations

Sustain grant funding, add staff, and invest in modern operational systems.



Public Works: Highway Division



Reliable Winter Road Maintenance

All streets plowed supported by staff and subcontractors.



Responding to Community Needs

Hundreds of resident work orders completed annually, reflecting strong engagement.



Addressing Aging Infrastructure

Ongoing street and sidewalk restoration, hazardous tree removals, and storm-water compliance.

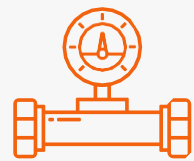


Strategic Recommendations

Cross-train staff, invest in preventive maintenance, and upgrade digital work order systems.

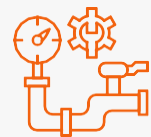


Water and Sewer Operations



Aging Infrastructure Challenges

- Ongoing need to replace wells, mains, and treatment systems



Recent Investments & Upgrades

- New treatment facilities, well replacements, and tower repairs underway



Rising Wastewater Volume

- Average daily flow now at **82.6% of plant capacity**



Strategic Recommendations

- Prioritize capital improvement planning, expand plant capacity, and enhance water quality initiatives



Financial Services Departments



Integrated Financial Management

- Accounting, Assessors, and Treasurer/Collector collaborate for fiscal oversight



Current Challenges

- Accurately monitoring property values to improve planning and budget process
- Manual processing increases workload and risk of errors
- Administrative complexity strains limited staff resources



Opportunities for Improvement

- Adopt digital tools and automation to streamline operations
- Invest in staff development for evolving financial regulations
- Centralize benefits processing for greater efficiency



Human Resources and IT

Human Resources: Recruitment & Engagement

- Consistently high recruitment activity and onboarding needs
- Significant growth in volunteer participation, especially in the SAVE program

HR Workflow & Compliance Challenges

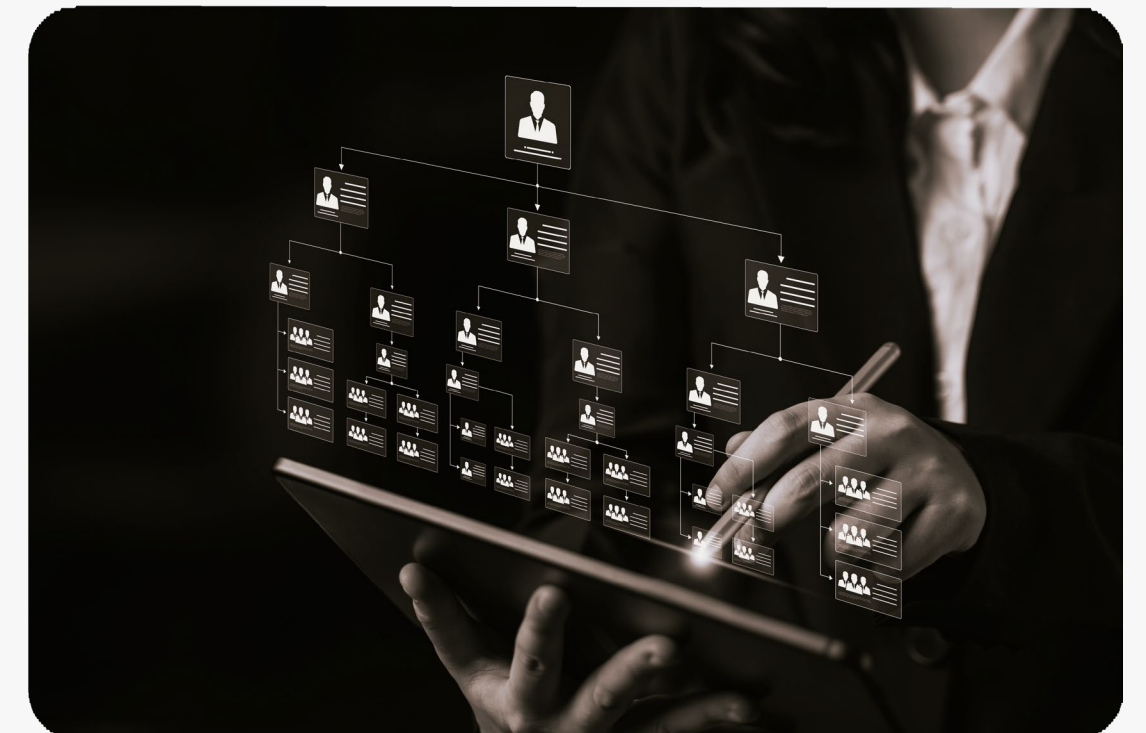
- Workflow inefficiencies due to split benefits processing between HR and Accounting
- Critical compliance functions managed outside HR, increasing risk

Information Technology: Rising Demands

- Support tickets nearly tripled from 2023 to 2025, straining resources
- Growing cybersecurity requirements and support for public safety systems

Strategic Recommendations

- Centralize all benefits and accrual processing within HR for efficiency
- Expand IT staffing and increase investment to meet operational and security needs





Town Clerk Department

Rising Demands on Clerk's Office

- Population growth and expanded voting options have increased workload
- Licensing and records management needs are also rising

Staffing and Process Challenges

- Current staff of three is stretched thin
- Manual processes heighten risk of errors and delays

Strategic Recommendations

- Increase staffing to meet service demands
- Automate key processes to improve efficiency and accuracy





Key Takeaways and Next Steps

Rising Service Demands

Departments are experiencing increased workloads and community expectations.

Operational Strain & Resource Gaps

Staffing, equipment, and funding are not keeping pace with needs.

Strategic Investment Required

Proactive planning is essential for sustainability.

Leadership & Next Steps

Town leaders should prioritize resource allocation and long-term planning.