

Santa Barbara LAFCO Municipal Service Reviews

Proposed Operational Policies

These policies are intended to guide the Commission and staff in preparing and implementing Municipal Service Reviews as required by Government Code Section 56430

1. Conduct MSRs in Conjunction with Updating Spheres of Influence

Generally, MSRs will be prepared in conjunction with updating Spheres of Influence, however, service reviews may be conducted independently of the sphere process.

Minor amendments to a sphere, as compared to a general update of the sphere, as determined by LAFCO, will generally not require a Municipal Service Review.

2. Services to be included in Municipal Service Reviews

The term “municipal service” refers to the full range of services a local agency is authorized to provide. Municipal Service Reviews will include water, sewer, drainage, harbor, libraries, roads, parks and recreation, police and fire protection and so forth.

General governmental services such as courts, social services and tax collection will not be included. LAFCO will determine which services will be included in each service review.

3. Agencies to be included in the Municipal Service Review

Local agencies – cities and special districts – that are subject to LAFCO review, or are required to have a sphere of influence, are subject to Municipal Service Reviews.

Whenever useful, data on services provided by agencies providing the same services will also be included such as private water utilities

4. Geographic boundaries and groupings

LAFCO will determine the geographic boundaries and agencies that are included in a service review. Factors that may be considered in determining a service review boundary include, but are not limited to, city and special district boundaries, spheres; topography; geography; community boundaries; tax/assessment zones; infrastructure locations; transportation systems; areas with shared facilities; areas with shared social and economic communities of interest and other factors determined by LAFCO.

With the exception of countywide districts, service reviews will generally be conducted for sub-regional areas within the County. As determined by the Commission, a service review may be done for a single agency or multiple agencies as the need may arise.

5. Data collection

The requirement for written determinations as described in Section 56430 will require data from affected agencies based on budgets, capital improvement plans, engineering studies, general plans and other agency documents.

Information may also be gathered from other sources including the County of Santa Barbara, SBCAG and the California Department of Finance.

Data will be presented to the extent possible in comparative format showing rates per unit, cost per capita, etc. according to industry standards. Analysis shall also acknowledge unique circumstances that may exist for a specific agency or type of agencies.

LAFCO will distribute a Request for Information to affected agencies soliciting information needed to prepare Municipal Service Reviews and update Spheres of Influence. The questionnaire is designed to general information necessary to comply with the requirement for specific written determinations.

6. Compliance with CEQA

For MSRs conducted as part of the periodic SOI update, LAFCO as the lead agency will determine the appropriate environmental review or exemption under CEQA.

Local agencies that apply for a sphere amendment that requires a service review will be the lead agency for the purpose of environmental review and prepare the appropriate environmental determination is appropriate (i.e., exemption, negative declaration, environmental impact report).