



# What Can Local Units Do to Prepare for Assessing Reform?

As has been discussed in other Topics, P.A. 660 provides a statutory framework to ensure proper assessing in order to guarantee the highest quality assessments for taxpayers as well as local units. The Act defines the requirements for a local unit to be determined to be in substantial compliance with the General Property Tax Act, provides timetables for audits as well as follow up audits and provides a process for bringing a local unit into compliance if they remain non-compliant after a follow up review (also known as the designated assessor).

These statutory changes make it even more important that local unit officials take a proactive role in assessment administration and work with their assessor to ensure proper assessing. The local unit board or council is responsible for making certain the local unit's assessing is meeting state requirements.

Local units can begin to prepare now by ensuring they are meeting the requirements in the current AMAR and if not, that they work to ensure corrections are made to bring them into compliance. The AMAR form is available on the State Tax Commission website ([www.michigan.gov/statetaxcommission](http://www.michigan.gov/statetaxcommission)) under the AMAR tab and provides links to the statutory or STC requirements.

Officials should not wait until they're faced with the audit of their assessing practices to start thinking about assessing and property taxes. Making an effort today will not just give your local unit a better chance of passing the AMAR with flying colors.

Officials must first make sure that their local unit employs an assessor who is certified at the proper level for their unit. Assessors must be certified through the STC and can achieve three levels: Michigan Certified Assessing Officer, Michigan Advanced Assessing Officer and Michigan Master Assessing Officer. The STC requires local units to have assessors at a certain level, based on the state equalized value of their property tax roll. Specific information regarding those levels is available on the STC website.

Some assessors work for multiple local units. While this is a common practice, especially in rural areas, Townships and Cities should monitor how many units their assessors are assessing. Even if they are within the state's limits for units they can assess, Townships and Cities need to ensure you are receiving the highest quality work from your assessor. Quality, thorough work must be the priority in hiring an assessor, not the price.

Once the assessor is employed, make sure they have all of the tools and funding necessary. A local unit must budget for resources to meet all state requirements, as well as a salary high enough to keep a quality assessor.

As the employer, local units should set annual benchmarks with their assessors and make sure they're being met. Officials should ask questions, such as whether the assessor

visited 20% of the local unit's properties this year or if the assessment roll was certified on time. One way to do this is setting aside time at meetings regularly to get reports from the assessor. Townships and Cities should review with their assessor the Supervising Preparation of the Rolls document (found on the STC website) to ensure the requirements are being met. They should also review the AMAR document prior to the audit to ensure all requirements are being met.

If your local unit's elected officials are unfamiliar with the assessing process, invite your assessor to give a presentation at a meeting, which will help gain insights that are valuable to their work for the local unit.

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