

How to select an ethical collection partner

A practical checklist for government agencies



Secure • Accurate • Reliable

Your choice of collection partner can have a significant, long-term impact on your constituents, cash flow, and reputation. Evaluating potential partners on their objective merits (e.g., recovery rates, size, years of experience, leadership team, technologies) is relatively straightforward. But vendors' other, less-tangible attributes — especially their commitments to compliance and ethical behavior — are just as important to consider, as they determine potential risk exposure for your team and those you serve.

More than ever before, your constituents expect you to partner with principled, mission-driven organizations. **So how can you evaluate your potential collection vendors, to ensure they are aligned with your ethical standards?** Here are some suggestions, based on our decades of industry experience:

Questions? Let's talk.

Municipal Services Bureau is an ethical debt collection partner with a track record for optimizing revenue, managing risk, and maintaining a positive customer experience for our hundreds of government clients.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk with their current and former clients . Candid conversations with peers about their experience with a vendor can help indicate what to expect from your own partnerships.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look up their Better Business Bureau rating (www.bbb.org). These are independent, unbiased ratings based on consumers' verified experiences with companies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask about lawsuits they have recently settled or had filed against them. Recognizing that not all suits have merit, it can still be helpful to look at patterns and outcomes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask to see their documented organizational code of conduct, controls, and processes for identifying and managing compliance and ethics risks. They should have systems and teams exclusively dedicated to these oversight activities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look into their financial situation . Solvency can be a good indicator of an organization's overall corporate governance and their ability to perform required services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask for information about their employee training programs . These should be robust, relevant, and regularly refreshed, with stringent requirements for both new hires and tenured employees. You also should see evidence that the vendor performs thorough employee background checks .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Request to see their licenses . They should have documented, current proof of their ability to collect on your specific debt portfolios, including proof of their compliance with all applicable local, state, federal, and industry regulations. Your collection agency vendor should be licensed to operate in all 50 states and U.S territories.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider their philanthropic commitments . Review their website and social media feeds. Ask them to explain their philosophy for giving back to their community. The more you learn, the more you may infer about how they would treat you, your staff, and your constituents.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If they subcontract work to other organizations, look into those companies too. Make sure you are comfortable with all parties that would handle your portfolios and interface with your constituents and that you understand where and how they will perform the work.