Making an Extreme Municipal Renewal **more Manageable**

Story Overview

A small municipality with 24 enrolled employees came to IMA after buying health coverage direct from BCBSKS. Just as IMA became broker of record in January 2026, the city was facing a 79.65% renewal for its April 1 plan year and needed workable options fast.

Challenge

The city's size made the situation more complex than the headline increase suggested. Because carriers release very little data for groups this small, the employer had almost no visibility into why renewal was spiking so far above normal trend, and buying direct had left it without broker-led market validation and with compliance gaps to address after transition.

> What looked unavoidable became significantly more manageable.

IMA's Strategy and Actions

IMA's employee benefits team acted to support the client by:

- Marketing the plan across multiple carriers to test the renewal and identify viable alternatives, not just theoretical quotes.
- Narrowing the field to options the city could realistically afford and explain to employees and city council.
- Guiding the city into a municipal association health plan that offered more stability, greater plan design flexibility, and added buying power for eligible municipalities.
- Moving the city from one plan to a dual-option structure, preserving a strong base plan and adding a buy-up option for employees who wanted richer coverage.
- Supporting rollout with employee education, plan booklets, online enrollment, and a post-renewal compliance onboarding review.

Why It Worked

IMA did more than shop rates. The team combined broad market exploration, plan modeling, and change management to build a recommendation the city could defend publicly, implement quickly, and explain clearly to employees and families.

Key Takeaways

For small employers, the best answer is not always a simple carrier swap. IMA identified a structure the client could not have replicated on its own and paired it with contribution strategy, education, and implementation support that made a difficult renewal more workable.

THE RESULT:

IMA reduced the projected medical increase from 79.65% to 45.46%, or about $115,000 less than renewing as-is. The city also gained employee choice, a more organized enrollment experience, and a path forward that was better received by leadership, employees, and their families.