

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION: GAINING EFFICIENCY AND REDUCING CONFLICT

WHAT IS IT?

As communities face tighter budgets and growing demands for services, the value of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly being recognized across the region. Efficiencies are being realized for mutual aid and shared services, jointly pursuing grant dollars, economic development initiatives, and a variety of other cooperative efforts. Communication between local governments and the coordination of plans also helps to prevent or reduce conflicts.

Throughout the Region, there are hundreds of intergovernmental actions taking place ranging from road maintenance agreements between adjacent towns to the regional economic development organization, Momentum West, working to promote and attract business to the Region. WCWRPC is also an example of communities working together toward common objectives.

Now that we are living in a global society where communities and regions around the world are competing against each other for prosperity, and where funding for services is tight, it is paramount that effective intergovernmental cooperation is widespread throughout the Region. Even though there are great regional examples of intergovernmental cooperation, more can and must be done to help guide the Region and our communities towards our shared vision.

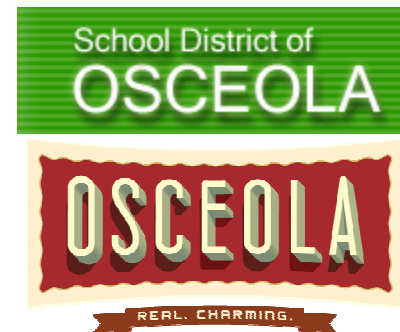
WHY DO WE WANT IT?

Intergovernmental cooperation has many benefits, such as:

- **Community costs are reduced** by sharing of resources and eliminating duplication.
- Through teaming together, a group of cooperating communities and other entities have a **larger and stronger voice** at the state and federal level. This is even more vital when a region is rural and is geographically distant from state and federal decision makers.
- A lack of trust and a variety of conflicts are often prevalent between communities. This is due to a history of little or no communication. Through communication and cooperation, **conflicts between communities are decreased and there is an increased level of trust.**
- Sustainable regions are comprised of sustainable communities. **Intergovernmental cooperation produces an easier path towards sustainable communities and regions.**

Gaining efficiencies

Through intergovernmental cooperation, communities or a region can become more efficient, identify opportunities for cost-sharing, and more successfully address issues that are important to becoming more livable and sustainable. In addition, when communities unite, they can have a stronger voice in addressing common issues.



Village of Osceola and Osceola School District

The Village and School District joined forces and received a grant from the State Office of Energy Independence as part of the State's Energy Independent Communities "25x25" Program. The aim of the program is for a community to obtain 25 percent of its electricity and transportation fuels from renewable resources by 2025. Osceola and the School District are attempting to reach 100 percent energy and food independence by 2025.



Owen-Withee

The City of Owen and Village of Withee are one mile apart in Clark County. The two communities share a variety of services, including police, chamber of commerce, Owen-Withee Area Development Corporation, and a host of other municipal services. Once these communities were fairly independent, now the thought of one community without the other is inconceivable.

Eau Claire Shared Services Committee

This City of Eau Claire committee discussed shared services with Eau Claire County, the City of Altoona, City of Chippewa Falls, and the Eau Claire Area School District. Explored shared service delivery and potential interest in partnering with the City in future shared service activities with area jurisdictions.

Chippewa Valley Stormwater Forum "Rain to Rivers"

Shortly after the turn of the century, this group of cities, villages, and towns jointly developed information and education components for their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. These efforts were initially assisted by a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources grant.



West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition

The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition provides leadership and coordination to develop passenger rail service through west central Wisconsin as part of a regional strategy to ensure a balanced transportation system necessary for long term sustainable economic growth. Made up volunteers including business people, government officials, environmentalists, and concerned citizens, the Coalition is also a committee of Momentum West, the 10-county regional economic development organization. The coalition meets monthly, and as needed in working committees.



Interstate 94 Corridor Coalition

In early 2010, five Wisconsin counties (St. Croix, Dunn, Eau Claire, Chippewa, and Barron) entered into an agreement to collaboratively analyze the feasibility and environmental impacts of various transit options in the Interstate 94 corridor from Eau Claire to the St. Croix River. The group will consider all possible modes including various forms of passenger rail and bus rapid transit, multi-use trails, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) applications, and roadway improvements. These will be related to the implementation of passenger rail or bus rapid transit, and associated land use and development impacts. WCWRPC is the administrative agent for the Coalition. The I-94 Corridor Coalition works cooperatively with the Minnesota I-94 East Corridor Commission, an organization similarly examining transit options in Ramsey and Washington counties.

Pierce, Polk and St. Croix County Groundwater Flow Study

This study was a cooperative effort that included Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix Counties and the USGS. The project began as a regional hydrologic investigation in the three counties to improve the understanding of the groundwater-flow system and its relationship to surface waters. It also was initiated to develop a groundwater-flow model for use on an ongoing basis by water-resource managers and demonstrate the use of the regional model as a framework for extracting local models to simulate groundwater flow and groundwater/surface-water interactions.

St. Croix Valley Municipal Association

Founded in 1999 and subsequently incorporated as a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization, the St. Croix Valley Municipal Association is an association of county and local governments in Barron, Burnett, Pierce, Polk and St. Croix Counties. This group meets regularly to discuss issues relevant to the operation, financing, and improvement of governmental functions. It has also become an arena for contact between state agencies and area municipalities.

Highway 29 Community Partnership and United Communities of Clark County

The Highway 29 Community Partnership was the result of a Wisconsin Rural Partners Community Resource Team effort to assess the conditions, impacts, and opportunities of a new four-lane highway on five of the corridor's communities. This partnership has outlasted its original purpose and continues to serve in a coordinating role. The United Communities of Clark County provides an avenue for cities and villages to share ideas, activities, facilities and services. These communities have worked together to recycle computers and purchase supplies jointly.

What needs to be done

- Inventory ongoing intergovernmental cooperation activities.
- Inventory community needs that could be addressed through intergovernmental cooperation.
- Promote regular, ongoing meetings between adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions for information sharing, identifying joint opportunities, and conflict resolution.
- Coordinate land-use decisions and analysis between jurisdictions and evaluate the cumulative impacts of development across jurisdictions.
- Contact agencies like WCWRPC, WisDOA, and UW - Extension on possible ideas and ongoing best practices in the Region.
- Recognize the importance of intergovernmental cooperation as a part of the community vision or mission statement.

Reducing conflict between units of government

Adjacent and overlapping communities has a host of reasons to communicate. One of the most pressing issues during the issue identification stage of the comprehensive planning process was the need for cooperation and coordination between units of government, primarily concerning land-use issues. A good and open relationship between communities is key to a prosperous, vibrant, and sustainable region. There are various ways that communities can interact and cooperate with their neighboring communities.

Extraterritorial plat review

This gives cities and villages unilateral review and approval of land divisions and development patterns outside their boundaries, in areas that will probably be annexed at some point in the future. It is also an opportunity for these jurisdictions to do joint planning to resolve boundary issues.

Cooperative boundary plans and agreements

This is a formal contract between cities, villages, or towns to set ultimate boundaries and other provisions related to shared municipal services and/or revenue. Involves a legally binding plan and agreement for maintaining or changing the natural and developed uses of a combination of town, village, or city territory for a period of 10 or more years.

Extraterritorial zoning

Cities and villages are authorized to participate with towns in the zoning of land outside their boundaries. Depending on the size of the city or village, the extraterritorial limits can be either three miles or 1.5 miles from the border. A committee, with three members from each jurisdiction, develops a plan for zoning the extraterritorial area.

Memorandum of understanding (MOU)

An MOU is a document describing an agreement between parties toward mutually beneficial outcomes. The MOU document can help build trust between the parties by describing past relationships, and establishing each jurisdiction's positions and expectations, areas of mutual agreement, issues yet to be resolved, and a process for moving forward toward resolving those issues.

Education and Outreach Forums/Meetings

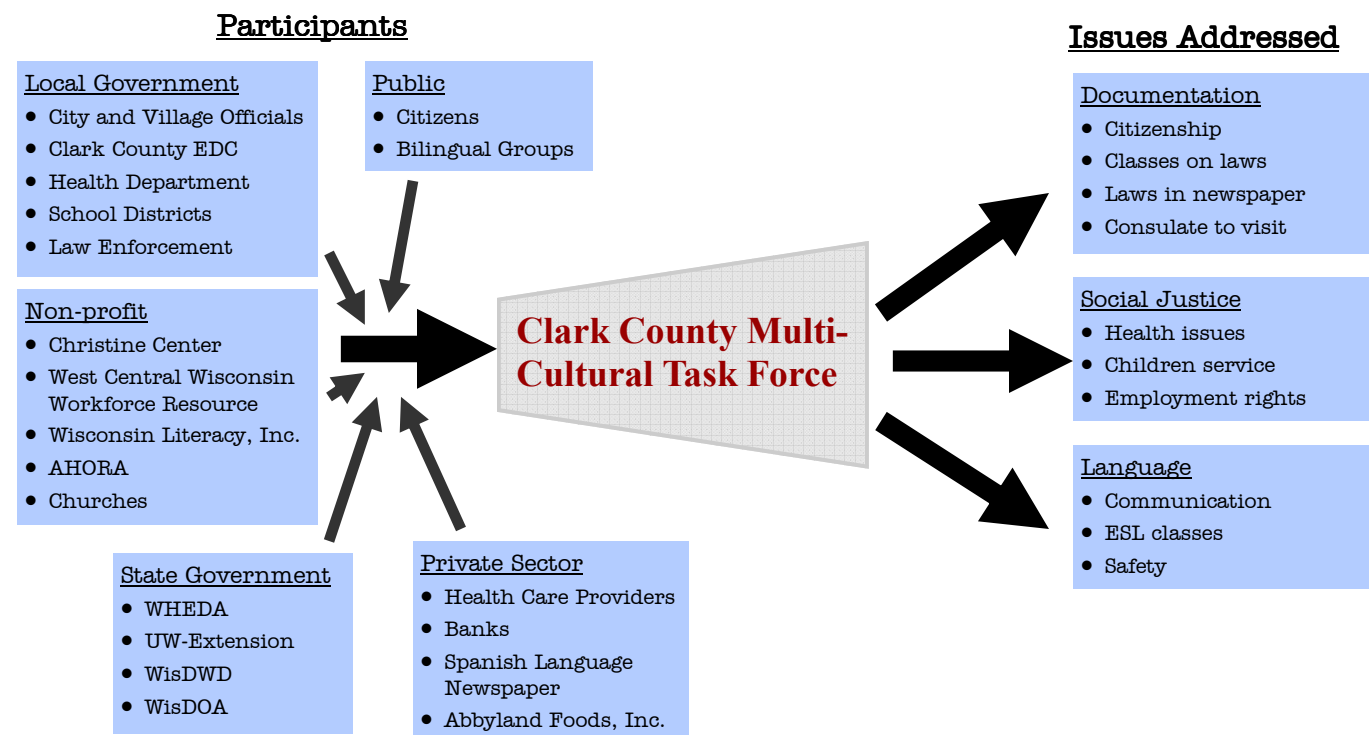
One way to eliminate barriers is to create a forum that brings parties together to discuss pertinent issues. This will help eliminate the barriers of a history of not working together and can help increase trust. This is especially important for natural resource issues, as issues of water and air quality do not stop at administrative boundaries. For natural resource issues, these forums/meetings could include adjacent communities that are not in the same county or even state. These forums could be organized locally and/or by WCWRPC or UW - Extension.

What needs to be done

- Contact adjacent communities to meet and have open dialogue about any issue.
- If communities are not aware of tools that are available to resolve conflict, contact WCWRPC, WisDOA, or UW - Extension.
- Organize an ongoing group made of community representatives to meet and discuss pertinent issues.
- Explore a regional entity for mediation of inter-jurisdictional disputes.

Countywide initiatives to address multijurisdictional issues

Often a county or region have an issue that can only be resolved by intergovernmental cooperation and gathering all the available resources that are needed to mitigate the issue. These issues can be environmental, economic, or social. A regional example of this is new immigrants locating to small communities. The two most prevalent examples of this in the Region are the City of Abbotsford, which has experienced an influx of Hispanic residents, and the City of Barron with significant Somali population growth.



Clark County Multi-Cultural Task Force

Clark County is experiencing a large influx of Hispanic immigrants. An example of the magnitude of growth in this one segment of the population can be seen in the City of Abbotsford, where in 2010, the elementary school had 33 percent Hispanic students, up from 15 percent in 2005. To proactively address this increase in Hispanic population and the large percentage of Amish and Mennonite, Clark County created the Clark County Multi-Cultural Task Force. This Task Force was charged to help immigrants become socially and economically integrated into the community and society that they now live. It is anticipated that additional communities in the Region will start experiencing an increase of new population groups and have similar challenges to address.

What needs to be done

- Determine new populations that are immigrating to the community.
- Use school enrollment data, as they can be much more immediately available than decennial census figures in determining the current population.
- Inventory existing resources and what resources are needed to help integrate the new population.
- If barriers (e.g., language, cultural) exist for adults, work on programs for children in addition to adult programs. Children will take information home from school and are often more bilingual.

RELATED CONCEPTS:

Regionalism: The combination of the consciousness of a specific geographic area and ongoing working relationships among the public and private sectors within that geographic area. The consciousness and relationships are geared to create more prosperous and sustainable communities and region as a whole.

Integration: Often misunderstood for assimilation, integration does not involve eliminating culture. Integration allows new populations to become a full-functioning member of society and the community.

Cooperative TID: A tax incremental district created through a boundary agreement between a town and city or village that allows towns to use regular City/Village tax incremental financing power. This facilitates industrial and mixed-use development, blight elimination and remediation projects in unincorporated urban areas.

Momentum West: A 10-county regional development organization that includes all seven counties of the WCWRPC Region.

Urban Fringe: The geographic area that is on the edge of a developed city or village and an unincorporated area.

Triple Helix: The collaboration of business, academia, and government for economic and social benefit.

All-terrain vehicle (ATV): Towns, cities, and villages often struggle with how to manage ATVs. Many adjacent communities have cooperated with each other to better link ATV routes and trails throughout the Region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission: www.wcwrpc.org
- University of Wisconsin—Extension, Local Government Center: <http://lgc.uwex.edu/Intergovt/index.html>
- Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Municipal Boundary Review: www.doa.state.wi.us/section.asp?linkid=132&locid=9
- Intergovernmental Cooperation Element Guide: www.doa.state.wi.us/dir/documents/wi_intergovernmental_guide.pdf