

Chapter 9

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Overview

In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. Typically, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination refers to the management and delivery of public services and facilities. It is also dependent upon a defined geographic area within which cooperation and coordination may be feasible.

Intergovernmental cooperation can be as simple as communication and sharing information, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing of resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue. It can even involve consolidating services, jurisdictions, or transferring territory.

Often the action of one governmental unit impacts another. Many important issues are regional in nature. Watersheds, economic conditions, commuter patterns, housing, media markets, and effects from growth and change are all issues that spill over municipal boundaries and impact the region as a whole. Many issues extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries and affect more than one community. For example, air, water, and wildlife pass over the landscape regardless of boundaries so that one jurisdiction's activities.

The City of Rhinelander is surrounded by the Towns of Crescent, Newbold, Pelican, and Pine Lake, and is part of Oneida County. All of these are important intergovernmental relationships for the City. Efforts should be made to maintain good working relationships with the surrounding Towns and County.

Benefits

There are many reasons intergovernmental cooperation makes sense. Some examples include

Cost Savings: Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.

Consistency: Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.

Predictability: Jurisdictions that cooperate provide greater predictability to residents, developers, businesses, and others. Lack of predictability can result in lost time, money, and opportunity.

Understanding: As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.

Trust: Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions.

Early Identification of Issues: Cooperation enables jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before affected interests have established rigid positions, before the political stakes have been raised, and before issues have become conflicts or crises.

Address Regional Issues: Communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues, which are regional in nature.

The major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation is the local resident. They may not understand, or even care about, the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate their benefits, such as costs savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

Intergovernmental Relationships

Currently there are numerous relationships and several general agreements in place. The following is a summary of existing and possible cooperative efforts, and some general trends.

Local

The Rhinelander Fire Department (RFD) has contracts to provide fire protection to Nicolet College and the Federal Forest. The RFD has mutual aid agreements with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the volunteer departments in the Towns of Pine Lake, Pelican, Crescent, and Newbold. The RFD is also part of the Oneida County HAZMAT Team and is a State asset for structural collapse.

Aspirus Rhinelander Hospital provides ambulance service in the Rhinelander area. However, the County heavily subsidizes this service. This is an area that might have some potential for a future governmental agreement.

The Rhinelander District Library is the result of an agreement between the City and its four surrounding the towns—Crescent, Newbold, Pelican, and Pine Lake. Oneida County contributes funds for those users outside of this area.

The City also provides sewer & water via an agreement to the Nicolet College campus. As the county seat, the City is the hub of county government. The Courthouse, as well as a variety of other assets are located in the City, including the County Law Enforcement Center. These all require ongoing communication between the city and county to provide residents of the City and County the best service.

Regional

The City of Rhinelander is located within the 10-county region of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). The NCWRPC, established in 1973 by state statute, is a voluntary association of governments with the mission of providing both local and regional assistance to its member governments. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include (but are not limited to) land use, transportation, economic development, intergovernmental and geographic information systems (GIS) planning and services.

State and Federal Government

As a local unit of government, the City has formal relationships with the state and federal government. The City frequently works with the various state departments, such as the Department of Transportation, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Revenue. Meanwhile, some of the federal agencies that the City works with include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Trends

A variety of factors, some long-standing and some of fairly recent origin, are combining to force citizens and local governments in both urban and rural area to confer, cooperate, and in some cases, to join together in a search for better ways to deliver public services in their respective areas. These factors include:

- Local governments financial situation;
- Opportunity to reduce costs by working together;
- Elimination of duplication of services;
- Population settlement patterns and population mobility;
- Economic and environmental interdependence; and

In addition, as more jurisdictions create comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will be identified.

Programs

66.0301 – Intergovernmental Cooperation: Wisconsin Statute §66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with §66.0301, formerly §66.30, are the most common forms of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

66.0305 – Municipal Revenue Sharing: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0305, Municipal Revenue Sharing, gives authority to cities, villages, and towns to enter into agreements to share revenue from taxes and special charges with each other. The agreements may also address other matters, including agreements regarding services to be provided or the location of municipal boundaries.

Boundaries of the shared revenue area must be specified in the agreement and the term of the agreement must be for at least ten years. The agreement must specify the formula or other means for sharing revenue, the date of payment of revenues, and the means by which the agreement may be invalidated after the minimum 10-year period.

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Encourage coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.

Objective 1: Maintain current agreements and explore additional opportunities with adjacent communities for services, such as fire and ambulance service.

- a. Establish regular meeting dates with surrounding towns and Oneida County to review service agreements and identify opportunities to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Goal 2: Coordinate development and planning activities with surrounding communities and Oneida County.

Objective 1: Work cooperatively with neighboring towns to develop a land use plan to guide development in the area under extra-territorial jurisdiction.

Objective 2: Communicate with surrounding communities when proposed development is on a boundary or could have impacts on the adjacent community.

Objective 3: Ensure that annexations proceed in an orderly manner.

- a. Work with the surrounding townships to develop cooperative boundary agreements.
- b. Continue to work with the County and adjacent towns to jointly review and coordinate development under the City's extra-territorial zoning and subdivision review authority, and to review projects under county zoning.
- c. Strengthen lines of communication with the County and neighboring townships regarding potential annexations.

Goal 3: Encourage participation by City officials and residents in all levels of government.

Objective 1: Encourage close communication between local officials and county and state government organizations.

Objective 2: Encourage general participation and feedback from residents through surveys, informational public meetings, newsletters, or other activities.

- a. Continue to maintain physical bulletin boards around Rhinelander where meeting agendas are posted.
- b. Continue utilizing technology to stream public meetings to allow more residents to be involved.
- c. Continue recording public meetings and hosting these recordings on the City's website.
- d. Consider developing a City newsletter.
- e. Continue to hold community informational meetings or create surveys to solicit public input on various issues affecting the City.

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