

Fostering Cross Boundary Initiatives

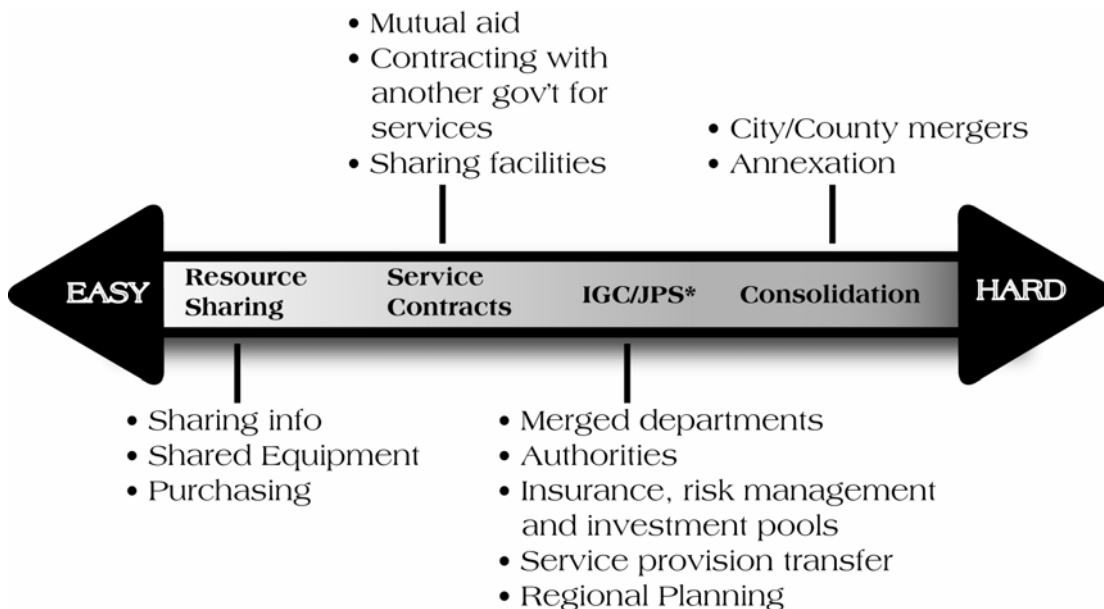
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Intergovernmental or Cross Boundary Collaboration is a process in which two or more entities can achieve scale and scope economies by jointly providing service delivery. The tangible benefit is improved cost effectiveness, while enhancing coverage and quality of services. While many may believe it's unnecessary or possibly threatening in some way, all signs are pointing towards tougher economic times for local units of government. Cities, townships and villages (CVTs) are struggling with falling revenues and escalating costs. Since no fiscally responsible elected official wants to propose raising taxes or fees, the logical alternative – sooner or later – is Cross Boundary Collaboration (CBC).



Why CBC? The reasons are many, as outlined in the sidebar below. In a nutshell, though, CBC makes good business sense, especially in these times of financial uncertainty. What's included in CBC? The diagram below gives an overview of the kinds of collaborative arrangements encompassed by Cross Boundary Collaboration.

The CBC Spectrum



*Intergovernmental Cooperation/Joint Public Service

CBC encompasses a great many practices *already* in broad use, as well as newer *innovative* ones, that enable participants to construct a more efficient service delivery structure. Numerous organizations are actively working to endorse and foster CBC around the state – SEMCOG, the Citizens Research Council, the Michigan Government Finance Officers Association (MGFOA), the Michigan Government Management Information Sciences (Mi-GMIS), Michigan State University, and so on. Recently, the State of Michigan formed the Local and State Cross Boundary Technology Steering Committee of the Michigan Department of Information Technology (the Cross Boundary Steering Committee for short). The Cross Boundary Steering Committee is co-chaired by Bob Daddow, Deputy County Executive of Oakland County, and Duane Hettinger, Director of Information Services of the City of Kalamazoo. Its *Mission* is to “Transform government by using IT as a catalyst to foster collaboration and improve functionality across government lines by sharing resources, eliminating duplication, and reducing costs.” The Steering Committee will serve in an advisory capacity only, assisting local governments with their collaborative efforts. Its stated *Objectives* include:

- Develop cross boundary strategies in the areas of technology infrastructure, applications, business systems, and processes
- Analyze individual cross boundary initiatives for best practices and successes
- Promote cross boundary initiatives, solutions, and relationships between local and state government and collaboration partners
- Become Michigan’s focal point for local and state collaboration using technology to provide better service delivery
- Establish and promote a central data repository for Michigan Cross Boundary Projects

Why CBC?

I. Service Provision

- Leverages staff to improve service levels
- Improves employee performance and morale
- Enhances career opportunities for staff
- More efficiently uses personnel and their talents
- Decreases response times
- Improves quantity and quality of services
- Reduces duplication of services
- Broadens resource accessibility / utilization

II. Finance

- Spreads financing responsibility and risk
- Broadens equipment replacement cost sharing and achieves volume purchasing discounts
- Capital acquisition/improvements and certain other resources becomes more efficiently and effectively utilized due to economies of size, scale, and scope

III. Community Relations

- Meets citizen expectations that communities should work together to leverage tax dollars
- Improves equity of access to services
- Expands the sense of community
- Reduces problems of jurisdictional boundaries
- Fosters an environment for future joint ventures
- Attracts businesses and furthers economic development

- Lead the nation in establishing a leveraged pool of shared local and state resources (i.e., services, applications, and people) to foster the implementation of collaborative programs statewide
- Develop IT standards across Michigan that support collaborative programs

The Local and State Cross Boundary Technology Steering Committee is conducting a survey of Michigan cities, townships, and counties to identify existing and planned cooperative initiatives. The primary intent of the survey is to identify collaborative projects that both involve and leverage Information Technology, using it as a catalyst for collaboration. Given its broad scope, the survey is being co-sponsored by the MGFOA and Mi-GMIS. Please take the time to participate in the survey, which can be found at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=961kTEerVDuBp_2b4dN8ZuFA_3d_3d

Cross Boundary Collaboration's time has come. Every CVT in Michigan should be pursuing CBC aggressively right now. Delaying the inevitable will leave fewer options and less time to proactively plan and transition. So, contact your neighboring jurisdictions and your County and start the ball rolling!