

LEARNING TO SHARE

Regional Cooperative Efforts

Introduction

As a result of the Local Program Planning unit discussions in January 2008, the League's Program Development Committee (PDC) identified "cooperation between local governments in southwest Ohio" as one of the subjects deserving LWVCA attention. Several units expressed a desire to learn:

- How the various county, township and city/village governments cooperate with each other to increase the efficiency and improve the quality of their services to the citizens, and
- What opportunities exist for further collaboration of this type in the future.

The County Government and City Government Committees have looked into this subject of inter-governmental cooperation and shared services. The attached list of References indicates the variety of resources that these Committees examined.

There are various mechanisms by which local governments can cooperate and collaborate. Services can be provided directly through contracts or cooperation agreements. Through such service agreements, communities have voluntarily consolidated public service delivery to enable lower costs or increased service levels. Government alliances provide forums for intergovernmental cooperation on a wide variety of issues. Examples include Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission's Planning Partnership, the First Suburbs Consortium of Southwest Ohio, and the Local Alliance for Nature and Development. Allied organizations can assist in facilitating service agreements through programs, networking opportunities or service to their constituents: Center for Local Government, Hamilton County Health Insurance Program, Cincinnati USA Chamber of Commerce, and Ohio Municipal League are among them.

The focus of this information is inter-governmental contractual service agreements.

Over the years, a wide variety of shared public service agreements for various purposes have been established in Hamilton County. Potential cost

savings of sharing services across jurisdictions is often the most important consideration along with increasing the quality of services provided. Shared public services described herein relate to local government services such as fire, water, safety, public health, waste disposal, insurance and property maintenance.

There are other shared or consolidated public services provided to the entire county as a result of an agency's jurisdictional authority and not requiring cooperation agreements. Examples include:

- library services provided by the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County
- human services provided by Hamilton County Jobs and Family Services
- transportation services provided by SORTA
- environmental services provided by Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services and the Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Cincinnati Area League has a long history of interest in and advocacy for structural reform of Hamilton County Government. The present position: "Modernization of Hamilton County Government" defines the LWVCA consensus on structural reform, i.e., a county home rule charter or an "alternative form" model.

In the mid 1980's, the search for more efficient and less expensive local government continued. The possibility of combining the delivery of a service between two or more local governments, creating special service districts, or contracting out to a private entity (such as management of a jail) was often being considered. This led to the development of another current League position "Support of Certain Criteria for Methods of Service Delivery" for evaluating service delivery proposals. These include measures for:

- relationships with other governments and service providers,
- accountability and responsiveness,
- taxes, fees and assessments
- quality of service.

These two LWVCA positions seek to improve county service delivery, reduce duplication/redundancy and costs.

Early Regional Efforts

In the mid 1990's there were several calls for regional cooperation within Hamilton County and within the wider region. The Metropolitan Growth Alliance, a group of community leaders, engaged a consultant, Michael Gallis to conduct an analysis of the metropolitan region. The report "Greater Cincinnati Metro Region Resource Book" was a call for collaboration and the need for the 13 County region to cost-effectively compete in the emerging global economy. Regional cooperation was promoted. Cincinnati Metropatterns followed in October 2001. Citizens for Civic Renewal sponsored this study that identified socio-economic and land-use trends viewed as detrimental to communities in the region. Two of these trends were:

1. urban sprawl, which was adding financial pressures on newer communities, and
2. fiscal disparities, the wide variation in the ability of local governments to raise revenues from local property and earnings taxes.

The CCR study also recommended regional cooperation and collaboration including tax reforms.

State Level Efforts

Until recently, Ohio did not have state-level incentives for communities to engage in cooperative public service provision. Individual communities weigh the potential savings from collaborative service agreements against the obstacles to overcome in developing such agreements or alliances.

During 2005 State of Ohio budget discussions, it appeared that local jurisdictions were going to experience cuts in funding for services. Cuts were restored but the need for communities to explore ways to reduce operating costs and dependence on state entitlements became important. Legislation (H.B. 66) was passed requiring larger counties and cities to report to the State Auditor describing efforts to coordinate or consolidate services and engage in regional cooperation. Cost savings resulting from regional cooperation and consolidation of services was to be included in the report.

In 2008 the Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration was formed to develop recommendations on reforming and restructuring local government in Ohio. The Governor appointed Cincinnati's Mayor Mark Mallory to serve on the Commission. And the Local Government Services and Regional Collaboration

Grant Program was established in the 2008-2009 Ohio Biennial Budget. In October 2008, the Ohio Department of Development announced the grants awarded from this program. The City of Cincinnati was awarded a \$63,350 grant to complete a feasibility study to identify opportunities for sharing the operation and maintenance of heavy vehicle equipment among participating jurisdictions within the County. And Hamilton County received a \$59,725 grant to investigate how consolidation can bring uniformity to the process of code enforcement and highlight differences in local building, property maintenance, zoning, and fire codes.

Local Efforts

The Center for Local Government

The Center for Local Government (CLG) is an alliance of communities focused on improving public service delivery. Formed in 1990 its mission is to improve public service delivery by the cities, townships and villages in the Greater Cincinnati Area through improved information exchange, cost reductions, shared resources, inter-jurisdictional collaboration and new approaches to capital equipment and skills acquisition. This non-profit organization is supported by membership fees, grants and fee based services. Membership in the Center is open to any county, municipality or township in the southwest Ohio area. (For current membership, see Appendix A.)

Planning Partnership

In 2002-03, Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (HCRPC) engaged in a community wide comprehensive planning effort resulting in the compilation of COMPASS, Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies. Strategies were developed toward a goal of building collaborative decision-making including collaboration on county-wide issues and incentives for better collaborative decision-making. Early work to carry out these strategies included an "Inventory of Shared Public Service Delivery". HCRPC together with CLG surveyed jurisdictions and gathered information about public service agreements. The results of this and other surveys were compiled by HCRPC.

The Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission provides advisory planning services to the unincorporated areas (12 townships) of the County and provides services upon request to 37 county municipalities that are members of the

Commission and pay annual fees. HCRPC formed the Planning Partnership to bring together public, private, civic organizations (including LWVCA) to work collaboratively in long range planning for the County.

Government Cooperation & Efficiency Project

In 2007 the Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project (GCEP) was convened under the auspices of the Hamilton County Planning Partnership. GCEP is a voluntary effort designed to help local communities improve service delivery and control costs through cross-jurisdictional cooperation, sharing of services and possible service delivery consolidation. A Steering Committee was established to guide the project that received funding from the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County and the Cincinnati Business Committee. All 50 governments in Hamilton County are included in the effort.

A consultant was retained to execute GCEP Phase I, a plan of work to engage local government leaders around the idea of service sharing and cooperation. Identifying additional service sharing opportunities that could improve efficiency and effectiveness of local government services and provide tax dollar savings was a goal. Respecting the existence of shared service initiatives that many jurisdictions were involved in already, an initial task was to build on those efforts and discover additional types of service sharing that could help save money or solve problems.

From interviews with elected officials in local jurisdictions and focus groups, distinct areas of service emerged. Three subject specific working groups were created in areas of:

- Finance, Administrative and General Services
- Public Works
- Economic Development, Community Development and Planning

Discussions in the Economic Development, Community Development and Planning group revolved around code enforcement and zoning issues and resulted in the successful application for a state grant.

A separate fourth working group was formed with selected managers drawn from the administration of the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County to explore cooperation between the two largest governments. While information technology and dispatch services were examples of past cooperation, current budget constraints of both or-

ganizations added timeliness to exploring service sharing opportunities. Discussions led to identifying a list of opportunities for collaboration between these governments and services that they could provide to other local governments within the County.

Twelve service sharing opportunities were identified as having immediate potential. Implementation steps were developed and a responsible party was identified to take leadership in implementation. Appendix B lists the 12 Service Projects, and the leadership responsibilities.

Achievements

As of December 2007, the first goal of the GCEP Phase I goals was accomplished. Thirty-eight of 50 Hamilton County jurisdictions participated in some way. Other jurisdictions by virtue of membership in the Center for Local Government have access to ideas generated by GCEP that will be implemented by the Center.

Several projects have resulted in cooperation and economies including the purchase of salt for winter season, the purchase of fuel for vehicles, the sharing of road line stripe painting, fire hydrant maintenance, and architectural services. Savings in these services have been documented at approximately \$500,000 on an annualized basis.

An intangible result of the GCEP has been a new-found trust among jurisdictions including interest in collaboration with the City and County.

GCEP Phase II

Building on the results of Phase I, a second Phase of the GCEP was initiated in 2008. The Steering Committee working with the consultant is seeking to support the Center for Local Government in increasing its capacity to serve as the institutionalization of the GCEP.

The role of CLG will include:

- soliciting input from jurisdictions and others on current and potential service sharing activities and opportunities
- serve as an arena for information sharing and discussion regarding service sharing ideas
- serve as the convener and staff for the GCEP Steering Committee
- assist local jurisdictions in marketing shared service opportunities to other potential partners
- serve as a clearinghouse for information related

to GCEP activities

A business service analysis for each of the service areas identified by GCEP will be developed. The analysis will be directed toward identifying and quantifying cost savings, increased efficiencies or improved levels of service/management expected to result from implementing proposed service delivery methods or models. The probable service areas for such analyses may include:

- Emergency Communications
- Call Center Operations
- Heavy Equipment Maintenance and Use Sharing
- Tax Administration
- Public Health Services
- Code Enforcement/Hazard Abatement

Driving Forces

Benefits of Shared Services:

- Trust and engagement among jurisdictions
- Increase in quality of services
- Increase in efficiency of services
- Savings to government and business
- Possibilities of new governance structure to enable shared services

Drawbacks/Difficulties of Shared Services:

- Citizens want their own government and independence and don't want to give up local control
- Tension between strong parochialism among diverse communities and the need to collaborate
- Citizens question if the time and energy spent in negotiations would result in actual cost savings

The following is excerpted from a September 2005 Report from HCRPC re: shared Public Service Delivery. There are competing pressures of budget shortfalls and demand for high quality public services from residents. Most communities take pride and derive a sense of identity through the services provided to residents. However, with increasing costs and decreasing revenues, sharing or consolidating local services between communities in order to reduce costs, spend tax dollars more efficiently and maintain or increase service levels looks more attractive to local jurisdictions. But there can be problems with this approach. There is a perception that combining services with another jurisdiction is a step toward a political merger between the communities. The line between functional (service) consolidation and political

consolidation needs to be clearly delineated if the concept is to gain additional support in Hamilton County.

There are arguments in favor of consolidating local services, such as more efficient use of tax revenue and maintaining service levels. These points are supported by the number of service agreements/consolidations already in effect through arrangement between individual communities and collectively through organizations like the Center for Local Government.

When considering service consolidation, the argument for tax savings is crucial. Elected leaders from each community involved want to know what benefits are possible in terms of money saved and service levels increased. The answer to the question depends on the type of service program involved. In general, a well designed service sharing program will provide tax savings, increased efficiency and decreased redundancy in services, and enhanced service planning. Smaller, non-controversial service sharing programs will yield smaller cost savings, but will require little political capital to carry out. Larger controversial programs or consolidations have the potential for great savings but require skilled political leadership to enact.

Complementary/Allied Local Organizations

REGIONAL INCOME TAX AGENCY (R.I.T.A.)

The Regional Income Tax Agency in the State of Ohio provides services to collect income tax for 142 member municipalities in the state. Founded in 1971, their mission is "to provide member communities with high quality, cost effective municipal services. We strive to service members with integrity and their taxpayers in a professional, courteous, and responsive manner." (The Regional Income Tax Agency).

In 1971, a Regional Council of Governments was formed among 38 municipalities in Ohio in order to enforce and administer tax collection in cities and villages. The Regional Council of Governments created R.I.T.A. as their first act. R.I.T.A. currently serves 44 counties in Ohio. In Hamilton County, 29 jurisdictions (including the city of Cincinnati) administer their own tax collection, while five (Addyston, Arlington Heights, Lockland, Newtown, and Silverton) have consolidated, using the services of the Regional Income Tax Agency.

(Information adapted from an article in the Summer 2008 *Citizens for Civic Renewal Newsletter*,

BUILDING ECONOMIC STRENGTH TOGETHER (BEST) TASK FORCE

The BEST Task Force, formed by Citizens for Civic Renewal (CCR) as an outgrowth of the Cincinnati Metropatterns report released in October 2001, has focused for the past three years on local government collaboration by looking at a variety of ways jurisdictions can work together. BEST has looked at the prospect of small governments working together on things like joint fire districts and joint economic development districts. In March 2009, CCR hosted a Citizens Connect Forum – “Silverton Shares Services: One City's Commitment to Efficient Local Government” for citizens to learn how this city is becoming a model for how shared services can keep cost down and help deliver better services.

AGENDA 360: A Regional Action Plan www.cincinnati360.com

Agenda 360 is a community-wide citizen engagement process designed to improve the competitiveness and quality of life of southwest Ohio. The mission of the Agenda 360 initiative is to transform Cincinnati USA into a leading metropolitan region for talent, jobs and economic opportunity for all who live here by the year 2020. This citizen engagement process resulted in the February 2009 release of “Agenda 360: A Regional Action Plan” to transform the region by the year 2020. Work on the Shared Regional Civic Agenda began in spring 2007. Geographic and demographic meetings were hosted throughout Cincinnati and the four southwest Ohio counties (Hamilton, Butler, Warren and Clermont) to gain input from participants as to how to make this region a better place to live, work, and play. Government collaboration is one of the six action areas to transform the community and includes priority focus on expanding shared service practices; increasing regional leadership capacity; and exploring multi-jurisdictional revenue sharing.

PORT OF GREATER CINCINNATI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY www.cincinnatiport.org

In the latter part of 2000, the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County collaborated to create the Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority. This new entity reconstituted an existing port authority that the two governments had formed earlier to spearhead the redevelopment of brownfield sites. The newly created Port Authority was given a dual mission of overseeing The Banks

Central Riverfront Project envisioned by the City and the County, and the Riverfront Advisors Commission, as well as continuing the brownfield redevelopment activities of the predecessor agency.

There are 18 members of the board of directors of the Port Authority jointly appointed by the Mayor of the City of Cincinnati with the advice and consent of City Council, and by the Board of County Commissioners of Hamilton County. The board represents a broad mix of business expertise, including development, design, finance and marketing.

THE BANKS www.cincinnatiport.org/pa

When the Riverfront Advisors Commission was chartered by the City / County Riverfront Steering Committee in February 1999, they were charged with creating a comprehensive development program for the central riverfront area between the two new proposed sports stadiums. Due to the reconfiguration of Fort Washington Way and other major street and utility infrastructure projects, eight city blocks (15 acres) of land on the Ohio River were opened up ready for redevelopment. The result of the Riverfront Advisors' efforts was a far-reaching vision (The Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan) for “The Banks,” a development that would create a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week diverse, pedestrian-friendly urban neighborhood with a mix of uses consisting of residential housing, retail shops and restaurants, office and hotel space, public greenspace and parking.

The Port Authority was chosen in 2001 as a development mechanism because it has a broad range of project management and funding capabilities or “tools.” A port authority's unique “tool kit” includes special financing options like revenue bonds, project incentives and grant programs as well as lease financing options, property ownership and project coordination. A developer selection process was implemented and eventually two Atlanta-based firms were chosen as co-developers. Work began in December 2008 on the public parking garage for the first phase of the \$600 million riverfront project. Construction is on track to begin in June 2009 on the first major retail and residential phase of the project (Phase 1A) to be built on top of the garage just west of the Great American Ball Park.

The Central Riverfront Park www.CRPark.org
Jointly commissioned by the Cincinnati Park

Board and Cincinnati Recreation Commission, is under construction between Great American Ballpark and Paul Brown Stadium along the banks of the Ohio River. With Phase I due for completion in late 2010. The 40-acre park will function as a "front yard" for the city and will feature restaurants and cafes, water features, playgrounds, gardens and trees, walkways, bike trail, and a River Edge Promenade. The park will continue the connection of the greenspaces along the Ohio River that include the Serpentine Wall, Sawyer Point, Bicentennial Commons and Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park. Funding for the park has come from a variety of sources: \$50 million, federal; \$10 million, state; \$ 20 million, local; and an anticipated \$35-40 million from private sources.

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APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Any county, municipality or township in the following Ohio counties is eligible to join the Center for Local Government: Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Greene, Hamilton, Miami, Montgomery, Preble and Warren. Membership shall be effective upon receipt of dues from the jurisdiction.

Membership: Full Members and Associate Members. Full Members are those political subdivisions which employ a full-time, appointed public administrator (e.g., Manager, Administrator, or Safety Services Director). Associate Members are those political subdivisions which do not employ a full-time, appointed public administrator.

Current Center Members

Amberley	Loveland
Anderson Twp	Madeira
Blue Ash	Mason
Cincinnati	Miami Twp, Clermont Cty
Colerain	Middletown
Columbia Twp	Milford
Deerfield Twp	Monroe
Deer Park	Montgomery
Delhi Twp	Mt. Healthy
Evendale	Newtown
Fairfax	North College Hill
Fairfield, City	Pierce Twp
Fairfield Twp	Reading
Forest Park	Sharonville
Glendale	Silverton
Greenhills	Springboro
Green Twp	Springdale
Hamilton County	Springfield Twp
Harrison	St. Bernard
Indian Hill	Sycamore Twp
Lebanon	West Chester Twp
Liberty Twp	Whitewater Twp
Lincoln Heights	Woodlawn
Lockland	Wyoming

APPENDIX B

HAMILTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT COOPERATION AND EFFICIENCY PROJECT

Shared Services Projects

The Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project (GCEP) was started in 2007 to help local governments improve service delivery and minimize costs through local government collaboration and service sharing efforts in Hamilton County. The following shared service opportunities identify existing and emerging collaborative efforts among local governments. More shared service opportunities will be identified as the work of the GCEP initiative continues.

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Bulk Road Salt Purchasing

Responsibility: Hamilton Cty / Cincinnati

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Bulk Fuel and Daily Fuel Purchasing

Responsibility: Hamilton Cty / Cincinnati

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Bulk Office Supply Purchasing

Responsibility: Hamilton Cty / Cincinnati

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Training and Professional Development

Responsibility: Center for Local Government

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Human Resources

Responsibility: Center for Local Government

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Information Technology Services

Responsibility: Center for Local Government

Service Category: Finance, Administration and General Services

Project: Grant Coordination and Acquisition

Responsibility: Center for Local Government

Service Category: Public Works

Project: Equipment Sharing Contracting

Responsibility: Center for Local Government

Service Category: Public Works

Project: Specialized Training

Responsibility: Center for Local Government

Service Category: Public Works
Project: Fleet Maintenance
Responsibility: City of Cincinnati Fleet Services

Service Category: Public Works
Project: Fire Hydrant Maintenance
Responsibility: Hamilton Cty Department of Public Works

Service Category: Public Works
Project: Street Signs and Markings
Responsibility: Hamilton County Engineers Office
- Traffic Department

APPENDIX C

Director's Corner - Butler County in LUCC

As a former employee of Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, I, like a lot of folks around town, get caught up a story of local government fragmentation that focuses on our region's core county. I don't know how many times we identify the 49 local jurisdictions in Hamilton County as a convenient talking point when talking about the need for government collaboration. Well as a colleague recently told me, this focus on the 49 is a bit disingenuous - particularly when you step back a bit and see all the good local government cooperation that is going on in our region.

Perhaps no area has been walking the talk of local government cooperation more than Butler County. It maybe that Butler County's cooperative spirit illustrates the old axiom "necessity is the mother of invention" but no matter, Butler County has spent the better part of the last twenty years finding areas - particularly relating to infrastructure - where local governments come together to act on issues of mutual benefit. Two examples of these cooperative efforts are the Land Use Coordinating Committee (LUCC) and the Butler County Transportation Improvement District (TID).

Land Use Coordinating Committee

The LUCC has been working on common infrastructure items like roads, airport planning, and groundwater protection for over ten years. The mission of LUCC is to be a facilitator, helping bring together public and private entities in order to assist them in the development and management of the county's land, transportation system, and infrastructure. The regular membership of LUCC is composed of all Butler County OKI Board of Trustees Representatives; one elected of-

ficial from each political jurisdiction in Butler County; one technical person appointed by each political jurisdiction in Butler County; one representative recommended by the Butler County Chambers Caucus and one representative recommended by the Butler County Farm Bureau Federation for appointment by the Butler County Commissioners. The common goal that directs this body is efficient economic development in the county.

Transportation Improvement District

With the oversight of several state and federal agencies, including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the TID serves Butler County, the cities of Hamilton and Fairfield; and Fairfield, West Chester and Liberty townships. For a project to occur in one political subdivision, there must be a consensus that exemplifies inter-governmental coordination. The TID was the main driver for the construction of the Butler Regional Highway between I-75 and Hamilton and the Liberty Township interchange. Future projects include the widening of the SR 4 bypass and SR 747.

No doubt that even with these strong institutions that foster collaboration, opportunities exist for more collaboration in Butler County. The lesson learned may be that just because jurisdictions are not going to agree on everything they shouldn't ignore areas of common interest. These tough economic times may just be the right environment for even more collaboration between Butler County jurisdictions and beyond that collaboration with jurisdictions across the county line.

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