

12: Collaboration Is All Well and Good, But Is It Right for You?



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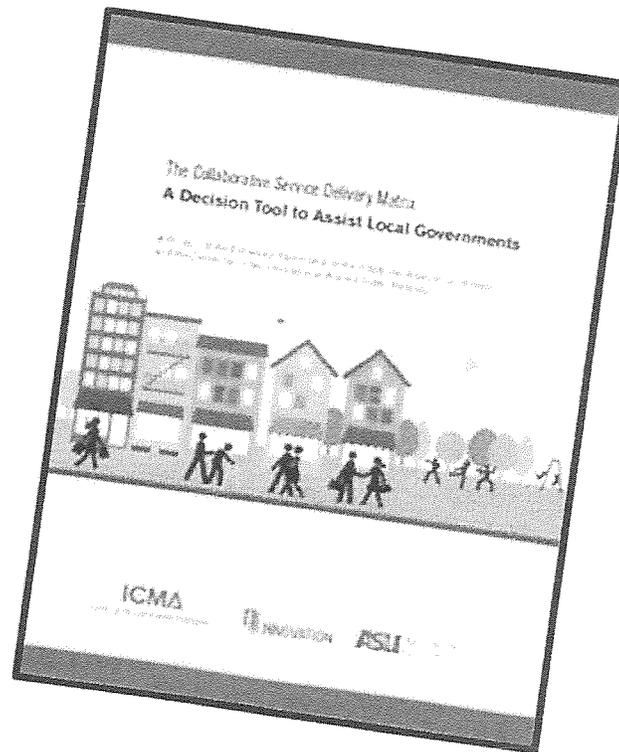
http://icma.org/en/results/management_strategies/home

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Collaboration is all Well and Good, But is it Right for Me?



**National League of Cities Congressional City Conference
NLC University Workshop
March 8, 2015**

What Do We Think about Collaboration?

Discussion Exercise #1

1. What do you see as the benefits associated with collaboration/collaborative service delivery?

2. What do you see as the challenges?

3. Why do you think collaboration is a good idea? Or do you?

Types of collaboration

1) hand strategy

2) Govt to Govt

3. Public-Private Partnerships

4) Reponsibility - Focused

4. Table Discussion notes

Doing Nothing

If you want to go fast go alone

I Ryan

Center for Sharing Public Health Services

A Roadmap to Develop Cross Jurisdictional Sharing Initiatives

Prerequisites for Success

1. Clarity of Objectives
2. Balanced Approach
3. Trust

Facilitating Factors

1. Success in Prior Collaborations
2. Regional Identity
3. Positive Interpersonal Relations

Project Characteristics

1. Senior Level Support
2. Strong Project Management Skills
3. Strong Change Management Plans
4. Effective Communications

Center for Sharing Public Health Services

A Roadmap to Develop Cross Jurisdictional Sharing Initiatives

Explore

- Is collaboration a **feasible approach** to address the issue you are facing?
- What are the **goals**?
- What **issues should and should not be considered** for the project?
- **Who** should be involved?
- What is the **history** of their relationships?
- What are the **guiding principles** that the effort would have? Do **all partners** share these principles?

Prepare and Plan

How exactly would it work?

- **Context and History**
- **Governance Options**
- **Fiscal and service implications**
- **Legal agreements**
- **Logistical issues**
- **Communications**
- **Change management**
- **Timeline**
- **Implementation monitoring and evaluation**

What makes collaboration work?

- *Willingness to cooperate*
- *Need*
- *mutual adv*

Implement and Improve

- Is the work being implemented **as planned**?
- Are the **results** of the work satisfactory?
- What is the level of **stakeholder satisfaction**?
- Is the knowledge acquired being **shared** with the project team and stakeholders?

What Do We Think about Collaboration?

Discussion Exercise #2

1. If you have pursued collaboration, did you follow a process like the “roadmap?” If not, can you see where these steps would have helped the effort?
2. Do you have the leadership and management, as well as soft skills, to pursue collaboration in your organization?
3. Table Discussion Notes

The Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix: A Decision Tool to Assist Local Governments

*A Product of the Enhanced Partnership of the ICMA, the Alliance for Innovation,
and the Center for Urban Innovation at Arizona State University*



ICMA
Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

**ALLIANCE FOR
INNOVATION**

ASU ARIZONA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Overview

Should you
engage in
collaboration
• Importance of
Specificity

Collaboration as an approach to the delivery of local services focuses on sharing costs and benefits by two or more organizations working together to address a need in a way that achieves efficiency and effectiveness that would not be realized by one organization operating alone. Most local government jurisdictions do "go it alone" by producing their services in-house. Certain services and certain kinds of communities may be able to develop alternative service delivery arrangements, such as a collaborative arrangement, that improves the quality of service and the satisfaction of citizens. But the key to a true collaboration, as opposed to other alternative service delivery models such as contracting or privatization, is that all the partners in the collaboration must share in the burden of the costs as well as in reaping the rewards. In other words, all partners must have a stake in the joint endeavor for the arrangement to be considered a collaboration and for the collaboration to have a reasonable likelihood of succeeding.

Collaborative service delivery of local services is not new. What is new is the attention such collaborative approaches are receiving from academics, political officials, practitioners, and consultants.

In recent years, there have been many new experiments with alternative service delivery arrangements, often accompanied claims of vast cost savings through increased efficiencies. The positive image that intergovernmental agreements and public-private partnerships have received has added more impetus for local decision makers to pursue new or expand existing collaborative arrangements based more on faith in the ideal of collaboration rather than evidence of its effectiveness.

However, there is a surprising lack of hard evidence available to support the claims that collaboration is a panacea of solutions to the array of challenges confronting contemporary local governments. There is no collection of data that simply counts the number of such service delivery collaborations, much less data measuring the success of these. Most of the reports and academic journal articles focus only on success stories. A primary reason for this is that local leaders are not as interested in sharing stories where experiments failed to achieve the expected goals. Furthermore, an ICMA survey of managers found that most collaborations and other alternative arrangements are simply not tracked or measured.

With little data available on which to base decisions about how best to deliver services to citizens, how can managers address this need?

This decision tool, developed by the Enhanced Partnership of the ICMA, Alliance for Innovation, and Arizona State University's Center for Urban Innovation, is designed to fill this need. We chose to build this tool to assist local leaders and their staff determine whether the conditions for expanding collaborative service delivery efforts may help local governments organization achieve their goals.

The tool is in two parts. The first part helps communities determine whether or not a collaborative arrangement is a good idea for their service regarding delivery of a specific service. The second part helps those that

want to pursue a collaborative arrangement (as determined by part one) choose from among five fundamental types of collaborative arrangements by using the same information developed in part one of the tool.

The first part of the tool provides a matrix of characteristics broken down into two groups: service characteristics and community characteristics. Managers work with their staff through a discussion of the characteristics and score each one on a simple three-point scale. The scores for the two groups of characteristics are summed and compared to a chart that illustrates the likelihood of successful service delivery through a collaborative approach. We refer to this as a "soft benefit/cost analysis" as it does not rely on hard cost estimates projected benefits. Such estimates rarely prove accurate, but are resource intensive to calculate as an aid in the decision about whether a proposed collaboration is possible.

Instead, we have developed this simple matrix, which is not data intensive and does not take a long time to execute. We designed it not to provide a yes or no answer to whether an organization should pursue a collaborative arrangement, but rather to encourage participants to work through a process and be very explicit about the opportunities and challenges they will confront when undertaking a collaboration. The outcome is simply an indication of the likelihood of success as evidenced by other collaborations and scholarly literature.

Those communities that choose to pursue a collaborative service delivery arrangement are faced with the decision as to which arrangement will lead to the best outcome for their service, given their community context. This is a more challenging question to answer due to the generally limited nature of data about the success of collaborations across different types of collaborations.

However, the same characteristics from part one of the decision matrix are helpful in leading communities towards the kind of collaborative structure(s) that are most likely to lead to positive outcomes in the delivery of the service. Part two of our tool uses the information from the matrix to help communities that want to pursue a collaborative arrangement choose from among five generalized types of collaborative arrangements: horizontal public-public partnerships (e.g., two nearby municipalities partnering), vertical public-public partnerships (e.g., a municipality partnering with its overlapping county), consolidation/regionalization (e.g., merging jurisdictions into one larger new jurisdiction), public-nonprofit partnerships, and public-private partnerships.

In addition to this document which contains just part one and part two of the tool itself, we also provide additional information. A white paper is also available through ICMA's Center for Management Strategies that elaborates on the concepts used in the matrix decision tool. It also highlights the benefits local officials might expect to see in a successful collaboration, as well as what challenges to be aware of in pursuing such strategies.

Instructions – Part One

Should the community pursue a collaborative service delivery arrangement?

The decision tool is a matrix to help staff, council members, or even citizens, work through the various aspects of a decision situation. While the exercise generates a numeric answer, the process is really the more important aspect. The “answer” is simply a useful index that should summarize what comes out of the process. The process will force participants to be very clear going into the decision as to whether or not a collaborative service is a good strategy for a given service in their community.

Below are the steps to follow for undertaking part one of the matrix decision exercise to help communities determine whether or not a collaborative arrangement is appropriate for this service under consideration, in the community context in which they are operating. Instructions for Part Two (determining which form of collaboration is best) begins on page 10.

Step 1

Determine who will be participating in the exercise. Participants should be those familiar with the service under consideration as well as the community context.

Step 2

Set up a time and place where the participants can come together and work through the process. We recommend this be completed in one session. Previous experiences with the exercise suggest that the entire exercise will take approximately two (2) hours. We also recommend a room with a round table or where chairs can be moved into a circle to facilitate as much dialog about each characteristic as possible. Snacks are always useful for these kinds of discussion sessions too.

Step 3

Provide copies of the worksheet (see below) so each participant can have a copy of the list of characteristics, a brief definition of each, and room to score each characteristic him/herself.

Step 4

Appoint someone familiar with the matrix materials as the facilitator of the discussion. This person's job is only to elaborate on the meaning of the characteristics and insure everyone has the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

Step 5

The first phase of the exercise focuses on the seven service characteristics. After introducing each characteristic and allowing for a brief discussion, the facilitator will instruct each participant to score that characteristic on the three-point scale (see the worksheet). Responses are shared to discuss variations in individual scores and adjustments can be made.

Step 6

After discussing the scores, the group must come to consensus on the

group's collective score for that characteristic. The facilitator may maintain the official scores or may designate someone else to maintain them. Fractional scores are permitted as well since the real purpose of the exercise is to encourage specific thinking about these elements. However, we encourage facilitators try to help the group reach a consensus on a whole number score. **WARNING:** The individual scores that each participant assigns on their own should not be averaged together in determining the collective score. This will likely lead to scores on all the measures drifting toward the middle point across all the characteristics. Rather, the facilitator should allow discussion on what the group score is so the participants can come to a consensus they may end up being quite different from the "average" of the individual scores.

Step 7

Once the seven service characteristics are completed and have been scored by the group, sum the official score of each characteristic to arrive at the Total Type of Service Score. The score should range between 7 and 21.

Step 8

Repeat the discussion and scoring for the seven community characteristics, and sum the official scores to arrive at the Total Community Context Score. This score should also range between 7 and 21.

Step 9

Using the graph on page 9, find the intersection of the Total Type of Service Score and the Total Community Context Score. Note the "zone" in which the intersection lies. This illustrates the general likelihood that a collaborative service delivery arrangement will be a viable alternative for the service you want to deliver and in the community in which you are located. Save a copy of the final scores generated in the process (for use in Part Two).

Remember that in interpreting the scores, these are not meant to be highly quantified indicators that yield a yes or no answer about whether a community should collaborate. The process is the important aspect of this decision tool. Even if the outcome suggests that it will be difficult to deliver a service through a collaborative arrangement, a community may still choose to go through with pursuing a collaboration. But the process will have helped identify those areas where challenges are most likely to arise.

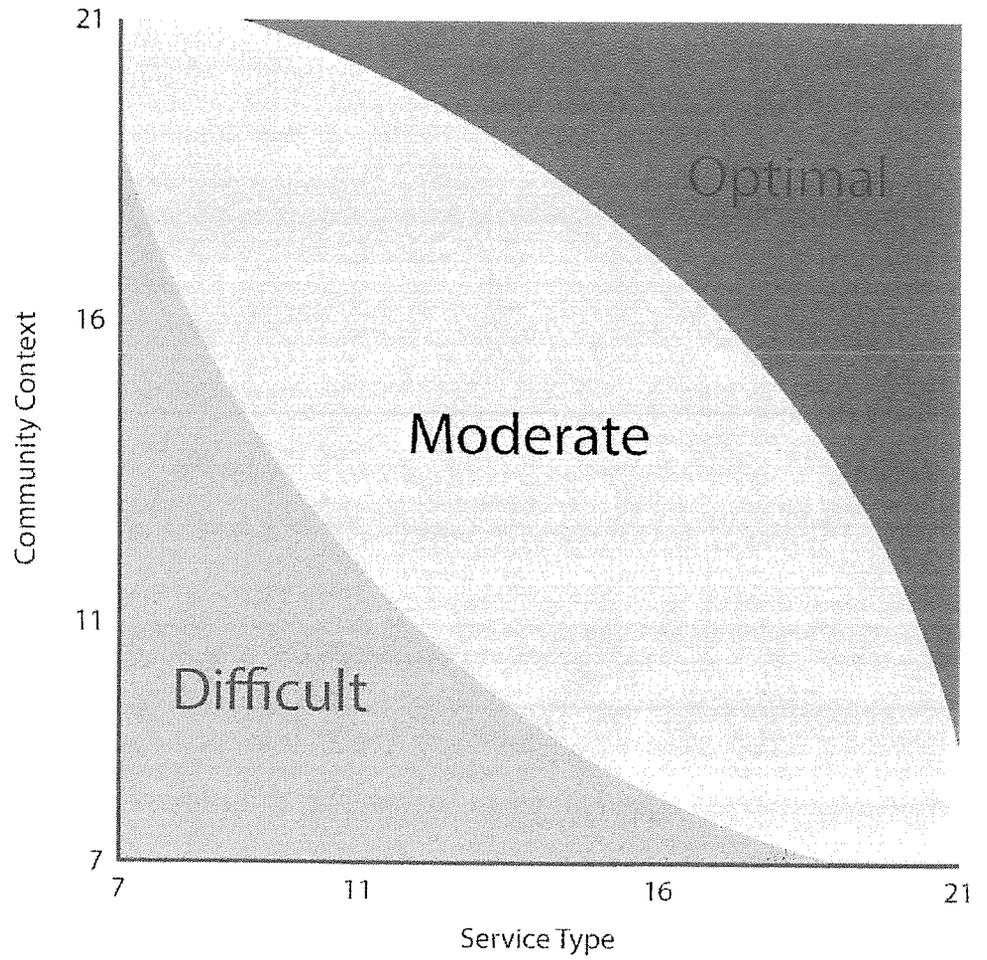
Collaboration Decision Worksheet

Type of Service to be Delivered	Score
<p>Asset Specificity – This represents the degree to which the service requires investment in special infrastructure (e.g., water pipes, treatment plants, ditch diggers) or technical expertise (e.g., legal, environmental), which may mean a lack of competitiveness in supplier markets and the level of the community's internal expertise or technical capacity. High asset specificity means that the investments cannot be easily adapted to produce another service. (High=1, Medium=2, Low=3)</p>	
<p>Contract Specification and Monitoring – Services that are relatively harder to specify in a contract or that are harder to monitor, or that require a higher level of performance management expertise on the part of government. (Hard=1, Medium=2, Easy=3)</p>	
<p>Labor Intensity – Some services are more labor intensive than others. Labor intensive services may also be capital intensive (see below). Generally, services that are more labor intensive in their delivery are better candidates for collaborative alternatives arrangements. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	
<p>Capital Intensity – Some services are more capital intensive than others. Capital intensive services may also be labor intensive (see previous). How diffused the benefits are from the capital investment determines the effect on the likelihood of successful collaborations. Generally, services that are more capital intensive with diffuse benefits are more amenable to collaborative approaches to their delivery. (Low=1, Medium=2, High with focused benefits=2, High with diffuse benefits=3)</p>	
<p>Costs – Overall project costs influence the likelihood of successful collaboration in terms of both driving the need for collaboration as well as limiting the pool of potential partner organizations that might be able to participate in the delivery of more expensive services. (High=1, Medium=2, Low =3)</p>	
<p>Management Competencies – Communities must be sensitive to the expertise they have available on staff for managing the various stages of a collaborative arrangement from planning, structuring and executing a competitive bidding process, to negotiating and bargaining with vendors and employees, to measuring vendor performance or partner evaluation. The greater the managerial expertise on staff related to a service, the more likely a collaborative arrangement can achieve success. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	
<p>Stability in Administrative Team – Communities should be aware of the degree of turnover in the administration and the likelihood of additional turnover in the short and long term future, as best as possible. Communities facing turnover in the higher level positions will have more difficulty establishing and maintaining the institutional knowledge and oversight necessary for successful collaborations. (High turnover=1, Medium=2, Low=3)</p>	
<p>Total Type of Service Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)</p>	

Are they reasonable partners?

Community Context	Score
Possible Public Partners – Communities may have other public jurisdictions with whom they can work in terms of nearby municipalities, townships, special districts, or county government. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	
Possible Private Partners – The opportunity for partnering for delivery with private sector firms is limited to the extent that the community or region is home to enough such competent firms to support a competitive marketplace. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	
Possible Nonprofit Partners – As with private partners, the size of the local supply of nonprofits will also be driven by the type of service under consideration as well as the competence of such organizations to serve as potential collaborators in service delivery. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3).	
Council Orientation/Political Environment – Different kinds of services may meet different levels of support among local politicians which can raise the costs of pursuing and/or executing a collaborative arrangement. (Highly sensitive=1, Moderately sensitive=2, Non-sensitive=3)	
* Fiscal/Economic Health – The community's fiscal condition may be a motivating factor in wanting to pursue alternative service delivery arrangements as a means to curbing costs. Those in better health are more likely to be successful in collaborative arrangements. But those that are in a weak fiscal position may find it more difficult to locate partners with whom to collaborate. (Poor=1, Moderate=2, Good=3)	
* Unions – In many communities, there may be resistance to any collaborative alternatives that could affect public sector employment levels. (Strong=1, Moderate=2, Weak=3)	
* Public Interest – Some services are more likely to attract the attention of citizens than others. Changes to those services that receive closer scrutiny by citizens are more likely to meet resistance to changes in how the community delivers the services. (High visibility=1, Moderate=2, Low=3)	
Total Type of Service Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)	

Interpreting the Scores



Instructions – Part Two

Which kind of collaborative arrangement is best?

If the participants complete the exercise and determine that the community should not pursue a collaborative approach to delivering that particular service, then the exercise is complete. However, if the community decides to move forward on a collaborative service delivery arrangement, then the discussion shifts to determining which alternative structure will maximize the likelihood of success.

Utilizing the information from the group discussion that worked through the worksheet in Part One, organization leaders will already have much of the information needed to identify the structure(s) that are most amenable to the kind of service under consideration for delivery in the type of community context in which the community is situated. Below are the steps for using the information from Part One to help generate a recommended form of collaborative arrangement that has the greatest likelihood of success.

The array of combinations of these characteristics and the collaborative structures that are a best fit are explained in more detail in the Collaborative Service Delivery white paper available on the ICMA Center for Management Strategies web site.

The second exercise is very straightforward. If you do not already have a copy, get the final scores the group generated in response to the service and community characteristics in Part One on the Collaboration Decision Worksheet. Transfer the final scores assigned by the group to each service to the Form of Collaboration Worksheet (see page 11). For instance, if the group scored their Asset Specificity score as a 2, then simply find the Asset Specificity line in the Form of Collaboration Worksheet, circle the "2" row with its arrow pointing to Public-Public (Horizontal). This would mean that for the service under consideration, the group believed that it had a "medium" level of asset specificity. In such situations, the form of collaboration associated with the highest likelihood of success is a public-public partnership between two jurisdictions at the same level of government (e.g., two municipalities). Transfer the remaining scores. Once all 14 scores have been transferred, go to the bottom table and record the sum of each type of collaboration suggested by each service or community score. Check the box with the most recommendations and that represents the form of collaboration with the highest likelihood of success for that service in a community with those characteristics.

While this part of the decision exercise can be conducted by a single person, we recommend that this be done with the same group that participated in part one in order to have as much feedback on the outcome as possible.

Options for Collaborative

Form of Collaboration Worksheet

Directions: Transfer the final scores assigned by the group to each service from the Collaboration Decision Worksheet by circling the score from there in the Score column below. Also circle the associated form of collaboration that number points to.

Service Characteristic	Score	Preferred Structure
	(circle your score)	(circle the corresponding structure)
Asset Specificity	1 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Contract Specification and Monitoring	1 →	None
	2 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
Labor Intensity	1 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	2 →	Public-Private Partnership
	3 →	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Capital Intensity	1 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2 →	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Costs	1 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2 →	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3 →	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Management Competencies	1 →	None
	2 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Stability in Administrative Team	1 →	None
	2 →	Public-Private (Vertical)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership

Community Characteristics	Score	Preferred Structure
	(circle your score)	(circle the corresponding structure)
Possible Public Partners	1 → 2 → 3 →	Consolidation/Regionalism Public-Public (Vertical) Public-Public (Horizontal)
Possible Private Partners	1 → 2 → 3 →	Public-Public (Vertical) Public-Public (Horizontal) Public-Private Partnership
Possible Nonprofit Partners	1 → 2 → 3 →	Public-Public (Vertical) Public-Private Partnership Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Council Orientation/ Political Environment	1 → 2 → 3 →	None Public-Public (Vertical) Public-Private Partnership
Fiscal/Economic Health	1 → 2 → 3 →	None Public-Public (Horizontal) Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Unions	1 → 2 → 3 →	Public-Public (Vertical) Public-Public (Horizontal) Public-Private Partnership
Public Interest	1 → 2 → 3 →	Public-Private Partnership Public-Nonprofit Partnership Public-Public (Vertical)

Transfer the results above to the table below by counting up the number of each collaboration form recommended. Once completed, check the box to the right to determine the form of collaboration associated with the highest probability of success.

(water tower) dual use
west lake + Keller Texas
(Somewhat
B or less)

Library, school districts
IGA Police City/County

Indianapolis,
Public/Private come together
Enterprise - CH2M Hill
provides water/power

Delivery Options	Count (how many circled)	Preferred Structure (check highest score)
Public-Public (Horizontal)		<input type="checkbox"/>
Public-Public (Vertical)		<input type="checkbox"/>
Consolidation/Regionalism		<input type="checkbox"/>
Public-Nonprofit Partnership	Regional Animal Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual Contract
Public-Private Partnership		<input type="checkbox"/>
None		<input type="checkbox"/>

Core competency - what business
do you want to be in or not to
be in

Formal + Informal Accountability

**Collaborative Service Delivery:
Tools and Best Practices to Assist Your Efforts**

Exercise #1: Water in a Small Town

According to 2012 Census Bureau estimates, the Town of Durbin Pike (TX) has a population of 5,218 with a median income of \$75,213. The local council of governments forecasts that Durbin Pike will reach 8,869 people by 2040, which is consistent with the community's goal to retain its small-town feel. The General Fund budget for FY14 is \$7.2 million. Public safety is provided through a contract with the County Sheriff's Office, while fire protection is available to private citizens through Rural/Metro Fire by individual subscription. A gas utility is available through Southern Gas, electricity through TESCO, and trash pickup is performed by private companies. Durbin Pike has no parks and recreation department, although it does maintain municipal rodeo grounds and trails. The town is located 15 miles away from the county's main city and, while technically in the MSA, the town has a distinctly rural flavor.

Last year, the local water company decided they were going to sell the wastewater treatment and water distribution system that serves Durbin Pike. No private firms have stepped forward to purchase the system. The central city is considerably distant in terms of possible connections and has not indicated any interest in acquiring the system. The system is aging but does have excess capacity that can be sold off to other jurisdictions presumably. The town and its 34 employees (whose morale is finally recovering after cuts from the recession) are faced with the option to purchase the system itself by setting up an Enterprise Fund, or perhaps looking for partners in the area that might be willing to work together on a shared arrangement.

The county does not provide water and the only proximate community is the Town of Melton, which abuts Durbin Pike to the north and has a population of approximately 3,500 with a median income of just over \$100,000. All of Melton's municipal services are contracted out. Citizens contract with private providers to receive water, wastewater, trash, electricity, and gas services. Melton has no parks, although it does own a public botanical gardens and a small community amphitheater.

Durbin Pike and Melton have not always got along and currently have no collaborative arrangements between them. Durbin Pike's town council is not enthusiastic about the prospect of having to buy the system. But they are more concerned at the moment about the possible loss of this water provider, as are the citizens and the business community. The company's books indicate that with the excess capacity, the system could generate sufficient revenues to cover maintenance and operational costs with projected additional growth in the area.

The town manager and her staff (those around your table) have already spent some time conducting the decision matrix tools and have come to consensus on the scores for each characteristic (as presented on the following two pages).

While there might be certain challenges, the town council wants to pursue some form of collaborative arrangement. Using the information in the scenario and the scores provided on the worksheet, which collaborative type of arrangement might make the most sense for this situation?

Collaboration Decision Worksheet

Type of Service to be Delivered	Score
<p>Asset Specificity—This represents the degree to which the service requires investment in special infrastructure (e.g., water pipes, treatment plants, ditch diggers) or technical expertise (e.g., legal, environmental), which may mean a lack of competitiveness in supplier markets and the level of the community’s internal expertise or technical capacity. High asset specificity means that the investments cannot be easily adapted to produce another service. (High=1, Medium=2 , Low=3)</p>	1
<p>Contract Specification and Monitoring—Services that are relatively harder to specify in a contract or that are harder to monitor, or that require a higher level of performance management expertise on the part of government. (Hard=1, Medium=2, Easy=3)</p>	2
<p>Labor Intensity—Some services are more labor intensive than others. Labor intensive services may also be capital intensive (see below). Generally, services that are more labor intensive in their delivery are better candidates for collaborative alternatives arrangements. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	1
<p>Capital Intensity—Some services are more capital intensive than others. Capital intensive services may also be labor intensive (see previous). How diffused the benefits are from the capital investment determines the effect on the likelihood of successful collaborations. Generally, services that are more capital intensive with diffuse benefits are more amenable to collaborative approaches to their delivery. (Low=1, Medium=2, High with focused benefits=2, High with diffuse benefits=3)</p>	2
<p>Costs—Overall project costs influence the likelihood of successful collaboration in terms of both driving the need for collaboration as well as limiting the pool of potential partner organizations that might be able to participate in the delivery of more expensive services. (High=1, Medium=2, Low =3)</p>	1
<p>Management Competencies—Communities must be sensitive to the expertise they have available on staff for managing the various stages of a collaborative arrangement from planning, structuring and executing a competitive bidding process, to negotiating and bargaining with vendors and employees, to measuring vendor performance or partner evaluation. The greater the managerial expertise on staff related to a service, the more likely a collaborative arrangement can achieve success. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	1
<p>Stability in Administrative Team—Communities should be aware of the degree of turnover in the administration and the likelihood of additional turnover in the short and long term future, as best as possible. Communities facing turnover in the higher level positions will have more difficulty establishing and maintaining the institutional knowledge and oversight necessary for successful collaborations. (High turnover=1, Medium=2, Low=3)</p>	2
<p>Total Type of Service Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)</p>	10

Community Context	Score
Possible Public Partners —Communities may have other public jurisdictions with whom they can work in terms of nearby municipalities, townships, special districts, or county government. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	2
Possible Private Partners —The opportunity for partnering for delivery with private sector firms is limited to the extent that the community or region is home to enough such competent firms to support a competitive marketplace. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	1
Possible Nonprofit Partners —As with private partners, the size of the local supply of nonprofits will also be driven by the type of service under consideration as well as the competence of such organizations to serve as potential collaborators in service delivery. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3).	1
Council Orientation/Political Environment —Different kinds of services may meet different levels of support among local politicians which can raise the costs of pursuing and/or executing a collaborative arrangement. (Highly sensitive=1, Moderately sensitive=2, Non-sensitive=3)	1
Fiscal/Economic Health —The community's fiscal condition may be a motivating factor in wanting to pursue alternative service delivery arrangements as a means to curbing costs. Those in better health are more likely to be successful in collaborative arrangements. But those that are in a weak fiscal position may find it more difficult to locate partners with whom to collaborate. (Poor=1, Moderate=2, Good=3)	2
Unions —In many communities, there may be resistance to any collaborative alternatives that could affect public sector employment levels. (Strong=1, Moderate=2, Weak=3)	3
Public Interest —Some services are more likely to attract the attention of citizens than others. Changes to those services that receive closer scrutiny by citizens are more likely to meet resistance to changes in how the community delivers the services. (High visibility=1, Moderate=2, Low=3)	2
Total Community Context Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)	12

Collaborative Structure Worksheet (Example Only)

Service Characteristic	Score	Preferred Structure
	(circle your score)	(circle the corresponding structure)
Contract Specification and Monitoring	1 →	None
	② →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
Labor Intensity	①	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	2	Public-Private Partnership
	3	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Capital Intensity	1 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
	② →	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Possible Public Partners	①	Consolidation/Regionalism
	②	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3	Public-Public (Horizontal)
Possible Private Partners	① →	Public-Public (Vertical)
	2 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Possible Nonprofit Partners	①	Public-Public (Vertical)
	2	Public-Private Partnership
	3	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Public Interest	1 →	Public-Private Partnership
	② →	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
	3 →	Public-Public (Vertical)

Tally the results from above:

Delivery Options	Count	Preferred Structure
	(how many circled)	(check highest score)
Public-Public (Horizontal)	2	
Public-Public (Vertical)	4	
Consolidation/Regionalism	0	
Public-Nonprofit Partnership	1	
Public-Private Partnership	0	
Possible Nonprofit Partners	0	
None	0	

Collaborative Service Delivery: Tools and Best Practices to Assist Your Efforts

Exercise #2: Permitting Offices

Truman, Georgia is home to 76,000 citizens and is the county seat of Townson County (home to another 38,000 residents). Truman is surrounded by several small towns scattered throughout the county, none larger than 3,000. The county is also home to an Air Force base that abuts the city limits on the northwest side. The base is a significant engine for the local economy, but the community also has a good manufacturing base and many retail outlets. The county has been trying to spread the economic development in Truman to other parts of the county in recent years.

While Truman made it through the recession without too much damage, the community has seen an increase in economic growth in the past couple of years, including new housing starts and many new small and mid-sized businesses. Recently, one of the city councilors asked the city manager several questions about the permitting process. Evidently, the councilor had been pressed by a business owner looking to expand her business. She was irritated that she was “having to chase all over the place to get a permit for this and a permit for that.” The city manager explained that the city was responsible for building permits, business operation permits, and zoning permits. The county was responsible for waste/water, dust, burn, and other environmental permitting. However, the permits are issued at three different locations: one here at city hall, one at the county courthouse building several blocks down the street, and the environmental permits in the county annex (a building attached to the back of a fire station just outside of Truman).

The councilor thought for a moment then asked why all these permits couldn't be provided in one location. The manager set up a meeting of his relevant departments to consider whether some alternative collaborative arrangement for issuing permits might be worth investigating. He knows the 7-member city council loves collaborative arrangements, but he also knows that the 5-member county commission is a little cool to Truman's initiatives lately because the city continues getting most of the economic development in the county.

The city manager and his staff (those around your table) have already spent some time conducting the decision matrix tool and have come to consensus on the scores for each characteristic (as presented on the following two pages).

While there might be certain challenges, the city council wants to pursue some form of collaborative arrangement. Using the information in the scenario and the scores provided on the worksheet, which collaborative type of arrangement might make the most sense for this situation?

Collaboration Decision Worksheet

Type of Service to be Delivered	Score
<p>Asset Specificity—This represents the degree to which the service requires investment in special infrastructure (e.g., water pipes, treatment plants, ditch diggers) or technical expertise (e.g., legal, environmental), which may mean a lack of competitiveness in supplier markets and the level of the community’s internal expertise or technical capacity. High asset specificity means that the investments cannot be easily adapted to produce another service. (High=1, Medium=2 , Low=3)</p>	2
<p>Contract Specification and Monitoring—Services that are relatively harder to specify in a contract or that are harder to monitor, or that require a higher level of performance management expertise on the part of government. (Hard=1, Medium=2, Easy=3)</p>	3
<p>Labor Intensity—Some services are more labor intensive than others. Labor intensive services may also be capital intensive (see below). Generally, services that are more labor intensive in their delivery are better candidates for collaborative alternatives arrangements. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	2
<p>Capital Intensity—Some services are more capital intensive than others. Capital intensive services may also be labor intensive (see previous). How diffused the benefits are from the capital investment determines the effect on the likelihood of successful collaborations. Generally, services that are more capital intensive with diffuse benefits are more amenable to collaborative approaches to their delivery. (Low=1, Medium=2, High with focused benefits=2, High with diffuse benefits=3)</p>	1
<p>Costs—Overall project costs influence the likelihood of successful collaboration in terms of both driving the need for collaboration as well as limiting the pool of potential partner organizations that might be able to participate in the delivery of more expensive services. (High=1, Medium=2, Low =3)</p>	3
<p>Management Competencies—Communities must be sensitive to the expertise they have available on staff for managing the various stages of a collaborative arrangement from planning, structuring and executing a competitive bidding process, to negotiating and bargaining with vendors and employees, to measuring vendor performance or partner evaluation. The greater the managerial expertise on staff related to a service, the more likely a collaborative arrangement can achieve success. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	2
<p>Stability in Administrative Team—Communities should be aware of the degree of turnover in the administration and the likelihood of additional turnover in the short and long term future, as best as possible. Communities facing turnover in the higher level positions will have more difficulty establishing and maintaining the institutional knowledge and oversight necessary for successful collaborations. (High turnover=1, Medium=2, Low=3)</p>	3
<p>Total Type of Service Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)</p>	16

Community Context	Score
Possible Public Partners —Communities may have other public jurisdictions with whom they can work in terms of nearby municipalities, townships, special districts, or county government. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	2
Possible Private Partners —The opportunity for partnering for delivery with private sector firms is limited to the extent that the community or region is home to enough such competent firms to support a competitive marketplace. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	3
Possible Nonprofit Partners —As with private partners, the size of the local supply of nonprofits will also be driven by the type of service under consideration as well as the competence of such organizations to serve as potential collaborators in service delivery. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3).	2
Council Orientation/Political Environment —Different kinds of services may meet different levels of support among local politicians which can raise the costs of pursuing and/or executing a collaborative arrangement. (Highly sensitive=1, Moderately sensitive=2, Non-sensitive=3)	2
Fiscal/Economic Health —The community's fiscal condition may be a motivating factor in wanting to pursue alternative service delivery arrangements as a means to curbing costs. Those in better health are more likely to be successful in collaborative arrangements. But those that are in a weak fiscal position may find it more difficult to locate partners with whom to collaborate. (Poor=1, Moderate=2, Good=3)	3
Unions —In many communities, there may be resistance to any collaborative alternatives that could affect public sector employment levels. (Strong=1, Moderate=2, Weak=3)	3
Public Interest —Some services are more likely to attract the attention of citizens than others. Changes to those services that receive closer scrutiny by citizens are more likely to meet resistance to changes in how the community delivers the services. (High visibility=1, Moderate=2, Low=3)	3
Total Community Context Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)	18

Collaborative Structure Worksheet (Example Only)

Service Characteristic	Score	Preferred Structure
	(circle your score)	(circle the corresponding structure)
Contract Specification and Monitoring	1 <input type="radio"/>	None
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Consolidation/Regionalism
Labor Intensity	1 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Private Partnership
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Capital Intensity	1 <input type="radio"/>	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Private Partnership
Possible Public Partners	1 <input type="radio"/>	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Horizontal)
Possible Private Partners	1 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Vertical)
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Private Partnership
Possible Nonprofit Partners	1 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Vertical)
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Private Partnership
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Public Interest	1 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Private Partnership
	2 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
	3 <input type="radio"/>	Public-Public (Vertical)

Tally the results from above:

Delivery Options	Count	Preferred Structure
	(how many circled)	(check highest score)
Public-Public (Horizontal)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public-Public (Vertical)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consolidation/Regionalism	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public-Nonprofit Partnership	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public-Private Partnership	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possible Nonprofit Partners	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Collaborative Service Delivery: Tools and Best Practices to Assist Your Efforts

Exercise #3: Incinerator

The City of Smithville, Ohio is exploring options for alternative service delivery of its incinerator unit. The incinerator turns solid waste into a fine ash that can be disposed in a smaller space than the solid waste itself, but still poses an environmental concern that has some in the community being vocal about the air pollution and ash waste. The politically conservative 11- member city council is more concerned about the continued cost overruns for operating the facility, even with the added revenues afforded by burning the trash from nearby jurisdictions for a fee.

Smithville grew tremendously in the 1950s and 60s, but its fortunes turned along with other Midwestern communities in the late 1970s and 80s. Today, the city has stabilized in terms of economic base and population, though at about 75% its size at its height. Crime and education are significant cost issues facing the community, and the incinerator was envisioned as a money maker for the city when they invested the capital to build it. Needless to say, the incinerator has not lived up to the promise and is a net drain on the community, but they have many more years to pay off the bonds they sold to build it.

The mayor is a strong advocate for alternative service delivery arrangements and has instructed the public works department and its interim head to determine if there is any value in exploring an alternative approach to operating the facility. Specifically, he wants to investigate alternative management arrangements. Given the nature of this service, there are limited local options in terms of groups that specialize in managing these kinds of facilities, though there are some national and international firms that do.

While the mayor is always interested in new alternatives, the city council is not always quite as excited. They are concerned about possible loss of control as well as whether the recent changes in the public works leadership might impact the ability to monitor the performance of some outside group brought in to manage the incinerator.

The city has been healthier financially in the past, but it did manage to maintain its AAA bond rating through the recession. The only other challenge they face is limited landfill space, which was one of the reasons that motivated the community to invest in the incinerator originally.

The mayor and his staff (those around your table) have already spent some time conducting the decision matrix tool and have come to consensus on the scores for each characteristic (as presented on the following two pages).

While there might be certain challenges, the mayor wants to pursue some form of collaborative arrangement. Using the information in the scenario and the scores provided on the worksheet, which collaborative type of arrangement might make the most sense for this situation?

Collaboration Decision Worksheet

Type of Service to be Delivered	Score
<p>Asset Specificity—This represents the degree to which the service requires investment in special infrastructure (e.g., water pipes, treatment plants, ditch diggers) or technical expertise (e.g., legal, environmental), which may mean a lack of competitiveness in supplier markets and the level of the community’s internal expertise or technical capacity. High asset specificity means that the investments cannot be easily adapted to produce another service. (High=1, Medium=2 , Low=3)</p>	3
<p>Contract Specification and Monitoring—Services that are relatively harder to specify in a contract or that are harder to monitor, or that require a higher level of performance management expertise on the part of government. (Hard=1, Medium=2, Easy=3)</p>	1
<p>Labor Intensity—Some services are more labor intensive than others. Labor intensive services may also be capital intensive (see below). Generally, services that are more labor intensive in their delivery are better candidates for collaborative alternatives arrangements. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	2
<p>Capital Intensity—Some services are more capital intensive than others. Capital intensive services may also be labor intensive (see previous). How diffused the benefits are from the capital investment determines the effect on the likelihood of successful collaborations. Generally, services that are more capital intensive with diffuse benefits are more amenable to collaborative approaches to their delivery. (Low=1, Medium=2, High with focused benefits=2, High with diffuse benefits=3)</p>	1
<p>Costs—Overall project costs influence the likelihood of successful collaboration in terms of both driving the need for collaboration as well as limiting the pool of potential partner organizations that might be able to participate in the delivery of more expensive services. (High=1, Medium=2, Low =3)</p>	1
<p>Management Competencies—Communities must be sensitive to the expertise they have available on staff for managing the various stages of a collaborative arrangement from planning, structuring and executing a competitive bidding process, to negotiating and bargaining with vendors and employees, to measuring vendor performance or partner evaluation. The greater the managerial expertise on staff related to a service, the more likely a collaborative arrangement can achieve success. (Low=1, Medium=2, High=3)</p>	2
<p>Stability in Administrative Team—Communities should be aware of the degree of turnover in the administration and the likelihood of additional turnover in the short and long term future, as best as possible. Communities facing turnover in the higher level positions will have more difficulty establishing and maintaining the institutional knowledge and oversight necessary for successful collaborations. (High turnover=1, Medium=2, Low=3)</p>	1
<p>Total Type of Service Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)</p>	11

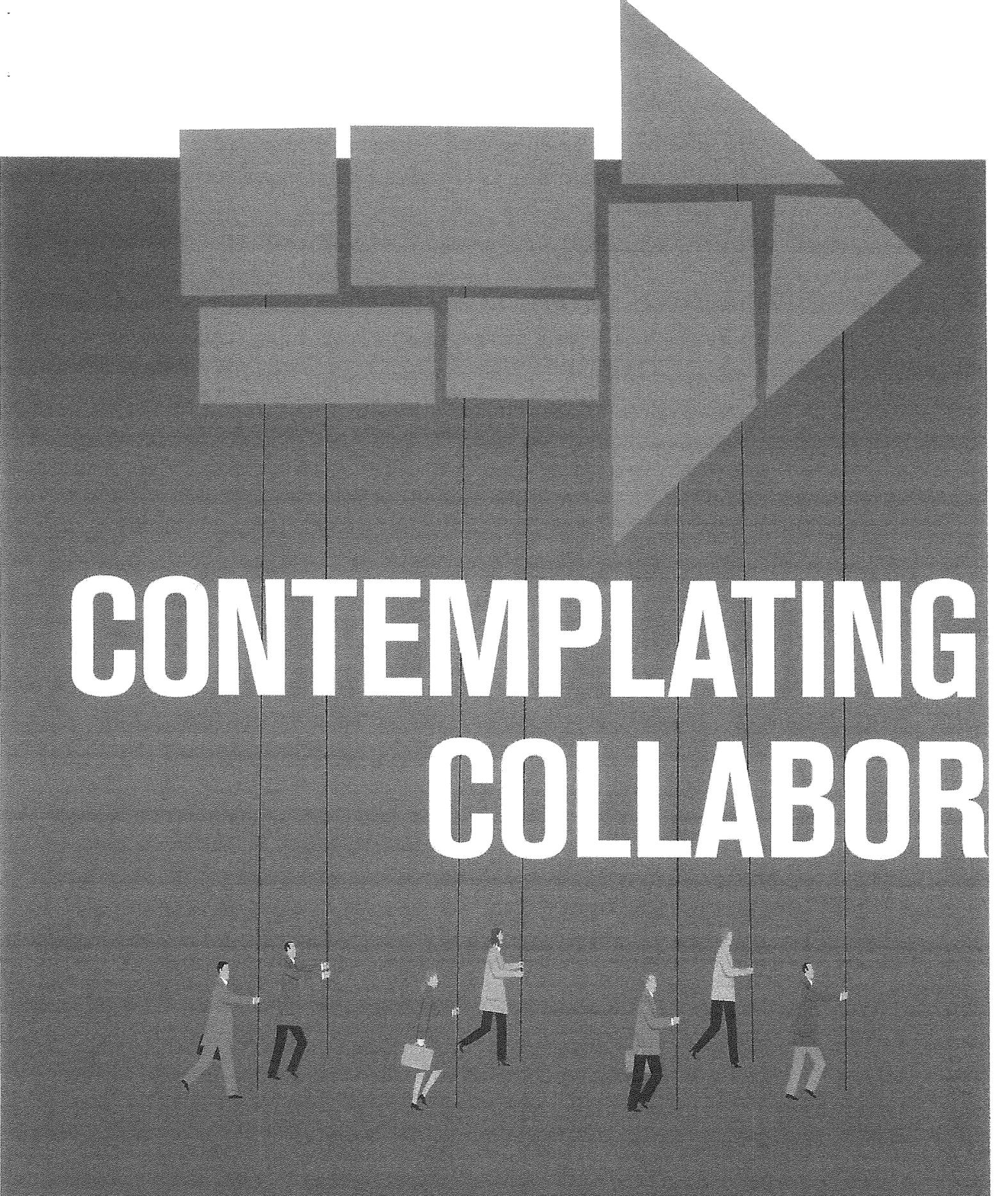
Community Context	Score
Possible Public Partners —Communities may have other public jurisdictions with whom they can work in terms of nearby municipalities, townships, special districts, or county government. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	2
Possible Private Partners —The opportunity for partnering for delivery with private sector firms is limited to the extent that the community or region is home to enough such competent firms to support a competitive marketplace. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3)	3
Possible Nonprofit Partners —As with private partners, the size of the local supply of nonprofits will also be driven by the type of service under consideration as well as the competence of such organizations to serve as potential collaborators in service delivery. (Few=1, Some=2, Several=3).	2
Council Orientation/Political Environment —Different kinds of services may meet different levels of support among local politicians which can raise the costs of pursuing and/or executing a collaborative arrangement. (Highly sensitive=1, Moderately sensitive=2, Non-sensitive=3)	1
Fiscal/Economic Health —The community's fiscal condition may be a motivating factor in wanting to pursue alternative service delivery arrangements as a means to curbing costs. Those in better health are more likely to be successful in collaborative arrangements. But those that are in a weak fiscal position may find it more difficult to locate partners with whom to collaborate. (Poor=1, Moderate=2, Good=3)	2
Unions —In many communities, there may be resistance to any collaborative alternatives that could affect public sector employment levels. (Strong=1, Moderate=2, Weak=3)	1
Public Interest —Some services are more likely to attract the attention of citizens than others. Changes to those services that receive closer scrutiny by citizens are more likely to meet resistance to changes in how the community delivers the services. (High visibility=1, Moderate=2, Low=3)	2
Total Community Context Score (sum of seven characteristic scores)	14

Collaborative Structure Worksheet (Example Only)

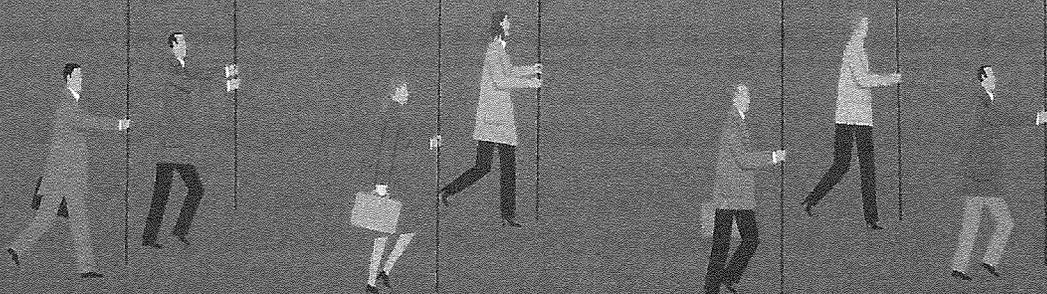
Service Characteristic	Score (circle your score)	Preferred Structure (circle the corresponding structure)
Contract Specification and Monitoring	1 →	None
	2 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
Labor Intensity	1	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	2	Public-Private Partnership
	3	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Capital Intensity	1 →	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2 →	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Possible Public Partners	1	Consolidation/Regionalism
	2	Public-Public (Vertical)
	3	Public-Public (Horizontal)
Possible Private Partners	1 →	Public-Public (Vertical)
	2 →	Public-Public (Horizontal)
	3 →	Public-Private Partnership
Possible Nonprofit Partners	1	Public-Public (Vertical)
	2	Public-Private Partnership
	3	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
Public Interest	1 →	Public-Private Partnership
	2 →	Public-Nonprofit Partnership
	3 →	Public-Public (Vertical)

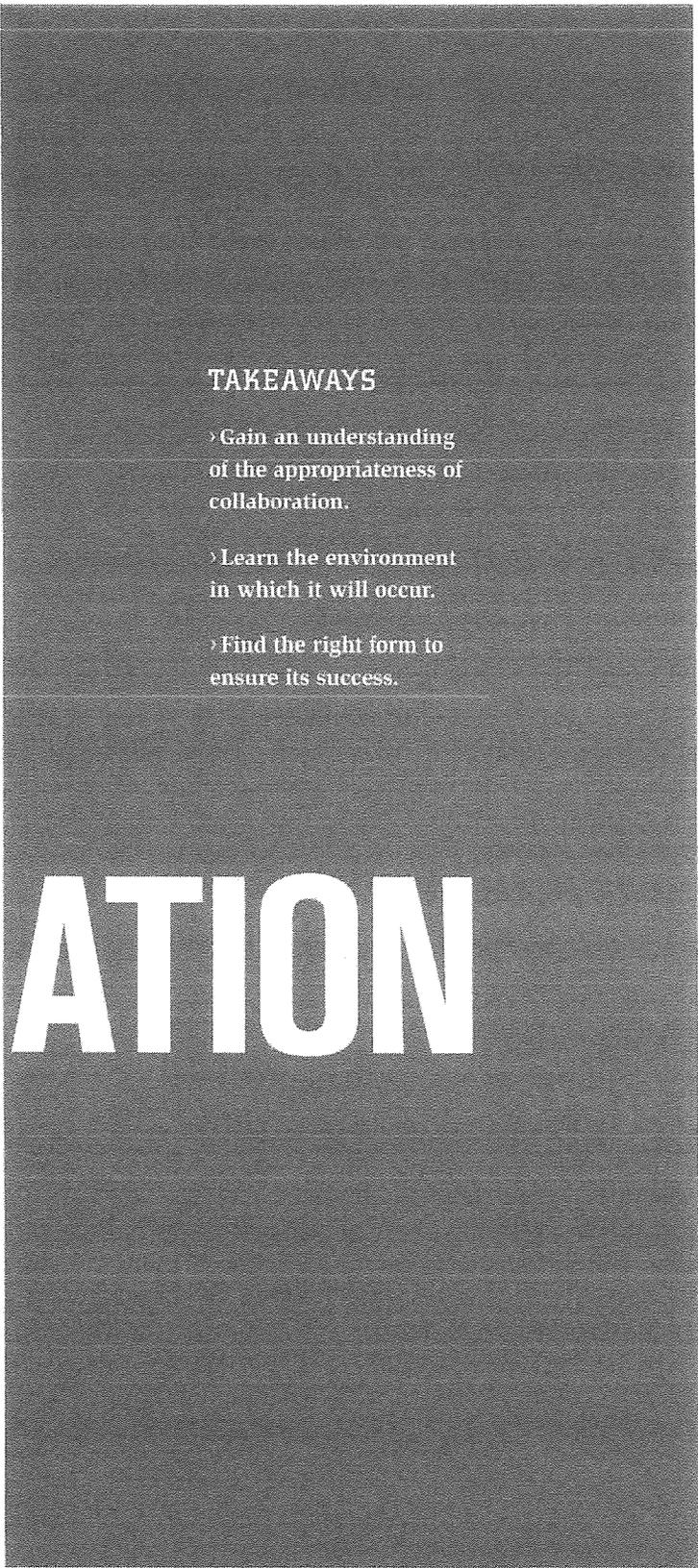
Tally the results from above:

Delivery Options	Count (how many circled)	Preferred Structure (check highest score)
Public-Public (Horizontal)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Public-Public (Vertical)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Consolidation/Regionalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Public-Nonprofit Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Public-Private Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Possible Nonprofit Partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	



CONTEMPLATING COLLABOR





TAKEAWAYS

- › Gain an understanding of the appropriateness of collaboration.
- › Learn the environment in which it will occur.
- › Find the right form to ensure its success.

ACTION

ICMA partnership develops practical assessment tools

By David Swindell and Cheryl Hilvert

To address today's challenges of decreased budgets and increased workloads, both local government managers and elected officials are embracing the concept of collaboration in new and innovative ways. Collaboration has proven to be an effective tool for jurisdictions to join with others—including other local governments, private sector organizations, and nonprofits—to achieve goals and deliver services that they may not have been able to accomplish on their own.



CONTEMPLATING COLLABORATION

While there has been a general push by residents, elected officials, consultants, and academics toward the use of collaboration as a key solution to governments' problems, these proponents sometimes fail to recognize that collaborations do not always achieve the goals for which they were established.

While collaboration is appropriately viewed as an option for local governments, the real issue surrounding collaboration is that often the costs and benefits associated with it are not fully realized, nor are strategies effectively evaluated that will motivate the collaborative effort.

The concepts to do so can be complex and confusing, and there have been few tools that give managers the ability to fully "talk through" a collaboration concept and ask such fundamental questions as: Should we engage in a collaboration? If so, what form of collaboration will have the highest likelihood of success?

Defining the Concept

Collaboration is "the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations to achieve an outcome that could not be achieved by the organizations separately."¹ Collaboration refers to arrangements in which all partners to the arrangement incur costs and share benefits related to their efforts.

These efforts are different from outsourcing or contracting where a separate entity handles certain aspects of service delivery. Because of resident/stakeholder expectations and interactions, local governments may find that those service delivery options in which they create a "partnership" allow an alternative approach to service delivery, yet maintain a level of responsibility between the local government and its constituents.

Is Collaboration Right for Us?

Working through a unique collaboration of its own, ICMA's Center for Management Strategies has teamed up with the Alliance for Innovation (AFI) and Arizona State University's (ASU) Center for Urban Innovation (ICMA-AFI-ASU) to determine the factors associated with both successful and unsuccessful collaborations.

Its findings suggest that having a discussion with all stakeholders as to the costs and benefits expected from collaboration—beyond finances alone—as well as a thorough understanding of the environment within which the collaboration will be situated, will do much to contribute to a successful evaluation of a collaboration opportunity.

These conversations can help to identify the "soft costs and benefits" that might be realized in a collaboration. Soft costs include the governance and the monitoring costs. If a collaboration might lead to reduced cost but involve staff cuts, there may be morale and political costs that must be explicitly evaluated as part of a cost-benefit approach.

ICMA's recent survey of more than 1,000 managers highlights some of the most important soft benefits associated with collaborations.² Bringing staff from your unit together with those from other units in a collaborative environment can improve the problem-solving process not only for the problem at hand but also for other problems on which the collaborative could work in the future.

Furthermore, these types of conversations can build relationships as well as trust and credibility in overcoming barriers to working on other issues. While cost savings or revenue enhancements might also be benefits, these soft costs must also be explicitly identified as part of the determination of whether a jurisdiction should invest the resources in such a collaborative effort.

Begin the Conversation: Know Thy Service

The ICMA-AFI-ASU research project identified a consistent set of factors that tend to be associated with success and others associated with failure in collaborative arrangements. These factors should be part of any conversation about entering a collaboration and fall into two main categories: service-oriented factors and community-oriented factors.

A discussion should begin with a full understanding of exactly what service/project the community is targeting for collaboration. Communities, for example, may want to explore a collaboration on "public safety," but that encompasses a vast array of specific services.

Is the community interested in sharing building, operating, and maintenance responsibilities of a shared forensics crime lab? Patrol officers? Shared purchasing arrangement for capital equipment like patrol cars? In order to begin the discussion, the community needs to be clear about exactly what service is the focus.

Seven characteristics associated with the service/project type can determine whether or not a collaborative arrangement is likely to help achieve desired goals:

1. Asset specificity. This represents the degree to which the service relies on investment in specialized infrastructure (e.g., fire trucks, water pipes, treatment plants) or technical expertise (e.g., legal, economic, environmental), which can make collaboration difficult due to a lack of suppliers to compete at the quality level needed by the community.

In these situations, collaboration opportunities may be limited, but other alternative service delivery options may still be appropriate or viable. Higher asset specificity also suggests that it

is difficult to adapt the investments to produce another service.³

2. Contract specification and monitoring. There needs to be clearly specified expectations among the partners as to which costs, benefits, and management services are to be shared and which entity is responsible for which activity. Services that are harder to specify in a contract or agreement, more difficult to supervise, or require greater performance management expertise are less likely to be successfully produced through collaboration.⁴

3. Labor intensity. Generally, services that are more labor intensive in their delivery and that replicate similar services in other jurisdictions represent the best opportunities for collaboration. An example of this concept is seen in a collaborative effort involving 18 municipalities in Cook County and Lake County, Illinois.

These local governments, motivated by the national economic downturn, believed that they might realize some cost saving by relying on the practice of bulk purchasing. The effort has led to savings of approximately \$500,000 after the first year for the combined group and involved labor intensive purchasing work that was similarly provided in all of the 18 jurisdictions.

4. Capital intensity. Generally, services that are more capital intensive, yet offer wider benefits than could be realized by a single jurisdiction alone are more amenable to collaborative approaches. In an example of this concept, Westlake, Texas (population 1,065), and Keller, Texas (population 41,923), were facing water shortages in the late 1990s. To grow both financially and physically, these two communities needed to construct water storage tanks.

They began a plan to develop their water system and together constructed an elevated joint-use water tank. The combined tank allows each city to maintain its separate water system

operations and represented the first time that a joint-use tank was designed and installed in Texas.

Each community shared in the \$3.1 million cost, saving each city more than \$1 million in construction costs. Each also experienced reduced costs for maintenance through an interlocal agreement for maintenance of the tank while maintaining their independent control over their share of the joint tank.

5. Costs. Service/project costs can drive the interest in collaboration by a local government. Costs can also limit the pool of potential partner organizations that may be able to participate in the delivery of more expensive services. When considering available partners, managers must be cognizant of the other participants' financial position, as each must be able to contribute meaningfully to the success of the effort.

6. Management competencies.

When discussing costs and benefits of potential collaborative arrangements, communities must be sensitive to the expertise—or lack thereof—for manag-

ing the various aspects of a service/project. The greater the managerial expertise on staff related to a service, the more likely a collaborative arrangement can achieve success. A lack of expertise will increase the costs of the collaboration perhaps to the point of exceeding the value of the benefits.

7. Administrative stability. The importance of stability among team members should not be underestimated. High staff turnover creates uncertainties, changes in policy directions, and undermines previously established levels of trust. Turnover is to be expected, and managers should be aware of the trend and likelihood of additional changes in the short- and long-term future, and they should ensure that succession planning is addressed in any collaboration plan.

Discussing and understanding these seven characteristics can influence the likelihood of success in achieving goals when a community delivers a service through collaboration. Fully understanding the service, however, is only one

NEW COLLABORATION RESOURCES

ICMA's Center for Management Strategies has partnered with the Alliance for Innovation and Arizona State University's Center for Urban Innovation to develop a program designed to assist local government managers in navigating the complex work of understanding and analyzing the concept of collaboration.

Underwritten with the support of ICMA Strategic Partner CH2M HILL, this work will provide a set of practical assessment tools that will allow managers to engage their staff, elected officials, and community in the dialogue described in this article on whether collaboration is an appropriate approach and what type of collaborative efforts are most likely to be successful.

Also available will be a set of recommended articles and documents designed to enhance knowledge of collaboration; a compilation of case studies on both successful and unsuccessful public uses of collaborative efforts; and, technical assistance to local governments by identified and vetted practice leaders.

For more information or to take advantage of this program beginning this fall, visit www.icma.org/strategies.



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aspect of informing a decision. The other involves explicit awareness of the environment within which the community operates.

Understand the Environment

Communities create strategic plans after an environmental scan identifies factors that can impact a community from both an internal and external perspective. Similarly, understanding these environmental context factors can assist a management team in determining if collaboration is even possible, much less destined for success:

1. Possible public partners. Before considering collaboration, a manager should fully understand the number and capacity of potential public partners in the area and identify which can be legitimate partners in a collaborative service delivery effort.

2. Possible private partners. In addition to possible public sector partners, managers should be aware of private sector firms that may be viable partners. As with potential public sector partners, private partners may be limited to the extent that the community or region is home to enough competent firms to support a competitive marketplace.

3. Possible nonprofit partners. Nonprofit groups are highly capable of partnering in a service delivery collaborative. As with private partners, the size of the local supply of nonprofits will also be driven by the type of service under consideration, as well as the size of the region in which the community is located.

4. Political environment. Managers should recognize the support or obstacles that exist among elected officials of the community. Elected officials may

be supportive of the concept generally but cautious or even opposed to collaboration on a specific service.

5. Fiscal/economic health. The community's fiscal condition may be a motivating factor in wanting to pursue collaboration. Those that are financially challenged may find it more difficult to identify partners with which to collaborate.

Communities in a better fiscal position are more likely to be successful in collaborative arrangements. Decisions on whether to collaborate need to take a community's fiscal health into account, as well as the fiscal condition of any partners, be they public, private, or nonprofit.

6. Employee/labor relations. Different communities face different

kinds of labor and employee relationships that can create pressure on collaborative discussions. There may be resistance to any service alternatives that could impact public sector employment levels.

In these situations, the costs of pursuing collaborative service delivery can increase significantly or decision making be made more

difficult. Involving employees in these discussions and seeking their input can be productive.

7. Public interest. Some services are naturally more likely to attract the attention of residents than others. Changes to those services for which residents are particularly connected are more likely to meet resistance. Involving stakeholders in these discussions can help ensure that all points of view are heard and accurate information is shared.

Collaboration Sounds Good, Now What?

If the dialogue described previously identifies supportive information about the service being considered and a receptive environment in which the collaboration could occur, the

While collaboration is appropriately viewed as an option for local governments, the real issue surrounding collaboration is that often the costs and benefits associated with it are not fully realized, nor are strategies effectively evaluated that will motivate the collaborative effort.

community will then need to decide which type of arrangement makes the most sense for it. Here are the most common forms of collaborative service delivery:

Public-private partnerships. The form that has received the most attention in the past decade is collaboration that involves a public agency working with

(2002)

CENTENNIAL COLLABORATES FOR SUCCESS

LEADERS OF CENTENNIAL, COLORADO, incorporated in 2001, envisioned an "intentional" city—lean, efficient, and with an eye toward outsourcing key services whenever possible. In slightly more than a decade, the city of more than 100,000 has emerged as a model of collaborative service delivery.

Centennial delivers services with its 54 employees in certain areas that make the most sense, including finance, accounting, communications, planning, and engineering management. For other services, the city partners with an array of government, nonprofit, and private organizations to deliver efficient, cost-effective services in keeping with its spirit of right-sized, fiscally responsible government.

Centennial's largest partner is Arapahoe County, which provides a variety of services that include law enforcement, schools, and libraries. For animal services, Centennial partners with the Humane Society of the Pikes' Peak Region, a nonprofit located in nearby Colorado Springs. Other outsourced functions include legal services, contractor licensing, sales and use tax administration, and audit functions.

Partnering for Public Works

Arapahoe County initially provided public works services for Centennial. In early 2008, city leaders took a closer look at needs that revealed gaps in service levels and decided to launch the city's own public works department through a public-private partnership with CH2M HILL, a global consulting and program management firm based in Englewood, Colorado.

CH2M HILL instituted a variety of innovative approaches to service delivery, including updating an old snowplow routing solution, applying updated algorithms, and using consumer-grade GPS units to reduce snowplowing time of city streets by as much as 40 percent.

Within this partnership, even the partner has partners. CH2M HILL collaborates with a number of other private sector companies reaping benefits for Centennial. SAFE-built—an ICMA Strategic Partner that offers customized full-service building department programs—introduced process and customer service improvements to the plan review and inspection processes. These include the establishment of two-hour inspection appointment windows, electronic plan review, online permits, and "Rapid Review

Thursdays" where customers seeking permits that do not require detailed zoning review—signs, fences, and simple structures—can receive expedited service.

CH2M HILL also established a consolidated customer service center, which serves as a single point of contact for all resident concerns, not just public works. Residents can call the center 24/7 or submit requests online. Information is entered into a work-order tracking system along with the requesters' contact information, so a representative can update them on the progress of work through completion.

It's Working!

"Our public-private partnerships allow us to provide on-demand services at the best value for our taxpayers," says Centennial's Mayor Cathy Noon. "We contract for a base level of service, and any time we have a spike in demand, we can bring in extra resources very quickly."

That flexibility is built into Centennial's various partnership contracts. A value-based system allows the city to adjust service quantities based on changing priorities and demand. If a mild winter requires less snow plowing, for example, the city might decide to use those dollars for additional road striping.

Pre-determined costs of service allow the city to effectively plan its budget over the contract's lifetime, while performance standards enable it to control the timing and amount of service performed, and pass the risk of quality and deadline commitments to the contractor.

In 2012, 79 percent of respondents to a National Citizen Survey™ rated the overall quality of public works services as "excellent" or "good." City leaders also liked the results, voting to extend the public-private partnership with CH2M HILL.

City Manager John Danielson is well acquainted with collaborative service delivery. His 25-year local government management career has included helping create two new cities from their inception, based on the public-private partnership model. He believes the scalability of resources and predictability of costs associated with collaboration can truly benefit local governments.

—Bill Doughty, APR, communications director, CH2M HILL, Englewood, Colorado (Bill.doughty@ch2m.com).



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a private firm. In truth, this is not as common as one might be led to believe.

While contracting services out to private firms is common, such contracting is not the same arrangement as collaboration. Public-private partnerships, in which a public jurisdiction and a private firm jointly share in the costs and benefits of a service arrangement, are truly collaborations.

These arrangements can be challenging because without the right partner or clearly defined purpose and responsibilities, different motivations can be pursued by the partners (service versus profit) and can impact the viability of the partnership.

Public-nonprofit partnerships. While public-private partnerships receive more attention, local officials should be aware of the potential advantages nonprofit partners might afford for certain kinds of services. One aspect that increases the likelihood of successful collaboration is that, like their public sector counterparts, nonprofits do not work on a profit motive.

On the other hand, while there are a number of potential nonprofits in a community, the number of them capable of being a partner may be more limited, depending on the type of service under consideration. A nonprofit with the expertise to manage a waste incinerator facility, for example, may be difficult to find, but one that has deep talent at operating a community homeless shelter may be an easily identifiable partner with which to address a community need.

Public-public partnerships. Collaboration between units of government is by far the most common form of partnership involving public services. Many may be informal arrangements

between abutting local governments, while some are represented by more formalized agreements.

The arrangements involve at least two units of government, but can include more. The earlier example

While public-private partnerships receive more attention, local officials should be aware of the potential advantages nonprofit partners might afford for certain kinds of services.

of the 18 municipalities in Lake and Cook counties highlights one type of public-public arrangement known as a “horizontal partnership” between governments at the same level.

There are also examples of vertical partnerships in which two or more units of government at different levels collaborate. Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, for example, have an extensive system of intergovernmental agreements for a wide range of services.

In the area of public safety, the city police department provides basic patrol services for the city and any other parts of the county not patrolled by another municipal police department. At the same time, the county provides jail services for the entire county, including all jail services for Charlotte.

While much has been written that suggests collaboration is the answer to problems and issues facing local governments today, managers must understand what collaboration is and what it is not. While significantly different from privatization or contracting,

collaboration can offer excellent alternatives for service delivery if the service is right and the community environment will support the concept.

Understanding the appropriateness of a collaborative effort as well as the environ-

ment in which it will occur, and selecting the right form will help ensure that the effort can be a successful and viable solution to the issues and challenges facing local governments today. **PM**

ENDNOTES

- 1 Bryson, J., B. Crosby, M. Stone., and E. Saunoi-Sandgren. (2009). “Designing and Managing Cross-sector Collaboration: A Case Study in Reducing Traffic Congestion.” *The Business of Government* (Winter/Fall):78–81.
- 2 O’Leary, Rosemary and Catherine Gerard. (2013). “Collaborative Governance and Leadership: A 2012 Survey of Local Government Collaboration.” *2013 The ICMA Municipal Year Book*. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association.
- 3 Warner, Mildred and Amir Hefetz. (2010) “Service Characteristics and Contracting: The Importance of Citizen Interest and Competition.” *2010 The Municipal Year Book*. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association.
- 4 Ibid.



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Presenters

Cheryl Hilvert

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Cheryl Hilvert is a management strategies consultant for the International City/County Management Association, providing subject matter expertise and content generation for key management strategies for local governments. Prior to her work as a consultant, she served as the Director for the Center for Management Strategies for the International City/County Management Association, providing research, training and technical assistance in a variety of leading practices and key management strategies designed to enhance local government efficiency and effectiveness.

Prior to her position at ICMA, Cheryl served for more than 31 years as a local government manager. She holds Bachelor and Master of Public Administration degrees from Eastern Kentucky University and is a graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia and the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma. She is also designated as a credentialed manager by ICMA.

Cheryl has served as Midwest Regional Vice President for ICMA and as a board member and chair of the Alliance for Innovation, Ohio City/County Management Association, Senior Executive Institute Advisory Committee, Cincinnati Area Local Government Management Association, and the Cincinnati Chapter of ASPA. She was named as Public Administrator of the Year by the Greater Cincinnati Chapter of ASPA and was the recipient of the ICMA Program Excellence Award for Strategic Leadership and Governance.

Susan Mays

Vice President, Marketing & Strategic Initiatives CH2M HILL

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Susan Mays has spent the past 24 years working on public-private partnerships in local government, primarily in marketing and business development. Through her career, Ms. Mays has been involved in the development and delivery of several of nation's landmark municipal partnerships, ranging from water and wastewater to public works and complete city startup and operation. Five of the partnerships on which she has worked directly in the past 12 years have earned national recognition.

Ms. Mays is responsible for directing marketing and strategic initiatives for the company's Operations Management Services group. In this role, she oversees marketing and communications – work that has been recognized with more than three dozen awards, including a Public Relations Society of America Bronze Anvil and a CINE Golden Eagle, both coveted national awards.

She works closely with CH2M HILL's local government clients, representing the company in its corporate partnerships with The United States Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, International City/County Management Association and Alliance for Innovation. She serves on the boards of the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships and the National Association of Water Companies. She manages CH2M HILL's strategic alliance with the University of Kansas School of Public Affairs & Administration, which focuses on educating emerging local government leaders on new strategies for service delivery, developing collaborative capacity in local government organizations and conducting research on public-private collaboration. She also oversees CH2M HILL's work with the newly formed ICMA Center for Management Strategies, which will bring forth research, education and technical assistance on the emerging topic of collaborative service delivery.

Ms. Mays holds a Bachelor of Journalism from the University of Missouri and a Certificate in Strategic Communications Management from Ithaca College. She tweets about water and partnership issues as @WaterMizz.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ICMA Center for Management Strategies, Documents and Articles Library, Collaborative Service Delivery

www.icma.org/cmsresources

Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix (Discussion Tool)

www.icma.org/cmsassessments

[http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/306983/The Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix](http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/306983/The_Collaborative_Service_Delivery_Matrix)

Collaborative Service Delivery Arrangements for Local Governments (summary of research)

www.icma.org/cmsresources

[http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/306982/Collaborative Service Delivery Arrangements for Local Governments](http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/306982/Collaborative_Service_Delivery_Arrangements_for_Local_Governments)

Contemplating Collaboration, ICMA PM Magazine, August 2014, Cheryl Hilvert and David Swindell

www.icma.org/cmsresources

[http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/306420/Contemplating Collaboration Collaborative Service Delivery](http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/306420/Contemplating_Collaboration_Collaborative_Service_Delivery)

Center for Sharing Public Health Services

www.phsharing.org

Notes

" Leave purses in the room "

Lunch 12:30

3-5:30

Expected benefits

monetary savings

economies of scale

Strengthen collaborative relationships

Promote regional service integration

Access technical expertise that
may not available

Prerequisites for success

- clarity of objectives -
- Balanced approach -
- Trust.

Facilitating factors

- Success in prior collaborations
- Sense of Regional Identity
- Positive Interpersonal Relationships