

Chapter III, Model Process

This chapter describes a model process for cooperation.

Some communities may be fairly far along in their cooperative initiatives when they pick up this workbook. If so, feel free to browse through it until you find the right starting place. However, we encourage you to read the steps and tips in the early sections even if you don't do all of the exercises. You may identify some ideas that are relevant.

All of the exercise sheets are included separately in the Appendices as well as within the text in case you want to copy them. A diagram of the Key Steps of the Model Process is on the following page.

Step 1.

Get Started Within Your Organization

Where should you start? The seeds of cooperation are usually traced to an idea from a motivated person in a key position, or a conversation between small numbers of like-minded people from different organizations. If you are reading this workbook, the odds are high that you are one of these people in your community.

These early activities are very important. Many ideas presented in this workbook imply by their very nature that the way organizations do business today should change. Change causes controversy. These ideas must be pursued with sensitivity, particularly in their infant stage. Any meaningful idea for intergovernmental cooperation will require the support and approval of the policy-makers of all relevant organizations: the elected officials, chief administrative officer, and possibly key department heads. Doing something that matters without the involvement of these people is not possible. So make sure they are involved early.

Here's a checklist of things you might want to do to get the discussion started. Although the communication and analytical steps are in a particular order for a reason, each situation is different. Based on your local circumstance you may decide that a different order will be better. However, be sure to do everything on this checklist before going on to the next Task.

Task A

Make a list of two or three key people in your organization with whom you want to discuss your ideas for greater cooperation.

“The first presentation of the concept or idea has to be within your own organization with your Superintendent and with key members of your staff. If you haven’t done sufficient staff-work to get full buy-in and support from your administration before going out to another agency, you’re doomed for failure.” Gene Hartline, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, Paramount Unified School District

These people should include the Chief Executive Officer (e.g., School Superintendent, City Manager, County Administrative Officer) and an elected official, most probably the lead elected official (e.g., Mayor, School Board Chair, Chair of the County Board of Supervisors).

**exercise
exercise
exercise**

**Key People in Your Organization for Starting
Discussions About Intergovernmental Cooperation
(Form A)**

Elected Official(s)

Staff

Task B

Hold a scoping meeting with your key people to further develop your specific idea or brainstorm possible cooperative ideas and identify potential benefits from cooperation.

The purpose of this meeting is to decide whether the key people find value in engaging other governmental partners directly in the discussion. Make a list of areas in which cooperation might benefit the people you serve. Next to each idea briefly note the types of benefits you might expect (e.g., cost savings, better quality service, etc.). The partial list of cooperative activities California governments are conducting today on the next page can be used to stimulate ideas. The case studies throughout this workbook should also help.

It may help you to think about cooperative possibilities in the following categories:

- **Facilities:** a facility may be large and flexible enough that different organizations can use it at the same time, or different organizations may use the same facility at different times;
- **Programs:** organizations may have complementary staff skills that can be integrated to jointly deliver a program, or complementary programs of different organizations might be located and/or promoted together;
- **Land Use Plans:** long-range school facility and city/county land use plans can be coordinated in a number of ways, including ensuring adequate school capacity for planned growth, good location for schools to foster community livability and smart growth, and co-locating parks and school playgrounds; and
- **Administrative Procedures:** organizations may benefit from combining or coordinating certain administrative procedures such as staff training and equipment purchasing.

Make your preliminary list of cooperative ideas on the next page. You don't have to be certain it's a good idea to place it on the list. And don't worry if you're not sure which category to put it in. Make your best estimate and keep moving.

Table 1
Examples of
Cooperative Activities
in California

Facilities

- Co-Location of parks, swimming pools, libraries with schools
- Sharing maintenance yards
- Joint construction of gymnasiums and community centers

Programs and Services

- Library services
- After-school programs
- Health care
- Graffiti abatement
- School security

Land Use Planning

- School siting
- Neighborhood Revitalization

Administration

- Joint purchasing, bidding and contracting
- Sharing maintenance responsibilities

exercise
exercise
exercise

Facilities

Programs and services

Land use planning

Administration

Preliminary List of Cooperative Ideas
(Form B)

You may already know exactly what you want to do, and may wonder whether there is any benefit from taking the time to think about all of the other possibilities for cooperation. You may skip this step if you wish, but we encourage you not to. While you may have a great idea, there may be an even better one that you haven't thought of yet. And there may be synergies between your idea and other ideas. You may decide it's smart to pursue multiple ideas, whether they are interrelated or not. There may be strategic reasons to implement a different idea before your original idea.

Task D

Develop an outreach strategy for involving the other governments.

1. Make a list of two or three key people who you think should be involved from each of the other governments on your short list. Their responsibilities should probably mirror those of your organization’s informal discussion group (at least one elected official, the high ranking staff).

exercise

exercise

exercise

Key People From Other Governments

(Form D1)

“Successes in this area are largely dependent upon the philosophy and attitude of an institution’s leaders.”
 Jon Sharpe, Vice
 Chancellor of the State
 Center
 Community College District

Government

Elected Official(s)

Staff

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

This is a good time to start thinking about a press strategy. Placing an agenda item or intergovernmental cooperative on your meeting agenda may generate a phone call from the press prior to the meeting, a story following the meeting, or both. This early press is high risk. Even if it is positive it can cause concerns with your prospective partners. They won’t want to “read it in the paper first.” It is best to try to keep the early stages of cooperative initiatives from drawing a lot of press attention. Try to work with the press to keep them informed, but avoid major articles until you have developed a surer footing.

2. Think about the best way to make initial contact with the other governments. The “correct” answer will be unique for nearly every circumstance. Sometimes there are strong personal relationships between elected officials, chief administrative officers, or department head staff. Sometimes there is established protocol that should be followed. Briefly describe your recommended approach for contacting each government.

exercise Outreach Strategy for Inviting Other Governments
exercise To Pursue Cooperative Initiatives
exercise (Form D2)

Government Strategy

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Key policy makers can change often. You may be dealing with a cast of new faces with little guidance from how things have been done in the past. In these cases, in particular, don't overlook the support personnel. Sometimes secretaries have outlived numerous bosses and will have valuable suggestions about the most effective way to communicate with their organization.

Task E

Brief your governing body and secure their support to implement the recommended outreach strategy with the other governments.

Schedule a briefing with your elected body to present the results of your thinking and seek their support to broaden the discussion to the other governments. Initiatives such as this can take a lot of time and resources to execute. Be clear with the elected officials that you are NOT asking for endorsement to implement any of the ideas on your brainstormed list, or even authorization to begin a comprehensive study of any of the ideas. All you are asking at this point is their support to start a preliminary discussion with the other governments about the merits of the ideas. You will need to come back to the elected officials following the preliminary discussions for permission to broaden the discussion into a more complete investigation and, possibly, implementation. Assure them that you will include estimates of resource impacts (staff time, professional assistance, etc.) before proceeding past the preliminary discussion phase.

The elected officials may conclude that more internal study is needed prior to contacting the other governments. This may be appropriate, but be careful about studying an idea that involves other governments too thoroughly before you notify them of what you are doing. Trust building is essential to cooperation, and no one likes to learn that someone else is planning for him or her to do something without his or her knowledge and consent. Too much isolated study and planning at the outset can set back rather than enhance the goals of cooperation.

Step 2.

Getting started with your partners

Task F

“In all of our situations, no one has taken the credit for what’s been done. The credit’s been shared between all the agencies and I think that we all have the attitude that this is not going to benefit just the school district, not just the city, but it’s going to benefit the citizens and the kids that the project is going to serve.” Terry Bradley, Deputy Superintendent of Business Services, Clovis Unified School District

You will need to repeat some of the actions you took within your organization, but this time with other governments. As soon as possible during this series of activities you should strive to develop an atmosphere of true partnership. Make this everyone’s initiative, not just that of the initiating government.

Implement your outreach strategy with other governments — schedule a start-up meeting

1. Implement the outreach strategy from step D. Invite key representatives from each of the appropriate governments to come to a meeting to discuss cooperative initiatives. Depending on the style and preferences of the people and organizations this meeting can be very informal or quite formal. Ideas include:
 - Start the process over a long lunch or dinner. If you do this, be sure the location is relatively quiet and private.
 - Have the best facilitator from the host organization’s team chair the meeting. If you do this, be sure this person serves as a true facilitator and doesn’t use the chair’s role to inappropriately advocate for his or her favorite ideas.
 - Have a third party facilitate the meeting, either from one of the participating organization’s staff not directly involved in the project or a consultant.

2. Either at the start-up meeting or in a subsequent meeting, discuss the possible benefits of studying cooperative initiatives and seek agreement to participate, at least in this initial examination. The best approach for the first meeting may not be the best approach for subsequent meetings. The structure of future discussions should be decided by the full group at the close of the first meeting. Share the responsibility of organizing, providing notice and executing the meetings between the governments as much as possible.

You will need to agree on a press strategy among the partners. You don’t really want the pressure of the press observing these early discussions, but local preferences and sensitivities may make it difficult to exclude the press from these meetings. If the press is interested in observing the meeting try to work out an arrangement in which they agree to treat the information as background information for use after decisions are made about what cooperative initiatives will be implemented. Having stories appear during these early discussions can either chill the conversation or promote grandstanding. Neither effect is helpful.

Task G

Step 6 *Make a list of past and current cooperative efforts among your government partners.*

The list does not need to be all-inclusive, but do your best in a short period of time to list most of the initiatives that have been pursued together. Review the list of cooperative examples from Table 1, page 41 of this workbook. Use the four categories of activities to organize the information.

exercise **List of Past and Current Cooperative Initiatives**
exercise **Among Government Partners**
exercise **(Form G)**

Facilities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Programs and Services

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Land Use Planning

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Administration

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Task H

List the reasons why you believe some of the cooperative initiatives were successful.

To find a recipe for future successes it helps to analyze what you have already done. To the extent that you have experienced successes in the past, even if they are partial, think about the reasons why. The reasons can be anything from key individuals who championed the project to trust building techniques that worked particularly well. This can be a very informative discussion. Everyone may agree an activity was successful but have very different ideas about why.

exercise
exercise
exercise

Reasons for Past Cooperative Successes
(Form H)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Task I

List the challenges and barriers to successful cooperation that had to be addressed.

It is always more painful to think about what went wrong than what went right. But there is often more learning that occurs by critically examining the problems. Be honest without being rude. If there have been difficulties that involve trust or personality issues, find a tactful way to say that so solutions can be found in the future. *“It would have been easier for me to be constructive rather than defensive about that if I had known it was happening”* and *“it will be easier for our organization to make cooperation a high priority if all of us share the credit for our successes”* are fair game. *“We really don’t appreciate it when you sneak around behind our back”* and *“we really didn’t appreciate that press conference you called to hog the glory last time”* are not!

**exercise
exercise
exercise**

**Challenges Encountered during
Past Cooperative Efforts
(Form I)**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Task J

Identify current priority issues affecting each organization.

Each organization should briefly describe its top current priorities. The point of this discussion is for everyone to understand the unique context in which each organization currently operates. That context might be anything from filling a key staff position, elections that are likely to cause turnover of key council or board members, responding to an immediate community crisis, or implementing a strategy to increase the long-term financial stability of the organization. It is not necessary at this time for these issues to have any direct relationship with future cooperative initiatives with other governments. Those insights remain to be discovered later in the process.

**exercise
exercise
exercise**

**Most Important Current Issues
for Each Organization
(Form J)**

Organization

Issues

“You have to know the political nature of the City you are working with...you have to be politically sensitive to what is driving the relationships between the City and the school district...maybe there are other forces driving things that aren’t necessarily a part of the joint-use agreement...but know the political environment” David Doomey, Assistant Superintendent of Facilities and Planning for the Capistrano Unified School

School Districts

Cities

Counties

Other

Table 2
Local Values

Examples of some of the values used by governments working on multi-jurisdictional projects:

Economic value — service should be delivered at the least long-term total cost

Accountability — citizens should understand who is delivering the service and have an effective means of participating in and affecting decisions about the service

High quality service delivery — service should be delivered consistent with the highest standards desired by the community

Economies of scale — geographic area should correspond to the optimum scale for service delivery (neither too large or too small)

Effective policy making — governance structure should support rational policy decisions that best serve the long-term interests of the citizens

Fairness — costs and services should be allocated equitably

Practical — estimated costs (e.g., legal, financial, political) to transition to a new way of doing things should be lower than the likely benefits

Do not challenge the issues listed by others. Remarks that directly or indirectly say, “I don’t know why you think that is so important” obviously are not helpful. The point is to understand, not to debate. The set of issues that a typical school district, city and county will be facing at any given time are often different and unique. In basic ways the cultures of these organizations can be quite different. Try to understand these differences and appreciate them. Part of the magic of partnerships is turning the differences into strengths rather than weaknesses.

It is appropriate to ask clarifying questions to make sure you “get” what the other participants are saying. Do your best to put yourselves in their shoes. The issues each organization is facing will very definitely influence the discussions about cooperation. Ideally, cooperation should help each organization to, in some direct or indirect way, more effectively address at least some of its priority issues. At the least, it is important that the cooperative initiatives not conflict with these other priorities.

Task K

Identify the core values or interests that will be important to each organization as it considers opportunities for cooperation.

This is a very critical step in the process. It is important that representatives of each organization express what is important to them so that everyone will understand where there is opportunity for common ground and where differences maybe difficult to resolve. Opinions should not, at this point, be expressed as positions. Advocating for a position or idea this early in the process may make it more difficult to reach agreement later. The examples below show the difference between values and positions:

Value	Position
Spending taxpayer dollars efficiently	Bulk purchasing supplies
Ensuring safety for all citizens	Stationing city police officers in schools
Providing opportunities for all to work	Locating welfare to work programs on school campuses

1. Make a list of all of the values proposed by each organization. Make the first list using the brainstorming technique (i.e., all ideas should be listed without challenge or debate, although questions to clarify what people mean are fine).

exercise
exercise
exercise

Comprehensive List of Values Related to
Pursuing Cooperative Opportunities
(Form K1)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.

2. Refine the list of values to represent values held by all partners.

Ask everyone whether they disagree with, or want to discuss, any of the listed values and put a check next to those items. If there is disagreement within the group, try to resolve it through changing the language of the disputed value(s). The final list should represent the mutual core interests of the group. If some of the values advocated by one or more of the organizations ultimately are not supported by the full group, they should not be included on the list. (This, however, is a warning sign that difficulties could lie ahead. You should keep a record of the proposed values that were not included on the final list for future reference.) Write the final list of values that everyone supports on the next page.

exercise
exercise
exercise

Final List of Values Related to
Pursuing Cooperative Opportunities
(Form K2)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

This list of values and interests will eventually be used as a set of criteria to judge the merits of different ideas for cooperation. It is important to reach agreement among all of the participants to support all of the values on the list. People may feel more strongly about some than others, but everyone should agree it would be best if the cooperative activities that are pursued are consistent with the final list of values.

It is often a good idea to appoint an editor or editing subcommittee to consolidate the comprehensive list of values into a draft that the full group might be able to support. The editing process can involve consolidating similar ideas as well as artfully crafting language for disputed items that satisfies everyone's interests.

Task L

Develop a preliminary list of future cooperative opportunities.

If each organization has independently created its own list, this is the time to share those ideas with each other it is also fine to build this list as a group. The rules of brainstorming should apply. No critical comments are allowed at this time. It is better to encourage creativity at this stage of the process. The critical analysis will come later.

Use the list of interests/values and the four categories of cooperative activities to help stimulate the discussion. How can the group's values be better achieved through cooperation in each of the four categories? Again, the list on page 51 can be used to help jump-start the discussion.

exercise
exercise
exercise

Preliminary Ideas for Cooperation
(Form L)

Facilities

Programs and Services

Planning

Administration

Sometimes patterns of agreement or disagreement will emerge by this time. Informal communication between participants outside of regular meetings should be encouraged. If a core group of leaders starts to emerge, it is very helpful for them to communicate with each other as much as possible about how they can work together to move the process forward. It is ideal if at least one leader emerges from each organization. If this doesn't happen you should try to foster creating a leader from each organization through informal communication channels. Sometimes letting someone know their opinions matter, through phone calls or informal communication of some sort, is all it takes to coax their latent leadership qualities to the fore. Likewise, if there are people in the group who routinely disagree with each other it might be useful for them to get together away from the full group to better understand each other so they can find ways to collaborate.

Task M

Make a preliminary assessment of how well the ideas for cooperation meet the values and interests of the group.

The dynamics in each community will be unique. At this point it may seem obvious to everyone which idea(s) are best to pursue. We continue to urge you to take the time to proceed systematically, regardless of whether the “answer” seems to have emerged. If you already have an idea for cooperation and wish to skip the next exercises, however, go straight to Step 0.

“We’ve always got to remember who’s benefiting. The bottom line is, what are we here to benefit? We’re not here to protect the City’s facilities, - you know, it’s outs and hands-off. It’s the users, the citizen’s, and the people. We’re suppose to be working together for this common good”

Ron Williamson,
Director
Parks and Recreation
City of Lodi

Use the group’s list of values to assign a preliminary “score” to each idea for cooperation. The benefit of this system is that it focuses on the group’s values as the primary means of decision-making. It should be understood by all participants that they are only being asked to identify their current opinions about the merits of each idea. Later in the process more rigorous analysis (e.g., legal, technical and financial feasibility) will be conducted before implementation decisions are made.

Create a simple numerical system to score each idea for cooperation listed on Form L for each of the core values Form K2. Do you think that it:

1. Supports the value.
2. Doesn’t support the value; or
3. Not sure — need more information.

Use form M1 on the next page to record the scoring.

Look at the chart and see how much agreement there is within the group. In areas where there is disagreement ask people to talk about why they thought the idea helped or hindered attainment of the value. If the discussion seems to be changing people's opinions, have them re-score the relevant items. If it appears more information, or more serious negotiation and mediation will be needed to resolve the disagreement, leave the issue alone for the moment. The group should learn that disagreement can be tolerated at times without threatening the partnership building process.

Try to relatively quickly use the scores on values to divide the list of opportunities into three categories:

- Opportunities that appear promising and should be considered further;
- Opportunities that do not appear promising and probably should not be considered further; and
- Opportunities that need either more consensus building work (i.e., participants disagree) or more information before deciding.

List the opportunities in these categories on Form M2.

If this planning oriented approach to sifting through the ideas seems too laborious, or once completed doesn't yield enough focus, try something else. Ask each participant to write down three to five ideas from the cooperative ideas list (Form L) that they really like. Tally the scores and see if there are items that all or most of the participants support. For an item that has substantial but not unanimous support, ask if anyone objects to listing the item as one the entire group supports. Next try to eliminate some of the ideas from further consideration. Ask each participant to write down three to five ideas on the list that they do not want to pursue further at this time. Follow the same tally and discussion technique with the group as before. Even with this approach try to use the list of core values to guide the discussion and resolve difference of opinion.

exercise
exercise
exercise

Initial Priorities for
Cooperative Opportunities
(Form M2)

- Opportunities that appear promising and should be considered further

- Opportunities that do not appear promising and probably should not be considered further

- Opportunities that need either more consensus building work (i.e., participants disagree) or more information before deciding

Task N

Talk about different strategies of how to proceed

This is the first critical juncture for the process. Stop to assess generally how things seem to be going. Ask the following types of questions:

- Is there excitement about the potential for cooperation?
- Does this seem like an important issue or a minor issue to people?
- Has agreement been easy to find so far?
- Is there a long list of good ideas, or just a few?
- Are there a lot of questions and concerns about issues (e.g., is it legal to do this? what would it cost? is it practical?)

There are many ways to move forward. A few examples of strategic options include:

a. Comprehensive approach — continue the process of systematically identifying, analyzing and prioritizing all of the potential ideas for cooperation. This strategy may work best if the group has developed a long list of ideas, many of which seem like they have good potential for implementation. If so, a major initiative could be established to systematically explore in more detail all of the many opportunities for cooperation and move them towards implementation in a timely manner.

b. Key issues approach — select a few high priority ideas and develop a detailed implementation plan. You may want to consider this approach if a relatively small number of good ideas seem to be rising to the top as a result of the preliminary analysis. If so, separate implementation plans could be put together for each activity. It is not even necessary that the activities be directly connected.

c. Burning community issue approach — select a single high visibility issue to tackle. Consider this strategy if there is a critical issue in the community that demands immediate attention. If so, focusing all of the capabilities for cooperation on this issue may be essential. The issue may not be the easiest cooperative idea on the list to implement, either from a technical or political standpoint; but it is the issue the community demands be addressed.

d. Start small approach — select a relatively easy project, implement it and score a quick victory for cooperation. This strategy can be helpful if you are having difficulty building agreement among the group, but don't want to give up on the cooperative initiative. Taking small steps together might help to build the experience, skills and trust necessary to take on bigger tasks later.

e. Technical approach — select certain cooperative ideas for more detailed study. It will be necessary to adopt this strategy when there are major legal, financial or logistical questions that must be answered before the basic viability of several cooperative ideas can be established. Gathering the facts is better than discarding the ideas.

f. Stop approach — shut down the cooperative process. You may want to consider this approach if the group has decided that all the best ideas for cooperation have already been implemented, are simply not feasible to implement at this time, or there is such strong disagreement that it would not be cost-efficient to try to reach a consensus at this time. The circumstances described above are not mutually exclusive. The best strategy for your community may be a blend of some or all of these approaches. For example, at this time you could:

- Eliminate some ideas from further consideration for lack of merit (f. Stop approach);
- Develop a research program to conduct financial, legal, program or other research about certain ideas (e. Technical approach);
- Pick one or two ideas that are good enough and simple enough to implement immediately (d. Start small approach);
- Establish a broad-based task force to tackle a burning community issue (c. Burning community issue approach)
- Establish teams of appropriate representatives to develop implementation plans for certain ideas (b. Key issues approach); and
- Assign the remaining ideas to a multi-jurisdictional coordinating committee for on-going discussion and consensus building (a. Comprehensive approach).

It is important, but not critical, that you pick the best strategy. It *is* critically important that the group make this decision together. Every step for which the group achieves consensus builds civic aptitude for cooperation that will pay dividends well beyond the life of this planning exercise.

exercise
exercise
exercise

Recommended Strategy
(Form N)

Write down your recommended strategy.

Part of the trust building dynamic is providing a safe way for people to gradually form opinions, and change them, in front of other people. Very few ideas will be ready for direct implementation with the preliminary level of analysis conducted to this point in the process. Even though more analysis may change people's opinion about the merits of an idea, it is important to know what they think based on information they currently have. There is no other way to provide focus to what can be a virtually limitless set of ideas. One of the understandings between participants should be that everyone reserves the right to conclude, after more information is gathered about an idea, that it should not be implemented.

Task O

Conduct technical and political scans.

The length and nature of your idea list for cooperation, and the strategy you have selected, will determine how you do this next exercise. You can either do it once, as it relates to your entire group of ideas, or for each idea.

1. ***Key stakeholders:*** *List the people and organizations who will be most affected by the idea.*

Include: 1) people within your organizations; 2) citizen groups, civic organizations, business associations, parent groups; and 3) other governments (e.g. adjacent cities, counties or school districts; regional, state or federal agencies; community colleges; special districts). Consider people who likely will support and oppose the ideas you are considering.

2. ***Key research areas:*** *List some of the questions you would like answered.*

These can relate to:

- 1) legal issues about authorities or liabilities;
- 2) financial questions involving tax rates, bond ratings, costs, revenues, size of potential benefited populations from each of the governments;
- 3) program questions about how well certain ideas have worked in other jurisdictions or details of how current separately operated programs function;
- 4) public attitudes about the issues.

3. ***Key resources:*** *List the human resources you will need and a rough estimate of the amount of their time that will be required.*

These could be staff resources within the organizations or professional services (consultants).

exercise
exercise
exercise

Technical and Political Scan
(Form 0)

1. Key Stakeholders

2. Key Research Areas

3. Key Resources

Task P

Prepare project organization plan.

Now that you know the basic elements of your recommended approach for pursuing cooperation, it is time to think about project organization. Is the composition of the intergovernmental group that has conducted these exercises optimum for what needs to happen in the future?

- Should the group be smaller or larger?
- Should more governments be added?
- Should more staff from the current participating governments be directly involved?
- How should non-governmental representatives be involved? Should they be added to the core project committee? Should separate outreach activities be designed to involve them in the process?
- Should subcommittees or separate working groups be formed? Should these groups be expanded to include people with more specific technical expertise?
- Is some form of permanent committee structure needed at all?

**exercise
exercise
exercise**

**Project Organization Plan
(Form P)**

Write down your organizational plan.

Do not underestimate the value of expanding participation at this time, particularly to non-governmental representatives. These people typically represent the interest groups and grassroots citizenry who comprise the unique local political milieu. Their involvement can help increase the quality of the work product as well as build the required community acceptance and support to implement new ideas. They often view all of the governments together as “belonging to them”. This attitude can help to overcome defensive or protective reactions from individual governments. Governments sometimes view expanding the communication to this wider circle as risky, but the reverse is more often the case. Pursuing ideas for significant change without involving those who will be most affected is often a recipe for failure. In some cases it may even be wise to appoint a nongovernmental civic leader to lead or chair the project. This sends the signal that all of the participating governments have equal status and that this is truly a community project.

Task Q

Prepare outreach strategy.

Once you know who you want to involve in the next stage of the process, prepare a strategy for inviting them to participate. Ask the same questions as in step D (page 43) when the initial outreach strategy to key government partners was designed. Are there good personal relationships that can help? Are there protocols with some of the organizations or individuals that should be followed? Cooperative initiatives thrive or die based on trust; it is very important that initial communications be handled well.

exercise exercise exercise

Outreach Strategy for Inviting More Stakeholders to Pursue Cooperative Initiatives (Form Q)

Organization

Strategy

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Task R

“Never make an assumption that everybody is as convinced of the wonderful merits of a project as you are...never make an assumption that everybody has as clear an understanding of the project and its benefits as you have...be simplistic, direct and clear. If you jump too far before you’ve brought them along, your chances of failure are pretty strong. If you take them step-by-step through the elements of the proposal, the benefits of the proposal, the total concept — the schematics of how you are going to bring this thing together, you can develop that ownership and that buy-in.”

Gene Hartline,
Assistant
Superintendent of
Business Services,
Paramount Unified
School District

Brief your governing bodies and seek support

Schedule a briefing with each of the government bodies. Send them a written report of your activities to date. It is important they understand that the partners went through a methodical process to arrive at their recommendations and their representatives to the process represented their interests well. Answer questions they have. Stress that no decisions have been made to this point. The group has been trying to scan the universe of possibilities so a focused and productive work plan can be put together. Only the governing bodies have authority to make decisions about which of these ideas to ultimately implement. Ask for their formal support for the list of core interests and values, the recommendations on which opportunities to pursue, the strategy, the resources you have requested, the project organization plan, and the outreach strategy. Try to get agreement from all of your elected officials. One vocal critic can do a lot of damage to the fragile business of multi-jurisdictional cooperation.

After all of the governing bodies have approved the recommendations you are ready for the next step. If one or more governing bodies have significant concerns, or want to make changes to the recommendations, you will need to re-convene the partners group to address the issues. Unilateral changes to recommendations that have been developed jointly are not allowed.

Consider reinforcing the message of partnership by sending a team to do all of the briefings. Sending one representative from each partner will increase the chances of being able to provide satisfactory answers to all of the questions that may arise. It will help ensure consistency, and smooth the process of reconvening the entire group, if that is necessary. A grander version of this approach is to schedule a joint work session of the entire membership of the governing bodies of the partners. This can be a very powerful way to build understanding, friendship and trust at an important crossroads for the cooperative initiative.

Don’t forget to be clear about the resources you will need to continue to seriously pursue the cooperative ideas. Experience has shown that lack of dedicated resources is one of the roadblocks to success.

Step 3. Decide What To Do

Now the hard work begins! Making big creative plans can be a fun process with the right people. Figuring out how to turn those ideas into action requires a great deal of very careful work.

Task S

Set up organization structure.

Implement the organization plan from Task P that was approved by the governing bodies. The structure, of course, will be very different for each community. You may have the same committee that developed the initial recommendations, a much expanded steering committee, several subcommittees or special issue task forces.

Task T

Conduct feasibility research.

Again, the specific research tasks will be completely dependent on the issue and the community. This section provides resources to help pursue that research.

Enabling Statutes

Start with an understanding of the legal authorities that relate to your ideas. The list below is a good place to start, but do not assume it contains all of the knowledge you will need. This task will require legal counsel.

You probably want the press to be an active part of the project at this point. A “secret” project that multiple governments have formally endorsed is not possible or wise. Take the press on site visits, share the details of your work, and generally try to help them understand both the complexities and potential benefits of your work. At this point a constructive press can help build momentum and accountability that can be important allies to help overcome bumps in the road you may encounter.

