

# **CREATING A COLLABORATIVE CITY GOVERNMENT**

**IRB FOR REVIEW  
BY  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative research project is to identify those local government services that provide the appropriate characteristics for possibly being provided jointly with other area local governments by collaborative interlocal agreement. The main objective of this research is to identify the services provided in greater detail than previous statewide research results have provided and focus on the area of Michigan known as Downriver, specifically the local governments surrounding Lincoln Park Michigan who are members of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance and Members of the Downriver Community Conference of Governments. This will develop a better understanding of what specific services are seen as most important to those serving in these leadership roles. The findings of this survey are intended to be used to support the hypothesis that the collaborative sharing of public services is a valid reform to present management of programs and being collaborative should become the established policy of a city government. These services will be identified through the use of a pre-interview questionnaire followed by a meeting held with those surveyed to explore in greater depth how the characteristics of the services identified may be reformed and provided in a collaborative manner jointly with other local governments.

Michigan Local Government is changing rapidly and dramatically. As the State Michigan shifts away from the traditional manufacturing economy demonstrating the effects of globalization the impact is severely restricting the ability of local governments, cities, villages, townships and counties, to provide public service programs within the existing tax structures.

While there is little doubt that the changes mentioned are occurring and appear to be positive, this plan B project raises three questions. First, Is joint public service provision the next reform for Michigan municipal government, or is it a reduction in the principals of Home Rule and local governments mission, objectives and services to the community?, Secondly, what are the political and legal implications for the city as collaboration expands?; and third, how does a city government adopt a policy to become a city with a recognized policy and a fully “collaborative city” in practical terms?.

The focus of the study will be chief policy officers and administrators working in the community governments. Several programs involving cooperative services exist in service delivery and support services such as purchasing although significant joint service sharing capacity is yet to be developed regarding most direct service programs. As these institutions continue to address the states growing government fiscal stability problems, the opportunity to institute the predisposition to consider collaborative services exists. If significant reasons to consider joint services and interlocal agreements are stated in a well supported and researched policy, time money and efficiency of service delivery is expected to result. To recommend such a policy, the type of services subject to analysis for joint service provision will be identified by those leaders who are most responsible for focusing the business of government efforts.

Upon its conclusion this plan B report will provide the reader with a clear understanding of what collaborative joint service sharing is, why it is a beneficial reform in the way cities are managed and what techniques can be utilized to improve upon organizational capacity to include collaborative service sharing in the implementation of public policy.

## **PROTOCOL**

The investigator, Master of Public Administration student Steve Duchane, will focus on the leadership opinions of at least 19 community government leaders regarding service sharing agreements. Data will be collected through a pre-interview questionnaire and personal, face-to-face interview in a focus group setting. The investigator is a member of this group but will not provide responses to a questioner preferring to address professional opinions in the summary and recommendations section of the report developed from this survey project.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

Attached is a copy of the pre-interview questionnaire that will be sent to the chief elected official and the chief administrative officer of each municipal organization that is a member of the Downriver Community Conference. The questionnaire (page 7) simply asks respondents to identify the method utilized to deliver a service or program. Organization that are listed will receive a letter of solicitation to participate, a reminder email and another opportunity to complete a survey during a focus group held prior to the start of a Downriver Community Conference meeting.

Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with seven to eight participants, as determined by their response to the questionnaire. Results from the questionnaire will be used to customize questions for the follow-up interviews to determine the interest in and which services are primary candidates for service collaboration.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBJECTS**

Participants in this study will be public officials and hold the position of chief elected or administrative officer in one of the conferences member communities. Because of their position they are most relevant to the project. All participants are adults, and while they hold a wide variety of titles, each appears on the organizations public information. Participation in the study is completely voluntary.

## **BENEFITS**

The information gathered from this study will be used by graduate student Steve M. Duchane for completion of the Plan B paper required by the Master of Public Administration program. It will also provide evidence of interest and successful techniques to form effective collaborative joint public service programs and provide valuable insight for individuals who wish to develop public policy for their organizations to identifying and implement the characteristics most commonly found among successful collaborative programs.

The step-by-step procedures for completing the research will begin by assembling reference materials from identified sources. In the analysis step, it is anticipated that the research will indicate what opportunities and challenges can be identified both legal and political in forming collaborative service sharing agreements. Practical experience in forming two service sharing agreements and one grant program encouraging collaboration will be analyzed with the conclusions evaluated for policy impact potential.

It is anticipated that the communities in the Lincoln Park region will be questioned regarding services provided and that data will be contrasted with the published results of the Citizens Research Council. This will support the policy analysis and it is anticipated it will provide a catalogue of possible services to be shared locally.

The major reason for communities to take a survey such as this is to determine the main type of service provision from each major category and to start thinking about conducting analyses to start to put the best practices in place. As a group, this survey provides the potential for communities to get together and determine joint service projects that may be beneficial to embark on. The survey also provides individual communities with a chance to look at services being rendered and start an internal dialogue on how these services may be provided more efficiently in the future.

## **RISKS AND PROTECTION OF SUBJECTS**

Confidentiality will be of the utmost importance in the administration of the pre-interview questionnaire and the follow-up personal interviews. Questionnaires will not ask for identifying information, and will not be coded for the follow-up interviews. Information will be gathered in the personal interviews using notes and audiotape recording (with permission of the participant).

All questionnaires, interviewer notes, and audiotapes will be available solely to investigator of this study, Steve M. Duchane. Because of this confidentiality, participation in this project will not pose any risk to those who volunteer. There are also no protection issues that should be addressed. Special notice will be provided that states no formal action by your council, board or commission is requested. The results of this survey will be for discussion purposes. However, all participates will be encouraged to seek input from policy body members or staff.

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

A solicitation letter will be sent to all individuals identified to participate in this study. The letter describes the purpose and nature of this study, and indicates that participation is voluntary. The letter also states that findings from this study will be made available to all participants. A copy of the solicitation letter (page 5) and the informed consent agreement (page 6) are attached to this application.

July 1, 2006

**Solicitation Letter**

Mayor Steven M. Brown  
City of Lincoln Park  
Lincoln Park, Michigan 48169

Dear Mayor Brown,

My name is Steve M. Duchane, and I am the City Manager for the City of Lincoln Park. I am also a graduate student, completing my capstone project for a Master of Public Administration degree. As part of this project, I am conducting a study on the development of a policy encouraging collaborative joint service sharing among city governments.

To gather this data, I am asking for participation from those currently in the role of leadership in each organization that belongs to the Downriver Community Conference (DCC). The study will include a brief 17-question survey which is enclosed with this letter and a one-hour focus group of participants to be arranged prior to a regular meeting of the Conference members in August or September. Your participation is completely confidential and your identity will not be revealed or cited in the final paper, which will be made available to all interested participants in the study.

After returning the enclosed questionnaire and consent form, you will be contacted and informed by the Conference of the proposed focus group meeting date.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I hope the results of this study will help provide a greater understanding on how to encourage collaboration in the sharing of public services for improved efficiency, effectiveness and cost reduction.

Sincerely,

Steve M. Duchane  
8820 16 ½ Mile Road  
Sterling Heights, MI 48312  
586-524-6927  
steveduchane@steveduchane.com

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Project:** “Creating a Collaborative City Government”

Questions regarding this research project can be directed to:

**Principal Investigator:** Steve M. Duchane, Master of Public Administration Candidate, 8820 16 ½ Mile, Sterling Heights, MI 48312. Phone: 586-524-6927  
E-mail: [steveduchane@steveduchane.com](mailto:steveduchane@steveduchane.com)

**Faculty Advisor:** Rick Kurtz, Ph.D., 313 Anspach Hall, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859. Phone: 989-774-3436. E-mail: [Rick.S.Kurtz@cmich.edu](mailto:Rick.S.Kurtz@cmich.edu)

**Project Description:** The purpose of this qualitative research project is to identify those local government services that provide the appropriate characteristics for possible being provided jointly with other area local governments by collaborative interlocal agreement. The main objective of this research is to identify the services provided in greater detail than previous statewide research results have provided and focus on the area of Michigan known as Downriver specifically the local governments surrounding Lincoln Park Michigan who are members of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance and Members of the Downriver Community Conference of Governments. This will develop a better understanding of what specific services are seen as most important to those serving in these leadership roles. The findings of this survey are intended to be used to support the hypothesis that the collaborative sharing of public services is a valid reform to present management of programs and being collaborative should become the established policy of a city government. These services will be identified through the use of a pre-interview questionnaire followed by a meeting held with those surveyed to explore in greater depth how the characteristics of the services identified may be reformed and provided in a collaborative manner jointly with other local governments.

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Participant's signature

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Date

## Memo and Survey Instrument

**To:** Downriver Community Association Leaders  
**From:** Steve M. Duchane  
**Subject:** Local Service Collaboration Services.

Please fill out the survey based on your own judgment of services and programs. No formal action is being requested by your legislative body. This is just for discussion purposes at this time. However, please feel free to seek input from other policy board members or staff if you wish to do so. All Downriver Community Conference member communities are receiving a survey and will be asked to participate in the focus group to discuss the results.

If I have missed a service area you feel is important to your community, please add it to the list and give it a ranking. Thanks for your continued support and interest in this “exploration of collaboration for service improvement”.

### Method of Service Delivery in Your Community

- (a). Does not provide or contract for this service
- (b). Directly provides this service
- (c). Jointly provides this service with another municipality
- (d). Jointly provides this service with the County
- (e). Jointly provides this service with the State
- (f). Has this service provided by the County
- (g). Has this service provided by another municipality
- (h). Has this service provided by a private provider

1. How does your municipality provide for document services such as document creation and destruction?

- (a)            (b)            (c)            (d)            (e)            (f)            (g)            (h)

2. How does your municipality provide for human resources (i.e. training, payroll/benefits)?

- (a)            (b)            (c)            (d)            (e)            (f)            (g)            (h)

3. How does your municipality provide for fiscal services (i.e. accounting, assessing, tax collection)?

- (a)            (b)            (c)            (d)            (e)            (f)            (g)            (h)

4. How does your municipality provide for information technology (i.e. website design, graphic information systems, management information systems)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

5. How does your municipality provide for elections (i.e. administration, accounting, etc.)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

6. How does your municipality provide for buildings and grounds services (i.e. security, cemetery, mosquito control, janitorial)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

7. How does your municipality provide for fleet services (i.e. purchasing, maintenance, etc.)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

8. How does your municipality provide for refuse collection?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

9. How does your municipality provide for building regulation (i.e. permits, inspection, code enforcement, etc.)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

10. How does your municipality provide for police services (i.e. training, crime lab, patrol, 911 dispatch, detention, etc.)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

11. How does your municipality provide for animal services (i.e. licensing, control, etc.)?

(a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h)

- (a) Does not provide or contract for this service
- (b) Directly provides this service
- (c) Jointly provides this service with another municipality
- (d) Jointly provides this service with the County
- (e) Jointly provides this service with the State
- (f) Has this service provided by the County
- (g) Has this service provided by another municipality
- (h) Has this service provided by a private provider

12. How does your municipality provide for fire services (i.e. training, inspection, rescue/ambulance, fire control, etc.)?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)
- (f)
- (g)
- (h)

13. How does your municipality provide for community and economic development (i.e. zoning, engineering, surveying, business retention/expansion, etc.)?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)
- (f)
- (g)
- (h)

14. How does your municipality provide for legal services?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)
- (f)
- (g)
- (h)

15. How does your municipality provide for maintenance/improvement of roads and sidewalks?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)
- (f)
- (g)
- (h)

16. How does your municipality provide for environmental services (i.e. erosion control structures, education, watershed management, etc.)?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)
- (f)
- (g)
- (h)

17. How does your municipality provide for parks and recreation services and cultural services (i.e. community center, senior center, library, etc.)?

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (e)
- (f)
- (g)
- (h)