

NEWS

More Communities Providing Joint Services

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ANN ARBOR (WWJ) - A new University of Michigan survey found that most communities statewide are already working together to increase efficiency and decrease costs.

This cooperation is a process through which two or more units of government work together to provide services jointly, such as joint police or fire services, or sharing employees with specialized technical expertise who can serve multiple jurisdictions.

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder is encouraging local governments to do more work collaboratively, and just announced plans to use revenue sharing incentives.

The newly released findings appear in a report by the [Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy](#) (CLOSUP), which is in the U-M's Gerald R. [Ford](#) School of Public Policy.

"Overall, the Michigan local government environment appears to offer a large and active marketplace for cooperative endeavors, with many opportunities for expansion," said Brian Jacob, director of CLOSUP.

Nearly three in four (72 percent) of the state's local jurisdictions reported they are currently involved in collaboration. Many describe these efforts as "very successful" (49 percent) or "somewhat successful" (32 percent). Fourteen percent report mixed success and failure, and only 2 percent say their efforts have been generally unsuccessful.

Many local leaders (44 percent overall) think that their jurisdiction's current collaboration efforts are "not enough," including 85 percent of leaders from the state's largest jurisdictions (those with more than 30,000 residents).

The report also indicates that many collaborations occur already without additional mandates from Lansing or incentives designed to expand the partnerships, and that many local governments are already looking to expand these efforts.

While the study found that 68 percent of all local leaders oppose state mandates to boost collaboration under any circumstances, officials in larger jurisdictions express some higher levels of support for potential mandates.

Meanwhile, in terms of possible state incentives, 50 percent of local leaders believe revenue sharing incentives would be effective, while 69 percent say grants to offset higher costs that are often found in the first few years of new collaborative efforts would be effective at encouraging more cooperation, the survey said. Sixty-eight percent believe grants to support planning efforts for new collaborative projects would be successful.

The report also notes that some local jurisdictions are not currently involved in formal collaborative efforts. In particular, small rural jurisdictions that provide few services in the first place may face situations that make collaboration more difficult to achieve and perhaps less likely to deliver significant benefits.

While collaboration is not appropriate in all situations, local leaders should understand that their peers generally give high marks to their existing efforts, the findings indicated.

The Michigan Public Policy Survey is a biannual survey of each of Michigan's 1,856 units of local government. Surveys were sent through the Internet and hardcopy to top elected and appoint officials in all 83 counties. A total of 1,189 jurisdictions completed valid surveys in the fall 2010.

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