

# The Collaborative Service Delivery Arrangements for Local Governments: A Summary of the Research Behind the Decision Matrix Tool

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



*Prepared by David Swindell, Arizona State University  
December, 2014*

## Executive Summary

The Enhanced Partnership represents the joint research efforts of the Alliance for Innovation, the International City/County Management Association, and the Center for Urban Innovation at Arizona State University. The Collaborative Services Decision Matrix Tool is the second product from this new partnership. Each product is designed to be a useful aid for local government officials tackling challenging opportunities.

This report supports *The Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix: A Decision Tool to Assist Local Governments*. It highlights the results of research, case studies, extensive bibliographic reviews, and interviews used by the Enhanced Partnership in the development of the decision matrix.

The Enhanced Partnership chose to invest in this project in order to develop a practical and low-cost decision instrument that local governments can easily employ and implement very quickly with existing staff. The tool helps communities determine whether or not entering into a collaborative service delivery arrangement is likely to result in achieving the jurisdiction's goals. This is done through an evaluation of 14 characteristics along two dimensions:

### **Type of Service**

Asset Specificity  
Contract Specification & Monitoring  
Labor Intensity  
Capital Intensity  
  
Costs  
Management Competencies  
Stability in Administrative Team

### **Community Characteristics**

Possible Public Partners  
Possible Private Partners  
Possible Nonprofit Partners  
Council Orientation/  
Political Environment  
Fiscal/Economic Health  
Unions  
Public Interest

Applying a 3-point grade to these 14 characteristics yields two scores that illustrate the likelihood that a successful collaborative arrangement is possible. Jurisdictions decide whether the expected benefits exceed the expected costs in light of their risk tolerance. If the jurisdiction decides to pursue a collaborative arrangement, staff can use the same scores on the 14 characteristics. This can determine which form of collaborative arrangement is most likely to succeed regarding the delivery of that particular service in that particular type of community.

This report elaborates on the 14 characteristics and the five (5) basic collaboration structures on which the decision matrix tool is based.

The tool, this report, illustrative case studies, an extensive bibliography of related research, and a series of other resources are available on the ICMA Center for Management Strategies' web site ([www.icma.org/cmsresources](http://www.icma.org/cmsresources)), the Alliance for Innovation web site ([www.transformgov.org](http://www.transformgov.org)), and the ASU Center for Urban Innovation web site ([urbaninnovation.asu.edu](http://urbaninnovation.asu.edu)).

**Table of Contents**

Executive Summary ..... ii

1. Introduction..... 1

2. What Is Collaborative Service Delivery .....3

3. The Benefits and Challenges of Collaboration.....5

4. The Decision Matrix Tool .....7

5. Alternative Structures of Collaboration and How to Choose One..... 12

6. Additional Resources ..... 15

7. About the Enhanced Partnership..... 15

8. References..... 17

## 1. Introduction

The Governments have several options available to them outside of traditional in-house service production when considering how to deliver a public service. Such alternatives include contracting out, privatizing, implementing vouchers, franchise licensing, or even load-shedding the responsibility altogether and letting some other group or agency pick up the service.

One increasingly popular form of alternative service delivery arrangement among local governments is through collaborative partnerships. Unlike privatization or contracting out a service, collaborative arrangements involve more than a simple pay-for service transaction. A collaboration involves both parties sharing the costs as well as the benefits derived from the service delivered. As such, these arrangements can take on many forms, though they tend to fall into five general categories: public-public (horizontal) partnerships, public-public (vertical) partnerships, consolidation/regionalization, public-private partnerships, and public-nonprofit partnerships.

While engaging in various alternative service delivery arrangements is very popular today and often has political support as well, research on alternatives shows that not all such arrangements lead to good outcomes. Sometimes, in-house production may be the best option. Other times, a collaborative approach might be best. This raises two questions:

**1–Is a collaborative service delivery approach right for my community?**

**2–If so, what form of collaborative approach makes the most sense for us?**

In order for a community and its leaders to answer these questions, the Enhanced Partnership involving the ICMA, the Alliance for Innovation (AFI), and the Center for Urban Innovation at Arizona State University, joined together in developing an evidence-based decision tool to aid communities in answering these questions. This tool is in the companion report: *The Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix: A Decision Tool to Assist Local Governments*.

The tool is in two parts, one dedicated to each question. The Enhanced Partnership built the tool based on extensive research of existing studies, interviews with city and county managers, and a range of cases studies of successful and less successful collaborations. We have synthesized the lessons derived from this evidence to provide a simple, straightforward tool that communities can use to conduct a “soft cost-benefit analysis” based on two general factors: the type of service under consideration and community context. Each factor has seven characteristics that staff, council, and/or community members can score on simple three-point scales. The results of those scores indicate the likelihood of a success, should the community pursue a collaborative service deliver approach.

The second part of the tool is designed to aid community leaders determine the form of collaborative approach that will be most likely to lead to positive outcomes. Using those same scores from part one, the tool points toward those arrangements that have demonstrated the most success in other communities.

This tool, while yielding answers to the questions above, are only meant to encourage communities to approach the collaboration decision with a clear idea of their goals and needs. Pursuing alternative service delivery arrangements for the sake of pursuing them is not good grounds for decision making. Therefore, the Enhanced Partnership offers the decision matrix to aid in the approach to any such decision. We make these tools and materials freely available through the web sites of the ICMA's Center for Management Strategies (CMS), Alliance for Innovation, and ASU Center for Urban Innovation.

The remainder of this paper provides the background material explaining how we developed the tool. The material here is available for those interested in a deeper understanding of the concepts used in the decision matrix tool, and includes a more complete overview of the five types of collaborative structures available to those communities that want to pursue a collaborative service delivery arrangement. The CMS web site houses the tool itself ([www.icma.org/cmsresources](http://www.icma.org/cmsresources)) and suggested contacts of specialists that can help with the specific details of developing a formalized collaborative arrangement, should your community decide to pursue such an option. In addition, the web site contains an array of illustrative case studies pooled from the extensive collection of the Alliance for Innovation, an extensive bibliography on which the tool is based, TV interviews, podcasts, and articles generated by this research effort that provide additional summaries of the tool and the overarching goal of this work. Many of these resources are also available on the Alliance for Innovation web site ([www.transformgov.org](http://www.transformgov.org)) as well as the ASU Center for Urban Innovation web site ([urbaninnovation.asu.edu](http://urbaninnovation.asu.edu)).

## 2. What Is Collaborative Service Delivery

Collaboration is a concept that describes “the process of facilitating and operating multi-organizational arrangements for solving problems that cannot be achieved, or achieved easily, by single organizations” (McGuire, 2000: 278). The Government Accountability Office (GAO) defines collaboration as “any joint activity by two or more organizations that is intended to produce more public value than could be produced when the organizations act alone” (Kaiser, 2011). Writing for the IBM Business of Government project, Bryson and his colleagues note that 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” (2009, 78).

While these definitions vary to some extent (and there are numerous other similar definitions), there are some fundamental characteristics common to them all. Collaborations involve at least two organizational actors coming together to do something. Only the details really vary: who are the actors, how many are there, and what it is exactly they are trying to accomplish together? The motivating force is the belief that trying to accomplish this shared goal will be easier, more efficient, or perhaps more effective if undertaken together as opposed to each organization trying to do it alone. And what distinguishes collaborative structures from other service delivery arrangements is the idea that all partners in the collaboration share in both the costs and the benefits derived from the shared activity.

The focus of the research and the decision matrix tool developed by the Enhanced Partnership is on collaborations designed to deliver public services at the local level of government. The range of those local services that might be the central motivation for a collaboration can vary quite widely from internal logistical processes such as procurement, to large scale capital projects like forensic crime labs, to labor-intensive tasks such as human service programs. The goal of the decision matrix tool is to help communities determine whether a collaborative approach makes sense for them given the service or project under consideration and the context in which they are operating.

### The Need for Collaboration

More local governments are trying to engage in collaborations than they did in the past. The number of local government units has become more fragmented since the 1950s and their responsibilities are often overlapping within limited boundaries. In addition, local government powers are constrained by state constitutions and statutes. Due to the increased fragmentation of local governments combined with the constraints of their legal environments, individual local governments face a significant challenge in responding to boundary-crossing environmental, social, and economic problems (Stenberg, 2007; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). As a result, local governments no longer function using only their own operational resources such as finance, information, and knowledge, but rather utilize the resources from counties, utilities, chambers of commerce,

development corporations, and many others as well (McGuire, 2000). In other words, by collaborating with other local governments or with the private/nonprofit sectors, local governments can enhance their capabilities and resources needed to launch and maintain an array of operational efforts.

Collaboration in government service delivery has emerged in a response to the demands of the times. Kaiser (2011: 15) summarizes these demands as:

- The growth and changing nature of governmental responsibilities;
- Political and economic pressures to reduce the size and scope of these responsibilities and to cut federal expenditures;
- Increases in the number, scale, complexity, and diversity of cross-cutting programs, with attendant increases in overlapping jurisdictions and shared responsibilities among agencies; and
- The urgency and importance of restructuring the government's responses to crisis situations

The challenge is determining whether or not a collaborative service delivery arrangement is a viable response to the immediate needs of the community. There certainly are other options available besides collaboration. These include the most common option of simply providing and producing the service "in-house." Another option whose popularity has waxed and waned over the past 40 years is privatizing the service. Load-shedding the public responsibility to individual residents is another more extreme option. For those communities that seek to address a perceived service need in the community but that cannot produce the service alone for financial, jurisdictional, or legal reasons, entering into a collaborative arrangement with another organization (public, private, or nonprofit) may be an appealing alternative. This is where the new tool is most useful. The decision matrix tool provides an adaptable framework to aid in determining the value of pursuing collaborative arrangements to deliver a particular service.

Such collaborations require the local government to join with at least one other partnering organization to accomplish the service delivery. But the collaboration model is not limited to only one partner. The illustrative cases provided by the Alliance for Innovation that we have included on CMS web site along with articles generated by this effort (e.g., Hilvert and Swindell, 2013) illustrate a variety of collaborations ranging from simple partnerships involving two partners up to far more complex arrangements involving over a dozen partnering local government organizations. The only limit to the number of partners is the extent to which the coordination costs become prohibitive. And of course, these collaborations actually need to do something. That is, they must be able to realize the goals for which the collaboration was created. Community leaders opt to pursue collaborative service delivery arrangements because of expected benefits. But collaborations pose a range of challenges as well.

### 3. The Benefits and Challenges of Collaboration

The decision matrix tool provides a decision space in which the likelihood of success in a collaborative effort can be determined. This likelihood is based on research of many cases of collaboration and an evaluation of their success or failure. Figure 1 in the Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix document (page 8) takes the benefits and challenges into account in helping communities determine if collaboration is right for them. But what are these benefits and challenges?

#### The Benefits

For years, researchers and public officials have worked on identifying all the possible benefits communities might hope to realize through collaborative service delivery arrangements. The most commonly cited benefit is that collaborations can lead to cost savings, which is true in some cases but not all. For instance, cost savings are most easily realized in a collaboration when managing to capture an economy of scale for services whose impacts can reach beyond a single jurisdiction, as is often the case with large capital intensive services as well as similar back-office processes like procurement.

But the benefits are not limited to potential cost savings. Researchers and practitioners also argue that collaborative approaches help communities better respond to increased demand for services by citizens, and respond with higher quality services. Others have noted that seeking service delivery through collaborative arrangements (particularly with government or nonprofits) can help reduce opposition from elected officials or citizen groups that oppose outsourcing of service delivery to private sector organizations.

Still other researchers have suggested other, less obvious benefits that might accrue from such collaborations. For instance, interactions with peers in other sectors or jurisdictions can expose one to new ideas. This can stimulate innovation in other areas back in one's home jurisdiction. Simply having relationships with peers in other jurisdictions can help create a positive environment of trust that facilitates additional partnerships on other wider or regional concerns. Finally, these collaborations also provide a way to celebrate one's own successes that can be shared with other jurisdiction and elevating the profile of the innovative jurisdiction (increasing the likelihood that they will be sought out by others for additional partnerships).

In 2012, O'Leary and Gerard surveyed city managers to find out what motivated those who indicated they were in a collaboration to join in such an arrangement (2013). They defined these collaborations as a: "...means to work across boundaries with two or more organizations to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations..." (p. 57). The motivations reported by the city managers fell into five general categories: (1) [collaboration] is implicitly mandated, (2) it improves outcomes, (3) it improves the problem-solving process, (4) it builds relationships and credibility, and (5) it is explicitly mandated.



## The Challenges

While there are many potential benefits to collaborative service delivery arrangements, they do not all work as intended. Some fail to achieve their goals because they are not able to overcome the costs or challenges inherent in collaborative arrangements. In fact, the majority of local public jurisdictions do not engage in collaborations even though there is extensive interest in them.

As with the benefits, researchers and practitioners have tried to identify the potential pitfalls communities might face when undertaking this path. For instance, in developing his “institutional collective action” framework, Richard Feiock helps identify one of the primary challenges that emerges in collaborative arrangements, particularly as the number of partners grows beyond two. He finds that as collaborations grow, there is a greater likelihood that one or more of the partners will attempt to “free ride” on the efforts of the other partners (gaining the benefits without contributing fairly to the costs).

In order to protect against this challenge, managers must expend considerable time in the coordination of multiple partners, including oversight to insure against free-riding. In other words, the costs savings a city manager might expect to realize from a collaboration may be offset by the transaction costs of coordination. There are other institutional and organizational challenges as well. For instance, governmental organizations are often resistant to change. Collaborations frequently require a long-term perspective necessary to build the trust and working relationships to achieve the delivery goals. However, local managers operate in the politicized environment of serving a local council, which operates on an election cycle. This poses the added challenge of working for change in a collaborative capacity while also maintaining the normal internal operations of the home jurisdiction. Other challenges might include political tensions between neighboring jurisdictions, differences in personnel competencies, and coordinating cost-sharing when jurisdictions have differing processes (Koenig, 2014).

O’Leary and Gerard’s survey of local government managers who engaged in collaborations also included questions about the challenges they perceived (2013). The top six categories of responses (those to which over 50% of the responses said yes) included: turf wars (79%), political culture (75%), reaching consensus or buy-in (73%), lack of mutual trust (68%), lack of communication (57%), and characteristics of the people at the table (51%).

Another challenge for managers undertaking the collaborative arrangement is the follow through. Often times, even once a project reaches the implementation phase, there is little measurement of outputs or outcomes (O’Leary and Gerard, 2013). This limits our ability to evaluate how successful collaborative service delivery arrangements actually are. Managers that want to engage in such collaborative endeavors need to know if the investment is generating the returns to the community to justify continuing it into the future. This means that even in the developmental stages, communities should specify the goal(s) they wish to achieve.

Clearly, there are potential benefits from undertaking collaborations. But there are also potential costs and those costs might exceed the benefits. The decision matrix tool integrates the costs and benefits associated with successes and failures from previous collaborations to help local government managers, staff, elected officials, and/or community residents determine if this option for the delivery of specific service makes sense for their specific community.

## 4. The Decision Matrix Tool

The Enhanced Partnership designed the decision matrix tool as a relatively simple, two-step process to aid local jurisdictions in determining whether collaborative service delivery is appropriate in their individual situation. The first step helps answer the question: is a collaborative arrangement a good idea for their delivery of the specific service the jurisdiction desires? The second part of the tool helps those communities that do want to pursue a collaborative arrangement (as determined in step one) choose from among five fundamental types of collaborative arrangements using the same information developed in step one of the process.

The tool provides a matrix of characteristics broken down into two groups: seven service characteristics and seven community characteristics. Managers work with their staff (or elected officials or community members) through a discussion of the 14 characteristics, scoring each one on a simple, qualitative, three-point scale. The characteristics are derived from the literature, case studies, and interviews undertaken by the Enhanced Partnership team and represent those aspects of the collaborative service delivery decision that are most influential on the likelihood of success. The tool is available on the CMS web site as well as the Alliance for Innovation web site (*The Collaborative Service Delivery Matrix: A Decision Tool to Assist Local Governments*).

### The Type of Service to Be Delivered

**Asset Specificity** 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). This is an important characteristic because it forces the participants to consider the possible lack of competitiveness in supplier markets as well as 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. Parking meter maintenance and collections are low in terms of asset specificity since the skills necessary for these tasks can easily be reassigned to other tasks. Sewage collection and treatment, however, are much more asset specific as re-tasking these assets is very difficult.

**Contract Specification and Monitoring** tries to encourage participants to consider the service they are interested in collaborating on in terms of the relative difficulty it would present to specify in a contract and the relative difficulty it would be to monitor. Those services that are more difficult tend to require a higher level of performance management expertise on the part of government. Certain services such as street/parking lot cleaning are easier to monitor and specify in a contract. Other services such as the operation or management of a public hospital are far more difficult.

**Labor Intensity** focuses participants on the degree to which a service is labor intensive. In general, research suggests that the more labor intensive a service is, the better candidate the service is for a collaborative delivery arrangement. Labor intensive services may also be capital intensive. For example, police beat patrol services are labor intensive in the sense that it requires individuals to undertake the actual patrol (though there are also capital costs in terms of vehicles and equipment as well).

**Capital Intensity** is another dimension of the inputs needed to produce a service. Some services are more capital intensive than others. The research indicates that diffusion of the benefits associated with more capital intensive services determines the effect on the likelihood of a successful collaboration. Generally, services that are more capital intensive with broad and diffuse public benefits are more amenable to collaborative approaches to their delivery. Sewer sanitation lines have both an individual level of benefit in terms of home or business hook ups, but also the collective benefits of public health and flood control. The individual level benefits make collaborative approaches on actual sewer line ownership difficult. But a county-wide standardized emergency communications system is more diffuse in its benefits and is more amenable to a collaborative approach in its design, financing, and even operations.

**Costs** are associated with one of the primary motivations behind collaborations. 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. Pooling purchasing services is a relatively low-cost proposition and thus is one of the more successful bases for a collaborative service delivery among local governments. A light rail system is very expensive, requiring heavy subsidies from governments and provides little opportunity for profit-making by would-be private sector partners.

**Management Competencies** focuses on in-house talent and skills. 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. More managerial expertise on staff that is related to a service increases the likelihood that a collaborative arrangement can achieve success. This has more to do with the ability to coordinate actors in the collaboration. Thus, organizations with less managerial skill available for a collaborative arrangement will likely face higher transaction costs to the point that the costs of trying to participate will be exceeded the possible benefits expected from the collaboration.

***Stability in Administrative Team*** is a factor that takes into account the volatility of the political context in which the collaboration will be taking place. 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 higher level positions will have more difficulty establishing and maintaining the institutional knowledge and oversight necessary for successful collaborations. This highlights the importance of having staff involved with the scoring discussion because they represent those with the knowledge of actual operations in the area that can capture the more qualitative nature of some of these characteristics that may be somewhat more political in nature. Knowing that there are tensions on council that could lead to turnover and the possible removal of the city manager is important to know when going into a collaboration because that kind of turmoil increases the transaction costs of the collaboration and could make it less appealing.

## Community Context

In addition to the seven service delivery characteristics, there are seven characteristics about the community that research suggests influence the likelihood of successful collaborations. These are external to the group of participants and may represent limits that will be difficult to surmount in some situations, regardless of the skills and resources available in the jurisdiction considering collaboration. The first few of these characteristics focuses on the array of possible partners with whom a community might even consider working.

***Possible Public Sector Partners*** represent the array of other public jurisdictions with whom a community might work. Such potential partners might include nearby municipalities, townships, special districts, or the overlapping county government. Collaborations with such partners often take the form of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA). More urbanized regions are more likely to have more such partners with whom to possibly partner. However, in highly fragmented regions, there may be considerable other local jurisdictions but few may be in a position to be a viable partner due to their size, expertise on staff, or resources (elements captured by other characteristics in the matrix).

**Possible Private Partners** indicates the array of opportunities for partnering for delivery with private sector firms. Public-private partnerships (P3s) are very popular in media currently, but there are actually relatively few that are truly partnerships in which both the public and the private sector partners truly share in the costs and the benefits of a service delivery arrangement. They are challenging because the partners' motivations do not always align and government transparency requirements can place public sector partners at an information disadvantage during negotiations. But in theory, these opportunities are only limited to the extent that the community or region is home to enough such competent firms to support a competitive marketplace.

**Possible Nonprofit Partners** is a community characteristic that encourages participants to broaden their viewpoint on who might be good 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. While there are many nonprofits across the nation and concentrated in urban areas, there is not as much depth of talent available in the sector which means that nonprofit partners are less common. Regardless, there are successful collaborations in certain service areas, some of which are illustrated in the case studies on the CMS web site.

**Council Orientation/Political Environment** is another aspect of the local political environment about which participants should be clear. 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. Furthermore, elected officials are more likely to personify friction between jurisdictions (turf wars). This can be particularly challenging when considering the consolidation or regionalization of a service, which elected official may view as a loss of local control. But the friction might also arise over the philosophy of government delivery of a service. Some services may resonate with members of council, for instance, in a manner that makes a public-private partnership appealing.

**Fiscal/Economic Health** represents the community's fiscal condition and may be a motivating factor behind 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, even though they are the jurisdictions most likely to need the benefits from a collaboration. Communities must be aware of the fiscal and financial strengths and weaknesses of their potential partners (be that other jurisdictions, private companies, or nonprofit organizations). Collaborations can yield positive benefits, but such benefits might not be realized if a weak partner effectively raises the costs of the service delivery to a point that exceeds those benefits.

**Unions** are commonly part of the environment in which local governments operate, particularly in terms of their own employees. Since one of the primary goals of unions is to protect the number of jobs for their members, they sometimes see alternative service delivery arrangements as a means of outsourcing jobs and generate opposition to new arrangements. While there are certainly examples of some arrangements having a depressing effect on the number of public employees, the nature of these collaborative arrangements required public personnel involvement. Partners in these arrangements share the costs and benefits, which means there is far less likelihood that there would be employment reductions resulting from these activities relative to contracting or load shedding a service. Regardless of the actual effect of a collaborative alternative on actual employment, the perceived negative expectations may be sufficient to galvanize opposition. Communities with stronger or more active unions will need to take this into account since there is a higher likelihood of incurring transaction costs in pursuit of new service delivery arrangements.

**Public Interest** recognizes that 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. For instance, while procurement practices rarely catch the attention of citizens, animal control frequently does.

The decision matrix tool requires the participants to work through each of these 14 characteristics and come to collectively agree-upon scores on the qualitative three-point scales. The seven service delivery scores are summed and the seven community context scores are summed. Then, the two scores are applied to the graphic (included in the decision tool) to determine likelihood of success for a collaborative arrangement to deliver that specific service in that specific community context.

While this is a useful decision aid, it only suggests the likelihood of success. Actual success may still be influenced by other factors, such as an external shock like the great recession. Also, even if the decision tool indicates a lower level of likely success, a community may still opt to pursue a collaboration. The tool will have helped identify the likely pitfalls for which the manager can prepare. And for those communities that want to pursue a collaboration, a new question emerges: what form of collaboration makes the most sense for the situation?

## 5. Alternative Structures of Collaboration and How to Choose One

Step one of the decision matrix tool is determining the likelihood of success from a possible collaboration for the service of interest in one's jurisdiction. Step two takes the information participants generated in step one to help choose the form of collaborative arrangement with the greatest likelihood of success. This is done based on the specific scores assigned to each of the 14 characteristics in step one. So no additional scoring is required for the tool to also generate a recommendation of the best form of collaboration for the specific situation facing a given community.

As with the benefits and challenges of collaborative service delivery that inform the decision matrix tool, researchers and scholars have also developed a wide array of alternative service delivery models, and different types of collaborative arrangements. Many of those studies are included in the extensive bibliography provided along with the decision tool on the CMS web site. But for this tool, the Enhanced Partnership narrowed the array to a more manageable set of five basic forms from which to choose.

### Public-Public (Horizontal)

Many collaborations involve two or more governmental units that operate at the same "level." For instance, there are numerous examples of two municipalities working together on a shared service delivery. This is, in fact, the most common form of service delivery collaboration. One such collaboration is the arrangement between Westlake and Keller, Texas. These two communities, one much larger than the other, undertook the construction and maintenance of a joint-use water tower. Both contributed to the costs, and both have benefitted in terms of water quality and pressure, as well as economic development that depends on this fundamental infrastructure.

The horizontal nature of this arrangement simply refers to the idea that the partners in the arrangement operate at the same level of government (i.e., two municipalities collaborating). But such partnerships do not have to be limited to only two partners. For instance, Illinois is home to a collaborative effort involving 18 municipalities in Cook County and Lake County. In an effort to realize some cost savings in the face of the great recession, these local governments successfully worked together on a collaborative arrangement centered on bulk purchasing.

### Public-Public (Vertical)

If there are horizontal public-public partnerships, there must also be vertical public-public partnerships. These are also relatively common among all collaborative arrangements and represent joint delivery efforts between two public jurisdictions operating on different levels of government. Given the wide array of different kinds of local governments in the United States, the variety of vertical arrangements is extensive. The most common form of these involves a municipality partnering with the county government within which it is situated.

For example, the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (North Carolina) maintain a wide array of intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) covering an extensive range of services. One of these IGAs centers on public safety: the city police department provides basic patrol services for the city and other sections of the county that are not patrolled by one of the other municipal police departments. Concurrently, the county government provides jail services for the whole county, including all jail services for Charlotte. Suspects are arrested by city police, and then custody of the suspect is transferred to the county for booking and lock-up.

### **Consolidation or Regionalism**

One of the more controversial forms of collaborative service delivery is the merger of two or more jurisdictions into a new single jurisdiction responsible for at least the service under consideration if not additional services. Because this by definition entails a lessening of authority or possible dissolution of the pre-existing jurisdictions, such consolidations are often opposed for political reasons based on arguments about the loss of local identity. Consolidation referenda rarely win at the ballot box, though there have been a select few consolidations over the past several years. The most recent of these was the consolidation of the city of Macon with Bibb County in Georgia in 2014 following the successful ballot measure in July, 2012.

Consolidation is an extreme form of collaboration. There are less extreme versions that researchers address under the umbrella of regionalism. Regional forms of collaboration or governance still involve constituent jurisdictions giving up some degree of their authority over the good or service at stake. These usually involve goods and services with benefits that spill over any single jurisdiction's borders. Thus, it can make sense to design a regional body that captures the whole benefit area in order to tie the benefits to the costs and the decision making. Such regional bodies may be single purpose, such as the Chicago Regional Transportation Authority that provides public transportation financing and planning over a six county area as an incorporated special purpose district.

### **Public-Private Partnerships**

While public-public horizontal collaboration is the most common arrangement currently, the concept of the public-private partnership receives far more attention in the media and among consultants to local governments. The difficulty with the concept is that most such partnerships are actually not partnerships or collaboration. Rather, they are simply contractual arrangements representing a form of privatization or a fee for service arrangement. They do not always represent the collaborative form in which all parties share in the costs and the benefits flowing from a given service delivery.



There are, however, several true public-private partnerships that have achieved their goals. And as more private firms and public jurisdictions become better able to work together on those services that are amenable to such arrangements, we are likely to see more examples of successful public-private partnerships. The challenge is finding the right private sector partners and clearly defining the purpose and areas of responsibilities to overcome the fundamentally different motivations that distinguish the public and private sectors. Some types of services are more amenable to these kinds of partnerships, such as when the good or service can be easily packaged. But many public services are not so easily delineated, which makes those kinds of services more difficult to produce in the context of a public-private partnership. As communities continue to explore and experiment with new arrangements with private sector partners, more lessons are emerging about how we can develop arrangements for sharing in the delivery of such core local government functions as building permitting, code compliance, and many “back office” operations.

### **Public-Nonprofit Partnerships**

Public-private partnerships are certainly the “hottest” of the different collaboration forms covered here. But managers should also consider the feasibility of working with nonprofit organizations that possess a depth of appropriate expertise related to the target good or service. There are currently over 1.5 million nonprofits in the U.S., most of which are based in or serve urban communities. As with private organizations or even nearby public jurisdictions that might be potential partners, managers need to be cognizant of the skills and resources in a partnering nonprofit agency.

While there are many examples of local governments contracting with nonprofit partners (particularly around human services and the arts/culture services), true public-nonprofit partnerships are not as common as public-private partnerships. Part of the reason is that there are not as many nonprofit organizations relative to private firms, particularly in terms of the available skills and resources for being a good partner in a collaboration. That said, there are many examples throughout the country of successful public-nonprofit partnerships that have achieved the goals for which they were established. For instance, Washoe County joined with the Nevada Humane Society (NHS) to jointly produce animal control services. The NHS invested \$2 million into the \$10+ million construction costs of a new joint animal control and shelter campus with the county. The county (through the sheriff's office) maintains the animal control responsibilities of capturing strays or removing dangerous animals. But the NHS runs the shelter and adoption program and has helped the county lower its animal kill-rate to almost zero. There are other examples of these successful public-nonprofit partnerships in the case studies collected by the Alliance for Innovation and available on the Alliance and the CMS web sites.

## 6. Additional Resources

As noted previously, this paper is only one of several resources available through the ICMA's Center for Management Strategies' web site ([www.icma.org/cmsresources](http://www.icma.org/cmsresources)), the Alliance for Innovation web site ([www.transformgov.org](http://www.transformgov.org)) and the ASU Center for Urban Innovation web site ([urbaninnovation.asu.edu](http://urbaninnovation.asu.edu)). In addition to the collaborative service delivery materials, these sites also provide an array of useful resources on innovations on such topics as citizen engagement (another project from the Enhanced Partnership), smart city public financing, cutting-edge sustainability practices, achieving resiliency, performance-based budgeting, transformational leadership, the high performance organization model, survey tools for data-driven communities, and process improvement. On the topic of collaborative service delivery specifically, the web sites provide a number of specific resources, including:

- The decision matrix tool
- The white paper on collaborative service delivery (this document)
- Articles on collaborative service delivery that emerged from this project
- An extensive bibliography of research literature used to develop the tool
- Several case studies of collaborative service delivery arrangements in action
- Additional media presentations of the material (podcast, television, and webinar recordings)

## 7. About the Enhanced Partnership

This collaborative service delivery project is the second in a series of research-based decision-making tools developed through a unique partnership involving the International City/County Management Association, the Alliance for Innovation, and Arizona State University's Center for Urban Innovation. The first project focused on citizen engagement and is also housed on the CMS web site.

### The Partners

The ICMA is the primary professional organization of local government management officials. It celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. The organization provides an array of services, supports research, generates numerous publications, collects data and information, offers peer and results-oriented assistance, and delivers training and professional development to thousands of city, town, and county leaders and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect millions of people living in thousands of communities, ranging in size from small towns to large metropolitan areas.

The Alliance for Innovation is an international network of progressive governments and partners committed to transforming local government by accelerating the development and dissemination of innovations. AFI seeks out innovative practices, challenges existing business models, exchanges knowledge, and provides products and services that help their members perform at their best. Through experimenting, learning, sharing and adapting, AFI has created a community of practice built by members who are dedicated to pursuing innovative in policy and practice. AFI works with this community to accelerate the adoption of new ideas while furthering the work of local government.

ASU's Center for Urban Innovation develops news ways for public officials, private entrepreneurs, nonprofit agencies, and citizens to work together in addressing the challenges that confront metropolitan areas around the nation, from the neighborhood to the regional level. The primary research mission addresses questions of public leadership, meaningful democracy, and the reform of governance through new structures and processes such a regional cooperatives and neighborhood empowerment. Bringing together urban scholars, policy practitioners, and graduate students, the Center designs innovative and sustainable solutions for today's practical applications, but that are flexible to serve tomorrow's needs.

These three organizations share a commitment to developing and disseminating innovative ideas on local government policy and practices grounded in evidence-based research. The three joined together in a new venture, the Enhanced Partnership, in which each contributed to a research fund dedicated to the ideal of generating new tools for local governments to help them move forward on innovations that fit the needs of their communities. While the research is led by the Center for Urban Innovation, the members of the Alliance provide valuable feedback and experiment with the ideas generated. The ICMA is the ideal partner for expanding the reach of the research tools and providing training and support for those communities interested in adapting the materials to their jurisdiction.

If you have ideas for new tools that the Enhanced Partnership might explore and develop, please contact David Swindell, Director of the Center for Urban Innovation ([david.swindell@asu.edu](mailto:david.swindell@asu.edu)).

## 8. References

- Bryson, J., Crosby, B., Stone, M., and Saunoi-Sandgren, E. (2009). "Designing and Managing Cross-sector Collaboration: A Case Study in Reducing Traffic Congestion." *The Business of Government* (Winter/Fall): 78–81. Retrieved September 6, 2013 from <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/article/designing-and-managing-cross-sector-collaboration-a-case-study-reducing-traffic-congestion>.
- Brudney, J. L., Cho, C., & Wright, D. S. (2009). "Understanding the collaborative public manager: Exploring contracting patterns and performance for service delivery by state administrative agencies in 1998 and 2004". In *The Collaborative Public Manager: New Ideas for the Twenty-first Century*, 1st ed., edited by O'Leary, R. and Bingham, L. B. (117-136). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Dawes, S. S. & Eglene, O. (2008). New models of collaboration for delivering e-government services: A dynamic model drawn from multi-national research. Working Paper Series, Center for Technology in Government. Presented at the 5th Annual Digital Government Research Conference, May 24-26, 2004 in Seattle, WA.
- Feiock, R. 2013. The institutional collective action framework. *Policy Studies Journal*, 41:397–425.
- Hilvert, C. and Swindell, D. (2013). "Collaborative Service Delivery: What Every Local Government Manager Should Know." *State and Local Government Review*, 45(4): 240-254.
- Kaiser, F. M. (2011). *Interagency Collaborative Arrangements and Activities: Types, Rationales, Considerations*. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved on October 4, 2013 from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41803.pdf>
- Kitchen, H. (2005). "Delivering local/municipal services". In *Public Services Delivery*, edited by Shah, A. (117-152). Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Koenig, H. (2014). "Interlocal agreements." In *A Handbook of Alternative Service Delivery for Local Government*, edited by Thurmaier, K. (69-87). Washington, DC: International City/County Management Association.
- Lowndes, V. & Skelcher, C. (2008). The dynamics of multi-organizational partnerships: An analysis of changing modes of governance. *Public Administration*, 76: 313-333.
- McGuire, M. (2000). Collaborative policy making and administration: The operational demands of local economic development. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 14: 278-293.
- O'Leary, R., and C. Gerard. (2013). *Collaborative governance and leadership: A 2012 survey of local government collaboration*. The Municipal Yearbook 2013. Washington, DC: ICMA.

- Péteri, G. (2007). "Alternative service delivery". In Public Finance Theory and Practice in Central European Transition, edited by Nemeč, J. and Wright, G. NISPAcee. Retrieved on October 4, 2013 from [http://www.lgidev.com/tl\\_files/lgid/ASDA.pdf](http://www.lgidev.com/tl_files/lgid/ASDA.pdf) .
- Préfrontaine, L., Ricard, L., Sicotte, H., Turcotte, D., and Dawes, S. S. (2000). New models of collaboration for public service delivery: Worldwide Trends. Working paper for CEFRIO's project. Retrieved on October 4, 2013 from [http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/reports/new\\_models\\_wp/new\\_models\\_wp.pdf](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/reports/new_models_wp/new_models_wp.pdf)
- Roberts, J. & O'Connor, P. (2007). Inter-Agency Service Collaboration in the NPO Sector. Wellesley Institute. Retrieved on October 4, 2013 from <http://www.joanroberts.com/inter-agency-collab-reportfin.pdf>
- Selsky, J. W. & Parker, B. (2005). Cross-Sector partnerships to address social issues: Challenges to theory and practice. *Journal of Management*, 31: 849.
- Sclar, E. D. (2000). *You Don't Always Get What You Pay For: The Economics of Privatization*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Stenberg, C.W. (2007). "Meeting the Challenge of Change". In *Managing Local Government Services: A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed., edited by Stenberg, C.W. and Austin, S. L. (1-28). United States: ICMA Press.
- Whitaker, G. P. (2007). "Service delivery alternatives". In *Managing Local Government Services: A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed., edited by Stenberg, C.W. and Austin, S. L. (369-390). United States: ICMA Press.