Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Municipal Shared Services

Windham Regional Commission
March 19, 2015
Franklin County

- Franklin County is the most rural county in MA.

- 71,372 people, 725 square miles, 26 towns.

- Greenfield – 17,456 residents; Monroe – 121 residents.

- 22 of 26 towns have population under 5,000; 19 under 2,000; 8 under 1,000.
Franklin Regional Council of Governments

- Former county government, now a municipal voluntary membership organization.

- Mission is to serve the region and the 26 municipalities of Franklin County.

- Services include:
  - Regional planning (RPA for the region)
  - Regional preparedness and emergency planning
  - Teen health
  - Legislative advocacy
  - Municipal services
# FRCOG Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Funding Mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; Special Projects</td>
<td>Membership Assessment, Grants &amp; Admin. Fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Public Health Service health district</td>
<td>Participant Assessment, Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Inspection</td>
<td>Participant Assessment and Permit Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Purchasing</td>
<td>Bid Participation Fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Accounting</td>
<td>Participant Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland Security</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Economic Development, GIS, Land Use, Natural Resources, Transportation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership for Youth</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Preparedness</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FRCOG Municipal Service Programs

- Small towns have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified, part-time staff.
- Small towns may have difficulty meeting state and/or federal mandates.
- Sharing reduces price, improves quality, or both.

FRCOG Programs as Host Agency:
- Town Accounting
- Public Health Service
- Cooperative Inspections
- Cooperative Purchasing
FRCOG Municipal Service Programs

- FRCOG determines service and staffing levels, hires and supervises staff.
-Pooling town needs allows the FRCOG to offer competitive salaries and benefited positions to attract qualified, experienced personnel.
-All programs are voluntary, opt-in.
- Towns pay for service based on an assessment formula:
  - Fixed fee for service
  - Historical use
  - Average weekly service level need
Franklin County
Shared Service Examples

- South County Ambulance Service
- Shared Fire Chief
- Regional Dog Kennel
- Cooperative Purchasing Program
- Town Accounting Program
- Cooperative Inspection Program
- Cooperative Public Health Service
South County Ambulance Service

- FRCOG committed state grant funds for study
- Town officials were committed to making it work – history of working together
- Planning group of local officials developed the plan for a shared service
- Deerfield is municipal host
  - IMAs with Whately and Sunderland
  - Deerfield is employer and fiduciary agent
Shared Fire Chief

- Wendell faced retirement of P/T Fire Chief
- Formed a transition committee to explore needs and options in a very small town
- Explored sharing with other nearby towns
- Found a partner in New Salem
- FRCOG committed state grant funds to develop agreements, job description, etc.
Shared Fire Chief

- Each town separately employs same person as part-time chief
- Agreement establishes method of sharing costs
- History of sharing
  - school & town administrator
- Win-win-win
Regional Dog Shelter & Adoption Center

- Hosted by the FC Sheriff’s Office
  - Directed by an ACO hired by Sheriff

- Serves 17 towns – each pays a small yearly fee and signed an agreement to pay vet bills

- Provides a safe place for local animal control officers to bring dogs.

- Lots of volunteers and donated supplies
  - Friends of the Shelter
Regional Dog Shelter & Adoption Center

- FRCOG used DLTA funds to facilitate the planning process
- FRCOG CIC grant helped fund start-up costs
  - Materials, equipment, & supplies
  - Leveraged $75K investment through Sheriff’s budget
- IMAs between Sheriff and Towns
- Advisory committee – Town reps, twice a year
FRCOG Cooperative Purchasing Program

- Fee-for service program used by municipalities, districts and not-for-profits
  - Bidding, Contracting & Troubleshooting
- FRCOG CPO and certified MCCPO
- Economies of scale
- Adherence to procurement laws
- Consultation services
FRCOG Cooperative Purchasing Program

- Highway products and services
  - Towns pay a fee to participate and can ask for pricing on any number of the 22 separate yearly bids
  - FRCOG contracts with vendors after award approved by towns
  - Contract management and troubleshooting as needed
FRCOG Cooperative Purchasing Program

- Fuel Products
  - Heating oil, Gasoline, and Diesel fuel
  - Fee charged per bid
- Dog Licenses and tags
  - Fee per bid
  - FRCOG Buys in bulk & towns reimburse cost
- Elevator maintenance & Fire alarm testing
FRCOG Cooperative Purchasing Program

- Direct consulting to public entities
  - Advice or complete procurements
  - Adherence to procurement laws
  - Can be quicker and cheaper than town staff
    - Local staff often not procurement specialists
    - Occasional or bid ticket kinds of purchases not usually handled locally
FRCOG Town Accounting Program

A fee-for-service program initiated by the FRCOG in 2005 to respond to the needs of Franklin County communities for professional accounting services

- Program began with 4 towns and 2 part-time accountants
- In FY2015 we serve 14 towns
- 6 staff: 2 full-time and 4 part-time (4.16 FTE)
FRCOG Town Accounting Program

- Towns participate through a contract agreement with the FRCOG
- Each Town officially appoints a specific FRCOG staff member as its Town Accountant
- The FRCOG is the host agency that administers the program
Shared Accounting Software

- FRCOG contracted to provide *Fundware* software to the participating towns

- Software license agreement allows towns with populations under 2,000 to use FRCOG software license at a reduced rate

- Participating towns must convert to *Fundware*

- One set of policies, procedures and chart of accounts across all towns
Shared Accounting Software

- Software is stored on the server at FRCOG offices in Greenfield and accessed remotely.
- Remote access allows program staff to work from multiple locations, increasing efficiency.
- Data is fully secure, backed up daily, and available 24/7.
- Read-only access for local officials, available 24/7.
FRCOG Accounting Program
Budget & Assessments

- Operates like an enterprise fund

- Participating towns share all program costs: staff salaries, benefits, operating expenses and overhead

- Towns are assessed the entire program budget through a formula based on anticipated hourly needs per week per Town, averaged over the fiscal year
  
  - i.e. some towns need 10 hours per week, some less, based on size of warrants, enterprise funds, CPA, etc.
Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program

- The FCCIP provides zoning and code enforcement for 16 towns
  - Issues building, wiring, plumbing and gas permits.
  - Provides annual periodic inspections for public buildings.
  - Provides on-line permitting to facilitate the permitting process and give town officials ready access to permit records.
  - Fields code and zoning enforcement questions.
  - Provides contractor training through website and bi-annual newsletters.
Online permitting benefits

- Users can apply from anywhere, 24/7
- Multiple users can access software simultaneously
- Can connect to other databases to retrieve information maintained there, such as assessors, tax and contractor data
- Can be accessed remotely by inspectors in the field
- 3 tier security to authenticate town officials before granting administrative access
- FCCIP administrators can do some of their own tech support
- Automatic reminders and alerts keep permitting process moving forward
- All communication is logged into system and becomes part of the record
- Generates custom reports for towns, boards
- Attaching plans reduces the amount of paper to be stored
- Saves gas and reduces carbon footprint.
Franklin County Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS)

- Regional health district serving 10 towns with a combined population of 15,500

- Commonwealth’s first:
  - health district organized under Chapter 40 sec. 4a (IMA)
  - hybrid health district allowing for both full and incremental membership

- Awarded CIC grant for FY 13, state regionalization funds in FY14, 15

- The CPHS has four public health programs towns can join:
  - Community Sanitation -- camps, housing, lead, hoarding
  - Food Safety -- food inspections, temporary food events, B&Bs, schools
  - Title 5 and Private Well Safety – septic system plan review and protections, private well permitting
  - Public Health Nursing – infectious disease control, MAVEN, flu clinics, chronic disease prevention, nursing home prevention
Contact

Bob Dean
Director of Regional Services
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
12 Olive Street, Suite 2
Greenfield MA 01301
Tel: 413.774.3167 extension 108
bdean@frcog.org
How to Get to Sharing Services
Take Advantage of Opportunities to Share

- Share cost of implementing state and federal mandates and policies
- Align service contract terms with other municipalities & bid for service collectively
- Start with low risk, relationship-building ventures
Take Advantage of Opportunities to Share

- Take advantage of staff attrition and retirement
- Formalize existing hand-shake agreements
- Implement recommendations from regional plans
Work Through the Details

- Understand Impacts of History and Past Projects
- Local Control
  - How important is it?
  - How can you preserve it?
- Local project champions & Key stakeholders
Work Through the Details

- Form a Planning Committee
  - Establish ground rules for discussion
  - Establish goals and objectives
  - Transparency and public engagement
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis
- Design a fair cost sharing structure
- Design a fair governance structure
- Set measurable and achievable performance standards to determine level of success
Governance Options

- Shared Service Agreement
  - A la carte vs. comprehensive
  - Lead municipality vs. host agency
- Regional District
- Mutual Aid Agreement
Find a Legal Mechanism

- Mutual Aid Laws
- Simple Contract or Letter of Agreement
- Specific State Laws
  - authorize sharing and delineate method.
- Special Legislation
  - Ask Legislature to codify your wishes
- Inter-Municipal Agreements
  - Chapter 40, Section 4A in Massachusetts General Laws
Inter-Municipal Agreements

- MGL Chapter 40, Section 4A
- By vote of Select Board, not Town Meeting
- Any activity a town may perform singly
- Maximum length: 25 years
- Formal contract, joint service agreement, service exchange agreement
- Creates financial obligation
Labor Issues?

- Work with your current employees toward agreement
- Regionalize new positions or as existing positions become open or contracts expire
- Recreate the hiring system
- Some specific MGLs delineate how to deal with employees
How Is Cost Assessed?

- Hourly fee-for-service
  - Professional services such as IT, engineering & legal
- Lump sum fee-for-service
  - Cooperative purchasing
- Annual service contract
  - Town or Host Agency provides scope of services, such as accounting, inspections, public health
- Some other funding formula
  - Design a formula that works for all participants
  - Get creative to make it work