

Local Government Academy

A Step by Step Guide to Multi-Municipal Planning

11 Recommendations for Getting started on your Multi-Municipal planning Grant

Following are 11 recommended steps for effective multi-municipal planning. In addition to these steps, you will find various contact agencies and individuals listed as sources of assistance. Please be aware that the sources and types of assistance may change over time; therefore, to obtain the most current information, contact LGA.

You should also become familiar with the services offered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services (www.newpa.com), various municipal associations and training providers. Most notably, LGA recommends *Planning Beyond Boundaries* a publication of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania- an alliance of organizations and individuals committed to improved land use policies and decisions in Pennsylvania. LGA has relied on this manual in developing a variety of land use programs.

Step 1: Contact your Neighbors

State laws and policies provide incentives for multi-municipal planning. In addition, land use issues don't usually coincide with municipal boundaries. Because of these considerations, planning efforts that provide the most benefit to the public take place on a multi-municipal scale. Municipalities should seek and encourage neighboring municipalities to join in their planning efforts.

Step 2: Obtain Available Training

Participate in training and become knowledgeable about the benefits and tools of good planning before you begin to plan. This knowledge will help ensure that the resulting plan will enhance your community's quality of life. Contact LGA to find out what training is available. Free webinars regarding multi-municipal planning and LGA's grant program are archived on LGA's website; viewing the presentations is a requirement for the LGA grant program.

Step 3: Adopt Resolutions

Once you've reached out to your neighbors and attended training, each municipality's governing body should authorize several actions. The number of resolutions and their exact form should be as recommended by your municipality's solicitor. However, the nature of the actions are as follows:

- a. **Intent.** Some solicitors may advise their governing body to adopt a resolution of intent to prepare a multi-municipal comprehensive plan and/or implementing ordinances. A model is available. (See appendix 2A-1 "Planning beyond Boundaries.")
- b. **Intergovernmental Cooperation.** The governing body of each municipality in the multi-municipal group should enter into an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement (ICA) for planning that establishes an area planning committee (appointed by participating governments) to guide the comprehensive planning process, scope of activities and cost sharing among municipalities. A model ICA can be sent to you. (See appendix 2A-2, "Planning Beyond Boundaries.")
- c. **Grant Applications.** Each governing body should authorize the area planning committee to prepare and submit applications for Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance (LUPTAP) grant funds to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and to the Local Government Academy and other agencies such as their county government that may provide financial assistance for multi-municipal planning. Municipalities should be aware that they will have to provide part of the total cost.
- d. **Requests for proposals.** A qualified planning consultant will be necessary to assist in the preparation of the comprehensive plan and any implementing ordinances. Issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) will facilitate the hiring of one. At least three firms should be solicited to submit proposals and these firms should receive face to face interviews. It may be cost effective to hire one person or firm to do all phases of the project; or, soliciting proposals at each step may be appropriate. If the consultant is hired early in the process, he/she may be able to assist with grant applications, although such assistance is often not eligible for grant reimbursement. Be certain to clarify with your consultant any such work that will be expected "pro bono". A model RFP for planning consultant services is available (See Appendix 2A-1, "Planning Beyond Boundaries").
- e. **Select a Planning Consultant.** The area planning committee should select the most qualified planner or planning firm and the participating governments should adopt a resolution appointing the consultant. A legal agreement should be executed between the consultant and the municipalities or the lead municipality.

Step 4: Seek Funding from Commonwealth of PA

The area planning committee should meet with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) regarding their application, which may provide some assistance for the cost of a plan. Contact the Southwest Regional office at 412-770-1660. Planning is fundable under DCED's Municipal Assistance Program. Applicants should fill out and submit the DCED Electronic Single Application, available online at the DCED website - www.newpa.com

Step 5: Seek Funds from Local Government Academy

The area planning committee should meet with the Local Government Academy (LGA) regarding application of their Multi-Municipal Planning & Community Sustainability Grant Program. Contact LGA at 412.586.5659 or info@localgovernmentacademy.org.

Step 6: Seek Additional Funding, if Available

Municipalities should contact their county planning agencies to determine if other funding sources are available.

Step 7: Assemble and Submit Applications

The area planning committee should prepare and submit the DCED and LGA grant applications in accordance with the filing instructions for each grant.

Step 8: Engage in Community Visioning

With consultant assistance, participating municipalities should engage in a joint community visioning process. This is the first step in developing the actual comprehensive plan. A successful community visioning process will enable the local officials and citizens to think about the future and the way they want their community to be. This important step will set the framework for the plan. Various alternatives exist for facilitating the visioning process. You will better understand those alternatives and be able to determine which one works best for your community after you have completed the training in step 2.

Step 9: Stick with It

The area planning committee should manage the process that will produce the multi-municipal comprehensive plan to be adopted by each governing body. This can be a lengthy process. Communities should rely on their planning consultant to facilitate the process so that it goes smoothly. In addition to achieving the outcomes desired at the start of this process, municipalities should preserve in their planning effort to avoid losing grant proceeds and burdening the public with the stranded costs of incomplete efforts.

Step 10: Adopt the Plan

Each governing body should adopt the comprehensive plan in accordance with the processes outlined in the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

Step 11: Implement and Evaluate

Each governing body should adopt and implement an ICA. A model can be made available. It is at this point that each governing body must decide whether to prepare joint implementing ordinances including zoning and subdivision/land development or adopt its own. The pros and cons of this choice will become clear during the planning process. Execution of the plan will also involve ensuring professional administration of the plan and ordinances. During the planning process, this and other issues will emerge that will require attention during the implementation phase.

These steps and model documents provide planning guidance. Their development has been based upon the experience and knowledge of some of our state's leading planners and most successful communities. Municipalities should consult their solicitors in regard to legal guidance.

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