

Executive Summary

The Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations believes that the historic pattern of very small and numerous local units of local government is not a sustainable organizational pattern for the future in Kansas. Rising property taxes, loss of population throughout most of the state, lack of available leadership, particularly in sparsely populated areas, and an increasing demand for services all point the way to consolidating functions and/or forms of government to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

However, the KACIR also believes that the only way to reduce the number of units of local government is for citizens to own the process and make the decision to consolidate. Unless such a move is supported by the grassroots, it cannot succeed.

In recent years the Kansas Legislature has shown a willingness to allow governmental units to combine, collaborate and modernize their ways of operating. Two like governmental units may combine and the process has been streamlined. However, the consolidation of city-county still requires legislative enactment to begin the process.

In order to facilitate consolidation discussions, whether citizen-initiated or initiated by elected officials of the affected areas, the KACIR is making available this Guide to assist with the process.

“A Guide to choosing consolidations and alternatives in Kansas -adapting local governments to local regional communities” was written by Allyn Lockner, a retired government professional for the KACIR. We are grateful to him for his extraordinary efforts and for making his work available to anyone interested in the topic.

The complete Guide is available by contacting Lynn Robinson, Kansas Department of Revenue, 901 Harrison, Topeka, KS. 66603 or by e-mail, Lynn_Robinson@KDOR.state.ks.us. What is shown on this website is a condensed version which does not contain all the worksheets and other tools which are in the complete Guide. Since the complete version numbers more than 180 pages, it is available only on Compact Disc which the Kansas Department of Revenue will provide.

The Guide basically outlines 20 steps by which two or more local governments can decide whether consolidation is a strategy which will benefit them. The process of building a community consensus to support consolidation, or its alternative, is lengthy and sometimes difficult. The Guide is a step by step tutorial on how to accomplish it.¹

Step 1: Identify Community and Government Assets and Major Concerns about the Community's Present and Future

¹ The process is synchronous with the only city-county consolidation that has occurred in Kansas: the Unified Government of Wyandotte County. All the bills which have been introduced in the Kansas Legislature essentially follow this same process.

Step 2: Build a Community Coalition to Determine the Need for Local Government Consolidations or Alternatives

Step 3: Determine Community Assets, Resident Major Concerns, Vital Issues

Step 4: Determine the Community's Strategic Vision, Vital Community Issues and Need for Local Government Consolidations

Step 5: Establishment of a Consolidation Study Commission; requires legislative approval

Step 6: Commission Prepares to Study Consolidation

Step 7: Commission Asks the Community Coalition and Other Residents for Their Ideas about a Consolidation Plan

Step 8, 9 10: Commission Chooses Vital Contexts, Ideas and other forces Propelling and Repelling Consolidation

Step 11: Commission Prepares the Preliminary Consolidation Plan

Step 12, 13: Commission Requests and Reviews Comments and Questions on the Preliminary Consolidation Plan

Step 14: Commission Adopts the Final Consolidation Plan

Step 15: Market the Final Consolidation Plan

Step 16: Voters Approve or Disapprove Implementation of the Final Consolidation Plan

Step 17: Governing Body Utilizes Transition Team and Plan to Implement the Final Consolidation Plan

Step 18,19: If Voters Disapprove of Plan Implementation, Choose Whether to Again Pursue Consolidation

Step 20: Inform the Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations (KACIR) about Lessons Learned

The Guide also contains numerous appendices and other helpful information.

Still to be published during 2008 is a guide to developing the budget information about the consolidated unit to aid in determining the efficacy of consolidation. Also, information on how to apply and distribute levies, how to handle staff reductions, salary differential issues, and other issues related to this process.