

Introduction

Intergovernmental cooperation may be defined as any arrangement through which two or more municipalities communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can include the sharing of information, facilities, and equipment or involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements.¹



The purpose of the intergovernmental cooperation chapter of the comprehensive plan is to describe current intergovernmental agreements, explore opportunities for future collaboration, and identify potential areas of conflict between the Town and its governmental neighbors.

Intergovernmental Vision

The Town of Oconto Falls will continue to work with its municipal neighbors, Oconto County, and the State of Wisconsin to pursue opportunities for cooperation and collaboration that lead to improved services and reduced costs for its residents, land owners, and business owners.

Adjacent Municipalities

The Town of Oconto Falls is located in southern Oconto County in northeast Wisconsin and shares boundaries with the following municipalities:

- City of Oconto Falls
- Towns of Gillett, Morgan, Spruce, and Stiles.

The Town maintains a positive working relationship, and shares services, with each of its municipal neighbors.

Oconto County

Oconto County provides a number of services to its municipalities including:

- Farmland preservation planning and technical assistance.
- Highway maintenance and improvement programs.
- Library funding and support.
- Senior and social services.
- Veterans' services.

¹ Excerpted from Guide to Preparing the Intergovernmental Element of a Comprehensive Plan, Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2002.

**CHAPTER 9:
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

The Oconto County Planning & Zoning Department is responsible for administering and enforcing zoning and shoreland zoning within the Town of Oconto Falls. The Department also works with the Oconto County Land Conservation Department to administer Wisconsin’s Farmland Preservation Program (chapter 91, Wis. Stats.).

School Districts

Residents of the Town of Oconto Falls are served by the Oconto Falls and Gillett School Districts. The Town has a positive relationship with the school districts and will advise them of future large-scale residential development projects so that they may better prepare for potential increases in student enrollment.

Quasi-governmental Organizations

The Town is also a member of the Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission, a multi-service planning organization established under Chapter 66.0309, Wis. Stats. It has benefited from cooperation with BLRPC in the past and will continue to utilize the services provided by the organization when appropriate

Intergovernmental Cooperation - Benefits & Challenges

Benefits

Intergovernmental cooperation between and among cities, villages, towns, and counties often produces less expensive and more efficient governmental services. Mergers of similar services can provide substantial cost savings when administrative and equipment duplication is reduced. Significant savings may be realized when local governments combine purchasing, planning, and contracted service delivery processes.

Cooperation during comprehensive planning efforts may be the most effective way to collaborate with neighboring communities. It provides opportunities to collectively identify issues, brainstorm ideas, and reach consensus. It also offers an occasion to address critical issues before decisions have been made and before development activities occur that may limit future solutions. Cooperating with planning provides opportunities for jurisdictions to be proactive rather than reactive.

Opportunities for collaboration in planning and the sharing of facilities and services between municipal governments include, among others:

- Water and wastewater treatment facilities.
- Public safety, including police, fire, and rescue.
- Joint economic development efforts.
- Libraries and parks & recreation.
- Solid Waste & Recycling.
- Group purchasing (health insurance, retirements, investments, etc.).
- Partnerships in pursuit of state and federal funding.

- Sharing of municipal vehicles and equipment (snow plows, mowers, dump trucks, etc.).
- Sharing of staff.

Challenges

There are often strong desires on the part of elected officials and residents to maintain the independence of existing jurisdictions. Efforts to increase cooperation and collaboration must deal with existing organizational missions and structures that support the independence of each community. The issues to be addressed when entering into multi-jurisdictional partnerships include:

- Desire for community autonomy.
- Questions regarding the allocation of costs.
- Fear of loss of service quality.
- Creating trust and an effective implementation mechanism.

Intergovernmental Notices

At the onset of the process to update the Town of Oconto Falls comprehensive plan, intergovernmental notices were mailed to the municipalities and organizations listed below. The purpose of the notices was to inform intergovernmental partners of the planning effort and to invite comment on draft plan chapters. A second mailing was sent prior to the Public Hearing to solicit testimony related to the recommended plan.

- Oconto County Planning & Zoning Department.
- City of Oconto Falls.
- Towns of Abrams, Gillett, Lena, Maple Valley, Morgan, Spruce, and Stiles
- Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission.
- Gillett and Oconto Falls School Districts.
- Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation.

Current Intergovernmental Agreements

As of January 2016, the Town of Oconto Falls is party to the following intergovernmental agreements:

- Municipal Intergovernmental Functional Collaboration Agreement.
- MABS-Division 137 Mutual Aid Agreement.
- Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Working Still Mutual Aid for Fire, Rescue, and/or Emergency Medical Services.
- Intergovernmental agreement for Town to use Oconto County Recycling Center in City of Oconto Falls.

CHAPTER 9: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Intergovernmental Programs

The following organizations provide intergovernmental assistance to local government:

Wisconsin Department of Administration²

The Wisconsin Department of Administration *Division of Intergovernmental Relations* (DIR) provides a broad array of services to the public and state, local and tribal governments. It supports counties, municipalities, citizens, and businesses by providing support services in land use planning, land information and records modernization, municipal boundary review, plat review, demography, and coastal management programs.

League of Wisconsin Municipalities³

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM) is comprised of 190 cities and 397 villages. LWM provides technical and legal assistance to member governments. It also acts as a representative of the state's incorporated communities before the governor and state legislature.

Wisconsin Towns Association⁴

The Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) is a statewide, voluntary, non-profit and non-partisan association of member town and village governments in the State of Wisconsin controlled by its Board of Directors. WTA's twin purposes are to support local control of government and to protect the interest of towns. In furtherance of those goals WTA provides three types of services for its members: legislative lobbying efforts, educational programs, and legal information. As of 2015, WTA's membership consists of 1,257 towns and 20 villages. Its services are made available to every elected or appointed officer of such member governments.

Intergovernmental Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The goals, objectives, and policies related to intergovernmental cooperation are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

² Excerpted from Wisconsin Department of Administration website, 2016.

³ Excerpted from League of Wisconsin Municipalities website, 2016.

⁴ Excerpted from Wisconsin Towns Association website, 2016.