



## MEMO

TO: ELECTED OFFICIALS, ADMINISTRATION STAFF, AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS OF THE INTERLOCAL COLLABORATION MEETING

FROM: COUNCILMEMBER RUD BROWNE, WHATCOM COUNTY

DATE: AUGUST 19, 2020

RE: GENERAL INFORMATION ON INTERLOCAL COLLABORATION

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In response to Whatcom County [Resolution 2020-022](#), elected officials from agencies and jurisdictions within Whatcom County participated in an online meeting on July 22, 2020. Attendees discussed opportunities to consolidate services to create efficiencies and costs savings. The following information builds on that discussion and aims to further dialogue at the next meeting.

### **VALUE OF COLLABORATION**

Washington State's [Interlocal Cooperation Act \(RCW 39.34\)](#) authorizes public agencies to contract with other public agencies to perform governmental or public services. Interlocal cooperation occurs to the mutual benefit of agencies involved and can reduce duplication, offer economies of scale, and improve governmental efficiency.<sup>1</sup> Contracts can be with a third party that provides service or with another governmental jurisdiction on a fee-for-service basis. Shared services can provide a new revenue stream for jurisdictions as well as offer that service at a lower cost. In cases where shared services do not create savings, there can be other benefits such as improved service delivery and increased interlocal communication.<sup>2</sup> It can be more cost effective to cooperate on service delivery for major capital expenditures or when special skills are needed.<sup>3</sup> The National Association of County Officials (NACO) recommends that shared service agreements begin with trust, allow the contract service recipient to maintain control over the service they receive, and maintain active management and open communication for all agencies involved.

### **WHATCOM COUNTY PARTNERSHIPS**

Whatcom County collaborates with many jurisdictions through Interlocal agreements or contracts for jail services, aerial photography, emergency medical services, parks programming, health education and outreach, pollution prevention education, and payroll services, as well as other services. Below are some examples:

- Whatcom County owns and maintains the Plantation Rifle Range and has interlocal agreements with law enforcement agencies and school systems to participate in **safety training programs**.<sup>4</sup>
- Whatcom Humane Society provides **animal services** for Whatcom County, Bellingham, Blaine & Ferndale.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Management/Service-Delivery/Intergovernmental-Cooperation.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event\\_attachments/Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf](https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event_attachments/Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://dced.pa.gov/download/intergovernmental-cooperation-handbook/?wpdmdl=56790&ind=0>

<sup>4</sup> Skagit Valley College ([201907029](#)), US Customs & Border Protection ([201907028](#)), Bellingham Police ([201905026](#))

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.whatcomhumane.org/services/>

- Interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Cities of Bellingham, Blaine, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas to use SHB 1406 revenue funds for **low income housing and emergency shelter** needs within Whatcom County. ([200402021-2](#))
- Whatcom County and San Juan County executed an interlocal cooperative agreement to implement youth **marijuana prevention activities**. ([202007007](#))
- The Whatcom County [Medical Examiner's Office](#) is an independent agency authorized by Whatcom County to perform **forensic investigations** for jurisdictions within the county.
- The Port of Bellingham's [Regional Economic Partnership \(REP\)](#) office work collaboratively with local and regional partners on various **economic development** efforts.
- Whatcom County area public safety agencies combine **emergency dispatch** into one call receiving and law enforcement dispatch communications center. ([201908010](#))
- Whatcom County and other jurisdictions work with the Opportunity Council to provide coordinated entry services for county area residents in need of **affordable housing or emergency shelter**.

### **EXAMPLES IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

Erie County, New York reorganized its technical infrastructure to create **shared IT services** across the county's departments and agencies, including integrating 26 police services answering points into one and increasing quality of its 911 emergency response system. The County saved millions of dollars and improved services.<sup>6</sup>

King County, Washington provides **police services** through contracts to 12 cities and saves millions of dollars. Each local jurisdiction selects their own police chief, wears distinctive uniforms, and displays its town seal on its vehicles thus maintaining the image as an independent jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup>

Atlantic County, NJ officials established a **utility district**, Atlantic County Utilities Authority, in the 1969 to address the need to provide comprehensive wastewater services and later expanded to include solid waste management, a landfill gas energy project, and refueling and vehicle charging stations. Local jurisdictions contract with the ACUA for services. ([www.acua.com](http://www.acua.com))

Many regions have partnered on **cooperative purchasing**. The [Kansas City Regional Purchasing Cooperative](#) has helped its members achieve nearly \$12 million in savings by fostering more cooperative purchasing.<sup>8</sup> The [Houston-Galveston Area Council \(H-GAC\) Cooperative Purchasing Program](#) assists local governments in reducing costs through this government-to-government procurement service.

Oakland County, Michigan in partnership with various jurisdictions developed a **Collaborative Asset Management System** for public assets such as water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer infrastructure<sup>9</sup>

### **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS\***

Agriculture Support Services	Fleet Maintenance	Joint insurance
Animal Control	Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	Landfills
Appraisal and Equalization	Grant Writing	Lawn and Grounds Maintenance
Behavioral Health Services	Human Resources	Parks and Recreation Services and Programs
Building Inspections	Information / Technology Services	Planning and Zoning Administration
Court Services	Infrastructure Maintenance	Personnel Sharing
Facility Sharing Agreements	Inspections	Police Services
Financial administration		

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.governing.com/blogs/bfc/Shared-Services--Less.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.governing.com/columns/mgmt-insights/col-shared-services-jurisdiction-identity-velveteen-rabbit.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://medium.com/coprocure/the-benefits-and-risks-of-cooperative-purchasing-202460993c8b>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.oakgov.com/it/Training%20Documents/B1.15\\_2017%20Exhibit%20XV%20CAMS.pdf](https://www.oakgov.com/it/Training%20Documents/B1.15_2017%20Exhibit%20XV%20CAMS.pdf)

Public Works Coverage  
Purchasing  
Records management  
Recycling  
Restaurant Inspections

Senior Services  
Social Services  
Solid Waste Management and  
Recycling  
Tax Billing and Collection

Transportation  
Wastewater Treatment  
Water Treatment and Delivery  
Website Design and Maintenance  
Youth Services

*\*Some listed programs may be underway in existing partnerships with potential for expansion.*

## **OTHER RESOURCES & REFERENCES**

MRSC: Interlocal Cooperation:

<http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Management/Service-Delivery/Intergovernmental-Cooperation.aspx>

A County Manager's Guide to Shared Services in Local Government:

[https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event\\_attachments/Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf](https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/event_attachments/Additional%20Service%20Sharing%20Resources.pdf)

Shared Services: Less Costly than "Free" Services: <https://www.governing.com/blogs/bfc/Shared-Services--Less.html>

Shared Services and the Velveteen Rabbit Factor:

<https://www.governing.com/columns/mgmt-insights/col-shared-services-jurisdiction-identity-velveteen-rabbit.html>

The Pandemic's Opportunity to Improve Government Procurement:

<https://www.governing.com/finance/The-Pandemics-Opportunity-to-Improve-Government-Procurement.html>

The benefits and risks of cooperative purchasing: Cooperative purchasing is increasingly part of the public procurement toolkit. Here's what you need to know about its benefits and risks:

<https://medium.com/coprocore/the-benefits-and-risks-of-cooperative-purchasing-202460993c8b>

XBC: Creating public value by unleashing the power of cross-boundary collaboration:

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Public-Sector/dttl-ps-xbc-08082013.pdf>

The Power of Cross-Boundary Collaboration:

<https://www.governing.com/columns/mgmt-insights/power-cross-boundary-collaboration.html>

Collaboration Done Right:

<https://www.governing.com/columns/mgmt-insights/public-private-coalition-adoption-services-texas-collaboration.html>

Will Massive Collaboration Work for You?

<https://www.governing.com/columns/mgmt-insights/Will-Massive-Collaboration-Work.html>

Politics in Bulk (March 2006): <https://www.governing.com/topics/politics/Politics-Bulk.html>

The benefits and risks of cooperative purchasing:

<https://medium.com/coprocore/the-benefits-and-risks-of-cooperative-purchasing-202460993c8b>

RCW 39.34: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=39.34>

Kirkland, WA: Interlocal Agreements:

[https://www.kirklandwa.gov/depart/Finance\\_and\\_Administration/Public\\_Records/Interlocal\\_Agreements.htm](https://www.kirklandwa.gov/depart/Finance_and_Administration/Public_Records/Interlocal_Agreements.htm)

US GSA Cooperative Purchasing Program

<https://www.gsa.gov/buying-selling/purchasing-programs/gsa-schedules/schedule-buyers/state-and-local-governments/cooperative-purchasing>