



Relationship Building

Members of the AAMDC/AUMA joint task force on cost sharing set forward the following principles for relationship building as a basis of successful service/cost sharing discussions and agreement development. In no particular order, the beliefs are:

- Recognize the importance of developing good inter-municipal relationships as a basis of good agreements.
- Facilitate the building of inter-municipal agreements based on open communication, trust, and transparency.
- Encourage the development of a broad community vision while respecting the democratic accountability of municipal councils.
- Realize the commitment from all parties to negotiate in good faith.
- Minimize the opportunities for litigation; take away the reasons for conflict.
- Remain flexible and adapt to emerging needs, agreements must be timely and reflective of the public will.

The task force identified that the most critical element to determine a successful outcome to cost-sharing negotiations is the relationship of negotiating parties, the attitude of individuals involved and the will of the group to come to a successful resolution. Relationships built on trust, respect, transparency and mutual understanding of the objectives, beliefs and values of the other party are essential to creating or nurturing a desire for a positive resolution to inter-municipal negotiations.

Characteristics of Effective Relationships

Effective relationships for purposes of creating and managing cost sharing arrangements will have a number of important characteristics.

- **Shared Values** – in the long run effective cost sharing relationships will be based on shared values.
- **Goal Oriented Shared Interests** – ultimately relationships in a cost sharing environment must be focused on a shared interest in identifying and helping to meet community needs. Relationships need to be rooted in a common view of those needs.
- **Shared Information** – effective cost sharing relationships require the creation and use of lots of information, from identification of needs to assessment of options to evaluation of results. Participants must work together to create, collect and use information wisely.

- Long Term – if there is a base of shared values and recognition of needs, effective cost sharing relationships will not be derailed by short term issues or problems.

Relationship Checklist

Establishing the appropriate climate for the development of successful cost-sharing agreements is fundamental. Once a relationship and understanding between two negotiating parties is reached, the desire and opportunity to achieve a successful resolution is enhanced. Below are a number of suggestions for building inter-municipal relationships as a starting point for negotiations.

Relationship/Attitude

- Create a will and commitment to improve/create a relationship – consider informal and formal events, such as:
 - an annual tour and discussion to gain a greater appreciation of the issues and priorities of those involved
 - joint council meetings
 - dinners, golf, social events
- Recognize the potential differences, cultural background, different values, beliefs, feelings, and avoid interruptions.
- Develop respect and understanding for each other and each other's position
- Leadership: encourage the process, look at different approaches, encourage other ideas
- Have all parties bury their differences – try to get those people involved that are interested in bringing a positive relationship out, and move others to the side
- Informal conversation - strategically identify other party's needs and the most effective way to communicate with them
- Be adaptable and willing to accept change in roles and behaviours in negotiation

Process

- Share individual municipal strategic visions and plans
- Develop a joint vision for cost-sharing
- Jointly set goals for the agreement/relationship
- Recognize a broader community vision in negotiation
- Identify common needs and interests
- Involve both parties equally in negotiations and decision-making
- Promote accountability among the partners
- Demonstrate economic, social and political advantages to the relationship
- Commit to negotiate in good faith
- Watch for early successes and build on those
- Remain in contact, and aware of emerging issues, challenges and opportunities that could impact relationships and the ongoing evolution of the community
- Ensure continued understanding from those involved of the visions, values, perceptions and strategies of differing parties

Barriers to be considered in Cost-sharing

The task force identified the following common barriers to be aware of and to consider in the development of Rural/Urban Cost-sharing Agreements:

- **Mistrust** – A fear of losing control over decision-making and suspicion regarding other’s motives
- **Negative attitudes** - An individual’s mindset, time made available for discussions, and the perception of fairness in negotiations
- **History** – The historical practices and preference of individuals, as well as any negative history will influence the expectations and attitude of the negotiating parties
- **Finance** – Increasing cost of municipal operations, ability to pay, usage and user pay and financial concerns/instability for municipalities
- **Politics** – Perceived expectations of public officials, turnover of municipal players and political pressure from external sources
- **Personalities** – Personal baggage of individuals, personality differences, an unclear understanding of “roles” and the desire for control
- **Power** – Differences in resources, appropriate sharing of decision-making and the equality of participants
- **Lack of leadership/vision** - Lack of leadership, ignorance of issues, understanding both perspectives, and different service level desires
- **Poor Communication** – Lack of appropriate communication
- **Fear** – Fear of loss of control over local services, and fear of creating unrealistic expectations in future agreements
- **Ignorance** - Lack of negotiating skills, lack of knowledge, misperception of roles, and an unwillingness to accept change
- **Me vs. Us** – Unwillingness to compromise or be good neighbours, focus on winning rather than compromise, and a focus on boundaries during negotiations
- **Public expectations** - Ratepayer buy-in or agreement, unclear public expectations and public pressure to develop a solution
- **Objectives** – Differing goals and priorities, differing understanding of community need and differing personal expectations
- **Viability** – Viability of the project
- **Transparency** – Transparency and openness of disclosure
- **Continuity of agreements after an election**
- **Goals/Expectations** - Differing goals or expectations from the agreement
- **Influence** - Differing influence and/or priorities

Inter-municipal advisory committees

To promote regular communication with residents, and to provide an opportunity for municipal representatives to understand and be aware of (service) concerns of other municipal officials and residents in the region, a worthwhile idea for consideration is the establishment of inter-municipal advisory committees. Inter-municipal advisory committees would encourage municipal representatives to work together to address issues in the region as a whole, and build relationships with each other and citizens.

Inter-municipal Advisory Committees

Sample Terms of Reference

Committee's Official Designation:

- The committee will be called the County of _____/Town of _____ Intermunicipal Advisory Committee

Purpose:

- The residents of the County of _____ and Town of _____ have an important role to play in the support and commitment of the work of their municipal representatives.
- Fostering relationships between residents and elected municipal representatives provides a strong sense of the larger regional community, an opportunity to gain information from all the participants of the committee, and promotes a better understanding of both urban and rural perspectives.
- Elected Municipal representatives have an opportunity to
 - Keep in touch with the perspectives and priorities of the regional community
 - Access an invaluable sounding board of residents
 - Receive input on proposed cost-sharing and other intermunicipal initiatives
 - Build relationships by working together to address local concerns that are common throughout the region.

Mandate

- Municipalities should jointly determine a mandate for an intermunicipal advisory committee.
- A mandate could include:
 - Providing an opportunity for community input
 - Provide a sounding board for elected representatives
 - Promote understanding and relationship building between elected officials and residents of a region
 - Identifying community priorities/concerns
 - Development of principles/guidelines to address community concerns
 - Identifying community needs, and
 - Identifying potential solutions for addressing community concerns/needs.

Representation

- **Representation is best determined by the participating municipalities**
- The Committee could consist of;
 - The Reeve (or designate) of the rural municipality(ies)
 - The Mayor(s) (or designate) of the urban municipality(ies)
 - An informal group of several informed residents, representing various interests from each participating municipality

Reporting

- The Reeve and Mayor would ensure regular communication with council/administration on the activities of the committee

Chair

- The Mayor and Reeve could serve as co-chairs, rotating the meeting chairmanship, or the committee could select a leading member of the broader community to chair the committee

Meetings

- Meeting frequency/scheduling would be determined by the participating municipalities

Term/Timelines

- To facilitate ongoing communication/goal setting/visioning the participating municipalities would determine an appropriate timeframe for the committee

Secretariat:

- Each participating municipality will appoint one staff member to provide research, advice and secretariat services to the committee

Communication:

- Official communication will be through the Reeve and Mayor