

High Performance Partnerships Final Report



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High Performance Partnerships *Dakota County*

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Executive Summary

The High Performance Partnerships (HiPP) project team identified 20 opportunities with the potential to enhance service delivery or reduce costs, or both:

Projects Evaluated

- **9-1-1 dispatching:** Consolidated PSAP
- **Building inspections and code enforcement**
- **Communications:** Enhance/expand joint communication efforts, including CATV
- **E-Government**
- **EMS:** New model for deployment of EMS resources
- **Energy:** Joint development and purchasing
- **Firefighting:** New model for deployment of firefighting resources
- **Health care:** Joint purchasing of employee health care
- **Information technology:** Combined operations, training, purchasing
- **Juvenile services:** One-stop shop
- **Law enforcement support/service center**
- **Leisure activities:** Coordinated delivery and scheduling
- **Police services:** New model for deployment of police resources
- **Prosecution services:** Joint non-felony prosecutions
- **Road system:** Coordinated planning
- **Service centers:** Co-location of multiple jurisdictions
- **Specialized public works equipment:** Sharing by multiple jurisdictions
- **Specialized public safety equipment:** Sharing by multiple jurisdictions
- **Street and road maintenance**
- **Transit services:** Coordinated planning and delivery

Evaluation Criteria

Each project was evaluated with a letter grade from A through F, on ten weighted criteria:

A. What is the magnitude of the potential success? (50%)

- **Quality of service:** How substantial is the anticipated improvement? (17.5% by weight)
- **Cost savings:** How significant are the expected cost savings? (17.5%)
- **Is there any other way to deliver the service?** (5%)
- **Transferability:** How many communities can benefit? (5%)
- **Qualitative advantages:** Are future "spin-off" benefits anticipated? (5%)



Executive Summary (continued)

B. What is the likelihood of achieving success? (50%)

- **Short-term manageability:** How complex, how costly is the initial effort? (17.5%)
- **Long-term manageability:** How complex is the ongoing management? (5%)
- **Political feasibility and support:** What are **citizens'** preferences? Is the opportunity consistent with citizens' values? (12.5%)
- **Political feasibility and support:** Is the opportunity consistent with the values of **elected officials, government employees and civic leaders?** (12.5%)
- **Measurement:** Can the outcomes be accurately measured? (2.5%)

The evaluation models and criteria are described in detail on pages 12-18 of this report. The "scorecard" is shown on page 18.

Projects Recommended at This Time for Implementation

1. **Joint non-felony prosecution services** (total score of 3.05 on a 4.00 point scale)
Rated "A" for long- and short-term manageability, public support, measurability
2. **Law enforcement support/service center** (3.05)
"A" for cost savings, transferability, spin-offs, officials support, measurability
3. **IT operations, training and purchasing** (3.00)
"A" for spin-offs, public support
4. **Joint purchasing employee health care** (2.85)
"A" for transferability, short- and long-term manageability, public support
5. **Sharing specialized public safety equipment** (2.82)
"A" for cost savings
6. **Centralized PSAP/9-1-1 dispatching** (2.80)
"A" for cost savings, transferability, spin-offs, measurability

The six projects that are recommended at this time for implementation are described in detail on pages 23-37 of this Final Report. The other projects considered are described on pages 38-52. A table showing the letter grades for all 20 projects on all 10 criteria, each, as well as the numerical score of all 20 projects, is shown on page 21.

Three additional projects earned numerical scores close to those of the six recommended projects. They are joint communications including CATV (2.72), joint purchasing of energy (2.70) and E-government (2.65). Other projects exhibited substantial strengths but also significant difficulties.



Executive Summary (continued)

Project Description

Project Charge: The HiPP project was designed to evaluate a very broad range of potential partnerships, and to identify three to five such opportunities that offered the best opportunity for success. As such, this project was not charged nor expected to provide a definitive or final analysis -- such as a fiscal or cost/benefit analysis, detailed feasibility study or an implementation plan -- of any of the opportunities. A more definitive analysis of the recommended options is anticipated as a next step for the recommended options.

Project Scope: The focus was primarily (though not exclusively) on those services for which the responsibility and accountability clearly rests with parties to this process -- i.e., on public-public partnerships, and on those among and between Dakota County and the cities and townships located within the county. Potential partnerships with such jurisdictions as school districts were not strictly ruled out, however, and the process also considered opportunities for privatization.

Methods: The project used a variety of methods to collect information, conduct evaluations and reach conclusions:

- Literature review of "best practices" in local government collaboration
- Survey of 300 citizens, local government employees and elected officials
- Facilitated workshops with municipal and county elected officials and senior administrators
- Public input meeting with an 80+ member citizen panel
- Additional public feedback from 60+ panelists in moderated focus group discussions

From all of the above sources, a list of 20 candidate opportunities for local government collaboration was developed, as well as the criteria for their evaluation.

- A scorecard was developed, against which the 20 candidates were rated and ranked

The methods of the HiPP process are described in greater detail on pages 7-11 of this Final Report.

Next Steps: For each of the six opportunities for local government collaboration that are recommended at this time for implementation, a further description of next steps, special challenges, possible features of the implementation, etc., are described on pages 18-37.

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Introduction

Project Description and Purpose

Local governments in Dakota County, and throughout the state and the nation, are under increasing pressure to answer the question of whether programs and services can be provided in a more effective and/or more efficient manner.

One way in which local governments are already moving to provide services more efficiently and more effectively is through partnerships with other units of government. A recent survey by the League of Minnesota Cities identified 1,682 such partnerships among 280 of its 820 member cities. Local governments in Dakota County, including both the county itself and many municipalities, are recognized as leaders in this area. In preparation for this project, Dakota County developed a list of examples of such partnerships in the county:

- Dakota County has entered into more than 75 joint powers agreements for the delivery of services to its citizens.
- The City of Lakeville is engaged in more than 80 collaborative service agreements.
- The City of Burnsville is engaged in more than 40 such agreements.
- Smaller communities such as Mendota Heights and Rosemount are party to approximately 15 joint service agreements.

The demands for greater cost-effectiveness, coupled with the many successes already achieved in the area, have stimulated the appetite of local governments in Dakota County to identify additional opportunities for collaboration. To this end, the county and many municipalities have launched the **High Performance Partnerships (HiPP) Project**.

The wisdom of undertaking this project at this time is borne out in the citizen survey conducted as a part of this project. Citizens were asked what they regard as the most serious issue in their community today, and 28 percent of the issues mentioned were budget and related issues -- budget cuts, taxes, the difficulty of maintaining quality services in an environment of declining or slow-growth budgets, and other related issues. Respondents were then asked if their local unit of government was doing the right amount of partnering with other local governments to deliver services or should do more, or less. Fifty-five percent said that their local unit of government should do more, while only seven percent said that their local government should do less.

Sixty county residents further participated in a series of focus group discussions, and expressed broad support for local government collaboration to save money, enhance services, or both.

Results of a survey of employees of municipalities and the county are even more striking. More than half of the issues that were raised centered on revenue, budget and related issues. When asked whether their department or area should do more partnering with other local units of government to deliver services, more than 60 percent agreed. Not a

single one of 161 respondents said they should do less. This is not surprising, since more than 80 percent reported that their department or area was already involved in collaborative service delivery arrangements, and they also reported a high level of satisfaction with the results of those arrangements.

Project Scope

Based on facilitated discussion with the project steering committee, the project scope was defined as follows.

- The HiPP project was designed to evaluate a very broad range of potential partnerships, and to identify three to five such opportunities that offered the best opportunity for success. As such, this project was not charged nor expected to provide a definitive or final analysis -- such as a fiscal or cost/benefit analysis, or detailed feasibility study, or an implementation plan -- of any of the opportunities. A more definitive analysis of the recommended options is anticipated as a next step for any of the recommended options.
- The focus of the project was primarily (though not exclusively) on those services for which the responsibility and accountability clearly rests with parties to this process. That is, the primary focus was on public-public partnerships, and on those among and between Dakota County and the cities and townships located within the county.

Potential partnerships with such jurisdictions as school districts were not strictly ruled out, however.

The process also considered opportunities for privatization.

- The parties to this project were open to any of the various types of formal relationships available to them under Minnesota Statutes.
- A preference was established for addressing issues that the county and/or cities are already addressing, and for which they have clear responsibility. Emerging issues, which the cities and/or county are not already addressing or which could be addressed at a higher level of intensity, were not ruled out, however.
- The parties were open to recommendations that entail relationships anywhere on a continuum from less intensive to more intensive partnerships. A model for describing the intensity of public service partnerships is presented on page 15 of this report.
- The project identified and recommended services that might be delivered jointly by several local units of government in a collaborative manner. The recommended services will serve as models -- that is, they will consist of service models that many if not most units of government in Dakota County might adopt. This project does not suggest or recommend which specific municipalities should adopt which (or any) of the recommended service models. These decisions are, of course, the province of each unit of government to make for their own community.

Methodology

In the project's first phase, a very wide range of opportunities was identified, and then reduced to a manageable number -- 20 -- for further evaluation. The HiPP project team gathered information in four ways in reducing the opportunities to those 20.

- A literature review of "best practices" in local government collaboration encompasses local, state and federal government reports; and research and reports by foundations, associations and academic programs. The review was submitted as a separate document, and the executive summary also is submitted as an Appendix to this Final Report.
- Input was solicited from citizens, and local government employees and elected officials through a survey, which was posted on the Dakota County Web site and distributed to officials and employees in hard copy format. Exactly 300 completed surveys were collected. The survey report was submitted as an Appendix to this Final Report.
- A series of facilitated workshop/discussions was held with the project steering committee, consisting of municipal and county elected officials and senior administrators. Members of the steering committee are listed on the first inside page of this report.
- A public input meeting -- with a citizen panel consisting of more than 80 residents from throughout Dakota County -- was held on May 6, 2004, at the Rosemount Community Center Auditorium. A report of the proceedings of this meeting was submitted as an Appendix to this Final Report.

In the second phase of the project, the 20 candidates were evaluated, and six are recommended at this time for implementation. The evaluation consisted of two steps:

- Public feedback was received from more than 60 residents of Dakota County in a series of moderated focus group discussions.
- A scorecard was developed, and each of the 20 candidates was rated and ranked using the scorecard.

Scorecard

The scorecard is built around two major categories of issues or concerns, with five criteria falling within each of these two areas:

- First, what is the magnitude of the potential success, whether anticipated to be in the form of cost savings, or improved services, or other?
- Second, what is the likelihood of success? What, if any, are the barriers to success, and how severe are they?

Each of the ten criteria was assigned a weight ranging from 2.5 percent to 17.5 percent of the total, and each of the 20 opportunities was assigned a letter grade from A through F on each of the criteria. The evaluation criteria and method are described in detail on pages 12-18, and the scorecard itself is shown on page 18.

Recommended Opportunities for Local Government Collaboration

As a result of the foregoing input and evaluation, six opportunities for local government collaboration are recommended at this time for implementation. All of the opportunities, and the rationale for their recommendation, are discussed in detail below. They are:

- Joint non-felony **prosecution services**
- Joint purchasing of employee **health care insurance**
- Countywide **law enforcement service and support center**
- Sharing of **public safety equipment**
- Centralized PSAP and **9-1-1 dispatching**
- Combined operations, training and purchasing of **information technology (IT)**

Reporting

Reporting has occurred progressively throughout the project, in a series of documents:

- Best Practices/Literature Review, dated March 8, 2004
- Interim Report, dated May 17, 2004
- Appendices to the Final Report, dated May 17, 2004, and including:
 - Survey Report
 - Citizen Participation Meeting Report
 - Literature Review Executive Summary
- Focus Group Report, dated June 17, 2004
- Final Project Report
 - Draft Report was dated June 29, 2004
 - This Final Project Report, dated July 29, 2004

About This Final Report

This Final Report has three major purposes:

- Discuss in detail the six opportunities that are recommended at this time for implementation. It should be noted that participation in any or all such collaborative efforts by Dakota County or any city or township will be voluntary on their part.
- Identify and discuss (in lesser detail) the 14 other opportunities that were evaluated for this project, and provide a rationale as to why the opportunities did not rank as highly as the six that are recommended at this time.
- Describe the methods and criteria used in the evaluation of these 20 opportunities.

Partnership Opportunities Considered in This Study

- 9-1-1 dispatching: Consolidated PSAP
- Building inspections and code enforcement
- Communications: Enhance/expand joint communication efforts
- E-Government
- EMS: New model for deployment of EMS resources
- Energy: Joint development and purchasing
- Firefighting: New model for deployment of firefighting resources
- Health care costs: Joint purchasing of employee health care
- Information technology: Combined operations, training, purchasing
- Juvenile services: One-stop shop
- Law enforcement support/service center
- Leisure Activities: Coordinated delivery and scheduling
- Police services: New model for deployment of police resources
- Prosecution services: Joint non-felony prosecutions
- Road system: Coordinated planning
- Service centers: Co-location of multiple jurisdictions
- Specialized public works equipment: Sharing by multiple jurisdictions
- Specialized public safety equipment: Sharing by multiple jurisdictions
- Street and road maintenance
- Transit services: Coordinated planning and delivery

Models and Criteria for Evaluation

Our literature review of “best practices” in local government collaboration identified a surprisingly wide range of approaches, models and criteria for evaluation and measurement. Workshop and survey results and citizen input was reviewed to determine which of these approaches makes the most sense for this project. The following approach (or model) and criteria are recommended.

The various criteria are defined in two categories.

- ***What is the nature and the magnitude of the potential success?*** If cost savings are anticipated, for example, how significant are they? If the quality of service is expected to improve, how substantial is the potential improvement?

- ***What is the likelihood of achieving success?*** Is the project easy to manage, or difficult? Does the partnership require a large commitment of resources up front? Is the collaboration likely to have the support of citizens and other stakeholders? How high are the barriers to success?

What is the magnitude of the potential success?

1. Quality of service. To what degree will the collaboration result in a significant improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the services provided?

- Effectiveness: Will the service be more effective? Will it result in better outcomes for those who receive the service?
- Improve customer service: Will citizens perceive the higher quality of service? Will the service be more responsive to citizens’ needs and expectations?
- Better coordinate service: Will the partners -- whether Dakota County, cities or townships, or other agencies of state, local and federal government -- provide a better coordinated, more seamless service?
- Accessibility of the service: Will the service be more readily and more conveniently available to those who need it? Is the responsiveness to special or unusual needs enhanced?

2. Cost of service. To what degree will the partnership result in a positive impact to the cost of the service?

- Reduce the cost: Will the partners be able to deliver the service at a lower total cost? What is the magnitude of the potential cost savings?
- Efficiency: Will the partners be able to serve more citizens for the same cost? Will the cost per customer or transaction be reduced?

- Do more with less: Will the collaboration allow the partners to continue to provide a high quality of service despite cuts in funding and/or other resources?

- Reduce risk: Will each of the partners experience a reduction in their exposure to financial and other risks associated with providing the service?

3. There is no other way to provide the service. An emerging issue -- such as the manufacture and use of methamphetamine -- may be regional in scope. No one jurisdiction may have the ability to cope with such an issue. Or, perhaps state or federal laws mandate a regional or sub-regional approach.

4. Transferability. Do many different local units of government have the opportunity to benefit from the collaborative service approach?

5. Qualitative advantages. Are there other, “softer” advantages that may result in additional “harder” advantages later on?

- Gain expertise, understanding: Do the partners have the opportunity to learn new skills or gain new knowledge about the issue or service in question?

- Build relationships: Will the partners have the opportunity to build relationships that may help uncover additional opportunities for high performance partnerships?

- Innovation: Does the partnership have the potential to cultivate a culture of innovation?

What is the likelihood of achieving success?

6. Short-term manageability/ease of implementation. How complex is this effort? How difficult will it be to launch a new, collaborative approach to this service? This criterion is drawn in part from a typology describing different levels of complexity of public policy and implementation issues published by the Pew Partnership for Civic Change.

Table 1: Three Levels of Complexity of Public Policy/Implementation Issues

- Type I problems are those that have an obvious definition, a clear solution, and the burden of responsibility lies with one person or a small group.
- Type II problems can usually be defined with some clarity, but the solution is unclear. They require traditional leaders and stakeholders to work toward the solution.
- Type III problems are those issues whose definition and solution are unclear, and they require by definition that those affected do the work toward the solution.

From Pew Partnership for Civic Change, *Collaborative Leadership*
www.pew-partnership.org/collableadership.html

Type I, II and III issues present increasing levels of management complexity and challenges on the following dimensions:

- Resources required: What is the cost in terms of dollars, human resources and time that are required to manage this project?
- Expertise: Do the potential partners have the experience and expertise to make a new approach work?
- Leadership: Is the leadership skill and capacity available that is necessary to make this collaboration work? Who will provide the leadership needed to make this collaboration work?
- Standards and expectations: Are the standards of service and other expectations of the potential partners compatible with one another? Is it common that different communities have different standards and expectations concerning the proposed service? Is that a problem?

7. Longer-term manageability issues. What, if any, longer-term management issues are there?

- Timing: How long will it take before the benefits of the collaboration are realized?
- Flexibility: How much and how rapid of flexibility is needed in this service area? Does the collaborative approach allow for enough flexibility in managing the service long-term? If a community chooses to participate in the proposed collaboration, does it still have (or does it forego) other options and approaches for the future?
- Accountability and control: Does the proposed collaboration provide for appropriate control over the delivery of the service? Is accountability for the quality of the service clear to citizens and to local officials (elected and staff)? Are accountability and control appropriately aligned?

8. Political feasibility and support -- citizens. What are citizens' preferences? Is there a reason to believe that citizens will support this particular effort?

9. Political feasibility and support -- government officials and staff. What are the preferences of local elected officials and employees throughout the ranks of local government? How much support and/or opposition to a given partnership reasonably may be foreseen?

Both criteria number 8 and 9 appeal to community values. Each asks, of a different constituency: Is the proposed collaboration consistent with the values of the community and of the political and civic leadership?

- Civic identity: Is this a core function? Is it a part of the civic identity? Is it a source of community building?
- Control: Is this a core local government service over which municipalities should maintain strong control? Does the collaborative approach allow for the maintenance of sufficient local control of the service?
- Accountability: Is it clear who is accountable for the service in a partnership arrangement? Is it clear to citizens? Is it clear among elected officials and staff? Or does a particular collaboration obscure the ultimate accountability in a particular case?
- Innovation: Is this collaboration particularly innovative? How important is it to be innovative?
- What is the “right” level of government to address this issue? Is this a local issue or problem or service? Is it regional in scope?
- Intensity of collaboration: What is the level of intensity of collaboration that is required to make the new service model work? Is the proposed level of intensity feasible? Is it agreeable to all of the potential partners? This important consideration is raised by a variety of sources reviewed and cited in the Literature Review, most usefully by Betsy Hubbard, *Making Sense of Public Service Partnerships: Understanding the Why and How of Interagency Efforts* (Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, August 1995; written in fulfillment of an independent paper requirement for a Master of Arts degree in Public Affairs). Hubbard’s elegant discussion of the levels of collaborative intensity is summarized in Table 2 on the following page.

10. Measurement. Can the outcomes be accurately measured? How difficult is it to measure results in this area? Will the participants know whether they have been successful, or not?

Table 2: Nine Types of Intergovernmental Partnerships

<p>Cooperating Using resources to assist other agencies</p>	<p>Coordinating Organizing or combining resources to more effectively reach a mutual goal</p>	<p>Collaborating Collectively applying resources toward problems that lack clear ownership</p>
<p>Contributing Resources Agencies contribute resources to another agency’s project or effort. <i>Primary goal:</i> Help a worthy cause</p>	<p>Reconciling Activities Agencies adjust or combine existing programs (on-going) in order to deliver services more effectively. <i>Primary goal:</i> Improve programs</p>	<p>Sharing Program Responsibilities Agencies come together as a new entity to provide services or manage a resource. <i>Primary goal:</i> Meet a need that can only be addressed by working together</p>
<p>Promoting Others Agencies willingly share information about the work or services of others. <i>Primary goal:</i> Meet the needs of a shared constituency</p>	<p>Sharing Resources Agencies that use the same good or service agree to share in its cost. <i>Primary goal:</i> Save money</p>	<p>Creating New Systems or Programs Agencies work to create and implement a new model to deliver services or address a public problem. <i>Primary goal:</i> Develop a new means of responding to public problems</p>
<p>Sharing Information Agencies share information on a formal or informal basis. <i>Primary goal:</i> Improve performance by keeping informed</p>	<p>Producing Joint Projects Agencies depend (short-term) upon each other for producing a specific event or product. <i>Primary goal:</i> Produce an outcome that no agency could achieve on its own</p>	<p>Collective Planning Agencies develop a collective vision for the management of a resource or alleviation of a social problem. <i>Primary goal:</i> Promote a collective vision.</p>

From Betsy Hubbard, *Making Sense of Public Service Partnerships: Understanding the Why and How of Interagency Efforts* (Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, August 1995; written in fulfillment of an independent paper requirement for a Master of Arts degree in Public Affairs)

Scorecard

A scorecard, encompassing the ten criteria, was compiled. (A copy of the scorecard is provided on the following page [page 18]). Each of the ten criteria was assigned a weight ranging from 2.5 percent to 17.5 percent of the total, as follows:

Table 3: Weights Assigned to Each of Ten Criteria

Criteria	Wt.
What is the magnitude of the potential success?	50%
1. Improved quality of service	17.5%
2. Reduced cost of service	17.5%
3. There is no other way to deliver the service.	5%
4. Transferability	5%
5. Qualitative advantages	5%
What is the likelihood of achieving success?	50%
6. Short-term manageability	17.5%
7. Longer-term manageability	5%
8. Political feasibility and support among the public	12.5%
9. Political feasibility and support among elected officials and local government staff	12.5%
10. Measurement	2.5%

- In general or categorical terms, the weighting consists of results (50 percent), manageability (25 percent) and political feasibility (25 percent).
- Each opportunity was then evaluated on each of the ten criteria by virtue of a letter grade from A through F.
- The weights and letter grade for each of the 20 opportunities was then converted to a numerical score. The letter grade (A through F) was converted to a four-point scale, and those points were then multiplied by the weight. For example, an “A” (4 points) on a criterion weighted at 0.175 equals 0.70 rating points.
- The points available for each opportunity, when added together, equal 4.00.

Dakota County High Performance Partnerships Project Evaluation Scorecard

Project:

Criteria	Wt.	Project Rating					Pts.
What is the magnitude of the potential success?	50%						Pts.
1. Improved quality of service	17.5%	F	D	C	B	A	
Effectiveness							
Improve customer service							
Better coordinate service							
Accessibility of service							
2. Reduced cost of service	17.5%	F	D	C	B	A	
Reduce the direct cost							
Efficiency							
Do more with less							
Reduce risk							
3. There is no other way to deliver the service.	5%	F	D	C	B	A	
4. Transferability	5%	F	D	C	B	A	
5. Qualitative advantages	5%	F	D	C	B	A	
Gain expertise, understanding							
Build relationships							
Innovation							
What is the likelihood of achieving success?	50%						Pts.
6. Short-term manageability	17.5%	F	D	C	B	A	
Resources required							
Expertise							
Leadership							
Standards and expectations							
7. Longer-term manageability	5%	F	D	C	B	A	
Timing							
Flexibility							
8. Political feasibility and support among the public	12.5%	F	D	C	B	A	
9. Political feasibility and support among elected officials and local government staff	12.5%	F	D	C	B	A	
10. Measurement	2.5%	F	D	C	B	A	
Total Points This Project							—

Evaluation

As noted above, each of the 20 opportunities was evaluated and assigned a letter grade (of A through F) against each of the ten criteria. Following, first, is a rough interpretation of the letter grades on each criteria and, secondly, the rating, ranking and scores for each of the 20 opportunities on page 21. A detailed discussion of the six recommended opportunities follows beginning on page 23, and a discussion of the other 14 opportunities also follows beginning on page 38. These discussion sections will provide a fuller rationale for the rating and ranking shown on the next three pages.

Table 4: Evaluation Criteria and Grades

<p>Quality of Service</p> <p>A = quality may improve significantly B = quality may improve some C = maintain existing quality of service D = reduce the quality in order to save money, or because people don't really care, etc.) F = reduce the quality significantly</p> <p>Note that no opportunity was rated as a D or F. Each of the 20 candidate opportunities would at least maintain current service levels.</p> <p>Cost Savings</p> <p>A = save a lot of money B = save some money C = maintain current spending, but get more service for the same price) D = spend more F = spend a lot more</p> <p>No opportunity was rated as an F. Fourteen of the 20 opportunities show the potential to reduce costs and are therefore rated as an A or B.</p> <p>No Other Way to Deliver the Service</p> <p>This item was rated as a Yes/No. Four of the 20 opportunities were rated as a Yes on this dimension.</p> <p>Transferability</p> <p>A = every community in the county could benefit B = many communities could benefit C = some communities could benefit D = a few communities could benefit F = very few communities could benefit</p> <p>Only two of the opportunities were rated as low as a D on this criteria.</p> <p>Qualitative Advantages</p> <p>A = lots of/very significant spin-offs -- e.g. centralized 9-1-1 dispatching might lead to new deployment schemes that could provide better service and/or further lower costs of EMS, fire or police deployment</p>
--

Table 4 continued**Qualitative Advantages continued**

B = some spin-offs

C = not clear

D = probably not

F = might even constrain future flexibility in other areas

No opportunities were rated lower than a C on this criteria.

Short-Term Manageability

A = this is easy and not very costly to do

B = somewhat easy and/or costly

C = significant complexity and/or costs (but not both)

D = significant complexity AND costs

F = extremely complex and or costly

Several opportunities were rated as a D, but none was rated an F.

Longer-Term Manageability

A = easy to manage longer-term and local governments retain flexibility

B = easy to manage longer-term OR local governments retain flexibility

C = some management complexity OR local governments lose some flexibility

C = some management complexity and local governments lose some flexibility

F = significant management complexity and local governments lose much flexibility

None of the opportunities was rated lower than C.

Political Feasibility

Support for the opportunity among the general public, and among government officials and employees are evaluated separately. But the letter grades may be interpreted similarly. The grades are based primarily (but not solely) on the surveys, public participation and focus group discussions. Only two items rated below a C, those reflecting potential public opposition building inspections/code enforcement and police deployment.

A = significant support for this opportunity, and no known opposition

B = some support; and while there is no known opposition at this time (in Dakota County), this type of consolidation has generated opposition elsewhere

C = some support was expressed, but some concerns and/or opposition also was voiced

D = either a lack of support or demand, or definite opposition

F = a lack of support or demand, and definite opposition

Measurement

A = very easy to measure results, to determine whether successful or not

B = easy to measure

C = not easy to measure, may not be able to fully determine success

D = difficult to measure

F = impossibly to measure, to know whether successful or not

No opportunity was rated below C.

Table 5: Rating, Ranking and Scoring for Each of 20 Partnership Opportunities

Criteria (across) Project (down)	Quality	Cost Savings	Only Way	Transfer	“Spin Offs”	Short-Term Manage	Long-Term Manage	Public Support	Gov’t Support	Measure	Total
Weight	17.5%	17.5%	5%	5%	5%	17.5%	5%	12.5%	12.5%	2.5%	
Non-felony prosecution services	B	B	N	B	C	A	A	A	C	A	3.05
Law enforcement support/service center	B	A	N	A	A	C	C	B	A	A	3.05
IT operations, training, purchasing	B	B	N	B	A	B	B	A	B	C	3.00
Joint purchasing employee health care	C	B	N	A	B	A	A	A	B	B	2.85
Sharing specialized public safety equipment	B	A	Y/N	B	B	C	C	B	B	B	2.82
Centralized PSAP/ 9-1-1 dispatch	C	A	N	A	A	D	B	B	B	A	2.80
Communications/CATV	B	C	N	C	B	B	B	A	B	C	2.72
Joint purchasing energy	C	B	N	B	B	C	B	A	B	B	2.70
E-government	A	C	N	C	A	C	B	B	B	C	2.65
Share public works equipment	C	B	N	C	C	C	B	B	A	B	2.52
One-stop juvenile services	A	C	Y	B	B	C	C	B	C	C	2.52
Street/road maintenance	C	B	N	B	C	C	B	C	A	B	2.45
Road system planning	C	C	Y	B	C	C	B	A	B	C	2.42
Deliver leisure activities	B	C	N	C	B	B	B	C	C	B	2.38
EMS deployment	B	B	N	A	C	D	B	B	C	B	2.38
Firefighting deployment	B	A	N	A	B	D	C	B	C	B	2.32
Building/code inspections	C	B	N	B	C	B	A	D	C	A	2.32
Co-locate service centers	C	B	N	D	C	C	C	B	C	C	2.15
Transit planning/delivery	B	D	Y	D	C	C	C	A	C	C	2.15
Deploy police services	B	B	N	B	C	D	C	D	C	C	2.00

**Partnership Opportunities Recommended At This Time
for Implementation (in rank order)**

1. Prosecution services: Joint non-felony prosecutions 3.05
2. Law enforcement support/service center 3.05
3. Information technology: Combined operations, training, purchasing
3.00
4. Health care costs: Joint purchasing of employee health care 2.85
5. Specialized public safety equipment: Sharing by multiple jurisdictions
2.82
6. 9-1-1 dispatching: Consolidated PSAP 2.80

Joint non-felony prosecution services (3.05 points)

Background

The suggestion of centralized prosecution services refers to non-felony prosecutions, which account for 99 percent of all prosecutions and for which city and county attorneys have statutory responsibility.

According to the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA), in 27 percent of Minnesota counties, all non-felony prosecutions are conducted by the cities. In 14 percent, the county conducts all non-felony prosecutions. In the other 59 percent, the county attorney prosecutes non-felony cases for some but not all cities.

All counties have full-time county attorneys, who are elected to office, while only about a dozen cities, most with populations over 50,000, have full-time city attorneys on staff. All others retain private law firms for prosecution services, either singly or jointly through joint powers agreements.

Opportunity

According to the OLA, cities using their county attorney for non-felony prosecution are more likely than cities using private firms to utilize the following best practices:

- 75 percent of counties have access to victim/witness assistance programs versus 55 percent of city attorneys
- Misdemeanor-related training for law enforcement
- A higher percentage of cases disposed of at arraignment
- Better communications with local elected officials, staff and citizens
- 52 percent of county attorneys have written policies to set priorities among cases versus 25 percent of city attorneys
- 82 percent of county attorneys reimburse prosecutorial staff for continuing education versus 38 percent of city attorneys

Based upon these facts, coupled with the widespread use of this approach across the state, it was determined that this would be a high potential candidate for collaboration to improve service via coordinated efforts and save money bas

Why This Opportunity Is Recommended

This opportunity is recommended first and foremost on the expectation that the costs of non-felony prosecutions can be reduced. Secondly, the quality of services -- as measured

by the implementation of the above best practices -- might also be enhance. Consolidation of prosecution services also offers the possibility that through coordinated efforts with a broad range of police departments, policies would be identified and adopted that would reduce the time that law enforcement officers spend in court.

Pros

- Reduce the cost of service
- Enhance the quality of service -- i.e. implementation of best practices, and also consistency/fairness of prosecutions
- Project is fairly easily managed

Cons

- Perception that there is not a problem in this area

Challenge

Because this is an area where services are already heavily privatized, cities are likely to receive objections from the private law firms who provide this service. Often these firms assign less experienced and therefore less costly attorneys to this duty. It is probable that they would contend that free enterprise is working well and that the city is getting good value. Additionally, in the typical scenario, more experienced attorneys in the firm are available to fill in and provide support.

Implementation

Of all of the projects presented, this seems most likely to be a project led by Dakota County. While certainly not a foregone conclusion, the basis of this recommendation is, in large part informed by the fact that this is a successful model in other counties. Given the county's staff infrastructure in the attorney's office, this would appear to offer the most realistic option. By providing staffing to the cities and overseeing the operation, the county could work with the cities to establish a model for coordinating with law enforcement agencies and billing the cities for the work performed.

Another approach involving the creation of a multi-jurisdictional provider could certainly be analyzed, but this may be unnecessarily bureaucratic for the type of opportunity described here. In either case, it would make sense for Dakota County to take the lead and convene a group of jurisdictions throughout the county to examine this more closely.

An oversight committee, made up of law enforcement or administration representatives, perhaps initially processed through the Criminal Justice Information Integration Network (CJIIN), could provide valuable guidance and direction to this effort, and should be considered if this project is pursued.

For More Information

Program Evaluation Division, Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota,
Non-Felony Prosecution: A Best Practices Review (April 17, 1997)

Law enforcement support and service center (3.05)

Background

Public safety is a core function of local government, and fairly recently was regarded as a very serious issue in many communities. Fortunately, concerns regarding crime and public safety have abated in recent years, according to many public opinion surveys. In the 2004 Dakota County Citizens Survey (not the one conducted specifically for the HiPP project), 90 percent of citizens reported feeling “somewhat” or “very safe” in their neighborhoods. Eighty-four percent reported feeling “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes, and 77 percent reported feeling “somewhat” or “very safe” from property crimes. The ratings for safety from violent crimes and property crimes are higher than the norm for other counties.

Yet, employee survey respondents agreed that there is more than can be done to enhance law enforcement efforts and public safety. In the employee survey, more suggestions were made for partnerships in the area of law enforcement and public safety than in other area of local government responsibility. Joint 9-1-1 dispatching (discussed below), and the coordination or consolidation of public safety agencies and prosecution services (discussed below) are examples. So, too, is the creation of a law enforcement support services center.

Most citizens think of law enforcement as the patrol officer or the deputy sheriff they see on the street. However, much of the time and money dedicated to law enforcement is allocated to the people and equipment that support those front line individuals. Report processing, evidence storage and maintenance, training, and a host of “back room” functions all take time and resources to deliver the service on the street.

Opportunity

Law enforcement, as mentioned previously, is typically the largest share of a municipal budget. Labor, in the form of support services, makes up a significant portion of those costs. Many of the support functions, such as report processing, use similar reporting formats and follow common procedures across jurisdictions. For these reasons, establishing a joint law enforcement support and service center was rated as a high potential project.

In the employee survey, the concept of a consolidated law enforcement support services center was among the top four most frequently mentioned suggestions. Also mentioned in the employee survey were a number of additional opportunities that may or may not fall beneath the umbrella of a support services center, and may or may not overlap with the above description:

- Homeland security, special operations and emergency preparedness
- Specialized investigations, including mobile lab/crime scene, and financial and computer crimes

- Combine IT support for law enforcement
- Streamline police interactions with the courts
- Traffic and commercial vehicle enforcement
- Jails and/or holding cells

Members of the HiPP Steering Committee agreed, and noted that such a center might encompass the following services:

- Dispatching (discussed separately)
- Records and document processing
- Evidence and investigative support,
- Technical maintenance (CJIN systems & 800 MHz)
- DWI processing
- Training
- Homeland security depot
- Dakota County Drug Task Force

Gaining economies of scale for many of these human resource heavy functions make this an attractive opportunity.

Why This Opportunity Is Recommended

This recommendation provides obvious opportunities to achieve economies of scale across a variety of law enforcement support services. It is perhaps equally, if not more important, however, that many of these services are highly specialized. They require special equipment as well as personnel with special training. A specialized service area encompassing some or all of the above services has the potential to provide more expert services.

Pros

Increase the quality/effectiveness of the service
Reduce the cost of the service
Transferability -- available to all jurisdictions in the county
Spin-off benefits, such as increased access to expertise

Cons

Cost of implementation, including possible construction of a new facility
Management complexity in terms of personnel, processes
Differing standards and expectations

Challenges

The greatest challenges to making this project happen are likely to center on two issues: (1) Management and coordination; and (2) standardization of processes.

Although many of these back room functions are similar, they are directly related to and support the functions of specific jurisdictions. Coordinating the activity and data flow among numerous jurisdictions could pose a significant challenge. Accountability for performance in the street is often tied to timely support; therefore, many internal stakeholders may resist changes in support services. As in many other projects, local control will be an issue.

Standardization will also be an issue, particularly if data processing functions are involved. As with the IT effort mentioned previously, the maximum gain comes from the standardization of procedure and process.

Implementation

Given the complexity and potential sophistication of the organization necessary to carry this out, it is likely that one large organization would take the lead on this. Another option could be to have different services carried out at different locations. Depending upon how the responsibilities are divided, however, this could limit the economies of scale gained from a larger consolidation effort.

A joint powers arrangement, with an oversight board representing each jurisdiction, would likely be the best model, given the issues involved and the importance of the services being supported. To determine the appropriate model and scope of services to be delivered, it would be prudent to engage a consultant to conduct an organizational analysis, including scope of services to be shared, geographic and organizational reach, and facilities to be constructed, or modified. The consultant, or perhaps a cross-jurisdictional team should also address the governance and oversight issues.

For More Information

League of Minnesota Cities, *Combining Police Departments: Issues to Consider* (www.lmnc.org/pdfs/jointpowersmemo.pdf)

Information Technology (IT): Combined operations, training, purchasing (3.00)

Background

All Minnesota counties participate in one of three computer collaboratives. Many cities, including several in Dakota County, participate in the Local Government Information Systems (LOGIS) collaborative. Employee survey respondents singled out the sharing of assessment data and county Geographic Information Systems (GIS) services to the cities as successful examples of existing partnerships.

In our Literature Review, we found that most of the attention to technology in government has been in the more glamorous areas of application development and e-government. There is surprisingly little published information about local government partnerships in the provision of the more mundane IT operational and support services. Successful application development and the timely delivery of digital services and e-government, however, depend upon an effective back-room operation.

A study exploring the potential consolidation of services of Pueblo County and the City of Pueblo, Colorado, suggests another benefit of collaboration in the area of information technology. That is, the limited availability and high cost of qualified IT professionals made it difficult for either to attract the employees they needed. A more consolidated approach to hiring (and/or purchasing) from that limited talent pool facilitated “better and extended services.”

Opportunity

Information technology and the supporting services necessary to keep it running require significant staffing and capital resources. The specialized nature of the field makes it difficult to attract and retain high quality staff. Further, ongoing training for general employees on the use of new software and systems requires a major commitment of both time and staff resources on a consistent and ongoing basis. The combination of high capital investment and significant human resources for both support and training make this a project with a high potential for cost savings.

Another reason to pursue this opportunity comes from local government employees in Dakota County themselves. When asked in the employee survey what they regard as key opportunities for local government collaboration, more than ten percent of all responses were in the area of information technology. The single IT opportunity most frequently mentioned is the consolidation of IT operations, technical support/services and the personnel who provide them.

It is reasonable to believe that the sharing of information technology and supporting services may increase the efficiency of their operations. Not the least of these is the fact that many local units of government in Dakota County are already partnering in the area of information technology with good success.

Why This Opportunity Is Recommended

There are two additional, overriding concerns that this opportunity addresses. One is that smaller communities have particular difficulty in accessing effective expertise in this area; this opportunity would provide them with cost-affordable access to technology services. The other is the proliferation of applications across jurisdictions.

Standardization of technology services will enable the service provider to recognize future opportunities to standardize technology. This, in turn, might provide a platform for a more cost-effective and integrated implementation of some (or all) of the 30 applications suggested in the employee survey, resulting in the ultimate outcome of improved customer service.

Pros

- Smaller communities cannot access a similar level of expertise in any other way
- Transferability -- available to all jurisdictions in the county
- Spin-off benefits, such as possible standardization, for enhanced compatibility and service delivery across jurisdictions
- Strong support among the public and government employees

Cons

- Management complexity, especially relating to non-standard technology
- Different standards and expectations among communities

Challenges

The most obvious challenge to local governments in joining together in this type of endeavor is the need to standardize software and hardware. Some flexibility can, and would likely be provided, but standardization will yield the highest benefit. Therefore, managing change and the difficulties related to giving up “uniqueness” will need to be addressed. Further, the jurisdictions that pay for the service but not directly control it will have to be convinced that they will receive timely support and assistance. These issues, and at least perceived inequities between large and small users, are likely to be an issue.

Implementation

The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) published one report that focused broadly on IT operations best practices in 2002. None of its recommendations call for partnering among local units of government, though the important role being played by computer vendors is noted. The OLA recommends that local governments should prepare to evaluate options for managing computer systems in the following ways:

1. Top officials should understand and support the role of information technology.
2. Local governments should determine where technology staff fits in their organization.
3. They should fully estimate the total life cycle costs of computer systems, including staff, training, etc.
4. They should be prepared to follow appropriate contract management practices when working with external providers.
5. Local governments should determine what services need to be automated.
6. They should evaluate their needs in the context of their fiscal and political situation.

The recommended best practices, then, include:

1. Establishing a framework to guide the management of a computer system.
2. Knowledgeable staff should maintain and use the computer system.
3. Computer systems should be secure.

These best practice recommendations suggest that a joint effort would benefit from clear direction, highly trained staff and a location that is secure. These conditions would seem to fit a model where sufficient office space is available to meet the space needs requirements of both staff and equipment. This suggests a large organization, perhaps Dakota County, taking the lead under a “vendor” type relationship with other organizations. This could be managed day-to-day by the lead organization, but given the importance of these systems to the functioning of each organization, a joint powers board or similar governance structure would be most appropriate.

Given the importance and complexity of implementing this approach, hiring a computer consultant to conduct a needs analysis and feasibility assessment would be a prudent first step. Because some members already belong to LOGIS, and share IT functions to some degree, an expert third party analysis can determine whether cost savings and/or better service would result from this project.

If a project is feasible, a broad based user committee, made up of technical and administrative staff of each organization should be organized to address the practical issues surrounding migration to this system.

For More Information

Program Evaluation Division, Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota, *Managing Local Government Computer Systems: A Best Practices Review* (April 30, 2002)

Center for Technology in Government, State University of New York at Albany, *New Models of Collaboration: A Guide for Managers*, including overview and summary at www.ctg.albany.edu/publications/online/new_models

Joint efforts to manage employee health care costs (2.85)

Background

Many cities engage in joint purchasing activities of one kind or another, most often in the areas of road maintenance and public works. Many cities also purchase various insurances in a cooperative fashion. The Cities of Apple Valley and Burnsville, for example, purchase dental insurance for their employees in partnership with Plymouth and St. Louis Park in Hennepin County. Lakeville, and many other cities, purchase dental, general liability, property and workers' compensation insurance with the LMC (or more specifically, the LMC Insurance Trust). The LOGIS group also provides an opportunity for cities to purchase insurance jointly.

Due to the variety of options available for joint purchase, most cities in Dakota county are already involved in some type of joint purchasing process.

Opportunity

Several local elected officials and employees expressed concern about the rapidly increasing cost of employee health care and recommended giving further consideration to joint purchasing of health care plans by a consortium of local governments in Dakota County. Many Dakota County cities purchase health insurance jointly, but they do not work as a Dakota County group to coordinate their efforts.

Given the high cost and rapid rise of health insurance as a component of city budgets, this was deemed to be a high potential project. Further, because the basic mechanisms already exist to coordinate and purchase services jointly, this was viewed favorably as a process that could be implemented more easily than many others.

Why This Opportunity Is Recommended

This opportunity is recommended based on the belief that participants in a broader buying pool could realize employee health care cost reductions. Further, this particular opportunity would seem to be fairly easily implemented, with few if any new resources needed.

Pros

- Reduction in the cost of service
- Transferability -- available to all jurisdictions in the county
- Some partners might also learn additional cost-saving methods

Cons

- Risk of leaving an existing buying pool
- Difficult to measure results (after initial study)

Challenges

The primary challenge for this project is the ability to accurately calculate the costs and benefits. Pooled risk management and experience ratings will account for a great deal in the group's ability to save money. Another limiting factor will be the penalties or adverse consequences that could accrue to cities that leave their current groups to join a Dakota County effort. Calculating the cost/benefit of those decisions may not be easy.

Implementation

One large organization, probably Dakota County, would take the lead on this and perform all of the administrative functions, including preparation of a bid solicitation. The collaborating cities would need to provide information and local coordination, which for some cities would be relatively easy, but for others, particularly those with small administrative staffs, could be burdensome. Ongoing involvement would entail document processing and premium payments, but should generally be manageable.

The group could create a joint powers organization for the purposes of overseeing this function, however, in our opinion that would be an unnecessary level of involvement and oversight for this type of activity.

Specialized public safety equipment: Sharing by multiple jurisdictions (2.82)

Background

Joint purchasing and ownership of specialized equipment -- and sharing of maintenance, storage and liability costs -- is often advanced as an opportunity for local governments to reduce costs. Typically, the sharing of specialized equipment refers to equipment used in road maintenance, public works and parks. This project extends the concept of specialized and emergency equipment sharing to equipment used for purposes of public safety -- mobile command units, hazardous material equipment, and so on. (Sharing of road maintenance and public works equipment is discussed as a separate activity.)

Opportunity

Many pieces of public safety equipment are specialized and are very expensive. Mobile command vehicles, ladder trucks, etc. can cost in excess of \$500,000. Although necessary, these specialized pieces of equipment are used infrequently, leading some to wonder about the cost/benefit of the expenditure, particularly if the adjacent community also has the same piece of equipment. Due to the high capital costs involved, the unique nature of the equipment, and the infrequent use patterns, specialized equipment sharing was identified as a project with a high potential for cost savings.

In addition to traditional fire, police and public safety equipment, this recommendation is also meant to apply to a potential new set of equipment falling under the heading of Homeland Security. The Office for Emergency Preparedness, Department of Homeland Security, makes funding grants available to state and local responders for purchases of many pieces of specialized equipment ranging from personal protective gear to CBRNE Incident response vehicles.

Elected officials and local government employees alike see the need for a coordinated countywide plan for the procurement, maintenance and utilization of any such equipment purchased for use in Dakota County.

Several respondents to the employee survey also cited the need for multijurisdictional cooperation in the areas of homeland security and emergency preparedness.

Why This Opportunity Is Recommended

First, the equipment encompassed in this recommendation is extremely costly. This recommendation seeks to rationalize all such costs if not directly reduce them. Second, given the high costs of the equipment, it is often shared among various jurisdictions already. This recommendation seeks also to rationalize the location, management of utilization of the equipment for the greatest good.

Pros

Reduce expenditures for costly equipment
Optimize services
Transferability -- provide access for all jurisdictions to needed resources

Cons

Reduction in local control
Management complexity in locating and staffing shared equipment

Challenge

The most likely obstacle to successfully implementing this concept would be internal stakeholders, such as police and fire personnel. Giving up local control and access, when historically this equipment has been locally available, may create significant tension and objections. Experience in other places suggests that this can reach as far as political campaigns waged to ensure that local control is preserved.

Implementation

Various types of agreements exist to implement these recommendations -- from mutual aid agreements to contractual arrangements between jurisdictions. Obviously, if a jurisdiction pays a portion of the cost of a piece of equipment, they are going to want to be assured of its availability. Clear agreements, with backup plans for simultaneous emergencies, would need to be put in place.

The first step to broadening the current shared relationships would be to establish a committee of public safety officials charged with the responsibility of developing a system of purchasing, sharing, deploying and maintaining this equipment. In addition, contractual or mutual aid agreements would be developed in conjunction, or concurrently with this effort. Depending upon the perceived difficulties in gaining cooperation among jurisdictions, a third party may be necessary to facilitate the process.

Centralized PSAP and 9-1-1 dispatching (2.80)

Background

9-1-1 dispatching is perhaps the most widely studied, and perhaps the most controversial, of the partnership opportunities. Lost amid the controversy is the fact that a vast majority of Minnesotans are already served by a joint dispatching service, or public safety answering point (PSAP). In Greater Minnesota, most 9-1-1 services are consolidated at the county level. In south central Minnesota three counties and four cities have laid plans to consolidate six PSAPs currently serving 30 different public safety agencies into one single PSAP. Some cities in the larger metropolitan areas operate independently, but even then most cities collaborate, such as in Anoka County, where all cities are dispatched through the county system.

Yet consolidated PSAPs remain controversial. In recent years, the City of Maplewood joined in a consolidated PSAP with other north Ramsey County suburbs. A year later, amidst a public outcry, it dropped out and revived its own, independent PSAP. More recently, the Minnesota state legislature funded a \$180,000 study of further consolidation of PSAPs. A public meeting in west central Minnesota caught the ear of the local Willmar newspaper, which quoted at length several law enforcement and emergency services personnel who oppose any further consolidation.

In Dakota County, a variety of PSAPs are in service, and communities have chosen a variety of strategies for the provision of 9-1-1 service. Eagan and Rosemount share a PSAP, for example, as do Farmington and Lakeville. The county operates its own PSAP to dispatch deputy sheriffs, and several cities subcontract 9-1-1 dispatching services from it. South St. Paul gets its fire dispatch services from West St. Paul, police dispatch from the county, and its EMS dispatch from HealthEast during the day and from the county at night.

Opportunity

Public safety is typically the largest component of most city budgets. The share of those budgets related to operating a PSAP are significant, both in terms of staffing and capital investment. While the state shares some of the burden, local government pays most of the cost of 9-1-1 equipment, developing local databases and employing dispatchers. The chance to significantly reduce costs by sharing this service with others makes this a high potential project. Further, history shows that cities have been willing to consider joint dispatching, especially when equipment updates are needed.

In addition to saving costs, joint dispatching may also be a means of maximizing public safety deployment in the future. Dakota County communities may give further consideration to coordinated deployment of fire and police services (discussed below as a separate opportunity) that would be aided by joint dispatch. The goal of that project would be to dispatch the nearest fire, police or EMS resource in response to any emergency -- sending the responder across jurisdictional boundaries, if necessary. Such a

coordinated deployment model whether pursued now, or in the future, adds further credence to joint dispatching as a high potential project.

Finally, comments received from both employees and citizens lend support to consolidation of PSAPs in Dakota County. Joint 9-1-1 dispatching was the second most frequently mentioned opportunity -- after street and road maintenance -- by employees of local units of government. More than ten percent of all employee mentions are accounted for by joint 9-1-1 dispatch and/or the merger or coordination of fire and EMS services across jurisdictions. Meanwhile, more than one suggestion in seven of the citizen comments received was for joint 9-1-1 dispatch and/or merged or coordinated police, fire and/or EMS services.

Why This Opportunity Is Recommended

Joint 9-1-1 dispatching through a consolidated, countywide PSAP is recommended because it provides the opportunity for significant cost savings, both short and long-term. At the same time, a consolidated PSAP may give rise to opportunities to enhance public safety through new, coordinated schemes for the deployment of police, fire and EMS resources.

Pros

- Reduced cost of service
- Transferability -- available to all jurisdictions
- Provides opportunities for future service enhancements

Cons

- Cost of implementation
- Management complexity, including technology, personnel, timing
- Reduced local control

Challenges

Experiences in many jurisdictions suggest that both City Councils and employee groups resist the consolidation of dispatch functions. Dating back to the 1970s, there have been three studies in Dakota County that have recommended combining dispatch functions, yet only limited consolidation has taken place. Uncertainty about capital cost recovery, particularly for jurisdictions that have recently updated or made a new investment, can create significant and understandable resistance. Finding a means by which these investments are recognized in the final cost sharing arrangement is crucial to successful consolidation.

Fear of losing local control over an aspect of the public safety system is another concern typically raised during consolidation discussions. Success here typically depends upon

the support and advocacy of the Fire Chief and Chief of Police, who may see this as a diminishing of their influence, size of department and local control.

Dispatchers as a group may also oppose this, with fear of job loss usually cited as the greatest concern. Establishing a solid human resource management strategy will be important to successfully addressing this issue.

Implementation

Given the capital investment necessary for this opportunity, it is most likely that a single entity would be responsible for providing the service, with the other jurisdictions providing monetary support or “buying” the service from that entity. Many examples of this exist -- Anoka and Hennepin Counties, for example. A single entity is not the only delivery model, however: multi-city PSAPs could also be developed. No matter which model is chosen, governance options would likely include either a joint powers board to oversee the operations or some combination of the lead entity reporting, or responsive to, an oversight board made up of user jurisdictions.

In any case, it will be necessary for the committed partners to undertake a detailed feasibility study to determine the costs associated with the establishment of a centralized PSAP/joint dispatch center. The consultant engaged for this purpose would need to know the population and geographic area to be served, the potential call loads and growth trends of the area, at a minimum. Additionally, decisions regarding the oversight structure should be made either up front or concurrent with the feasibility study. This could be accomplished as part of the feasibility study, or assigned to a group of representatives from each jurisdiction.

For More Information

Program Evaluation Division, Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota, *9-1-1 Dispatching: A Best Practices Review* (April 6, 1998)

“Our view: Proposal to merge area governments faces barriers,” *St. Cloud Times*, December 19, 2003

“Sharing dispatchers not well received,” *West Central Tribune* (Willmar, MN), December 12, 2003

Other Partnership Opportunities Considered in the HiPP Process (in alpha order)

Building inspections and code enforcement (2.32)

Many Minnesota municipalities share building inspectors, whether they are employees of one of the cities or whether they are private contractors. The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) reports 29 such partnerships among its recently published list of 1,682 local government partnerships among 280 LMC member communities. In Dakota County, the City of Burnsville shares an electrical inspector with Bloomington.

Inspections, in general (that is, not limited to building inspections), are suggested as an opportunity for local government collaboration in the Dakota County employee survey. The employee survey also identifies one of the barriers to successful collaboration -- that is, different communities may have different standards and expectations -- which might come into play in this area. Perhaps this is why “only” 64 percent of the citizen panel (eighth highest among ten service categories) agreed that this was an acceptable service to be delivered by shared arrangement with other jurisdictions.

Similarly, several focus group participants felt that consolidation would not work, because the building codes and ordinances in different cities are different -- and should be different. Meanwhile, those who support consolidation in this area do so based on two very different beliefs and for two very different reasons:

- Some believe that building codes are mostly mandated by state law and are very similar from one community to the next. Therefore, cities easily can share building inspectors, and perhaps thereby save money.
- About an equal number believe that building codes, or at least their enforcement, varies widely from one community to the next. Codes and enforcement should be consolidated, and should be more alike from community to community, so as to be easier for the average citizen to deal with.

Two respondents to the citizen survey -- echoed by a joint study of Pueblo County and the City of Pueblo, Colorado -- suggest taking this idea further. That is, to create a “one-stop shop” for all inspections and permits. Many building projects require multiple permits and licenses from various different government agencies. The process, as the Pueblo study states, is not customer friendly. Automation, or co-location, or other means might be explored for the creation of a real or a virtual one-stop shop.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: First, the potential cost savings do not appear to us to be large. Secondly, the different standards and expectations of different communities would make implementation difficult, and raised “red flags” for our citizen panel.

Communications: Enhance/expand joint communication efforts (2.72)

By the term “communications,” we originally meant to describe three discrete activities. They are:

- Access to professional staff for occasional writing, media and other communications services.
- Joint production and/or coordinated distribution of cable access television programming.
- Delivery of information and services on the World Wide Web, including Web site development and Web hosting.

The first two are suggested in the elected officials and employee surveys -- CATV programming was among the top 10 most frequently suggested opportunities in the employee survey, in fact.

More importantly, there is a theme that runs throughout the literature of government “best practices.” That theme is well-expressed in the Wisconsin Governor’s Blue-Ribbon Commission report, which states that “repairing the partnership” between the people and their governments depends upon putting “citizens at the center” of that effort: “Wisconsin’s state-local partnership must be strengthened by putting citizens at the center of everything government does.”

This principle suggests the critical importance of communicating with citizens by all available means in order for local units of government in Dakota County to build partnerships not only among themselves, but also with their citizens.

The World Wide Web is sometimes seen as a panacea for whatever ails the body politic, and as a “silver bullet” with which government may more effectively communicate with and serve the public. As such, we have discussed the role of the World Wide Web or E-Government separately.

As to the other two opportunities:

- It is not clear whether providing cities with access to professional writing, media and other communications services would be through county staff or perhaps through a joint RFP process. In either case, given that the effort likely would entail more, rather than less spending, there are other opportunities that are more consistent with the goals of the HiPP process.
- There is ample precedent for joint CATV programming. Many communities, such as Apple Valley, Farmington and Rosemount, already partner for the provision of cable television services and collaborate through their Cable Commission for production services. It is a natural extension for the cities and commissions to collaborate for public

service programming to address informational needs that citizens have in common throughout the county. Yet, we believe that a substantive improvement in the quality of CATV programming would entail more, and not less, spending. There are other opportunities that are more consistent with the goals of the HiPP process.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: The communications goals and activities of the various communities tend to be quite different. As a result, it is difficult to imagine any significant economies of scale or cost savings as a result of this activity. The quality and variety of CATV programming might represent a real enhancement of service quality, but the recommended opportunities seem to us to deliver more value for citizens.

E-Government (2.65)

E-Government refers to the delivery of information and services via the Internet. As one Dakota County resident said, “This area will only grow in popularity,” and many citizens and local government employees believe that there are significant opportunities to reduce the cost of hardware and of the development of E-Government applications.

There is a huge literature concerning E-Government, in which the World Wide Web is sometimes seen as a panacea for whatever ails the body politic -- or, as a “silver bullet” with which government may more effectively communicate with and serve the public. The final report of the Wisconsin Governor’s Blue-Ribbon Commission recommends that Wisconsin “aggressively develop an e-government system,” including:

- Web-based portals that make it easier for citizens to navigate government services.
- Internet-based procurement and online catalogs that reduce the cost of the goods that...governments buy.
- Improved data systems so citizens have to report information to state and local government agencies only once.

A report by the Center for Public Policy, Brown University, identifies the online services most frequently offered by units of government in 2002:

- Request service
- Request information
- Pay traffic ticket
- File complaint
- Apply for job
- Register for service
- Pay taxes
- Request information
- Report crime
- Report abandoned auto

Here in Minnesota, the Minnesota Board of Government Innovation and Cooperation (BGIC) published a compendium of innovations in local government in 1999, including ten examples of “technology improving public service outcomes:”

- Document imaging system for retrieving legal orders
- Northwestern counties data security association
- On-line torrens property records system
- Fiber optic communications network
- Mass residential appraisal system
- Court services via interactive television
- GIS for program planning
- Touch screen job information system
- Metropolitan fiber optic network and community Web site
- Connecting Technology, Information, Education and Society (TIES project)

The Citizens League published *Getting Online Government Back on Track* about a year ago. The emphasis on customer service applications cited in the Wisconsin, Brown, BGIC and Citizens League reports is typical.

Consistent with these broad findings, about 15 percent of more than 200 suggestions by local government employees encompassed infrastructure and/or back-room computer applications accessed primarily or solely by the employees themselves. (One could argue whether these represent real E-Government -- that is, customer service -- applications, or should be considered under the broader rubric of Information Technology [IT].)

Further, respondents to the Dakota County Citizens Survey (not the survey conducted specifically for this project), cited a variety of applications and information they would like to see on the county’s Web site, including:

- Park information, including making a reservation at a regional park facility -- 25 percent
- General information about the county -- 10 percent
- Service information -- 8 percent
- Property sales/information -- 5 percent
- Job search -- 5 percent
- Budget documents -- 4 percent
- Recreation/entertainment information -- 4 percent
- Recycling/waste disposal information -- 4 percent

Clearly the continued and expanded use of the World Wide Web is important, yet we do not believe that it is, in fact, a panacea.

Most of the HiPP focus group participants agreed with the focus group respondent who said, "This area will only grow in popularity." But others nevertheless expressed a concern that "Some of us don't get on the computer very often," or "(Many) seniors don't have access to computers." They fear that an over-reliance on E-Government may result in a loss of services for some. Or at a minimum, local government must continue to provide staff for personal interactions with citizens and to answer incoming telephone calls. This, in turn, reduces the cost-effectiveness of E-Government.

This is not to say that some short-term cost savings might not be available in the areas of Web hosting and development. But it is meant to suggest that the long-term vision of E-Government probably involves investing more resources, not less.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: E-Government is an area that will and should continue to occupy the attention of local government. But we also believe that the potential cost savings in this area are not significant. Rather, a significant improvement in the quality and consistency of E-Government applications suggests more, not less, spending. As a result, the other, recommended opportunities are more in keeping with the spirit of the HiPP project.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS): New model for deployment of EMS to maximize public safety (2.38)

Communities deploy emergency medical services (EMS) in a variety of ways, most of which are already collaborative in nature. Most communities cross-train their police and firefighters as first responders, for example. Others have agreements with medical facilities, and many communities already share ambulance service.

Here in Dakota County, Eagan is a part of a nine-city consortium that receives ambulance service from HealthEast. Apple Valley, Lakeville and Farmington partner for the provision of the ALF ambulance service. In Washington County, the cities of White Bear Lake, Birchwood, Dellwood, Gem Lake, Hugo and Lino Lakes collaborate for full BLS and ALS ambulance service.

The question before the HiPP team is whether the various existing EMS resources in Dakota County can be deployed in such a way as to improve response times and increase public health, safety and welfare. In other words, can public safety be improved by deploying the resources across the current boundaries -- by sending an ALS ambulance into Burnsville or Eagan if it is closer to the emergency, and in turn sending a HealthEast ambulance from Eagan into Apple Valley if it is closer to the emergency.

There appears to be good public support for this concept: Merging of 9-1-1 dispatch and/or EMS services is one of the most frequently suggested opportunities for collaboration in both the employee survey and the citizen survey. Focus group participants also were supportive of both, assuming of course that response times are improved or (at least) maintained.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: Consolidated EMS services are not recommended at this time. The potential cost savings from consolidated EMS do not appear to be as large as those that might be realized in other areas.

Energy: Joint development and purchasing (2.70)

Joint purchasing arrangements among units of government have proliferated in recent years. The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) recommends it as a “strategy for efficiency” (though it reports relatively few such arrangements among its list of 1,682 local government partnerships). Dakota County reports four joint purchasing agreements, and local governments participate in many. Seven cities jointly purchase crack sealing and road striping services, for example.

Yet several respondents to the employee survey suggested joint purchasing as an area in which local governments in Dakota County could do more.

Historically and nationally, joint purchasing has been used primarily in the area of road maintenance and public works, but joint purchasing is also going in a variety of new directions. Considering the rising cost of energy, the joint purchase of energy is a logical new direction for some exploration.

It is not clear at this point whether the joint purchasing of energy can promise cost savings to Dakota County, however, given the fact that energy rates are regulated by the State of Minnesota and true competition among energy providers does not exist.

Nevertheless, a recent Web search turned up at least four analogous efforts, not cited in the original Literature Review. These sources are provided as additional information and insight into this possible opportunity.

- The Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee representing 447 local governments (www.baltometro.org/news/press001018.html)
- Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) (www.abag.ca.gov/services/power)
- Hancock County (Maine) Planning Commission (HCPC) (www.hpcme.org/news/eljp2.html)
- The Basics of Governmental Energy Aggregation, Ohio Consumers’ Counsel (www.pickocc.org/publications/gov_energy_agg.pdf)

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: This is an intriguing opportunity and communities in other parts of the country have realized significant cost savings. However, it is highly uncertain at this time what, if any, cost savings are available here in Minnesota and Dakota County, considering that there is no real competition among energy suppliers in the county and pricing is highly regulated by the Public Utilities Commission.

Firefighting: New model for deployment of fire personnel (2.32)

There are almost 800 fire departments in the State of Minnesota. Most (92 percent) consist of volunteers or paid-on-call fire fighters who work elsewhere but respond to emergencies when needed. Only three percent have full-time paid staff, and another five percent are “combination” departments with both full-time and paid-on-call fire fighters.

The cost of a full-time paid department is prohibitive for most communities, but relying on volunteers and paid-on-call staff is fraught with difficulties as well. It has become more and more difficult in recent years to recruit volunteer and/or paid-on-call fire fighters, and it is particularly difficult to staff the daytime hours when most fire fighters are at work elsewhere.

So many Minnesota fire departments have mutual aid agreements -- in the event of a major fire, the various departments agree to come to one another's aid. In Dakota County, Eagan (for example) has mutual aid agreements with neighboring Apple Valley, Inver Grove Heights and Rosemount. Yet even with these mutual aid agreements, it is not clear that every area has sufficient resources to respond to a major fire 24 hours by 7 days.

Meanwhile, smaller communities lack both the fiscal and human resources to provide for their own fire protection, so the City of Sunfish Lake (for example) contracts with neighboring Mendota Heights for fire protection.

So, while many communities are cooperating with one another for their mutual benefit, most communities still field a fire department of their own. Given the various resource issues associated with fire protection, it is possible that joint, multijurisdictional fire districts could address those issues, while also providing for improved (or, minimally, equal) fire protection at a lower cost..

To describe the new model more fully, it is, perhaps, a combination department (professional and paid-on-call), but organized to serve an area -- a fire district -- that is larger than a single city, and large enough to provide the resources necessary to support a high quality of service delivery -- i.e., of public safety.

The West Metro Fire and Rescue District, formed in 1998 by the neighboring cities of Crystal and New Hope, is an example of this “hybrid” model. The on-call fire departments in Crystal and New Hope were merged and began operating as a single department. Fire and rescue operations in the district are based on proximity to the three fire stations, irrespective of city boundaries. The new fire district resulted in both improved first responder service and cost reductions. The cost savings resulted from unfilled turnover in fire fighter positions, but more significant savings are expected over time as the fire department avoids the costs of replacing three pumpers while maintaining its ISO rating.

Public support for a new fire services model is suggested by the survey results. The merging of fire departments was the single most frequently mentioned opportunity for local government collaboration in the citizens survey, and was one of the top ten most frequently mentioned by local government employees. Three-quarters (exactly 75 percent, or sixth highest among ten service categories) of the citizen panel agreed that this was an acceptable service to be delivered by shared arrangement with other jurisdictions. Focus group participants did not, overall, register any particular concerns or opposition to this idea, assuming that current response times are indeed improved or, at least, maintained.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: Despite the clear potential of this opportunity, it is not recommended at the present time due to its obvious administrative and management complexity.

Juvenile services: One-stop shop (2.52)

Services for at-risk youth are provided on three tracks -- that is, within the schools; in the health, human and social services; and in the criminal justice system. There is a vast national literature advocating for a more holistic approach to juvenile services -- the Annie E. Casey Foundation perhaps chief among them. Of course, most youth-serving agencies already collaborate quite extensively with their peers in other such agencies.

This area is perhaps unique among the various areas being explored in the HiPP process in that immediate, measurable cost reductions are not really anticipated. Rather, there is a clear interest in achieving better results. Specifically, there may be an opportunity to do a better job (through collaboration) in early identification, intervention and prevention of behaviors that escalate to matters for the criminal justice system. This might result longer-term in cost savings in reduced criminal and social service needs.

Concerns in these areas were voiced in the citizen and employee surveys. Several citizens and employees listed vandalism, violence and drug abuse among youth; direction-less youth and poor parenting; and a lack of activities for youth as serious problems in their community. Few suggested a solution to these complex issues, though two citizens proposed using the schools as centers for the provision of human and social services and one employee proposed a more “holistic” approach.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: Like many of the partnership opportunities that are not recommended for further action at this time, a more holistic approach in this area is clearly a good thing to do, or at least to explore. Given that the effort likely would entail more, rather than less spending, and given the uncertainty of the results, there are other opportunities that are more consistent with the goals of the HiPP process.

Leisure activities: Coordinated delivery and scheduling (2.38)

Surveys of the LMC show that 15 percent of local government partnerships in 1992 and 16 percent in 2003 are in the area of parks and recreation. In Dakota County:

- Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Lakeville, Rosemount and Savage conduct joint planning of recreation programs.
- Burnsville reports eight additional partnerships with neighboring cities and school districts. Eagan reports 15 partnerships with neighboring cities, school districts and (mostly) private entities. Lakeville reports 14 such partnerships with Dakota County, cities, schools and private parties, and South St. Paul three with the school district.

Despite all this activity, 7.5 percent of all suggestions of further partnership opportunities received in the citizen and employee surveys focus in the area of parks, trails, recreation and athletics, encompassing both facilities and programming. There is particular interest in maximizing the use of existing facilities through collaborative programming and scheduling. There is also an interest in a centralized registration service that would enable interested citizens to attend programming in neighboring cities.

Among the citizen panel, 82 percent (fourth highest among ten service categories) agreed that this is an acceptable service for delivery by shared arrangement with other jurisdictions. One person who voted “no” stated that her objection was that such programming was a place where people should be able to establish friendships that would spill over into other areas. Geographical proximity of the program, therefore, is important.

Among the focus group participants this latter theme proved to be a powerful one. Participants were overwhelmingly opposed to changes in their community’s leisure-time (park and recreation, community education) activities. Two grounds were cited:

- Services in these areas are already so good that it is hard to imagine them getting any better. Therefore, a change can only be a change for the worse.
- These activities are vital to creating a sense of community and of community identity. This means, for example, that children make friends in these activities that they will interact with throughout their youth. The activities are very largely supported by volunteers, and volunteer involvement is something one does in his or her own community.

It is also true that there was no objection to doing what was originally proposed in this area -- that is, to provide a centralized place where citizens can obtain information about a wide range of leisure activities available throughout the county. But it is vital that the programming be grassroots-based, bottom-up, rather than top-down. Whatever is done in this area must be clearly perceived as limited only to the area of communications, while programming and delivery remain community-based.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: This opportunity was designed to deliver an improved service -- that is, access to more leisure activities. But there is no public clamor for improved services in this area, and there is significant public resistance to anything that diminishes local control and a local orientation of these services. Also, cost savings were not the motivating factor here, and we do not see that any such savings are available in this area.

Police services: Coordinated deployment to maximize public safety (2.00)

As noted above, public safety is a core service of municipal government. More than that, a community's self-identity is to some degree embodied in its police officers and in the police cruisers with the city's name and/or logo on the side. It is not surprising, then, that one elected official stated, in the HiPP project survey, that a merging of police departments was the one partnership that was off the table.

Yet, according to the LMC, law enforcement agencies participate in more partnership agreements than any other area of local government. Nineteen percent of all such partnerships were in the area of law enforcement in 1992, and 17.4 percent in 2003 -- the lower percentage not reflecting fewer law enforcement partnerships, but rather a rapid increase in partnerships in other areas of local government.

Most of these are mutual aid agreements, like the regional mutual aid agreement in which all Dakota County cities, and Bloomington and Savage participate. Of course, law enforcement agencies sometimes consolidate -- the Rock County Sheriff's Department and the City of Luverne Police Department recently merged to form a single, countywide law enforcement agency. Many other examples exist, primarily in areas of greater Minnesota experiencing a population decline.

There is, however, no groundswell for the merging of police departments in Dakota County. Three citizens out of 131 suggested merging police departments, while none of the 161 employees who completed the survey, did so. Sixty-one percent of the citizen panelists (ninth out of ten service categories evaluated) said this was an acceptable candidate for service delivery by shared arrangement with other jurisdictions.

In the focus groups, there was little or no opposition to the consolidation of backroom, support functions, including central 9-1-1 dispatching, non-felony prosecutions, homeland security, juvenile services, drug task force, shared information and records, holding cells, staff and administration, shared equipment, communications including 800 Mhz, SWAT teams and training facilities. There was also little opposition to mutual aid agreements.

But there was widespread concern about changes in the deployment of police officers. Focus group participants noted that a police officer's work should properly include much personal interaction with the community: personal relationships are very important to successful police work. For many, the local police department is one of the most important components in the creation of a sense of a community. Although less of an emphasis by focus group participants, it is important to recognize that EMS and fire personnel similarly engage in critical community-based relationships for the benefit of emergency preparedness and fire safety, much as police officers interact with community members in order to promote crime prevention. The issue of intimate knowledge of the community may be less important in emergency situations, when maintaining efficient response times becomes a higher priority.

- “There’s a reason why they have local police. They are familiar with the community and establish connections.”
- “The county already has countywide law enforcement, but there’s a reason why the city has its own police, why it didn’t just stay with the sheriff. The advantages of local police are response times and knowing the community, familiarity with different areas of the community.”

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: The research clearly shows that the mutual aid agreements already in place among police departments -- combined with the consolidated 9-1-1 dispatching that is recommended in this report -- represent what citizens are willing to support by way of local government collaboration in the area of law enforcement. There is significant citizen resistance to any reduction in the community orientation of police officers.

Road system: Coordinated planning and construction of roads (2.42)

Traffic congestion has become a matter of serious concern for many Twin Cities residents over the past several years. Not surprisingly, traffic and transportation surfaced as an important issue in the HiPP survey.

- More than 12 percent of respondents to the citizen survey cited transportation issues, including traffic congestion, as the most serious issue facing their city or town. Transportation was the third most frequently mentioned category of issues behind growth, development and urban sprawl; and budget, funding and taxes.
- Transportation was the most frequently mentioned category of opportunities for local government collaboration. Road maintenance and countywide transportation planning are both among the top five most frequently mentioned specific opportunities.
- Similarly, traffic congestion is the fourth most frequently mentioned issue in the employee survey.

- Transportation is the second most frequently mentioned category of opportunities by the employees. Roadway planning, design and engineering was among the top ten most frequently mentioned specific opportunities.
- Of particular concern is the fact that the historic road system is geared largely toward getting people to or toward the core Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. East-west roadways have not kept up with the demand for cross-county travel within the county.

The citizen survey may have slightly depressed mentions of transportation issues by directing respondents to think about issues of importance “in your city or town.” Many respondents probably do not think of transportation issues and traffic congestion as a local issue, but rather see it as a regional issue.

Focus group participants identified transportation planning as a promising area for collaboration not for its great upside, but rather because there is little or no downside. By this, respondents mean that the service currently is not very good -- “You can’t get from one place to another.... It’s a disaster.” Dakota County needs to develop “a vision...something that will serve us for the long term.” A new effort is very unlikely to do any harm.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: The upside of this opportunity is limited not because this is not a problem area. But rather, we are skeptical whether Dakota County and the cities have the ability to effect positive change. As one focus group participant said, “Dakota County could show you the vision, (but) all that’s missing is the money.” This is, in short, a statewide, not merely a countywide issue.

Service centers: Co-location of multiple jurisdictions (2.15)

The joint study by the city and county of Pueblo, Colorado, recommended “co-locating similar departments or functions.” Not only does co-location promise reduced costs, but “co-location was also cited by the administration, planning and public works sub-committees as a way to improve many governmental services.” The study went on to suggest co-location of the police and sheriff, 9-1-1 dispatch, public works, purchasing and fleet management operations of the city and county. More than just co-location, however, the study recommended the consolidation of most of these operations.

Pueblo, Colorado, is quite different from Dakota County, of course, in that the City of Pueblo accounts for the vast majority of residents of the county. In contrast, Dakota County residents are widely dispersed in more than 30 communities. Eleven cities range in population from 11,000 to 63,000, with no community accounting for more than 18 percent of the total. So the precise structure of co-location of city and county operating units would probably look quite different from that of Pueblo, Colorado.

Collaboration in Dakota County might extend to planning, funding, design, engineering and construction, as well as the coordination or consolidation of the services provided in that facility.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: This opportunity is not recommended, as it would be available, even as a best case, in rather few cities in Dakota County.

Specialized public works equipment: Sharing by multiple jurisdictions (2.52)

Joint purchasing and ownership of specialized equipment -- and sharing of maintenance, storage and liability costs -- is often advanced as an opportunity for local governments to reduce costs. Typically, the sharing of specialized equipment refers to equipment used in road maintenance, public works and parks. (The sharing of road maintenance services is discussed below as a separate opportunity.)

The Wisconsin Legislative Audit Committee issued a best practices review in 1999 titled Local Cooperation to Maintain Roads and Streets. It provided examples of equipment suitable for joint ownership, such as brush chippers, power broom, road packer, pavement roller and pothole patching machine. Equipment that is needed on short notice or by more than one municipality on the same day, such as a snowplow, are not good candidates for joint ownership.

Presently, Dakota County and ten cities share public works equipment through CONDAC. Yet sharing of specialized equipment was one of the most frequently mentioned opportunities for further collaboration in the employee survey.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: Certainly, the sharing of road maintenance and public works equipment is a good thing to do. Given, however, that much equipment would be exempted from such a program -- by virtue of its being needed everywhere at the same time -- we wonder whether the potential cost savings would justify what would be a major effort. We believe that the recommended opportunities provide more potential at this time.

Street and road maintenance (2.45)

Street and road maintenance represents significant line items in the budget of every unit of local government. So there has been much interest in joint agreements and best practices in street and road maintenance, statewide and in Dakota County.

The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor publishes a long-standing series of Best Practices Reviews, and it solicits suggestions for potential topics of future reviews. A recent list included all of the following:

- Bituminous patching, seal coating, crack filling, roadside mowing, slurry seals and fog seals
- Gravel road maintenance
- Purchasing new road maintenance equipment
- Road striping

- Road maintenance -- e.g. sharing facilities among units of government, sub-contracting to other units, etc.
- Sign surveying and roadside maintenance

The LMC reports many joint agreements for street and road maintenance, statewide, increasing from 5 percent of all joint agreements in 1992 to 7.3 percent in 2003.

In Dakota County, the Cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, and Lakeville -- along with Prior Lake, Savage, and Shakopee in Scott County -- jointly purchase crack sealing and road striping services. Lakeville reports eight additional road maintenance partnerships with Dakota County and MnDOT. South St. Paul conducts maintenance on all county roads within the city. Other communities routinely enter into joint agreements for the planning, construction and operation of traffic signals. Dakota County has maintenance agreements with several cities, shares resources, and enters into agreements to accelerate road and bridge projects.

Yet, employees of units of local government in Dakota County suggested street and road maintenance more frequently than any other partnership opportunity in the employee survey. Meanwhile, citizens cited the area of transportation, generally, more often than any other area of local government activity, and then suggested road maintenance more often than any other transportation activity.

The most comprehensive discussion of best practices in street and road maintenance is the report of the Wisconsin Joint Legislative Audit, mentioned above in context of shared ownership of specialized maintenance equipment. The report also recommends the following additional joint activities:

- Group purchasing, typically of bulk materials such as road salt, fuel and roadwork supplies
- Group purchases of equipment and machinery
- Renting of equipment from one local government to another
- Communities can share maintenance responsibilities on boarder roads
- Communities can trade personnel and equipment on a project benefiting one community for similar in-kind work on another project
- Communities can combine the human resources of one community with the fiscal resources of another

As noted above, many Dakota County municipalities are already engaged in these types of collaborative efforts. Based on the employee survey results, there appears to be an opportunity for many more. In addition, 88 percent of the citizen panel (third highest

among ten service categories) said this was an acceptable candidate for joint service delivery.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: Many focus group participants expressed a concern about a potential loss of service quality, either because “We all need the same equipment at the same time,” or because different communities have different standards and expectations. One said, “(Roads) are local things, different cities have different wants, different standards.” These concerns are widespread enough that, overall, the participants are equally divided on the desirability of pursuing these opportunities.

Transit services: Coordinated delivery of transit services (2.15)

No municipality operates transit services on its own. Transit services are provided in every case by virtue of local government collaboration. Dakota County is served by three discrete transit “collaboratives” -- DARTS, Metro Transit, and Minnesota Valley Transit. The question is whether the three services are integrated as well as possible, and whether “one transit system” might operate as more than the sum of the parts.

Of particular concern is the fact that much of the scheduled transit is geared toward getting people to or toward the core Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Transit service availability has not kept up with the demand for cross-county travel, particularly east-west travel, within the county.

Many focus group participants expressed strong support for more mass transit, including circulator bus service, Cedar Avenue BRT and Hiawatha light rail. Some advocated for a countywide transit authority, whether by joining with MVTA or otherwise opting out of Metro Transit.

Why This Opportunity Is Not Recommended: This opportunity is not recommended, because we are skeptical of the impact that Dakota County can have on this issue. Certainly, a collaborative could clarify the vision for a more effective transit system in Dakota County, but until further funding is forthcoming at some level there is little likelihood that such a vision of enhanced transit services can be implemented. The recommended opportunities have more potential for success at the present time.

Barriers to Implementation

Moving forward to implementation, regardless of the opportunity, is not without potential challenges. Each project brings with it a unique set of issues that require attention from the governing bodies as well as those impacted by the service delivery.

Generally speaking, local governments in Dakota County will need to reconcile the following issues to make implementation possible:

1. **Power sharing.** Power, in any collaboration, will be shared between political jurisdictions. Power is also shared among front line staff that provide the services and have accountability for results. Decision-making and direction to staff will need to be very clearly delineated, both on a policy and an operational level.
2. **Service levels.** Local governments and their citizens have varying expectations for the level of services that are provided -- often expressed qualitatively as “basic,” or “high quality,” or in similar terms. Merging or coordinating services with historically different quality levels requires significant up front effort to clarify outcomes and expectations. Some communities may not wish to collaborate with others that do not share their service level definitions.
3. **Local control.** This is a political as well as an operational consideration. Collaboration by its very nature implies the sharing of control, or sometimes even moving front-line management control entirely to another jurisdiction. Accountability flows to those in control of results. If historic patterns of oversight and control are changed, loss of “local accountability” can be a source of friction.
4. **Change management.** From simple opposition to change, to fear of job loss, and to the practical difficulties of merging systems -- the failure to effectively manage these and other elements of change can slow or stop a collaborative project. Issues such as union rules or incompatible accounting or information systems, for example, may need to be worked out before the first effort can commence.

More to the point, any and all stakeholders will need to be engaged in any collaboration that is implemented as a result of the HiPP process. Further, the management team must help all stakeholders to clearly understand and to focus upon the desired outcomes, such as enhanced public safety, providing a high quality of service with fewer resources, and so on.