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Connecting State and Local Government: Collaboration through Trust and Leadership

From the Front Lines of Collaboration

Law enforcement officials in Washington State are saving valuable time, and gathering key information, thanks to the Washington Justice Information Data Exchange (JINDEX). JINDEX is a shared integration platform designed to exchange and transfer data and information throughout the statewide justice community. Spearheaded by the Washington State Department of Information Services (DIS), this collaboration allows state and local law enforcement officers to generate electronic traffic and collision reports in their patrol cars using a scanner and laptop computer.

From there, the electronic documents are uploaded to the central Statewide Electronic Collision & Ticket Online Records application (SECTOR) server and sent to the JINDEX. Once received by the JINDEX, these records are routed to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the Department of Licensing (DOL), and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) for processing and disposition. These electronic tickets are delivered to local courts of jurisdiction within seconds, saving organizations on all sides both time and money.

Collaboration—Technology as a Key Enabler

This example from Washington is just one of hundreds of successful state and local government collaborations across the country. Several states have implemented public safety initiatives similar to JINDEX, and success stories abound from around the country of these collaborative partnerships between state and local law enforcement agencies. Whether collaborating horizontally across state agencies, entering

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into a public-private partnership, or crossing organizational boundaries between state-federal or state-local levels of government, state CIOs must continuously work to connect silos to increase efficiency and improve citizen service.

With technology serving as a chief facilitator for collaboration across organizational boundaries, engaging in cross-boundary collaboration is inevitable for state CIOs. Government, in order to be effective, must be user-friendly, accessible and accountable to citizens. Leveraged by investments in information technology, crossing organizational boundaries between levels of government can be used as a way to increase governmental effectiveness. *Citizen demand for streamlined, efficient government often drives state agencies to seek out opportunities to deliver traditional services in non-traditional ways.*

Engaging in cross-boundary collaboration is often viewed as a means to achieve the following:

- Cost reduction
- Establishing relationships between organizations
- Providing increased or better services to citizens
- Streamlining processes and speeding transactions
- Improving information-sharing and quality
- Leveraging enterprise solutions
- Sharing risk
- Addressing fiscal constraints and lower administrative costs by leveraging mutual resources[1]

While the advantages of collaboration can be applied universally, the approach and methodology of collaboration will vary depending on the initiative. When engaging in state-local collaboration, state agencies can provide services to citizens within the local communities in which they live and work. In turn, localities can take advantage of shared resources and deliver services that may not otherwise be possible. State governments have a long history of partnerships with local jurisdictions to deliver state services or act as

agents of the state. However, these agreements were generally not collaborative in nature and were not crafted with a governance model.

Developing Trust and Effective Leadership in Governance

Crossing organizational boundaries is an endeavor that requires a great deal of trust on all sides. Particularly in state-local collaborations, where the processes and the players can differ greatly, it is important to construct and cultivate trust at the outset of collaboration. Establishing a sound governance model is the first step in establishing this trust. *A sound governance model for state-local collaboration is one that encompasses shared accountability, establishes leadership, encourages mutual trust and promotes collective dedication to achieving the same strategic goals.*

One way to construct a governance model is through legal documentation in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Defining participant roles and the overall organization of the project at the beginning may help deter initial obstacles in the early development stages. A governance model may also be pre-determined through enabling legislation (if applicable), project charter, or Executive Order.

Ascertaining a governance model early in the initiative, and firmly documenting the role of each participant, can help begin to create trust on all sides. *Establishing this trust, turning that trust into action, and expanding it beyond a project's beginning into a mature, sustainable collaboration, can be achieved through effective communication.*

Levels of Communication in Leadership

Communication is essential in developing the leadership necessary to create a culture of collaboration that is self-sustaining

and that transcends future organizational, political and funding changes and challenges. This, in turn, enables collaboration to move from being project-specific to becoming standard procedure. There are three key ways in which communication can be administered throughout an initiative:

- **Communicating to Stakeholders**—This is an essential part of establishing initial buy-in from an initiative's funding sources, such as the legislature. It is critical to effectively communicate the benefits and expected results of collaboration and to demonstrate, from the beginning, the positive outcomes that will result from the investment of both money and employee time.
- **Communicating to Participants**—No matter which entity is established as the leading body, it is essential that all participants are kept aware of the progression of the collaboration. This can be done either formally through the issuance of official press releases, surveys and reports, or informally through personal communication with individuals or through monthly or bi-weekly project updates with all participants via email. *If feasible, establish shared performance measures that are simple, easy to track and transparent.* In some instances, the participants and stakeholders of a collaboration will be the same individuals or organizations.
- **Communicating to Citizens**—Keeping the public aware of the benefits and results of the collaborative effort can be key to a successful initiative. Without public buy-in and support, some collaborative efforts could potentially collapse. Make this aspect of the initiative a two-way conversation. Leverage public comment software solutions, discussion boards, blogs and other web channels to solicit citizen feedback. Addressing collaboration challenges in a timely manner, and continuously communicating the advantages of collaboration to citizens, can increase support and use of collaborative services.

Communicating with Collaboration Innovators—Communication with other states or localities that may have already developed successful state-local collaboration initiatives is a key way for state CIOs to gather ideas and lessons learned. Seeking out those organizations that may have implemented a similar project, and identifying their challenges and success stories, can help ascertain what steps need to be taken first and what pitfalls should be avoided. The individuals behind these successful initiatives can be valuable resources for a collaborative effort that may be just beginning, or experiencing challenges.

Governance Models for State-Local Collaboration

Since each collaborative effort will involve different independent organizations, participants and stakeholders, the governance models used for state-local collaborations will vary greatly. A universal key to success is recognizing that the governance body may be called upon to make tough decisions and must speak in a collective voice. In addition, the leaders on the governance group have the given the opportunity to plow new ground, introduce innovation and share the risks of their collective decision making. Below are examples of two collaborations between state and local governments, and the governance models that were used.

Minnesota's governance model for its IT Standards Program for IT Purchasing brings together all stakeholders and allows them a voice in the guidance and direction of the initiative, while state agencies maintain the management aspects of the collaboration. Spearheaded by the Minnesota Office of Enterprise Technology and the Department of Administration, this collaboration brings together state agencies with local governments and the education sectors in order to deliver cost-savings to the state.
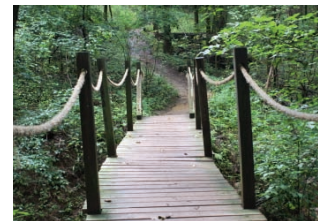
Minnesota IT Standards Program: State Drives Cross-Boundary Collaboration in Procurement/Purchasing

In December of 2006, the Minnesota Office of Enterprise Technology and the Department of Administration began development of an ongoing IT purchasing process for all Minnesota government entities to procure hardware, software and professional and technical IT services. This collaboration brought together multiple stakeholders in order to develop a stream-lined process that could be used by all.

While the state acts as the primary driver of this initiative, the collaboration has developed a governance process that consists of a cross-boundary steering team and work groups that include representation from multiple state agencies, local governments, higher education and K-12. In the program's first year, over 200 government entities participated in the new purchasing process and benefited from the initial aggregated purchasing opportunities.

The calculated savings for desktops, laptops and monitors for the estimated install base are approximately $19 million per year, spread among participating entities. All of the savings benefit Minnesota's taxpayers and result in improved performance and additional dollars for other, high-priority programs and services. As impressive as the short-term financial results have been, the ultimate value of this streamlined process lies in the foundational cultural change toward inter-governmental collaboration and problem-solving that will make possible more innovation and consolidation of IT management and resources.

While this example in Minnesota highlights the state as the leading entity driving the collaboration, the example below in Massachusetts features a collaborative governance model which involves a third-party leading entity. In Massachusetts, the

movement toward health information exchange has progressed rapidly in recent years, due in large part to the Massachusetts Health Data Consortium. The Consortium brings together representatives from state government, the private and non-profit sectors and municipalities in order to achieve a common goal of promoting health information technology and health information exchange.

Massachusetts Health Data Consortium Brings Stakeholders Together

The Massachusetts Health Data Consortium, a non-profit organization with over one hundred participant organizations, operates a regional collaborative initiative called Massachusetts SHARE (Simplifying Healthcare Among Regional Entities), referred to as MA-SHARE.

MA-SHARE seeks to promote the inter-organizational exchange of healthcare data using information technology, standards, and administrative simplification, in order to make accurate clinical health information available wherever needed in an efficient, cost-effective, and safe manner. The eventual goal is to link entire communities to MA-SHARE.

This type of large scale data exchange brings together multiple stakeholders under a third-party governing body made up of representatives of all sectors.

Regional health information exchange efforts such as MA-SHARE are developing throughout the country, and serve as the embodiment of cross-boundary collaboration. Since individuals will frequently seek out healthcare where they live, efforts for health information exchange beginning at the local and regional level are seen as a natural starting point for eventual statewide data exchange. Health IT initiatives around the nation are implementing a governance model in which no single entity serves as a primary "steering" body,

which allows all stakeholders to have equal representation.

Many routes can be taken on the path to achieving a sound governance structure, and each will vary depending on the needs of the community, the unique characteristics of the collaboration, and the role of the state. These examples examined two governance structures that are commonly used in state-local collaboration. Other models include local governments acting as the leading entity or state and local governments working together with equal management responsibilities for the collaboration. Ultimately, effective leadership and governance rely on the shared interest of the entities that come together for a common goal.

As a collaborative effort moves from development into implementation and eventually to maintenance, various responsibilities of the organizations and the ways in which they are accountable are likely to shift and change over time. Having primary responsibilities identified, and gaining buy-in from all participants at the outset of collaboration, is a key part of leading and governing collaboration.

Sound governance should not be taken for granted, but should be nurtured as the collaborative initiative moves from conception to implementation to maintenance. In order to gain new perspectives from each stage in a collaboration's life cycle, there should be constant feedback and review of the governance model that is in place as the collaboration grows.

Funding Models for State-Local Collaboration

For any collaborative effort between state and local governments to begin, financial resources must be dedicated in some capacity toward starting and maintaining the initiative. There are several avenues states and localities can utilize when searching for the best funding model for their particular initiative. Since each collaborative effort will have its own unique

characteristics, each effort will also need to be individually examined for the most appropriate funding model.

When exploring the role of state governments in collaboration, there are typically three capacities in which the state may act as a financial stakeholder:

- **State as Leading Entity**—In this scenario, the state becomes the major stakeholder in the initiative by putting forth the most money toward the collaborative effort. When this occurs, the state will often receive the most recognition for the collaborative effort and will be very influential in the effort's direction due to its position of authority.

- **State as Partner Entity**—When states are financial partners in a collaborative effort, but not necessarily the leading entity, they can help bring credibility and stability to the project, but not function as the sole financial driver. State roles can often shift from a leading entity to a partner entity as the effort solidifies. The collaborative effort may even begin to take in revenue of its own. For example, a state may provide full financial support at the outset of a collaborative effort in the form of a major grant. As the effort becomes more self-sustaining, the state may be able to eventually become a financial contributor rather than a full financial enabler.

- **State as Facilitator**—In some collaborative efforts, the state may not financially participate at all. For example, lawmakers may enact legislation, or provide tax incentives, but not put forth additional funds specifically for the effort.

States can incorporate aspects of all of these funding methods into various initiatives, or encompass all three of them in a single initiative. In South Carolina, the Information Sharing and Analysis Center (SC-ISAC) has operated since August of 2004 and was initially funded by a grant

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from the United States Department of Homeland Security with other financial resources and core competencies contributed by the partnering organizations.

South Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (SC-ISAC)

The state established this system by assuming a leading entity role in the three critical areas related to security within the state. The SC-ISAC uses staff, information, and equipment from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Secret Service, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, and the Office of the State Chief Information Officer. Berkeley County and the City of Columbia are two examples of successful partnerships with the SC-ISAC to date. In their own words…..

Berkeley County: *"With the State steering the project we get expert help and advice, yet we can determine when threats, staffing, and other issues allow us to implement solutions or mitigate threats. Basically, the state sets the pace and we are allowed to march at the pace we can. On multiple occasions during the past two years, these early warning mechanisms helped Berkeley County IT staff to isolate vulnerabilities and mitigate threats quickly before they escalated."*

City of Columbia: *"By partnering with CIO/SC-ISAC the benefits to the City of Columbia have been many to date. This partnership has brought not only the tools, the expertise and knowledge to use this appliance, but also the knowledge transfer and training for our security network support staff. Moment to moment this alone can be documented to have helped protect the interests of the City of Columbia. As in all governmental environments the complexities of IT services are great, and the available funding is limited, so it has been an extreme benefit to the City of Columbia to have the ability to obtain what can be described as a virtual extension of our staff in the form of our partnership with the CIO's SC-ISAC office."*

From combating cyber security attacks, to conducting the daily business of the government, collaboration between states and localities is critical. ***When initial efforts evolve into long-term, self-sustaining business practices, these successful collaborations can lead to lasting partnerships between agencies.*** In Nebraska, the Governor and Legislature created the Intergovernmental Data Services (IDS) program in 1993, now administered from within Nebraska's Office of the State CIO. This example highlights the state acting as the leading funding entity.

Nebraska's Office of the CIO Intergovernmental Data Services (IDS) Program

The Intergovernmental Data Services (IDS) program has responsibility for managing the statewide infrastructure of at least one server in each of Nebraska's 93 counties, connected to the state's data communications network and enterprise computing infrastructure.

Sample applications running in this environment include:
- Issuance and collection of taxes and fees for all vehicle titles and registrations in each of Nebraska's 93 counties in the state
- Automation of county and district courts throughout the state
- Automated posting of county payroll data to the state's Retirement Board
- Exchange of data from counties to the Secretary of State's central voter registration database.

Counties are also able to operate applications of interest within any given individual county on this state equipment, including Accounts Payable, Budget Preparation, Payroll, and other miscellaneous business functions.

By law, this program must be financially self-supporting. Rates are established and reviewed annually for access and

use of the IDS common infrastructure. Revenue from these rates pay all costs of the communications and computing network infrastructure and any additional administrative costs of the program.

For the nearly 15 years of its existence, this statewide, collaborative program has been a tremendous example of partnership between state government agencies like the Department of Motor Vehicles, Secretary of State, Office of the CIO, Department of Health and Human Services, State Court Administrator and their counterparts operating at the local government level.

Collaboration arises from need—the need of citizens, or the need of government agencies striving to streamline processes or combat tight budgets. This need may be immediate and arise from an emergency or perceived crisis situation. In a critical situation, organizational boundary pretenses can be quickly dropped in order to accommodate pressing needs at hand. Ripple effects of these crisis scenarios can also lead to future collaborative efforts.

Following the devastating events of September 11, 2001, a hard look was taken at the nation's capabilities to communicate between state and local law enforcement officials, fire departments, and other first responders. When public safety radio interoperability was not available between police officers and firefighters at Ground Zero, resulting in more tragedy that could have possibly been prevented, states rushed to tackle this issue among their own first responders. In South Dakota, legislation had already been enacted directing state agencies to integrate their radio telecommunications functions and facilities into a single cohesive network. This legislation also placed all state radio infrastructure and the three state government dispatch centers under the state CIO's control.

Public Safety Wireless Interoperability for South Dakota

Operating as a funding partner, the state drew upon many sources to start this effort. These included a $7,000,000 Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, a $4,000,000 appropriation from the 2001 legislative session, another $3,991,200 COPS grant, a $1,156,000 Highway Safety grant and $1,431,354 in state agency funding. These resources allowed the Governor to begin the integration process.

These funds were used to buy the radio system infrastructure, and mobile and portable radios for state government and local public safety agencies. The state initially funded the base state radio infrastructure and put a mobile radio in every public safety vehicle. Local mobile radios were issued to 232 fire departments, 107 police departments, 65 sheriff's departments, all ambulance/EMS entities (including air ambulances), all emergency managers, and all emergency care medical facilities.

The radio system and network is supported by the State of South Dakota via the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications' (BIT) State Radio group. The state maintains the towers, repeater equipment, central controller and transport equipment. Local users are responsible for maintenance and repair of the mobile and portable radios in use by those agencies and any related control equipment (console/dispatch) used.

The state's radio system solution allowed existing analog VHF users to communicate day one — at a minimum through the statewide mutual aid channel. All proposed radios can utilize any VHF system — whether new, existing, analog, or digital. Ultimately, using one frequency ensures radio communications anywhere in South Dakota.

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Crossing organizational boundaries in order to achieve strategic goals is prevalent within nearly every issue state CIOs address.

While budgetary appropriations and grant funding are two widely utilized funding models that states and localities will rely upon to fund a collaborative effort, there are several other IT funding models that can be applied. Other innovative and alternative IT funding models identified by NASCIO in 2003 from a survey of the states included:

- Bonds
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Performance-Based Contracting
- Sharing Services
- Investment Funds
- Leasing & Financing
- Certificates of Participation
- Purchasing & Procurement Strategies
- Outsourcing & Managed Services
- Benefits Funding
- Budgeting & Appropriation Strategies[2]

Overall, it is important to any collaborative effort to not rely on one particular revenue stream to sustain the initiative throughout its existence. It is essential to identify other funding mechanisms for continued operation, especially for grant-funded projects. In addition, budgetary allocations have the potential to change every year, and government agencies often struggle with funding uncertainty until late in the legislative session.

Collaboration is Essential for State CIOs

Cross-boundary collaboration, of any kind, is seldom easy. *Any sort of collaboration, and in particular state-local collaborative efforts, require careful planning, deliberate execution and routine maintenance in order to nurture and grow the relationships that are required for a surviving—and thriving—collaborative effort.*

Even though cross-boundary collaboration can be difficult, it is essential for state CIOs to be prepared to engage in collaborative efforts as part of their jobs. Crossing organizational boundaries in order to achieve strategic goals is prevalent within

nearly every issue state CIOs address. Emerging issues such as health IT, disaster recovery and the greening of IT demand cross-boundary attention and collaboration.

Sound leadership, a carefully devised governance plan, and a solid financial model can all help ensure a collaboration's success. *State CIOs who identify and address these components at the outset of a collaborative effort will be better able to ensure a successful collaboration between state and local governments.*

Appendix A: Endnotes

[1] "Getting Started in Cross-Boundary Collaboration: What State CIOs Need to Know," NASCIO, May 2007, <https://www.nascio.org/publications/index.cfm>.

[2] "Innovative Funding for Innovative State IT," NASCIO, November 2003, <http://www.nascio.org/publications/documents/NASCIO-FundingReport2003.pdf>