

Where to Begin

Recent amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) provide incentives to municipalities engaging in multi-municipal planning. Developing a multi-municipal plan also provides a method for municipal leaders to enhance their community's future quality of life. Because this can be a complex process, this brief guide has been developed to help communities and individuals better understand what is involved in developing a multi-municipal plan.



The 11 guiding steps inside include planning recommendations by the Local Government Academy along with guidance on obtaining possible funding. While this may initially seem daunting, LGA is committed to assisting you with your efforts.



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Multi-Municipal Planning "Step-By-Step"



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The "Steps"

Following are 11 recommended steps for effective multi-municipal planning. In addition to the steps, you will find various contact agencies and individuals listed as sources of assistance. Please be aware that the sources and types of assistance may change over time; therefore, to obtain the most current information, contact LGA.

You should also become familiar with the services offered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services (www.landuseinpa.com), various municipal associations and training providers. Most notably, LGA recommends "Planning Beyond Boundaries," a publication of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania - an alliance of organizations and individuals committed to improved land use policies and decisions in Pennsylvania. LGA has relied on this manual in developing a variety of land use programs. Contact information for 10,000 Friends appears at the end of this brochure.

#1

Contact Your Neighbors.

State laws and policies provide incentives for multi-municipal planning. In addition, land use issues don't usually coincide with municipal boundaries. Because of these considerations, planning efforts that provide the most benefit to the public take place on a multi-municipal scale. Municipalities should seek and encourage neighboring municipalities to join in their planning efforts.

#2

Obtain Available Training.

Participate in training and become knowledgeable about the benefits and tools of good planning before you begin to plan. This knowledge will help ensure that the resulting plan will enhance your community's quality of life. In addition to programs conducted by Local Government Academy, various statewide organizations provide assistance. Contact LGA to find out what training is available. Training at no cost to the municipality is available through LGA and is a requirement for an LGA grant.

#3

Engage in Community Visioning.

Following training, neighboring municipalities should engage in a joint community visioning process. A successful community visioning process will enable local officials and citizens to think about the future and the way they want their community to be. This important step will set the framework for the plan. Various alternatives exist for facilitating the visioning process. You will better understand those alternatives and be able to determine which one works best for your community after you have completed the training in step 2.

#4

Adopt Resolutions.

At this point, each municipality's governing body should authorize several actions. The number of resolutions and their exact form should be as recommended by your municipality's solicitor. However, the nature of the actions are as follows:

a. **Intent.** Some solicitors may advise their governing body to adopt a resolution of intent to prepare a multi-municipal comprehensive plan and/or implementing ordinances. A model is available. (See appendix 2A-1 "Planning Beyond Boundaries.")

b. **Intergovernmental Cooperation.** The governing body of each municipality in the multi-municipal group should enter into an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement (ICA) for planning that establishes an area planning committee (*appointed by participating governments*) to guide the comprehensive planning process, scope of activities and cost sharing among municipalities. A model ICA can be sent to you. (See appendix 2A-2, "Planning Beyond Boundaries.")

c. **Grant Applications.** Each governing body should authorize the area planning committee to prepare and submit applications for Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance (LUPTAP) grant funds to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and to the Local Government Academy and other agencies such as their county government that may provide financial assistance for multi-municipal planning. Municipalities should be aware that they will have to provide part of the total cost.

d. **Requests for Proposals.** A qualified planning consultant will be necessary to assist in the preparation of the comprehensive plan and any implementing ordinances. Issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) will facilitate the hiring of one. At least three firms should be solicited to submit proposals and these firms should receive face to face interviews. It may be cost effective to hire one person or firm to do all phases of the project; or, soliciting proposals at each step may be appropriate. If the consultant is hired early in the process, he/she may be able to assist with grant applications, although such assistance is often not eligible for grant reimbursement. Be certain to clarify with your consultant any such work that will be expected "pro bono." A model RFP for planning consultant services is available. (See appendix 2A-1, "Planning Beyond Boundaries.")

e. **Select a Planning Consultant.** The area planning committee should select the most qualified planner or planning firm and the participating governments should adopt a resolution appointing the consultant. A legal agreement should be executed between the consultant and the municipalities or the lead municipality.

#5

Seek Funding from Commonwealth of PA.

The area planning committee should meet with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) regarding application for their Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP) which can provide up to 50 percent of the plan cost. Contact the Southwest Regional office at 412-565-5002. At this time, LUPTAP requests require the filing of two documents - the "Single Application for Assistance" and the "Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance" application. These can be obtained online at the DCED website - www.inventpa.com.

#6

Seek Funds from Local Government Academy.

The area planning committee should meet with the Local Government Academy (LGA) regarding application of their Multi-Municipal Planning Grant Program. Contact Ray Reaves, Program Manager, at 412-422-7877 or via email at rayreaves1@msn.com.

#7

Seek Additional Funding if Available.

Municipalities should contact their county planning agencies to determine if other funding sources are available.

#8

Assemble and Submit Applications.

The area planning committee should prepare and submit the DCED and LGA grant applications in accordance with the filing instructions for each grant.

#9

Stick With It.

The area planning committee should manage the process that will produce the multi-municipal comprehensive plan to be adopted by each governing body. This can be a lengthy process. Communities should rely on their planning consultant to facilitate the process so that it goes smoothly. In addition to achieving the outcomes desired at the start of this process, municipalities should persevere in their planning effort to avoid losing grant proceeds and burdening the public with the stranded costs of incomplete efforts.

#10

Adopt the Plan.

Each governing body should adopt the comprehensive plan in accordance with the processes outlined in the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

#11

Implement and Evaluate.

Each governing body should adopt an implementing ICA. A model can be made available. (See appendix 6A-1, "Planning Beyond Boundaries.") It is at this point that each governing body must decide whether to prepare joint implementing ordinances including zoning and subdivision/land development or adopt its own. The pros and cons of this choice will become clear during the planning process. Execution of the plan will also involve ensuring professional administration of the plan and ordinances. During the planning process, this and other issues will emerge that will require attention during the implementation phase.

These steps and model documents provide planning guidance. Their development has been based upon the experience and knowledge of some of our state's leading planners and most successful communities. Municipalities should consult their solicitors in regard to legal guidance.

Contact Information

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