



Contact Information

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Communities Strengthened Through Partnership



Regional Partnerships Initiative

The service delivery demands placed on municipalities by residents and industry are increasingly complex.

To compete effectively in the global economy, Alberta municipalities, working together, are developing new ways of thinking, establishing creative problem solving processes, and implementing innovative service delivery strategies.

To support this innovative thinking, Alberta Municipal Affairs developed the Regional Partnerships Initiative with a vision of:

"Communities Strengthened Through Partnership"

Should your municipality consider a Regional Partnership?

The benefits are many:

Cost-Effective Services

Collaborative approaches can create economies of scale and scope which provide the advantage of reduced per-unit service delivery costs. Cost savings for municipalities and ratepayers help to strengthen the Alberta Advantage.

Focus on Regions

The ability of municipalities to cooperate in meeting regional economic, environmental, and social needs leads to stronger regions and, ultimately, a stronger province.

Strong Municipalities

Cooperation and collaboration with neighbouring local governments can result in more efficient, effective and innovative municipalities. This serves, in turn, to enhance municipalities' vitality and viability.

Improved Quality of Life

Effective use of partnerships to leverage resources, promote innovative ideas, expand service choices and lower costs promotes an improved quality of life in Alberta communities.

Managing Growth

Today's growth challenges, specifically significant service delivery and infrastructure costs, are often best accommodated through cooperative approaches to service provision and infrastructure development.

How are Partnerships Developed?

Partnerships between people and organizations are generally developed through a process in which trust is built and a common understanding of opportunities for mutual benefit is established. Beyond these fundamental building blocks, there are typically four stages in the regional partnership development process:

Opportunity

At the first stage of the development process, prospective partners meet to determine if there is support for the idea of working together. In most cases, the parties will meet to discuss a particular opportunity that has been identified. In some cases, however, parties will identify potential partnering opportunities. Various deliverables may emerge from this first stage, including:

- an agreement to proceed in developing a particular partnership around a specific opportunity or set of opportunities;
- an agreement to undertake the necessary preliminary studies to explore the feasibility of specific partnering ideas; or
- a resolution that commits the parties to the concept of delivering services through partnerships, and that places the parties "on the lookout" for opportunities that may arise in the future.

Parameters

Once prospective partners have agreed to develop a partnership around a specific opportunity or set of opportunities, the partners need to begin defining the partnership's parameters. Discussions need to be initiated in order to establish:

- the preferred scope of the shared service (e.g., an entire recreation function, including facilities, programs and parks; or a single aquatic centre);
- the most appropriate governance model for the service (e.g., non-profit society, commission, etc.);
- the most appropriate delivery model for the service (e.g., delivery through one municipality; delivery through a new agency, etc.); and
- an equitable system for sharing costs related to the service (e.g., on the basis of population; on the basis of assessment, etc.).

In addressing each of these considerations, prospective partners may undertake and/or commission studies to identify and assess options.

Groundwork

At the third stage of the development process, the partners lay the groundwork for the service. For example:

- bylaws to establish the service may need to be adopted by the participating municipalities;
- voter approval may need to be obtained in one or more of the participating municipalities;
- communications strategies and materials may need to be developed to explain key changes to the communities involved;
- the chosen governance body and delivery body may need to be established; and
- staffing, systems, procedures, contracts and other administrative matters may need to be arranged or modified.

Delivery

Once the groundwork has been laid, the service partnership is ready to begin delivering the service. The types of activities that occur at this stage will depend on the type of service being provided, and the specific type of arrangement developed.

Funding Opportunities

The Regional Partnerships Initiative assists municipalities at any or all of the stages in the partnership development process.

Exploration Grants - Alberta Municipal Affairs may provide an Exploration Grant to approved partnerships for the "Opportunity" and "Parameters" phases of partnership development.

Implementation Grants - Once partnerships have completed approved Exploration Grant activities, further funding may be available via an Implementation Grant for approved "Groundwork" and "Delivery" phases that move the process forward.