

Practice Name:**Date Created:** 26-May-09**Author:****Last Updated:****Abstract:****GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of Practice	Inter-Municipal Cost Sharing Agreement
Date	30-June-08
Name of Municipality	Woodlands County, Town of Whitecourt
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THE ISSUE**Abstract:**

What is the practice you developed or are developing (brief abstract)?

Please briefly describe the final practice developed. (e.g.

if you developed a new Council agenda, list the agenda items, or if a new communications plan was created, provide a summary of the plan's goals, objectives and highlights.)

Woodlands County and the Town of Whitecourt have partnered to create an Inter-Municipal Cost Sharing Agreement, which deals with all facets of municipal operations.

The agreement takes a community approach to dealing with municipal partnerships, as both municipalities share service responsibilities. What makes the agreement unique is that it covers municipal areas that have not been traditionally viewed as part of a long-term partnership before.

Need:

Please describe (just a couple of sentences or bullet points) why you needed to create this practice (policy or process).

Woodlands County and the Town of Whitecourt realize the importance of sharing resources, and an inter-municipal agreement is a practical way to allow residents increased availability and accessibility to certain facilities and services.

What issue made it necessary? (e.g. "We needed a comprehensive plan to deal with...", or "We needed an annual forecasting tool because...")

The practice was also created to eliminate the prospective duplication of municipal services (i.e. creating two fire departments for each municipality.) The agreement ensures a long-term buy-in for both municipalities through their abilities to have input at the ground level and to share in community decisions. It also ensures that residents will be provided with the same services regardless of which municipality they reside.

The program will also help combat potential budget constraints, allowing both municipalities to accomplish more for the good of their communities, and will also allow for the sustainability of future programs.

CREATING YOUR PRACTICE

Research:

How did you obtain information to help design your practice (including consultation with stakeholders, formal and informal research)?

Please include any research documentation you can share, or give us a source reference (e.g. Web site, literature, "We reviewed the bylaws from other municipalities in the area...").

Both the Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County researched numerous cost sharing agreements before deciding on the Inter-Municipal Cost Sharing Contribution Agreement. However, the design of the practice was largely shaped by a willingness to create a partnership that would theoretically erase the geographical boundary between the Town and County, thus creating a broader community approach.

The master plan was highly influenced by input from municipal committees.

Process:

How did you go about designing your practice? For instance, did you create a team, hire a consultant, borrow something ready-made from another jurisdiction?

Describe briefly who did the design work and what process they followed.

Both municipalities consulted existing agreements established in British Columbia and Alberta. Our Joint Liaison Committee, which includes members from both the Town and County Councils, was also forwarded information from various committees. We did not want to take a cookie-cutter approach when creating our inter-municipal plan, and made the decision to use our in-house resources (administrative staffs, councils) to gain intimate knowledge of our communities and their long-term requirements.

The structure of our practice was created in-house, using both Town and County administrative staffs and councils. We also included some input from solicitors.

GETTING APPROVAL FOR YOUR PRACTICE

Authority:

Whose/what approval did you need to create and implement the practice?

Initial approval was required from the Joint Liaison Committee, and afterwards from both the Town of Whitecourt Council and Woodlands County Council.

Reporting:

How did you inform the decision-maker(s) about the practice and your need for their approval?

Both municipal councils were intimately involved with the entire planning process therefore they were thoroughly informed in time for approval.

Please note the name of any documents provided to the decision-makers that you would be willing to share.

Consultation:

Did you consult with stakeholders as part of your approval process?

Yes, for six to seven years. Our stakeholders were primarily consulted through information sessions.

If so, how? If possible, attach a copy of templates, surveys or other documents you used as part of your

consultation.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR PRACTICE

Plan:

Describe the process you went through to implement the practice. If you used an implementation plan, please note it here.

Our implementation process consisted of obtaining information from stakeholders. This information was then brought to the Joint Liaison Committee for discussion, and then to both municipal councils for approval.

Policy:

What changes to bylaws, regulations or procedures were needed to implement this practice and how did you deal with them?

N/A

Please attach a copy of the change in bylaw, policy or procedure.

When:

When did your municipality begin to use the practice? Was it implemented all at once or in stages?

A major component of the agreement became effective on January 1, 2008. However, the agreement was initially implemented approximately four years ago in stages before the formal agreement was finalized. The structure of various committees was designed for both municipalities to be able to have input into the agreement. The Joint Liaison Committee became the focus for initial discussion and then the committee would relay recommendations to both municipal councils.

Who:

Who was responsible for implementing the practice?

Both municipal councils and administrative staff were responsible for implementing the practice.

If someone else is responsible for ongoing management, who is it?

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Budget:

How much did it cost you to design and implement your practice (i.e. We saved/spent \$XX per year)?

It is difficult to determine an exact dollar amount at this time, however both municipalities anticipate saving \$10 million to \$20 million over the full-length project term (e.g. having one fire department will save X amount of dollars for both municipalities.) Also, design costs were minimal because of in-house staff contributions.

What are your ongoing operational and capital costs, if any?

The ongoing operational and capital costs are between \$5 million and \$6 million per year however, these costs will vary and will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Staff:

What human resources did you need to design, implement and manage your practice? (e.g. “It took X staff member (s) X months on this” or “This is part of normal staff duties.”)

Although we do not have exact human resource figures, our municipal staffs and committees have been designing this practice for six years, and they have been implementing and managing it during regular business hours.

Infrastructure:

N/A

What “capital costs” (such as information technology, other equipment or building assets) did you need to design, implement, manage, and/or evaluate your practice?

EVALUATING YOUR PRACTICE

Formal:

If you did a formal evaluation (e.g. user satisfaction survey, analysis of annual expenditures or number of rate payers served) for your practice, please describe the evaluation tool and the process used.

Tell us who was involved.

Informal:

If you did an informal evaluation, describe what you did (such as discussing the practice with people in the office or on the street, or letters/comments received).

The Town of Whitecourt and Woodlands County have not yet conducted an evaluation, but our future plans consist of collecting data as part of a survey or independent consultation.

Performance measures:

Please list the performance measures for this practice (i.e. reduced number of complaints, money saved, or change in equipment life expectancy.)

Both municipalities have not taken specific performance measures as of yet, but money is anticipated to be saved through the joining of projects. We will complete performance measures based on annual budgets in the future.

Please list the process you used for measuring performance, (i.e. We do annual surveys on...) examples include:

- collecting data
- establishing a baseline
- applying the measures
- results
- follow up

Changes:

(a) Based on the evaluation (formal or informal), describe any changes you have made, or would like to make, to your practice as a result. (e.g. “After implementing this practice, we decided that it would be better if...”)

a) Currently, we have not yet done a follow-up of our survey, as the new agreement was just recently implemented. We will complete this task in the future.

-or-

(b) Has your practice met your expectations and if so, how?

LESSONS LEARNED / BENEFITS RECEIVED**Benefits:**

What are the benefits of this practice to your municipality? (eg. Preparation of Council agenda packages now requires less time, etc.)

One of the key benefits of this practice is that it will provide effective and efficient services to our communities. The practice also allows us to obtain new grant dollars, as well as to explore new initiatives to potentially add to the agreement.

Key Lessons:

What key lessons have you/your municipality learned through the process of:

- designing;
- obtaining approval;
- implementing; and
- evaluating your practice?

One of the main lessons our municipalities have learned through our design, approval, implementation and evaluation processes is to involve all parties at the inception point of the project—including residents. Communication is also a critical aspect with regards to the project's overall development.

Include any problems, surprises, and unanticipated benefits. (e.g. "We realized that we needed to spend more time...")

Some difficulties that arose during the planning process included a change of councils, which resulted in re-education, reasoning and some change in direction for the parties involved.

Advice to Municipal Peers:

What advice would you give to another municipality that is considering adopting your practice? Is there anything you might have done differently?

Our municipalities would advise others to not lose focus of their goal, and in this case, our goal was the community. Community was kept as the focus even during deliberation of the specific agreement details.

PRACTICE UPDATES**New Information:**

There may be some new information to add since this practice was first posted. This is especially true if:

- a new process has been implemented in your municipality;
- there are new practice evaluation results; or
- there has been a change affecting organizational direction. For example, explain how new economic conditions or a new vision/strategy affect the practice.

Please indicate those changes here. Don't forget to list any new documents that may be useful to your peers. Then go to "Other Information" to attach the new documents.

OTHER INFORMATION**Suggestions:**

Please list relevant information sources that others might use or you would be willing to share (courses, Web sites, literature, experts).

Documents & Attachments:

Joint Town of Whitecourt council and Woodlands County

Please attach (using the "Browse" button below) any documents you would be willing to share with others interested in your practice (e.g. a bylaw, a policy, approval documents, templates).

* Note: If you do not have an electronic copy of a document, please send Municipal Excellence a paper copy for scanning to:

Alberta Municipal Affairs
Municipal Excellence Network
17th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4L4

Nominations:

Do you have any suggestions of other individuals or municipalities with municipal practices that we should add to the Municipal Excellence network? Please list their practice, municipality, and contact information.

Or, e-mail menet@gov.ab.ca and let us know about a municipal colleague that has a really good way of doing things.

council function with Whitecourt - Ste. Anne MLA George VanderBurg and the Honourable Ray Danyluk, Minister of Municipal Affairs

A joint column about the agreement submitted to the Whitecourt Star newspaper from Whitecourt Mayor Trevor Thain and Woodlands County Mayor Jim Rennie.

A spreadsheet outlining the costs associated with the agreement

The agreement as amended on June 17, 2008

Inter-Municipal map schedule

COMMENTS

Have we missed something; anything you'd like to add to the areas we have touched on, or an area we have not mentioned?