

Chapter 13. Intergovernmental Collaboration



Photo Credit: Eastern Iowa Mental Health and Disability Region website, <https://easterniowamhds.org/>



Photo Credit: Eastern Iowa Mental Health and Disability Region website, <https://easterniowamhds.org/about-eastern-iowa-mental-health/>

OVERVIEW

The success of the Comprehensive Plan will rely on the ability of Jackson County and individual communities to come together as a region to achieve a common goal. Historically, the county and city governments in Jackson County have had a good working relationship. Jackson County and the cities are able to cooperate to complete projects of mutual interest. Cities and the county also work together to share information and resources, and are active in several regional organizations.

The county and cities take advantage of many opportunities for collaboration in economic development, law enforcement, hazard mitigation, and mutual aid. This chapter will outline current collaboration efforts within the county and profile several regional organizations that facilitate collaboration. The chapter also will identify additional opportunities for collaboration.

Recommendations included in this chapter will help county and city governments continue to work together to achieve their shared goals for the future.

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Intergovernmental collaboration offers many benefits. They include:

Cost Savings

Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.

Address Regional Issues

By communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state agencies, counties and cities are able to address and resolve issues which are regional in nature.

Early Identification of Issues

Cooperation enables jurisdictions to identify and resolve potential conflicts at an early stage, before affected interests have established rigid positions, before substantial funds have been expended, before the political stakes have been raised, and before issues have become conflicts or crises.

Reduced Litigation

Communities that cooperate may be able to resolve issues before they become mired in litigation. Reducing the possibility of costly litigation can save money, as well as the disappointment and frustration of unwanted outcomes.

Consistency

Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring cities, counties, and other jurisdictions.

Predictability

Jurisdictions that cooperate provide greater predictability to residents, developers, businesses, and others. Lack of predictability can result in lost time, money, and opportunity.

Understanding

As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another’s needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.

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Trust

Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust and good working relationships between jurisdictions.

History of Success

When jurisdictions cooperate successfully in one area, the success creates positive feelings and an expectation that other intergovernmental issues can be resolved as well.

Service to Residents

The biggest beneficiaries of intergovernmental cooperation are residents for whom government was created in the first place. They may not understand, or even care about, the intricacies of an intergovernmental issue, but all residents can appreciate their benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, and a strong economy.

CURRENT COLLABORATION

Local governments in Jackson County collaborate with each other and with regional, state, and federal government agencies using a combination of formal and informal agreements to provide services to their residents.

Intergovernmental 28E Agreements

Formal municipal agreements are generally referred to as 28E agreements as they are permitted under Iowa Code Chapter 28E: Joint Exercise of Governmental Powers. Iowa Code Section 28E.1 permits “state and local governments in Iowa to make efficient use of their powers by enabling them to provide joint services and facilities with other agencies and to co-operate in other ways of mutual advantage.”

Several Jackson County departments use 28E agreements, such as Engineering, Mental Health, the Recorder, and the Waste Authority of Jackson County.

Mutual Aid Agreements

Mutual aid agreements are a type of 28E agreement that provides procedures for sharing of resources. In Jackson County, there are mutual aid agreements for sharing fire response, ambulance services, criminal investigation, and maintenance of secondary roads.

The Jackson County Emergency Management Agency coordinates local efforts in partnership with the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The Emergency Management Agency also works with cities, school districts, and other partners in planning for and responding to hazards and emergencies.

The Iowa Secretary of State maintains an online database of 28E agreements at: <https://sos.iowa.gov/search/28ESearch.html>. When accessed in December 2023, this database listed 96 active 28E agreements for Jackson County. Table 13.1 breaks out these agreements by service type. The most common 28E service types for Jackson County were 24 for Health and 14 for Street and Road Systems.

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Informal Collaboration

Jackson County local governments also collaborate through a variety of informal agreements with nonprofit, private, and community organizations.

The county and cities partner with or belong to chambers of commerce, economic development associations, transportation planning agencies, tourism bureaus, and other groups.

For example, the Jackson County Economic Alliance (JCEA) is responsible for developing and implementing an overall economic development plan for Jackson County. Investors include: the county; five cities; utilities; chambers of commerce; financial, health, and educational institutions; businesses; and nonprofit organizations.

The JCEA Board of Directors has five-year goals and objectives established for 2023-2028, including: Collaboration with Jackson County, cities, schools, hospitals, and service organizations to better facilitate collaborative success and creative economic solutions.

<https://www.theicea.org/>

28E AGREEMENTS BY SERVICE TYPE	2023 TOTAL
Law Enforcement	
Criminal Investigation	6
Emergency Management	1
Police Protection	4
Fire Services	
Fire Response	2
Highway & Public Works	
Engineering	4
Sanitation	1
Street & Road Systems	14
Water System	4
Wastewater System	3
Other Public Works	2
Transportation	
Motor Vehicles	4
Community & Neighborhood Services	
Economic Development	1
Health	24
Planning	2
Other Neighborhood Services	7
General Management	
Finance & Tax Administration	1
Information Services	5
Purchasing Services	2
Risk Management	1
Elected Officials, Boards, & Commissions	
Any Elected Officials, Boards, & Commissions	7
Other	
Watershed Management Authority	1

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Regional Collaborations

Jackson County participates in various regional collaborations. Below are some examples that relate directly to chapters of this Comprehensive Plan.

The **East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA)** is a membership sponsored organization of local governments in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. ECIA services cover six broad categories: community development, economic development, transportation planning, housing assistance, employment and training, and rural transit services.
<https://www.ecia.org/>

The **Eastern Iowa Mental Health and Disabilities Services (MH/DS) Region** serves Cedar, Clinton, Jackson, Muscatine and Scott Counties under a 28E agreement. “The community-based, person-centered mental health and disability services system for adults provides locally delivered services, regionally managed with statewide standards.”
<https://easterniowamhds.org/>

The **Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority (EIRHA)** serves Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, Jones and Scott Counties, excluding the cities of Clinton, Camanche, Davenport, and Dubuque. The goal of EIRHA is to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing for eligible households; promote self-sufficiency; create economic independence; and provide home ownership opportunities for Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Program participants.
<https://www.eirha.org/>

The **Grant Wood Loop** region includes Dubuque, Jackson, and Jones counties. “The region boasts a wealth of assets and opportunities for a collaborative effort to connect parks to people and places. The Grant Wood Loop Master Plan is a roadmap and living document for collaboration toward a shared vision within the region to enact over the next 20 years.” <https://gwloop.com/>

The **Maquoketa River Watershed Management Authority (WMA)** enables cities, counties, a benefitted lake district, partners, stakeholders, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to

collaborate on watershed management and improvement in 1,870 square miles across 80 townships and nine counties.
<https://www.limestonebluffsrcd.org/maguoketariverwma>

Prosperity Eastern Iowa is a partnership of economic development stakeholders that leverage financial and human resources to achieve efficiencies for the economic prosperity of the eastern Iowa region of Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, and Jones Counties.
<https://prosperityeasterniowa.org/>

The **Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA)** encompasses Clinton, Delaware, and Jackson Counties, and the rural portion of Dubuque County. The RPA plans for the regional transportation network using Federal funds under the guidance of the State of Iowa. The RPA is led by a policy board that is made up of representatives from local county and city governments.
<https://www.eciatrans.org/rpa8/index.php>

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Local governments in Jackson County work together to provide the best services possible to their residents; however, conflicts may arise.

Preventing Conflicts

In most cases, communities can avoid conflicts by establishing agreements and developing consistency in their local policies. Working closely with the county and other cities will help all parties involved identify and resolve issues before they become conflicts.

Resolving Conflicts

If conflicts do occur, counties and cities may use an alternative dispute resolution process that provides a low-cost flexible approach to resolving conflicts.

“Alternative dispute resolution is the use of mediation that enables people to reach a mutually agreeable solution to their conflict with the assistance of a neutral mediator. Mediators are not judges. They make no decisions for the parties. A mediator helps parties realize

and explain their needs, clarify issues, explore solutions and negotiate an agreement. The purpose of mediation is to help parties find a solution that will work for them.”¹

The principal benefits of utilizing an alternative dispute resolution process to resolve conflicts include:

- Saving time and legal expenses.
- Having greater control over the dispute resolution process.
- Resolving conflicts in a more creative way than might be possible if left to a decision by a judge or jury.
- Greater privacy in resolving disputes than is afforded in a courtroom.
- Responding to conflict in a rational and courteous manner can increase communication, foster positive intergovernmental relationships, provide an opportunity for learning, and broaden perspectives and solutions.

Figure 13.1 shows a dispute resolution ladder. The goal is to resolve conflicts at the lowest steps on the ladder. If the dispute is not resolved at the lower stages, the dispute moves up the ladder. It is in the best interest of all parties involved to resolve the dispute at the lower stages on the ladder, as both the cost and duration of the process increase at the higher stages and the involved parties have less control over outcomes.

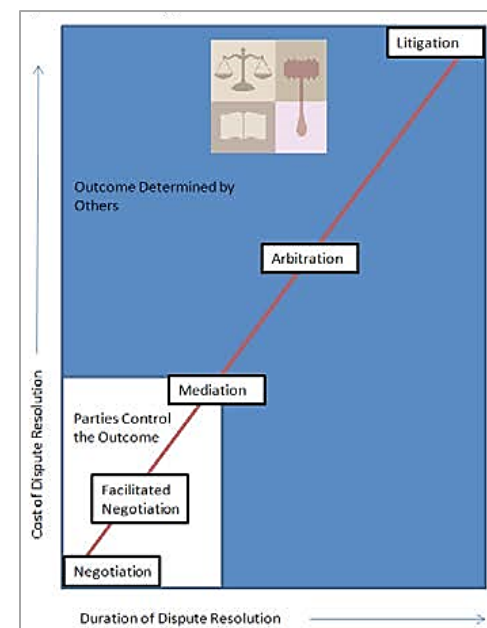


Figure 13.1 Dispute Resolution Ladder
Source: Washington, WI Comprehensive Plan:

¹ <https://www.iand.uscourts.gov/alternative-dispute-resolution>

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ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Build Local Capacity

Issues: Local governments, non-profits, and community organizations play an essential role in developing and implementing community goals for the future through plans, regulations, infrastructure investments, programs, and services.

However, many of these groups may work with limited staff and funds, or may not have the knowledge, training, or technical resources to achieve their goals, or to tap into financial and technical assistance from local, state, and federal programs on their own.

Opportunities: The need for local governments, non-profits, and community organizations facing similar issues to cooperate in finding solutions is an opportunity to share resources they could not afford individually.

Efforts to build local capacity for these groups can range from training and building technical knowledge, to ensuring sustainable funding, to networking and enhancing partnerships to share resources.

Capacity building resources include:

The **Government Training Institute** at East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA), based in Dubuque, is aimed at increasing the capacity of city and county officials and economic development groups in the region. https://www.ecia.org/programs/government_training_institute.php

The **ECIA Fundraising Team** is a non-profit resource for communities and non-profits for capital campaigns and capital projects that require various funding sources. https://www.ecia.org/programs/fundraising_consulting/index.php

The **Community Foundation of Jackson County**, based in Dubuque, inspires people to give back; collaborates with local leaders to identify needs and solutions to community-wide issues; builds endowments to support local organizations; and strengthens local non-profits through funding, capacity-building, and other services. <https://dbqfoundation.org/affiliates/cfjc>

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, based in Ames, engages Iowans and strengthens communities and

their local economies by enhancing leadership capacity, creating partnerships, teaching best practices, and delivering research-based education and information to address current and emerging real-life challenges. The Jackson County Extension office is located in Maquoketa.

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/our-story/2022-iowa-state-university-extension-and-outreach-annual-report>

Informal Collaboration

Issue: The Jackson County Economic Alliance (JCEA) Board of Directors has established five goals and objectives for the Alliance for 2023 to 2028.

Goal 3 is: Collaboration with Jackson County, cities, schools, hospitals, and service organizations.

Opportunity: The JCEA will further develop its relationship with Jackson County's public institutions and service organizations to better facilitate collaborative success and creative economic solutions.

<https://www.thejcea.org/about-us>

Collaboration for Youth Development

Issue: The Jackson County Economic Alliance (JCEA), in conjunction with the East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA), contracted the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities, an organization within the University of Iowa’s Office of Outreach and Engagement, to develop strategies to attract young adults to the region.

The resulting 2018 *Jackson County Tomorrow Strategic Plan* aims to align the region’s resources to help reverse the “brain drain” experienced over the prior two decades.

“Jackson County’s young residents and high school alumni leave for educational or professional opportunities and do not return, taking their talents with them. Their departures create disproportioned population pyramids that seem “hollowed out.”

This trend saps local morale, diminishes productivity, limits economic dynamism, and causes an outbound flow of community wealth. Businesses close,

schools consolidate, and a downward spiral ensues.”²

Opportunities: “There is cause for optimism, however. Although national trends appear to be working against small towns, emerging strategies leverage regional assets – natural, cultural, and economic – to ensure long-term growth and stability.

The strategies within *Jackson County Tomorrow* will not produce immediate results – it takes focus, time, and effort to attract younger residents – but they can help ensure that residents of today and tomorrow live in a Jackson County with a sustainable future.”³

“Students reported in surveys distributed to local schools that they wanted to return to their communities, but believed that job opportunities are limited across the county. Investing and developing young people’s talents can introduce fresh ideas to the community while also teaching young people the skills they can bring back to the county in the future.”⁴

“Investing in young people – especially students – represents a two-pronged approach to increasing the number of young families in Jackson County. First, investing in the community’s current young population makes the community more attractive to the young people themselves – they may feel valued, important, and empowered. Consider a hypothetical teen currently attending a local high school.

Teaching this student leadership and entrepreneurial skills today can pay off down the line when, after attending college and after a job or two, they consider relocating with a family in tow. Armed with the independence and real-world skills developed in Jackson County and cultivated thereafter, they decide to start a business back home. The student had a great experience growing up and wants to provide the same opportunities to the next generation. They already know the business climate, the available resources, and how to leverage them.”⁵

²² 2018 *Jackson County Tomorrow Strategic Plan*, p. 11

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid, p. 23

⁵ Ibid, p. 46

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Build Local Capacity

13.1 Build capacity of local governments, non-profits, and community organizations in Jackson County through:

- Provide training to build technical knowledge.
- Ensuring sustainable funding.
- Networking and enhancing partnerships to share resources.

Informal Collaboration

13.2 Jackson County Economic Alliance (JCEA) collaboration with Jackson County, cities, schools, hospitals, and service organizations.

- JCEA will develop a comprehensive questionnaire based on the premise of the Synchronist software to identify the needs, activities, and goals of these organizations.
- JCEA will meet with Jackson County staff and officials on at least a quarterly basis and develop a set of goals and initiatives to better

understand the county’s challenges, assets, and opportunities.

- JCEA will meet with City staff and officials on at least a quarterly basis and develop a set of goals and initiatives to better understand each city’s challenges, assets, and opportunities.
- JCEA will meet with each school district every year and develop a joint program between the JCEA and each school district to promote community development and economic growth.
- JCEA will meet with each chamber and development group every year.
- JCEA will meet with the hospital every year.
- JCEA will meet with at least 5 service organizations and/or non-profits every year.

Youth Development

13.3 Promote engagement and entrepreneurship among the county’s youth, including professional development opportunities for young workers.

- Improve youth leadership and engagement through engaging activities and leadership development opportunities.
- Improve youth entrepreneurship through innovative programming.



PBnJ Youth Advisory Board presents grant (2021)
 Photo Credit: Community Foundation of Jackson County, <https://dbqfoundation.org/affiliates/cfjc>