

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Vision

The Municipal Capacity Development Program (MCDP) goal for promoting regional partnerships is to provide assistance to **promote and develop municipal capacity to support community readiness and sustainability** for Saskatchewan municipalities. With this goal in mind, the vision for the Regional Partnerships Initiative

Is:

Growing Saskatchewan Communities

What are the Benefits of Regional Partnerships?

Regional partnership funding activities to date demonstrate that **local** priorities are often best addressed by **local** decision makers through **regional** action. Some regional partnerships address issues that are based on a shared geography (e.g., three communities that share municipal boundaries). Other regional partnerships represent a collection of municipalities who come together to pursue mutual interests (e.g., activities that may increase knowledge, training, service or infrastructure sharing across municipalities while reducing costs to individual communities). The MCDP program is designed to help strengthen local communities by encouraging partnerships that enhance local service delivery and reduce costs for Saskatchewan communities. This regional approach supports municipalities to:

Share service delivery – Municipalities working together to deliver key local services often results in enhanced service delivery for Saskatchewan residents, businesses and industries.

Expand cost-effective services – When applied properly to specific types of services, collaborative approaches can take advantage of economies of scale or scope and reduce per-unit service delivery costs. Cost savings for municipalities and their ratepayers can result. These cost savings, in turn, help to promote the ***Growing Saskatchewan Communities***

Develop regional forums – Current MCDP workshop participants indicate that the forums for discussing regional interests and issues offer significant benefits, particularly in developing innovative approaches. The MCDP Program encourages initiation and development of these regional discussion forums.

Focus on regions – No municipality in Saskatchewan is an island unto itself. Economic and social activities are increasingly regional, rather than local. The ability of municipalities within a region to collaborate to meet regional economic and social needs leads to stronger regions and, ultimately, a stronger province.

Strengthen municipalities – Cooperation and collaboration with neighbouring local governments can result in more efficient, effective and innovative municipalities.

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Efficiency, effectiveness and innovation serve, in turn, to enhance municipalities' vitality and autonomy.

Improve quality of life – The effective use of partnerships to leverage resources, spread innovative ideas, expand service choices and lower costs promotes an improved quality of life in communities. Quality of life is an important, if not critical, consideration in the location decisions of residents and businesses.

Plan for growth – The specific challenges presented by changes, including ongoing population changes, are often best accommodated through cooperative approaches to service provision and infrastructure development.

The regional partnerships established to date have demonstrated that there are a number of economic, social, environmental, and quality of life benefits associated with regional approaches to service delivery.

What is the Process Involved to Initiate and Develop a Regional Partnership?

The **partnership development process** tends to consist of **four key stages**:

1. Opportunity

In the first stage of the partnership development process, prospective municipal partners meet (e.g., through joint council meetings or in other similar forums) to determine if there is support for the idea of working together. Usually, the parties will come together to discuss a **particular opportunity** that they have identified as suitable for pursuing through a shared working venture such as a regional partnership. In some cases, however, the parties may not have identified a particular opportunity and will arrange to meet to hold a visioning session or other similar discussion forum, then identify **possible partnering opportunities** that they could explore together. In these situations, municipalities often meet individually prior to the discussion forum to determine their respective self-interests in pursuing a regional partnership. The discussion forum serves as a platform to identify commonalities in the respective self-interests – thereby potentially determining solid regional partnership activities supportable by each municipality at the table. 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; and
- 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.

2. 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 and scope**. Discussions need to be initiated in order to explore:

- 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., planning commission or a regional development authority or similar structure);
- the most appropriate delivery model for the service (e.g., delivery through one municipality or delivery through a new agency); and

- an equitable system for sharing costs related to the service (e.g., on the basis of population or on the basis of assessment).

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

Typically, after the completion of the **Opportunity** and **Parameters** stages of the partnership development process, the municipal partners have two choices with respect to the projects they are exploring:

1. If the project is deemed to provide value to the municipal partners and their constituents, the partnership would move forward to the **Groundwork** laying stage of the partnership development process.
2. If the project does not provide enough value to the partnership's members, the partnership would decide to cease exploration of the specific project or concept and then may consider other projects.

In cases where the regional partnership determines that ceasing the exploration of a specific option or activity is the best course of action, the MCDP Program would like to know why the partnership has determined that ceasing exploration is the best approach. This information will be used in the future to develop best practices and case studies designed to assist municipalities throughout the province in the development of regional partnerships.

3. Groundwork

At the third stage of the development process, the partners undertake the preparations **necessary** to implement their chosen arrangement. For example:

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

4. 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. A new recreation partnership developed to build a regional aquatic centre may issue a request for proposals for a facility plan. A new regional water utility may develop concept plans, a feasibility study, or an implementation plan for service delivery.

Figure 1 illustrates the basic **four-stage partnership development process**. The MCDP Program is tailored to encourage and assist municipalities at any or all of the stages in the development process.

<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunity</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Parameters</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Groundwork</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Delivery</u></p>
<p>-meet to gauge support for working together</p> <p>-discuss specific opportunity(ies) or identify opportunities</p>	<p>-negotiate and establish parameters for service partnership</p> <p>-parameters include: scope, governance, deliver, cost-sharing, etc.</p>	<p>-lay necessary groundwork for partnership to function</p> <p>-may need to:</p> <p>a) set up systems;</p> <p>b) create a governance body;</p> <p>c) obtain voter approval;</p> <p>d) undertake information program;</p> <p>e) etc...</p>	<p>-ready to begin functioning (i.e., delivering the service)</p> <p>-may begin work by:</p> <p>a) commissioning plans;</p> <p>b) completing designs;</p> <p>c) undertaking surveys;</p> <p>d) developiong design and/or concept plans;</p> <p>e) etc...</p>

Suggested Shared Services

When the Municipal Capacity Development Program was initially developed, many municipalities focused their activities primarily around economic development initiatives. Municipalities are now strongly encouraged to **explore regional shared services and delivery** as well as economic development initiatives under all future regional initiatives and activities that may be developed. New applications will be encouraged to have a regional shared service component as part of the partnerships' exploration and implementation activities.

The MCDP Program actively encourages municipalities considering requesting or pursuing funding to consider opportunities related to the following regional shared services:

- Water treatment, transmission and distribution
- Sanitary sewage collection, transmission and treatment
- Stormwater management
- Solid waste management
- Garbage collection and/or recycling
- Land use planning
- Road maintenance
- Infrastructure management
- Bylaw enforcement
- Administration/governance
- Policing
- Fire and emergency services
- Recreation
- Economic development
- Property assessment
- Affordable and seniors housing
- Permits, inspections, etc.
- High speed data transmission

It is important to note that the list provided above is not all inclusive. Rather, it is simply a guide to promote discussion of potential regional opportunities. Services other than those noted above may also be eligible for grant funding.