

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fellows, National Academy of Public Administration
FROM: Standing Panel on Intergovernmental Systems
RE: Dynamic Framework for Analyzing and Improving Intergovernmental Operations for Better Outcomes
DATE: September 16, 2020

As the United States continues to deal with COVID-19 and the pockets of hunger and economic instability left in its wake, with raging wildfires and unprecedented extreme weather events wreaking havoc in multiple places at the same time, and with growing awareness of past and current policy inequities and consequences, **the need for effective intergovernmental arrangements has become increasingly apparent.**

What has also become increasingly apparent is the need to understand when intergovernmental arrangements work well, what makes them falter, and how to make them work better in the future. Over the past few years, the Standing Panel on Intergovernmental Systems has been working to create a stronger foundation for building that understanding to boost government's capacity to deliver better in the many policy areas where intergovernmental arrangements already are or could or should be used.

An initial goal of this effort was to increase appreciation for effective intergovernmental action, a need now being tragically demonstrated by efforts to address Covid-19. Another initial goal was to provide recommendations that Congress could use to realize better outcomes and reduce implementation stress when legislating, appropriating, and conducting oversight in areas requiring intergovernmental action. As this work evolved, it became clear that this set of tools might be useful not only for Congress but also and especially for government agency and cross-agency leaders as well as policy entrepreneurs outside and within government to develop partnerships and convenings to solve problems. This includes those working on the Academy's Grand Challenges, Agile Government Center, Election 2020, and other projects.

The Standing Panel is now reaching out to Academy Fellows for your feedback and contributions. What we send today represents our initial efforts to bring attention to what we think is a very important but under-examined aspect of effective government and good governance. This is very much a work in progress. We now seek your input and assistance in several ways:

- **Intergovernmental tool kit.** See, attached, a list of ten practices or patterns of action that we believe contribute to more successful intergovernmental efforts. This list was developed based on the collective experience of panel members. It evolved after work on an initial set of 4 cases, and we expect it to continue to evolve. We would like to see this 10-tool framework, together with a repository of intergovernmental cases, become a dynamic continually improving evidence-informed resource for those seeking to launch and participate in more effective, less frustrating intergovernmental partnerships.
 - **The panel now invites your suggestions on additions, subtractions, or revisions to these tools.**
 - **We also seek your suggestions about next steps for using them.** In short, we seek your suggestions on the value, uses, and ways to strengthen this intergovernmental tool kit.
 - **In addition, we invite you to try using these tools in your work and to share feedback with this collective effort on how you used them, what worked well, what did not, and suggested adjustments to the tools based on your use.**
- **Cases.** We are pairing the toolkit with cases to illuminate not only effective approaches to intergovernmental action, but also practices to avoid. Four cases are posted with the toolkit. Two – one on [infrastructure](#) and one on [meaningful work](#) – are organized around the 10 tools. The infrastructure case tests the value of the 10 tools as an organizing framework for learning from past experience in a more

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systematic way. The meaningful work case suggests how the toolkit can be helpful for thinking about and then organizing solutions to a problem that no single level of government can solve on its own. The other 2 cases – one on federal/state/local [emergency and disaster management](#) and one on an intergovernmental/intersectoral government [purchasing collaborative](#) launched 15 years ago – take a more general look at the great potential value of successful intergovernmental efforts, as well as the kinds of challenges that can arise.

- **Grand Challenges in Public Administration.** The Panel notes that the current work on a number of the Academy’s Grand Challenges are directly concerned with the current state of intergovernmental relationships and the need for proactive steps to improve these relationships. There is a dynamic crossover and synergy between the intergovernmental tools and cases referenced above and the Grand Challenges working groups. As you encounter intergovernmental issues in your Grand Challenges work, the tools and cases are intended to be helpful and facilitate an effective path forward.

The panel now invites your suggestions and contributions in several ways:

- **feedback on the value of assembling a repository of intergovernmental cases**, especially if and how you think such a repository could be useful (e.g., for teaching, training, research, practitioner prep prior to an intergovernmental engagement);
- **suggestions for additional cases**, both cases already written (e.g., Recovery Act cases) and cases you might want to author/co-author; and
- **thoughts about building an intergovernmental evidence repository, how to do that to make the repository useful to more people, and volunteers to help on this effort.** This, of course, assumes that you think such a repository would be useful.

Next Steps

We welcome your thoughts about users and uses of this resource, as well as your participation bringing this resource to life. Please get your thoughts and suggestions back to us by October 10, 2020, using the SurveyMonkey link below. If you cannot get back to us by then but would still like to be involved in this effort going forward, please let us know of your interest.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YSXVW67>

Survey Questions

1. Please make your suggestions for additions, subtractions, or revisions to the ten tools.
2. It has been suggested that we change the name of this resource to “10 Critical Practices for Effective Intergovernmental Practices” or “10 Essential Practices...” instead of “10 Tools.” Do you have a preference among any of these options, or suggestions for something else?
3. Please provide your suggestions about the value, uses, and options to strengthen the tool kit.
4. Please provide your feedback on the value of assembling a repository of intergovernmental cases, and how you think such a repository could be useful.
5. Do you know of and/or are you interested in writing an additional case?
6. Are you interested in staying involved with this effort?

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Attachment A: 10 Tools for Effective Intergovernmental Action

1. **Lead:** Leaders step up, and are designated or agreed upon, who focus on shared objectives and best outcomes. Leaders guide deployment of knowledge, skills, resources, authorities, and relationships to advance collaborative and whole-of-community responses that support realization of best outcomes.
2. **Focus on Outcomes:** Maintain attention on best outcomes that minimize undesirable side effects and unintended consequences.
3. **Address Equity:** Account for impacts on all affected when goal-setting, determining policy and selecting strategies for execution in order to generate net positive impact for all, without favor or bias.
4. **Communicate:** Transmit and receive information in ways that support all levels of government to identify, define, choose, and explain problems, strategies, results, and causal factors and to determine next steps.
5. **Prioritize:** Work collaboratively across boundaries to prioritize problems and select interventions using shared evidence-based knowledge.
6. **Build and Share Knowledge:** Look for and collect data, conduct analytics, and access well-designed measured trials to inform decisions and actions within and across levels of government.
7. **Solve Problems:** Engage agility, efficiency, respect for scale economics and geographical variance in surge demand, when problem solving at the level closest to the problem, and with accountability sorted accordingly within and across levels of government and among all stakeholders.
8. **Work Across Silos:** Build networks and advance trusted professional relationships by negotiating and problem-solving with respect for the interests, capacities, and constraints of others.
9. **Motivate:** Encourage continual evidence-informed improvement of outcomes using well-designed financial and non-financial incentives that do not tempt gaming and/or other perverse consequences.
10. **Remain Mindful of Finances:** Integrate changing costs and resource capacities continually into decisions and actions to advance best outcomes.