

Review of State Infrastructure Coordination Models

The state models in Table 1 below illustrate how coordinating models can range from formal to informal. The most formal models (West Virginia and Arkansas) have legislative or other state authority that mandates regular group meetings to conduct coordination business and ongoing community participation in the coordination process. The most informal models (Ohio and Colorado) consist of a group of funding agencies and other organizations that meet to discuss projects and consider funding options.

Table 1: Formal and Informal State Coordination Models¹

Formal			Informal		
West Virginia	Arkansas	New York	Montana	Colorado	Ohio

Colorado and Ohio have allowed funding agencies and other participating members to become more familiar with one another’s funding program requirements but tend to have very little participation from communities. Arkansas’s governor issued a proclamation that a community can not receive state funds without going through the state coordinating body. Once a community obtains a recommendation, however, it is free to either follow that recommendation or apply to whichever funding program it wishes. In contrast, West Virginia statutorily requires community participation in its coordination process and binds communities to its recommendations for funding packages. West Virginia’s coordinating body is required to make actual decisions for community funding, while Montana and New York effectively function the same way but do not advertise it as such. The funders in these two states, respectively, have worked together for so many years that they essentially decide which agencies will fund which projects. New York funding agencies operate under a less formal memorandum of understanding, but still feature participation from nearly every community that uses co-funding. Similarly, Montana coordinates with informal agreements but garners full participation among its communities. Mixed models of coordination can be as effective as formal models with respect to the amount of community participation they exhibit.

The following bullets summarize how other state coordination models are organized and what services they provide.

Members / Participants

- The number of agencies involved varies from less than five to greater than twenty actively participating organizations, including regulatory agencies, technical assistance providers, and other planners. Arkansas and New York involve only funding agencies, while other states have advisory members. Two states have a

¹ Kentucky is not listed in the tables above because it does not have a working coordinating body but rather a model for state-wide water infrastructure planning.

number of inactive members that serve in an advisory role and keep up to date with the body's work. Montana has 60 members but only 20 are active. Ohio has a large informal group of 30 advisory members, of which only 10 - 15 regularly participate. West Virginia mandates attendance for six agencies, four public members, three federal agencies, and eight non-voting advisory members (21 total regular participants). Our case studies reported few to no problems with the presence of federal agencies – a concern among North Carolina stakeholders.

Committees

- Most states examined have committees. These range from a minimum of two in New York to nine in Montana. The committees differ in scope and purpose. New York has essentially a Project Review Committee that handles project funding and a broader Steering Committee that sets goals and guides the coordinating body. In contrast, Montana has a variety of committees, including separate committees dedicated to organizing an annual summer picnic and another for creating videos about their initiative. Ohio's body has four committees or workgroups. West Virginia's Infrastructure Council has four full-time committees and a fifth committee used on an as-needed basis. Most of the coordination work in these states takes place in committees, and their quarterly or monthly meetings primarily report the committees' progress.

Staff

- In general, little in-house or other staff time is devoted to coordination efforts. Most states do not have staff dedicated to administering coordination, but rather use the staff of existing agencies. Ohio's Small Communities Environmental Infrastructure Group (SCEIG) staff is provided by the Ohio Water Development Authority, which houses one staff person with flexibility and time to organize their group. West Virginia is the only state with in-house staff. West Virginia has two formal staff members and an annual budget of \$400,000, in addition to staff resources from other agencies. These agencies exchange staff services for resources such as engineering reports and grant money provided by the coordinating body.

Meetings

- Regularly scheduled meetings assist in consistent coordination. Most state coordinating bodies meet monthly or quarterly, but conflicting schedules and travel time can make meetings difficult. New York uses conference calls for a portion of its meetings to ameliorate scheduling and travel problems.

Measuring Success

- There are no real measures or definitions for the success of state models, except in West Virginia and Montana, which keep statistics on money expended for projects, projects completed, and customers served.

Services Provided

- States provide a wide variety of services including: 1) updated central information sources, 2) summaries of state-wide eligibility requirements, 3) joint documents, 4)

compilations of local needs studies, 5) informational conferences and workshops, 6) criteria for creating a list of prioritized projects, and 7) direct financial assistance for infrastructure projects.

- Central repositories of project information has aided in coordination by providing coordinating bodies with a means to track the progress of projects and prioritize which ones to fund. Particularly, New York has used shared information among funders to monitor and coordinate funding for every co-funded project that comes through the pipeline.
- A number of states share joint documents such as joint applications, engineering reports or environmental reviews. Montana utilizes all three of these joint documents to filter every community seeking public funding through its coordinating body. Each agency agrees to submit the joint documents to all project applicants and then bring the documents to the entire coordinating group for review. Joint documents are initially difficult to develop because of differing agency criteria, but they have aided the funding process in Montana and other states.