



Coordinating on Local Climate Action

How U.S. Municipalities Engage
Across Jurisdictions
and Levels of Government

For the Local Government Association

*International learning on local and national government
governance and collaboration on climate action*

March 14, 2024

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Overview

Goal: Understand why and how local governments coordinate and collaborate with each other and with other levels of government by examining examples from the U.S. and Canada.

- About USDN
- Local-local coordination
- Local-state coordination
- Local-federal coordination
- Conclusions



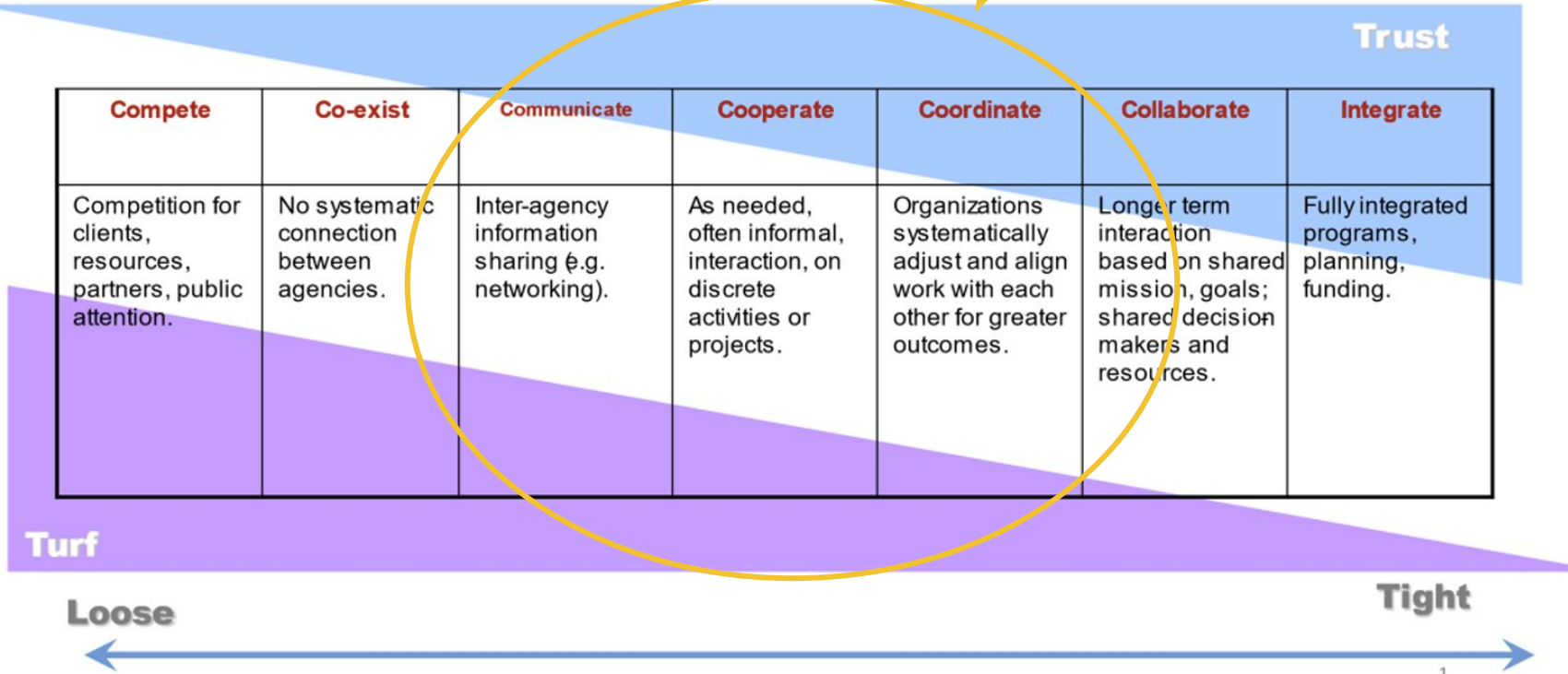
Functions: What purposes does engagement across jurisdictions and levels of government serve? What motivates each type of coordination?

Challenges: What inhibits each type of coordination? Where are there barriers to greater engagement?

Opportunities: What trends are positively impacting coordination? What actions might increase effectiveness?

A word on terminology...

(Engagement)



The Collaboration Spectrum. Source: [Tamarack Institute](#)

About USDN

USDN | urban sustainability
directors network

- **Peer-to-peer network** of local government sustainability practitioners
- **300 member communities** in the U.S. & Canada representing 106M residents
- **2,700 participating individuals** annually
- **Member programs offer peer connection & learning, training, technical assistance, coaching, regranting, events, etc.**

VISION

An equitable, resilient, and sustainable future for all.

MISSION

USDN creates equitable, resilient, and sustainable communities by advancing the field of local government sustainability and equipping practitioners to be catalysts of transformative change.






Local-Local Coordination

Local governments engage with each other through individual relationships, formal and informal networks, and coalitions at all geographic scales.

FUNCTIONS

- Peer exchange and learning
- Collaborative projects
- Policy and regulatory influence
- Community-building and support
- Professional development and skill-building

Scale	Example
Global	 CNCA <u>Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance</u>
National / Multi-national	 urban sustainability directors network
Multi-state Region	 SOUTHEAST SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTORS NETWORK <u>southeaststdn.org</u>
State	Virginia Energy & Sustainability Peer Network (VESPN)
Sub-state / Metro Area	Metropolitan Mayors Coalition (MA) <u>mapc.org/get-involved/coalitions/mmc/</u>

Local-Local Coordination

CHALLENGES

- **Cost** and **capacity** to coordinate and to be part of networks
- **Diverse local contexts** impact how lessons translate across jurisdictions
 - Community characteristics
 - Form of local government
 - Physical climate and built environment
 - State policy and politics
 - Utility and regulatory context
- **Trust-** and relationship-building take time

OPPORTUNITIES

- Dues scaling and stipends
- Network facilitators who convene, support, and foster connection
- Digital tools can enable better information exchange and smart ‘matchmaking’
- Identifying a menu of local strategies newcomers can reference to help them advance more quickly to action
- Creating “sub-communities” within larger networks (affinity groups, communities of practice)

Local-State Coordination

State policy and regulatory outcomes can have a big impact on local climate action. There is scattered but growing engagement from local governments to inform state-level decision-making.

FUNCTIONS

- Influence state policy outcomes
- Bring local government and community perspectives into regulatory decision-making
- Inform program design and funding allocation
- Be an implementation partnership to state agencies

Example



Colorado Communities
for Climate Action

A 42-member coalition of Colorado municipalities advancing stronger climate policy.

cc4ca.org

- Dedicated staff
- Member dues-funded
- Governing board
- Joint policy statement member sign
- Annual policy influence agenda

Local-State Coordination

CHALLENGES

- Policy and regulatory engagement often requires high-cost policy, legal, and technical **expertise**
- Sustainability staff may not have clear **mandates** to engage in state policy
- Engagement **channels** or **authority** to engage with state counterparts
- **Input windows** or **processes** for informing state programs may be unclear
- **Utilities** often have greater political and regulatory power
- Oppositional state leadership and **preemption** of local authority in some regions

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Cost-sharing** on technical and legal professionals needed to jointly engage in utility proceedings
- Greater **engagement between networks** of local government staff and state government agency staff
- Support and incubation for state-level **networks** and coalitions of local governments
- **Vertical policy integration** (e.g. alignment of local GHG or renewables targets with state targets)

Local-Federal Coordination

The current federal landscape is opportunity-rich, complex, and rapidly evolving. Local governments need support understanding available programs and creating strong applications, while federal program administrators can benefit from the insights of on-the-ground implementers.

FUNCTIONS

- **Understanding federal programs** available to support local governments
- **Accessing federal funding** (competitive and non-competitive grants, direct or via states)
- **Providing feedback** to federal agencies on local government needs, program design, funding access barriers, or implementation challenges



Local-Federal Coordination

CHALLENGES

- Complex and **changing landscape** of funding opportunities
- **Inconsistency** in policy, leadership and staffing
- Limited **funding for capacity-building** activities and long-term staffing
- **Unclear mandate** or authority of sustainability staff to engage with higher levels of government
- **Limited capacity** to pursue federal funding, manage grants, implement projects or engage
- Design of federal programs may lack **local practitioner input** at key design stages

OPPORTUNITIES

- Federal programs **integrating practitioner engagement** into program design, e.g.
 - ◆ listening sessions
 - ◆ advisory committees
 - ◆ Requests for Information (RFIs)
- Local government role in gathering and sharing **success stories**, which can build greater support for funding
- **Supporting role of intermediary organizations** who can educate, convene, facilitate knowledge exchange, and support applications to federal funding programs
- Joint or aligned messaging **from local-serving networks and state-serving networks**.

Conclusions

- **Heterogenous policy environments** create challenges for coordination at all levels
- **Intermediaries play a key role** to convene, connection, represent and amplify the voice of local government
- Coordination and alignment **starts with relationship- and trust-building**, and requires time
- **Capacity is a key constraint** for all organizations and all levels and must be factored into design of successful coordination initiatives and funding programs



Discussion



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