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WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Why Local Governments Collaborate:
Perspectives from Elected Officials and Local Government Managers on Regional Collaboration

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

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Acknowledgements

Dedication

This work is dedicated in memory of Ronald Hampton Rowe

During this journey, I have received support and encouragement from a number of individuals. Thank you to Dr. Meghan Gough, my dissertation Chair for your oversight, patience, and expertise during this process and to the supportive committee members, Dr. Brubaker, Dr. Farmer and Dr. Huff. Thank you to the faculty at Virginia Tech for supporting me in many ways during the last stages of this journey.

Thank you to those lost during the journey, my grandmother, Ethel M. Osterbind and my mentor, Rebecca T. Dickson.

Thank you to the men who supported me during this journey, my husband, Chris Davis, my son, Carter Davis and my step-father, Jerry Twiggs.

Thank you to my mother, Martha Osterbind Twiggs who showed me that we can do anything and overcome any obstacles personal and professional. You have been and will always be my role model and hero.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
List of Tables	6
List of Figures.....	7
ABSTRACT	8
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	10
Introduction.....	10
Background.....	12
Virginia’s Enabling Legislation for Intergovernmental Collaboration	13
The “Dillon Rule”	14
The Role of the Local Governing Body	15
The Role of the Local Government Manager	16
Regional Collaboration	17
Problem Statement.....	18
Significance of the Study.....	21
Design and Methods	22
Limitations of the Study.....	24
Definitions of Key Terms.....	25
Organization of the Study.....	26
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework.....	27
Introduction.....	27
Literature Review	27
The New Public Service.....	27
Decision- Making in Public Organizations.....	28
Role of Perception in the Decision-making Process	29
Defining Regional Collaboration.....	30
Continuum of Collaborative Arrangements.....	31
Preconditions to Regional Collaboration.....	34
Overview of the Factors Influencing Decisions to Engage in Regional Collaboration	35
External Factors Influencing Engagement in Regional Collaborations	36
Benefit and Barrier Factors.....	36
Internal Factors Influencing Engagement in Regional Collaborations.....	38
Elected Official’s Perceptions.....	39
Appointed Local Government Managers’ Perceptions.....	41
Theoretical Framework.....	42
Public Choice Theory	42
Public Goods and Decision-making	44
Collaboration Theory	45
Synthesis	48
Chapter 3 Methodology	50
Introduction.....	50
Methodological Justification	50
Research Relationships and Reflexivity.....	52

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Data Collection	57
Data Analysis.....	58
Validity	61
Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretations	62
Introduction	62
The Study Participants	63
The Study Region And Associated Local Governments	64
Elected Officials: Research Findings and Interpretations	69
A Priori Codes.....	70
Emergent Codes	95
Local Government Managers: Research Findings and Interpretations	108
A Priori Codes.....	108
Emergent Codes	127
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations	134
Introduction	134
Conclusion	135
Implications for Public Policy	149
Implications for Practitioners	149
Implications for Academics	151
Limitations of the Study	153
Future Research	153
References	156
Vitae	161

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1. Continuum of Collaborative Arrangements	33
Table 2: Population by Locality.....	55
Table 3: Percentage of Population by Race	55
Table 4: Form of Government.....	56
Table 5: Elected Officials' Interview Questions	59
Table 6: Appointed Managers' Interview Questions.....	59
Table 7: Tenure of Elected Officials and Local Government Managers.....	64
Table 8: Tenure and Leadership Position of Elected Official.....	71
Table 9: Profiles of Interview Quotes of the Benefits of Regional Collaboration.....	92
Table 10: Profile of Interview Quotes on the Barriers to Engagement in Regional Collaboration	94
Table 11: Tenure of Local Government Managers.....	109

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

List of Figures

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework.....	49
Figure 2: Continuum of Regional Involvement.....	69
Figure 3 Factors Influencing Elected Officials' Decision to Engage in Regional Collaboration	138
Figure 4: Factors Influencing Local Government Managers' Decision to Pursue Regional Collaborations	140
Figure 5 Factors Influencing Regional Collaboration	142

ABSTRACT

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE:
PERSPECTIVES FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MANAGERS ON REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Stephanie Dean Davis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018

Major Director: Dr. Meghan Z. Gough, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public
Affairs

Local governments in the United States face difficult choices as they allocate scarce resources to provide services to their citizens. Regional collaboration offers an option. Given the external pressures on local governments and the perceptions of elected and appointed officials as to the opportunities and challenges of regional collaboration, this study examined the factors that influence a local government's decision to engage in regional collaborations as a way to address public problems that are not subject to traditional jurisdictional boundary lines. The purpose of the study was to identify and understand the factors that influence elected officials and appointed local government managers in the decision to engage in regional collaborations to address a public problem. The study utilized a qualitative research method using semi-structured interview questions and included seven local governments in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Four counties and three cities were selected and two elected officials and each local government manager were interviewed. Data analysis was conducted using the verbatim transcripts of the interviews with each study participant. The findings from the data analysis resulted in an understanding of the perspectives of elected officials and local government managers. Elected officials engaged in regional collaboration to solve public problems in response to preconditions such as a disaster occurrence, fiscal stress, citizen-backed consolidation referendums, State of

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Virginia influence, and outside agency influence. The study found elected officials in highly-engaged communities developed significant relationships with their counterparts in other jurisdictions that increased the likelihood for cooperation. Shared norms and values among elected officials across jurisdictions enabled these types of arrangements. Elected officials recognized the role of the local government manager as the initiator of these projects and established expectations for the manager in initiating these projects. Local government managers similarly recognized preconditions that influenced their decision to engage in regional collaboration and the need for elected officials to give their early and continued support for regional collaboration. From the local government managers' perspective, elected officials were a significant factor and a barrier to engagement in regional collaboration. Investigation into the motivations of the elected official and the local government manager revealed that successful collaborations require a jurisdictional benefit that positively impacts the self-interest of the elected official and local government manager. Future research should include both the elected official and local government manager to understand the full dynamics of local government management and administration.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Why Local Governments Collaborate:

Perspectives from Elected Officials and Local Government Managers on Regional Collaboration

“The pursuit of self-interest through government, while commonplace, must be resisted when either citizen or public servant self-interest erodes the general interest. Rather than merely facilitating the pursuit of self-interest, the public administrator will continually strive, with elected representatives and the citizens, to find and articulate a general or common interest and to cause the government to pursue that interest.” (Frederickson, 1991, 415-416)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Local governments in the United States face difficult choices as they allocate scarce resources to provide services to their citizens. These public organizations have been challenged by the continued recovery from the Great recession, significant reductions in funding from the State and Federal levels of government, and increased requests and demands for services from citizens. Further complicating the decision-making process in allocating scarce resources for public services is the inherent conflict between elected officials and appointed local government managers and their individual motivations for serving the public. The conflict between elected officials’ perspectives in representing their constituency and local government managers’ perspectives in ensuring the efficient delivery of services is both an opportunity and challenge for any local government organization. Out of this environment, new ways to deliver services, including privatization, collaboration, and public-private partnerships, have been sought by both elected officials and appointed local government managers.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

While the literature provides a breadth of research on these various arrangements, this study investigates the area of regional collaboration. The impacts of collaboration at the local government level have been well documented in the literature. Beginning with Cigler's seminal article on preconditions that influence the development of multi-community collaborations, over the past twenty years other scholars have documented the benefits and barriers to intergovernmental collaborations (Cigler, 1999; Morse, 2005; Warm, 2011; Benton, 2013; Carr and Hawkins, 2013, Lackey, et. al., 2002). The challenges to intergovernmental agreements include loss of local identity, unequal sharing of costs and benefits, loss of oversight and control of local services and lack of coordination of service delivery. In a 2013 survey, researchers found the benefits of intergovernmental agreements included cost savings, expanded services, improved service, resultant economies of scale, and increased trust among partners (Hilvert and Swindell, 2013). As a result, the decision-making process for a local government to commit to an intergovernmental relationship involves a balance of negotiation, deliberation, and cooperative actions between the two actors at the local government level.

Given the external pressures on local governments and the perceptions of elected and appointed officials as to the opportunities and challenges of regional collaboration, this study examined the factors that influence a local government's decision to engage in regional collaborations as a way to address public problems that are not subject to traditional jurisdictional boundary lines. The purpose of the study was to understand the factors that influence elected officials and appointed local government managers in the decision to engage in regional collaborations to address a public problem. This study investigated the overarching research question:

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

How do perceptions of the internal and external benefits and barriers of regional collaboration influence elected officials' and appointed managers' decision to engage in regional collaborations?

To obtain elected officials' and local government managers' perspectives two additional research questions guided the study:

How do elected officials make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?

How do local government managers make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?

Chapter 1 provides the study background, a statement of the problem and the purpose and significance of the study within the context of local government in the U.S., and concludes with an overview of the dissertation.

Background

The United States is made up of a significant number of local governments classified by counties, municipalities, and townships. In 2012, the United States Census Bureau identified 90,106 local governments in the United States. Of this total, 38,910 are general-purpose governments made up of 3,031 counties, 19,519 municipalities, and 16,360 townships and over 51,000 special purpose governments established for specific public purposes such as education or public utilities (Census of Governments, 2012). General-purpose governments perform a number of functions including financial administration, police and public safety functions, transportation, utilities, and other health and welfare functions. For the purpose of this study,

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

general-purpose governments are the type of organizations examined and will be referred to as local governments. Further, due to their consistency in the types of services that are provided and the governmental boundaries specific to local governments in Virginia, only counties and cities were included.

Local governments deliver a range of services to citizens. Public education, public safety functions, and social welfare programs are State and Federally mandated and require local government to provide them. Services may be provided as a result of a locality- specific issue such as crime prevention, economic development partnerships or environmental sustainability initiatives. In addition, service provision reflects local community characteristics such as median income, real estate and personal property assessments, business and commercial tax base and demographics. As a result of these characteristics and other factors, communities make difficult choices to provide services to their citizens.

Virginia’s Enabling Legislation for Intergovernmental Collaboration

In 2011, the General Assembly directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to review the costs and benefits of providing incentives to local governments to encourage local collaboration on capital projects or service delivery (JLARC, 2012). The Code of Virginia authorizes two or more localities to collaborate on local government functions. For example, Section 15.2-1300 allows local governments to jointly perform any activity on their own also referred to as the joint exercise of powers authority (JLARC, 2012). Virginia offers incentives to local governments for regional efforts such as state financial assistance for the construction of regional jails. The report noted some of the barriers to regional collaboration including “a lack of resources to plan or initiate a collaborative effort, logistical challenges

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

associated with merging or coordinating functions across jurisdictions, and a lack of local leadership or community support” (JLARC, 2012).

City and County Independence

One of the main challenges to regional collaboration in Virginia is the structure in which cities are independent from their counties in their governance and receipt of state funding (JLARC, 2012). Compared to other states, Virginia is unique in that cities are independent from counties and has equivalent power to tax and similar responsibilities for service delivery (Roberts, 2009). Roberts (2009) posits that the 1971 Constitution of Virginia, which recognized city-county separation, was constructed to “avoid duplicative services and increase political accountability”. The structure of county and city jurisdictions serves as a natural disincentive to collaborate because State funding is determined on a jurisdictional basis, counties and cities provide the same services and not required by overarching legislation or regulations to provide any services outside of jurisdictional boundaries, and elected governing bodies serve the constituency determined by these jurisdictional lines.

The “Dillon Rule”

Another potentially complicating factor for intergovernmental cooperation is that Virginia is a “Dillon rule” state which means that localities have power only expressly granted by the State through its legislative powers. In 1865, Judge John F. Dillon established the “Dillon Rule” in *Clark v. City of Des Moines* by establishing that “a municipal corporation possesses and can exercise the following powers and no others: first those granted in express words; second, those necessarily or fairly implied in or incident to the powers expressly granted; third, those essential to the declared objects and purposes of the corporation, not simply convenient but indispensable. Any fair, reasonable doubt concerning the existence of the power is resolved by

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

the courts against the corporation, and the power is denied” (Richardson, 2011). There is continued debate on whether Virginia’s unique local government structure may impede regional collaborations due to its more rigid boundaries and lack of shared power and authority between counties and cities.

The Role of the Local Governing Body

Virginia’s local governments include 95 counties, 38 cities, and 191 incorporated towns. Local governments are managed by elected governing bodies; elected Board of Supervisors, City Councils, or Town Councils, and their duties are codified in the Code of Virginia. These elected officials represent districts of a county, city, or town and have executive and legislative powers to adopt policy at the local government level. The Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-403, states that the county board of supervisors is the “policy-determining body of the county” and “shall...provide for the performance of all governmental functions...”(Code of Virginia). Cities and towns are granted power under Section 15.2-1102, Code of Virginia, which allows these municipalities to “exercise all powers...to secure and promote the general welfare of inhabitants of the municipality...” (Code of Virginia). The purpose of the elected governing body in a county, city, or town is to set public policy for the municipality they serve.

To implement elected governing body policies and directives, County Board of Supervisors, City councils or Town councils may employ a chief executive or local government manager. Sections 15.2-300 through Sections 15.2-858, Code of Virginia, provide for alternative forms of government in the Commonwealth including the county board, county manager, county executive, and urban county executive forms of government. The local government manager may be identified as a city manager, county administrator, county manager, or town manager and is hired to implement the policies of the elected governing body. Section 15.2-406 states, “The

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

board shall appoint a county administrator and fix his compensation. He shall be appointed with due regard to merit only, and need not be a resident of the county at the time of his appointment. No board member shall, during the time for which he is elected, be chosen county administrator. The county administrator may be removed at the pleasure of the board” (Code of Virginia).

The Role of the Local Government Manager

Local government managers serve at the pleasure of the elected governing body. They can be terminated for any reason and are not subject to a grievance procedure. The local government manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the local government and oversees the various departments and employees of the county, city, or town. Section 15.2-407, Code of Virginia, sets forth the role of the manager in the county form of government including “...The county administrator shall, insofar as the board requires, be responsible to the board for the proper administration of all affairs of the county which the board has authority to control. He shall keep the board advised as to the financial condition of the county and shall submit to the board monthly, and at such other times as may be required, reports concerning the administrative affairs of the county...”(Code of Virginia).

The role of the local government manager balances the political and administrative pressures of managing a local government organization (Nalbandian, 2006). The local government is charged with implementing the policies adopted by the governing body through the administrative arm of the local government. The ability to translate these policy directives into action is one of the main challenges facing local government managers. The unique demands on the manager have prompted the national professional organization for local government managers, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), to develop supportive best practices. These best practices help professional managers build

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

community and support democratic and community values (Nalbandian and O'Neill, Wilkes, and Kaufman, 2013).

Regional Collaboration

Regional collaborations are defined as two or more local governments working together to solve a public problem or provide a public service. Swindell and Hilvert (2014) state, “collaboration refers to arrangements in which all partners to the arrangement incur costs and share benefits related to their efforts”. These arrangements demonstrate efforts by local governments to work together to get something done that would otherwise not occur with a single organization (Warm, 2011). For the purpose of this study, regional collaborations represent intergovernmental relationships that serve to solve a public problem through shared services or shared capital investment.

One justification for joint service provision is that many public issues cross-jurisdictional lines. Water quality, air quality, economic development, and transportation impact multiple jurisdictions. In some cases, public problems do not occur within one jurisdiction and the remedy is not constrained to a single municipality (Perlman and Jimenez, 2010). One example of regional collaboration in Virginia is the regional planning district commission system. Established in 1968, these regional organizations serve many jurisdictions and “foster intergovernmental cooperation by bringing together local elected and appointed officials and involved citizens to discuss common needs and determine solutions to regional issues” (Planning District Commissions, 2012).

Intergovernmental relationships and partnerships is “not a new idea” (Warm, 2011). During the 1980s, intergovernmental relationships became more prevalent with two jurisdictions developing partnerships (Warm, 2011). However, the nature and complexity of these

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

relationships have expanded over the last thirty years. In addition, the attention given to the area of regional collaboration has expanded. A study of Florida city and county managers found that managers were interested in more focused research in the area of collaboration and understanding the precursors, outcomes and other factors of interlocal agreements (Lee and Hannah-Spurlock, 2015). Lee and Hannah-Spurlock (2015) posit that the scholarship has “paid very little attention to the views of practicing, experienced managers.”

Problem Statement

Public administration has evolved through three movements over the course of decades. Starting with the “old public administration” to “New Public Management”, public administration practice moved from a focus on the hierarchical bureaucracy to a focus of self-interest and efficiency through the use of market influences (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Beginning in early 2000, a new movement, Public Service Management, began to recognize the need to focus on values and a renewed sense of public service in public administration. Public Service Management considers the need for cooperation, citizen engagement, democratic deliberation and changing the lens for government operations from “running it like a business” to one of “building communities, engaging citizens and making government work more efficiently” (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).

Within this context of public service values, new frameworks have been developed on interlocal cooperation and value focused administration. More research is needed on interlocal cooperation or interlocal collaboration through the New Public Service lens. Zeemering (2008) recognized this need in a study of city council member’s interest in interlocal cooperation and the implications of their interest in the development of cooperative arrangement. The study found that city managers and elected officials need to work together to implement

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

intergovernmental arrangements, public administrators should recognize the elected official's value conflicts with blurring jurisdictional boundaries and governments should seek citizen engagement in the decision-making process on cooperative agreements. The findings support the New Public Management core values and provide an expanded framework for investigation.

This study encompasses the foundations of the New Public Service movement while recognizing the New Public Management movement by integrating both public choice and collaboration literature. The need to focus on democratic ideals and the renewed focus on the public good was key to this study of regional collaboration. Zeemering (2008) states "working across local government borders places city managers in a position to consider new and varied constituencies impacted by service delivery". Recognizing the need for regional collaboration and understanding the factors that drive the decision-making process was a key contribution of this study to the area of interlocal cooperation and the New Public Service movement in public administration.

The nature of the local government environment, with decision-making at the level of the elected governing body and implementation at the administrative level, reflects a complicated and conflicted pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services. Continued recovery from the great recession of 2008 has resulted in stagnant revenues and the effects of the financial crisis and its aftermath are important factors that will shape municipal decisions in the future (Barnes, 2010). Further, political views of communities have changed due to variations among community demographics including race, gender, and income levels (Barnes, 2010). Revenue reductions from the State have required significant cuts to local budgets and corresponding reductions in services to citizens. At the same time, local governments have increased citizen demands for services due to the long recovery of the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

recession. As noted by Abels (2014), as the result of the recession, local governments have been pressured to readjust their financial, organizational and management practices. This ever-changing environment requires local governments to adjust quickly and decisively.

In response to this fluid environment, local governments have formed regional collaborations to provide services to citizens. Joint service delivery and joint facilities that serve multiple jurisdictions are becoming increasingly prevalent among local governments and will likely continue to grow in the future (Barnes, 2010). As opposed to single jurisdictional service provision, localities face different challenges and different benefits from regional collaborations. More effective and efficient services may result from regional collaboration as economies of scale or cost savings are achieved. However, the importance of jurisdictional boundaries and identity will need to be realigned because of the need to solve problems across jurisdictions (Barnes, 2010).

The decision-making process, in any organization, is the result of the individual perceptions of positives and negatives of a particular solution or alternative solutions. As noted by Robbins and Judge, (p. 159), “the way individuals make decisions and the quality of their choices are largely influenced by their perceptions.” To understand why local governments make the decision to engage in a regional collaboration, it was necessary to understand the individual’s perceptions of the factors that influence the decision. Elected officials and appointed local government managers’ perceptions of external and internal factors influence their decisions about regional collaboration. Further, elected officials and appointed local government managers’ perceptions of external benefits and barriers and internal perceptions of self-interest versus the public interest influence the decision to engage in regional collaboration.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

The inherent conflict between the elected and appointed officials, the fluid nature of the local government environment and the limitations placed on local governments, lead to decisions based on compromise and in many cases, not necessarily the optimum choice. What motivates the policy makers, the elected officials, and what motivates the policy implementers, the manager, explains decisions at the local level. In many cases, decisions made by the governing body leave staff and citizens asking the question “Why did they do that?” To understand decision-making at the local government level, the factors that influence the individuals in the context of regional collaboration need to be investigated and understood.

The decision-making process at the local government level reflects external and internal influences. The decision-maker, either the elected official or the appointed manager, relies on external information. How the individual processes the external information, and perceptions of benefits and barriers to regional collaboration, play an integral role in the decision-making process. In addition, internal perceptions of the benefits and barriers, through a public interest lens and a self-interest lens, are integral factors in the decision-making process. The perception of the impact on both the elected official and the appointed manager in terms of re-election, continued employment, or other self-interest factors influences the decision to pursue regional collaborations. The perception of the impact on the community as a whole or the “public interest” also influences the decision to pursue regional collaborations. The implications of understanding these factors may lead to better decision-making and service delivery in communities and to better serve the public interest.

Significance of the Study

This investigation bridges the gap between theory and practice and seeks to provide practitioners with public policy considerations when addressing public problems from a regional

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

perspective. Local government managers and elected officials seek to provide services to their citizens in the most efficient and effective manner. This study will provide insight that will support public policy from a regional perspective. As noted by Lee and Hannah-Spurlock, (2015), “there is a need for academic study on actual practitioner behavior.” This study also includes the perceptions of both the elected official and the appointed manager that will expand areas of research in the local government context. The scholarship within this context focuses on either the elected official or the administrative staff, department heads and manager. This study will be of interest in the community of local government managers by providing data and conclusions from the elected official’s perspective.

The academic community will gain knowledge by understanding the factors that influence the decision to engage in regional collaborations by examining both the elected official and the local government manager. The literature on collaboration theory tends to focus on the actions within collaboration or on the outcomes of collaboration. Understanding the elected officials and local government managers’ perceptions of external and internal factors and incorporating both collaboration theory and public choice theory in the analysis is a unique model of decision-making. Further research could utilize the framework and methods for investigation in other areas of local government service delivery.

Design and Methods

This study was exploratory and sought to understand perceptions of external and internal benefits and barriers to regional collaboration from the perspective of both the elected official and the appointed local government manager. To understand perceptions, this study utilized a modified grounded-theory approach and gather data through the use of in-person, semi-structured interviews. The inductive approach to research builds theory and allows the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

researcher to build conclusions through a reiterative data collection process. From thematic coding, gathered from the use of digital recordings and memo writing, the researcher developed themes from the interviews of both the elected official and the appointed manager. During the data collection process, the researcher ensured the questions asked captured the information to be obtained.

Due to the inductive nature of the study and the utilization of a modified grounded-theory research design, site and participant selection for the study were important considerations. Participants for the study included both elected officials and local government managers in the State of Virginia. The richness of the study was defined by the two contrasting views of these local government officials. Site selection was an important consideration as well and the decision to select a region in Southwest Virginia was based on a number of criteria. The researcher considered the importance of regional collaboration demonstrated through an active Partnership, the population of the individual localities, urban, rural, or suburban status, heterogeneous versus homogeneous communities and city/county mix. The selected region represents seven localities, three cities, and four counties, with a total population of 330,466. Regionally the population growth is fairly stable with both migration and immigration occurring at different rates in the individual communities. The unemployment rate reflects higher than the state average in some communities and lower in other communities. The mix of cities and counties also accounts for diversity, although limited, in race. The selected area, when compared to Northern Virginia or the Hampton Roads area, is more representative of of the state and the other counties and cities outside of the Northern Virginia or Hampton Roads area. Larger, more populous regions may have already developed extensive and highly sophisticated collaboration projects in such cases as transportation. The selection of the region reflects a decision to identify

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

a community with growth opportunities and potential that represents the vast majority of the communities in Virginia.

Limitations of the Study

The study will examine only the municipalities in the study area in the Commonwealth of Virginia including four counties and three cities. The Commonwealth of Virginia is unique among the other states because it has independent counties and cities. In most other states, cities and counties are responsible for different functions of governments such as social services in counties and utilities in cities. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, local governments are responsible for all government services and authority is not dependent on city or county status. Use of a larger sample size or other regions of Virginia may result in different findings.

Definitions of Key Terms

The inclusion of the definitions of key terms in this study seeks to help the reader understand the context in which the terms are used throughout the paper. The key terms are applicable in the area of local government management and many of the terms have been defined through the Code of Virginia. Citations are provided for future investigation.

Board of Supervisors: the governing body of a county (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

City: means any independent incorporated community which became a city as provided by law before noon on the first day of July, nineteen hundred seventy-one, or which has within defined boundaries a population of 5,000 or more and which has become a city as provided by law (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

Collaboration: a process that engages stakeholders with an interest in solving a problem and recognizes that one party alone cannot successfully achieve results by themselves (Gray, p. 5)

County: any existing county or such unit hereafter created (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

“Dillon Rule”: judicial ruling regarding municipal power. In Dillon- rule states, power is only conferred by the state through expressed words, implicitly allowed, or those powers essential to the purpose of government corporations.

Governing body: the board of supervisors of a county, council of a city, or council of a town, as the context may require (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Locality or "local government": shall be construed to mean a county, city, or town as the context may require (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

Local government capacity: the integration of internal and external resources necessary for a local government to accomplish a public goal and includes financial resources, human resources, infrastructure and management (Christensen and Gazley, 2008)

Municipality, "incorporated communities," "municipal corporation," words or terms of similar import shall be construed to relate only to cities and towns (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

Politics/Administrative Dichotomy: Reflect the inherent conflict between elected politicians and appointed professional managers in the governing of a municipality (Nalbandian, 2006)

Regional Collaboration: two or more jurisdictions working together to solve a public problem (Warm, 2011)

Supervisor: a member of the board of supervisors of a county (Code of Virginia Section 15.2-102)

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of this study reviews the background of local government, the purpose and significance of the study, limitations of the research and the definition of key terms used throughout the research. Chapter II will review the relevant literature to support the investigation. Chapter III includes an explanation of the research methodology to be used in this investigation. Chapter IV reports the findings of the interviews and data analysis. Finally, Chapter V will review the conclusions and implications for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of relevant literature and provides the theoretical framework for the study. The first section examines decision-making in public organizations and the role of individual perceptions in the decision-making process. Next, the chapter includes the definition of regional collaboration and the various arrangements identified in the literature. In addition, an overview of the preconditions necessary for regional collaboration and an examination of prior research on the factors that influence the decision to engage in regional collaboration are included. These factors are categorized as external and internal. Finally, the theoretical framework for this study draws on public choice theory and collaboration theory.

Literature Review

The New Public Service

Literature in the field of public administration encompasses ideals and practices that have evolved over the history of scholarly writings on this topic. Beginning with “old public administration”, the view of government was seen as a purely bureaucratic machine (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). Government was characterized as politically neutral, a deliverer of direct service, top-down decision-making, limited citizen involvement, value of only efficiency and rationality, and implementation (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). The “old public administration” established the hierarchical view of the government as an organization and the control of decision-making at the very top echelon of the organization. The managers were viewed as implementers of policy, determined by politicians, and had very little input in the development of policy initiatives.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

In the 1990s, the New Public Management was introduced and emphasized the self-interest of the citizen as customer and focused on efficiency and results (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). The New Public Management “is clearly related to the public choice movement” and focuses on the self-interest and market functions of an economy (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). The New Public Management sought to improve efficiency and the effectiveness of services through the use of performance measurement. Managers still implement policy approved by the politicians but the focus was how to improve services through market-oriented relationships. This period saw increases in public-private partnerships and privatization of services.

Fifteen years ago the New Public Service movement was conceptualized as a movement “emphasizing democratic norms and citizen engagement in the conduct of public administration” (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). This view emphasized the need to “give voice to the traditional and significant democratic perspectives” that may have been tempered during the New Public Management movement (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). This movement focuses on seven core arguments related to the role of the public service and a focus on the “value tensions surrounding bureaucracy, efficiency, equity, responsiveness and accountability” (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). Out of this movement a number of new frameworks have been developed, including the cross-boundary cooperation identified by Zeemering and local governance issues identified by Nalbandian (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). This study seeks to position itself with the New Public Management literature while investigating the movement from the New Public Service literature in practice.

Decision- Making in Public Organizations

The concept of decision-making in organizations is found in the organization theory literature. Decision-making is studied as a process in which organizations achieve their goals but

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

considers the difference between public and private sector decision-making. Private sector organizations, in most cases, are focused on the profit or bottom line of the organization (Vasu, Stewart, and Garson, p. 195). Previous research has found that private organizations tend to have decision-making processes that are more efficient as compared to public-sector organizations (Nutt, 2006). Private-sector organizations work within an environment of competition and price as opposed to public organizations that provide public goods to all citizens. Public-sector organizations work with tax dollars and are subject to oversight of legislative bodies and citizen review.

Administrative behavior, decision-making, is the result of individuals making decisions based on values, perceptions, and goals. In this work, Simon makes a clear distinction between facts and values on the decision-making process (Simon, p. 55). Facts are known ideas that are true or false as opposed to values that reflect an idea of good or bad, or “ought to be” (Simon, p. 57). The values and beliefs of individuals directly impact their assessment of the best alternative solution to a problem and these values and beliefs determine their individual perceptions about a particular problem.

Role of Perception in the Decision-making Process

The role of perception in the decision-making process is critical to understanding why decisions are made by individuals, on behalf of an organization to support or facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. These perceptions influence the ways individuals will vote on a particular issue or how they will encourage a particular policy agenda at the local government level. Perception is defined as the process individuals use to “give meaning to their environment” (Robbins and Judge, p. 152). Three factors are identified as influencing perception including the perceiver, the target or the situation (Robbins and Judge, p. 152). The perceiver is

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

influenced by internal attitudes, motives, interests, experiences, and expectations (Robbins and Judge, p. 152). The target that is being perceived identifies certain characteristics such as sound, size, similarity, and background (Robbins and Judge, p. 152). Finally, the situation influences the individual's perception including the time, place, work, or social setting (Robbins and Judge, p. 152). Understanding the perceptions of both the internal and external environment is critical in understanding the choices made by elected officials and appointed local government managers in this study.

Defining Regional Collaboration

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that influence a local government's decision to engage in regional collaborations, as perceived by the elected official and the local government manager, to solve a public problem. In the local government context, public officials make decisions about public safety policies, budget and tax rates, economic development initiatives and other jurisdictional-specific projects and issues on a daily basis. However, the decision to work with other governments is a fundamental shift in philosophy and precedent because it requires decision-makers to also consider the interests and needs of another jurisdiction decision-making and encompasses a wider range of influences from homogeneous and heterogeneous communities. The justification for evaluating regional decision-making in this study was that the complexity of these arrangements and the nature of the actors involved have not been thoroughly investigated in the literature and there is a need to understand the nature of these relationships. This section will provide the foundation of this examination by defining and considering the context of regional collaboration.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

For the purpose of this study, regional collaborations were defined as intergovernmental relationships that serve to solve a public problem through shared services or shared capital investment.

The study of intergovernmental relationships is not new in the literature (Warm, 2011). Beginning in the 1980s, intergovernmental relationships became more prevalent in the context of two jurisdictions developing partnerships (Warm, 2011). However, the nature and complexity of these relationships have expanded over the last thirty years. New research on collaboration, networks, and other interconnected relationships has developed yet there are opportunities to investigate these relationships in more detail.

Continuum of Collaborative Arrangements

These new intergovernmental relationships continue to be investigated and defined in the literature by identifying the ways in which local governments work together. Walker (1987) identifies seventeen ways local governments or metropolitan areas work together through regional approaches to service delivery. From informal cooperation, contracts, regional councils, special districts, joint authorities to local government consolidations, the breadth of regional collaborations continues to grow. As noted by Barnes (2010), joint -service delivery and joint facilities that serve multiple jurisdictions are becoming increasingly prevalent among local governments and will likely continue to grow in the future.

Collaborative relationships between organizations can be viewed on a continuum with varied structures and parameters. Mandell (1999) recognizes collaborative relationships are on a continuum from “loose linkages” to more “lasting structural arrangements”. The continuum at the extremes includes linkages between two or more organizations up to a network structure where there is “a broad mission and joint and strategically interdependent action” (Mandell,

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

1999). Mandell (1999) also identifies intermittent action between two organizations such as a temporary task force, a permanent meeting through a formal arrangement, and a coalition.

Cigler, (1999), identifies a continuum of partnerships which are identified based on their purpose, intensity of linkages, and formality of agreements. Networking partnerships are relationships between organizations tied together through very loose linkages (Cigler, 1999). Cooperative partnerships are defined as organizations that work together on one or more activities, staffed by middle managers, and using few resources (Cigler, 1999). Coordinating partnerships require commitment of resources, development of a shared goal, more formality, loss of autonomy, and tend to be more visible (Cigler, 1999). Finally, collaborative partnerships are the most formal and have strong linkages among members (Cigler, 1999). Resource commitment tends to be significant, and their efforts are highly visible within the community (Cigler, 1999).

Selden, Sowa and Sandfort (2006) classify inter-organizational relationships on a continuum of collaborative service arrangements. This classification moves from cooperation to coordination to collaboration and finally, service integration (Seldon, et. al, 2006). Cooperation is defined as informal and personal relationships between management and staff of different organizations (Seldon, et. al, 2006). Coordination is defined as two organizations making an effort to work together while remaining independent (Seldon, et. al, 2006). Collaboration is defined as sharing of resources, authority, and benefits (Seldon, et. al, 2006). Service integration is defined as a new service delivery through combined organizations (Seldon, et. al, 2006).

Blair and Janousek (2013) identify formal and informal methods of interlocal collaboration that reflect unofficial and less structured collection of interactions. These interactions can occur without formal action, legal authority, or written communication (Blair

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

and Jonousek, 2013). Informal actions included mutual aid, common understanding, association, or consortium (Blair and Jonousek, 2013). Formal mechanisms include agreements, contracts, federations, and joint ventures (Blair and Jonousek, 2013). This longitudinal study, using a state survey of Nebraska local governments, found that informal interlocal collaboration had grown over the eleven year study period, and the authors posit that more informal collaboration is preferred among municipalities (Blair and Jonousek, 2013).

The section above seeks to demonstrate the continuum of collaborative arrangements organizations utilize to accomplish public goals. Table 1 summarizes the literature in this review to demonstrate the varied collaborative arrangements. For the purpose of this study, the type of collaboration is defined among the collaborative continuum. The investigation will seek to understand the inter-governmental collaborations and will consider collaborative arrangements at the local government level as a wide range of activities that local governments may engage with other local governments. This study does not attempt to narrow the definition of regional collaboration to a particular type or framework because doing so will limit the ability to focus the investigation on decision-making and the factors that influence local governments.

Table 1. Continuum of Collaborative Arrangements

Informal		Formal
Informal Cooperation Exploratory-questioning Informal service agreements Loosely linked relationships Cooperative Partnerships Coordination Informal actions such as mutual aid, common understanding, association or consortium	Committee Advisory Collaborations Confederative Collaborations Coordinating Partnerships	Partnerships Contractual collaborations Consolidations Strong relationships Collaborative Partnerships Service Integration Formal actions such as agreements, contracts, federations or joint ventures

Preconditions to Regional Collaboration

Preconditions are identified as concepts that serve as precursors to engagement in regional collaboration and are action-generating items that must be present to enable the possibility of a regional collaboration to solve a public problem. Through a qualitative study of managers in local government, nonprofit organizations, and private organizations, Cigler (1999) identifies the preconditions or factors that influence the emergence of multi-community collaborative organizations. These preconditions include fiscal stress or perceived stress, a political constituency for cooperation, supportive capacity building, early and continued support from elected officials, visible advantages for cooperating, existence of a policy entrepreneur, early focus on visible, effective strategies, and emphasis on collaborative skills building, including strategic planning (Cigler, 1999).

Similarly, Warm (2011) identifies four broad forces or factors that entice local governments to consider local government collaboration. In the study, the four factors include financial stress, building competitive advantage, practical or common sense approaches to regional issues, and political forces such as citizen support (Warm, 2011). In a study of rural and non-metro communities, Morse (2005) finds consistency in the literature on the factors influencing regional collaboration. The author identifies several factors including: “the existence of a pressing, shared issue, including fiscal stress”, public support, opportunity for capacity building, a leader with collaborative motivations, trust among partners, “administrative capacity”, previous positive experience with collaborating partners, support of elected officials and social capital building (Morse, 2005). The study was identified as an action research pilot project that considered the success of an interlocal collaboration in two counties. Morse (2005) found that the value of efficiency was less important in collaboration and that trust was a key

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

element in the success of the pilot collaboration. The study confirms the importance of “soft skills” of public management and emphasizes the need for involving community stakeholders, building trust, focusing on outcomes of the collaboration and building collaborative leaders (Morse, 2005).

Preconditions, the drivers for local government officials to pursue regional collaboration, were examined in the study in the semi-structured interviews during the data collection process. Local government officials were asked to identify the reasons they considered a regional collaboration using the framework identified in the literature review. The preconditions considered are fiscal stress, support of citizens and elected officials, recognition of shared benefits to collaborate and established relationship with partners.

Overview of the Factors Influencing Decisions to Engage in Regional Collaboration

This study classifies or categorizes the factors found in the literature related to regional collaboration into two categories: external factors and internal factors. External factors influence the decision to pursue or not pursue a regional collaboration that is reflective in the local government environment. Elected officials and local government managers consider these as opportunities and challenges presented in the context of the local government organization. In contrast to internal perceptions, the perception of external benefit and barriers identify ways the local government organization will be impacted by regional collaboration. Benefit and barrier factors are identified as concepts that serve to facilitate or impede a decision to pursue regional collaboration. The next sections will examine these categories of factors.

External Factors Influencing Engagement in Regional Collaborations

Benefit and Barrier Factors.

To pursue regional collaborations, local governments must weigh the benefits and consider the costs to working with other jurisdictions. The literature cites a number of benefits. The goal to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a local government service has been found in a number of studies. For example, in a qualitative study of Iowa counties, researchers found the most important impetus for creating an interlocal agreement was to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of a service (Thurmaier and Chen, 2009). The concepts of effectiveness and efficiency are frequently quoted reasons for local governments to provide services, to fund programs or to initiate changes to functions provided. Effectiveness reflects the impact of a service while efficiency reflects the provision of service at the lowest cost. To understand the overall goals of a decision made at the local government level, it is important to recognize the difference in the two concepts.

Expanding from efficiency and effectiveness goals, the literature also finds that the need to cut costs or share costs is an important benefit cited by local governments. Benton (2013) notes from a study of professional local government organizations that the benefits to regional collaboration include the local government's ability to cut or share the costs of services, to achieve economies of scale in the delivery of service, to maintain or improve the level of service, and to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of service delivery. It is logical that if one of the preconditions needed to consider regional collaborations is a financial crisis then one of the benefits local governments would seek is to save money or share costs.

Risks associated with collaborative service arrangements are factors that influence local governments' decision to pursue regional collaborations. Carr and Hawkins (2013) consider

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

risks from a transaction cost theory perspective and transaction costs have been identified as barriers to regional collaboration in the literature. Coordination costs are the risks associated with negotiating and bargaining in the development of agreements for shared service delivery (Carr and Hawkins, 2013). Division costs include the difficulty in dividing the benefits of collaboration equally among the partners (Carr and Hawkins, 2013).

Shared benefits and power in a regional collaboration are factors that support successful collaborations. If benefits cannot be shared equally, frustration and distrust will occur among those partners who feel they are not equal in the process of collaboration. Carr and Hawkins (2013) identify defection costs as the risks associated with partners not fulfilling their agreement or participating equally. In collaboration, there is a risk for partners to free ride and to take advantage of the other partners. Therefore, elected officials and local government managers work to ensure the balance of power and sharing of benefits is equal among jurisdictions in regional collaborations.

Community factors can be barriers to regional collaboration including jurisdictional identity, community heterogeneity, and federal and state aid requirements. Warm identifies four significant barriers to collaboration including structural barriers such as boundary lines, maintaining a strong local identity, and federal and state aid programs requiring certain service deliveries remain within jurisdictional boundaries (Warm, 2011). Communities that are more heterogeneous, as opposed to homogeneous, bring a diverse constituency and the ability to achieve a “one size fits all approach” to government service delivery is a challenge.

Jurisdictional boundary lines and local identity are considered barriers because local governments are bound to provide services to their citizens. The citizens of the local government may not support services that appear to benefit other jurisdictions. Federal and state grants and

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

funding requirements may not allow for the sharing of funding among jurisdictions or the authority to share funding may not be explicit in terms of the granting requirements. These community factors impact local governments' ability to pursue regional collaborations.

Organizational capacity in terms of resources can be viewed as a barrier to regional collaboration. Those resources include time to allocate to regional participation; lack of organizational leadership and trust among officials may serve to impede progress for regional projects. The time to effectively participate in collaboration is viewed as a barrier in regard to the ability to get a problem solved in a short period of time (Warm, 2011). Collaboration takes more time, more effort, more resources, and more people to successfully address a regional issue. Organizational leadership, either elected officials or local government managers, can be viewed as a barrier if appointed and elected roles do not consider regional collaboration a priority practice for their jurisdiction (Warm, 2011). Organizational constraints and fractures among local officials can serve as barriers to regional collaboration. Distrust among officials, time to collaborate, limited government revenue and resources, political problems and lack of support were identified as barriers to regional collaboration (Lackey, et. al., 2002).

The section above discussed the external factors that influence local government decision-making and demonstrate how external influences impact local government officials' decision to pursue regional collaborations. This study investigated the elected officials' and local government managers' perceptions of the benefits and barriers to regional collaboration and the impact of those factors in relation to the local government organization and the community

Internal Factors Influencing Engagement in Regional Collaborations

The internal environment and the people with a vested interest in the government's ability to provide services to citizens, directly impact the decision to pursue a regional

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

collaboration as well. These persons include the elected local government officials such as the Mayor, Board of Supervisor member, City Council member, and the appointed local government manager. These individuals directly influence policy decisions at the local government level through their actions based on individual values and interests. The study facilitates the comparison of objective environmental factors versus subjective individual factors that influence local government regional collaboration. The contrast between what is right from a “public interest” perspective and what is right from a “self-interest” perspective is an interesting dichotomy that this study will investigate.

Elected Official’s Perceptions.

A significant challenge to regional collaboration is the perceived loss of power by elected officials. The collection of individual elected officials is defined as the governing body. The governing body takes the form in this study of the elected Board of Supervisors or the elected City Council. The dichotomy between politics and administration and the impacts of the inherent conflict serve to provide an understanding of how managers and elected do or do not work together to solve local public issues. The view of this dichotomy has been termed in the difference in values between an elected official and an appointed city, county, or town manager. Nalbandian, (2000), posits that elected officials’ roles and responsibilities are guided by the “democratic values of efficiency, representation, social equity and individual rights and the four values constitute political responsiveness.” On the other side are the manager’s values of professionalism and administrative sustainability reflected in the professionalization of the city, county, or town manager position. This dichotomy between politically acceptable versus administratively sustainable weave into the discussions of management, policy and implementation from internal to external issues affecting local government organizations

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Loss of jurisdictional identity and power is a critical factor influencing elected officials' inclination to pursue regional collaboration. Elected officials are concerned about losing control over public services and the perception by citizens that they are not in charge of a public service. Elected officials can be barriers to intergovernmental collaboration because their lack of support influences the direction of the local government organization as a whole (Zeemering, 2015). Zeemering (2015) notes in a study that assessed local elected officials concerns about interlocal agreements that elected officials seek to preserve local jurisdictional autonomy.

Elected officials also may be concerned with the loss of control over service delivery and with the perceived loss of citizen participation in the provision of services typically provided by one locality (Zeemering, 2015). A survey of 554 elected officials in the San Francisco Bay Area to understand the elected officials roles and perceptions of interlocal agreements study found elected officials were concerned about protecting their home jurisdiction. They were very interested in promoting the interests of their city and protecting it from relying too heavily on other jurisdictions (Zeemering, 2015).

Elected officials pass legislation or approve policy based on their individual values and self-interest. From one perspective, elected officials will support policies that will enhance their re-election chances. This perspective legitimizes the idea of self-interest and finds elected officials will support local government initiatives that are supported by citizens to maintain their position of power as an elected official. In addition, elected officials may pursue initiatives that benefit campaign supporters or powerful individuals in their communities. The desire to ensure approval by citizens or key community stakeholders will influence elected officials decision-making at the local government level. Elected officials' individual self-interest demonstrated through the desire to be re-elected and to ensure continued approval from key community

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

stakeholders and their constituency will impact the decision to provide a service through a regional collaboration.

Appointed Local Government Managers' Perceptions.

Appointed local government managers will recommend legislation or policy based on their individual values. From one perspective, local government managers will recommend policies that will enhance their continued employment with their respective local government. This perspective legitimizes the idea of self-interest and details that local government managers will support local government initiatives that are supported by elected officials to maintain their position of power as the appointed local- government manager. In addition, appointed local government managers will recommend initiatives that may increase the overall budget and that may increase the number of employees they oversee. The individual self-interest to continue to be employed, oversee a larger budget and organization which leads to higher compensation are individual values that may influence a local government manager to recommend particular policies or legislation. The desire to ensure approval by the governing body will influence appointed local- government manager's decision-making at the local government level.

In contrast, from an administrative sustainability value perspective, local government managers seek ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of local government services. The literature shows individual perspectives of neighboring jurisdictions and personal relationships with other managers, influence the success of a regional collaboration. In a case study of three Illinois communities, Thurmaier (2006) identified a number of key characteristics of a successful collaboration including trust, personal relationship, non-territorial or protective perspective, and equal control over the process (Thurmaier, 2006). Further, in a study of local government cooperation, Lackey, Freshwater, and Rupasingha (2002) isolate the factors that

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

influence local government cooperation in rural areas. This study found that 67% of the counties have collaborated with neighboring jurisdictions at some point (Lackey, et. al., 2002). Prior working relationships and personal relationships, viewed as trust, contributed to successful collaborations (Lackey, et. al., 2002). In case study interviews, officials noted that support of the elected officials was key. Local leaders were dedicated to the project's success, and agreement on the project's scope also promoted regional collaboration (Lackey, et. al., 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Public Choice Theory.

Decision-making in the public sector has been examined through both a political science lens and a public choice theory lens. Public choice theory examines the political environment using economic analysis (Heckelman, p. 1). Mueller, (p. 1), states that “the subject matter of public choice is the same as that of political science, the theory of the state, voting rules, voting behavior, party politics, the bureaucracy and so on.” Political science examines the connections between voters, parties, politicians, bureaucrats, interest groups, and voting rules but the introduction of public choice theory into the realm of politics allows for an economic study of government actions (McLean, p.1). The public choice literature is an appropriate line of scholarship to investigate and analyze decision-making at the local government level because of the intersections of the politician, the bureaucrat, and public service choice.

Public choice theory uses economic analysis and economic assumptions to analyze and evaluate activity in the political realm. As noted by Ostrom and Ostrom (1971), the “traditional ‘economic man’ is replaced by ‘man: the decision maker’.” The rational behavior and self-interest seeking assumption of the economic man in the market is the underpinning of the decision-maker in the public sector. The use of public choice theory to understand decision-

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

making at the local government level is effective to understanding how the politicians and managers' impact and influence the choices made by local governments.

As with other economic analysis, a number of assumptions are made about the individuals and the environment. Economic analysis assumes self-interest meaning individuals will pursue activity that is in their best interest (Heckleman, p. 4). Self-interest is defined in regard to individuals as one having their own preferences that influences the decisions or choices that they make (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Applying this assumption to the elected official and the appointed manager, this study utilizes the basis of decision-making on the perceived preferences of the individuals.

In addition to the assumption of self-interest, individuals are assumed to be rational and able to rank their preferences among a variety of alternatives (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Public choice theory also assumes individuals will maximize their preferences to obtain the best benefit (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Local government officials and appointed managers face difficult decisions for the provision of services for their citizens. To understand why certain decisions are made, assumptions about their individual actions are provided through the public choice theory. Elected officials and appointed managers are deemed to be self-interested and rational given alternatives on how to solve a public problem and are able to prioritize these alternatives based on their preferences.

The level of information the individual has about a choice or alternative will impact his or her choice. Information is comprised of three levels that include certainty, risk, and uncertainty (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Certainty posits that the individual is confident about the various alternatives; that there is a clear outcome associated with each alternative and the individual knows which outcome they desire (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Risk is associated

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

with the various strategies and outcomes but the individual does not know which strategy will lead to an outcome or an individual may not know all of the strategies or outcomes (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Uncertainty indicates that the individual cannot predict outcomes based on certain strategies (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971).

Public Goods and Decision-making.

Within public choice theory, the comparison between the market and the political environment is delineated between products and services provided. The market provides goods and services that can be valued and priced. Public goods are goods and services with unique characteristics; they are, “highly indivisible goods and services where potential consumers cannot be easily excluded from enjoying the benefits” (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). A public good is provided to anyone whether they use or not. Examples of a public good include national defense or a public park.

For public goods to be provided, collective action is taken to provide the service. Collective action is defined as the compilation of individual actions (Buchanan and Tullock, p. 3). Applying the self-interest assumption to the political environment allows one to understand how collective action is achieved. Individuals, working together to maximize their own preferences, will join together to provide public goods in the form of collective action. Ostrom and Ostrom (1971) further this analysis posits that public agencies are the mechanism in which public goods are provided and decisions are made as a result of individual preferences.

Applying the public choice literature to the specifics of this inquiry, we can examine the locally elected official as the politician. An elected governing body that is a form of representative democracy governs local governments. In this environment, officials are elected by the constituents that they represent. The politician is assumed to be working in his or her self-

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

interest. This self-interested perspective can manifest itself in a desire to be re-elected, a desire to accomplish a certain policy goal or to increase the elected official's campaign fund. The politician will be motivated by these desires and the choices or votes will reflect the individual's motivations.

Applying the public choice literature to the specifics of this inquiry, we can examine the local appointed manager as the bureaucrat. The bureaucrat is assumed to be working in his or her own self-interest in the public choice literature. From this, the literature implies a bureaucrat will pursue governmental activities that increase their power in the form of increased salary, larger budgets, and more staffing. The local government managers, due to their appointed nature, ultimately are incentivized or motivated to keep their employment. From the public choice approach, the local government managers will rationally act or recommend action that increases salary, increases budgets and staffing levels, and promotes continued support in their positions by the elected officials.

Given the nature of public goods and the necessity for collective action for the provision of public goods in a community, local government officials influence the decision-making process by their own perceptions of benefits. Public choice theory allows the researcher to examine public decisions by understanding individual preferences and through the use of economic assumptions. For the purpose of this study, decision-making at the local government level is posited to be a group of individuals making decisions. The collective action is influenced by the individual's self-interest, rationality, and access to information.

Collaboration Theory

Collaboration theory, a line of academic theory within organizational theory, has emerged to understand complex connections among public, private, and nonprofit organizations

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

that develop to solve public problems. Within the area of public sector scholarship, collaboration theory is used to define inter-organizational arrangements to solve “wicked problems” (Rittel and Weber, 1973). Rittel and Weber (1973) coined the term, “wicked problems”, to describe social problems that include the array of public policy issues. At the time the article was written and in the context of the urban planning literature, Rittel and Weber defined wicked problems for an entire sector, the public sector, and how the study of those problems and the development of solutions was not comparable to an engineering problem (Rittel and Weber, 1973). In the context of the public sector, wicked problems are never ending. They are not one-time issues; there is no right or wrong, good or bad. They are unique, and how a solution is defined is determined by the way the problem is viewed (Rittel and Weber, 1973).

The 1985 seminal article by Barbara Gray, *Conditions Facilitating Interorganization Collaboration*, opened a new area of scholarship in the study of inter-organizational collaborations. She identified three steps in the process of collaboration and identified the unit of analysis as a domain. The domain is defined by the “interdependencies among stakeholders who are affected by an issue and claim a right to influence its outcome”. The definition of a domain, as opposed to an organization, is an important characteristic of a collaborative endeavor because it recognizes that in many instances wicked problems are not confined to an organization, a department, or within jurisdictional boundaries.

Gray identifies a three-step collaboration process and the preconditions necessary for a successful collaboration within the domain. The three-step process includes problem setting, direction setting, and structuring. Within the problem-setting phase, all stakeholders on an issue must reach consensus and the stakeholders have to believe that collaboration will produce successful outcomes. Stakeholder recognition of interdependence and legitimacy for

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

participation are identified as preconditions in the problem-setting phase. During the direction setting phase, stakeholders need to have a shared recognition of values that guide their interactions, solutions, and agendas. Finally, power must be shared equally among the stakeholders to ensure accountability for the success of the collaboration. The structuring component of the process reflects the conditions necessary to further the collaboration once it has been initiated. This study examined and concluded, “collaboration is a viable and necessary approach to confronting many complex problems faced by our society”. Thirty years ago, Gray concluded that collaborative problem solving is necessary to address society’s more complex social problems.

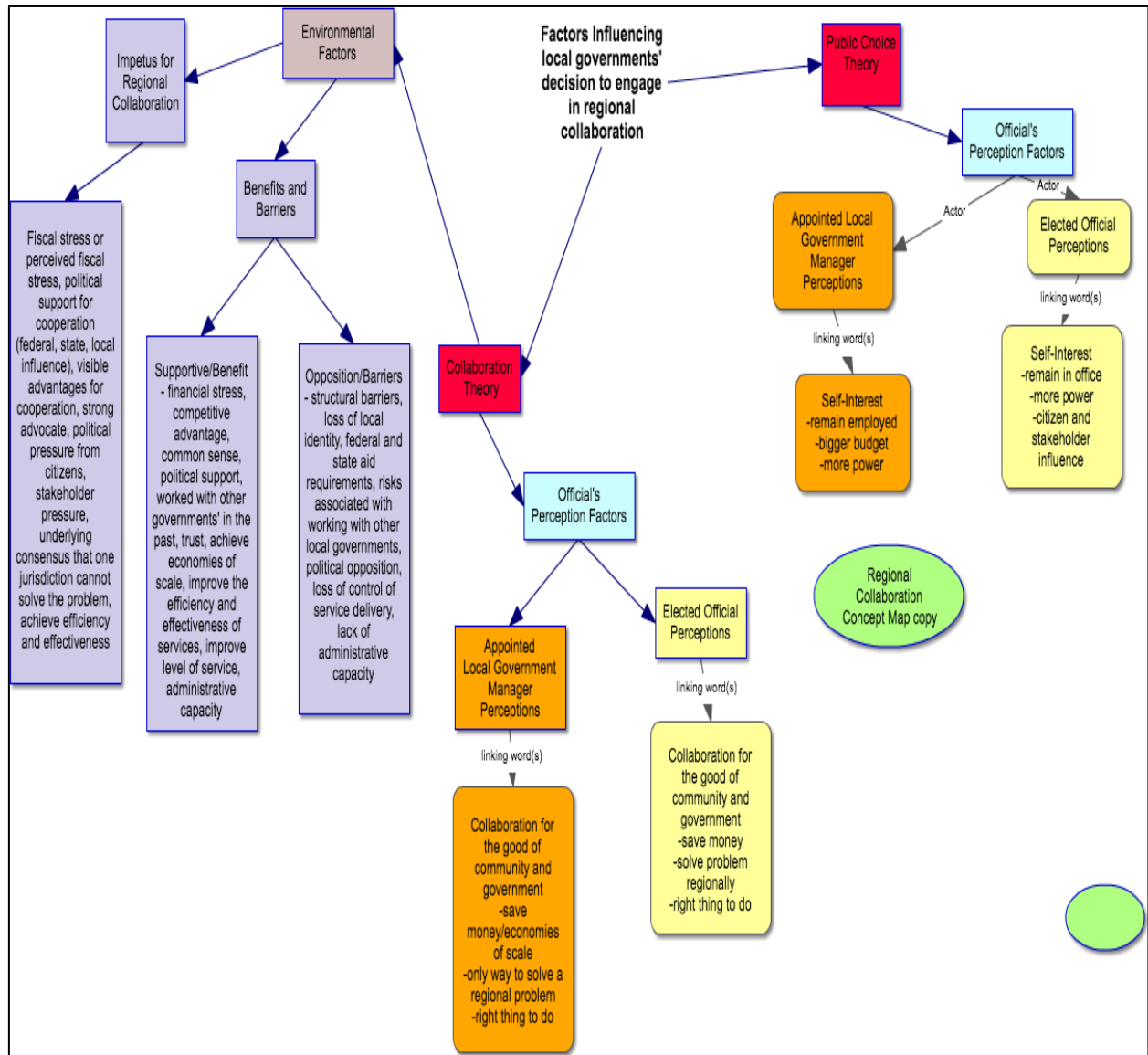
Collaboration can be viewed as a process that engages different actors to solve a shared problem. Gray defines collaboration as a process that engages stakeholders with an interest in solving a problem and recognizes that one party alone cannot successfully achieve results by themselves. Further, collaboration is used when stakeholders recognize the need for and advantages of working with others to solve a problem. The opportunities for the use of a collaborative process include the potential to resolve conflict among partners and to advance a shared vision for the public good. Gray notes that “collaborations induced by shared visions are intended to advance the collective good of the stakeholders involved” and collaborations can be designed to address a particular social issue or policy goal. Examples of collaborations with shared visions include public-private partnerships that have gained momentum in the United States as a way to solve social problems. Public-private partnerships have been used to solve economic development or redevelopment, education, housing, or transportation problems within communities. As Gray notes, a number of joint ventures, public and private partnerships reflect the implementation of collaboration among stakeholders to solve a public problem.

Synthesis

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature and provides the theoretical framework for the study. Synthesizing the information provided on the roles of the elected official and the local government manager provides the foundation for understanding the differences in perspectives of the two groups. The contrasting theories of public choice and collaboration inform the study and provide the basis for the study's research questions by considering factors influencing regional collaboration from a self-interest perspective and a public-interest perspective. How elected officials and local government managers view these relationships and the benefits derived from them is an important consideration as local governments seek to provide services to their citizens or solve public problems that are constrained within jurisdictional boundaries.

The proposed theoretical framework provides a basis for deeper understanding of the factors that influence regional collaboration by examining environmental factors and internal factors. Environmental factors that influence the decision to pursue regional collaboration are identified as both preconditions and benefit and barrier factors. The individual perspectives of elected officials and the appointed local government managers are examined through both public-choice theory and collaboration theory. The graphic below provides a picture of the proposed theoretical framework that will guide the study.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



The next chapter will review the study's overarching research questions that guide the methodology for the study. In addition, Chapter 3 will discuss the research design and methodological justification for the study and describe the development of the design using the proposed theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapters provided an overview of the background and issues related to the factors that influence a local government's decision to engage in regional collaboration. The literature review and theoretical framework provided an overview of the existing literature related to the topic of regional collaboration and interlocal agreements. Finally, the theoretical framework identifies potentially relevant concepts from public-choice theory and collaboration theory that will be used in the analysis as sensitizing concepts. Synthesizing concepts provide a general guide and are used to develop a qualitative study. These concepts serve as a foundation for investigation as opposed to quantitative studies that build on hypotheses and a deductive approach to research (Bowen, 2006). This chapter will review the study's methodology and research design used to answer the research questions:

Research Question 1: *How do elected officials make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

Research Question 2: *How do local government managers make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

Methodological Justification

In general, social sciences research has three recognized strategies of inquiry: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The quantitative design is typically deductive, focused on theory testing, and includes experimental designs and non-experimental designs often

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

based on data collection through surveys. Qualitative designs are typically inductive and focused on theory building, utilizing interviews, observations, or focus groups. The findings are non-representational and non-generalizable and often based on narratives, ethnographies, grounded theory, or case study approaches. The mixed-method design includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. For the purpose of this study, the research method was qualitative, utilizing semi-structured interviews and a modified grounded theory approach.

A qualitative approach to research is “one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives” (Creswell, p 18). This approach often analyzes individuals’ perceptions and descriptions of experiences to develop common themes or patterns from data gathered through interviews, observations, or other types of qualitative data. The five strategies for collecting data suited to the grounded theory research include interviews, narratives, phenomenology, ethnographies, or case studies (Creswell, p. 18).

A grounded theory methods approach is an inductive approach to research, i.e. theory is constructed or “grounded” from the data (Charmaz, date). Inductive reasoning is a “bottoms up” approach to theory building. As noted by Bowen, (2006), “inductive analysis is the principal technique used in the grounded theory method”. Sensitizing concepts provided the initial development of the qualitative study and using grounded theory, a researcher can develop themes from the data. The researcher analyzes data to identify patterns that can be developed into theories about particular issues. The inductive approach to this study was appropriate based on the research questions that are focused on decision-making processes, which have not been addressed through empirical research studies about this issue. In addition, this approach was appropriate due to the research question that attempts to fill a gap in the empirical research. The

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

research questions require a better understanding of relevant themes from the perspective of the elected official and the appointed manager.

In summary, a qualitative research design utilizing a quasi-grounded theory approach was used for this study and the study design was appropriate because the study investigates perceptions of individuals related to decision-making. The researcher's ability to interview both elected officials and appointed local government manager captured the subjective experiences and perceptions of decision-makers and to probe responses to maximize understanding.

Research Relationships and Reflexivity

My interest in this area of study is a result of my experience working in local government for 18 years as a Finance Director and my interest in how decisions are made at the local government level. In many instances, I observed good policy decisions rejected by the governing body without understanding the reasons or factors for their denial. This is a common occurrence in local government and staff within the organization is often left confused and not trusting the governing body. My goal in this study is to gain an understanding of the individual perspectives and their influence on regional collaborations.

In addition to my prior experience, in my current role as Director of the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management with Virginia Tech, I am responsible for the delivery of local government master's level education for students with an interest in local government management. A foundational concept for our students is understanding the relationship between elected officials and the appointed local government manager. This study will further our understanding in this area and will serve as an initial research study for a research agenda in local government management.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

My role with the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management affords me the opportunity to work and interact with local government managers in Virginia on a daily basis. I am a member of the Virginia Local Government Managers Association and serve as a nonvoting member on the Executive Committee of the Association. I am a member of the International County/City Managers Association and serve on the Advisory Council of Graduate Education and the Local Government Committee of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration. The network of local government managers in Virginia support and invite research in the area of local government management and the reputation that I have established with those managers will allow me to conduct the interviews in an atmosphere of trust and credibility.

Finally, my work with elected officials over the past 18 years and through limited consulting activities through my current position, affords me the ability to build relationships with elected officials. I have a solid knowledge of how to ask questions with elected officials with respect for their position and the office that they hold. The ability to build relationships with the elected officials who will be interviewed will be an extremely valuable asset during this study process. For both the elected official and the local government manager, I will be viewed as someone who can be trusted because of my experience. Further, my doctoral studies and interest in local government will support my credibility and expertise for this process.

Site Selection

Site selection for this study was an important consideration given the variances in regions in the State of Virginia. The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service identifies eight regions in the State including Central Virginia, Eastern Virginia, Hampton Roads, Northern Virginia, Richmond, Southside, Southwest, and the Valley (Virginia's Regions, 2014). Each of these

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

regions was considered for site selection for the study and the decision to select the area will be detailed in this section. Factors that were considered included the population of localities, urban, suburban, and rural status, heterogeneous versus homogeneous communities and documented projects of regional collaboration.

Southwest Virginia and the associated regions encompass the study area and reflect a total population of approximately 1.2 million people and over 14,000 square miles. The localities within Southwest Virginia had very low growth compared to the other six regions in the state and the Southwest Virginia region had the highest unemployment rate in Virginia while the selected region reflected the lower unemployment rate (Virginia's Regions, 2014). The Southwest Virginia and the selected region were two of three regions that saw a reduction in population as compared to the other five regions in Virginia (Virginia's regions, 2014).

As shown in the map on page 49, the southwest region of Virginia includes the four counties and three cities. The Partnership provides economic development and community information for the localities. The region is the largest metropolitan area in Western Virginia and home to diverse communities and more than 300,000 residents. The cost of living is below the national average and median home prices of \$150,000 are below the United States average of \$176,600. Forbes.com has ranked the area in the Top 100 Best Places for Business and Careers and Top 15 Most affordable places for doing business. The Partnership also identifies higher education access as a strong asset of the area with a high concentration of higher education institutions, including 25 colleges and universities and a Medicine and Research Institute within a 60-mile radius.

Population growth in the area has increased and the population reflects a balanced mix of rural, suburban, and urban communities. In addition, population by races reflects a balanced mix

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

of localities including a more heterogeneous community in City A and more homogeneous localities among the other municipalities.

Table 2: Population by Locality

Locality/Year	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
County B	19,379	17,855	17,215	16,250	15,515
County C	23,270	24,992	30,496	33,148	33,486
County D	35,740	39,549	47,286	56,159	56,373
City A	100,220	96,397	94,911	97,032	99,681
County A	72,945	79,332	85,778	92,376	93,775
City C	23,958	23,756	24,747	24,802	25,438
City B	9,063	7,198	6,303	5,961	6,198
Study Region	284,575	289,079	306,736	325,728	330,466

Table 3: Percentage of Population by Race

Locality	White	Black	Am. Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Other
County B	92.60%	4.60%	0.20%	0.20%	1.10%	1.30%
County C	94.20%	3%	0.20%	0.50%	1.10%	1.00%
County D	87.40%	8.10%	0.20%	0.40%	2.50%	1.40%
City A	61.90%	28.10%	0.20%	1.70%	5.50%	2.60%
County A	88.60%	5.00%	0.10%	2.70%	2.10%	1.50%
City C	87.30%	7%	0.20%	0.60%	2.40%	1.50%
City B	83.10%	12.40%	0.30%	0.60%	1.50%	2%
Study Region	81%	12.50%	0.20%	1.50%	3.10%	1.70%

Regional Cooperation

In a 2013 publication, Regional Report Card, by the Partnership, 105 multi-jurisdictional projects and programs were identified and documented to demonstrate the level of partnerships and collaborations with the region among the identified jurisdictions (Regional Report Card, 2013). Projects identified included two jurisdiction projects where ten or more jurisdictions collaborated. The cooperative activities cited in the “Report Card” were divided into ten categories: Economic Development; Education; Environment; General Government; Libraries;

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Parks/ Recreation; Public Safety; Public Works and Facilities; Social and Human Services; and Transportation (Regional Report Card, 2013).

Sample and Participant Selection

The participants for the study were the elected officials of each locality and the appointed local government manager. The table below summarizes, by locality, the form of government, the appointed local government manager title and the composition of the governing body.

Table 4: Form of Government

Locality	Form of Government	Manager Information	Governing Body Information
County A	County Administrator	County Administrator	Five Board Members
County D	County Administrator	County Administrator	Seven Board Members
County C	County Administrator	County Administrator	Five Board Members
County B	County Administrator	County Administrator	Seven Board Members
City C	Council-Manager	City Manager	Five City Council Members
City A	Council-Manager	City Manager	Seven City Council Members
City B	Council-Manager	City Manager	Five City Council Members

This was a purposive sample because participants were identified prior to the interview. Maxwell, (2013) identifies purposive sampling as an appropriate sampling method for qualitative research because the specific person or setting is relevant to the qualitative research questions. Because this study considers a regional context, a natural choice for site selection is an identified region and the natural choice for participants is the elected official and the appointed manager.

Recruitment and human subject protections

The researcher developed a list of all seven local government managers and identified two elected officials from each local government. Using the IRB-approved protocol, the researcher sent introductory emails to all seven local government managers. The emails included

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

an introductory message about the project and the researcher included the following attachments for review by the manager:

- Summary of project and purpose including the principal investigator contact information and student contact information
- Proposed interview questions for the elected official and the local government manager
- Student researcher biography
- IRB approved consent form

Once the introductory email was sent, the researcher conducted follow-up phone calls with each manager. It is important to note that the researcher identified the elected officials to be interviewed using a random selection technique however, each local government manager recommended the appropriate elected official for the interview based on their level of knowledge and engagement with regional projects. Managers and their staff set up the time, date and location of interviews with most interviews being held on the same day and at the county or city administration building.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher provided the summary of the project, the interview questions, and the consent form. The participants were asked for verbal consent to participate in the project and verbal consent was audiotaped.

Data Collection

This section describes the interview instrument, interview schedules, and setting.

Interview instruments. The final interview instruments were semi-structured and comprised of open-ended questions. There were two sets of interview questions, one for elected officials, and one for local government managers. The interview questions were piloted with a

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

local government manager not included in the study. Based on the feedback from the pilot, an additional question was added to the interview instrument: How did the State impact your decision? Describe incentives or disincentives.

Interview Schedule and Participation. Interviews were conducted during the months of September, October, and November of 2017. The interview length of time ranged from approximately 40 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes. All seven managers from each selected local government participated in the interviews. Of the fourteen elected officials identified and scheduled for interviews, three did not participate in their scheduled time and were not available for follow-up.

Each interview was recorded via audio recorder and verbal consent was recorded. The interviewer made notes during the interview for follow-up and supporting documentation to accompany the interview transcripts. After the interviews, transcripts were made of the audio recordings, with the date, time, locality, and identification of elected official or local government manager. The transcript of each interview was read, thoroughly, multiple times.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews was analyzed and coded using thematic coding. Thematic coding refers to the method of identifying themes in the interviews that are identified in the literature and the theoretical framework. The initial themes (a priori codes) are shown in the two tables below reflecting potential themes that were developed during the initial study design. The codes were developed from the literature review and based on prior research on this topic.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Table 5: Elected Officials' Interview Questions

Elected Officials	
<i>Interview Question</i>	<i>A priori code</i>
How long have you served in elected office?	Tenure
Tell me about a project that the County/City worked with other counties and cities in the region.	
What was the type of project?	
What was the problem?	Preconditions: Disaster Occurrence, Fiscal Stress,
Why did you want to work with other localities on this issue? What did you think?	Elected officials' perspectives on Benefits and Barriers
What did your citizens' think?	Citizen support
How did the State or other agencies influence your decision?	State Influence and Outside Agency Influence
Did you always support the project from a regional perspective? Why not?	Self-Interest, Prior Unsuccessful Collaborations
Would you pursue a regional collaboration in the future? Additional considerations we have not discussed?	Emergent Codes

Table 6: Appointed Manager Interview Questions

Appointed Manager	
<i>Interview Question</i>	<i>A priori code</i>
How long have you served as the manager?	Tenure
Tell me about a project that the County/City worked with other counties and cities in the region.	
What was the type of project?	
What was the problem?	Preconditions: Disaster Occurrence, Fiscal Stress
Why did you want to work with other localities on this issue? What did you think?	Managers' perceptions of benefits and barriers
What did your board or council think?	Early and Continued Elected officials' support
How did the State or other agencies influence your decision?	State Influence and Outside Agency Influence
Why did you support it?	Self-Interest
Did you always support the project from a regional perspective? Why not?	Preconditions: Managers' perceptions of benefits and barriers
Would you pursue a regional collaboration in the future? Additional considerations we have not discussed?	Emergent Codes

The initial review allowed for preliminary coding of the data and subsequent reviews refined the coding. The researcher developed a matrix using an excel spreadsheet that identified the a priori codes and in vivo codes that emerged during the data analysis. The matrix was used to reconcile the data and develop a list of codes that were consistent with the actual data in the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

interview transcriptions. From the final codes, categories or themes were developed. This matrix style coding was used for both the elected officials' and the managers' data; therefore two matrices were used in the data analysis.

Interplay between coding and analysis

The use of qualitative data provides the researcher with the opportunity to investigate unknown phenomenon or research areas that may have limited scholarship. The method of inductive analysis of qualitative data allows raw data to be analyzed and, through the lens of the researcher, interpreted to develop research findings from the significant themes from this raw data (Thomas, 2006). Inductive analysis has been defined as “approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (Thomas, p. x). As noted by Thomas, the coding process in inductive analysis is a reiterative process that incorporates an initial reading of the text data, identifying specific text, labeling the text (coding), creating categories, revising those categories and finally, creating a model of the most important categories. Given this structure for inductive analysis of qualitative data, the information below details the coding process used to develop the most important categories related to the research questions.

The resultant final categories are the product of the researchers interpretations of the raw data and “the findings are shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the evaluators conducting the study and carrying out the data analyses” (Thomas, p. x). The development of a priori codes from the literature creates a conceptual framework for the inductive analysis and helps to mitigate researcher bias in the data analysis and interpretations.

The tables below provide a reconciliation of the a prior codes developed from the literature review, the emergent codes that were found in the raw data and the final, most

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

important, categories identified from the raw data. The data is presented in the context of the elected officials' responses and the local government manager responses.

Memos were compiled for each interview that summarized the interview and made note of any important themes identified. Individual memos for each interview were developed. The researcher also crafted memos for the elected officials' responses in total and the local government managers' responses in total. Finally, memos were developed for specific projects and local governments with clear connections to each other. For example, County B and City B identified an interlocal revenue sharing agreement. The researcher drafted a separate memo detailing the themes resulting from this specific regional collaboration.

Validity

Validity is a concept in both qualitative and quantitative research methods related to the ways in which the researcher may be wrong about the interpretations of the data gathered (Maxwell, p. 123). For the purpose of this study, researcher bias and reactivity were identified as two possible threats to the validity of the conclusions for this research study. To minimize these threats, the researcher read the interview questions consistently for each interview. In addition, verbatim transcripts were taken after each interview and validated throughout the coding and memo process of data analysis. Multiple readings, coding and memos were used to ensure the quality of the data analysis. Triangulation of the interviews, memos, and matrices served to ensure the information is captured correctly for the purpose of data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of elected officials and local government managers that influence the decision of a local government to engage in regional collaborations. This study utilized interviews of the two groups, elected officials and local government managers, to inform the following overarching research question: *How do perceptions of the internal and external benefits and barriers of regional collaboration influence elected officials' and appointed managers' decision to engage in regional collaborations?*

To obtain elected officials' and local government managers' perspectives two specific research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: *How do elected officials make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

Research Question 2: *How do local government managers make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section will describe the study participants. The second section will describe the seven local governments and the unique subareas of the study region in Southwest Virginia. In the final two sections, the findings and interpretations of the qualitative analysis are presented for the elected officials' perspectives and the appointed managers' perspectives.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

The Study Participants

The study design outlined a sample of 21 participants, including 14 elected officials (two from each locality) and seven local government managers (one from each locality) from the seven local governments. Of the 14 elected officials, three did not participate (one from the City B, one from County D, one from County C), resulting in 11 interviews with elected officials. All seven of the local government managers participated in interviews. Data saturation, or the consistent responses and common themes in the data, arose from the 11 elected-official interview data and seven local government-manager interview data; no additional interviews were sought.

The State of Virginia's local government structure is based on a county and independent city structure and cities do not reside within county borders. Independent cities and counties are generally responsible for the same general government functions and have generally the same powers and duties as set forth in the Code of Virginia. Most cities in Virginia use the "council-manager" form of government that was first established in the City of Staunton in 1908. This form of government has an elected city council or governing body and a strong city manager. The city manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the city government. The mayor is elected either by the citizens of the respective city or elected by the city council. The capitol of Virginia, Richmond, is the largest city in Virginia that does not conform to a council-manager structure; instead the City of Richmond has a council-mayor form of government and the mayor, elected by the citizens of the City, is responsible for the administration of the city government and serves as the Chief Administrative Officer. For this study, all three cities operated under a council-manager form of government with the mayor elected from the City Council governing body. All four counties operated under a County Board of Supervisors and county administrator form of government.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Tenure, or length of time in office or position, was obtained for each of the elected officials and managers. In addition, the researcher asked elected officials if they held a leadership role on the elected board or council to obtain the experience of the elected official in leading the governing body. The responses are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 7: Tenure of Elected Officials and Local Government Managers

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Elected Official Tenure and Leadership Position</i>		<i>Manager Tenure in current position with locality</i>
County A	16 Years Chairperson	4 Years Chairperson	4 years
City B	5 Years Mayor	n/a	2 Years
County D	6 Years Chairperson	n/a	2.5 years
City A	12 Years	8 years	2 months
County B	3 years	6 years	2 years
City C	11 years Mayor	13 years	10 years
County B	10 years	n/a	2 years

It is important to note that all eleven of the elected officials were on the Board of Supervisors or City Council prior to the hiring of each manager and each elected official had a role in the hiring of each of the managers in all seven localities. In addition, of the seven managers, six managers had been in their current locality for less than four years. Consequentially, relatively new managers who were hired within the same time frame serve the study region. This dynamic has allowed the managers to form relationships from the beginning of their positions and these personal relationships have grown over time.

The Study Region And Associated Local Governments

The study region of Southwest Virginia includes four counties and three cities. Factors considered when selecting this region to study included the population of the localities, urban,

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

suburban, and rural status, heterogeneous versus homogeneous communities, and membership in the Partnership.

Partnership

The Partnership is the regional economic development organization representing the four counties, three cities, and one town. Local government membership in the Partnership (“Partnership”) was an important characteristic of local governments selected for the study. Created in 1983, the Partnership is a joint venture between these local governments and more than 200 private sector businesses, focused on helping the region grow. The Partnership’s mission is to facilitate the development and implementation of regional economic development projects among those participating jurisdictions and serves as an umbrella economic development organization providing the region with business recruitment and retention support.

Unique Subareas

During the data collection phase, it became apparent that while all of the localities are members of the Partnership, unique subareas of the region have formed as a result of location, or economic and political issues impacting those local governments. Proximity to each other or jurisdictional boundaries shared between local governments appeared to influence the collaborations between communities. For example, the County B and City B share jurisdictional boundaries and have developed an interlocal revenue sharing agreement. City A, County A, and City C have entered into economic development collaboration. For these jurisdictions, proximity to each other facilitated participation in regional collaborations. In contrast, County D and County C noted that participation in a particular region project did not benefit them because it was not in close proximity or the project was not located in shared boundaries.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Political factors influenced local governments in particular subareas. For example, County B and the City B sought ways to alleviate political pressure as a result of citizen backed consolidation referendums by working together collaboratively through the implementation of an interlocal revenue sharing agreement. The Cities A and C and County A sought out collaborative projects to bring businesses that in effect would bring more jobs to the region's subarea. Counties C and D limited their involvement in regional projects because their respective governing bodies are focused on in-jurisdiction projects such as a new 550-acre business park in County D and a number of new businesses that located within County C.

Finally, economic factors influenced the subareas as defined by the researcher. Loss of businesses, jobs, and population influenced the development of collaborative projects in the County B and City B subarea. The need for quality economic development and business development influenced collaborative projects in the selected region subarea. Finally, in-jurisdiction projects and the need to invest financial resources within the jurisdiction form the basis for the County C and County D subareas, respectively.

Regional Involvement Continuum. Additionally, for the purposes of this study, the four unique subareas of the region are defined and differentiated by the degree to which local governments have or have not pursued regional collaborative projects. This categorization allows the researcher to investigate the unique relationships or collaborations that have formed in the specific areas of the selected region as identified in the study. Most importantly, understanding and interpretation from the semi-structured interviews is amplified by the unique subareas categorization because the respondents identified factors for intergovernmental relationships in the context of the unique subarea. Economic factors, political factors, proximity through shared jurisdictional boundaries, and level of involvement in regional projects issues influenced the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

types of projects that local governments engaged in this study. Using this categorization of subareas provides more insight to the findings and allows for additional interpretation and comparison of the findings. The next section will discuss the four unique subareas identified by the researcher.

For example, the City A subarea includes the City A, City C, and County A. The elected officials and local government managers from the City A subarea discussed regional collaborative arrangements with specific references to projects that impacted those three localities. The two cities and county recently entered into an agreement to purchase 100 acres of land with a prorated initial investment of \$10 million shared 44% (County A), 44% (City A) and 12% (City C) of the total investment. Shared water infrastructure was identified as another regional collaboration facilitated through the Western Virginia Water Authority. The Broadband Authority, another joint project, was established among these localities to provide low-cost broadband services to citizens.

In addition, the City B and the County B also represent a unique subarea of the selected region. For the past thirty years, the city and county citizens have initiated consolidation referendums in response to their frustration at the perceived ineffective government structure. While each of these referendums has failed, a clear message has been sent to elected officials that citizens want the governments to cooperate. The City B and County B have established an interlocal revenue sharing agreement for economic development that allows the two localities to invest in infrastructure and land equally and share in the economic benefits equally.

County C represents a single subarea as a result of economic development initiatives and opportunities that have located to the county in the last five years. The county's focus has been within its borders and has concentrated on providing economic development incentives and

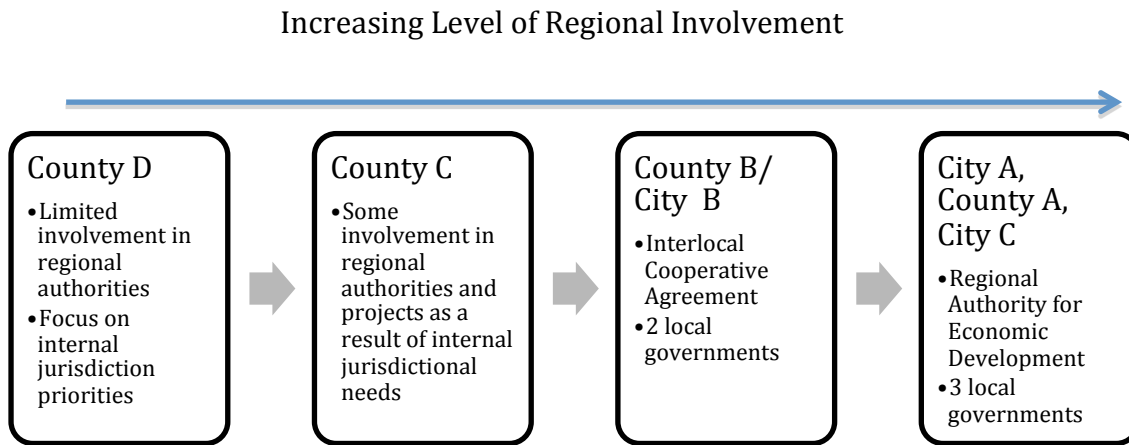
WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

ensuring adequate water and fiber infrastructure to businesses with an interest in relocating to the county. County C was not an original member of the Western Virginia Water Authority but has recently joined the Authority for water resources. County C was a member of the Broadband Authority but was not a participating member until recently due to the need for high-speed Internet services by businesses relocating to the County. As a result, their participation in various regional projects has been limited to those projects that provide a direct benefit to the county without regard to the overall contribution to the region.

County D is similar to County C in their focus on jurisdictional issues as opposed to the overall selected region. Instead of participating with the Regional Broadband Authority, the county has chosen to establish their own broadband authority to provide broadband services to its citizens. In addition, the county has been focused on their own 500-acre industrial park and ensuring adequate infrastructure and incentives for businesses that may relocate to the area.

The projects and the relationships formed between jurisdictions can be shown as on a continuum from least participatory to most participatory demonstrated in the graphic below. The graphic represents the overall trend that was observed during the interviews with both the elected officials and local government managers. The findings in this chapter will detail how elected officials and managers in these localities have made decisions and the resultant findings inform the development of the continuum.

Figure 2: Continuum of Regional Involvement



Elected Officials: Research Findings and Interpretations

The sections below present the research findings for the study's two research questions. The first section investigates research question 1: *How do elected officials make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

Semi-structured interviews with 11 elected officials were analyzed to understand the factors influencing their decision to engage in regional collaboration and how those factors impacted the decision to pursue regional collaboration. In this section, the findings are considered with the context of the theoretical framework established in the literature review. The established theoretical framework for this study identified several factors that influenced elected officials to consider engagement in regional collaborations with other local governments. For the purposes of this study, external factors were considered as those in the local government environment that influenced the decision and internal factors were considered as those that influenced the individual elected officials. The findings of the data reflected the factors as perceived by the individual elected official and are interpreted in the following section.

A Priori Codes

A priori codes were developed from the literature review and served as the foundation for the development of the semi-structured interviews. There were 8 a priori codes including tenure, preconditions identified as a disaster occurrence, fiscal stress, citizen support, state and outside agency influence, self-interest, prior unsuccessful collaborations and elected officials' perceptions of benefits and barriers. These codes were used to perform the data analysis of the raw data from the interviews. This section will present the detailed findings for each a priori code for the elected officials.

Tenure. Tenure, or length of service as an elected official, was established as an a priori code based on the literature review with an expectation that the longer an elected official was in the position, the more likely cooperation among jurisdictions would occur. The findings from the interviews are somewhat consistent with the literature and suggest that tenure influenced cooperative agreements in some of the jurisdictions. All of the elected officials were in office when a new manager was hired in their respective jurisdiction and in the highly engaged communities they expected the manager to prioritize regional collaboration. .

Feiock (2007), presents propositions related to factors that influence regional cooperation including the impact of both elected officials and managers' tenure on cooperation. Feiock posits that there is a positive relationship between the length of time in office and the development of cooperative agreements. His suggestion results in a proposition that the longer the tenure, the more cooperative agreements will be engaged as result of reduced uncertainty. As noted in Table 3, tenure of elected officials ranged from three years to 16 years of service. Comparing the level of involvement in regional projects, there is a variation among the highly involved localities and the level of regional collaboration but overall the length of service may be

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

a factor in cooperation. For the purpose of this study, confirmation of propositions from the literature was not evident but should be considered as a topic for further investigation.

Table 8: Tenure and Leadership Position of Elected Official

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Elected Official Tenure and Leadership Position</i>		<i>Level of Regional Involvement on Continuum</i>
County A	16 Years Chairperson	4 Years Chairperson	High
City B	5 Years Mayor	n/a	High
County D	6 Years Chairperson	n/a	Low
City A	12 Years	8 years	High
County B	3 years	6 years	High
City C	11 years Mayor	13 years	High
County C	10 years	n/a	Low

Preconditions. Preconditions are identified as the drivers or precursors for local government officials to pursue regional collaborations. Existing research suggests that viable multi-community collaborations will “not occur unless the actors and organizations involved possess the requisite skills necessary for fostering collective action” (Korsching, P. F., Borich, T. O., & Stewart, p. 53). For example, Cigler (1999) identified preconditions for collaboration including a disaster occurrence, fiscal stress or perceived fiscal stress, political constituency for cooperation or citizen support, and support programs provided by external agencies such as State or outside agencies. It is important to note that “not all of the preconditions must be present for regional collaboration to take place for a particular collaboration and the degree to which the precondition influenced the decision to engage in regional collaboration may not necessarily be assessed.” (Cigler, p. x). During the data analysis and in the findings reported below, all localities reported one or more of the preconditions identified in the literature and the section below reports the findings of preconditions and the interpretation of those findings.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Disaster Occurrence. One precondition for regional collaboration is the occurrence of a “disaster,” expressed in a number of ways including environmental which serves as a motivator for regional collaboration. Cigler defines a disaster occurrence as economic losses, population decline, natural disasters such as floods, or any other event that severely impacts a community’s stability. It is a precondition for regional collaboration and serves as a catalyst for change in how services are delivered at the local government level (Cigler, 1999).

In response to interview questions about factors motivating their decision to consider collaboration in a regional project, elected officials frequently referenced a variety of “disasters” in their region or jurisdictions. An elected official from the City B stated,

“The Hercules Fiber part, there's a Film and a Fiber section, they were on the same property, two separate buildings. The Fiber side caught on fire, and burned up. Everybody on the Fiber side lost their job, basically, or that many people lost their jobs with the company. Some of them, they were transferred. That just kicked somebody else out of a job. That was like 1200-1500 jobs. With the railroad leaving from Clifton, in the early '70s, that was big hit. It's just the Westrock, or Westvaco, or the paper mill, whatever you want to call it, has kept us alive for years. With the population loss, we can't do what we used to could. You lose half of your residents, you lose a lot of income, a lot of revenue” (City B elected official, Interview, October, 2017).

In the County B/City B subarea, elected officials stressed the loss of employment, declining population and lack of economic development as a factor to consider regional collaboration. The loss of the iron industry, railroad industry and supporting jobs for those businesses have significantly impacted the region and is a major factor in the overall decline in

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

population, high unemployment and low median household income. The loss of jobs in the area over the past 50 years is a precondition in the subarea for regional collaboration and is classified as a disaster occurrence for the purpose of this study. For example, An County B elected official stated,

“We lost Lear. We lost Parker Hannifin and across the line in Buena Vista, Dana Corp. Probably about 100 people from County B worked there. We had like 300 people at Parker Hannifin, which is a rubber processing plant. Then, you had Lear, which made door panels for the automobile industry in City B, which employed about 300 people. You lost a little over 700 jobs from manufacturing plus the smaller outfits that service those groups. That could be well over 1,000 and all this was done since 2008, 2007.”(County B Elected Official, Interview, October, 2017)

From a report prepared for the County and City, population in the City B declined 37.3% from 1970 to 2000, County B’s population declined 1.9% during the 1990s, and the Town of Clifton Forge’s population declined 22.5% during the 30-year period and is expected to continue (Challenges for Economic Growth in the Alleghany Highlands, 2008). An elected official from the City B stated, “Looking at regional opportunities, City B is half the size it was in the '60s. We were at 12,000 people. We're at 6,000 now” (City B elected official, Interview, October, 2018).

Along with the declining population, median household income lags behind the State. County B’s median income was only 75.3% of the statewide median income and the City B’s median income only 63.8% of the statewide median income (Challenges for Economic Growth

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

in the Alleghany Highlands, 2008). High poverty rates plague the area and it is apparent that citizens are “struggling to make ends meet”

Elected officials in County A and City A cited a significant drought as a factor that facilitated regional collaboration in the form of the Virginia Water Authority. This drought created a lack of water for citizens and a situation that City A needed to partner with the County due to the availability of water resources in the County. Elected officials in both communities were asked to identify a regional project and what precipitated the regional discussion. An elected official from County A stated, “The Valley had a problem and the problem was that City A was running out of water and we had a pretty significant drought” (County A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). An elected official from City A stated, “Then of course, once the drought came along, it was like, Wow, we really need to think about combining our systems and our resources and preventing ourselves from some of the problems that we had” (City A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). Another elected official from City A stated, “The drought of 2004, 2005, at least in modern history, really highlighted the importance of regional cooperation” (City A elected official, Interview, September 2017).

Fiscal Stress. Elected officials that encouraged consideration of regional collaborations identified fiscal stress or the perceived fiscal stress as a precondition. Analysis of elected official interviews confirmed previous evidence in the literature that fiscal stress acts as a strong precondition to collaboration, enticing local governments to consider inter-jurisdictional collaboration (Cigler, 1999; Warm, 2011; Morse, 2005). During the interviews, elected officials were asked why they considered a particular project through regional collaboration. A County B elected official stated, “Sometimes there's something good to be said of a good down turn of the economy. It's an old business saying... A good financial downturn makes people get along a

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

little better, because you have a common enemy, which is survival. That plays into it” (County B elected official, interview, October, 2017). Elected officials stated that financial constraints and financial stress in their own jurisdictions were preconditions that facilitated the interest in working with other jurisdictions. City A elected official stated, “I think also part of it, because of the recession and the new norm, I guess people are saying, in terms of local revenue streams, it's much harder for one locality to say ... I mean, County A could have said, "Well, you know, that's in our county, we'll buy all the land, we'll do all the infrastructure development and all the investment that's necessary to make this ready for somebody to come in," but it's harder for one locality to do that these days” (City A elected official, Interview, September, 2017).

Consistent with the literature, fiscal stress or perceived fiscal stress was a common theme that emerged from the data and elected official’s recognition of the need for local governments to reassess how they are delivering government services to their citizens. Elected officials identified the lack of recovery in revenues resulted in less financial resources to accomplish their community’s goals. A City C elected official stated:

“I'm thinking it's probably, well, you know the economy. All of that. Just kind of changed I think everything and the way you had to look at things. When you work together you have greater buying power and I still think, and being part of the regional commission like I am too, that's given me other ideas as to how we can work together as a region and some things that we've discussed as a regional commission have been like collectively buying things for the localities, exploring the possibility of doing that down the road” (City C elected official, Interview, October 2018).

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

As a result of the recession and the slow recovery in their own local economies, elected officials recognized the corresponding slow recovery in local sources of revenue. Real estate taxes, the largest source of local revenue for local governments, lagged in recovery because housing valuation has not achieved pre-recession levels. As a result of the recession and limited recovery in revenues, elected officials have considered partnering through regional collaboration as a way to share resources to accomplish public goals.

Citizen Support for Cooperation. Citizen support for multi-jurisdictional collaboration is viewed as a “push” for communities to engage in collaboration and Cigler identifies a political constituency for cooperation as a precondition for collaboration. Citizen support for cooperation through regional collaboration was identified during the study only in the County B/City B subarea. This finding is important because the “push” for regional collaboration was citizen-driven. Interestingly, Cigler notes that in many cases of collaboration, a strong political constituency is not a precondition for these engagements and states, “natural political constituencies for the promotion of collaborative venture are rare.” Because the literature recognizes the limited occurrences of citizen promotion for regional collaboration, this finding is important to the study.

Consistent within the context of limited political constituencies, citizen influence as a precondition for collaboration was an important factor for the elected officials’ in the County B/City B Subarea. As a result of citizen frustration of the perceived inefficient and ineffective service delivery of the two local governments, citizens have initiated consolidation referendums for over 20 years. For County B and the City B, citizen pressure for cooperation was a precondition for the interlocal initiatives and confirms the findings from the literature. As stated by a City B elected official:

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

“(The City and County) have had three or four consolidation referendums in the last 50 years. The idea is always less government, joint services, one school system, and those were the drivers. Our school systems are expensive. We’ve got two of the most expensive school systems in the state, because we’re so small and dealing with such a small population. The school systems are an important part of that. The joint services is something that what can we do together that we’re doing separate now. Those were the types of things people were talking about, and they’re all good points. But since I’ve gotten elected, and Vice Mayor after me, and we were elected at the same time. We’ve pretty much the same kind of ideas. We work together a lot real well. He’ll tell you some things a little bit different, but it’ll be similar. Once we didn’t have a consolidated government, one of the things we started working on, he and I both, when we got elected, was more joint services and more regional cooperation.”(City B elected official, Interview, October, 2017)

Citizen initiated referendums served as the “push” for better cooperation between the two jurisdictions. Furthermore, consistent with the literature, the data analysis found that the other five local governments did not specifically identify citizen pressure as a precondition for regional collaboration. The majority of localities (5 of the 7) stated that citizens were neither interested nor cared about the various regional projects that the specific locality was engaged in. As a result of the lack of political constituency for collaboration, other preconditions proved stronger motivators for localities to engage in regional collaborations.

State Influence and Outside Agency Influence. Support capacity building by other governments and outside organizations is identified as a precondition for local governments to

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

engage in regional collaboration. As noted by Cigler, without a strong political constituency to “push” localities to engage in regional collaboration, incentives or governance structures “pull” localities to engage to regional collaboration. During the interviews, elected officials identified structures that influenced or “pulled” the localities to consider engagement in regional collaboration to solve a public problem that crossed jurisdictional boundaries. Those structures include the regulatory influence of the State of Virginia, incentive- based influence of the State of Virginia, Statutory Authority provided to local governments in the Code of Virginia and outside agency facilitation.

The elected officials identified the influence of the State of Virginia on consideration of regional collaboration as a precondition. State of Virginia influence is viewed as a precondition for regional collaboration because elected officials recognized that the State of Virginia has regulatory influence over certain decisions at the local government level and has funding to encourage regional projects. Cigler identifies outside capacity building by the State as a precondition for regional collaboration.

Elected officials were asked how the state helped or hindered their efforts to engage in regional collaboration during the interviews. The literature on federal and state requirements was identified in this study as a barrier to regional collaboration. Warm (2011), identified four significant barriers to collaboration including federal and state programs requiring certain service deliveries remain within jurisdictional boundaries. This study found that the State was a precondition for engaging in regional collaboration and was not viewed as a barrier to regional collaboration. On the contrary, the findings demonstrate the strong influence on local governments to work together whether through regulatory influence or statutory influence.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Elected officials in the study recognized the State of Virginia as serving as a motivating factor for regional collaboration in dual capacities including as a regulatory influence and incentive. While the elected officials' perceptions of the influence were negative or positive, nonetheless the State served as a capacity-building entity. Further, the literature recognizes mandated frameworks that reflect the influence of incentives or sanctions by another governmental level to encourage intergovernmental relationships (Alexander, p. 177).

State of Virginia Regulatory Influence. Elected officials recognized that the State held regulatory influence over their local decision-making in the case of water availability. In County A, the local government's water permit would be withheld had they not worked to solve a regional water issue. An elected official of County A stated, "because we're pulling water out of the river and what with our permit, there's no scenario that the state wouldn't have forced us to provide water if City A's out of water" (County A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). The locality was faced with regulatory implications if the City and the County did not develop a solution to a regional water problem. As a result, in 2004, the two localities joined to create a Virginia Water Authority that now serves as the regional water supplier for the study area.

In the County B/City A subarea, elected officials identified the Commission of Local Government as a precondition for regional collaboration because the Commission had regulatory review over the interlocal agreement. The elected official recognized that the Commission needed to approve the agreement before they could officially engage in revenue sharing and stated, "we had to ask permission from Big Brother" (County B elected official, Interview, October, 2017). The role of the Commission on Local Government was to facilitate capacity building through the use of interlocal agreements.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

State of Virginia Incentive-based Influence. The State serves as facilitator of intergovernmental relationships through incentives such as grant funding or sanctions such as regulatory oversight to foster intergovernmental projects that accomplish a particular goal (Alexander, p.235). For the purpose of this study, the State provided incentives and sanctions in the form of statutory authority for localities to engage in regional collaboration. The status of Virginia as a Dillon-rule state and the restrictions on local actions by the State, required legislative authority to enter into interlocal or multi-jurisdictional agreements that serve as an incentive for local governments to work regionally.

The Code of Virginia with statutory authority granting local governments the ability to enter into interlocal agreements or authorities was also viewed as a precondition or facilitating factor to encourage regional collaborations. When asked by the interviewer what role the State of Virginia played in their decision to consider regional collaboration, the elected officials reported both positive and negative influences on their decision to consider regional collaboration. A City A elected official stated, “the two biggest things the state has already done...having the moratorium on annexation and two is providing the opportunities for localities to go together to form these Regional Industrial Facility Authorities and share revenue...the Regional Authorities Act...”(County A elected official, Interview, September 2017).

Funding for joint projects through the Department of Housing and Community Development supported regional initiatives. County B and the City B secured funding through a cooperative grant opportunity to conduct a joint comprehensive plan effort for the region. A County B elected official stated,

“We are doing a comprehensive plan with the City B and County B, which will be compiled as separate lands, but one steering committee directing both

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

jurisdictions. When it comes back to the county it'll be the county's plan. The county has to prove it. The city out there have to prove it. The goal, the end result, and milestone dates are all the same. That goes hand in hand with our economic development that we have a joint partnership with and is complete” (County B elected official, Interview, October, 2017).

The joint comprehensive plan was partially funded through a grant through the Department of Housing and Community Development’s Building Collaborative Communities program which is designed to assist regions in creating and sustaining new economic opportunities across Virginia. The program promotes regional economic collaborations in economically distressed areas to stimulate job creation, economic development and build community capacity, and leadership. Building Collaborative Communities is a broad-based program that provides the financial and technical resources from a number of state entities. “By working collaboratively, regions are able to capitalize upon the regional place-based assets that create appealing and unique communities where people want to live and work” (Department of Housing and Community Development, <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/regional-development-opportunities/building-collaborative-communities-bcc.html>) Through this grant, the two communities are engaging in public projects in a cooperative manner and this initiative was identified as a factor that helped support this regional project in the County B/City B subarea.

Statutory Authority. Elected officials cited the governance structure authorized under the Code of Virginia as a capacity building structure for regional collaboration such as the State Code Section 15.2-1500-5159, Virginia Water and Waste Authority Act. This State Code section provides localities with the ability to enter into agreements to establish water and waste

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

authorities for the purpose of providing various water and waste services to two or more jurisdictions. Interviewees cited the Virginia Water Authority as a regional collaboration that was established to provide water and sewer services to the region. The Virginia Water Authority provides water to four of the seven localities identified in the study.

State Code Section 15.2 – 6400- Virginia Regional Industrial Facilities Act authorizes three or more localities to enter into agreements to “enhance the economic base for the member localities by developing, owning, and operating one or more facilities on a cooperative basis involving its member localities” (Code of Virginia). City C, City A and County A utilized this code section to establish the Regional Industrial Facility Authority to procure 100 acres of land, for economic development purposes. As noted by a City A elected official, “the two biggest things the state has already done...is providing the opportunity for localities to go together, form these Regional Industrial Facility Authorities and share the revenue...having the State put that opportunity in place provides that great incentive...”

State Code Section 15.2-1301, Voluntary Economic Growth Sharing Agreements allows two local governments to enter into agreements to share in the revenue related to economic development projects. This section provided the authority for the City B and County B to enter into an interlocal agreement for economic development purposes. The agreement was subject to review by the Commission on Local Government and public hearings were held for citizen input. The elected officials and managers of the two local governments cited the review process as an administrative burden; however, the benefit of State input and engagement was a positive influence on the overall process.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Outside Regional Agency Influence. Outside regional agencies served as capacity building facilitators of regional collaborations. The Partnership is the regional economic development organization representing the four counties, three cities, and one town.

For the local governments in this study, the Partnership conducted a site analysis to identify potential sites for business attraction. This site analysis was presented to the local government managers and they determined the best site to invest in for economic development. . An elected official from County A stated, “one of the things we were told by the Partnership is that we had a lack of inventory of 100 acre sites for development, for business, so that was one of the reasons why we pursued the property over there” (County A elected official, Interview, September 2017). The elected officials credited the Partnership for initiating the site analysis and prompting the City A, City C, and County A to engage in the regional collaboration for economic development purposes in the region. A City A elected official stated, “our Partnership, economic development partnership, had done a very good job, I think, of documenting the need for large parcels”(City A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). Elected officials were asked how outside regional agencies, serving as capacity building entities, were influential in their decision to pursue regional collaborations.

The Partnership served as a capacity building structure that led to the engagement of three communities for the purposes of economic development. As noted by Cigler (1999), capacity-building entities can take the form of governmental agencies or outside private or nonprofit agencies. As an elected official from City A stated, “Well, I think they have taken a regional view all along, and one of the things that the regional commission in particular has tried to do over the years is periodically to document and try to bring some attention to the number of areas where regional cooperation is already going on, whether it's through a formal authority or

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

whatever you've got. Some of that is through formal authorities and some of it is not, but it's still happening” (City A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). Consistent with the literature, for the selected region, the Partnership was instrumental as a capacity building structure for those communities for the purposes of economic development.

The Foundation serves as a capacity building structure for the City B and County B for the purposes of intergovernmental cooperation. The Foundation is a private foundation that came about as a result of the sale of a community non-profit hospital to a for-profit hospital. A Board of Directors comprised of citizens of both County B and the City B manages the Foundation. The Foundation’s purpose is “to provide financial support that primarily benefits worthy activities in the Alleghany Highlands of Virginia. “ The Foundation provides funding to eligible organizations for projects that meet established criteria and the funding serves as an incentive for local governments to collaborate. In the interviews with the elected officials from County B and the City B it was noted that they believed their efforts to engage in interlocal collaborative arrangements would serve to secure additional funding from the Foundation. An elected official from County B stated “County B holds around \$55 million in a trust fund from the sale of the hospital. They give money out and we’re not asking them to give us all the money...we need help.” Another elected official from County B stated:

“(the foundation director) said he wants to do things in the community above and beyond the normal function of government or to assist government in things where we can make it better...they helped us build a joint YMCA, a joint animal shelter, new air packs for volunteer fire and rescue...if it’s not for everybody, they’re not going to pick...we can kinda regionalize some of these projects. I think they’ll step up and help us.”

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Outside agencies, such as nonprofits, serve as capacity building structures for local governments considering engagement in regional collaboration. The entities and the financial and knowledge resources that they provided local governments were preconditions for elected officials to consider engagement in regional collaboration. The findings from the interviews were consistent with the literature in that those agencies provided resources to “pull” localities into intergovernmental arrangements.

Self-Interest. This research study investigated the elected official’s internal motivation for engaging in regional collaboration and considered if elected officials wanted to engage in regional projects to promote their re-election. When asked during the interview if an elected official would support a regional project for re-election purposes, an County B elected officials stated, “In all honesty...most don’t care...they do not care...just keep the plane flying straight and they do not care” (County B elected official, interview, October 2017). An elected official from the City A stated,

“There's no time. Yes, we try to tell them. Your opportunity to tell them, unfortunate is probably door to door, when you're going door to door knocking on doors and someone says "I really wish you guys would just talk to County A. Then they ask you stupid questions like "What do you think of sanctuary cities?" You don't really get to talk about the real issues that really are important to make this valley great, or to keep this valley great... It is a real challenge to communicate with the constituents because they're busy. They've got their lives going on. To pay attention to those stupid guys on city council. When I first ran for council I had the idea that, this can't be that hard. You look at a problem, the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

pros and the cons, you figure out what's in the best interest of the city and you do it and you move on” (City A elected official, Interview, October 2017).

The direct response to the question was that elected officials do not use these types of regional projects as a re-election promotional tool. An elected official from the City C stated, “People just don't care. They don't understand it” (City C elected official, Interview, October, 2017). Even though elected officials did not expressly state that a successful collaborative project would be a message they would use during election time, they did note that collaborations were mechanisms to address public priorities. They did suggest that regional collaboration was a mechanism to address citizen concerns in a positive manner. Elected officials discussed the need for quality jobs and a better quality of life for their citizens and believed that a regional economic development project would fulfill this need. . Indirectly, regional collaboration was identified as a way to respond to citizen concerns by their representative and citizens pleased with the results will re-elect them. From the public choice literature, self-interest was a factor that influenced elected officials’ decision to engage in regional collaboration. The politician is assumed to be working in his or her self-interest, seen as a desire to be re-elected, to accomplish a certain policy goal, or to increase the elected official’s campaign fund.

Elected officials may have disguised self-interest by citing jurisdictional benefit or jurisdictional interest. Visible advantages of cooperation, or jurisdictional benefits, were identified as an important factor for regional collaboration from the perspective of the elected official. Elected officials understood how the individual jurisdiction would benefit from participating in a regional collaboration with other jurisdictions. In contrast, if elected officials could not ascertain a jurisdictional benefit for a particular project, then the project would not be

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

investigated further. Cigler (1999) identifies visible advantages as a precondition of regional collaboration and states, “unless participating governments see clear advantages to partnerships, they will not lend long-term commitment to such ventures.”

When elected officials were asked why they would engage in regional collaborations, they consistently stated that a jurisdictional benefit was necessary to consider the engagement. A County A elected official stated, “because we all want to work together, we all want to be fair but we're not gonna just advantageous. We're not gonna do something disadvantageous to our citizens just to be nice” (County A elected official, Interview, September 2017). A City A elected official stated, “Then you make the call that you think is in the best interest of the majority of the City A... I'm going to do what I think is in the best interest of the city overall.” (City A elected official, October, 2017).

The findings from the data provided insight into the perceptions of elected officials for why they did or did not consider engagement in regional collaboration. In the interview with a City A elected official, expansion of public transportation across jurisdictional lines was discussed. The elected official stated, “There aren't that many people in the county who are going to want to take the bus to come into the region, so why should we support it?” (City A elected official, October, 2017). This quote supports the idea that elected officials would pursue interlocal cooperation that benefits their jurisdiction and not pursue regional projects that did not benefit their jurisdiction.

Negotiation and compromise were concepts that elected officials referred to when they were working with other jurisdictions to partner regionally and yet protect the jurisdiction's interests. A City B elected official stated, “We looked at other things we can do, sometimes not feasible, sometimes it is. We're trying to do the best we can and work with what's the best

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

solution, what's best regionally. How can we do this and save everybody money, and what's the best option? Sometimes a little give and take. We argue and fuss sometimes, because the give and take, and no one wants to give up anything” (City B elected official, Interview, November 2017). For local governments in the study, they sought ways to benefit the jurisdiction through negotiation and compromise.

As demonstrated through the data, elected officials could identify jurisdictional benefits for engagement in regional collaboration and could communicate those benefits during the interviews. Elected officials would not pursue regional collaborations without a perceived benefit to the locality. An elected official from the City C stated, “but then as time went on and we learned more and examined it more, it became clear that City C was going to be better off joining the authority” (City C elected official, Interview, November, 2018). Zeemering (2008) found that elected officials are motivated by jurisdictional self-interest in working interlocally.

The connection between jurisdictional self-interest and individual self-interest cannot be overlooked in this study. The researcher sought to understand if regional collaborations could be used as a re-election tool for elected officials. The responses from the interviewees suggest that they do not necessarily promote regional projects to their citizens. However, any regional project must have a jurisdictional benefit; something elected officials can recognize as a benefit to their citizens. Inherently, if elected officials are working in their jurisdictions’ best interest, they are working in their own self-interest. The connection between responding to citizens’ wants and needs and representation of the citizenry by the elected official is indirectly self-interested. Specific perceived jurisdictional benefits and perceived barriers in terms of engagement in regional collaboration were also identified as part of the study and serve to

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

provide further detail on the visible advantages or conversely disadvantages to engaging in regional collaboration.

Prior Unsuccessful Collaborations. Interview analysis revealed that elected officials in this region had varying perspectives on prior unsuccessful collaborations as a deterrent for future collaborations. Many of the elected officials have not based their decision to collaborate with each other on the degree of success at previous attempts to collaborate while many of the elected officials recognized prior successful collaborations as a “momentum” building effort for future collaborations. For example, a County A elected official referred to a park project that was envisioned as a regional project and he stated, “I believe that we didn’t pursue it or I didn’t pursue it, because I think too many people in this area have a bad taste in their mouth with (the park) (County A elected official, Interview, September 2017). Further inquiry by the researcher during the interview revealed that the County was going to approach those communities in the future to reconsider a regional park project. This quote and the extended inquiry reflects the perspective of the elected officials that prior unsuccessful collaborations deterred participation in the existing project but that the County would continue to pursue a collaborative effort in the future.

Those elected officials were not deterred from pursuing other regional projects now and in the future because the overall benefit to the communities and the region were worth the risk. In addition, the elected officials could see the benefit of a successful project leading to future successful regional collaborations. During the interviews, elected officials with significant tenure on the governing board or council recalled prior projects that were not successful due to lack of trust in the persons or the process involved in a engaging in a regional project. A City A elected official expanded on this concept as follows:

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

“Yeah, a little more background, when we built the Spring Hollow Reservoir, it was designed to be a joint project between City A and County A. City A backed out at the last minute. So, the county ... We had a water problem, the county went forward with Spring Hollow Reservoir, shouldered the entire debt. The debt was 70 million dollars back in mid, I don't know, '93 timeframe, which put that in today's dollars, big, big. We shouldered it and we were running water rates probably close to double City A's water rates at the time and City A continued for a number of years to have much lower water rates than we did as a result of us going forward with Spring Hollow Reservoir. There was a little bit of bad blood because they were supposed to be sharing this and they backed out at the last minute” (City A elected official, Interview, September 2017).

Prior unsuccessful collaborations did not deter elected officials from considering future collaborations and there was a common understanding that one successful project would build momentum for future projects. An elected official from County A stated, “I think that once we start to see the momentum...you’re going to see more regional cooperation...I think initially everybody was a little standoffish because of the history of the (park)” (County A elected official, Interview, September 2017). Elected officials stated that successful projects would build momentum by demonstrating that the localities could work together and could be successful.

In the context of this study, elected officials recognized that small successes would lead to more collaborative projects in the future. Cigler, (1999) identifies “early focus on visible, effective strategies” and Morse (2005) expands this precondition by “suggesting that early successes stimulate interest and build ‘collaborative constituencies’”. An elected official with

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

County A stated, “But again, I think that once they see the Woodhaven property, once they see it come to fruition and it’s successful, I think that’s when they’re going to be looking for opportunities for us to work with them” (County A elected official, interview, September 2017). Successful collaborations were viewed as precursors for future collaborations.

The literature (Cigler, Morse) identified prior unsuccessful or successful projects as a factor influencing elected officials decisions to engage in regional collaboration. The data reveals that prior unsuccessful projects did not deter elected officials from engaging in new or future projects but with new successes, new collaborations would be pursued. The elected officials who were interviewed had been in office when prior collaborations had failed. They did not reflect negative perspective on current or future regional collaborations, and elected officials recognized that success would facilitate new projects in the future.

Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Regional Collaboration

Why elected officials engage in regional collaborations or do not pursue them is impacted by their perceptions of benefits of and barriers to regional collaboration. The internal values and beliefs and the external environment drive perceptions of elected officials. It is important to understand because it provides both academics and practitioners with insight into the internal factors that influence elected officials.

Perceptions of Benefits of Regional Collaboration. Elected officials cited a number of benefits to engaging in regional collaborations with other jurisdictions. Thurmaier and Chen (2009), identified improved efficiency and effectiveness as important benefits achieved from regional collaboration. Improved efficiency and improved effectiveness in the delivery of government services were consistent themes identified in the interviews. The ability to achieve economies of scale and cut costs were identified as common themes. There was a recognition

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

that working with other local governments enabled localities to share resources including physical resources such as water and sewer infrastructure, land, or broadband infrastructure. Shared resources also included financial resources such as funding for a particular project. Benton (2013) identifies benefits such as shared costs, improved level of service, and achieved economies of scale. As opposed to a local government funding an entire project, a regional collaboration provided the mechanism to prorate financial investment. In addition, sharing resources also enabled localities to share in the reward of the investment. As opposed to one locality reaping the benefits of a particular investment, partners in a regional collaboration share in the financial benefits on a prorated basis consistent with their initial investment. The table below examines the benefits of collaboration as identified by elected officials and provides a profile of interview quotes and frequency of responses from the interview data. The numbers represent the number of interviews in which the Elected official referenced a particular benefit. The majority of elected officials reported the six benefits of regional collaboration.

Table 9: Profiles of Interview Quotes of the Benefits of Regional Collaboration

Shared Expenses	<p>“We will share in the costs” “might be a little bit easier than trying to have one jurisdiction swallow the whole thing”.....10</p>
Shared Revenue	<p>“We will share in the revenue” “A system of revenue sharing and it was fair and it was agreed on by both boards”.....10</p>
Save Money/Cost Avoidance/Economies of Scale	<p>“We’ve saved quite a bit of money”.....9</p>
Shared Resources	<p>“We’ve got all the land” “Not having a whole lot of developable land, you know it really does limit you and ...a way to reap some of the benefits” “We’ve got the land in the county”.....4</p>
Shared Return on Investment	<p>“We will benefit from the tax revenue that comes back to us, so this is not an expense of taxpayer’s money, this is an investment that promises a return”.....4</p>
Efficiency and Effectiveness	<p>“...it’s exactly what governments should be doing to be more efficient for its citizens”</p>

	“we have to be more efficient” “more efficiently and effectively than they can solve it by themselves”.....5
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Elected officials recognized that the benefits of regional collaboration to the jurisdiction were improved efficiency in the delivery of services and improved effectiveness of those services. Elected officials cited the ability to cut or share costs and achieve economies of scale were jurisdictional benefits through regional collaboration. Shared resources in terms of funding, land or other resources with shared rewards were jurisdictional benefits that could be achieved through regional collaboration. Elected officials would not consider regional collaboration without some return on the investment resulting in the lack of jurisdictional benefit from the project.

Perceptions of Barriers to Engagement in Regional Collaboration. Elected officials cited a number of barriers to regional collaborations with other jurisdictions. Jurisdictions who were not actively engaged in regional collaborations cited other priorities within their jurisdiction as the reason not to participate. Limited organization capacity is cited within the literature as a barrier to regional collaboration because communities lack resources to effectively collaborate (Warm, 2011).

Risks associated with collaborative service arrangements include transaction costs, coordination costs, and division costs. Barriers included the risk of partners pulling out of the project, no perceived jurisdictional benefit, lack of leadership to facilitate the regional collaboration, and lack of trust among local officials (Carr and Hawkins, 2013). Further, jurisdictional boundary lines or lack of proximity to a particular regional project was considered a barrier (Warm, 2011). For the County B/City B subarea, distance from City A was identified as

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

a barrier to working collaboratively with the other jurisdictions whose boundaries lines were shared with the City A.

The table below examines the barriers to engagement of collaboration as identified by elected officials and provides a profile of interview quotes and frequency of responses from the interview data. The numbers represents the number of interviews in which the Elected official referenced a particular barrier.

Table 10: Profile of Interview Quotes on the Barriers to Engagement in Regional Collaboration

Risks of partners pulling out of project	“they were supposed to be sharing this and they backed out at the last minute”.....2
Unequal relationship	“We’re willing to meet them but we expect a relationship with both sides being equal. Or you know, expect it to be somewhat equal.”.....1
Lack of Communication Among Partners	“That’s part of the process anywhere. You’ve got (to) communicate.”.....6
No Jurisdictional Benefit	“Is it in the best interest of the City?.....10
Competition among jurisdictions	“A lot of the competition between localities has gone away...” “they were really competing against each other9

Finally, elected officials identified prior governing bodies’ relationships lacking trust among other local officials as another barrier to working together to solve a public problem. Lackey, et. al., (2002) identified a lack of trust among officials as a barrier to regional collaboration. County D identified lack of trust as a main barrier to working collaboratively with the incorporated Town in their jurisdictional boundary.

Another area of investigation was the elected officials’ perceptions of barriers to regional collaboration and reflected the jurisdictional interest perspective of the elected officials. Elected officials identified risk, lack of leadership of elected officials, lack of trust, and no jurisdictional benefit as barriers to regional collaboration. A common theme for elected officials in regard to

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

barriers was the lack of regional collaboration as a priority or jurisdictional priorities took precedent over regional priorities.

Emergent Codes

Emergent codes were developed from the interview data and provide additional findings that answer the study's research questions. These codes were found through the data analysis process and represent consistent themes that elected officials expressed during the interviews that were not considered as part of the initial or a priori codes for the study. The researcher found three additional themes that reveal why elected officials engage in regional collaboration and their impact on the decision. This section will present the detailed findings for each emergent code for the elected officials.

Shared Norms and Vision among Elected Officials. A common theme that emerged from the interviews of elected officials was the concept that engagement in regional collaboration was “the right thing to do” and the elected officials recognized that other partnering governments' elected officials shared the same perspective. In other words, there was a shared norm among local government officials that regional collaboration was an appropriate method of delivering public services. Further, local government officials had an understanding that other elected officials shared this vision for regional collaboration. While the literature mostly views the shared norms of interlocal cooperation from the local government manager's perspective, little research has been conducted on the elected officials' shared norms of interlocal cooperation. Zeemering (2008) recognized this gap in the literature and while his study does investigate elected officials' perspectives on interlocal cooperation, he recognizes the need for further investigation.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Given the necessity to investigate elected officials' perceptions to engage in regional collaboration, it is important to recognize the emergent finding of shared norms related to engagement in regional collaboration. An elected official in County B reflected on the last consolidation referendum that failed and stated,

“So now, if we're not going to put them together (consolidation of the city and county), what's the next best thing? Work together. Forget trying to call us all a city of Jackson or some damn whatever, they come up with names, forget that. It's easier just to work together” (County B elected official, Interview, September 2017).

This statement supports the idea that, in the County B/City B subarea, elected officials had grown weary of the citizen-backed consolidation referendums and recognized that the solution to the issue was working together through interlocal agreements. During the interview with the City B elected official, the researcher inquired as to why he ran for office. The City B elected official stated,

“In 2011, there was an initiative to do a consolidated government... I told my wife that if the consolidation failed, I was going to run for office... Now, I think if the governments are working together, we can probably accomplish as much as we could as a consolidated government... But since I've gotten elected, and (elected official in City B) after me, and we were elected at the same time. We've pretty much the same kind of ideas. We work together a lot real well. He'll tell you some things a little bit different, but it'll be similar. Once we didn't have a consolidated government, one of the things we started working on, he and I both,

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

*when we got elected, was more joint services and more regional cooperation.
(City B elected official, Interview, October, 2017).*

The perspectives of the elected officials in the County B/City B subarea provide insight into the thinking of elected officials about interlocal agreements and cooperation as a solution to failed citizen-backed consolidation referendums. As stated by a County B elected official,

“It's realizing that if we don't do partnership and don't consolidate in our efforts, we don't have to consolidate the schools or whatever, but our efforts to make this a great area, it won't survive... The jurisdictions, you have a structure here. I'm not complaining about them, but it was old school. Business has changed. You have NAFTA. You have a world economy. It's a trickle down. It affects even small towns. You've got people here now that understand that. It's harder to get state funds, federal funds. You have to have partnerships” (County B elected official, Interview, September, 2017).

Further, the elected officials in both communities recognize that regional collaboration is appropriate mechanism to providing better government services without consolidation. This shared norm and understanding is what is driving the interlocal agreements and joint projects in the County B/City B subarea.

Elected officials in the Regional subarea also related the shared norm of cooperation or regional collaboration through the interviews. The Regional subarea includes the City A, City C and County A and represents the most highly involved regional area of the study. As noted above, one of the most frequently cited projects during the interviews was the Economic Development project. Through the interviews,

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

the elected officials discussed the shared norms of working together in the context of large economic development projects. A City C elected official stated, “it’s just a mindset, things changed, just that we’re all in this together” (City C elected official, Interview, November, 2017). A County A elected official stated, “Better off as a community if we work with our partners in other jurisdictions” (County A elected official, Interview, September 2017). A City A elected official stated, “To get back really to your question, there just wasn't even an argument in anybody's mind about setting up this authority (Regional Industrial Facilities Authority for the purchase of the property)” (City A elected official, Interview, October, 2017). Further, elected officials recognized that the region, not one individual community, defines success. An elected official from City A stated, “The health of the region is going to be reflected by the health of the rest of the region” (City A elected official, Interview, October, 2017).

From the highly involved communities, elected officials stated there was a shared recognition among elected officials within the region that problems could be solved regionally and there was a shared vision among elected boards and councils to engage other local governments to solve a public problem. An elected official from County A stated, “I want a roadmap, I want to know where we are going (as a region)” (County A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). Gray (1985), noted stakeholders need to have a shared recognition of values that guide their interactions, solutions, and agendas.

A consistent theme that emerged from the data from the elected officials was the need to have a shared vision for working regionally among all elected officials in the region. From the data, a consistent message from the elected officials was that was a shared vision among the elected officials, across jurisdictions, to consider regional collaborations. “...I’m not saying us as

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

County A, I think us as a region” (County A elected official, Interview, September 2017). If certain communities did not embrace this vision, then regional collaboration may not come to fruition. Early and continued support from elected officials, through the demonstration of a shared vision, is an important factor for engagement in regional collaboration.

Further, this shared vision is coupled with shared norms and values of the elected officials. Elected officials noted that interlocal cooperation or regional collaboration was “the right thing to do”. This understanding moves away from the values of efficiency and effectiveness of administration to a norm based decision-making effort. Elected officials in highly involved communities understand and were able to communicate that this is a normal part of governmental administration. They supported regional collaboration because of a shared norm or value of working together.

The communities of County C and County D provided the researcher with a contrasting view of shared norms and values. Both local governments had limited elected official involvement in the study and only one elected official from each local government participated in the interviews. In County C, the elected official was not aware of any regional projects and spoke to accomplishments within the county’s jurisdiction. In County D, the elected officials were not aware why the county had proceeded with their own Broadband Authority as opposed to joining the Regional Broadband Authority. When asked did the elected official know why they were not a member of the Broadband Authority in County D, the elected official stated, “I’m not certain why, no” (County D elected official, Interview, November, 2017).

County D and County C and the subareas they represent are on the low engagement in regional projects continuum. The lack of shared vision and norms for cooperation and regional collaboration is reflected in this study through lack of participation and the inability for the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

elected officials to engage with the interviewer in the interview questions. Further, the elected officials' lack of interest in regional collaboration sets the tone for the entire local government and the external region. Elected officials in other local governments in the study area did not reference the counties during the interviews and were not able to identify a specific reason for lack of engagement on behalf of those communities. The lack of shared norms and values among the other regional communities may inhibit County D and County C's ability to engage in future regional collaborations.

Governing Body Expectations of Appointed Manager as Policy Entrepreneur.

Elected officials recognized the importance of the governing body setting clear expectations for the appointed manager's vision to seek out regional solutions to local problems and to serve as the local governments' policy entrepreneur who provides ideas and technical support. As Roberts and King (1991) note policy entrepreneurs need political support. All the elected officials interviewed were in office at the time the manager for each local government was hired. The elected officials were asked about the direction given to the manager by the governing body and the manager's role in regional collaborations.

The local government manager serves the elected officials as the policy entrepreneur in terms of regional collaboration by initiating regional projects for consideration by the elected officials. An elected official from County A spoke about the hiring process of the new County Administrator in the context of the vision for the County and stated:

"Then we started looking for a new county administrator and we found (the county administrator). He came in the very end of 2014, late December. Of course, then I came in as chairman in '15, and that was the first thing I said to him. I said, "I want a roadmap. I want to know where we're going because my

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

experience is if you don't have a roadmap you're going to go nowhere." We put it together. We poured in over a thousand citizens and we put together County A's first ever strategic plan, which kind of laid out a roadmap of where we're going to go over the next five years. I think that has helped us internally and us as elected officials, and even the citizens know what are the priorities, and where are we going" (County A elected official, Interview, September, 2017).

This quote reflects the direction of the elected officials to the local government manager and the need to provide expectations of the position and the local government.

This study identified a key theme in the data related to expectations of elected officials of their local government manager. For new managers in some jurisdictions, elected officials clearly expressed a requirement for the manager to engage and initiate regional collaborations. A City A elected official stated, "He (the new manager) understands, immediately, how important it is to reach out and to find partners and to see where you can reach the commonality and then move forward. Yes, that was a big part of our decision to hire (the new manager)" (City A elected official, Interview, October, 2017). Another City A elected official stated, "he (the manager) understands immediately how important it is to reach out and to find partners and to see where you can reach the commonality and then move forward." (City A elected official, Interview, October, 2017). For the City A, experience in regional collaboration was a job requirement and candidates who had demonstrated success in regional projects were considered highly valuable.

In the City B/County B subarea, elected officials spoke about the local government manager's perspective and need for them to be open to regional collaboration. A County B

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

elected official spoke not only about the County Administrator but also the City Manager in City B and stated

“but we were grateful that the city hired (the City Manager). (the city manager) has opened the city up to this conversation because he's more broadminded. Not being from the area, he's looking at it as being a region also. I think that's probably them two (the County B Administrator and the City B Manager) putting it together and then presenting it to both boards and we went from there. I've been supportive of it from day one, still supportive of it” (County B elected official, Interview, November, 2017).

A County B elected official stated, “but one thing that's helping us around here ... you just interviewed him Different guy. He goes to City B and they play sports here, and he's part of that more mobile generation. Newer, young guy. Came into City B, outside point of view. He knows who he works for, but at the same time, he understands us...” (County B elected official, Interview, November, 2017). In the County B/City B subarea, elected officials recognized the importance of the managers’ perspectives on interlocal cooperation and the influence manager’s have on the process of working collaboratively.

In the City C, the elected official was asked if regional collaboration was in part a factor in hiring the current manager. The City C elected official stated, “yes, in part, Maybe somebody's who familiar with the region; that was one reason that (they hired him)” (City C elected official, Interview, November, 2017). Another elected official from the City C stated:

“You know I wanted first and foremost whoever we hired to be a leader and to be able to come into this organization and be respected and just be someone who could lead. I think that was my number one thing. And then the thought had

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

occurred to me can he work well with others because I think impressions are everything, and when you've got somebody that's leading your city and they are expected to work with other local leaders and managers, I think you wanna have somebody that plays nice with others, I guess, for lack of a better way to term it. And that's respected by others. And I think that was part of it but maybe not the primary factor” (City C elected official, November, 2017).

In some jurisdictions, elected officials were not clear or not communicating a desire for the manager to engage in regional collaboration discussions. Therefore, the data reflects a common theme that elected officials must clearly, either in writing, through a strategic plan, a job advertisement, or informally, through discussions or interviews, indicate that regional projects are a priority for the elected officials and managers should initiate regional projects. The findings support Cigler’s precondition for multi-community collaborations specifically related to a policy entrepreneur to initiate regional collaboration. Elected officials identified the manager as the lead on initiating these types of regional projects and identified this responsibility in the hiring of newly appointed local government managers. Local government managers serve as the elected officials’ policy entrepreneur for engagement in regional collaborative projects.

Elected Officials’ Relationships, Communication, and Trust. Elected officials recognized the need for informal and formal communications with other elected officials to facilitate regional collaborations that build and maintain relationships and trust. Morse (2005) found that relationship building and trust are essential in “cultivating collaboration.” From his study of local governments, Morse found that trust is a key factor on whether or not a proposal will be developed and trust is vital to collaborative success (Morse, 2005). The engagement in informal and formal communications among elected officials is viewed as a mechanism to build

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

trust and a foundation for regional collaborations. Informal and formal communication mechanisms were identified in the interviews and within each subarea the level and extent to which elected officials engaged in these types of activities can be linked to the level and extent to which local governments were working collaboratively.

Informal communications, in the context of this study, meant there were individual personal relationships formed between elected officials across jurisdictions. An elected official from County A was asked how a particular regional project was initially discussed and he stated, “We had breakfast. It's something even with the Town of Vinton, like, this Friday morning Tom and I are having breakfast with the town manager and the mayor” (County A elected official, Interview, September, 2017). Another elected official from County A stated, “The mayor and I, we have gotten together a couple of times this year for breakfast, talking about different types of things and you talk about something that doesn't work or might not work and we're gonna look at it anyways” (County A elected official, Interview, September, 2017).

A City A elected official spoke on the different ways to engage in informal communications by stating:

“You do it by going to the functions that are sponsored by the Partnership, the regional chamber, the regional commission. If you see them in a restaurant, you go over to their table and you talk to them, you go to dinner with them. It is more than meeting every other Monday in city council chambers and talking about regionalism. It's developing a personal relationship. When I'm in City C, I go by the jewelry store just to pop in and say hello. We're friends. I think of (another elected official) out in County C, we're not friends where we socialize but we had breakfast together yesterday morning. Just to talk about issues that are in

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

common ... that are common to all of the various jurisdictions. I don't know everybody. I need to meet and become a little more familiar with the two newest members of the County A Board of Supervisors. Joe ...I go by his ice cream store” (City A elected official, Interview, October, 2017).

An elected official from the City B stated, “We do. We have lunch once a month. With the other two managers, the four of us would have lunch a lot of times together. Steve and I were kind of forging that relationship with them, in those lunch meetings, when John and Richard hit it off. (City B elected official, October, 2017). An County B elected official stated, ““we’re also good personal friends” in reference to another elected official in neighboring jurisdiction “I work with them really good...we have each other’s cell phone numbers and we talk a lot”, “making some road trips...we’ve had windshield time” (County B elected official, Interview, November, 2017). The concept of “windshield time” was a common acronym for traveling in the same vehicle to a particular meeting or event.

The activities that represented informal communication among elected officials were not present in the interviews with County D. The Chairman of the Board stated, when asked if he participated in any regional boards, “Not on an ongoing basis, no.” (County D elected official, Interview, November, 2017). In addition, when asked about any further participation, the elected official stated, “At this point, I'm not on that many committees. I'm a full time dairy farmer, so I haven't been able to do those types of things” (County D elected official, Interview, November, 2017). The fact that the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors is not engaged in informal communications with other elected officials is important and influences County D’s engagement in regional collaboration.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Formal communications, in the context of this study, meant there was representation on a governing board, regional commission, or other joint authority board. Formal communications were defined as Boards or Commissions that elected officials participated on in their official capacity as a member of the governing body. Elected officials also recognized that formal communication through participation a regional body was an important component to regional collaboration.

A common theme identified in the data analysis was elected officials' belief that communication with other elected officials, both formal and informal, was important to their consideration of regional projects. In a study of elected officials, Zeemering (2008) found that local elected officials “may view interlocal agreements as innovative tools” and “elected officials, like city managers, use intergovernmental communication networks to identify opportunities for partnerships”. In the same study, Zeemering found that local elected officials engage in intergovernmental communications with other elected officials frequently with 61.7% of the elected officials stating that they often talked with other public officials in the area.

The impact of formal and informal communication among elected officials cannot be overstated. Elected officials were asked about their interactions with other elected officials, how they interacted, and how those interactions impacted engagement in regional collaboration. An elected official from the City A stated, “just started having some more informal conversations with our counterparts on the county board of supervisors...feel more comfortable with the whole process by having those more informal conversations” (City A elected official, Interview, October, 2017). The findings from the data demonstrate how strong trust impacts relationships both personally and within the context of government operations. Trust among elected officials was identified in the study as an important factor for successful regional projects. In turn, lack of

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

interaction with elected officials from other jurisdictions, lack of participation on regional committees and boards was inherently a deterrent for regional collaboration. Trust was built through these different interactions and participation in regional committees and boards provided formal engagement with elected officials. Informal communication, through informal meetings, calls or emails were considered an important factor in building trust and relationships. Elected officials who are not engaged in formal or informal communication demonstrated a consistent theme of lack of regional engagement.

Summary

This section reported the findings from the semi-structured interviews for the elected officials in the area region. In summary, the elected officials identified a variety of factors that influence their decision to engage in regional collaboration. A priori codes and emergent codes were reviewed and supported by the data collected during the semi-structured interviews. The next section will present the findings for the local government managers in the area region.

Local Government Managers: Research Findings and Interpretations

This section investigates research question 2: How do local government managers make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?

Local government managers are appointed by the governing body of each jurisdiction and serve at the pleasure of the Board or Council. They are exempt from grievance procedures and can be terminated at any time. They are responsible for the implementation of policy approved by the governing body and are the chief executive officers of the administration of the local government. This position provides recommendations and advice to elected officials; however they ultimately are responsible for carrying out the priorities of the governing body.

In developing the findings for the local government managers, the researcher found that the managers focused on implementation and execution of regional projects. In contrast with the elected officials, managers were answering the questions from a perspective of “how” the projects are implemented as opposed to elected officials’ perspectives of “why” the projects are implemented. The a priori codes are the same as the elected officials’ a priori codes but the responses to the questions and the findings below demonstrate how the roles and responsibilities contrast between the manager and elected official. Further discussion on this important concept will be provided in Chapter 5.

A Priori Codes

A priori codes were developed from the literature review and served as the foundation for the development of the semi-structured interviews. The seven a priori codes utilized reflected the factors identified in the literature and served as the foundation for the semi-structured interview questions. The seven a priori codes included preconditions such as a disaster occurrence, fiscal

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

stress, early and continued elected officials' support, and state and outside agency influence.

The other a priori codes not identified as a specific precondition, included tenure of the manager, self-interest and the managers' perceptions of benefits and barriers to regional collaboration.

The follow section will review the findings of the interviews including an analysis of a priori codes and emergent codes that were identified during the data analysis.

Tenure. Tenure or length of service within a jurisdiction was considered a factor that influences the development of regional collaborations within the Region. Managers were asked how long they had been with the city or county during the interviews. The table below shows the length of tenure for each manager by their respective communities:

Table 11: Tenure of Local Government Managers

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Manager Tenure in current position</i>
County A	4 years
City B	2 Years
County D	2.5 years
City A	2 months
County B	2 years
City C	10 years
County C	2 years

Each manager was asked their perspective on the influence of cooperation on new managers with relatively short tenures. City Manager S6 stated, "Certainly (The manager in a neighboring jurisdiction) and I coming on at the same time ... that's helped" (City Manager Subject 6, Interview, November, 2017). This response supports the finding that new managers hired within the same time period helped to facilitate inter-jurisdictional cooperation. Further, the managers recognized that the prior history of previous managers was not an issue once a new manager was employed. County Manager S2 stated, "A little bit less than two years. He was hired as city manager just prior to my appointment as county administrator. So it just ... I guess

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

just new personalities” (County Manager Subject 2, October, 2017). City Manager S7 stated, “I wanted to do good as a manager, because we had County Manager S1 and City Manager S2, and a good group of managers in the area, who are all trying to work together better than, perhaps, our predecessors had” (City Manager Subject 7, Interview, November, 2017). The managers interviewed for this study recognized the difficulties in relationships of prior managers in the region and the impact of those tenuous relationships on cooperation among jurisdictions.

Feiock (2007) presents propositions related to factors that influence regional cooperation including the impact of both elected officials and managers’ tenure. Feiock posits that there is a positive relationship between the length of time in office and the development of cooperative agreements. His suggestion results in a proposition that the longer the tenure, the more cooperative agreements will be engaged as result of reduced uncertainty (Feiock, 2007). Local government managers employed in the study’s local governments had varying tenures. Tenure or length of service in the profession was not investigated as part of this study. However, there appears to be some influence on regional collaboration given the relatively new tenures in the current jurisdiction. New managers building relationships on a professional and personal basis was important for the development of regional collaborations in the study area. Future research should consider the length of service within the profession and consider the professional training of the local government managers and the impact of turnover on the priorities and objectives of the governing body from a regional perspective.

Preconditions. As noted in the previous section, preconditions are identified as the drivers or precursors for local government officials to pursue regional collaborations and existing research suggests that viable multi-community collaborations demand skills needed for needed for pushing collective action. (Korsching, P. F., Borich, T. O., & Stewart, p. 53). During the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

data analysis and in the findings reported below, all localities reported one or more of the preconditions identified in the literature and the section below reports the findings of preconditions and the interpretation of those findings.

Disaster Occurrence. Local government managers identified a disaster occurrence as a precondition for considering regional collaborations to solve a public problem that crossed jurisdictional boundaries. When asked why the water authority had been established, the County Manager S1 stated, “The fighting that went on between the jurisdictions over access and availability to water, the consequence of not having sufficient water on economic development. One jurisdiction trying to constrain another's growth by controlling access to water... Then ultimately a crisis occurs where it's so bad for everybody that they just had to work together.” (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017). A disaster occurrence is identified in the literature as a precondition for regional collaboration and serves as a catalyst for change in how services are delivered at the local government level (Cigler, 1999).

Fiscal Stress. A few (2 of the 7) of the respondents from the local government managers noted that fiscal stress was a factor in pursuing regional collaborations. Only two of the seven managers specifically identified fiscal pressure or stress as a reason to engage in regional collaborations. The County Manager S1 stated, “For me, why do we do the collaboration is really because almost everything we do, either requires resources that are beyond the capability of any individual entity, and/or the impact or the benefit is beyond just the boundaries of any one of those parties” (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017). The County manager S1 expressed the concept that almost all government service delivery requires resources that are scarce and that local governments must prioritize resources to accomplish the goals of the community.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

In the data analysis, only one local government manager identified the recession as a catalyst for change for the City to engage in regional collaborations. The City Manager S7 manager stated, “and particularly the recession, and maybe it's not a coincidence that things began to change just as the recession was coming in. Because I'm telling you that about 10 years ago is when I began to notice the change. That was a change in leadership on the management side, but it was also a change in financial situations for everybody, as well, too. Where (the locality), in the past, could absolutely afford to be completely independent, 10 years ago that began to change. Our ability to pay for whatever we want, not worry about bills. (The Locality) was financial, very, very secure prior to real estate values essentially stopping and growing” (City Manager Subject 7, Interview, October, 2017). A study by Chen and Thurmaier (2009), found that “fiscal condition of local government units is a much less important reason for creating an interlocal agreement.” Local government managers did not consistently identify fiscal stress as a reason for engaging in regional collaborations and this finding is consistent with the literature.

Early and Continued Support by Elected Officials. Local government managers understood the need for elected officials to develop a vision for the governing body to achieve the goals of the community. For local government managers to engage in regional collaborations, elected officials must demonstrate a value in regional collaboration and have a vision for working regionally. Cigler, (1999), identifies early and continued support of the elected officials as a precondition for regional collaboration. The findings from the data analysis support the literature and consider the method or mechanism in which the support is communicated to the local government manager. How this vision was communicated or not

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

communicated provided the local government managers with direction on whether to seek out intergovernmental projects or to focus internally within the jurisdictional boundaries.

During the interviews, the managers were asked about how the governing body had communicated or not communicated the goals of the local government in respect to regional collaboration. Both formal goal setting such as strategic planning initiatives and informal goal setting such as direct discussions discerned the strategic vision and support for locality initiatives. County manager S1 was asked if the Board communicated a vision for regional collaboration directly through the County's strategic plan. The county manager S1 stated,

“Well I think you'll find in the strategic plan any number of examples where whether it's expressly stated or not, there's a very big emphasis on regional cooperation ...The board sets the policy direction and policy direction, for a lot of our policy direction, revolves around the need to grow from an economic perspective. I think it's appropriate and prudent for them to not necessarily say exactly how that'd be done. If they were going to tell us exactly what to do they probably wouldn't need me (County manager Subject 1, Interview, September 2017).

The use of a formal strategic planning document was an important symbol and communication tool for the manager and gave direction from the elected officials to engage in regional collaboration. As noted by the manager, the exact means to achieve the goals of the governing body was not necessary; simply the overarching goal was needed.

Managers identified goal setting and direction as an informal process between the manager and the governing body. When the researcher asked the City Manager S5 what

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

factors influenced his decision to pursue regional collaborations, the City manager S5 stated,

“The other would be the political side of it, and typically here, what I would end up doing is just talking with the council members and the mayor, kind of one-on-one, just to gauge the sense of, “If we went down this path, here are things I see as benefits, and potential limitations of it,” and kind of feel them out about where they are politically on it. I have the advantage that right now, I have council that is very open to those kind of partnerships, and don't bring any baggage to it”
(City Manager Subject 5, Interview, October, 2017).

This quote supports the proposition that early and continued support from elected officials’ can be communicated informally among the members of the governing body.

The manager utilized informal communication mechanisms to approach the members of governing body individually and understood that these types of collaborative agreements were important to the governing body and to the individual members. City Manager S7 also cited the idea of informal communication of governing body goals for regional collaboration:

“ So, we had three new members of council, from the time I was hired up until the Wood Haven decision. And that was a fairly significant change for (the city). (A city councilmember) being on there, who was a big proponent of regionalism, and not being so insular, isolated, as the (locality). (A city councilmember), who was here when I was hired, had become mayor. Much more open to working together regionally. (A city councilmember), who was elected shortly after I got hired, still very (locality) oriented, but willing and wanting to work, seeing the advantage of

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

working regionally. We had that change” (City Manager Subject 7, Interview, November, 2017).

As noted by Lackey et al, absent the support of elected officials, there is no possibility of local government cooperation. Managers reported instances in which the governing body did not support a regional vision, either formally or informally, which deterred the manager from pursuing regional projects with other local governments. For example, County Manager S4 said, “I think it was just there was no push by the elected officials to have them be broader in their collaborative work” (County Manager Subject 4, Interview, November, 2017). This quote supports the idea that for this local government, regional collaboration, and working cooperatively with other jurisdictions was not a priority. Further, City manager S6 stated, “because if they’re not on board with something and approving something out in the end, there’s no need for us to work on it” (City Manager Subject 6, Interview, October 2017). For local government managers to consider engagement with other localities in a regional project, the elected governing body must demonstrate a vision for working regionally. A vision for regional collaboration can be demonstrated through formal and informal communication with the manager.

State Influence and Outside Agency Influence. All seven managers identified either the State or an outside agency that served a role in regional collaboration. State statutes, which give local governments the authority to enter into interlocal agreements or regional authorities, were identified as mechanisms that facilitated regional collaboration. County Manager S1 described the ways in which state statutes had given the local governments the ability to form regional authorities for the purposes of water infrastructure, economic development and solid waste management. County Manager S1 stated, “we work at regional level on many different

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

fronts, resource authority, solid waste authority, regional industrial facilities authority” (County Manager Subject 1, September 2017). “Initially I kind of said this a bureaucratic thing...but I was kind of glad to see Richmond...and it built some good will with them”

Local government managers identified the Economic Development Partnership as a regional facilitating governance structure that supported individual local governments’ efforts in regional collaboration. City Manager S1 stated,

“I mean they're key here, because the way we positioned ourselves, and this was just how the groups just have worked it out, is in most instances, they're our lead provider, so they're the ones that bring prospects to the community... Again, to me, that's the strength of the partnership here and what Beth brings to the table. She's not just waiting for instructions from the partners, she's actually leading the conversation in a lot of ways, which has been a good thing.” (City Manager Subject 1, Interview, October, 2017).

The influence of the Partnership in the region was viewed as a positive factor that encouraged regional collaborations for the purpose of economic development. City manager S3 stated, “the executive director was certainly a part of that (selling the idea to Council)” (City Manager Subject 3, Interview, November, 2018). County manager Subject 2 stated:

“The City Manager and I, driving back and forth to ... Actually driving back and forth to Partnership meetings in the study region ... We had the conversation about, "Hey, why don't we enter into a joint revenue sharing agreement" at about the same time that what (Partnership) is working on at the Regional Industrial Facilities Authority over at Western ... the Partnership was, was ... had finally ... That authority had some traction. They were starting the evaluation process at

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

that time to identify the piece of property there at Fairlane, so then we just started talking to her and kind of figured out what they had done and then started looking at what we would need to do, and found out we were going to have to get a different process, and it's just taken that long” (County manager Subject 2, Interview, October, 2017)

Local government managers identified the Partnership as a facilitator of individual projects for economic development. County manager S3 stated “and it was through some of that brokering of the Partnership that ended up allowing us to actually have that project” (County Manager Subject 3, Interview, October, 2017).

One locality did not identify direct benefits from the Partnership but did identify indirect benefits as being a member of the Partnership. County Manager 4 stated, ““I’m not sure there’s been too much benefit other than the indirectly just the association with that group... just that association does elevate the County’s status” (County Manager 4, Interview, November, 2017). It is interesting to note that the community, identified as low on regional involvement and a single subarea, did not see the Partnership as a facilitating regional entity. Instead, they viewed the partnership as a way to promote their individual county through the association with the Partnership.

The Foundation, a nonprofit organization, is viewed as a regional collaboration facilitator in the County B/City B subarea. The County B administrator stated, “The other partner that we have is a local foundation, The Foundation. It was created for the sale of a hospital. That's just across the interstate here now, but it was ... It was ... I think if the city and the county ... If they see us working together, and the city and the county are investing jointly in a project, we'll then be able to leverage some of their money” (County B manager, Interview,

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

September, 2017). Similar to the responses from the elected officials in the City B and County B subarea, the Foundation is viewed as a facilitating structure for regional collaboration and one of the factors that influence both the managers' and elected officials' decision to engage in regional collaborations.

State Influence and outside agency influence is identified in the literature as a precondition or factor that influences regional collaboration. From Cigler's preconditions, support capacity building structures positively influence regional collaboration by providing incentives or authority for local governments to engage in regional collaboration. Feiock identifies political institutions as mechanisms to support intergovernmental agreements (Feiock, 2007). The a priori code of state influence and outside agency influence reflects the supportive nature, as viewed by the local government managers, of the political institutions that enable interlocal cooperation.

Self-Interest. Similar to the elected officials, managers did not specifically state that regional projects were pursued in their own self-interest but did state there was a necessary jurisdictional interest in seeking out these collaborative projects. This reflects the concept that projects that benefited the local government inherently benefited the manager. Managers did not specifically state that regional collaboration was established for them to continue in their position, to build a larger bureaucracy, or to gain prestige and status directly to the interviewer. While the data did not show that managers engaged in regional collaboration in self-interest, it is understood that if managers do not carry out the policy decisions by the elected officials, they will be terminated.

Similar to the elected officials, local government managers reported that for them to present a regional project for consideration and approval by the governing body, there needs to

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

be an identified jurisdictional benefit. Jurisdictional benefit or interest was a concept not identified as a factor influencing the decision on the part of the manager for engagement in regional collaboration during the literature review as an a priori code. The concept of jurisdictional benefit is not simply a benefit from regional collaboration; it is an expression of thought by the manager and the elected official that there is jurisdictional self-interest in all of these cooperative arrangements.

The literature considers jurisdictional advantage in discussions on economic development from a perspective of the assets a locality brings to an economic development discussion. In other words, jurisdictional advantage is about the strengths of a jurisdiction. For economic development purposes, all of the highly engaged localities are working together to build regional advantages to entice businesses to relocate and invest in their communities. Jurisdictional advantage is different from jurisdictional benefit or interest in that the decision to engage in a regional collaboration depends on a project's benefits for the local government. This study specifically identifies this concept in the context of the interviews and the common theme that was noted was how managers understand what is gained by the jurisdiction as opposed to the members participating in the collaboration.

All seven managers identified the need to evaluate any regional collaboration in terms of jurisdictional benefit. County Manager S1 stated, "It's much more what's right for my jurisdiction kind of discussion" (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017). City Manager S7 stated, "I think there is some long-term benefit to the city, of being part of it, I truly do. I wouldn't have sold it if I didn't think so" (City Manager Subject 6, Interview, October, 2017). City Manager S5 explained the rationale when evaluating projects for the benefit of the jurisdiction:

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

“I mean for me, I'm going to evaluate it from both the economic benefits side of it, and it may not always be an economic initiative, may come so maybe I shouldn't say economic, I'm going to say kind of from the administrative side of it, I guess. I'm going to look at it and evaluate if it is an economic program, what would be the economic benefits of us participating, if it's some sort of joint regulatory kind of thing, what would the benefit be from an administrative standpoint? How will it help us, as a government, accomplish our objectives, or our goals, that kind of thing, that's going to be one calculus that I'll do. (City Manager Subject 5, October, 2017).

In the region subarea, the researcher asked the question “How do you explain to citizens that you are using their tax dollars for a project that is not within your jurisdictional boundaries?” The responses from the local government managers in the region subarea reflected the concept that the investment would ultimately benefit the individual jurisdiction or there is a jurisdictional interest in investing in areas outside of the jurisdictions borders. County Manager S1 also expanded on the concept of jurisdictional benefit:

“ First of all, we just don't do that out of the goodness of our hearts. If you're going to do something like this there has to be a presumed return on investment to your citizens., we also have a business sense about us because we are investing local resources, citizens resources into things that we would expect to result in something. So, to the extent that we would invest there, we'd make sure that there is a sufficient return on investment that we could demonstrate to our citizens and that will obviously be the argument for that.” (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017).

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

In contrast, local government managers from other subareas that were identified as low regional involvement explained how jurisdictional benefit played a part in their decision not to engage in a particular regional project. County Manager S4 stated, “there was no direct benefit for us... But I don't think our board ever really considered any of those things. They were just, "Nope, we're doing our own." And then some of it conversation I had with them about, "Well you can still" They seemed to say that there was no direct benefit for us rather than a return on investment that could be made in other areas.” (County Manager Subject 4, Interview, November, 2017). County Manager S3 stated, “it takes money to play and so should we invest within the borders of the county or should we invest outside the border of the county” (County Manager Subject 3, Interview, October, 2017).

Jurisdictional benefit was identified in a specific interview with a locality that was identified as highly involved in regional projects on the continuum. When asked about jurisdictional interest and a particular project that had not come to fruition, the manager stated, “It does not yet make financial sense for us to join the water authority, because our system works so well. There's just not a need for us to do that. We would not see an increased level of customer service by joining” (City Manager Subject 6, Interview, November, 2017). This interview response revealed that even though the community is highly engaged in regional projects, the city did not pursue a particular project because there was not a jurisdictional benefit.

Jurisdictional benefit was defined from the interview with managers as intangible benefits such as fulfilling a goal of the governing body. When asked to discuss a regional project, the high regional involvement subareas described the Woodhaven project as a priority to be implemented for the purposes of realizing regional collaboration. For example, in the region subarea, City Manager S7 responded that “it was a big deal for us to decide to do this” and it was

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

a priority of the City council (City Manager Subject 7, Interview, November 2017). City Manager S5 stated when asked if the project was a priority, “So yeah, for the council here it was definitely in the forefront of their mind” (City Manager Subject 5, Interview, October, 2017). In response to the question of regional projects as a priority, the County manager S1 stated, “more typical that through these various regional entities that we engage with, we produce things that we think are in keeping with what our jurisdictions are interested in, our elected officials are interested in” (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017). For the Regional subarea, the managers understood that regional collaboration was a priority for the Board and for the communities involved. This understanding of the priority facilitated discussions at the manager level to engage in regional collaboration and the managers could identify a specific project that fulfilled a jurisdictional interest of the governing body.

In contrast, the subareas of County C and County D demonstrated a low regional involvement on the continuum and a lack of shared vision or early and continued support for regional projects at the governing body level. For example, County manager S3 stated, “Well one of the things was that we ended up having our plates full with the projects that we already had going. It wasn't like that we had been sitting over here and that there was no activity... it's not that were anti (regional) but we're being blessed so much that we've got to take care of our stuff at home” (County Manager Subject 3, Interview, October, 2017). This response reflects the manager's focus on projects within the jurisdiction as opposed to regional projects. When asked why the county did not participate in the Woodhaven economic development project, the county manager S4 stated, “we have our own 550 acre business park” (County Manager Subject 4, Interview, November, 2017). This response reflected the manager's view that the priority for the local government was a business park located within the jurisdiction's borders and that the

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

jurisdictional interest or benefit was understood to be fulfilled by focusing on projects within the county's borders.

Understanding the factor of jurisdictional benefit is important to the study of regional collaboration because the concept of jurisdictional benefit had been identified by both elected officials and managers as an important factor that influences their decision to engage in regional collaborations. Managers understood jurisdictional benefit as a return on investment or as a mechanism to accomplish established goals. On the other hand, managers recognized when there was not a jurisdictional benefit or when resources were needed within the jurisdictional borders. Zeemering (2008) notes elected officials' jurisdictional self-interest needs further investigation as it relates to metropolitan cooperation. This study suggests that research into the concept of jurisdictional benefit from the perspective of both the manager and the elected official and the connection to self-interest is needed. Further discussion will be provided in Chapter 5.

Perceptions of Benefits and Barriers to Regional Collaboration

Their perceptions of benefits of and barriers to regional collaboration impact managers' decisions to engage in regional collaboration. Managers are driven by internal values and beliefs in addition to their perceptions of the external environments. The responses to the question of why consider regional collaborations are discussed in the findings section below and are identified as benefits and barriers.

Perceptions of Benefits of Regional Collaboration. Local government managers identified a number of benefits to engaging in regional collaborations with other jurisdictions. Managers identified shared risk as a benefit. County Manager S1 stated, "There's always risk in things like this. So you share the risk, right? 10 million dollars is a lot of money and we're sharing that risk" (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017). Shared risk was

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

also associated with shared rewards. City Manager S1 stated, “There's some logical sense to us sharing the risk and there's also some logic to us sharing the reward. When we do it together, not only do we share the expense of it but we share the future revenues off of that” (City Manager Subject 1, Interview, October, 2017). Consistent with the literature, shared risks, and rewards are perceived benefits to engagement in regional collaboration.

The ability to share resources, physical or monetary, was viewed as a benefit to regional collaboration. For two subareas, Regional subarea and the County B/City B subarea, sharing of physical resources such as land and sharing of monetary resources was a major factor in considering a regional collaboration. For example, City Manager S1 stated when asked about shared resources as a benefit to regional collaboration,

“but it is a really good example of one of those things that grew out of a necessity, which was the city, for us, the City, for economic development. We don't have any land. There's just physically no land here, it's all pretty much built out, and we've got some redevelopment going on, but most of our redevelopment is occurring for residential or office type uses, which are industrial. Just can't compete with, in terms of the scale of what's needed. So for us, it was a necessity of, “We don't have any land to actually continue to offer product for economic development purposes.” For City C, same thing, no land available. County A, and though they're not a part of this particular project, County C and some of the other counties, of course, are rich in land, but they don't have any money to actually make any of these things happen, so it gave us an opportunity, the authority did, to where we could come in with the financial resources that we had and in effect, buy into the land availability that was in County A”

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

City Manager S1 stated, “Of course, then the shared expenditures with the shared revenues makes it so that everybody's equally contributing and equally benefiting from, and so you don't have to worry about that issue completely with your own kind of elected officials, because the benefit's there and spelled out, so good program, good way to address some things that Virginia's interesting form of government kind of necessitates” (City Manager Subject 1, Interview, October, 2017). From the Regional subarea, the three managers were consistent in their understanding of the benefits of engaging in regional collaboration. One of the city managers in the Regional subarea expanded the view of short term shared resources and risks and identified long term gains associated with regional projects. The City Manager S3 stated, “It's a long-term investment for which we expect a return. But it's also an investment in the region...So, we're pretty much each equal partners, in terms of investment” (City Manager S3, Interview, November, 2017). For the managers in the Regional Subarea, shared risks and rewards, shared resources including land and money, and long term shared investment returns were benefits to regional collaboration. In the County B/City B Subarea, the managers identified similar benefits achieved from the economic development interlocal revenue sharing agreements. City Manager S2 stated, “We share whatever we agreed on in the agreement. Theoretically 50/50. And then when we land the project and something happens there, we share 50/50 on the revenue” (City Manager Subject 2, Interview, November, 2017).

Local government managers identified a factor that influences regional collaboration as the equitable sharing of resources and risks of a particular project. Chen and Thurmaier (2009) found in a study of local government managers that a significant factor for successful collaborations was the managers' perception of equitable sharing of benefits. Shared resources

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

and risks, as viewed by the local government manager, are identified as a benefit from successful regional collaboration.

Perceptions of Barriers to Regional Collaboration. Managers' perceptions of barriers to regional collaboration were identified as a priori codes in the development of the semi-structured interviews. The code was established to identify factors that were found in the literature including risks of partners pulling out of a project, risk of unequal sharing of resources including physical or monetary resources. It is interesting to note and significant to address that the managers specifically identified one factor as a main barrier: the elected officials. In reference to the a priori code for the managers' responses, early and continued support from elected officials was a strong factor that influenced a local government managers' decision to engage in regional collaboration. Elected officials' influence on a local government managers' decision-making process is critical. If the governing body has not set clear expectations for regional cooperation, the manager will focus on jurisdictional projects only. As in the case of the County D subarea, elected officials have not given the manager direction to engage in regional collaboration and the elected officials interviewed did not see regional cooperation as a priority therefore, the County D subarea reflects low on the regional involvement continuum. Similarly, in the County C subarea, elected officials' have supported the appropriation of financial resources for projects within the jurisdictional boundaries and have given the local government manager direction to facilitate internal (within the jurisdiction) economic development projects

Select a priori codes and emergent codes are viewed as factors that are considered both benefits and barriers and factors that influence managers' decisions to engage in regional collaboration. As noted above, the precondition of early and continued support by elected officials is identified as a precondition and a factor that influences regional collaboration. It is

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

also identified as a barrier to regional collaboration as stated above; without elected official support, regional collaboration will not be pursued. Perceived equality in the sharing of resources and risks is a benefit of regional collaboration and a factor that can serve as facilitator to engage in regional collaboration. The next section will expand on the factors influencing local government managers' decision to pursue regional collaboration through the analysis of emergent codes from the interviews with local government managers.

Emergent Codes

The data analysis resulted in two emergent codes or themes identified during the interviews of the local government managers. These themes were not noted as factors from the literature during the development of the a priori codes or the semi-structured interviews. The emergent codes are presented below and include managers as the policy entrepreneur and manager relationships, communication, and trust. The section below will detail the findings from the interviews for the emergent codes.

Manager as the Policy Entrepreneur. A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the concept of manager initiation of discussions on projects for regional collaboration. Managers initiate and develop the idea for regional collaboration and present these recommendations to the elected officials for consideration. County manager S2 stated, "So it wasn't a Board ... I took the concept back to my Board" (County Manager Subject 2, Interview, October, 2017). In addition, the county manager S1 stated, "it's not typical though for elected officials to get together and tell us do something." City Manager S5 stated, "it's really the administrators that do that" (City Manager Subject 5, Interview, October, 2017). A common theme among managers was that it was at the manager level that initial discussions about regional collaborations began. County Manager S2 stated, "the manager and I drive back and

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

forth to Partnership meetings and we had a conversation about “Hey why don’t we enter into a joint revenue sharing agreement? so it wasn’t the Board, I took the concept back to my Board”(County Manager Subject 2, Interview, October, 2017). In an environment in which elected governing bodies had communicated direction for the manager to engage in regional collaborations, managers took the initiative to discuss ideas about how individuals could work together to accomplish both jurisdictional and regional goals.

This finding supports the elected officials’ perception of the manager as the policy entrepreneur. The elected officials identified the directive of the governing body for the manager to initiate projects as a key factor for engaging in regional collaboration. County Manager S3 stated, “but the truth is in every community it’s the County Administrator, the City Manager that is facilitating those pieces” (County Manager Subject 3, Interview, November, 2017).

Local government managers in communities with high levels of involvement in regional collaboration understood this as a responsibility from the governing body. County Manager S1 stated that the elected officials “ base their actions on the recommendations of their respective manager” (County Manager Subject 1, Interview, September, 2017).

County Manager S1 explained the process in more detail by saying,

“We put the project together and the proposal and then we carry it to the board and say in furtherance of the economic development agenda of our respective regions we think this makes logical sense and there's a significant return on investment for us. Then we present them the details of that and they make a decision as to whether or not it's something the jurisdictions will engage in together, right and whether will each individual jurisdiction support it.”

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

The local government manager as the policy entrepreneur is an important factor that influences engagement in regional collaboration coupled with the elected officials' understanding that the local government manager is responsible for initiation and identification of regional projects. As stated by Schneider and Teskes (1992),

“In local governments, political entrepreneurs can be high-level unelected leaders, such as city managers; elected politicians, such as mayors or members of city councils; leaders of established interest groups; or creators of new groups. These political entrepreneurs develop new and innovative policies and galvanize otherwise difficult-to-organize, dispersed citizens to support their policies.”

This finding is significant and contributes to the literature in regard to the role of the local government manager as viewed by both the manager and the elected official. Further discussion on this finding in Chapter 5 will be provided.

Manager Relationships, Communication, and Trust. All seven managers identified strong personal relationships, informal and formal communication and trust as important factors that influenced their decision to pursue regional collaboration. During the interviews, managers were asked about their relationships with other managers and how discussions about a particular regional project were initiated. For these managers, the governing body views their positions as the policy entrepreneur that implies conversations about regional projects begin with the manager. From the perspective of City Manager S7, “we just really worked well, we all knew each other, we respected each other, and all of a sudden we all trusted each other and could work well... a good group of managers in the area, who are all trying to work together better than, perhaps, our predecessors had” (City Manager Subject 7, Interview, November, 2017). The

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

development of personal relationships between managers positively influenced the likelihood of regional projects to come to fruition. As stated by the City Manager S7,

“I think a lot of pieces came together at the same time. I hesitate to say, but actually I do think that, the management changes that happened 10 years ago, That dynamic of those managers working together, and the political changes that happened with some elected officials changing, and bringing some new ideas in, of being willing to work together. Again, whether it's a third each credit in terms of that, or whether one group deserves a little bit more credit or not. But I think the management changes and the fact that the managers liked and respected and worked really well together, I think probably had a pretty big impact on where we are today, working as a region

Managers in the study were asked about the mechanisms for communication with other managers. Managers explained that they communicate both formally and informally. The formal methods of communication included attendance at formal meetings, events, or serving on a particular committee together. County manager S3 is the Chairperson of the Regional Industrial Facilities Authority that is the managing entity for the Woodhaven project in the City A subarea. This committee includes all of the managers in the regional subarea and provides for a formal communication mechanism.

Managers identified informal communication as one of the most important factors influencing engagement in regional collaboration. In the County B/City B subarea, managers reported informal communication as “windshield time.” County manager S2 stated that informal communication was “the manager and I drive back and forth...just driving back and forth to meetings... Two dudes riding down 220 to go to a meeting in the region had a conversation, so

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

... The City Manager and I just driving back and forth to meetings together” (County Manager Subject 2, Interview, September, 2017). City Manager Subject 2 stated, “It's just talking together. We ride ... we go to the City together for meetings so, it's like, why not talk ... and that's one of the things that I've learned kindly in the city. This didn't communicate over the years or everyone was just very postured and it was just ... and I'm not from here, I recognize the history, but I'm not tied to the history. The county manager is the same way” (City Manager Subject 6, Interview, October, 2017). Informal communication through an organized event unrelated to regional collaboration was identified as a way to engage in discussions with managers. County manager S3 stated, “we were riding the Amtrak together...and we were talking about transportation...and what can be done about that” (County Manager Subject 3, Interview, October, 2017). The managers took advantage of a formal event to engage in side discussions about regional transportation concerns and solutions.

Managers identified trust as a factor that influenced regional collaboration both positively and negatively. When asked about relationships and collaborative projects with a town within a jurisdiction's border, the manager stated that the lack of trust between the town officials and the County board of supervisors made it difficult to engage in cooperative projects. The manager stated, “I told him, you violated the county's trust with that and now my board doesn't want to have anything to do with you so you'll have to...I apologize for not really using any of my resources on the town because not only would my Board look unkindly on me for doing that... so the trust is gone” (County Manager Subject 4, Interview, November, 2017).

In the City A subarea, managers also responded to the question about trust in relation to how they could communicate a decision not to collaborate. When asked during the interviews how they would respond to another manager to a request that would not be in the jurisdiction's

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

interest, City Manager S5 stated, “I would interact with the manager as another manager and explain why it's a bad idea and I can't do that, and just relay that to him on all of those grounds, both from the benefit-cost standpoint as well as the political” (City Manager Subject 5, Interview, October, 2017). This quote is interesting because it reflects that the City Manager trusts the County Manager to relay difficult information and it reflects an understanding on the part of the City manager that he can openly communicate with the County Manager. This exemplifies that there is a level of trust between the two managers.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the results of the semi-structured interviews with the elected officials and local government managers in the seven localities in the study region. It reviewed the study area and the study participants and identified four unique subareas the researcher observed during the data collection process. The four unique subareas, as defined by the researchers, were identified based on proximity of jurisdictions, economic factors, political factors, and level of regional involvement. A level of regional involvement continuum was presented as a basis for understanding how the subareas differ in regard to regional collaboration.

This chapter reviewed the findings from the elected officials' and local government managers' interviews by providing an analysis of all a priori codes and the additional emergent codes that were identified during the data analysis process. For the elected officials' eight a priori codes were interpreted and presented and three emergent codes were interpreted and presented. For the local government managers, seven a priori codes were interpreted and presented and three emergent codes were interpreted and presented.

The next chapter will provide conclusions to the study and identify implications for scholars and practitioners.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore elected officials' and local government managers' perceptions of the factors that influence the decision-making process of a local government to engage in regional collaborations. This study utilized interviews of the two groups, elected officials and local government managers, to inform the following overarching research question: *How do perceptions of the internal and external benefits and barriers of regional collaboration influence elected officials' and appointed managers' decision to engage in regional collaborations?*

To obtain elected officials' and local government managers' perspectives two specific research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: *How do elected officials make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

Research Question 2: *How do local government managers make decisions about regional collaborations? What factors do they consider and how do they matter in the decision-making process to pursue regional collaborations?*

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section will provide the conclusions of the results of the findings from the study. The second section will describe the policy implications of the findings. In the final two sections, recommendations for elected officials and local government managers are reviewed and recommendations offered for academics including suggestions for future research.

Conclusion

This study sought to answer the “big question” in the context of local government management and policy choices: Why did they do that? From the beginning of this study, the question being investigated by the researcher was why elected officials and local government managers work with other local governments. Incorporating contrasting views from the New Public Management movement and the New Public Service movement, this study sought to compare and contrast the values of efficiency and self-interest with democracy and public interest. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) posit that public administration is not defined by either movement but as a blend of the two movements and the norms and values associated with each. This study is the result of that perspective; elected officials and local government managers respond to public problems by blending the perspectives and motivations of self-interest and public interest to achieve the best possible solution.

As discussed in the first chapter, to dissect decision making at the local government level for or against collaboration with other jurisdictions, there is a need to understand what motivates the policy makers, the elected officials, and the policy implementers, the local government managers. . This study answers the established research questions from the perspectives of elected officials and local government managers.

Factors Influencing Elected Officials. This study confirmed a number of factors influencing elected officials in their decision to pursue or not pursue regional collaboration identified in the literature. From Cigler’s framework, elected officials identified preconditions, or factors that facilitate the engagement of regional collaboration. A disaster occurrence such as natural disasters or significant loss of employment and population were examples cited by the elected officials and identified in the literature (Cigler, 1999). Citizen support for collaboration

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

was demonstrated by citizen-backed consolidation referendums (Cigler, 1999). Cigler notes the importance of state's providing supportive, capacity-building entities that serve to facilitate regional collaboration. The State of Virginia's influence was evidenced by examples of regulatory influence, incentive-based influence, and statutory authority granting localities the ability to enter into various forms of cooperative arrangements.

External or regional environmental factors influence elected officials decision to engage in regional collaboration. Morse (2005) and Warm (2011) identified factors that encourage local governments to engage in regional collaboration. The findings from the study confirm the literature and identified both formal and informal communication mechanisms among the localities elected officials that facilitated trust and built relationships among elected officials that served as a conduit for discussions about regional solutions to multi-jurisdictional problems. Elected officials' perceptions of benefits and barriers for pursuing regional collaboration were identified through the interviews and were consistent with the literature with regard to their influence on regional projects. The benefits from regional collaboration Benton (2013) identified included the ability to share costs, achieve economies of scale, and maintain or improve the level of service provided. This study confirmed the literature in relation to the benefits of regional collaboration.

Finally, localities representing highly engaged communities on the collaboration continuum reflected the elected officials' shared values and norms on the benefits of providing public services collaboratively. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015, 2011, 2000), present a set of norms and practices that encompass the concept of the New Public Service (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015) reflecting democracy and citizen engagement as opposed to the New Public Management movement and its focus on efficiency and self-interest. . The set of norms and

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

practices under the New Public Service considers and incorporates the public choice perspectives from Ostrom in relation to collective action. This study demonstrates that in a collective setting other norms and values further engagement in regional collaboration. This finding, shared norms and values, was significant and warrants further study because little research has been conducted on the norms and values of elected officials at the local government level.

Internal, locality-specific, organizational factors influenced elected officials' decision to engage in regional collaboration. Elected officials identified the local government manager as the policy entrepreneur responsible for implementing and initiating the regional projects. Roberts and King (1991) characterized the policy entrepreneur as the one who provides the recommendations and then implements those recommendations the politicians approve. This study furthers the research in regard to the policy entrepreneur in particular at the local government level. The topic of council-manager relationships is extensive throughout the public administration literature and this study contributes to the understanding of this form of government and the relationship between the manager and the local governing body.

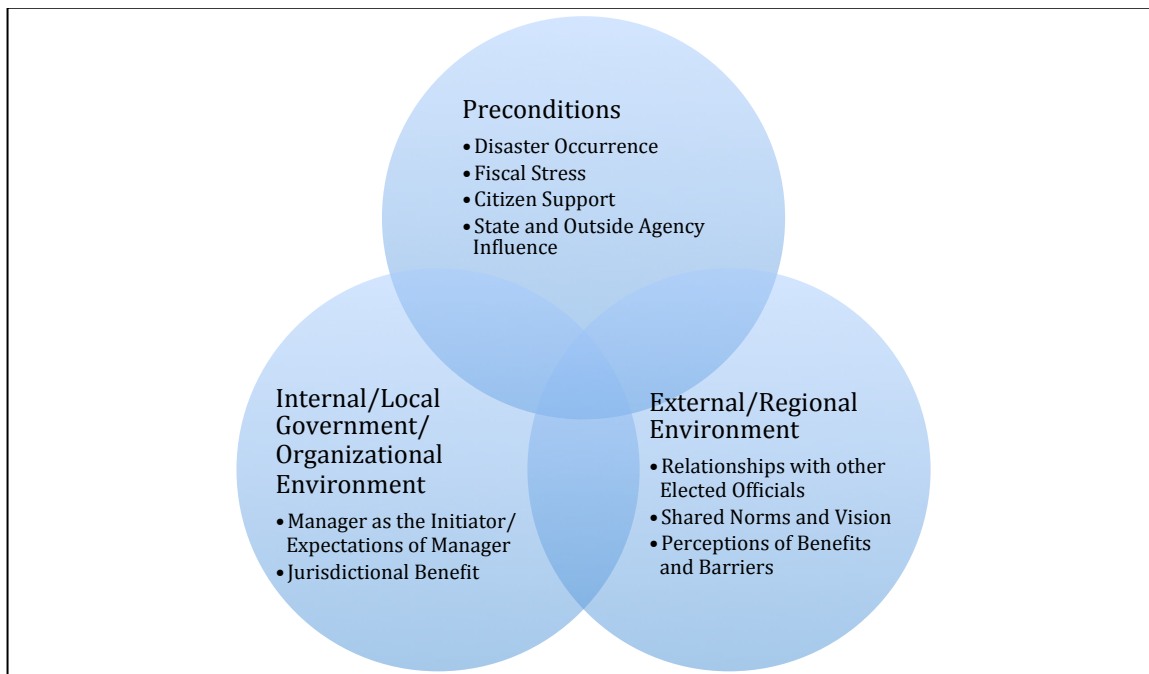
Interviews revealed the connection between self-interest and jurisdictional interest. Elected officials communicated that for any regional project to succeed there would need to be a jurisdictional benefit that inherently serves as a self-interest benefit. Ostrom and Ostrom (1971) provide insight as to the connection between individual self-interest and collective action. When looking at the individual level of decision-making, self-interest has been a key assumption in public decision-making (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). If individuals are maximizing their self-interest, then there is no reason for collaboration. However, local governments are collaborating all the time. From this study, elected officials and managers are working in ways that will secure their position in the future even though neither group specifically stated this. In a collective-

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

action setting, individuals will collectively work together and this study found that elected officials and local government managers enter into collection action arrangements in the form of regional collaborations to benefit their jurisdictions and inherently their self-interest.

Figure 3 below provides a graphical depiction of the factors as viewed by the elected official.

Figure 3 Factors Influencing Elected Officials' Decision to Engage in Regional Collaboration



Factors Influencing Local Government Managers. This study found a number of factors that influenced local government managers' decision to engage in regional collaboration. Similar to the elected officials, preconditions, the external, regional environment, and the internal, local government, organization environment were categories of factors influencing the local government managers' decision to engage regionally.

Local government managers identified preconditions that served as precursors for their decision to engage regionally. Similar to the elected officials and consistent with Cigler's

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

framework, a disaster occurrence cited by local government managers included a significant drought, loss of business and population. Fiscal stress as a result of the recession was identified as a factor that precipitated a regional project. Again, state and outside agencies such as the Foundation or the Partnership served as facilitator of regional discussions. Finally, a significant factor identified by the local government managers was the early and continued support of elected officials.

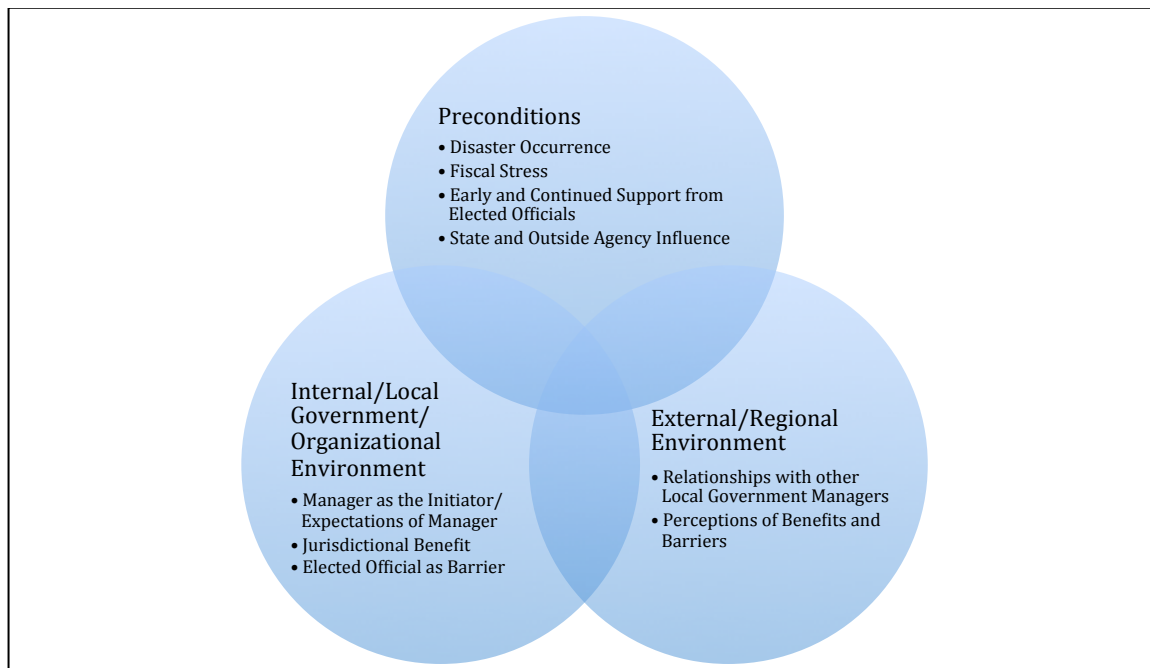
The external, regional environment served to facilitate regional discussions by the managers in the study region. Manager relationships including personal relationships served as a significant factor in building trust and allowing for discussion between managers on regional projects. Consistent with the literature, local government managers identified a variety of shared considerations as benefits for regional collaboration and significantly, identified the elected official as the one barrier.

The internal, local-government specific, organization environment consists of those factors internal to the locality, within the jurisdictions' boundaries, that influence regional collaboration. Local government managers stated that for any regional project there would need to be a jurisdictional benefit that inherently benefits the manager in their role as bureaucrat and employee. Nalbandian (2005) refers to local government managers and their role in bridging the gap between administrative sustainability and political acceptability. The local government managers in this study seek to bridge that gap through their role as the policy entrepreneur. Local government managers recognized their role as the initiator or policy entrepreneur in these types of collaborations and also recognized their role as the initiator of projects that would be politically acceptable. This recognition connects them to the elected officials by developing shared expectations of job performance and job deliverables. Finally, internally, elected officials

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

influence the decision to engage in regional collaboration significantly as a barrier to cooperation. Local government managers understand that elected officials are the primary barriers to regional collaboration and recognize that collaborations must be politically acceptable to be successful.

Figure 4: Factors Influencing Local Government Managers' Decision to Pursue Regional Collaborations

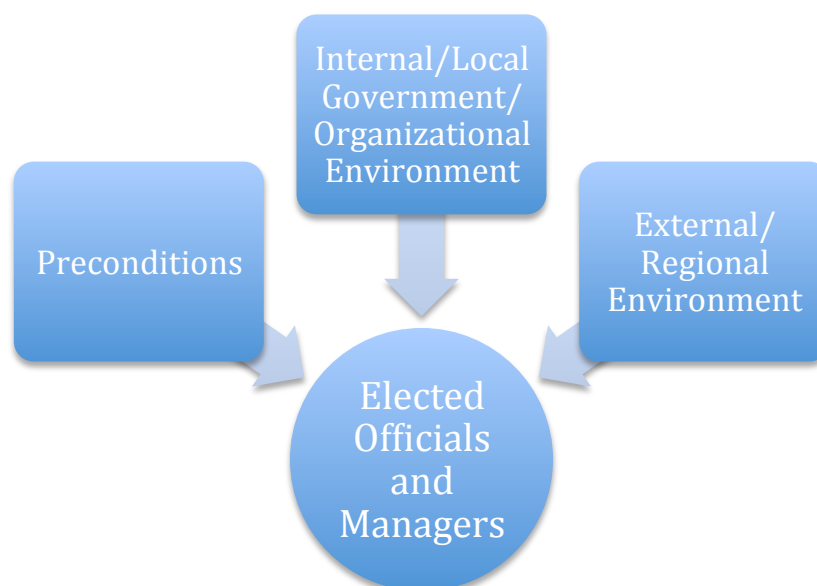


Factors influencing regional collaboration. Synthesizing the findings for both the elected official and the local government manager provides a broad perspective of regional collaboration, at the local government level, and the factors influencing the decision makers in these arrangements. Overall, preconditions or events that happen with significant impact lead to local governments seeking out ways to accomplish their goals in different ways. Regional collaboration was found to be a solution to the significant disasters, fiscal stress, and citizen

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

“push” for cooperation in many of the jurisdictions in the study. A common theme that developed from both the elected officials and managers was the influence of the external/regional environment and it is important to understand the influence of relationships with similarly positioned persons in other localities (elected official to elected official, manager to manager, etc.) The finding of shared values and norms among elected officials was an important factor for both the elected officials and the local government managers. Shared values and norms for regional collaboration at the elected official level served as a significant factor for local government managers because they identified early and continued support from elected officials as an influencing condition. Finally, the internal, local government specific, organization environment was a significant category for the findings of the study. Within the jurisdiction’s borders, elected officials and local government managers identified a jurisdictional benefit coupled with inherent self-interest as an important factor for collaboration. The connection between elected officials and managers in regard to the manager’s role of initiator also served as a significant, connected factor for regional collaboration. Figure 3 depicts a graphical representation of the factors influencing regional collaboration at the local government level.

Figure 5 Factors Influencing Regional Collaboration



Discussion

The next section provides an overview of the importance and significance of this study in both the academic and practice areas of public administration. The New Public Service informed the overall context for which the study was developed and this study contributes to the literature under this broad concept of public administration. This study contributes to the scholarship on regional collaboration and interlocal agreements by considering three areas of importance and significance, the influence of the elected official, the expectation of the elected officials as to the manager's role as the policy entrepreneur and the development of shared values and norms among elected officials.

The New Public Service. The New Public Service provides a framework for considering the core values of public service and administration and served as a lens for the development of this study. Developed by Denhardt and Denhardt (2015), the New Public Service is characterized by seven core principles: serve citizens, not customers; seek the public interest; value citizenship and public service above entrepreneurship; think strategically, act

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

democratically; recognize that accountability isn't simple; serve, rather than steer; value people, not just productivity. The framework provides for the blending of both the New Public Management literature and the New Public Service framework by recognizing both self-interest and public interest perspectives in public administration. From this study of elected officials and local government managers, evidence was found during the data collection process that both study groups demonstrated the principles of the New Public Service. Elected officials demonstrated a desire to achieve citizen priorities such as a good quality of life through quality economic development projects. Elected officials recognized citizen concerns for effective and efficient government services through the use of citizen-backed consolidation referendums and those elected officials have worked diligently to partner and collaborate across jurisdictional boundaries. The norms and shared values among elected officials demonstrated a commitment to working in the public interest and public service. Local government managers stated that elected officials established the priorities for the local government and the manager was held accountable for achieving those priorities. Service to the public in the form of regional collaboration, in this study, was a key principle that was demonstrated throughout the interviews with both elected officials and local government managers.

The findings of this study demonstrated both efficiency and effectiveness as factors considered during the decision-making process to engage in regional collaboration and demonstrated the function of regional collaboration to further the public interest. Elected officials and local government managers recognized the benefits to regional collaboration including increased efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public services, achieving economies of scale, sharing monetary and non-monetary resources and shared investment in large scale projects. On the other hand, elected officials and local government managers

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

recognized the role of the individual, norms and shared values, which impacted the decision-making process to engage in regional collaboration. This study investigated these perspectives in the delivery of public services through the use of regional collaborations.

Contributing to the work of Denhardt and Denhardt and others who have found their place in the New Public Service discussion, this study furthers the discussion and recognizes the perspectives of elected officials and local government managers. Studies within the New Public Service framework have focused on citizen participation in the public sector; focusing on one of the core values of the framework. Other scholars, such as Delabbio and Zeemering (2013), have contributed to the discussion of the public interest, one of the core values, in a study of County cooperation and the values that shape county engagement in interlocal agreements.

The Influence of the Elected Official. This study found that the influence of the elected official is broad and extensive in the engagement of regional collaboration and is reflected in three roles: the bridge builder, the barrier, and expectation setter. The influence was demonstrated outside of the organization and within the organization starting with the local government manager and permeating vertically to the front line employees. The influence of the elected official cannot be overstated in this area of local government service delivery.

Elected officials demonstrated public leadership qualities in the engagement of regional collaborations by exemplifying the characteristics of “bridge builder”. Elected officials represented “bridge builders” in the development of regional collaborations and demonstrated public leadership in regional collaborations. Crosby and Bryson (2015) analyzed this type of relationship building noting that public leadership is about public leaders taking collective action in pursuit of the common good. Public leaders exercise power on behalf of the public inside and outside their organizations, which is especially important as public managers work across

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

organizational and sector boundaries (Crosby and Bryson, 2015). From the highly-engaged communities, elected officials communicated the need to build relationships with neighboring jurisdictions' elected officials and recognized the importance of those relationships in the success of regional collaboration. These relationships, fostered and nurtured reciprocally, served to build trust, which is a key factor needed in the success of these agreements.

Elected officials can be considered sponsors of regional collaboration. Crosby, Hart and Torfing (2016), recognized a leader's role in innovation in the public sphere and identified topologies of roles leaders can assume in collaboration including sponsors, champions, catalysts and implementers. Sponsors are defined as those actors that have political authority and can appropriate resources for collaboration (Crosby, et. al, 2016). Elected officials, as sponsors of regional collaboration, use their position to benefit both the local government and themselves. Zeemering (2008) recognized the role of the elected officials in identifying opportunities for interlocal cooperation. Elected officials, like city managers, use intergovernmental communication networks to identify partnerships. In another study of interlocal cooperation, Zeemering (2015) interviewed elected officials to obtain their concerns on interlocal cooperation. Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, a better understanding of those concerns were developed. Elected officials were found to be jurisdictional based and Zeemering's findings concur with the findings of this study in terms of intergovernmental communication and jurisdictional interest. This study contributes to the scholarship on public leadership and collaboration by demonstrating the role of the elected official in regional collaboration.

The local government managers viewed elected officials as the "barrier" and the single most important factor for the success or failure of a regional collaboration. Local government

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

managers recognized regional projects would fail or not gain traction without the support of elected officials and cited elected officials as the single barrier to regional collaboration. Cigler (1999), identified early and continued support from elected officials as a factor that influenced the success of regional collaborations. This study found confirmation of this factor in the engagement of regional collaboration. In addition, this study supports Nalbandian's framework of political acceptability and administrative sustainability by identifying how elected officials influence local government managers' decision to engage in or initiate regional collaborations.

Elected officials set expectations of the local government manager in the administration of the local government organization. This function or responsibility establishes the culture of the organization and sets the tone for the entire organization. Elected officials in highly engaged communities established clear expectations for the manager during the recruitment and hiring process that collaboration was an important part of their duties. Managers identified an important factor for engagement in regional collaboration was early and continued support from elected officials. The influence of the elected official cannot be dismissed and represented a significant factor that mattered most in the decision for managers to pursue regional collaboration.

Regional collaboration, in this study, was a mechanism or tool to achieve the public interest by elected officials. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) identify a core characteristic of the New Public Service is to seek the public interest, based on a shared understanding and responsibility for supporting a common goal. The findings of this study demonstrate how shared values and norms among elected official in the study jurisdictions seek to achieve the public interest through the development and implementation of regional collaborations. The shared

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

values and norms guide the decision-making process in local government and reflect the “cornerstone of the New Public Service” (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015).

The Policy Entrepreneur: Role of the Manager As Viewed by the Elected Official And the Manager. The concept of the manager as the policy entrepreneur was an important theme that was significant in both the elected officials’ and the managers’ interviews. Elected officials often set the priorities for the local government through formal communication such as a strategic plan or through informal communication, in one-on-one meetings, with the manager. The broad vision and goals for the community are established by the elected officials with the local government manager pursuing the implementation of their vision and goals. The significance of the connection is important for public administration and local government management specifically. In a study of elected officials and managers, Svava posits that the relationship between a manager and the elected officials in a council-manager form of government is complementarity (Svava, 1999). Administrators respect the control of the elected officials in an environment of interdependence and shared goals between elected official and managers. . The findings of this study related to the perception of the role of the manager by both the elected officials and local government managers supports the findings of Svava. Both the manager and the elected official recognize their roles in the administration of local government depend on each other and, I believe, the better the understanding of how those positions are complimentary, the better the local government is at achieving its goals. The politics and administration dichotomy or the line of separation between politics and administration is blurred with elected officials and local government managers.

Normative Influence On Decision Making. Elected officials from highly involved jurisdictions have recognized that working together is the “right thing to do”. This statement

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

reflects a shared norm or shared values of the importance of regional collaboration that was not tied to a benefit. This study found that there is a connection between elected officials self-interest, jurisdictional interest, and the public interest. While elected officials are inherently working in their self-interest, the self-interest manifests itself as jurisdictional interest that is synonymous with the public interest.

Of significance in this study is the connection between self-interest and the factors that motivate the individual versus the public interest and the factors that motivate the collective action by individuals. Public choice theory informed the study's theoretical framework by providing a self-interest motivation for public action in the engagement of regional collaboration. This study found both public choice theory characteristics and public service framework characteristics; which represented a blending between the two perspectives for decision-making at the local government level. Future studies should consider expanding this approach to understand more fully the motivations of elected officials. In a study by Zamir and Sulitzeanu-Kenan (2017), the researchers investigated the gap between public choice theory and behavioral ethics. This gap identifies an area in need of research between what we think people will do versus what they actually do. The results of the data collection from the interviews with elected officials provide insight to understanding how elected officials acted given the opportunity to engage in regional collaboration. Elected officials engaged in regional collaboration because of a number of factors including the influence of shared norms and values among other elected officials. Investigating the decision-making process among elected officials and local government managers in future studies may provide the answers to these questions. Building social capital, maintaining trust and credibility and recognizing the non-monetary benefits of regional collaboration are key areas for future research.

Implications for Public Policy

Investigation and policy changes for Virginia's Interlocal Revenue Sharing Agreement System. This study revealed a potential area of policy review related to the voluntary agreements for revenue sharing purposes between two local governments in Virginia. From the interviews with both elected officials and local government managers who had identified the interlocal revenue sharing agreement as a regional collaboration, it appears that this specific process requires significant oversight by the State through the Commission on Local Government. As opposed to statutory authority for forming Authorities, this statutory authority requires public hearings in both localities, hearings at the Commission on Local Government and a variety of other processes. The researcher found that this was an important tool for sharing resources (land, financial, staff) to build a better product as opposed to one locality carrying the burden of the investment. This could be an excellent tool for small, struggling towns in Southwest Virginia to build a better product. Conversely, struggling counties and cities in the Southwest Virginia area could consider investing with towns and other local governments to share investment and to potentially bring business, attractions, and visitors to the area. It appears that making this tool available and easier to implement may lead to more collaborations in the struggling areas of Southwest Virginia.

Implications for Practitioners

For elected officials. For elected officials, this study provides insights into how other elected officials have successfully engaged in regional collaborations and how their perspectives differ from those elected officials in the low-engaged local governments. This study highlighted the importance of relationship building with other elected officials through formal or informal mechanisms such as committee participation, formal events, and informal breakfast meetings.

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

The development of relationships with their counterparts in other jurisdictions was an important factor for regional collaboration and should be considered a best practice for elected officials.

Given the inherent conflict between the elected official and the local government manager because of their different goals at the local government level, this study identified a key factor that connected the elected official and manager in the development of regional collaborations. This study highlighted the importance of setting expectations for local government manager through informal or formal mechanisms such as strategic plans, job description requirements, and informal discussions with manager and identified a significant theme of the manager as the entrepreneur. Elected officials who may struggling with implementation of regional projects can consider the recommendations from this study and work more closely with the manager who has been identified as the implementer of the governing body's vision for regional collaboration.

For local government managers. This study highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships with other managers including informal opportunities to interact. “Windshield time” whereby local government managers would ride to a meeting together provided an opportunity for managers to informally discuss a variety of issues impacting their respective localities and specifically discuss the potential for regional collaboration. The role of tenure was not explicitly identified in the study as a significant factor influencing regional collaboration but in this particular region, the role of turnover at the local manager level is important. Local government managers should reflect on how they interact and communicate with their counterparts in other localities and consider ways to reconnect and build better relationships.

Implications for Academics

Much has been written about the topic of collaboration, interlocal agreements, and intergovernmental arrangements. This study furthers the scholarship in a number of ways. This study builds on the literature for understanding the types of collaborative agreements that localities engage in and how localities differ in their levels of engagement of intergovernmental activities. Mandell (1999), Cigler (1999), Selden, Sowa and Sandfort (2006) built on the work of Walker (1987), the seventeen ways local governments work together, resulting in a continuum of collaborative agreements. The continuum of collaborative agreements is expanded in this study by providing a continuum of types of regional collaboration from low engagement to high engagement. Academics can utilize this continuum and the examples provided to understand various types of collaboration found at the local government level. The typology developed from the data collection may serve to provide further knowledge on the nature of the elected officials and local government managers' perspectives and how those views influence regional collaboration.

One of the key points of consideration for academics in this investigation was the utilization of two study groups; the elected officials and local government managers. The literature is lacking in this type of investigation where we can compare and contrast the perspectives of local elected officials to the local government manager. This study provides an area of investigation for future researchers in that it considers the connection between the expectation of the manager as viewed by the elected official and the manager. It is when these two perspectives and expectations meet that true local government management is at its most effective. Zeemering examines the council manager relationship in interlocal cooperation and examines the interests of both the manager and the elected official (Zeemering, 2008).

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Zeemering concludes that future studies should integrate elected officials and managers and further inquiry into the council-manager relationship on various public management areas is necessary (Zeemering, 2008).

A significant finding was the evidence associated with the shared norms and values of the elected official and the impact of those shared norms and values on engagement in regional collaboration. Future studies should investigate this phenomenon further to understand how elected officials in highly engaged communities develop these shared norms and values while lower engaged communities have not developed these shared norms and values. Investigating what is different, why and how different communities develop different expectations could serve the literature and practice significantly.

This study contributes to the literature under the umbrella of the New Public Service and the ideal of public service as a core value in public administration. The development of the New Public Service framework contrasts with the New Public Management literature in the view of self-interest and efficiency focused. The findings from this study blend these two perspectives: elected officials and local government managers seek to maximize jurisdictional benefit that inherently benefits the individual. The normative factor that influences elected officials to engage in regional collaboration, “it’s the right thing to do”, or rather it is in the public interest. As noted by Denhardt and Denhardt (2015), the New Public Service and the New Public Management offer principles that can be blended for scholars and practitioners and further inquiry into their implicit values leads to better understanding of what works best in a given situation. . This study can be viewed as scholarship that responds to that request and demonstrates the blending of both public management and public service models.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations identified by the researcher in this study. First, the State of Virginia is significantly different from other states in that the government structure is a county and independent cities structure. Most states share boundaries between counties and cities with both municipalities serving the public. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other local governments. Second, the sample localities are small and future studies should consider a larger number of localities to test the consistency of the findings in this study. Finally, future studies on this topic should include a quantitative study design to obtain a larger number of responses to further the study of regional collaboration and understanding of the decision-making processes of elected officials and local government managers.

Future Research

While much has been written about interlocal agreements and regional collaboration, future research should consider why local governments collaborate. Understanding the motivations, perspectives and beliefs that both elected officials and local government managers bring to the discussion of interlocal cooperation may be a significant endeavor to further both scholarship and practice. The findings of this study of elected officials and local government managers provide researchers with an examination of factors that influence the decision-making process in the development and implementation of regional collaboration. Throughout the conclusions, recommendations for future studies and research have been provided and this section provides a succinct discussion.

One of the most significant findings of the study was the identification of shared norms and shared values among elected officials. Future studies should seek to understand how those norms and shared values have developed and what factors have influenced elected officials in

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

highly engaged communities. In addition, this study furthers the scholarship in relation to intergovernmental communication among council members. As noted by Zeemering (2008), future research should identify which methods of communication elected officials prefer and this study contributes to the understanding that elected officials utilized informal communication mechanisms significantly. However, to understand the preference, as noted by Zeemering, future scholarship may consider the preferences of elected officials.

The New Public Service framework complements the concept of public leadership and additional research should consider how individuals demonstrate public leadership in the execution of public administration. Given the current challenges to public administration, scholars and practitioners should consider how public leadership is demonstrated to ensure integrity and confidence in our institutions. Crosby and Bryson (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of public leadership; definition, theory, research methodologies, etc. only to resolve that future studies should focus on “public” and how leadership is different in the public sector and how leadership is defined cross-disciplined. Using an interdisciplinary approach to studying public leadership and a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies may provide insights to both scholarship and practice (Crosby and Bryson, 2018). This study contributes to this area by identifying public leadership components in the engagement in regional collaboration however; future studies are needed to build our understanding of public leadership.

Finally, public administration research should focus on the elected official and the local government manager. Zeemering (2015) calls for more interviews with elected officials to uncover a wider range of roles in interlocal politics re collaboration. Future studies should consider qualitative and quantitative research methods to understand how and why elected

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

officials and local government managers collaborate. Successful cooperation depends upon the roles and perspectives of both.

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Vitae

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Education

PhD, Public Policy and Administration (August 27, 2018)

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Master of Public Administration (2001)

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Bachelor of Science, Economics (1994)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University – Blacksburg, VA

Academic/Professional Positions

Academic

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA,

Associate Director, Center for Public Administration and Policy, 2017-present
Assistant Professor of Practice/Program Director, 2015 -present
Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management
Graduate Certificate in Public and Non-Profit Financial Management Certificate
Adjunct Faculty, 2012-2015

Teaching:

Human Resources, Finance and Performance Management
Introduction to Public and Nonprofit Financial Management
Public Budgeting and Implications
Budgeting for Performance Management and Outcomes
Asset Management
Local Government and the Organization

Professional

Springsted, Inc, Richmond, VA, February 2011 – June 2013

Vice President/Consultant

County of Powhatan, Powhatan, VA, November, 2002 – February, 2011

Director of Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology

County of Chesterfield, Chesterfield, VA, August 1997 – November 2002

Budget and Management Analyst

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

State of Virginia, Compensation Board, Richmond, VA, August 1994 – August 1997
Management Analyst

Honorary Memberships

Pi Alpha Phi (2015)

Professional Associations

Virginia Local Government Management Association
Virginia Government Finance Officers' Association
International City/County Management Association
Government Finance Officers' Association

Publications

Articles

“Comprehensive Services Act In Need Of Cost Analysis,” Virginia Town and City Magazine, Volume 36, No. 12, December 2001, pp. 20-23

Academic Presentations

Davis, Stephanie, “Why Local Governments Collaborate: Perspectives from Elected Officials and Local Government Managers on Regional Collaboration” Paper presented at the National ICMA Academic Symposium, September 2018

Davis, Stephanie, “Understanding the Factors Influencing Regional Collaboration” A proposal presented for feedback at the National ICMA Academic Symposium, September, 2016

Davis, Stephanie, “Using performance measurements and transparency efforts to further collaborative efforts between local governments and nonprofits” A paper presented at the 2015 Conference for the Social Equity Leadership Conference., Summer 2015

Professional Presentations

Davis, Stephanie, “Why local governments collaborate?” Presentation to the Virginia Local Government Management Association, June 2018

Davis Stephanie, “Capital Improvement Planning at the Local Level”, Presentation for the Virginia Association of School Board Officials, October 2017

Davis, Stephanie, “Capital Improvement Planning for Planners” American Association of Planners in Virginia, Presentation at Annual Conference, July 2017

Davis, Stephanie, “Funding the Future”, Presentation for Planning Directors on Funding the Capital Improvement Program, October, 2015

WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE

Davis, Stephanie, “Stewardship and the Public Service”, Presentation for Leadership at the Virginia Department of Corrections, September 2015

Consulting and Programming

Virginia Government Finance Officers’ Association – Professional Development Program

Coordinator (2017-present)

Town of Pearisburg, VA – Salary Survey (2018)

Town of Pulaski, VA –Capital Improvement Program Development (2017/2018)

Amherst County, VA – Facilitation of Monthly Leadership Group Meetings

Town of Amherst, VA – New Councilmember Orientation (December, 2016)

University Service

Virginia Tech Academic Leaders Program (2017)

ICMA Student Chapter Faculty Advisor (2015-present)

Community Public Service

Wythe-Grayson Regional Library Board (2018), Board of Trustee