

Developing Successful Intergovernmental Relations

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Session Objectives

- What does intergovernmental relations success look like nationally and in South Carolina?
- How have recent disruptions affected relationships between the federal, state, and local governments?
- What do local governments need to do to be successful in the current uncertain governance environment?
- Why is trust in government important, and why does the public rate local governments as the most trustworthy units?
- What competencies and skills are necessary for county elected officials and staff professionals to work successfully across boundaries?
- What are the facilitating factors and barriers to South Carolina's counties working across boundaries?

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Who are you?



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Confused Roles & Responsibilities: The Big Questions

- Who does what?
- Who pays the bill?
- Who is "accountable"?

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Recent IGR Disruptions

- Pandemic – Back to the Big Questions
- The Great Revealer – Division & Disparity
- The "Nervous" Area of government
- Racial Tensions
- Local Workforce Frustration – "Great Resignation"
- Citizen Anger – Mixed Messages & Reduced Trust
- Budget Gaps & Uncertainties
- Competing Values & Distortions
- Intergovernmental Friction – Federalism Under Fire

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The Public's View: Mixed Messages



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Welcome to the Dynamic & Disruptive "VUCA" IGR World

- Volatile
- Uncertain
- Complex
- Ambiguous

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An Intergovernmental Perspective on Disruption & Change

- + No longer "local" problems
- + "Wicked" problems ignore boundaries – they are intergovernmental, intersectoral, interdisciplinary
- + Authority is fragmented (separation of powers, federalism) but not restrained or shared
- + Administrative systems are vertical; solutions are horizontal
- + Solutions require navigating networks of government/non-profit/for-profit organizations, and residents who are the many faces of the "public intersection"
- + Administrative Reform – the beat goes on

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II. Three Disruptive Intergovernmental Trends

1. "Pendulum" moving away from Washington
2. Tug-of-war with the states
3. Fend-for-yourself federalism

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1. "Pendulum" Moving Away From Washington

- Federal Budget Drivers
 - + Deficits
 - + Debt
 - + Defense
 - + Demographics
- Discretionary: \$ 711 billion estimated grant-in-aid tab (FY 2024); 1183 programs (FY 2025); much overlap & duplication
- Coercive Federalism; subnational impacts often ignored (mandates, tax reform, grant program cuts)
- Economic Stimulus Grant Packages to state & local governments (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 -- \$275 billion); Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act of 2020 (\$150 billion); American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 -- \$362 billion)
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (PL 119-21; 1,038 pg.)

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Here Comes the Cavalry!



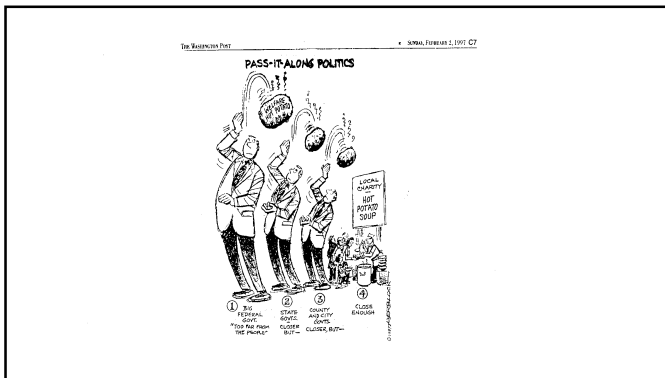
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Federal Disruptive Trends

Implications

- **Alarming growth of debt** (\$29 trillion 2024 to \$37 trillion 2025 estimates) & continuation of deficits
- **State and local governments** will receive more than \$1 trillion in federal grants each year from 2021-2029 (26.5% of total revenues), but questionable discretionary spending sustainability
- **Future federal budget focus:** health care, income security & defense; Medicaid accounts for 56.8% of total outlays, \$615 billion in FY 2023, shift from places to people
- **Increasing use of contractors & third parties** ("shadow government")
- **Declining technical expertise, monitoring & oversight capacities of federal administrators** in complex intergovernmental management environment
- **Continuing lowered public confidence**
- **Devolving more responsibility and emphasizing accountability** (fraud, waste & abuse)
- **Deconstructing and defunding the administrative state**

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2. Tug of War with the States

The States' Resurgence

- Historic role as “laboratories of democracy”
 - + Executive, legislative, judicial capacity-building
- Growth in interstate communication & collaboration
- Budget uncertainties due to federal cuts

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State Disruptive Trends

Implications

- The “state” of state-local relations is poor in many places
 - States have the capacity to act, but do they have the commitment (e.g. Medicaid expansion)?
 - DOGE 2.0 period gives state leaders opportunities to
 - + reopen the “laboratories of democracy”
 - + reshape governmental roles
 - + refocus service delivery priorities and responsibilities
 - + rethink relationships with local governments
- but will they pursue them?**

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Contested Federalism: State-Local Tug of War



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Fundamental Debate: Control

Judge John Dillon

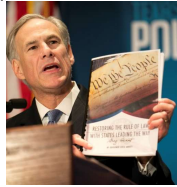


Dillon's Rule stated that the powers of a local government are limited to: "First, those granted in express words; second, those necessarily or fairly implied in or incident to the powers expressly granted; third, those essential to the accomplishment of the declared objects and purposes of the corporation—not simply convenient, but indispensable. Any fair, reasonable, substantial doubt concerning the existence of power is resolved by the courts against the corporation, and the power is denied."

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"As opposed to the state having to take multiple rifle-shot approaches at overriding local regulations, I think a broad-based law by the state of Texas that says across the board, the state is going to pre-empt local regulations, is a superior approach."

Governor Greg Abbott
March 21, 2017



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Navigating the State Control-Local Autonomy Minefield: Where We Are Today

- Research has found a steady increase in bills interfering with local autonomy across the country since 2011.
- The 2018 survey by the National League of Cities found: 41 states preempted ride sharing, 28 preempted minimum wage, and 23 preempted paid leave policy; 20 states restricted municipal broadband authority.
- Recent focus on property taxation and land use preemption

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3. Fend-for-Yourself Federalism

- Great Recession, Pandemic & Trump Administration actions long-term impacts uncertain
 - + Personnel recruitment & retention
 - + Service level/quality sustainability
 - + Accountability
- Collaboration & networking responses
- The states: partners or adversaries?
- Certain-uncertainty

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Local Disruptive Trends

Implications

--Tough adaptive choices; uncertain authority & resources; high stress

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| + Marijuana legalization | + Minimum wage |
| + Gun control | + Gay marriage |
| + Immigration | + Homelessness |
| + DEI strategies | + Affordable housing |

-- Successful IGR involves creativity, innovation, partnerships, and proactivity in problem-solving, **but will state and federal actions support or stifle initiatives?**

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The IGR Road Ahead: Local Strategies for Working Across Boundaries

- Informal Cooperation & Contracts
 - Service sharing
- Areawide Planning & Coordinating Bodies
 - COGs
- Special Districts & Public Authorities
 - Single purpose & Multi-purpose
- Functional Transfers

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Beyond Dillon: A NC Example

NC G.S. Chapter 160A Article 20

ss 160A-461. Interlocal cooperation authorized.

Any unit of local government in this State and any one or more other units of local government in this State or any other state (to the extent permitted by the laws of the other state) may enter into contracts or agreements with each other in order to execute **any undertaking**. The contracts and agreements shall be of reasonable duration, as determined by the participating units, and shall be ratified by resolution of the governing board of each unit spread upon its minutes.

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County Assets

- Agent of state – partnership potential
- Responsible for services that matter most to residents
- Prudent financial management
- Local governments most trustworthy and rated highest in public confidence surveys
- Elected officials close to constituents
- Professionalism
- County officials as transactors and transformers

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So, What does this mean in South Carolina?

What are the major challenges you face in your counties when it comes to working with other local governments?

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1) TRUST in Government

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According to Gallup...

POLITICS OCTOBER 13, 2023

Americans Trust Local Government Most, Congress Least

BY JEFFREY M. JONES

67% Trust Local Government
32% Trust Congress

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/512651/americans-trust-local-government-congress-least.aspx>

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Current vs. Historical Average Trust Ratings for U.S. Government Institutions and Actors

How much trust and confidence do you have in ... ?

Figures are the percentage who have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the institution or actor.

	Average %	2023 %	Difference (pt. pts.)
Your local government	70	67	-3
Your state government	63	59	-4
The executive branch	52	41	-11
The American people	67	55	-12
Men and women in political life	54	40	-14
Federal government: International problems	59	44	-15
Federal government: Domestic problems	52	37	-15
The legislative branch	48	32	-16
The judicial branch	66	49	-17

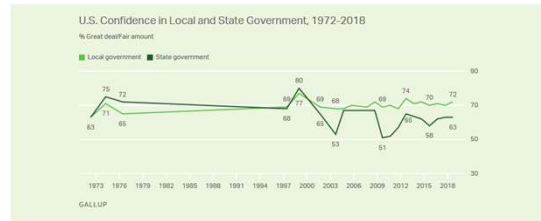
Averages date back to 1972 for all institutions except the American people (1974). Not all items have been asked all times the trust series has been asked.

Get the data • Download image

GALLUP

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Trust in State and Local Governments



Source: Gallup (2018)

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What can you do to build trust?

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2) CONFUSION

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So much government!



Figure 1.3: American Government Under a Federal Structure
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Attribution: U.S. Census Bureau
License: Public Domain

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Local Governments in the U.S. 1952-2022

	1952	1977	1987	2007	2017	2022
County	3,052	3,042	3,042	3,033	3,031	3,031
Municipal	16,807	18,862	19,200	19,492	18,545	19,491
Township	17,202	16,822	16,691	16,519	16,253	16,214
School District	67,355	15,174	14,721	13,051	12,745	12,546
Special District	12,340	25,962	29,932	37,381	38,542	39,555
Total	116,756	79,862	83,186	89,476	89,116	90,837

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Local Governments by State: 2023

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Local Governments in South Carolina 1952-2022

	1952	1977	1987	2007	2017	2022
County	46	46	46	46	46	46
Municipal	237	264	269	268	270	271
Township	0	0	0	0	0	0
School District	1,220	92	92	85	81	78
Special District	78	182	300	299	274	271
Total	1,581	585	707	698	671	666

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Local Governments by State: 2023

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Council of Governments



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Pre-Home Rule County Government

- County purpose doctrine
- The legislative delegation ruled supreme
- County supply bill
- Delegation could not administer laws
- Led to Boards of County Commissioners
- Reynolds vs. Sims (1964)
- Contentious relationship

Slide Source: SC Association of Counties

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Home Rule Law

- Home Rule Law was enacted in 1975.
- The Act provides for 3 forms of government for municipalities and 5 forms for counties (one of which, the commission form was ruled unconstitutional)
- The Act designated the general powers of county governments.

Slide Source: SC Association of Counties

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Article VIII, Section 17

The provisions of this Constitution and all laws concerning local government shall be liberally construed in their favor. Powers, duties, and responsibilities granted local government subdivisions by this Constitution and by law shall include those fairly implied and not prohibited by this Constitution.

Slide Source: SC Association of Counties

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What are local assets/strengths that your county brings to the table?

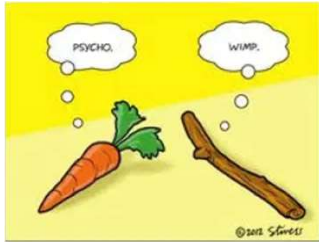
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3) POWER

It's all about PERSUASION and COLLABORATION

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How does federal government get states to do things?
How do state governments get local governments to do something?



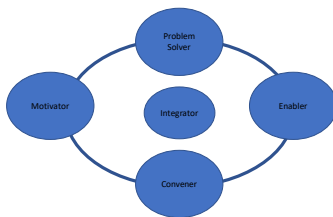
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Who is
Responsible?



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Roles of Local Government



Source: Eggers and Kettl. *Bridgebuilders*

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Roles in governance & collaboration

• Problem Solver

- Role: Comes up with solutions to the issue at hand through actionable steps
- Skills: Analytical thinking, solution-oriented approach

• Enabler

- Role: Provide resources, support or authority
- Skills: Resource management, create opportunities for others, facilitate access to resources

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Roles in governance & collaboration

• Convener

- Role: Bring people together, create coalitions, facilitate discussions
- Skills: Leadership, communication, negotiation, relationship-building

• Motivator

- Role: Inspire action, mobilize people, encourage others to act towards common goal
- Skills: Persuasion, leadership, communication, EI

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Roles in governance & collaboration

• Integrator

- Role: Align various efforts, organizations and initiatives towards a common goal; ensure parts of system are in harmony and connected
- Skills: Cross-sector collaboration, systems thinking, ability to create a cohesive plan

Who is playing these roles? Staff? Council members?

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

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What is your role? How can you be a Bridgebuilder?

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Quick Break.... Welcome Panelists

- *Charles Jennings, McCormick County Council Vice Chairman*
- *Toby Chappell, Greenwood County Manager*
- *Alice Howard, Beaufort County Council Chairwoman*
- *Kristy Danford, Former Project Director Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council*

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Welcome Panelists!

- Who were the key catalysts for your intergovernmental collaborative initiative? What were the factors that enabled you all to work successfully across boundaries?
- What initial concerns did the county partners have about collaborating and working with other jurisdictions and agencies, and how were they addressed?
- What barriers did you confront in moving forward with your project?
- What role did the state play in developing or helping implement the collaborative initiative? In what ways, if any, were federal funds or regulations involved?
- What advice would you offer to others who are considering working across boundaries through interlocal collaboration?

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Table top

- What can you do to build trust?
- What are local assets/strengths that your county brings to the table?
- What is your role? How can you be a Bridgebuilder?

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Report Out ...

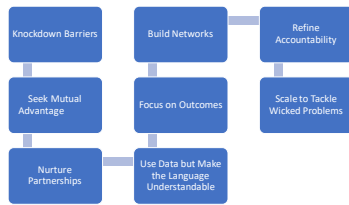
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Bridgebuilding

- 1) What resources do you need?
- 2) Who controls those resources?
- 3) What influences them? (data, stories, etc.)
- 4) Who can help?

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Key Actions for Bridgebuilders



Source: Eggers and Kettl, [Bridgebuilders](#)

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Questions?

Feel free to reach out to us!

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