

# connecting communities

A REPORT ON  
GOVERNMENT  
COLLABORATION

working  
together  
to create  
a more  
advanced  
community  
through  
collaborative  
efforts and  
resources

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 Vision 2015



**collaboration** has clearly helped Northern Kentucky to achieve progress and it will be important to seek even more opportunities for collaboration. The sponsors of this report look forward to working with the local governments to identify additional collaborative projects. Based on the interviews and information shared by local officials, a few policy issues local governments might consider include:

### **Simplify Occupational License Tax Remittance**

Occupational license taxes include payroll tax withholding from employees and either net profits or gross receipts tax on businesses operating within a jurisdiction. These taxes are important, as often the highest or second highest sources of revenue to cities. Unfortunately, having multiple jurisdictions with variable tax rates is cumbersome for businesses to comply with and can hinder Northern Kentucky's economic development efforts.

**opportunity** **Develop an inter-local agreement across Northern Kentucky with a uniform tax rate and a centralized collections process, simplifying compliance for businesses.**

### **Develop a Central 9-1-1 Emergency Response System for Northern Kentucky**

There are currently five 9-1-1 emergency response systems across three Northern Kentucky counties with one in Boone County, one in Campbell County and 3 in Kenton County. Efforts to consolidate this service have been accomplished recently, and greater efficiencies can be achieved by having either one system for the entire region or one for each county.

**opportunity** **Consolidate 9-1-1 emergency response systems across Northern Kentucky with uniform technology in a way that lowers costs while maintaining high-quality service.**

### **The General Assembly Should Encourage Cost-Effective Collaboration Among Governments**

Kentucky statutes create requirements for local governments that often discourage collaboration and consolidation of services. For example, KRS 78.530 currently requires agencies to sign a contract to receive health insurance through the Personnel Cabinet, which can be more expensive than other options and ultimately increase the overall cost of the merger.

**opportunity** **Amend KRS 78.530 and support cost-effective agency mergers by giving government units the flexibility to seek employee benefit solutions that keep merger costs low.**

**“The ability to collaborate has always been what sets Northern Kentucky apart from other areas, allowing us to make positive changes for our citizens more quickly. The Chamber applauds our governments’ great work and encourages us all to continue to work together to make our community an attractive location for businesses and families.”**

— Steve Stevens, President, Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

# combining forces

makes our region a better place to live.

Vision 2015, a powerful growth plan for Northern Kentucky, the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the largest business organization in our region, and the Northern Kentucky Area Development District (NKADD), our local multi-county planning and development organization, have joined together to commission a study on community cooperation among local governments.

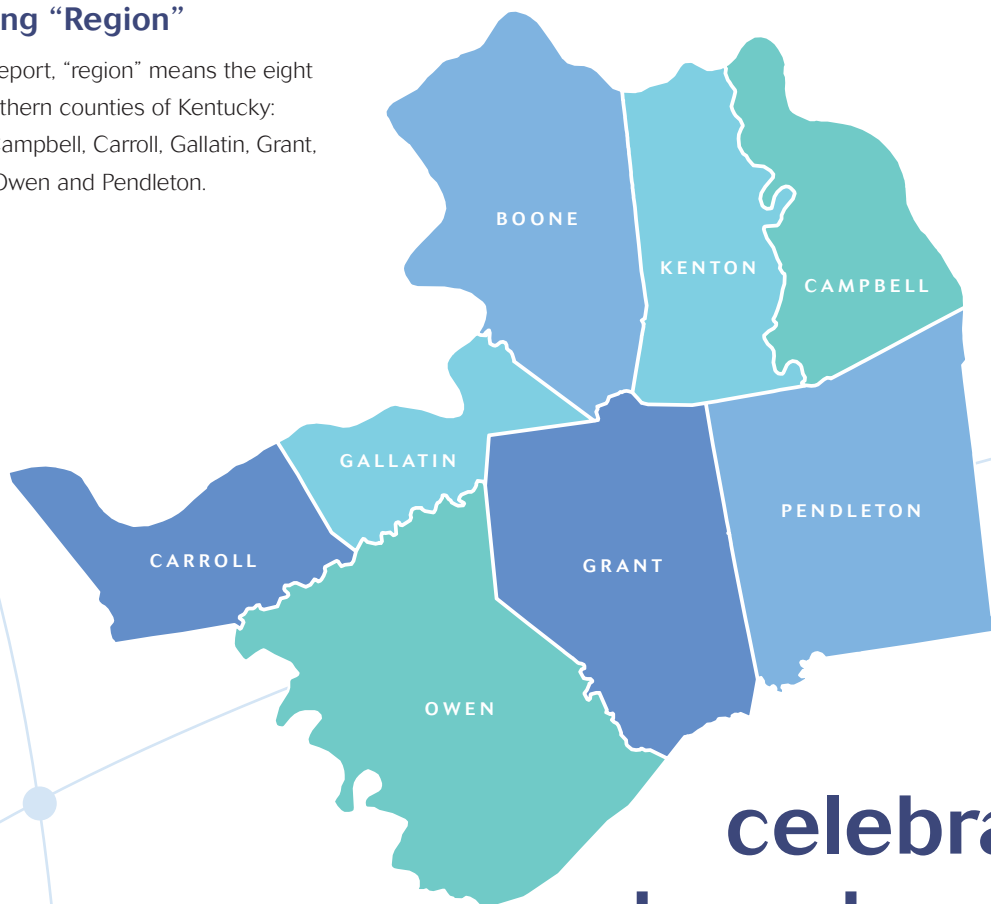
The study examines why our region's governments have succeeded in collaboration. The streamlining of services, creation of regional partnerships, and identification of obstacles that have impeded previous efforts were analyzed through the perspective of local officials and representatives from rural, urban and suburban localities in Northern Kentucky over the last decade. Our region has many assets. Understanding our past success and our inhibitors to future success may enable us to work together in bolder, broader ways, across jurisdictional boundaries to implement more transformational change.

## The Process

Hearing firsthand from local governments what has worked over the past ten years, was the critical basis for this report. First, correspondence was sent from the NKADD to all government entities in the region introducing the project and requesting interviews with key leaders. Then, a brief survey was developed and distributed to Northern Kentucky's government entities, asking them to reflect on past, present and future successes and obstacles to government collaboration. Finally, personal interviews were conducted with representatives from more than thirty local communities. The information in this report is based on the local governments who participated in this process.

## Defining "Region"

For this report, "region" means the eight most northern counties of Kentucky: Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen and Pendleton.



**celebrating  
shared success**

# Public Safety

Emergencies do not just occur clearly within jurisdictional boundaries. Often times back-up support is needed to ensure the best services are delivered to Northern Kentucky residents. Many examples of this form of cooperation were shared when interviewing city and county leaders:

## Police

- Aligning Police Departments and Authorities has been a key success in recent years. Examples include: Crestview Hills and Lakeside Park; Erlanger and Crescent Springs; Southgate and Highland Heights
- Owenton, Monterey, and Gratz have incorporated an interlocal agreement that focuses on the enforcement of nuisance laws
- Grant County provides police services to the city of Crittenden
- Ludlow provides services to Bromley
- Boone County merged the cities (with the exception of Florence), county police, and sheriff's department to form the Boone County Sheriff's Department
- Covington's crime lab is available for Northern Kentucky Departments to use

## Fire Protection

- Most fire departments in Northern Kentucky have mutual aid agreements with neighboring communities for backup and support. In addition, a number of communities have gone beyond mutual aid to combine services: Crestview Hills and Lakeside Park receive fire protection and EMS services from Ft. Mitchell. Bellevue and Dayton have merged fire services
- Crescent Springs and Villa Hills have a joint fire department
- With several communities on the county line, Owen County has worked out different agreements with surrounding counties to help with fire protection

## EMS/ALS

As demands for EMS and ALS services continue to rise within local governments the following communities have developed cooperative agreements to provide service in an efficient manner.

- Erlanger provides ALS services to Point Pleasant, Edgewood, Villa Hills, and Crescent Springs
- Ft. Wright provides EMS service to Park Hills
- Ft. Mitchell currently provides ALS services to Lakeside Park and Crestview Hills
- Southgate and Wilder have a joint EMS service
- Alexandria currently provides ALS services to Wilder

## Dispatch

With the ever-changing advances in technology comes the need for a more sophisticated and integrated approach to dispatching.

- In Kenton County, Erlanger provides dispatching services for eleven cities. The rest of the county is served either by the County Dispatching Services, or the City of Covington
- Newport and Campbell County created the Campbell County Dispatch Center
- The Kentucky State Police provides dispatching for Grant County

## Water Rescue

- Kenton, Boone and Campbell counties are all served by the Boone County Water Rescue team

# Administration/Finance

Northern Kentucky jurisdictions collaborate on a multitude of administrative functions including joint purchasing, joint maintenance, and joint oversight projects. Examples shared with us during the unique city and county leader interview process include:

## Joint Purchasing

Identifying ways to save costs is always a priority for local governments.

- Crestview Hills and Florence jointly purchased street signs
- Taylor Mill and Edgewood purchased a boom truck
- Edgewood and Ft. Mitchell share a street cleaning truck

“Effective Governance is a critical element in the lives of families and businesses in Northern Kentucky and real collaboration can only occur when we are inclusive, transparent and work together across jurisdictional boundaries.”

— Bill Scheyer, President Vision 2015

## Ethics

- The NKY regional Ethics Authority is a collaborative effort among the following 15 communities: Bellevue, Covington, Crescent Springs, Elsmere, Erlanger, Florence, Melbourne, Park Hills, Pendleton County, Taylor Mill, Southgate, Union, Walton, Williamstown, and Woodlawn

## Occupational License Fees

- The majority of cities in Kenton County have worked together to develop a county-wide occupational license permit. This allows a business to purchase a single license to do business throughout the entire county

## Recreation

Quality of life is a key component to what makes Northern Kentucky a great place to live.

- Gallatin County and Warsaw built and installed a skate park
- Kenton County and the City of Ludlow also jointly installed a skate park
- The creation of the Pendleton County Athletic Park was a collaborative effort between Pendleton County Schools, the City of Falmouth, the county, private industry, and individual citizens

# Infrastructure

## Joint Maintenance

Maintaining key corridors is a vital function for local governments.

- All counties in Northern Kentucky have agreements with cities within their counties to assist with snow removal and maintenance of streets
- Gallatin County and Glencoe are working with Sparta on a sidewalk repair project
- Bellevue has an agreement with Kenton County to jointly purchase road salt

## Joint Redevelopment Projects

- Pendleton County, Grant County and Williamstown are actively working to increase the size of Williamstown Lake, to provide a water and recreation resource for Northern Kentucky
- The Licking River Corridor spans multiple counties and cities and could be a prime recreation and water source for Northern Kentucky if access were improved and proper clean-up took place. Campbell County, Covington, and the Northern Kentucky Area Development District, have received a Brownfield petroleum clean-up grant and have applied for a second Brownfield grant for hazardous waste clean-up. Taylor Mill, Covington and Wilder have signed an interlocal agreement to develop 5.2 miles of multipurpose trail along the Licking River

# Shared Utilities

In addition to having regional water and sanitation districts, many Northern Kentucky communities are collaborating to meet the growing infrastructure needs.

- The Carrollton Waste Water Treatment Plant provides sewer services to a multi- county area including Carroll, Gallatin, Henry and Owen Counties
- Grant County has created the Grant County Sanitation District to manage growth and development
- Pendleton County and Falmouth are now collaborating on a northern sewer expansion project which will cover the remaining portions of the county
- Williamstown and Dry Ridge have begun constructing a new waste water treatment plant
- When most Northern Kentuckians think of collaboration, they don't think of sharing services between state lines. Boone County purchases their water from the city of Cincinnati
- Florence worked with SD1 on the development of their new treatment plant truck lines
- Williamstown and Grant County worked together to construct two wireless towers to expand access to wireless internet services

# special thanks

Thank you to Brandon Hamilton, a student at NKU, for conducting the interviews and to those who gave valuable time to be interviewed and provided the information that is the basis for this report including:

- **Jill Bailey**, City Administrative Officer, Taylor Mill
- **Henry Bertram**, Judge/Executive, Pendleton County
- **Karen Bond**, Mayor, Crestview
- **Denny Bowman**, Mayor, Covington
- **Glenn Caldwell**, Mayor, Williamstown
- **Linda Carter**, City Administrator, Erlanger
- **Gayle Cayton**, Mayor, Crittenden
- **Jim Collett**, Mayor, Crescent Springs
- **Ralph Drees**, Judge/Executive, Kenton County
- **Kenny French**, Judge/Executive, Gallatin County
- **Thomas Fromme**, City Manager, Newport
- **Dan Groth**, City Administrator, Independence
- **Jim Hamberg**, Mayor, Southgate
- **Thomas Holocher**, Mayor, Fort Mitchell
- **Gary Huff**, City Administrative Officer, Fort Wright
- **Carolyn Keith**, Judge/Executive, Owen County
- **Darrell Link**, Judge/Executive, Grant County
- **Daniel McGinley**, Mayor, Alexandria
- **Paul Meier**, Mayor, Crestview Hills
- **Gary Moore**, Judge/Executive, Boone County
- **Chuck Norris**, Assistant Fire Chief, Covington
- **Steve Pendery**, Judge/Executive, Campbell County
- **Kenneth Rankle**, Mayor, Dayton
- **Roger Rolfes**, City Administrative Officer, Edgewood
- **Brent Ruschman**, Director of IT, Campbell County Fiscal Court
- **Ed Schroeder**, Mayor, Ludlow
- **Joe Shriver**, Deputy Judge/Executive, Kenton County
- **Keith Spoelker**, City Administrator, Bellevue
- **Harold “Shorty” Tomlinson**, Judge/Executive, Carroll County
- **Katherine Terwort**, Mayor, Lakeside Park
- **Terry Vance**, City Administrator, Wilder
- **Michael Vank**, City Administrative Officer, Cold Spring
- **Josh Wice**, Community/Business Development Director, Florence

“Times require all of us to be as responsive and efficient as possible, and the public sector is no exception. Local governments in Northern Kentucky are continuing to explore and implement ways of collaborating to help our region meet the challenges of these times.”

— John Mays, Executive Director Northern Kentucky Area Development District

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