

**A GUIDE  
TO CHOOSING CONSOLIDATIONS AND ALTERNATIVES IN KANSAS -  
ADAPTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO LOCAL REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

**First Edition  
Condensed Version**

*(The complete version is available from the Kansas Department of Revenue)*

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**Introduction**

*If only we could restructure our local governments and improve working relations among them, residents in our community would live better lives.*

Some Kansas residents are probably satisfied with their local governments. But if they have ever uttered these words about local governments in their local regional community, they may find the Guide helpful. Local government consolidation and alternatives that improve interlocal government relations are important strategies for improving the health of a local regional community. But each strategy must be tailored to fit each community. The Guide is intended to help civic-minded Kansans to choose whether a strategy is necessary or wanted and, if so, to develop, approve and implement the strategy.

More than at any other time, many local governments in Kansas local regional communities are being requested to provide the same services with declining tax revenues, or more and/or higher quality services, with declining, flat or slowly growing tax revenues. Service expenditure requests are outstripping local tax revenues. Also, state and federal financial assistance is inadequate or even nonexistent. At the same time, these governments are grappling with many issues that have implications for the communities, such as economic development, environmental impacts, social equity, growth management and contraction management. These situations have caused civic-minded Kansas residents in local regional communities to look for strategies to resolve these issues. Some residents want to undertake or at least want to know more about local government consolidations and alternatives.

If the benefits of consolidations and alternatives are so great, why haven't more Kansas communities sought to reform their local governments? The answer is that it is a long, complex and difficult process to build the community consensus needed to support consolidations and alternatives. Research indicates the vast majority of consolidation initiatives throughout the United States fail, and that it can take many attempts before coming up with the strategy that wins majority voter support within the community.

These are challenging times for Kansas local governments, but they are also exciting times thanks to the growing willingness and capacity of the private for-profit and not-for-profit sectors to participate in local regional community affairs, and the growing demand by voters for resident

engagement. By collaborating across these sectors, civic-minded residents and local government stakeholders can find new solutions to old issues and in the process change the way the local regional community thinks about and governs itself.

### **Kansas Local Government Structure**

According to the most recent data, the trends in the number of different types of Kansas local governments are shown in the following exhibit:

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 Number of Kansas Local Governments by Type and Year

<u>Type of Local Government</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>2002</u>
Counties	105	105	104
Cities	618	627	627
Townships	1,546	1,367	1,299
School Districts	2,261	326	324
Special Districts	880	1,370	1,533
 Total	 <u>5,411</u>	 <u>3,796</u>	 <u>3,877</u>

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Compared to surrounding states in 2002, Kansas ranked second in the number of counties, second in the number of cities, first in the number of townships, fourth in the number of school districts, first in the number of special districts and first in the number of all local governments. Also, Kansas ranked:

- Fourth nationally behind Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas and California in the number of local governments.
- Third nationally behind Wyoming and New York in the number of full-time equivalent local government employees per 10,000 population.
- First among surrounding states in the number of full-time equivalent local government employees per 10,000 population.

### **Premise of the Guide**

Too often, civic leaders and others who become champions for consolidation or a consolidation alternative, jump straight to a particular answer without defining the community’s issues and alternatives. Most important, the voters and other residents who will be affected by the consolidation or alternative are left out until the last step of voting. A successful consolidation or consolidation alternative requires a process that answers some basic questions, such as:

- What does the community want to be in the future?
- What must the community do now to be what it wants to be in the future?
- How will the community do what must be done now?
- Why will the community doing what must be done enable it to be what it wants to be in the future?

A community makes several choices when considering consolidation and consolidation alternatives. It first needs to analyze its current reality and its vision of the future and determine

whether a vision-reality gap exists. If a gap does exist, the community determines the reasons why it exists and what needs to be done to close the gap. This analysis may raise issues that can be resolved by consolidation or an alternative. But the analysis may also define issues that can be resolved by improving internal government processes, strengthening elected leadership, obtaining additional resources, improving informal interlocal government relations or doing something else that does not require consolidation or an alternative. Participation of community residents in the analysis enables them to identify the issues facing the community and to choose the strategies to resolve them. That is the principal reason for developing a step-by-step guide to help residents in Kansas communities to choose whether consolidation or an alternative is needed to resolve current and future issues, or whether something else needs to be done to resolve these issues.

### **Collaboration and Consensus**

The basic premise of the Guide is the engagement, collaboration and consensus of residents in the local regional community<sup>1</sup>. If civic-minded residents are brought in a constructive environment with pertinent information, they will define vital issues and create an authentic vision and develop effective strategies, involving local government services and or structures, to resolve the issues and realize the vision. Successful collaboration and consensus achieve tangible results, generate new processes that can lead to solutions where traditional ones have failed, empower citizens and groups, and change fundamentally the way communities deal with complex issues.

Collaboration and consensus among residents on how to deal with an issue have to be built step by step. If they don't agree on the issues, they will not agree on the strategies to resolve them. And if they don't agree on the strategies they will not agree on whether consolidation or a consolidation alternative is necessary to refine and implement the strategies.

Through collaboration and consensus, the following questions are asked and answered:

- What are the issues? Are they the real or false issues? Are the issues likely to continue or even grow in the future?
- Who has identified the issues? Are the issues a perception of civic elites? Or are they pervasive throughout the community?
- Is there a consensus among stakeholders that these are the issues? Is there consensus on the scope of the issues? Have these reached the vital level?
- What do residents believe regarding the existing responsibilities and roles of local governments for resolving the issues? Regarding the expected responsibilities? In particular, what do stakeholders and voters believe?
- What strategies and tactics to address the issues have already been tried? What were the results in the view of stakeholders and voters?
- What is the connection, if any, between each issue and other issues in the community? What is the connection between a strategy that resolves one issue and the status of other issues?

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<sup>1</sup> This term refers to the configuration of local governments attempting to consolidate.

It is equally important to identify and understand what is going right in the local governments in the community. A list of success stories is created. They can serve as the building blocks to future successful performance. For example, if local governments in the community have come together in different ways in the past to resolve issues, there may be lessons from these experiences that are applicable to resolving current vital issues. The positive experiences of past successes will motivate stakeholders and voters to participate and collaborate, and inspire them that the governments in their community can and will resolve the current vital issues. For these reasons, it is important to identify the assets of the local governments and the community.

A facilitative leader can help identify representatives in the community and keep the decision-making process on consolidations and alternatives moving smoothly. An outside and neutral facilitator may be necessary. In either case, the emphasis is almost entirely on process with emphasis on communication. The complete **Guide** identifies facilitative techniques.

### **Guide Use**

How is the Guide intended to be used in Kansas? Guide users are various individuals and groups in the local regional community in which the local governments are located. They include the civic-minded residents, local government stakeholders, community coalition, consolidation study commission, local government officials, etc.

The Guide is divided into twenty steps. Users in the local regional community read each step one at a time as needed to determine what the step does. Users then ask and answer the question: Will the step help us do what we need to do to achieve consolidation or an alternative in our local regional community?

For each step, if users answer “yes,” they undertake the step. If they answer “no,” they do not undertake the step. Users might decide to use only part of a step or supplement it with their own ideas and information that are more effective in their local regional community. In short, users choose the steps, or parts thereof, they undertake in each local regional community and how they undertake them.

With these matters in mind, the next section is the first of several steps for Kansans to choose whether to undertake consolidations or alternatives and, if so, to achieve successful consolidations or alternatives.

#### **Step 1: Identify Community and Government Assets and Their Major Concerns about the Community’s Present and Future**

It is important to identify and understand early what is going right in the community, including its local governments. The coalition reaches consensus on a list of success stories. They can serve as the building blocks to future successful performance. For example, if local governments in the community have come together in different ways in the past to resolve issues, there may be lessons to be learned from the experiences that are applicable to resolving current resident concerns and vital issues. For these reasons, it is important to identify the assets of the community and its local governments.

The coalition reaches a consensus on the answers to the following questions which identify the assets of the local governments and the whole community:

- What are the qualities of our community that make people choose to stay here, to return here, or to move here from other communities? Why do people like living here?
- What business firms, professional organizations and other employers have thrived in our community? Why have they succeeded
- What institutions have contributed to residents living better lives in our community? How have they sustained success over time?  
What are the assets of our community's natural environment? How have we preserved and enhanced these assets?
- What are the assets of our community's cultural and social environment? How have we preserved and enhanced these assets?
- What provides our community with a distinct sense of identity and place? How have we preserved and enhanced this sense?
- What are the views of visitors to our community? Are there community attributes we want to preserve, enhance or remove?
- What local governments have achieved and are achieving excellent service performances that enable residents in our community to live much better lives? Why have they succeeded?

The identification of the assets of the community and local governments serves as building blocks to resolving vital issues that are obstacles to achieving future successful service performance. The positive experiences of past successes will later motivate stakeholders and voters to participate and collaborate, and inspire them to look for ways that the governments can and will resolve the concerns of residents and vital issues in the community.

## **Step 2: Build a Community Coalition to Determine the Need for Local Government Consolidations or Alternatives**

The leaders of the consolidation movement, whether residents or elected officials, organize a coalition. Its size, diversity, function and organization can vary and depend largely on:

- The number, diversity and significance of the concerns.
- The number, types and sizes of the identified local governments.
- The expected difficulty of arranging the concerns into clusters.
- The expected existence, size and strength of coalition opponents.

Stakeholders take these factors into consideration when they build their coalition and choose its features. They must also focus on other essential factors, namely building trust, collaboration and achieving consensus.

Building a coalition is about building trust among coalition members. It is also about building trust between the coalition and the local governing bodies, the consolidation study commission, and a significant majority of voters in the local regional community.

The coalition makes all of its choices and decisions by consensus. For example, if the coalition cannot reach a consensus on the issues, they will not achieve a consensus on the strategies for

resolving them. This means that coalition members agree with the idea under consideration or before them for decision and will work to support it. If members do not agree, members accept the idea and will not subsequently work to defeat it.

There exists a full range of differing interests and viewpoints involved in addressing resident concerns, identifying vital issues, and participating in discussions and decisions pertaining to local government consolidations and alternatives. The solution is likely to be much more comprehensive and creative than if a small group of like-minded individuals acted on its own. The inclusion of all stakeholders also creates a broader base of support for the solution and increases the likelihood that it will actually be implemented.

### **Step 3: Determine Community Assets, Major Concerns, Vital Issues**

The coalition:

- Identifies the major opportunities (openings, breaks or prospects) available to the local regional community:
- Identifies the major strengths of the existing local governments that help the community to exploit each major opportunity:
- Identifies the major weaknesses of the existing local governments that hinder the community to exploit each major opportunity:
- Identifies the major threats (dangers, risks or hazards) confronting the local regional community:
- Identifies the major strengths of the existing local governments that help the community to thwart each major threat:
- Identifies the major weaknesses of the existing local governments that hinder the community to thwart each major threat:

The coalition's top five to seven major concerns are the coalition's vital issues --- the crucial concerns --- confronting the local regional community at the present time or expected in the foreseeable future. It is the resolution of these issues that drives the later steps of the complete Guide.

### **Step 4: Determine the Community's Strategic Vision and Course, Vital Community Issues and Need for Local Government Consolidations**

Local government consolidations --- regardless of whether it is services or structures consolidation --- are not an end in themselves. They need to serve higher ends. Consolidations need to serve the higher ends of the entire local regional community in which the local governments are located.

The coalition determines:

1. Vision of the community.
2. Reality of the community.
3. Community vision-reality gap between vision and reality.
4. Vital community issues that cause the vision-reality gap in #3.

5. Strategies that resolve the vital community issues in #4, close the gap in #3 and realize the vision in #1.

If the coalition decides the chosen governments do not, will not and/or cannot achieve this result, the coalition continues Step 4. Either services or structures consolidation is necessary to improve local government performance to resolve the vital community issues, close the community's vision-reality gap and realize its vision. The coalition determines the community's strategic vision and course.

Kansas statutes do not authorize blanket city-county structures consolidations. Instead, the coalition must request members of the legislative delegation representing the local regional community to introduce into the Kansas Legislature a bill authorizing the structures consolidation of specific city and county governments in their community. The coalition testifies for the bill, utilizing the information it has collected in Step 3 or Step 4. If the Legislature approves and the Governor signs the bill, the coalition goes to Step 5. If the consolidation involves the structures consolidation of other types of local governments or the services consolidation of any types of local governments, the coalition goes directly to Step 5.

#### **Step 5: Coalition Requests the Establishment of a Consolidation Study Commission**

The establishment of a commission has been the process used in the two recent Kansas city-county consolidations. It could also be used to consolidate two counties, two cities, or not used, as the situation dictates. Establishing a commission requires local government officials or governing bodies or state officials to answer the following questions or, if no provisions exist, it seems necessary for them to answer the questions:

- What existing local governing bodies comprise the commission?  
If no existing local governing bodies comprise the commission, who appoints the commission?
- What are the qualifications of commission members?
- What is the deadline for appointment of the commission?
- What is the commission's workable size?
- What is the racial, cultural, urban, suburban and exurban [rural] diversity of the commission?
- What is the partisan political party affiliation of commission members or is the commission nonpartisan?
- When will the commission hold its first meeting?
- Who calls the first commission meeting?

#### **Step 6: Commission Prepares to Study Consolidation**

The commission's preparation for the study of consolidation can vary widely and depends on the expected number and complexity of the local governments to be studied for services or structures consolidation. Other factors include the expected time and effort to collect and understand the data and other information and to listen to the consolidation views of community residents. An early, if not the first step in preparation is to understand the statutory authorization for services and structures consolidation.

### **Coalition Information**

The local regional community coalition shares with the consolidation study commission a document containing the following information:

- The concerns of community residents.
- The members of the coalition.
- The community's vital issues and local governments.
- The community's vision, reality, vision-reality gap, vital community issues and strategies that resolve the issues, close the gap and realize the vision.

The commission utilizes this information, along with information from a variety of other sources, in its study of consolidation and in its development, adoption, and marketing of a consolidation plan.

### **Statutory Authorization**

Kansas statutes contain the statewide consolidation requirements. They include the authorizations of services and structures consolidations, and authorizations of consolidation to the different types of local government. The Guide user is asked to refer to the applicable statutory provisions or receive the advice of legal counsel. The complete Guide contains a summary of these provisions.

### **Commission Organization**

Once the commission has been appointed, it must organize itself to study consolidation of the local governments in the local regional community. It answers the following questions:

- What are the duties and powers of the consolidation study commission?
- What are the other key statutory provisions that authorize consolidations?
- Who are the commission's officers?
- What are the commission's rules of procedure?
- What is the commission's budget?
- How are the commission's expenses to be financed?
- What is the compensation and/or expense reimbursement of commission members?
- Who staffs the commission and what are their compensation and/or expense reimbursement?
- What are the commission's rules of meeting procedures?
- What is the commission's policy on members issuing minority reports?
- Where is the office of the commission and its staff located?
- How will the commission's meeting notifications, agendas, minutes, and other records be distributed to voters and other residents, such as at the commission's office, commission's Internet website and/or blog, local radio and television stations, community newspapers, local libraries, office of the city clerk, office of the county clerk, etc.?
- Who is to serve as the commission's liaison for collaboration with the county elections commissioner [or county clerk]?
- What other questions need to be answered before the commission starts its study of consolidation?

Answers to these questions will vary among local government consolidation in local regional communities.

### **Step 7: Commission Asks the Community Coalition and Other Residents for Their Ideas about a Consolidation Plan**

At least three possible situations can exist before the consolidation study commission begins its collection of local information on the contents of the consolidation plan. The commission may need to be aware of these situations and decide how to handle them

One possible situation is that the community coalition and others have views on the contents of the plan and will share their views when requested by the commission.

A second possible situation is that the voters and other residents believe, whether true or false, that the commission has already made decisions on the contents of the plan and that requests for public input are nothing more than “window dressing” for these decisions.

A third possible situation is that the voters and other residents, when they have opportunities to do so, do not share with the commission their comments on the contents of the plan.

The consolidation commission handles these three situations by beginning with no preconceived ideas about whether it should prepare a consolidation plan or the contents of plan. It begins its study, before it does any else, by holding public meetings. The community coalition, local governing bodies, other community leaders, voters and other residents are encouraged to attend and share their comments on whether a plan should be prepared, why or why not, and what the plan should include and exclude, and why. The commission schedules the meetings several days in advance so that they have time to think about and prepare for the meetings. The commission publicizes the meetings widely in the media.

The commission obtains, analyzes and summarizes information on topics that are vital to the success of its consolidation plan and the consolidation itself. These topics are in Steps 8-10. When the commission has completed Step 7 through Step 10, it will have laid the foundation for its preparation of the preliminary consolidation plan in Step 11.

### **Step 8: Commission Chooses Vital Contexts Propelling and Repelling Consolidation**

Contexts are the situations, backgrounds or environments that actually or potentially affect services and/or structures consolidation in the local regional community. The contexts of different communities contain significant or sensitive differences. Since the actual or potential effects of contexts on consolidation are unknown at the start of its study, the consolidation study commission learns about these contexts and their effects, if any, on consolidation and incorporates them into the preparation of the preliminary consolidation plan.

The contexts include:

- Local Government Service Performance.
- Local Government Structures.

- Intergovernmental Relations.
- Community Future.
- Natural Environment.
- Technology.
- Economy.
- Demography.
- Social Environment.
- Attitudes and Preferences.
- Communications.
- Social Power.

After reviewing these contexts, the commission chooses those which are vital to achieving successful consolidation in the local regional community.

### **Step 9: Commission Chooses Vital Ideas Propelling and Repelling Consolidation**

The commission reviews ideas during its consolidation study to determine if they are vital to services or structures consolidation, given the contexts of the consolidation. These ideas are concepts that, depending on the contexts in the local regional community, the commission reviews for inclusion in the consolidation plan. The ideas include:

- Policy Development and Implementation.
- Economies of Scale.
- Diseconomies of Scale.
- Economies of Scope.
- Diseconomies of Scope.
- Transactions Costs.
- Proliferation Costs.
- Fragmentation and Competitiveness Costs.
- Fiscal Equivalency Benefits and Costs.
- Bond Financing Costs.
- Transition Costs.
- Opportunity Costs.
- Threat Costs.
- Reversible Consolidations.
- Risk-Reward Tradeoffs.

### **Step 10: Commission Chooses Other Vital Forces Propelling and Repelling Consolidation**

There are “other forces” that might affect the consolidation plan and the services or structures consolidation itself. The other forces include:

- Economic Development.
- Economic Contraction.
- Elected County Sheriff.
- Other Elected Local Officials.
- Appointed Local Government Employees.
- Debt, Taxation and Services.

- Group Representation.
- Municipal Option.
- Structure of Consolidated Governing Body.
- Chairperson of Consolidated Governing Body.
- Dual Majority Vote Requirement.
- Consolidation Campaigns.

A force propelling or repelling consolidation is the power of a person, group, idea, fact, context, etc. to control, persuade, influence, etc. consolidation choices. Propelling forces are drivers for consolidation. Repelling forces are restrainers against consolidation. The forces may be strong or weak. The relative net strength or weakness of the forces determines whether consolidation does or does not occur.

For example, if the elected county sheriff supports or is neutral about consolidation, he or she is unlikely to be a repelling force against consolidation. But if the sheriff is a repelling force, the consolidation study commission will have to prepare, adopt and market a consolidation plan that excludes the sheriff. He or she can be expected to remain neutral or inactive about consolidation.

Although they are not known to have the influence of the county sheriff, the county clerk, register of deeds and treasurer are three other elected officials who are affected by city-county and county-county services and structures consolidation.

The treatment of appointed local government employees is another aspect of consolidation. The status of the most powerful employee groups --- the deputy sheriffs and city police officers --- is central to the issues regarding the transition for government employees in the consolidation.

Taxes are a major issue in consolidation. Some voting taxpayers fear that consolidation will increase their taxes for debt retirement and current operations. Other voting taxpayers fear that consolidation will not decrease their taxes. Both are repelling forces.

Many different factors are considered when choosing the size and structure of the consolidated governing body. One of the more critical aspects of structure relates to the areas represented by members of the governing body. Diversity plays an important role in consolidation politics, particularly in communities that have diverse populations.

Minor municipalities can be excluded or allowed to opt out of consolidation, but still retain the right to vote on consolidation plan implementation.

Two aspects of the governing body structure concern supporters of consolidation. The first is the actual size of the new governing body. The second is the structure of the governing body. On the surface, neither aspect appears to be a significant propelling or repelling force affecting consolidation.

The consolidation study commission looks forward to the marketing of the final consolidation plan when it is studying consolidation, preparing the preliminary plan, and adopting the final plan.

In a strong pro-consolidation campaign, the fundamental message must be that the current structure [and services] of local government are unable to support the economic development vision promoted by the civic leaders. Consolidation would promote economic development with an improved, efficient and effective government, as well as provide better governance and planning for the local regional community. Successful opposition campaigns are a strong force repelling consolidation, not because of money, but because they often have the support of a leading elected local official. Successful opposition to consolidation can be former members of local governing bodies, members of the consolidation study commission, and sheriffs.

The consolidation study commission's staff summarizes the information the commission received from Steps 3 through Step 10. The commission analyzes, discusses and reaches consensus on the information that is vital to it preparing a successful consolidation plan and achieving a successful consolidation.

The commission prepares a consolidation plan that ensures that the propelling forces are stronger than the repelling forces so that the plan contains the services or structures consolidation that enable local governments to achieve service performance and other provisions needed to move the local regional community on the course to its vision.

#### **Step 11: Commission Prepares the Preliminary Consolidation Plan**

During its consolidation study, the commission chooses whether services or structures consolidation is necessary. The commission and the separate local governments involved in the consolidation collaborate with one another in the commission's preparation of the consolidation plan. The commission may also ask for the collaboration of the local regional community coalition, other persons and organizations who are local government stakeholders. The commission prepares a preliminary plan that fits the local regional community.

#### **Step 12: Commission Requests Comments and Questions on the Consolidation Plan**

The commission needs public comments and questions on the preliminary consolidation plan before it adopts a final consolidation plan which will be submitted to voters for approval or disapproval of plan implementation.

The community coalition, elected local officials, other community leaders, voters and other residents review the preliminary consolidation plan and respond to the consolidation study commission's request for comments and questions on the plan.

Particularly important is the community coalition which local government stakeholders began building in Step 2 and continue to build and maintain while the consolidation commission undertakes Step 5 through Step 10. At Step 12 the coalition evaluates the preliminary plan and determines whether it, if implemented, would resolve the issues the coalition identified in Step 3 or in Step 4. The coalition submits to the consolidation commission its comments and questions on the plan.

#### **Step 13: Commission Reviews Comments and Questions, and Chooses the Next Step**

What the commission chooses to do in Step 13 depends on its review of the comments and questions it received on the preliminary consolidation plan it prepared in Step 12. Some of the choices after the review are summarized below.

1. Commission chooses not to revise the preliminary plan and goes to Step 14.
2. Commission chooses to revise the preliminary plan and goes to Step 14.
3. Commission chooses to revise the preliminary plan, but first repeats Step 10, Step 11 and Step 12, and then goes to Step 14.
4. Commission chooses not to revise the preliminary plan or not to agree on the revisions of the plan and terminates the consolidation process at Step 13.
5. Community coalition goes to Step 19: Coalition Chooses Whether to Pursue Consolidation Alternatives.

Which choice the commission chooses to exercise depends largely, if not entirely on whether commission members reach consensus on the contents of the preliminary plan. The commission determines whether it can reach consensus by going to **Step 14**.

#### **Step 14: Commission Adopts the Final Consolidation Plan**

The adoption of the final consolidation plan by the consolidation planning commission might be achieved through a consensus among commission members or a majority of the commission members voting for adoption of either the preliminary plan as the final plan, or a revised version of the preliminary plan as the final plan.

After the commission adopts the final consolidation plan, the time has arrived to share the plan with voters and other residents.

#### **Step 15: Commission, Coalition and Others Market the Final Consolidation Plan**

Implementation of the final consolidation plan requires voter approval. Once the consolidation study commission adopts its plan, the next step is to design and implement a campaign strategy to obtain voter support. As discussed earlier, a winning strategy is not about outspending the opponents of the plan. The key is an honest, accurate and clear message that explains the need for plan approval and asks voters to approve the plan.

It is also critical or at least advisable that elected local government officials support or at least not oppose the plan, and, if possible, play a major role in marketing the plan.

The process of building a winning coalition for consolidation plan implementation is based on three ideas:

- Most voters make reasoned or emotional decisions about plan implementation.
- Preferences of a small percentage of voters are useful in predicting the preferences of all voters.
- Voters take into account what other voters may decide before making their own decisions.

#### **Step 16: Majority of Voters Approve or Disapprove Implementation of the Final Consolidation Plan**

If a majority of voters approves the plan, the plan is ready for implementation by the affected local governments. If the plan calls for consolidated services, the local governments currently

producing those services separately should collaborate in making the transition from separated to consolidated services. If the plan calls for consolidated structures, officials of the local governments should collaborate in replacing the separated governments with one consolidated government.

The approved consolidation plan will require either services consolidation or structures consolidation. In either case, the coalition plays a more limited role and the local governing body goes to Step 17.

### **Step 17: Governing Body Utilizes Transition Team and Plan to Implement the Final Consolidation Plan**

The final consolidation plan approved by voters is ready for implementation. Plan implementation is achieved by appointing a transition team which prepares a transition plan. The transition team and transition plan depend on which one of the two possible types of consolidation plans prepared in Step 11 and approved in Step 16:

- A plan that transfers one or more specific services of two or more separated local governments to one these governments or to a separate entity. This is services consolidation.
- A plan that abolishes the entire structures (including all services) of two or more separated local governments and transfers them to a new consolidated government. This is structures consolidation.

The implementation of each of these consolidation plans is different and, therefore, each requires a different transition plan.

### **Step 18: Coalition and Others, After Voter Disapproval of Plan Implementation, Choose Whether to Again Pursue Consolidation**

A few weeks, months or years after voters disapprove implementation of the final consolidation plan, the community coalition and perhaps others could choose whether to continue to pursue consolidation.

If the coalition chooses to again pursue consolidation, it should reexamine the earlier steps in light of the voting to determine whether to support the resubmission of the same plan, or to revise or develop a new version of the disapproved consolidation plan.

### **Step 19: Coalition Chooses Whether to Pursue Alternatives to Consolidation**

At any point in this process the community coalition may choose to go to Step 19. Why? For example, it might conclude that KSA does not authorize the type of consolidation for the local governments it wants studied by a commission. Or the coalition concludes that services or structures consolidation is an inappropriate way to resolve the issues it has identified. Or, the commission may receive public comments on services and/or structures consolidation and concludes that it cannot prepare a plan that a majority of commission, or the voters will approve. Step 19 becomes the “second best” way of resolving the vital issues identified in Step 3 or the vital community issues in Step 4.

Consolidation alternatives include interlocal agreements, special purpose districts, annexation, collaboration strategies. A lengthy discussion of these alternatives is found in the Complete Guide.

## **Step 20: Consolidation Commission, Community Coalition and Local Governing Bodies Inform the Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations (KACIR) about Lessons Learned**

The lessons Kansans learned from successful and unsuccessful consolidations and alternatives in the past will be useful to them in the future in at least two ways:

- Choosing whether to undertake consolidation or an alternative in their community, and if the choice is to undertake either one,
- Choosing how to tailor a consolidation or an alternative so that it will be successful in resolving the issue(s) confronting the community.

This information can reduce the time, effort and cost in making these choices. It can also aid in tailoring the consolidation or alternative to fit the contexts of each local regional community in Kansas. Please inform the KACIR by contacting the Kansas Department of Revenue.

## **Twenty Steps and Beyond**

**Step 1** through **Step 20** aims to enable civic-minded residents, the local regional community coalition, the consolidation study commission, elected local officials and voters to make more informed and successful choices about local governance in Kansas. These choices pertain to consolidations --- whether services or structures consolidation --- and alternatives --- whether services contracts, interlocal agreements or other arrangements. These local governance reforms are sometimes complex and difficult, and therefore can require more than a little time, effort and resources to study, prepare, adopt, market and implement.

Local governments can obtain various types of assistance from their state associations. Cities obtain assistance from the League of Kansas Municipalities. Counties obtain assistance from the Kansas Association of Counties. School districts obtain assistance from the Kansas Association of School Boards. All local governments obtain assistance from KACIR.

*If only we could restructure our local governments and improve working relations among them, residents in our community would live better lives.*

We began the **Guide** with the above statement. If Kansans in local regional communities choose to pursue consolidations or alternatives, they must undertake these 20 steps with integrity, deliberation, diplomacy and determination. This approach increases the chances of success and enables more Kansans to live better lives. After all, that is the overarching mission of local government service performance.