Shared Vision:
Lessons Learned In Facilitating Partnerships to Sustain Rural Communities
Benefits of Regionalization

- Improve Effluent Quality and Treatment Affordability
- Improve Level and Cost of Service
- Focus on System Sustainability, the Long-Term Vision of the Future

Photo credit: Ashley Zuelke, RCAP
Context for Lessons Learned

HEAT MAP:
RCAP Regionalization Projects mid 2012 to mid 2018*

- RCAP’s regionalization work began nearly 20 years ago
- In June of 2018, captured data on at least five years of regionalization projects
- Personal experience working on projects

*Conservative estimates
1. Regionalization consolidation, but can

Increasing Transfer of Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal Cooperation</th>
<th>Contractual Assistance</th>
<th>Joint Powers Agency</th>
<th>Ownership Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work with other systems but without contractual obligations</strong></td>
<td>Requires a contract, but contract is under system’s control</td>
<td>Creation of an entity by several systems that continue to exist independently (e.g., regional water system)</td>
<td>Takeover by existing or newly created entity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sharing Equipment</td>
<td>• Contracting operation and management</td>
<td>• Sharing System Management</td>
<td>• Acquisition and physical interconnection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sharing bulk supply purchases</td>
<td>• Outsourcing engineering services</td>
<td>• Sharing operators</td>
<td>• Acquisition and satellite mgmt</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mutual aid arrangements</td>
<td>• Purchasing water</td>
<td>• Sharing source water</td>
<td>• One system transferring ownership to another to become a larger existing system or a new entity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMUNITIES Unlimited
2. “Let’s help you regionalize / you should think about regionalizing” is not the best conversation starter

- Building trust between integral stakeholders first is key
- Regionalization does not work if forced

- The amount of buy-in generation that needs to occur is significant
- The main reason we have seen that communities decide not to pursue a partnership is sovereignty
3. Don’t underestimate history

- Let communities tell each other their stories
  - Why and how were they established?
  - How did their community first get water service?
  - What were the economic drivers?
  - What are the similarities/distinctions of their water supply’s history?
4. Everybody should win
(and each community can define “winning” for themselves)

Systems need a driver to even consider regional collaboration

Most Frequent Precipitating Conditions for Regionalization by RCAP Region (2012-2018 projects)

1. Management and Operations Capacity Challenges
2. Infrastructure Conditions
3. Water Availability Issues
4. Compliance & State Laws

1. Water Quality Issues
2. Financial Issues
3. Compliance

1. Financial Issues
2. Management and Operations Capacity Challenges
3. Water Quality Issues

1. Water Quality Issues
2. Unsanitary Conditions
3. Compliance

1. Compliance
2. Management and Operations Capacity Challenges
3. Infrastructure Conditions
5. Regionalization does not happen overnight

- Often negotiations can take several years, and even up to a decade
- It is better to explore all options and be thorough than rush into it. Do not want systems involved to regret the results later
- There are less than desirable ways to regionalize and there are cases where the solution was the "wrong fit" for that unique set of systems
- No two regionalization projects are the same
6. Having a third-party, non-biased professional facilitator helps

- Can bring all parties to the table, provide the education and resources needed
- Can help interested parties move through this often-complicated process
- Critical to maintaining momentum, facilitating needed connections, translating, and negotiating
- Have no stake in the result and can guide parties – often with some creativity – toward the light at the end of the tunnel

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Questions?

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