

Community & Economic Development Series: Number 2

Seneca County's Local Governments

*Opportunities for Intergovernmental
Cooperation, Needs for Educational
and Technical Assistance*

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Duane Wilcox

C O R N E L L

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM



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The Local Government Assistance Project

**Seneca County's Local Governments:
Opportunities for Intergovernmental Cooperation,
Needs for Educational and Technical Assistance**

August 1995

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Abstract

The Local Government Assistance Project is an evolving effort to assist local governments in rural counties improve their prospects for community and economic development by increasing their effectiveness and governance capacity. Borrowing from the Cornell Local Government Program's successful Business Retention and Expansion approach, systematic survey and interview techniques are used to highlight common or pressing technical assistance and educational needs identified by local officials, as well as opportunities for intermunicipal cooperation. A Task Force that includes key local officials helps adapt the generic process to local circumstances, interpret the survey results and formulate and pursue recommendations for responsive "next steps".

This publication reproduces the written materials that resulted from the application of this concept to Seneca County, New York. The project was conducted as part of a larger county-wide effort, funded by the US Department of Labor, that was intended to stimulate economic redevelopment in the county in the wake of extensive downsizing of the Seneca Army Depot. This publication details the procedures used in Seneca County and emphasizes the task force recommendations adopted. The survey and interview responses of officials from each of the county's municipalities and school districts, which served as the basis for the task force recommendations, are also extensively reviewed.

The Local Government Assistance Task Force

The Local Government Assistance Task Force endorses the **Findings, Recommendations and Strategies for Future Action** summarized at the beginning of this report and more fully presented in Chapter 2. While the Task Force provided advice, guidance and hands-on assistance throughout the project, it is responsible only for the **Findings, Recommendations and Strategies for Future Action**. The Local Government Program at Cornell takes full responsibility for all other portions of this document.

Members of the Task Force included:

John Sinicropi	Chair, Seneca County Board of Supervisors
Bill Ritchie	Highway Superintendent, Town of Romulus
John Plume	Superintendent, South Seneca School District
Margaret Birmingham	Director, Office of Employment and Training
Cheryl Schaefer	Project Manager, U.S. Dept. of Labor, D.C.A.
Allen Woodward	Director, Seneca County Cooperative Extension
Thomas A. Mayfield	Vice President, Savannah Bank, N.A.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
of the
Local Government Assistance Task Force

GENERAL PROPOSITION

The Local Government Assistance Task Force believes these recommendations need to be implemented. The Task Force believes further that momentum in this direction must be sustained by creating an institutional “champion” that, with dedicated staff support, is responsible for implementation and follow-up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Local Government Assistance Task Force should be continued and strengthen its ties to county, town, village and school district officials as it advances the recommendations of this Task Force.
- Because of the important relationship between local government policy and economic development, staff support should be provided through agencies that have commitments to both areas, such as the Department of Economic Development and Planning or Cornell Cooperative Extension. In the absence of supplemental funding, adequate staff support might most realistically be provided by formally redefining some duties of an existing position.
- The Local Government Assistance Task Force should have a voting member appointed to the Seneca County Redevelopment Advisory Council.

FINDING 1

Seneca County municipalities already benefit from significant inter-governmental cooperation, the breadth of which ranges from public safety to solid waste, from youth services to real property assessment. (See Report Sections 2.1, 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and implement a multi-faceted effort to publicize the existing significant level of intergovernmental cooperation.
- Work with the media to highlight, and wherever possible record, local examples of successful cooperation.
- Monitor progress in intergovernmental cooperation and develop innovative means to call this to the public’s attention.
- Involve the public as intensively as possible in further work by the Task Force.

FINDING 2

Water and sewer issues have already engaged the serious attention of many municipal leaders throughout the county. The potential for collaboration is widely recognized, sometimes at a very localized scale and sometimes involving larger municipal groupings. (See Sections 2.1 and 3.1.4.1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Meet promptly with the County Water Quality Committee to discuss survey findings. Request a comprehensive review sponsored by this committee of county-wide water and sewer system capacities and needs. The Water Quality Committee should evaluate the review and prepare a set of specific recommendations for the County Board or regional groupings of towns and villages. At least one member of the Local Government Assistance Task Force should coordinate closely with the Water Quality Committee in preparing this document.**

FINDING 3

The school districts already play a significant role as a cultural and educational community resource, and they cooperate with general purpose local governments on a variety of fronts. There is interest on the part of some school administrators in significantly expanding the schools' ability to serve as a community resource, which could involve creative collaboration with local governments in the area of service delivery. (See Sections 2.1 and 3.14)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Work with school administrators and representatives of the county board to "brainstorm" a set of possible school district roles which would be discussed and evaluated at "community forums" in each of the county's school districts.**
- **Collect and make available to all interested parties a set of materials (readings, interview notes, video or audio tapes) that describe successful instances of schools serving as community resources in collaboration with general purpose local governments.**

FINDING 4

Survey respondents identified a potential for expanded cooperative purchasing of materials. School districts and county government are taking the leadership role in this area. (See Sections 2.1, 2.2, 3.1.4.3 and 3.2.4.7)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the potential for cooperative purchasing of supplies and materials with a primary focus on major budget items. The potential for an independent purchasing cooperative should be included in the evaluation.**

FINDING 5

Seneca County already has several existing examples of municipalities cooperatively employing skilled municipal service providers (e.g. assessors). Survey respondents have identified some general opportunities along these lines. (See Sections 2.1 and 3.1.4.4)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Invite local officials to a series of monthly meetings about successful shared professional service arrangements. Presentations should be by involved persons from Seneca County and beyond. Produce a “user-friendly” summary report and/or video of each presentation and discussion for distribution to meeting participants and to officials unable to attend the meetings.**
- **Work with meeting participants to help assess and document the way municipalities currently meet their service needs, the stability of these arrangements, and the locally perceived advantages and disadvantages of moving towards shared service providers.**

FINDING 6

Pursuit of collaborative or self insurance provision (health, liability, equipment) was “vigorously” recommended by the 1991 county-sponsored Highway Task Force, and was highlighted by one of the public works superintendents we interviewed and mentioned by other officials. (See Section 2.1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop support for and implement a study of the potential in Seneca County for comprehensive cooperative insurance programs. After establishing the facts of existing municipal insurance in Seneca county, a report should document experiences in other New York counties, provide estimates of likely costs and benefits for Seneca County, and make specific recommendations.**

FINDING 7

Municipal officials identified the need for a wide range of information, training and technical assistance that would help them perform their responsibilities more effectively. The most widespread interest was expressed in “leadership” issues such as creating and implementing a long term community vision, and finding capable people to serve in public office. (See Sections 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Task Force as a whole should work with each subcommittee to help prioritize these needs further, evaluate the options for meeting those needs, identify possible service providers, and then organize or advocate to meet the high priority needs.**

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC WORKS

FINDING 1

From one perspective, the compatibility of this Task Force's findings with those identified by a previous task force is a useful confirmation that the outstanding areas of concern and opportunity have been successfully isolated. From a second perspective, the fact that several of the same issues continue to surface four years later is a practical reminder of the amount of "follow-through", leadership and dedicated effort that is required to change the existing way of doing things. (See Section 2.2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Local Government Assistance Task Force should establish a Highway Subcommittee in cooperation with the county Highway Superintendent and the county's Highway Superintendent Association. This subcommittee must have adequate staff support to enable it to advance the recommendations presented in this report.**

FINDING 2

Cooperation between town and village highway and public works departments already exists and is routine, substantial, and accepted as successful by participants. It is grounded in an informal atmosphere of trust and regular communication. (See Sections 2.2 and 3.2)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop and implement strategies that will continually publicize the extent and benefits of cooperation among municipal highway and public works departments. Coordinate with any parallel efforts to publicize other forms of intermunicipal cooperation.**
- **Evaluate the existing system of informal cooperation for chip sealing, paving and ditch cleaning in search of potentially significant improvements.**
- **Make appropriate recommendations based on a review of the existing liability exposure of municipalities participating in cooperative highway and public works activities.**

FINDING 3

Joint purchasing and bidding on materials and equipment already exists to some extent, but the existing system might be improved to take advantage of opportunities and better meet the needs of the users. (See Sections 2.2 and 3.2.4.7)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Determine whether significant new equipment purchases in the towns, villages or county are likely in the near future and, if so, whether a cooperative approach to any of these purchases would yield net benefits.**
- **Study county bid arrangements for road materials to determine what improvements might be made to provide additional benefits for participants.**

FINDING 4

Both the highway superintendent and companion municipal/school district surveys revealed interest in the potential for cooperative maintenance agreements, possibly in conjunction with regionalized maintenance facilities. (See Sections 2.2 and 3.2.4.3)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Follow through with an exploration of the specific potential for the school districts, county, towns and villages to implement both small and large-scale cooperative arrangements to provide vehicle maintenance.**

FINDING 5

The construction of joint salt storage facilities is a proposal that continues to look very promising. The proposal is strongly supported by the County Highway Superintendent, has the attention of most local highway superintendents and the support of some, but has not been implemented. In some locations, practical solutions will need to involve the state as well as local governments. (See Sections 2.2 and 3.2.4.6)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Identify and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of specific cooperative alternatives for providing salt storage facilities, building upon the input of all possible governments and the assistance of personnel with knowledge of the practical issues involved with siting.**

FINDING 6

There are significant differences of opinion both within and between towns about whether or not contractual agreements with the County are economically beneficial. Snowplowing agreements with the county are a case in point, with only four towns currently plowing county roads. (See Sections 2.2 and 3.2.4.4)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The town and county highway superintendents, together with appropriately selected members of some town boards, should begin an open discussion with a neutral moderator regarding the most appropriate approaches to setting reimbursement rates for contract work and for the rental of county equipment. This moderated discussion should occur under the sponsorship of the County Board of Supervisor's Government Operations Committee.**
- The discussion should be supplemented with credible estimates of the actual costs to towns of plowing county roads, and make reference to documented examples of contractual arrangements in other counties.**
- If it were decided to abandon the current rate structure, a procedure for periodically updating reimbursement and rental rates ought to be negotiated such that the procedure could be formally recommended for adoption by the Government Operations Committee.**

1. Project Overview

1.1 Introduction

In the wake of major reductions in the civilian and military work forces at the Seneca Army Depot that capped a number of other negative economic events and trends, Seneca County cooperated with the New York State Department of Labor to secure a Defense Conversion Adjustment Demonstration Project from the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. While this project has several specific objectives, the overall goal is to contribute significantly to Seneca County's economic redevelopment. The project accomplishes this goal by developing information, strategies and programs, strengthening leadership, building new relationships and generating an overall economic development plan. An important part of the project is also to document its processes and outcomes so that other limited-resource rural areas facing economic dislocations from base closures and realignments may learn from Seneca County's experience.

The developers of the project proposal recognized that a plan for redeveloping Seneca County's economy should develop information on local government services and include recommendations for improving them. *Local government services are a significant part of the business environment. They are essential for businesses to produce their goods and services. They contribute significantly to the quality of life and thereby provide either incentives or disincentives for firms and their owners and employees to come to or remain in an area. Also, the taxes and other revenues that support local government services are significant costs to businesses; thus, these costs affect the competitiveness of firms and whether they remain in an area and, indeed, remain in business.*

The "Local Government Assistance Project" was developed and implemented as a part of the overall project in order to respond to this need to address the local government aspects of redeveloping the Seneca County economy. The Local Government Program (LGP) at Cornell University, a long-established research and extension education program, developed the project proposal in consultation with Seneca County staff. The LGP took the lead in implementing the project, but consulted at crucial points with county staff and a task force of county staff, local officials, and other local leaders. Certain county staff and Cooperative Extension staff played significant roles at times in project implementation.

The Local Government Assistance Project was primarily focused on one objective: to identify recommendations for improving Seneca County's local governments as a part of an overall community plan. A mailed survey and interviews with local officials were the principal means chosen for achieving this objective. These procedures were designed to identify opportunities for increasing intergovernmental cooperation and meeting educational and technical assistance needs. The basic approach is adapted from the LGP's experiences with its successful Business Retention and Expansion Program.

Three other components helped support the Seneca County survey effort. One component provided local officials with information on the impacts on local government finances and services subsequent to military facility closures and downsizings in other places. This information was intended to help them consider what to expect in Seneca County and help them think about possible responses. A second and related component provided them with fiscal histories and projections for their particular jurisdictions to help them react to the changes at the Seneca Army Depot. A third component was a survey that identified their opinions about the impacts of these changes on their towns and villages and their perspectives on the economic futures of these jurisdictions.

The following sections provide brief descriptions of each of the major components of the Local Government Assistance Project as it was applied in Seneca County. Since the supporting components provided part of the context for the basic cooperation opportunities and needs survey, these supporting elements are described first.

1.2 Fiscal Impacts of Base Closures

An initial project component was focused on the impacts of military base closures and realignments on the expenditures, revenues, and services of nearby local governments. The downsizing and/or closure of the Seneca Army Depot is one of many such occurrences during the 1960's and 1970's and now again in the 1990's. Each military base and its relationships with surrounding governments constitute a unique case, as does the way in which any particular base is closed or realigned. Yet a review of as many experiences as possible could help Seneca County local officials identify possible impacts in their particular case and consider short and long-term responses that will help to redevelop the Seneca County economy.

LGP staff addressed this need by reviewing the available literature on military base closures and realignments. A number of studies of economic impacts on nearby communities and fiscal impacts for their local governments have been done over the years. LPG staff undertook an extensive literature search to identify fiscal impact studies focused on the closure and realignment of bases in smaller urban and rural areas. They then used these studies to prepare an overview document entitled The Fiscal Impacts of Base Closures: Insights for Seneca County Local Governments. This document was distributed by overall project staff to local officials in late 1994. A version of this document by Michael Hattery and Robert Koch was published as "The Fiscal Impacts of Base Closures: Insights for Rural Local Governments", Government Finance Review, Vol. 11, #2, April 1995, pp. 7-10.

1.3 Fiscal Profiles for Towns and Villages

A complement to this document was provided by another project component. Few small local governments, in Seneca County and elsewhere, maintain their own fiscal histories; such histories can provide an important context for thinking about the future, both in

terms of what could happen regardless of local action and what local officials and the citizenry would like to make happen. In this particular case, fiscal histories could provide a context for thinking about the fiscal and service impacts of the downsizing or closure of the Seneca Army Depot. For example, how might the trend lines for the town's real property tax rate be affected by the closing of the depot?

To inform local officials and stimulate their thinking concerning such questions, LGP staff prepared "fiscal profiles." They used the information reported annually by the county's towns and villages to the NYS Comptroller's Office to construct tables and graphs for the ten most recent years of available data for each jurisdiction; the tables and graphs showed dollar amounts for various expenditure and revenue items, full value of taxable real property, and real property tax rates. They also projected into the future trend lines for certain fiscal items. An accompanying narrative statement described certain trends in the historical data and the future projections. These fiscal profiles were distributed to all town supervisors and village mayors and some town highway superintendents in conjunction with the survey process described below. In addition, in response to requests from local parties, a fiscal profile for Seneca County was prepared and distributed later.

The fiscal profiles are available from the authors.

1.4 Municipal Fiscal Conditions Survey

A third project component undertaken in late 1994 and early 1995 was a "Municipal Fiscal Conditions Survey." In contrast to the fiscal profiles, which primarily documented actual fiscal data from the past, in this case the focus was on eliciting the opinions of town and village officials about the impacts of the downsizing of the depot on their jurisdictions' fiscal situations, how they were responding, and their perspectives on the economic futures of their towns and villages. The general tendencies revealed by this survey should be useful to the town and villages officials themselves as well as to the Seneca County Redevelopment Advisory Committee as it develops recommendations for future action to improve the county's economy. In addition, the survey was intended to serve as an initial contact for the second and much more intensive survey process described below. Thirty-one officials completed the survey form.

A more detailed description of this survey is presented in Appendix I.

1.5 The Cooperation Opportunities and Educational and Technical Assistance Needs Survey

The central project component intended to develop recommendations to improve local government operations and thereby the local economic environment was based in good part on the Local Government Program's assessment of the history of local government reform efforts in New York State. For decades New York's system of cities, towns, and villages has been widely criticized, particularly by business people, for being inefficient,

duplicative, and costly. One alleged outcome is a poor operating environment for business. The standard prescription has been "Consolidate, consolidate!! Eliminate most of those small, inefficient, overlapping, duplicate units of local government!" While this has broad appeal in the abstract, when applied to a specific area, it has rarely been accepted by the great majority of local officials or the general citizenry. In contrast, in many cases, intergovernmental cooperation offers substantial gains in efficiency or improved services and is much less likely to encounter the same level of resistance; city, town, and village governments have a solid--although not widely appreciated--record of intergovernmental cooperation in search of both greater efficiency and better services, documented by previous Local Government Program research.

In addition, properly focused, funded, and staffed educational and technical assistance programs for local officials often offer impressive gains in productivity and are widely accepted by local government officials. The fifty-year record of the Cornell Highway School, which has helped introduce thousands of town highway superintendents to improved practices, is an excellent example; so, too, are its well-attended regional workshops of recent years. Other examples are the well-received computerized budgeting program for towns and villages developed by the Cornell Local Government Program and its program in the mid-1980's to introduce local officials to the use of microcomputer technology.

The LGP staff's observations on county-wide local government reform efforts were also relevant for the development of this project component. Typically, a local group of leaders is recruited and asked to develop recommendations to improve efficiency or services or both. In some cases, local government officials have been excluded from these groups, reflecting views that they are a large part of the problem and, as members of the group, would work to "water down" or defeat the most important possibilities for constructive changes. In the great majority of cases, however, this exclusion denies the group the benefit of the practical knowledge of local government possessed by these officials. More importantly, it undermines an opportunity that is frequently significant to develop with them recommendations they would not only consider desirable but would be willing to help implement. The most significant outcome in these cases is usually a large measure of frustration on the part of reform group members and those expecting meaningful changes to follow from their efforts.

Based on the foregoing, the Local Government Program worked with Seneca County staff to develop and implement a survey of town and village officials to identify opportunities for additional intergovernmental cooperation and educational and technical assistance needs. An earlier ad hoc effort of this nature had been completed by the LGP in Tioga County in cooperation with the Tioga County Council of Governments in 1993. Seneca County represented an opportunity to make major improvements in the approach used in Tioga County, and to apply the technique to a county with the Board of Supervisors form of government..

The survey effort proceeded in a number of steps:

- A combination of county, town, village, and school district officials, county staff, and other community leaders were recruited as members of a “Local Government Assistance Task Force.”
- The Local Government Assistance Task Force reviewed the proposal and provided input to help LGP staff develop a plan for its implementation.
- The Local Government Program, with the assistance of the Survey Research Unit of the Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research (CISER), developed survey “instruments.” One instrument (“checklist”) asked local officials to identify activities in which they currently cooperated with other local governments and additional opportunities to cooperate; two other checklists asked them to identify their governments’ educational and technical assistance needs. An interviewer’s guide was also developed.
- The institute staff trained Local Government Program staff and volunteers from the Local Government Assistance Task Force in the use of the instruments and the interviewer’s guide.
- The checklists were mailed to the local officials who had earlier been asked to complete the “Municipal Fiscal Conditions Survey.” This was a selection of town supervisors and highway superintendents, school superintendents, village mayors and public works superintendents, and county supervisors who were not also town supervisors; one village administrator was also included. They were asked to complete the checklists and mail them back to Seneca County Cooperative Extension Director Allen Woodward, the local interview coordinator. In actual practice, many of them completed and/or returned them when the interviewers arrived (see next step).
- Teams of two trained interviewers (including LGP staff and 3 other Task Force members, plus affiliated staff) conducted interviews with the local officials to explore their checklist responses in more detail. In particular, they encouraged the local officials to discuss in more detail two existing cooperative activities that they thought were most successful or those cooperation opportunities that they thought it would be most fruitful for their local governments to pursue. The interviewers also asked the respondents to discuss the most important of the educational and technical assistance needs they had identified on the needs checklists. Extensive notes were taken on these interviews.
- The responses to the completed checklists were then summarized into tables and the interview notes were transcribed by CISER staff. LGP staff used this information to develop reports that emphasized trends in the data, widespread consensus on issues, and original and insightful thinking by the interviewees.
- LGP staff reviewed these reports with the task force members and worked with them to develop Task Force recommendations that they believed were supported by the survey information for submission to the Seneca County Redevelopment Advisory Committee.

The reports and recommendations are presented in the following chapters.

It is important to keep in mind that recommendations that relate to changes in governmental structure, relationships, and processes are, for the most part, only first--albeit important--steps in processes aimed at meaningful changes. Most of them call for additional study by local groups with support from staff. This reflects the fact that the interview process used in this case was intended to identify a list of possibilities; it was not intended to go further to produce the detailed analyses needed by local parties to decide whether each particular possibility represents a feasible opportunity for meaningful change, nor was it intended to produce the list of steps that must be taken to convert each feasible opportunity into reality. These are matters that must be addressed by additional analysis, negotiations among local governments and the local officials responsible for particular tasks, input from the public, etc.

This crucial fact calls attention to what will be needed to produce meaningful changes as a result of the work initiated by the Local Government Assistance Task Force. The work of such groups in other counties has produced little meaningful change in a number of cases. Often the finger of blame has been pointed at the narrow self-interest of local officials and the hold on both them and their citizens of established ways and an irrational fear of change. Of equal or greater importance in many cases, however, is that the initial group is disbanded and no successor group, assisted by able staff, is constituted to carry forward its work; recommendations that require additional analysis and that relate to numerous jurisdictions will not be implemented just because they are included in a final report. For this reason, the Local Government Assistance Task Force's reports include "how-to" recommendations relating to a successor group, subgroups for pursuing particular recommendations, the provision of staff, and use of existing groups for moving forward with the task force's substantive recommendations. Reports do not change institutions; it is people with resources and determination who do.

2. Findings, Recommendations and Strategies for Future Action Endorsed by the Seneca County Local Government Assistance Task Force

2.1 Cooperative Opportunities for Municipalities and School Districts

The following findings, recommendations and strategies are based upon this Task Force's review of summaries of interviews with twenty-three town, village, county and school district officials in Seneca County. Out of a large number of excellent ideas and themes, we have featured only those that we feel are most promising for Seneca County. The Task Force offers all of these recommendations in the spirit of enhancing the effectiveness and public responsiveness of local governments, which we believe simultaneously enhances the climate for desirable economic development.

GENERAL PROPOSITION

The Local Government Assistance Task Force believes these recommendations need to be implemented. The Task Force believes further that momentum in this direction must be sustained by creating an institutional "champion" that, with dedicated staff support, is responsible for implementation and follow-up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Local Government Assistance Task Force should be continued and strengthen its ties to county, town, village and school district officials as it advances the recommendations of this Task Force.**
- **Because of the important relationship between local government policy and economic development, staff support should be provided through agencies that have commitments to both areas, such as the Department of Economic Development and Planning or Cornell Cooperative Extension. In the absence of supplemental funding, adequate staff support might most realistically be provided by formally redefining some duties of an existing position.**
- **The Local Government Assistance Task Force should have a voting member appointed to the Seneca County Redevelopment Advisory Council.**

Discussion

The existing Local Government Assistance Task Force should be continued and strengthened, with an assurance of adequate staffing. The purpose of this Task Force should be to prioritize the recommendations presented here, to develop specific follow-up strategies for some or all of them, and to set those strategies in motion. In general this

will involve additional prioritization of strategies, initial recruitment and mobilization of a broad range of interested parties with some stake in the implementation of the strategies, and collection of additional information.

An important role of the Task Force will be to coordinate different follow-up efforts and associated Task Force subcommittees. The Task Force should plan on creating subcommittees, each of which would have the primary responsibility for pursuing one or several related key recommendations. Each subcommittee should be represented on the Task Force.

Membership on the Task Force should be modestly increased as subcommittees are created. In general, additional members should be local officials who help strengthen the primary character of the Task Force as a geographically diverse body representing all types of major local governments - towns, villages, schools and the county. Because officials of these governments always play an essential role in the success of attempts to spur collaborative intergovernmental change, they should have a dominant role on the Task Force. However, a limited number of other community leaders should also be added to the Task Force in order to add to the breadth of perspective represented. At the subcommittee level, recruitment of members should begin as broadly as possible, explicitly involving as equal partners the full range of parties with a well-defined interest in the recommendation.

FINDING 1

Seneca County municipalities already benefit from significant inter-governmental cooperation, the breadth of which ranges from public safety to solid waste, from youth services to real property assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop and implement a multi-faceted effort to publicize the existing significant level of intergovernmental cooperation.**
- **Work with the media to highlight, and wherever possible record, local examples of successful cooperation.**
- **Monitor progress in intergovernmental cooperation and develop innovative means to call this to the public's attention.**
- **Involve the public as intensively as possible in further work by the Task Force.**

Discussion

The extent of existing inter-governmental cooperation is not adequately appreciated by the public or even current officials. In order to promote a realistic understanding of local government in Seneca County and the full potential for intergovernmental cooperation, we recommend that the results of this survey be widely publicized along with case studies of successful existing cooperative efforts. Further public education will be enhanced through direct involvement of the public in further Task Force work.

FINDING 2

Water and sewer issues have already engaged the serious attention of many municipal leaders throughout the county. The potential for collaboration is widely recognized, sometimes at a very localized scale and sometimes involving larger municipal groupings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Meet promptly with the County Water Quality Committee to discuss survey findings. Request a comprehensive review sponsored by this committee of county-wide water and sewer system capacities and needs. The Water Quality Committee should evaluate the review and prepare a set of specific recommendations for the County Board or regional groupings of towns and villages. At least one member of the Local Government Assistance Task Force should coordinate closely with the Water Quality Committee in preparing this document.**

Discussion

Within this general topic area there are diverse possibilities that range from collaboration on billing services to joint purchase of specialized maintenance equipment to extending water and sewage services to new areas. The changing situation at the depot and at Willard Psychiatric Center pose unique challenges and opportunities in this regard. There is great potential to build on existing collaborative arrangements and ongoing but currently uncoordinated intermunicipal discussions or negotiations. We strongly recommend that a comprehensive, county-wide review be undertaken of water and sewer system capacities and needs. Obviously, this review will touch on some issues that have significant short and long term planning and public investment implications, both locally and county-wide. In order to take full advantage of the intermunicipal negotiations that are already underway and avoid missed opportunities, the review must be undertaken as soon as possible. We believe that the County Water Quality Committee is well situated to manage this review.

FINDING 3

The school districts already play a significant role as a cultural and educational community resource, and they cooperate with general purpose local governments on a variety of fronts. There is interest on the part of some school administrators in significantly expanding the schools' ability to serve as a community resource, which could involve creative collaboration with local governments in the area of service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Work with school administrators and representatives of the county board to “brainstorm” a set of possible school district roles which would be discussed and evaluated at “community forums” in each of the county’s school districts.**
- **Collect and make available to all interested parties a set of materials (readings, interview notes, video or audio tapes) that describe successful instances of schools serving as community resources in collaboration with general purpose local governments.**

Discussion

With a significant organizing effort, school facilities and resources could be used to help deliver a variety of services to the public, particularly recognizing the schools' access to the decentralizing and “bridge-building” potential of new technology (computers and telecommunications). *The benefits might be particularly noteworthy insofar as they help better unify the northern and southern ends of the county.* At a time when revenues are tight all around, the schools' existing and potential capacities with respect to training, technological infrastructure, physical facilities and transportation infrastructure offer exciting prospects for collaborative activity. Initial collaborative efforts might be grounded in the provision of certain administrative or youth-oriented functions with a focus on decentralized delivery of county services, but with some attention to relationships to towns and villages, too. The Task Force recognizes that this is a broad vision at an early stage that could be elaborated in many directions. However, we strongly recommend that the Task Force work with school officials and school communities to develop some specific proposals for consideration by the school districts and county board.

FINDING 4

Survey respondents identified a potential for expanded cooperative purchasing of materials. School districts and county government are taking the leadership role in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the potential for cooperative purchasing of supplies and materials with a primary focus on major budget items. The potential for an independent purchasing cooperative should be included in the evaluation.**

Discussion

A county-wide mechanism for the joint purchasing of highway materials is already in place. This is not true for most other materials purchased by local governments. Given the relative quantities of materials likely to be purchased, it is reasonable that the county and school districts would show the greatest interest in pursuing cooperation in this area. We recommend that a comprehensive evaluation of the potential for joint materials purchasing be undertaken, with a focus on major budget items. The evaluation would include an inventory of current purchasing patterns, including sources, material specifications, prices and any special requirements. The results of this review should be presented to the county board, the schools and town and village officials. The review should be spearheaded by the county in cooperation with the school districts. The materials purchasing requirements of villages and towns should also be thoroughly explored, including their potentially more prominent role in an independent purchasing cooperative.

FINDING 5

Seneca County already has several existing examples of municipalities cooperatively employing skilled municipal service providers (e.g. assessors). Survey respondents have identified some general opportunities along these lines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Invite local officials to a series of monthly meetings about successful shared professional service arrangements. Presentations should be by involved persons from Seneca County and beyond. Produce a “user-friendly” summary report and/or video of each presentation and discussion for distribution to meeting participants and to officials unable to attend the meetings.**

- **Work with meeting participants to help assess and document the way municipalities currently meet their service needs, the stability of these arrangements, and the locally perceived advantages and disadvantages of moving towards shared service providers.**

Discussion

The most prominent success in this area may be the employment of a single assessor by four municipalities in the county. Another success involving three municipalities has been in the provision of staffing for youth recreation. Other areas of potential collaboration mentioned during the interviews were shared bookkeepers, town justices and tax collectors. Statewide, the Comptroller's office has documented joint activities in many other functional areas including building code enforcement, planning, zoning, solid waste and public safety. The interview results suggest that this is an area of some potential. However, more information is required about the way municipalities currently meet their service needs, the stability of these arrangements, and the locally perceived advantages and disadvantages of moving towards shared service providers. We recommend that a strategy for collecting this information efficiently and evaluating it be developed by the Task Force or a subcommittee of the Task Force.

FINDING 6

Pursuit of collaborative or self insurance provision (health, liability, equipment) was "vigorously" recommended by the 1991 county-sponsored Highway Task Force, and was highlighted by one of the public works superintendents we interviewed and mentioned by other officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop support for and implement a study of the potential in Seneca County for comprehensive cooperative insurance programs. After establishing the facts of existing municipal insurance in Seneca county, a report should document experiences in other New York counties, provide estimates of likely costs and benefits for Seneca County, and make specific recommendations.**

Discussion

Despite the lack of focus on this issue by more than a few respondents, the Task Force supports the 1991 proposal, which has proven itself in other counties. As documented and promoted by the State Comptroller's Office in a recent publication on "Local Government Cooperative Service Provision", for example, Tioga County has brought towns and villages into their health insurance plan, resulting in significant savings for

taxpayers. The example of Tioga county and other successes should be investigated. There must be a core of support developed for a feasibility study that would bring expertise to bear on the critical questions of potential cost savings and how to build arrangements that can endure. Though this issue area was raised in the context of highways and public works, it is listed here because this prospect will prove most feasible if it gains significant participation of municipalities, schools, fire departments and the county.

FINDING 7

Municipal officials identified the need for a wide range of information, training and technical assistance that would help them perform their responsibilities more effectively. The most widespread interest was expressed in “leadership” issues such as creating and implementing a long term community vision, and finding capable people to serve in public office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Task Force as a whole should work with each subcommittee to help prioritize these needs further, evaluate the options for meeting those needs, identify possible service providers, and then organize or advocate to meet the high priority needs.**

Discussion

On the basis of survey responses and discussion with local officials, the greatest demand for assistance appears to be in the areas of leadership (“visioning”) skills and recruitment and training of new elected or appointed public officials. Other high demand areas include specialized assistance with economic development, evaluating debt instruments, computer training, and engineering and map work related to water and sewer projects. Highway and public works officials expressed a similar set of priorities. The Task Force should work with each subcommittee (or if necessary a new subcommittee should be created) to sort through these survey results further, evaluate the options for efficiently meeting the needs of a variety of related but different audiences, and then organize or advocate for the delivery of the means to meet the high priority needs. A leadership skills conference has been discussed by the Task Force and ought to be considered along with a variety of additional possibilities ranging from specialized training seminars to one-on-one tutorials to mailings of appropriate educational materials.

2.2 Cooperative Opportunities for Highway and Public Works Departments

Four years ago the Seneca County Highway Task Force released a set of findings that highlighted six issues and conclusions. Now, as part of its mandate to consider the potential for intergovernmental cooperation and shared service delivery within Seneca

County, the Local Government Assistance Task Force has also focused on highway services and public works.

The Local Government Assistance Task Force findings were arrived at independently. Not surprisingly, however, the highway findings adopted here build upon the findings submitted in 1991. The 1995 Task Force conclusions are based directly on the observations of town, village and county highway and public works officials who took the time to complete written surveys and to participate in structured interviews with members of the task force. Our findings and recommendations focus on only the key issues derived from summaries of those surveys. Other experiences and collaborative possibilities are discussed in the following summary of the survey results.

FINDING 1

From one perspective, the compatibility of this Task Force's findings with those identified by a previous task force is a useful confirmation that the outstanding areas of concern and opportunity have been successfully isolated. From a second perspective, the fact that several of the same issues continue to surface four years later is a practical reminder of the amount of "follow-through", leadership and dedicated effort that is required to change the existing way of doing things.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Local Government Assistance Task Force should establish a Highway Subcommittee in cooperation with the county Highway Superintendent and the county's Highway Superintendent Association. This subcommittee must have adequate staff support to enable it to advance the recommendations presented in this report.**

DISCUSSION

Few of the changes recommended below will be implemented unless there is a commitment of leadership, time, appropriate funding and staff support. The responsibilities of a Highway Subcommittee should be to 1) further prioritize the following recommendations, and 2) advocate for follow-up on those that are most promising. In order to be most effective, it should obtain participation and active endorsement and support from the county board of supervisors and county highway superintendent, the school districts, and the county Highway Superintendents' Association. It should also have some continuity of membership with the members of the current task force, and be established as a subcommittee of the overall Local Government Assistance Task Force. One of the Highway Subcommittee's earliest tasks should be to establish a productive relationship with the full membership of the county Highway Superintendent's Association. That association should play a central role in helping the Highway Subcommittee prioritize these recommendations, and must be prepared to be an active partner in the implementation process.

FINDING 2

Cooperation between town and village highway and public works departments already exists and is routine, substantial, and accepted as successful by participants. It is grounded in an informal atmosphere of trust and regular communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop and implement strategies that will continually publicize the extent and benefits of cooperation among municipal highway and public works departments. Coordinate with any parallel efforts to publicize other forms of intermunicipal cooperation.**
- **Evaluate the existing system of informal cooperation for chip sealing, paving and ditch cleaning in search of potentially significant improvements.**
- **Make appropriate recommendations based on a review of the existing liability exposure of municipalities participating in cooperative highway and public works activities.**

DISCUSSION

Cooperation between towns is particularly well-established for intensive short term activities like chip sealing, paving, and ditch cleaning. Town-village cooperation also exists for these activities and even includes the joint purchase and ownership of some equipment in the larger town-village pairs. While not all municipalities cooperate with all others on all activities each year, essentially all municipalities are involved in cooperative agreements with some of their neighbors, and general intermunicipal relations are good. Cooperative work arrangements are reached routinely each year, but are scheduled on an informal and case by case basis. Accounting procedures for this work are also largely informal, and vary from town to town. However, within a general atmosphere of trust in the context of relatively small investments, the superintendents seem assured that each gets a "fair deal" from year to year. The following discussion expands upon the three specific recommendations listed above.

- a. The extent of existing cooperation and associated benefits are not widely recognized, particularly by the public. Given general concern about public sector spending, strategies should be developed to simultaneously justify and publicize the extent of cooperation, plus its practical and fiscal benefits for local governments.
- b. The frequent and routine but informal nature of intermunicipal cooperation on chip sealing, paving and ditch cleaning reflects a system that works well. Could it work better? It appears that this question has not been addressed directly. We recommend that the Highway Superintendents Association sponsor a more systematic look at these

annually recurring activities. It is possible that improvements in scheduling or opportunities for additional intermunicipal partnerships could be identified and implemented with only minor planning effort.

c. Existing cooperative activity occurs without the constraints or benefits of legal formalization. While there are legitimate fears that over-formalizing existing arrangements could smother the easy nature of existing cooperation, municipalities may be exposing themselves to unnecessary liability. It is not clear whether all or even most municipalities are adequately protected. We recommend that the Highway Superintendents Association sponsor a review of each municipality's liability exposure regarding intermunicipal agreements. If the need is identified, the next step should be to investigate the feasibility and desirability of developing and/or promoting simple "boilerplate" language that could be adopted by individual municipalities.

FINDING 3

Joint purchasing and bidding on materials and equipment already exists to some extent, but the existing system might be improved to take advantage of opportunities and better meet the needs of the users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Determine whether significant new equipment purchases in the towns, villages or county are likely in the near future and, if so, whether a cooperative approach to any of these purchases would yield net benefits.**
- **Study county bid arrangements for road materials to determine what improvements might be made to provide additional benefits for participants.**

DISCUSSION

a. Regarding the first recommendation, the 1991 Highway Task Force report noted (after completing a countywide inventory of highway machinery and equipment) that "there is coming a time that updating is going to be a major concern." A bidding "consortium" was recommended. Though this idea seems reasonable to us, there appears to have been little or no follow through on this topic, and possibly less interest now than there was in 1991. Is this perception accurate? Are significant new equipment purchases about to be made in several jurisdictions? We suspect that it would be fairly easy to establish the answer to this question, and recommend that the Task Force initiate a discussion on this topic at a meeting of the County Highway Superintendent's Association.

b. Regarding the second recommendation, the county bid on road materials already benefits cooperating schools, towns and villages. However, it may be possible to increase the satisfaction levels of participants. Could additional materials (e.g. gravel) sensibly be

included in the county bid? Are there ways to cooperatively supplement the existing system if the quantity or quality of material purchased proves to be inadequate for a subset of existing or potential users? Are current priorities for access to the material generally deemed satisfactory and equitable? An explicit review of the "consumer's" needs and current purchasing practices should help answer these questions and provide further direction.

FINDING 4

Both the highway superintendent and companion municipal/school district surveys revealed interest in the potential for cooperative maintenance agreements, possibly in conjunction with regionalized maintenance facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Follow through with an exploration of the specific potential for the school districts, county, towns and villages to implement both small and large-scale cooperative arrangements to provide vehicle maintenance.**

DISCUSSION

The potential that has already been identified ought to be explored further and include the participation of school districts, which could play a crucial role. It is noteworthy in this regard that the 1993 - 1994 Seneca County Region Shared Services Study Interim Report for school districts and the county recommends that those entities ought to "evaluate the potential for the sharing of maintenance, purchasing and fueling resources with municipalities." Some negotiations have begun, and the process should be encouraged.

There is potential here for both "large" agreements, such as those involving significant regionalization of specialized maintenance services in a single facility, and "small" agreements such as those involving the sharing between several municipalities of the services of a skilled mechanic. In further priority setting the Highway Subcommittee should not ignore the possible "small" agreements in the search for "large" ones.

FINDING 5

The construction of joint salt storage facilities is a proposal that continues to look very promising. The proposal is strongly supported by the County Highway Superintendent, has the attention of most local highway superintendents and the support of some, but has not been implemented. In some locations, practical solutions will need to involve the state as well as local governments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Identify and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of specific cooperative alternatives for providing salt storage facilities, building upon the input of all possible governments and the assistance of personnel with knowledge of the practical issues involved with siting.**

DISCUSSION

The 1991 Highway Task Force report recommended that, in order to economize on costly investments, "as few [environmentally sound salt storage facilities] be erected as possible on a cooperative basis between the Towns and County." We also endorse this recommendation, noting that there may be other possible intermunicipal arrangements as well (e.g. the existing successful facility rented from the state that serves the town and village of Waterloo). There is a clear expectation that environmental regulations will eventually push municipalities in this direction, but some towns may soon be moving independently. In order to overcome current resistances to joint facilities, as a first step some of the involved parties must agree to begin negotiations and conduct a specific analysis of realistic alternatives at the most probable locations. An independent, professional analysis should document the likely effects on investment costs, operation and maintenance costs, and service quality and timeliness.

FINDING 6

There are significant differences of opinion both within and between towns about whether or not contractual agreements with the County are economically beneficial. Snowplowing agreements with the county are a case in point, with only four towns currently plowing county roads.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The town and county highway superintendents, together with appropriately selected members of some town boards, should begin an open discussion with a neutral moderator regarding the most appropriate approaches to setting reimbursement rates for contract work and for the rental of county equipment. This moderated discussion should occur under the sponsorship of the County Board of Supervisor's Government Operations Committee.**
- **The discussion should be supplemented with credible estimates of the actual costs to towns of plowing county roads, and make reference to documented examples of contractual arrangements in other counties.**
- **If it were decided to abandon the current rate structure, a procedure for periodically updating reimbursement and rental rates ought to be negotiated such that the procedure could be formally recommended for adoption by the Government Operations Committee.**

DISCUSSION

Though there are a surprising number of specific factors that determine whether or not contractual plowing is efficient and mutually beneficial in a given town, it seems likely that there are significant unmet collaborative or contractual opportunities. Several town superintendents have asserted that the existing reimbursement rate structure is a strong disincentive to towns that might otherwise be interested in plowing county roads. This is an issue that is already "in the air". It would be beneficial to have more open and regular communication between town and county officials on controversial issues like this. Any discussion about differences of opinion on equitable plowing reimbursement should be supplemented with credible estimates of the actual costs to towns of plowing county roads, and preferably refer to documented examples from other counties.

3. Interview Survey Results Summaries -

3.1 Cooperative Opportunities for Municipalities and School Districts

3.1.1 Background and Procedures

A total of twenty-three local government officials were successfully interviewed in person by members of the task force. (See Appendix I for interview instrument). These elected leaders represented all the towns and villages in the county, and also included one official each from the Romulus, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and South Seneca school districts. In addition, four of the respondents were "county supervisors" elected exclusively to represent their towns on the county board. In another instance, a village administrator was interviewed as well as the mayor. Unless otherwise specified the survey results are based upon all of these responses. Overall, the statistical summary in Table 1 would change, but not dramatically, if only one response per municipality was reported, or if school district responses were reported separately.

In preparation for the interviews, the officials were asked to complete a "checklist survey" that contained a list of 25 service or activity areas relevant to municipalities (see Appendix I for survey instrument). Respondents identified those activities in which they currently cooperated or contracted with other municipalities or school districts, as well as those in which they saw an opportunity to cooperate or contract. They were also asked about the extent to which the situation at the Seneca Army Depot was or could be a factor affecting the cooperative activity.

All respondents were guaranteed that their responses would be kept confidential. Honoring this pledge places some limits on the amount of detail that can be reported here.

In part because the main purpose of this checklist survey was to simply serve as a guide to the personal interview to follow, not all of the checklists were filled out by the respondents with equal thoroughness. Nor does the checklist alone provide a sense of what local officials had in mind regarding the type or degree of cooperation within a specific service area, nor of the particular ways in which the Depot downsizing might affect the cooperative activity. As suggested below, there are some cooperative service areas that have been identified which might be worth investigating further, but for which little or no specific information was provided. The results summarized in Table 1 below offer a good portrait of the overall extent of existing and potential inter-governmental cooperation in Seneca County.

3.1.2 Existing Cooperation

Even a quick glance at Table 1 makes clear the significant extent to which inter-governmental cooperation already exists in Seneca County. The breadth of cooperation in areas ranging from public safety and solid waste to youth services and real property assessment should provide a strong foundation for expansion of existing arrangements and exploitation of new cooperative opportunities. Since cooperation involves a

Table 1. Cooperation by Service Area (number of mayors, etc.)

<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Currently cooperate</i>	<i>Opportunity to cooperate</i>	<i>Depot is a factor</i>
<i>Public Safety</i>			
Law enforcement	15	2	2
Fire prevention & control	19	1	1
Emergency or rescue service	14	0	2
Animal control	8	4	0
Other	1	0	1
<i>Infrastructure, transportation and public works</i>			
Sewage, incl. sewer district	13	4	3
Solid waste	7	3	0
Recycling	15	0	0
Water supply & distribution	10	4	4
Highway maintenance & improvements	14	4	0
Snow removal	14	5	0
Public transportation (e.g. bus, vans)	0	5	1
Building/facility construction or use	6	4	1
Other	0	0	0
<i>Health and recreation</i>			
Health services	9	4	1
Youth services	19	1	2
Senior citizen services	9	4	0
Parks and recreation programs	11	3	0
Public library	14	4	0
Historian, museum, other cultural	17	1	0
Other	0	0	0
<i>Planning</i>			
Land use planning and regulation	9	4	1
Code enforcement	12	4	0
Economic development	11	3	4
Other	0	0	0
<i>Administration and other</i>			
Real property assessment	15	3	1
Clerical or record keeping functions	8	1	0
Legal services	7	1	0
Purchasing	8	8	0
Other	0	0	0

Note - A total of 23 individuals were surveyed. While most were elected supervisors or mayors, the totals also include information provided by four school district officials, one village administrator, and four supervisors-at-large. Thus, in several cases more than one individual answered about the same local government.

significant degree of trust and willingness of all parties to work together towards mutually beneficial agreements, the success of past cooperative efforts can be a strong indicator of the potential for additional success. The fact that cooperative effort currently exists in so many different areas is a positive sign in this regard, even if not every example referenced can be held up as an example of an outstanding success.

In terms of raw numbers, a significant degree of existing cooperation reported by respondents in the “public safety” areas of fire prevention and control, law enforcement and emergency and rescue services. In the “infrastructure, transportation and public works” categories, there was a high level of acknowledgment of cooperation in the service areas involving water and sewer, solid waste and recycling, and highways. (Current and potential cooperation involving highway departments was explored in much greater detail with all highway and public works superintendents, as is reported in a separate document.) In the “health and recreation” category, youth services and cultural services (historian, museum, library) were identified as service areas in which cooperation was already widely in place. The totals were only slightly less in the three “planning” categories, and high levels of cooperation in real property assessment stood out within the “administration” category. It is important to note that much of the cooperation identified did not involve all municipalities in the county, but rather occurred between a smaller number of municipalities, generally geographic neighbors.

3.1.3 Opportunities to cooperate

While far fewer respondents identified opportunities to cooperate than identified existing cooperative activities, the diversity of the possible areas of cooperation identified is still impressive. In some cases, the opportunity identified appears to be an expansion of an existing kind of activity (for example, by adding a new service component or a new municipality to an existing arrangement involving only a few municipalities). Water and sewer, real property assessment, and some of the activities in the “health and recreation” and “planning” categories appear at least superficially to be in this mode. In other cases, the opportunity appears to be to implement a newly defined activity, or at least an activity with a significant number of newly involved parties. Of particular note in this regard are service areas with comparatively low levels of existing cooperative activity and comparatively high numbers of respondents identifying a cooperative opportunity. Cooperative purchasing stands out in this regard, with eight individuals identifying this as an area with potential, the same number as identified existing cooperative activities. Similarly, five respondents noted that there were cooperative opportunities in the area of public transportation, while no such existing activities were identified. Cooperation in building/facility construction or use and in animal control were other service areas with a high number of persons identifying opportunities relative to the existing level of cooperative activity.

3.1.4 Interview Results

As mentioned previously, during the course of the in-person interviews, respondents were asked to select a couple of the collaborative activities they had identified on the checklist survey for further discussion. If they had identified three or more cooperative activities, they were asked to select opportunities that seemed "most fruitful to pursue", or existing cooperative activities they thought had been "most successful". It is in this sense that the topics discussed in this section can be generically thought of as "high priority" for further evaluation and discussion.

The twenty-three respondents discussed a total of just over 40 cooperative service activities and possibilities. Topical areas receiving attention included water and sewer; public safety including emergency services, fire prevention and control, and law enforcement; public transportation; planning and economic development; purchasing and other administrative services, including tax assessment; youth services; solid waste collection; and shared buildings and facilities. A number of service areas related to highways and snow removal were also mentioned, but they were explored and reported on much more fully in the interviews conducted with highway and public works superintendents.

3.1.4.1 Water and Sewer

The single most striking result of a review of these interviews is the number of water and sewer related topics respondents elected to discuss. Approximately one-fourth of all topics chosen involved water or sewer service issues. No other issue area received even close to this much attention. While this focus does not stand out to the same extent in reviewing the checklist survey results discussed previously, the questionnaire and interview results together confirm that there is widespread interest in evaluating collaboration on water and sewer provision. This interest involves almost every municipality in the county, and at least one school district. (Even though a few of the southern and northernmost town supervisors did not discuss water or sewer examples in depth, only one selected neither water nor sewer activities on the checklist survey, and this supervisor actually did discuss water and sewer provision as an economic development issue.)

The water and sewer activities discussed were, considered individually, quite diverse. For example, it was suggested that (cooperative) access to specialized engineering and planning skills could help finalize the provision of septic services in Fayette. A village official noted that cooperation on water and sewer already exists between the village and town of Seneca Falls. However, this official suggested that existing cooperation could be expanded, for example, by consolidating sewerage billing services. Broader discussions have already occurred about extending water service to Fayette, Varick, and Romulus. Previously unsuccessful talks have been revived regarding the creation of an authority to link the Waterloo and Seneca Falls water systems, partly in order to provide mutual backup during temporary system failures. Officials from municipalities (including the Romulus school district) in the vicinity of the Seneca Army Depot expressed concern about the viability of water district contracts with the Depot for water supply, given EPA directives aimed at

ensuring the quality of the Depot source. Another official noted that the sewer district serving Lodi, Ovid and the hamlet of Willard could be expanded. (He had concerns, related to the ultimate disposition of the Willard psychiatric facility, about maintaining a sufficient customer base to keep unit costs in line.) Several of the southern villages have attempted water and sewer service cooperation, successfully sharing equipment and labor for water system maintenance, but with less success in the joint purchase of sewage system maintenance equipment.

Still other cooperative water and sewer examples exist. One of the keys to the interest in this area is the understanding of the key role water and sewer infrastructure plays in directing economic development. Thus the extension of water to the new outlet mall and to the Empire Farm days site have obvious planning and economic development implications. This economic implication coexists with recognition of the importance of environmental and public health issues, including the desire to reduce dependence on and impacts upon lake water.

Overall, the water and sewer issues are recognized by a number of respondents to go beyond the scope of existing sub-county intermunicipal agreements. Several respondents made strong recommendations that a piecemeal approach to these issues was not satisfactory, and that a comprehensive planning review of options be conducted on a county-wide basis. It appears that some consideration of this possibility by the county is indeed already on the table, and that this issue ought to be a primary focus for further effort. However, because of the important economic development, land use and environmental implications of the extension of sewer and particularly water lines, any proposals for large scale change will likely require significant work and negotiation to implement.

3.1.4.2 Transportation

Another service area that appears to be worthy of further exploration is that of public transportation. While east-west transportation was not identified as a problem, the county does lack north-south public service. This lack was seen to have a number of implications, including some touching on the perceived isolation of the southern end of the county, and related issues of service delivery and economic development potential. In fact, only four respondents singled out this area for in-depth discussion. However, they were from municipalities in both the north and south. Several southern municipalities are already involved in negotiations with Tomtran to provide transportation connections to the Ithaca area. However valuable this service would be if ultimately provided, the service being explored would not constitute a north-south link for Seneca County, but rather provide linkage between the southern end of the county and the Ithaca area. Other more geographically ambitious options have been investigated in the past, and there appears to be more than localized interest in keeping the issue open. In any event, demonstrating the feasibility of generating minimum ridership (adequate demand) for the service would be a key to moving forward.

3.1.4.3 Joint Purchasing

The areas of administration and particularly joint purchasing were already identified in the checklist survey as services with significant potential for collaboration. Several respondents expanded on this topic during their interviews, with school district officials expressing special interest in this area. One, for example, had already talked to the county about joint bids on paper, trucks, busses and other vehicles. His list did not stop there, however, as he also saw potential for the joint purchase of copiers, cafeteria and food supplies, and health insurance. He noted that the school districts and county might be the major partners in joint purchasing of this type, but that towns and villages could become involved too. There was in fact some interest in joint purchasing expressed at the town level, but the focus there tended to be on highway materials and equipment that constituted a larger part of their budget. While there would need to be a lot of ongoing communication and negotiation to fully exploit the potential in the joint purchasing area, and to focus on the specific items in which there is adequate volume and common interest to make joint purchasing worth the effort, it seems like another service area worthy of a closer look.

3.1.4.4 Sharing Skilled Personnel

Another “administrative” area discussed by several respondents was the cooperative use of skilled service providers. Interest was broadest regarding assessment services, but a shared business manager (between school districts), and shared town justices were also mentioned. The sense that there are efficiencies (consistency, improved service, avoided duplication of effort, etc.) in hiring a full-time, more professional employee appears to drive interest. Particularly with assessment services, there is broad interest and a local experience base to work with. For example the negotiated joint utilization of the services of a single assessor by Covert, Romulus, Lodi and Ovid is a specific model that might be expanded or emulated. At least one other example of a single assessor employed by more than one municipality (Junius and Waterloo) already exists in Seneca county, and there is some possibility that this temporary circumstance could be transformed into a negotiated intermunicipal arrangement.

3.1.4.5 Use of Facilities

A different “spin” on some of these administrative issues was brought out in a discussion with a school district administrator about cooperative use of “buildings and facilities”. Not surprisingly, several officials mentioned the practice and potential for school districts to play a major role by cooperating in the use of garage and maintenance facilities for vehicles, and for after-hours use of school buildings by a variety of community groups. There appears to be a potential for further cooperation in this way, particularly in the more densely populated parts of the county. However, recognizing the important role that his school already plays in the life of the southern part of Seneca County, this official was eager to open the school facility to even broader community use, more self-consciously establishing the school as a kind of community center. As part of this effort, he was particularly interested in exploring the potential to improve his facility in a way that would establish the

school as an electronic informational hub and training center, providing businesses, governments, community groups and others access to a variety of computer networking services. A variety of governmental administrative services might be made more accessible in this manner, specifically those normally requiring trips to the county seat. While no other respondents had this particular vision in mind, the general issue of using new technology to cooperatively improve access to government services is one that the schools might well take a lead in exploring.

3.1.4.6 Other Areas Including Youth Services and Public Safety

Several other examples of cooperative service provision were given in the area of public safety and youth services. For example, Interlaken, Ovid and Lodi have established a single youth board and provide coordinated youth programming. As an example in the public safety area, the town and village of Seneca Falls contracted with three fire departments for coordinated fire protection services, including the village department. There were other examples discussed, and there is likely potential for additional cooperation in each of these areas, too. However, the type and extent of potential was less easy to assess than in some of the other areas previously discussed, and may better be placed in a second or third "tier" of cooperative possibilities in terms of priority setting.

3.1.4.7 Summary

In sum, the interview results suggest that one or more task forces could most profitably begin to evaluate further cooperation potential in the area of water provision, sewer services, north-south public transportation options, joint purchasing arrangements, coordinated/shared use of service providers like assessors, and the school's roles in turning their facilities into a mechanism for the delivery of a variety of public services to the public, particularly through the use of modern computers and telecommunications technology.

3.1.4.8 Need For More Detailed Discussion

The researchers believe that the most significant potential instances for intermunicipal cooperation have already been singled out in this report. Nevertheless, there were some limitations to the survey and interview methods used.

Unfortunately, practical constraints such as the length of an interview limited the amount of information that could be obtained from the respondents on the details of many of these existing and planned activities. To be more specific, many examples of existing cooperation and opportunities to cooperate were discussed in some detail during the interviews, which generally lasted between 1 and 3 hours. (These interview responses were summarized in the previous section.) However, while many respondents had half a dozen or more possible areas that could have been discussed, most respondents only had time to provide details of two cooperative activities. Thus, there appear to be a large number of specific ideas individuals had about both existing and potential intermunicipal cooperation that are not reported here.

Consequently, it appears likely that the interview responses did not bring to our attention certain areas of promise for further cooperative ventures. Determining whether or not this is the case might be most effectively identified by a series of discussions focused on particular activity areas. The most appropriate people to attend these discussions would vary by topic. The discussions could be sponsored by the county board of supervisors or an appropriate local government association.

Several examples follow.

First is animal control. Although a number of respondents identified animal control as an area of both existing and potential cooperation between municipalities, only one supervisor brought out any detail. Even his discussion of different towns hiring the same contractor for dog control was brief, as this appeared to be simply an example of independent rather than cooperatively determined decisions to hire the same service provider. There are no clues as to what other respondents had in mind when they checked this service area on the checklist survey.

Second is recycling and solid waste. Although 15 respondents mentioned recycling as an area of existing cooperation, few gave details. One supervisor noted that recycling is now available because the county contracts with a private firm to collect recyclables throughout the county, but suggested that service (recyclables accepted) ought to be expanded. This example of county-coordinated service provision may be what the others had in mind, but this is not certain. In the solid waste area, one village official mentioned a specific option of extending its solid waste collection routes to a town that was currently serviced by a private vendor, offering the town the potential to reduce costs when its contract with the vendor expires. Others may have had similar cooperative arrangements in mind, but there is no specific evidence in support of this..

Third is health services and senior citizen services. Four respondents noted an opportunity to cooperate in each of these areas, and also in each nine noted instances of existing cooperation. However, no one directly discussed any of these instances further. Some public health issues were brought up in the context of improvements in water and sewer service, and others were raised in discussions of youth services or public safety, but it seems likely that respondents had other health service topics in mind. No one identified specific cooperative services of relevance to seniors.

Fourth is parks and recreation, as well as cultural services like shared libraries and historian services. In these areas, a number of individuals indicated that there was both existing cooperative activity and the potential for more cooperation. However, no specific examples were elaborated during the interviews.

3.1.4.9 Is The Seneca Army Depot a Factor?

Survey respondents were specifically asked to identify the cooperative activities that were or could be affected by the downsizing of the Seneca Army Depot. As shown in Table 1, the changes at the Depot were perceived to have impact by some respondents, particularly in the areas of planning for economic development, and water and sewer supply. Because of the nature of the downsizing and the dependence of some municipalities on the Depot water supply, these relationships to the Depot seem straightforward. The Depot was also identified by several officials as a possible factor affecting cooperation in several public safety areas, as well as in several other areas. The reasons respondents perceived these latter impacts were not made explicit.

3.2 Cooperative Opportunities for Highway and Public Works Departments

3.2.1 Background and Procedures

A total of twelve highway superintendents and village public works superintendents were successfully interviewed in person by members of the task force. These officials represented the villages of Interlaken, Ovid, and Waterloo, the towns of Covert, Fayette, Lodi, Ovid, Romulus, Seneca Falls, Varick, and Waterloo, and Seneca county.

In preparation for the interviews, the officials were asked to complete a “checklist survey” that contained a list of 17 service or activity areas relevant to highway departments. Respondents identified those activities in which they currently cooperated or contracted with other municipalities, as well as those in which they saw an opportunity to cooperate or contract. They were also asked about the extent to which the situation at the Seneca Army Depot was or could be a factor affecting the cooperative activity.

In part because the main purpose of this checklist survey was to serve simply as a guide to the personal interview to follow, not all of the checklists were filled out by the respondents with equal thoroughness. Nor does the checklist alone provide a sense of what the respondent had in mind regarding the type or degree of cooperation within a specific service area. Nevertheless, the results summarized in Table 2 below offer a good portrait of the overall extent of existing and potential highway department cooperation in Seneca County.

It should be further noted that the perspectives of mayors, supervisors and school officials have been reported in a separate document. While these officials were asked to consider a wide range of cooperative intergovernmental activities, the general topics of “highway maintenance and improvements” and “snow removal” were perceived by this other group of officials as being areas of both substantial existing cooperative activity and relatively high potential for further cooperation. The summary below substantiates this by focusing on the more detailed responses of highway and public works superintendents.

3.2.2 Existing Cooperation

As was further confirmed in the oral interviews, the checklist survey established that there is already a high level of intermunicipal cooperation and contracting occurring across a range of highway services. An apparent key to the successful history of cooperative effort is good intermunicipal communication and personal relations between superintendents.

In general, informal cooperative arrangements are a long-standing tradition among towns. More formal contracting for services is a common arrangement between the towns and the county. There was some kind of existing cooperative activity identified by at least one respondent in every area of service listed. However, existing cooperation was most widespread in the areas of chip sealing, paving, snowplowing and ditch cleaning. These activities tend to require intensive use of equipment and labor over short time periods. If scheduling issues can be worked out, economic and practical efficiencies in sharing are generally more likely under such circumstances, particularly if specialized skills or equipment are needed.

Table 2. Number of Cooperating Municipalities by Highway Service Area

Highway Services	Currently cooperate	Opportunity to cooperate	Depot is a factor
Chip sealing	8	2	0
Paving	7	2	0
Snowplowing	6	2	0
Patching	4	0	0
Ditch cleaning	7	0	0
Mowing	3	0	0
Gravel production	3	0	0
Salt & sand storage	3	2	0
Fuel Storage	1	0	0
Equipment maintenance	2	3	0
Sign replacement	2	1	0
Road condition evaluation	3	2	0
Materials purchasing	3	3	0
Project engineering	3	1	0
Project management	2	1	0
Bidding	4	1	0
Computerized payroll	1	1	0
OTHER	2	0	0

Note - A total of 12 county, town or village highway officials were surveyed.

3.2.3 Cooperation Opportunities

In addition to the existing cooperative activity, a number of highway officials identified areas in which opportunities for further cooperation existed. While quite a number of particular opportunities were identified by one individual only, shared equipment maintenance and materials purchasing were the only areas noted by more than two (i.e. three) officials in the written survey.

None of the highway or village public works officials indicated that the downsizing of the Seneca Army Depot has influenced existing cooperative activities or would affect opportunities for cooperation in highway oriented activities.

3.2.4 Interview Results

During the in-person interviews, the respondents described in detail several of the situations they had identified in the written checklist as summarized in Table 2. Due to practical time constraints we were unable to discuss all of the relevant cooperative activities, so the officials were asked to provide details of only two of the most promising or successful cooperative activities.

3.2.4.1 Paving and Chip Sealing

Six village and town officials elected to discuss cooperation in a) paving and b) chip sealing in more detail. With both of these activity areas, patterns of intergovernmental cooperation are already well established, with some variation in the details from place to place. Some but not all towns, for example, elect to rent specialized paving equipment from the county. Others estimate that it is more beneficial to rent equipment from private contractors. Joint ownership of equipment by towns and/or villages was another cooperative option mentioned by the officials, though not one that appears to be common in practice. Nevertheless, there are some examples of this in the county, especially within town/village partnerships. Joint equipment purchases in Seneca Falls, are one example, as is the town and village of Waterloo's co-ownership of some equipment (e.g. roller, paver, power broom).

Individual superintendent's decisions appear to be driven by their evaluations of the relative costs of alternative options for obtaining access to paving and chip sealing machinery. Not all arrive at the same bottom line about whether a cooperative or contracting/rental approach makes sense. There are clear differences of opinion about whether or not the rates charged by the county are competitive with other available options, and indeed whether limiting exchanges to this kind of leasing arrangement between different units of government is satisfactory. One town superintendent noted, for example, that he currently found it more cost effective to rent paving equipment from a local contractor rather than from the county. At the same time, he would be interested in negotiating a deal to plow county roads in exchange for use of the county paver.

As suggested in the discussion on snowplowing below, it might be of some use to open a more formal dialogue on these issues, and possibly to explore the extent to which these varied opinions and perceived differences in cost are based on differences in quality or important details of the work to be performed.

In addition to the shared intergovernmental use of specialized paving and chip sealing equipment and operators, trucks and manpower are regularly exchanged with other nearby municipalities in a series of informal, loosely coordinated but dependable agreements. Not all municipalities participate equally in any given year in every aspect of this informal exchange, and not every municipality works with every other municipality. However, because there are overall good relations between most municipalities in the county, there is a general expectation, based upon experience, that a satisfactory arrangement for sharing can easily be worked out with other jurisdictions. These arrangements are usually made on an as-needed basis. Most superintendents appear to keep at least informal records of intermunicipal work, and believe that a fair balance of intermunicipal assistance is achieved over time. This informal town-level cooperation appears to stretch across county boundaries only rarely.

Because of the history of cooperation and generally good communication between most Seneca County municipalities (especially between towns), it appears that the most obvious opportunities for cooperation have already been largely exploited. However, formally focusing on paving and chip sealing activity might allow some superintendents to review their own estimates of costs and benefits and the extent of their cooperative activity in a new light.

3.2.4.2 Coordinated Scheduling

One highway superintendent explicitly suggested that while existing catch-as-catch can cooperative arrangements usually suffice, the county association of highway superintendents might help the officials establish a more formal scheduling mechanism. This might help improve the effectiveness, dependability and fairness of the shared effort, even given that the system works fairly well as is. While this suggestion was made in the context of chip sealing and paving, it could be thought of more generally. This superintendent, like others, was nonetheless concerned that formalizing the cooperative activity not go too far, for fear of smothering the existing informal exchanges with a bureaucratic overlay.

3.2.4.3 Cooperative Maintenance Arrangements

Two superintendents discussing chip sealing or paving activities pointed out that cooperating on equipment maintenance and joint utilization of maintenance facilities was a possibility that might fruitfully be explored. The overall benefits of consolidating equipment maintenance geographically in a common facility was highlighted by a third superintendent with specific consideration of the northern part of the county.

As one of these superintendents noted, small town crews have little available extra time for repair work in summer, and are equally pressed for time during winters with significant snowfall. He suggested that there was an opportunity to collaboratively employ mechanics in order to provide service and repairs that could not be done easily by the regular crews, or that diverted them from more productive work. A number of towns would have to collaborate in order to offer a mechanic a significant amount of work.

In general, cooperation in the maintenance area might be explored narrowly in the context of some of the more specialized equipment, or it could also be conceived more broadly in terms of a general equipment sharing pool or other formal arrangement for sharing equipment itself. Moreover, while certain kinds of cooperative maintenance agreements are feasible without sharing an actual building, it was also clear from the superintendents' comments that raising the question of shared maintenance also raises the question of whether this activity ought to be consolidated physically.

Finally, the opportunity for joint equipment maintenance and facilities was also noted as an area of promise by the mayors and supervisor group, with a potentially very significant involvement of school districts. The fact that both the highway superintendent and mayor/supervisor groups each selected this area obviously makes it a more prominent candidate for closer scrutiny.

3.2.4.4 Snowplowing

Three highway superintendents (including the county's) discussed existing cooperative snowplowing arrangements in some detail. Others mentioned snowplowing, but in less depth. In general, existing intermunicipal arrangements involve plowing on a contractual basis. Thus, the county plows state roads for reimbursement from the state, while four towns currently plow county roads on a contractual basis. Again, the assessment of the net cost and benefits to the municipality of these contractual arrangements seems to vary widely from superintendent to superintendent. Such an assessment must consider a lot of local variables, ranging from desired service levels to characteristics of specific stretches of road. Plowing is, ultimately, an area where cooperative/contractual arrangements have been demonstrated to work to the satisfaction of some of the involved parties. However, other town superintendents are dissatisfied, especially with county reimbursements. If the towns wished to pursue this issue further, evaluation of the actual costs and benefits of cooperative or contractual snowplowing might help clarify some of these concerns, and possibly uncover cooperative opportunities that are not currently fully exploited.

With the snowplowing activity in particular there may be a need for improved communication and coordination of effort between and among towns and the county. Improved communication might help move towards better understanding of the reasons for certain differences in standards (i.e. how clear of snow do different roads need to be kept, and why?), and might also avoid certain efforts (e.g. sanding) that are undone by an uncoordinated later effort (e.g. plowing). A forum for dealing creatively with certain existing, mostly acknowledged but unresolved tensions between the county and some

towns might also be usefully focused on snowplowing given the sense of some town officials that county reimbursements to the towns for plowing are not fair or adequate. (For example, at least one superintendent perceived a lack of symmetry and fairness in noting that the county is compensated by the state on an hourly basis while it compensates the towns for similar work through a fixed payment.) While a resolution to this tension may not be easy, the issue handicaps the potential for greater town-county cooperation on highways.

3.2.4.5 Ditch Cleaning

Only two superintendents discussed the cooperative ditch cleaning activity in detail, though this was the other “high-scoring” item on the written checklist survey. Each had worked out a different form of cooperative arrangement, with some history of experimenting to see what worked best. Both mentioned the positive role played by the soil and water conservation district in assisting the municipalities with this activity.

3.2.4.6 Salt and Sand Storage Facilities

Joint salt and sand storage facilities were also mentioned as an opportunity for cooperation by two highway officials, one of whom already was involved in a joint town/village salt storage arrangement. If the current state-owned joint storage facility were to become unavailable, this superintendent was interested in pursuing other cooperative storage options with neighboring municipalities.

The county highway superintendent was particularly enthusiastic about the joint salt storage possibility, and mentioned that he has tried to promote the concept with the towns without clear success to date. One town highway superintendent noted that a “push” from the state Department of Environmental Conservation might be the most important factor in initiating new arrangements of this type, given that concerns about probable increased distances to joint facilities and associated costs were a hindrance to cooperation at present. Certainly, new objective information about (and/or regulations affecting) the relative costs and benefits of this approach would be a prerequisite for moving forward with joint salt storage facilities.

On a similar note, an existing joint fuel storage facility involving a complex group of general purpose local governments and other agencies was also discussed by one village official.

3.2.4.7 Joint Purchasing Arrangements

Cooperation for the purposes of insurance purchasing and joint bidding on materials were two other topics that were detailed by one or two officials. While some opportunities for cooperation in each of these areas could be explored further, the ones that seemed to spark interest in several highway superintendents were cooperative materials purchasing

and joint bidding (see Table 2). To some extent this is already in place, as the county bids for such materials as road oil, blacktop, and runner crush. (One superintendent suggested that gravel, a material included in years past, ought to be restored to the list.) This road material is purchased jointly for towns, villages and schools as well as for county needs. However, some superintendents expressed reservations with the current system in terms of responsiveness to town needs. For example, one individual was concerned about how to maintain access to high quality material when supplies run unexpectedly low. Successful cooperation depends on clarity of communication and opportunities to be responsive to changing circumstances. Perhaps focus on these issues could clarify whether or not changes could usefully be made.

3.2.4.8 Evaluating Road Condition

Finally, it should be noted that, while Table 2 indicates some existing arrangements plus some opportunities in the area of cooperative road condition evaluation, no one chose to discuss this activity in detail during the interviews, suggesting that this area might not be perceived as an area of opportunity with high priority. This is not to say that exploring cooperative opportunities in this area might not be worthwhile after all.

3.2.4.9 Summary

Existing levels of informal cooperation on highway activities are already significant, particularly with intensive activities like chip sealing and paving. Contractual agreements between the county and the towns also have a long history regarding snowplowing. Other cooperative arrangements, such as those involving bidding on materials, are also already in place.

The potential for establishing joint maintenance arrangements, possibly including joint facility use or joint equipment ownership, should be further explored. There is some potential that establishing joint salt and sand storage facilities would be advantageous, but movement in this direction will probably depend upon convincing local highway officials that specific facilities could be located so that there is a positive net benefit for their municipality.

In general, there does not appear to be a consensus that there are important cooperative opportunities that are being totally overlooked. However, there are indications that more attention to existing cooperative arrangements could improve coordination, increase satisfaction levels and possibly lead to increased cooperative effort.

Finally, much of the cooperation that currently occurs is informal, based on a history of cooperation and existing good interpersonal relations. It is standard practice in this area to note that formalizing these arrangements to the extent of acknowledging them in written form can provide legal protections that are currently not in place. This can be done on a "blanket" basis that is not overly bureaucratic and cumbersome, but simply lays out the general conditions for routine equipment and manpower sharing. Of course, this suggestion would have to be explored carefully to ensure that existing cooperative activities were not made more difficult.

3.3 Information and Training Needs

3.3.1 Mayors and Supervisors

As displayed in Table 3, the 22 supervisors and mayors (only one school official answered this part of the survey) surveyed expressed interest in receiving a broad range of information and training assistance. (See Appendix I for survey instrument.)

The most widespread "great need" was registered for leadership skills assistance, with strong emphasis on the skills needed to create and implement a vision for the community, which sometimes referred to the county as a whole and sometimes the town or village. The difficulty of finding capable people to serve on boards was also noted by as many total respondents, though more checked this problem as one of "moderate" rather than "great" need. The only other area in which more than five persons indicated a "great need" was in computer training, with about the same number selecting "introductory training" as "specific skills" training.

There were only three topics listed for which more respondents checked "no need" than checked "great" or "moderate need." These lowest priority topics were meeting management, contracting with consultants and building code enforcement. Given the dissatisfaction expressed with existing "code enforcement" agencies in other parts of the survey, exploring the building code enforcement responses more thoroughly might be worthwhile. In any event, these results identify a potential audience for quite a variety of informational and training materials or events.

In addition to noting how many mayors and supervisors perceived a need for information and training in these areas, we also asked each of them to comment on up to three of the "most important" areas of information or training needs. Most of the mayors and supervisors gave more detailed comments on the topics, usually on topics that many had highlighted as "great" needs. Those ten or so most concerned with visioning and finding capable people for office are quoted (with slight editing for clarity and to protect confidentiality) first:

"There is a need for people to manage the town. Have to actively seek individuals - they don't come forward. Being interested is the biggest qualification. Need a long term vision for the town. Need to plan for the future, carry out vision, plan for purchasing to carry out vision." "Long term vision is needed. Need to coordinate with village board. Laws have not been updated since '40's. Need more contact with community. A planning board could help village board by putting together a long term perspective. Community review group would also help. Need to get a higher level of citizen involvement in decision making, involving more than just the Anti's. No one calls to say you're doing a great job." "Need expertise of others to help create a long term vision, a plan for where community shall be 5 to 10 years from now. Outsiders see things differently; we are used to what we see or hear. Need to look at possible social components, too. Also, hard to find capable people. Few willing to serve, don't like to put name up in front of people. Qualified individuals don't want to serve, due to time

Table 3. Information or Training Needs (supervisors & mayors)

	Great Need	Moderate Need	No Need	No Answer
<i>Communication</i>	<i>(number of supervisors & mayors)</i>			
How to get input from public	4	8	3	7
How to present info to the public	2	8	5	7
Communicate within own government	3	6	6	7
Communicate with other governments	3	10	2	7
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Management</i>				
Managing meetings	2	4	9	7
Managing employees	4	6	5	7
Newly elected training	5	10	1	6
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Leadership Skills</i>				
Finding capable people for boards	8	6	2	6
Creating long term vision	11	3	3	5
How to make vision happen	10	4	3	5
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Budgeting</i>				
Annual budgeting	4	6	5	7
Administration of annual budget	5	4	6	7
Calculating cost of services	4	5	6	7
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Planning</i>				
Planning for capital improvements	4	8	3	7
Land use planning and regulation	3	8	3	8
Building code enforcement	2	5	8	7
Contracting with consultants	0	8	7	7
<i>Computing and Other Skills</i>				
Introductory training	6	7	3	6
Use for specific skills	7	4	5	6
Other	0	0	1	21

Note - A total of 22 individuals were surveyed. While most were elected supervisors or mayors, the totals also include information provided by four school district officials, one village administrator, and four supervisors-at-large. Thus, in several cases more than one individual answered about the same local government.

commitment, need for election. Volunteer boards have high turnover as people lose interest. Looking for people with time - younger people don't have time or expertise." "Finding people is hard. A lot are busy, don't want to get involved. It's time consuming, little compensation. Public service not as positive as in past. Negative attitudes about elected officials, lack of trust." "We have so many organizations and so many efforts, need to channel these into a coordinated effort, a vision. To make it happen, we need a point person or organization to help coordinate effort. A regional, not isolated effort. The two villages and two towns are integrally linked." "Hopefully visioning comes up with written reports. Have spent a lot on studies, have yet to see reports and recommendations. Is being

studied to death through vision studies." "Implement vision through community committees, planning board - fire program would have to grow and change if development occurred." "Many times you don't know what the public wants until you've done something and then they let you know it was the opposite of what they wanted. I want to make sure I am representing the public the way they want. If resources existed, need to educate constituents, i.e. doubting Thomases or negative thinkers to bring them along to vision and get their support." "Need to create long term vision for county - for police, highway, county manager; concern that structure of county government creates conflicts and discourages cooperative effort, creates conflicts of interest." "Need to find people with time to serve, something to offer. They should be out there." "Hard to find people, given time commitment, extra costs." "Need opposition in election."

Other comments highlighted computer training needs: "This is a great need for future." "World passes you by if you're not computer literate. Supervisor and clerk are the officials who need it. Assessor already uses a computer. Should be used for record keeping, to assist clerk (already contract for bookkeeper). Highway department probably doesn't need computer yet." "Need up to date equipment and training. Highway department needs it for inventory, truck history. Assessment bureau needs it to keep assessments up to date." "Town clerk needs help with change in justice system. Secretary needs training for future, especially with change in state reporting system." "General need for computerizing the town. State contract bidder will be providing training for eight - constable, highway super, justice and liaison, clerk, town board, supervisor. Basic training for all, advanced for justices. Trying to get everyone ready for future. Clerk can share supervisor's machine." "Like to bring computer skills into 21st century, include bookkeeper in training. Intro section possible?" "We already have equipment, need training."

Returning to consideration of the number of mayors and supervisors with common concerns, looking at both "great" and "moderate need" combined adds several additional areas that were selected by more than ten respondents. Among these "newly elected training" (which might also have been classified in the "leadership skills" category) heads the group. This topic was closely followed by four communication and planning topics. The need to "communicate with other governments" was identified by 13 respondents, and may have been thought of in relation to this overall project's emphasis on intergovernmental collaboration. "How to get input from the public" was the other communication need identified, while capital improvements planning and land use planning and regulation were the two planning needs identified by more than ten people.

Again, in identifying up to three "most important" areas of information or training needs, a number of mayors and supervisors gave more detailed comments, as presented next in slightly edited quotes.

Regarding communication: "Need to communicate better and more cooperatively with other levels of government, without letting personalities get in the way." "Need more input from public. Get very little turnout for meetings other than municipal employees. People don't come out for budget hearing - only with complaints." "Many times you don't know

what the public wants until you've done something and then they let you know it was opposite of what they wanted. I want to make sure I am representing the public the way they want to be represented." "Discontent by taxpayers is due to lack of information; either cut services or raise revenues (and not property taxes). Present press coverage is limited to hot issue of the day. Day to day providing of services and reduction of taxes is not reported." "Communicating with other governments would help us learn from their experiences, lead to more cooperation between us. Meetings, associations - no newsletters."

Regarding training for officials: "See a general need at county level, not in my town. Had training in budgeting as town board member before becoming supervisor. County budgeting is much more complicated. A professional budget officer is needed for county. There's only a 12 month budget, no long term plans. Lack of monitoring of expenditures during the year. Need for better communication with treasurer, who may think supervisors don't want monitoring information. County has no financial reserves at this point." "State training and supervision of town justices is not adequate. Had recent problem. Town justices need better training." "There is no orientation for new officials - it's needed. No technical training for budgeting. Past experiences are not passed on. Suggest that NYS send trainers, take advantage of statewide training offered." "Training for newly electeds greatly needed." "Need more skills for school board." "People run for mayor or trustee without ever attending a board meeting! Do they realize what they are getting into? Training is definitely needed." "Training for bookkeepers and supervisors on local government accounting and bookkeeping. It's quite a bit different than for business. Daily housekeeping now done with "Quick Books", but output must be transferred to town bookkeeper."

Regarding budgeting and planning assistance on a variety of topics: "Assistance setting up and administering annual budget. Why - we don't have a good foundation, no one has good information, nor is there a way to monitor." "Need bonding and planning assistance, need to plan for new jail sooner or later." "Capital improvements needed in water and sewer. Water tanks getting old, engineering study done, did project when money available. Planning over years for where money is available. Grant and low interest loans and manageable debt load achieved. Still need to find available money. How long to borrow? What about budget process, water rate increases, health department requirements?" "How to hold budget line, keep it under control?"

Several leaders highlighted personnel management issues: "Managing employees better is needed. County department heads don't always achieve as much cooperation as desirable. They need help working together. What about TQM seminars?" "Managing engineers: teach techniques, communication and relationship skills with department supervisors. Need to improve working relationships to increase efficiency, loss of time. Need for performance evaluations. Mechanism would be classes, videotapes." "Managing employees - issues are morale, job security, cooperation among departments. There is no county administrator - county is run by committee." "County department heads need training given our structure. Employee who has a complaint goes to county administration, which then talks with department head, and problems are not resolved. Employees need an outlet to resolve grievances without threat of losing jobs."

Finally, miscellaneous comments that were highlighted include: "County health department doesn't provide much help down here with building code enforcement, e.g. help enforcing anti-junk law with absentee landlords. County is shortstaffed, can't provide service." Also, regarding land use planning and regulation: "Need to plan for land use in face of double standards, NIMBY attitudes."

3.3.2 Highway and Public Works Officials

The responses of highway and public works officials (Table 4) mirrored those of the mayors and supervisors sufficiently that the table does not need to be reported in separate written detail. Once again, the largest number of officials expressed the need for the topics listed under leadership skills and also newly elected training. If anything, the highway officials put an even stronger emphasis on computing skills, and like their colleagues, a majority of them (i.e. more than 5) expressed a need for capital improvements planning, land use planning and regulation, and communicating with other governments and getting input from the public. To a greater proportional extent than the mayoral group, the highway officials indicated some need for training or information in the areas of presenting information to the public, managing meetings, and budgeting topics, especially "calculating the costs of services."

Most of these same topics were emphasized with additional commentary as being among those selected as the "three most important". Thus, regarding leadership and community visioning : "People are caught up in present problems and issues and can't focus on the future. Too many unanswered questions like, 'Will I have a job?', 'where will the money come from'. The present is too often summed up by 'Why would anyone want to live here?', to be able to work on a vision." "Need to know what will happen in the future and prepare. There would be more citizen support for reserve funds, for example, if people saw where it was to be used." "Create a vision to expand water system with other towns. All continued replacement and repair of water and sewer needs more of a long range plan."

Regarding recruitment and training of officials: "Need to train in the 'nuts and bolts' of the job, where services are provided, how the system functions. Current officials would have to provide training to newly electeds." "Need to know how to attract capable people, interest 'new blood' in running for office. Need to make it easier to be involved in the process." "Newly elected officials should have budget training to understand how it works and provide informed input to budgets. Number of service districts impacts complexity. A mentoring program would help highway superintendents learn codes, systems, processes, etc. Costs can hinder participation. Efficiency then suffers." "Good people don't want to serve on local boards. They are 'thankless' jobs with low pay. Time is a problem for those with full time jobs." "Newly elected officials - those running for highway position may know nothing about the job skills required. Town board members learn on the job. Clerks responsible for licensing need training to properly issues legal licenses. This has caused legal problems in the past." "Finding capable people is very important. Some places people just aren't up to the job. Like to find someone else capable of taking over my job."

Table 4. Information or Training Needs (highways & public works)

	Great Need	Moderate Need	No Need	No Answer
<i>Communication</i>	<i>(number of highway superintendents)</i>			
How to get input from public	1	5	4	2
How to present info to the public	2	4	3	3
Communicate within own government	1	3	7	1
Communicate with other governments	2	4	3	3
Other	1	0	0	11
<i>Management</i>				
Managing meetings	2	5	4	1
Managing employees	1	4	5	2
Newly elected training	3	6	1	2
Other	0	0	0	12
<i>Leadership Skills</i>				
Finding capable people for boards	4	3	4	1
Creating long term vision	6	2	2	2
How to make vision happen	5	2	2	3
Other	0	0	0	12
<i>Budgeting</i>				
Annual budgeting	1	4	6	1
Administration of annual budget	1	3	6	2
Calculating cost of services	3	4	4	1
Other	0	0	0	12
<i>Planning</i>				
Planning for capital improvements	4	3	4	1
Land use planning and regulation	2	4	4	2
Building code enforcement	1	1	8	2
Contracting with consultants	1	4	5	2
<i>Computing and Other Skills</i>				
Introductory training	5	1	5	1
Use for specific skills	4	3	5	0
Other	0	2	3	7

Note - A total of 12 highway and public works officials were surveyed.

Regarding communication issues: "Need to present info to the public. People don't thing about the portion of taxes that actually go to the highway department; newsletter could be enclosed with the tax bill to show where the money goes." "Need to get better input from the public, to see where they want to go. Pose the decision between quality of service and cutting costs. Current information is too little and unreliable." "How can we help inform the public in order to cut down on individual calls and misunderstandings, time wasted at board meetings with problems of individuals." "Need to improve channels of communication with the state especially, as they affect our budgeting requirements. Need mechanism of communication, e.g. regarding reductions in CHIPs, for years is late relative to the process of preparing and adopting a budget." "What does the public want and need, given the cost of improvements they may want? Can't please everybody all the time." "Need to communicate better within our own government. It's difficult to get understanding

of needs and problems across to governing board members. They often don't pay attention or don't do so until rather late in the process." "There is a need for decision makers to listen to department heads, pay attention to all positions and viewpoints. More support and exchange needed within our government." "In communicating with other governments, we need to minimize the bureaucracy. Especially concerned with how state and federal agencies don't relate to the locals."

Regarding computing: "Would like to do much of the daily record keeping on a computer. Would also like to have computer maps of roads, water and sewer lines. Need introductory training." "Would like some help with computers. Inherited computers from Depot, but they appear to be unusable. Interested in SARA grant opportunity." "Can't access county or town records. Could better use Cornell services with a computer. Would do DPW inventory, reduce paper work. Have access to a computer, but need to know how to use it." "It might be useful to computerize more of our operation. It would be useful to see what a computer could be used for." "Water and sewer mapping is going on computers. Will evaluate ongoing usage. Inventory of parts, equipment, supplies, maintenance..."

Finally, regarding additional budget issues and a couple of miscellaneous topics: "Could use budget assistance, given uncertainty of outside funds." "I put together a budget, but the town board ignores it. Usually stick to their own budget" "Need help with right to know legislation. State says you have to do it, but doesn't provide cheap training. Available materials from state and elsewhere are very expensive, especially from elsewhere." And last but not least, "Don't see any needs. I'm shocked things work as well as they do already."

3.4 Technical Assistance and Other Problem Solving Help

3.4.1 Mayors, and Supervisors

In addition to "information and training" help, interviewees were asked about their local government's need for "technical assistance and other problem solving help". The technical assistance was distinguished from information and training help by topic and by noting that it would primarily be delivered as "individualized assistance from specialists". However, there was not always a clear distinction between the two categories, and responses about "information and training", which came first, tended to be more detailed. (See Appendix I for survey instrument.)

None of the technical assistance "great" needs identified by the mayors and supervisors group (Table 5 - only one school official responded) were selected by as many leaders as the ten or eleven who expressed "great need" for leadership skills in the Information or Training needs section of the survey. However, five or more of these leaders did identify a "great need" for specialized assistance with economic development, evaluating debt instruments, engineering for water and sewer projects, and map updating for water and sewer lines. These results, especially regarding water and sewer, are quite consistent with the same emphasis in other parts of the survey. Interestingly with respect to the five officials highlighting a "great need" for help evaluating debt instruments, the same topic had the largest number of responses identifying "no need" for help in this area. Obviously there is a very specific audience interested in this topic. (All five were town officials).

**Table 5. Technical Assistance & Other Problem Solving Help
(mayors and supervisors)**

	<i>Great Need</i>	<i>Moderate Need</i>	<i>No Need</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
<i>Finance</i>				
Evaluating debt instruments	5	1	9	7
Major equipment purchases	2	7	7	6
Prioritizing road maintenance	4	7	5	6
Capital planning	3	8	5	6
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Development</i>				
Contract development	3	4	5	10
Development of bid documents	2	5	6	9
Annual budget development	2	5	7	8
Economic development	6	3	6	7
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Administration</i>				
Insurance and risk management	1	9	5	7
Grant applications	4	8	4	6
Real property assessment	3	3	9	7
Compliance with Disability Act	1	7	7	7
Other	0	0	2	20
<i>Engineering</i>				
Specific roads and bridges	1	8	4	9
Water and/or sewer projects	5	7	3	7
Other	0	0	1	21
<i>Mapping</i>				
Updating for roads	4	3	7	8
Updating for water and sewer lines	5	4	5	8
Updating for land use planning	3	6	5	8
Other	0	0	2	20
<i>Computing</i>				
Selecting hard and software	4	7	3	8
Other	2	0	1	19

Note - A total of 22 individuals were surveyed. While most were elected supervisors or mayors, the totals also include information provided by four school district officials, one village administrator, and four supervisors-at-large. Thus, in several cases more than one individual answered about the same local government.

In comments on the topics they thought among the “three most important”, these topics arose again. Paraphrased comments by fourteen mayors or supervisors on the topic of economic development or debt, grant writing and finance included: “Need long range plan to bring in business and jobs.” “This area would like to see professionals come to the southern part of the county, put on an evening seminar for people interested in starting a business, etc. There are opportunities associated with proximity to Ithaca.” “Typical economic development assistance not helpful. Need someone who can help businesses cut through state regulations and paper work. Example - signage problems with DOT” “Need

a coordinated effort to make a vision in economic development come about. Part of general vision for future, but economic development would be the focus." "Need to coordinate between departments when calls come to county about business expansion; orient staff, improve responsiveness, provide information." "County is self-insured - no reserve for disaster." "Could use speakers on the topic of self-insurance programs." "Need help evaluating and using bonds for future growth; need more than one opinion." "How to go about getting and administering grants - what's available, how to keep records, etc." "Need more help understanding bond and debt instruments - concepts, sources of funds, etc." "Need one or two people responsible for grant writing, attending workshops, making contacts, familiar with resources available." "Grant applications - what's available? How to apply, how to qualify, how to use grants? How to rely on an engineering firm, which can be costly?" "Normally have to hire a grants writer - costly for a village this size. Would there be a way to share the costs of using a grants writer? How about help from the county?" "Need help on legalities and technicalities of bids and contracts, matching debt instruments to actual needs, not just cost considerations." "Need on-site assistance, reasonable consulting firm help on where to obtain funds." "We need help updating maps using a GIS system to use for encouraging economic development."

Paraphrased comments by three mayors or supervisors on the specific topic of water and sewer included: "Need engineering help - had no idea beforehand as to rules." "Need expertise to set up water and sewer districts.. Need help in most economic and efficient means of developing water and sewer with least disruption to residents." "At mercy of engineering firms. Need to be assisted on where to go for information." "Engineering needed for cooperative water and sewer projects." "Need to update water and sewer system maps. In the past complete records were not kept. Need for planning - could be a combined contract to have work done for all the villages in the county."

Considering "great" and "moderate need" together, some additional technical assistance needs can be identified as having been selected by "many" (more than ten) officials. These include the financial aspects of prioritizing road maintenance, capital planning, insurance and risk management, grant applications, updated mapping for land use planning, and selecting computer hardware and software.

In further comments (not included in paraphrases listed above) on topics rated among the "three most important", the mayors and supervisors also noted: "There is a great need for computer hardware and also training." "There is need for a municipally oriented computer school for supervisors, clerks, highway people, bookkeepers, assessors." "Computer training needed!" "Selection of computer soft and hardware - need coordination of compatible equipment - departments buy non-compatible versions. Also need training in use, ongoing technical assistance." "It's very important to know enough to get the right computer program for our needs." "We need help complying with ADA. Town is willing to comply, but can't see how it can afford to do so." "Help with road mapping." "Prioritizing and budgeting for road maintenance expenditures - not enough planning that could benefit the public and government." "With respect to roads, need to know which are done, which, need to be done or redone. Used to have an engineer to

layout village streets, but too expensive. Service could be provided to whole county - one person to do it and keep records.” “Budgeting for road maintenance - CHIPs funds fluctuate up and down. It costs a lot to repair a street, and is hard to set budget”

3.4.2 Highway and Public Works Officials

Once again, the answers of highway officials were generally consistent with those of the mayors and supervisors group. While just one or two highway officials identified quite a number of topics for which they felt their municipality had a “great need”, both economic development and grant applications stood out as the two technical assistance areas selected by five of the nine superintendents that answered this question (Table 6). Considering “great” and “moderate” needs together, assistance in economic development continued to rank first. Four highway superintendents also noted that economic development was one of the three areas they ranked “most important”, and three rated help with grant applications “most important”. Paraphrased comments on these topics included, “Wish there were someone to look around for grant opportunities, perhaps to share with other governments.” “Need lots of help to obtain more grants.” “Ought to have a computer - help discovering what grants might benefit us, how to access them.” “Economic development help is and will be needed due to closings of Willard and the Depot, purchase of land for Hector land use area, loss of tax base.” “Worry about becoming a retirement community. A lot of unused land on the Depot - create industrial park or have warehouses.” “Economic development is important, but what can be done, especially given NIMBY problems (e.g. Willard and drug rehab).”

Additional areas of need selected by a total of more than five superintendents were major equipment purchases and prioritizing road maintenance under the finance category; insurance and risk management in the “administration” category, engineering for specific roads and bridges, updating maps for water and sewer lines and for land use planning, and selecting computer hard and software.

In further discussion of areas the superintendents felt were among the three “most important” for their municipality, most of these topics were reiterated. Three superintendents’ paraphrased comments on insurance and risk management include: “Like to keep abreast of changing circumstances.” “Someone needs to help the jurisdictions structure a cooperative agreement.” “Recently purchased policy to protect personal assets from suit, but exposure is tremendous and we need help to assess the real situation and how best to protect town.”

On budgeting and other financial or administrative topics, eight superintendents made comments about “most important” issues, paraphrased here: “Budget is always just a guesstimate for the future, affected by the winter, bids, chance needs, etc. Major problem is for highway materials like blacktop, etc.” “It would help to get more of a preview of what material costs would likely be ahead of time, some way to figure out what expenses will really be.” “Capital planning doesn’t exist here but should be used for water and sewer, fire trucks, street equipment, etc.” “Need to be aware of planning for capital

**Table 6. Technical Assistance & Other Problem Solving Help
(highway supers)**

	<i>Great Need</i>	<i>Moderate Need</i>	<i>No Need</i>	<i>No Answer</i>
<i>Finance</i>	<i>(# of highway & public works supers)</i>			
Evaluating debt instruments	2	2	5	3
Major equipment purchases	1	5	3	3
Prioritizing road maintenance	1	5	4	2
Capital planning	2	3	4	3
Other	0	1	2	9
<i>Development</i>				
Contract development	0	4	5	3
Development of bid documents	1	3	5	3
Annual budget development	0	5	4	3
Economic development	5	5	0	2
Other	0	0	2	10
<i>Administration</i>				
Insurance and risk management	2	4	2	4
Grant applications	5	1	2	4
Real property assessment	1	4	4	3
Compliance with Disability Act	0	5	3	4
Other	0	0	2	10
<i>Engineering</i>				
Specific roads and bridges	1	5	4	2
Water and/or sewer projects	2	2	6	2
Other	0	0	2	10
<i>Mapping</i>				
Updating for roads	2	3	4	3
Updating for water and sewer lines	2	4	3	3
Updating for land use planning	2	5	3	2
Other	0	0	2	10
<i>Computing</i>				
Selecting hard and software	2	4	4	2
Other	0	0	1	11

Note - A total of 12 highway and public works officials were surveyed.

improvements - one person should be responsible for capital planning, including grants writing and implementation." "Need to follow the town board more carefully - especially regarding the bid process and specifics of bidding." "More of a partnership with the town board is needed in annual budget development." "It would be helpful to have help developing specifications for bids." "If we had knowledge of bonds available, some deals may be better than others - need help in structuring the bonds." "There is concern about fairness in property tax assessment."

Seven superintendents' paraphrased comments on roads and bridges mapping and water and sewer engineering include: "We're too small to have full time engineer to help on water and sewer districts." "Need new map to show road types, e.g. dirt, stone, etc. to

help long range repair. Plus use computer program that tracks road details, maintenance records, resurfacing etc.” “We need improved road maps - lots of problems as abandoned roads stay on map as classified highway due to red tape.” “Need help developing engineering skills in roads and bridge projects.” “Need to work with engineering companies to update projects and mapping.” “Circuit rider concept for engineer is a good one - state notifies us of deficient bridges but doesn’t say how to fix them or what load levels the bridge can hold.” “Water and sewer engineering is a costly, awfully big problem because of the people in new areas who want decent water.”

Finally, two superintendents elected as “most important” comments on a couple of other topics: “There is great need in all departments for the benefits that computing can bring.” “Need more information on the Americans With Disabilities Act” to help from unintentionally breaking the law.

3.5 Past Experiences With Assistance - Good and Bad

All the officials were asked to identify and describe examples of past assistance they had found particularly productive and useful, as well as the opposite.

3.5.1 Supervisors and Mayors - Assistance That Was Useful

“Past assistance that was useful included videos on management, zoning and fiscal issues. Also, assistance from the Comptroller’s office - auditors.” “Explanation of requirements of Comptroller’s office relating to budgeting and expenditure of funds. Afterwards, realized that I already knew most of it.” “Audit and Control and DEC have been very helpful with financing instruction, technical instruction and assistance with formation of water and sewer district.” “NYS Association of Counties offers excellent seminars.” “NYS Association of Towns, though they always meet in downtown Manhattan where cost is a factor. Good program but too expensive.” “NYCOM provides lots of services, information on various topics.” “Parks and Recreation have a lot of state land, have provided planning and development assistance to create a public park.”

“Consulting firm help on obtaining funds, completing grant application forms - they offered onsite assistance at reasonable cost.” “A water and sewer project engineer was technically competent, offered onsite assistance over costs. Had no idea beforehand as to the rules.” “Construction manager on courthouse saved costs as an intermediary between contractor and the county.”

“County health department has helped with water issues, suggestions and specific help with technical guidelines.” “County Health Department gave technical assistance analyzing water samples, fielding our phone calls, physically surveying the situation, etc.” “County Emergency Services has helped, cooperatively with Planning, to assist the local fire department.” “County Office of Emergency Services has helped the local fire department, and seems to work well with local departments. They understand what is needed and provide good, quick service.” “Department of Social Services got help from state and

federal government on educating county on costs, and helped save costs with information on available programs such as employing DSS recipients.” “County Real Property Tax Office was very helpful with putting together the four town assessor deal. They helped make it work, came to meeting to explain how assessment works, and helped recruit the replacement for a previous assessor.” “Good help with Urban Cultural Park in Seneca Falls - helped to promote history, women’s rights, museum, activities.” “Sheriff’s department has been helpful.”

“Likes training that emphasizes practical programs and examples of solutions by other local governments. It is important that groups work together in an effective way to learn together.. The more theoretical it is, the less useful.” “Public safety assistance, due to my prior experiences and need for public safety and to further communications.”

“Cornell newly elected officials programming - should be for all officials because things change.” “Newly elected programming from Cooperative Extension increased our understanding of our roles and responsibilities.” “The supervisors training school for newly elected officials gives a headstart and knowledge base “ “Town recognized it had a problem. Cornell Local Roads Program came and helped us solve the problem, helped us prioritize the use of limited resources. Town can only rebuild 2-3 miles of road each year. CLRP used a formula to determine which roads to rebuild first. They understood the problem, had a good methodology, and developed a solution.”

3.5.2 Supervisors and Mayors - Assistance That Was Not Useful

“Grants like this. Studies need to be more productive. Do we have jobs from grants, training? New businesses or expansions?” “State financial assistance for town roads without engineering advice resulted in short lived benefits. Lack of proper base was an important problem.” “Code enforcement is overzealous and drives out business.” “County code enforcement and economic development - they tend to ignore the southern towns and villages.” “There is a lack of communication skills with the public by code employees.” “Code enforcement slows development, is complicated and can be harassing. State and federal mandates add to the situation.” “County Health Department is inconsistent and inequitable in decision making re variances, rulings, etc. Can’t resolve problems and requires a lot of time. We can’t get help with specific problems.” “Promotion of the youth program - 16 years to declare independence; most end up on welfare.” “HUD just recently extended section 108 program to non entitlement communities. When lower level management employees quarreled over this program, there were roadblocks - they were uncooperative and unresponsive.” “Asked for help from the Soil and Water Conservation District, but never received it.” “Lack of cooperation from County Highway Department.”

3.5.3 Highway and Public Works Superintendents - Assistance That Was Useful

"Some DPW schools and conferences were useful when new on the job, but they became repetitious." "Cornell Local Roads school satellite in Seneca Falls - the risk and tort liability course was good because the instructor (Bill Mobbs, Tompkins County DPW) was sharp,

had worked on roads and knows the job, has real credibility." "Cornell Local Roads Program has excellent resource, tapes, very helpful." "Tape library of Local Roads Program is very flexible and useful approach to training staff. No VCR on site, but brings one in or joins with other town for use of their VCR. Can be very helpful with unusual cases." "Question and answer session with lawyers for state DOT. Like the fact that is just deals with our problems, not a lecture." "Cornell Local Roads Program is better than Catskill association meetings. Like to see superintendents take one man to school each year." "Cornell Highway School discusses new ways of doing things, greater efficiencies. Though it's not pitched at small towns bits and pieces are useful." "Cornell Highway School, since I pick up something every year. Like classes and tips from interacting with others. Wish it were open to crew members because the investment would be more than worth it." "Cornell Local Roads Program Highway School on safety and personnel management." "Cornell Local Roads program - drainage projects, use of materials for roads and training films have been useful." "Cornell Highway School and fall convention of NYS Highway Superintendent's Association are times to go one on one with people, make a direct communications link." "Help from Local Roads Program is great. Like the agenda there, plus afternoon workshops. Gives a new perspective on things, offers a fertile exchange of ideas."

"Soil and Water Conservation District - help on water drainage pipes, drainage ditches needed." "Soil and Water Conservation District helps a lot with work they do for farmers, surveying, etc. Have done drainage work for them, and they have a good relationship." "Soil and Water Conservation District helps a lot. They cover all the ditching. One man lays out everything; he's very conscientious and uses his vast experience. They are the most professional people in the county."

"Likes NYCOM sessions for Public Works Superintendents on different subjects. They are well organized, level of information is appropriate, facilities are good. Limited size of class to numbers they were prepared to handle." "The state association of highway superintendents has done a good job lobbying for funds. The group effort helps save money and provide a forum for common exchange of ideas." "The state association has helped on labor relations, election law and possible conflicts of interest."

"Underground Facilities Protection Organization/ATT - topic was fiber optics and exposure to lawsuits, etc. when digging. Not previously aware of what's in this area and discovered there was quite a bit here. Was a very practical, no cost service." "Standard Engineering drew up blueprints for a bridge that had to be installed. This work was really helpful, and save the town a lot of money. The county could offer engineering help - if good blueprints are available, then the town can do lots of work at less cost. County might be able to do this less cheaply than having Standard do it. Concern, too, about state rules for bridges. Meeting state specs is costly, and they charge more as well!"

3.5.4 Highway and Public Works Superintendents - Assistance That Was Not Useful

"Conferences required for licensing because attendance is required and much is repetitious or pertains mostly to large cities." "Cornell Highway School is oriented too much to large

municipalities (county and state)." "Some mandatory sessions by state agencies aren't really oriented to small places. In some cases the facilities are too small for the number of people involved." "Cornell doesn't pay attention to small towns or programs." "Cornell Local Roads Program - highway school is not that productive since it's targeted at larger communities and departments." "Cornell Highway School doesn't come down to local level, talks about paving and those with money to work with and large staffs. The technology Cornell is studying is not available to rural DPW departments." "Cornell programs have been boring. Insurance talks just haven't been relevant to our situation."

"Local legal guidance is not, in general, sufficient to deal with highly technical legal problems or situations." "Code enforcement is not done properly. Leach lines, etc. are not properly checked. They are lax on junkyards, trailer park licensing. Enforcement is a problem."

3.6 The Role of County and Regional Associations

The Local Government Program has observed and promoted the roles that county and regional associations of local governments can frequently play in helping meet officials' needs. After identifying information, training and technical assistance needs, and then discussing particularly positive and negative experiences with past assistance providers, the interview respondents were asked to consider any possible county or regional associations of local officials that might play a helpful role in responding to their needs.

For the majority of mayors and supervisors, nothing specific was mentioned directly in response to this question. Ultimately, responses to this question did not lead to a clear shared sense of a particular opportunity or need or a specific helpful role that a local officials' association could adopt.

More particularly, some officials noted that the County Board of Supervisor's structure already provided a format in which both inter-town and county issues could be discussed in the same forum. Another official stressed dependence on informal networks and use of local community expertise for problem solving. Others reiterated their appreciation for the services of the statewide organizations like NY Conference of Mayors, NYS Association of Counties, the New York State Government Financial Officer's Association, and the New York State Association of Towns, though without reference to specific services they offer or could offer. Passing reference was also made to The Finger Lakes Association ("more tourism oriented") and discussions by Ontario county supervisors about participation in a regional jail at the Seneca Army Depot.

In terms of suggestions for change, one official did note that it would be worthwhile taking up more active participation in the regional caucus of NYCOM that has been led by the Mayor of Canandaigua. Finally, another suggested that an intercounty, regional association of officials would provide strength in numbers for supporting issues facing the counties and businesses within the counties.

A number of the highway officials did have suggestions on this topic. Both the New York State Highway Association and the county association were identified as organizations that could and should play broader information, communication, training, education or lobbying roles, sometimes taking better advantage of resources like the county highway superintendent. The specific suggestion was made that the county association could play a bigger role if it put more effort into "program planning" or "arranging and hosting seminars for local training". An additional suggestion was that the Fire Chief's Association host sessions on a variety of technical topics, such as hazardous materials or "confined space."

3.7. Satisfaction with State, Federal and Local Programs, Policies and Agencies

As part of the Business Retention and Expansion work that was completed in Seneca County, 90 businesses were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a long list of programs, policies and agencies. Partly for comparative purposes, municipal officials were asked to respond to the same question. However, in the interest of minimizing the response burden on the involved officials, this was not emphasized as a critical element of the local official's survey process. Response rates were 14 of the 18 mayors and supervisors (no school officials were asked to respond to this question), and 7 of the 12 highway and public works officials who were interviewed. Nine of the mayors and supervisors and three of the highway and public works officials added brief written highlights to the answers. These highlights identified the several programs or agencies with which they were "most" or "least" satisfied. In most cases, only one or two individuals picked the same agency or program to highlight. Of course, one or two is a number too small to support either positive or negative generalizations about the program or agency. A brief summary of results follows.

3.7.1 Mayors and Supervisors

Mayors and supervisors were also most positive about organizations at the county level (Table 7), with only County Mental Health, the Health Department, the United Way, and the Department of Employment and Training getting more than two mayors or supervisors expressing dissatisfaction. This contrasts with the much higher dissatisfaction levels expressed with state and federal agencies and programs, particularly state welfare programs, worker's compensation, the state Department of Transportation, and several regulatory agencies (DEC, OSHA and EPA).

The agency receiving the highest total number of this group's "very" or "somewhat satisfied" responses was Cornell Cooperative Extension. Real Property Tax Services also ranked well, with the highest number of "very satisfied" responses. Other agencies that satisfied many (10 or more) municipal leaders include the Office of Emergency Services, the Office of the Aging, the Department of Economic Development and Planning, the Association of Retarded Children and the County Youth Bureau.

Table 7. Satisfaction with Programs, Policies and Agencies (mayors, supervisors)

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Sure	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<i>State Agencies</i>	<i>(# of mayors, supervisors, & school officials)</i>				
Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	1	6	1	7	1
Dept. of Economic Development (DED)	0	5	4	4	2
Urban Development Corporation	1	5	7	0	1
NYS Job Service	1	5	8	1	0
Dept. of Labor (DoL)	0	7	6	1	1
Public Utility Commission (PUC)	0	4	9	1	2
Dept. of Agriculture and Markets	0	5	7	3	0
Dept. of Health	1	3	6	3	1
Dept. of Transportation	1	5	1	7	2
Job Development Authority	0	2	10	1	2
<i>Federal Agencies</i>					
Occupation Safety and Health (OSHA)	0	3	4	7	1
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	0	6	1	6	1
Small Business Administration (SBA)	1	1	7	4	1
US Dept. of Commerce	1	0	11	1	0
Farmer's Home Administration (FHA)	2	3	7	1	1
Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	1	3	6	2	2
<i>State or Federal Policies and Programs</i>					
Worker's Compensation	0	2	2	5	4
Unemployment Compensation	0	2	8	2	2
Highway Programs	2	5	3	3	1
State Welfare Programs	0	1	2	5	7
Liability Insurance	0	0	7	5	1
Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)	0	5	5	3	1
Minimum Wage Regulations	1	4	5	3	1
Energy Credit Program	0	2	9	1	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
<i>County Departments, Agencies and Orgs.</i>					
Dept. of Economic Dvpmnt. & Planning	6	5	1	2	0
Health Dept.	1	7	2	4	0
United Way	3	3	4	4	0
Dept. of Employment and Training	1	3	6	3	1
Dept. of Social Services (DSS)	2	4	4	1	1
Association of Retarded Children (ARC)	3	6	2	1	0
Chamber of Commerce	2	6	3	1	1
Waterloo Downtown Business Association	1	2	10	0	0
Seneca Falls Downtown Business Assoc.	0	1	10	2	0
Cornell Cooperative Extension	5	9	0	0	0
Farm Bureau	0	5	7	1	0
Office of Social Ministries	0	1	11	1	0
County Mental Health	0	4	4	6	0
Soil and Water Conservation District	1	8	4	1	0
Community Action Program (CAP)	0	4	8	1	0
Seneca County Tourism Department	4	7	1	2	0
Office of Emergency Services	6	6	2	0	0
Office of the Aging	5	7	1	1	0
Real Property Tax Services	7	4	1	1	1
County Youth Bureau	4	6	4	0	0

Note: Of 22 mayors, supervisors and school officials surveyed, only 14 answered these questions.

The eight officials identifying agencies with which they were “most” satisfied came up with answers that overlapped each other only slightly, including the one official who noted that, “I have been satisfied with many of our local agencies.” In other words, no particular agencies or programs really stand out positively or negatively in this regard. Thus, with respect to social issues, one official noted that Department of Social Services ran an excellent program, while another complimented the public health secretary, another the “well-run” United Way, and yet another suggested that the “office(s) of aging, social service, youth (and) mental health” were the departments that “seem to deliver.” Two officials mentioned public safety services (“police, fire and DA’s office”; the “very helpful Seneca County sheriff’s department”). On the economic development front, one official mentioned the positive “new direction” of the Department of Economic Development and Planning, and another mentioned the “great package” that led to the urban cultural park in Seneca Falls. One other agency singled out by an official for positive acknowledgment were the “well-thought out” plans of the Office of Emergency Services.

Seven officials mentioned agencies with which they were “least” satisfied. The county’s budget in general was singled out by one. Most significantly, five officials raised concerns about code enforcement, noting that code enforcement was “driving potential businesses from the area”, or was not helpful, or that inspectors did not communicate well with the public, or that, regarding “the Health Department and Code” issues, there were “no results and little response.” Notably, “code enforcement” as such was not listed on the list of printed choices, which emphasizes the extent to which this issue was on these five person’s minds.

In addition, one official expressed dissatisfaction with “grants and training at the Depot”. Another registered “general dissatisfaction” with the county Department of Social Services. Finally, concern was expressed by one official each about the difficult burdens of assessment procedures on “life-long lake residents”; about the “emancipation program” (“16 year olds can go on welfare if they want”); about improvements needed in the JTPA; and about the Soil and Water Conservation District’s lack of response in this municipality on surface drainage issues.

3.7.2 Highway and Public Works Officials

In numerical terms (Table 8) this group of officials expressed the most dissatisfaction with state welfare programs, and only slightly less dissatisfaction with two federal agencies (OSHA and HUD). The most positive (“very” or “somewhat satisfied”) marks were given to a number of programs and organizations based at the county level. Among these the Office of Emergency Services, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Cornell Cooperative Extension rated most favorably. There were programs from higher levels of government that also were generally favored, with the highest satisfaction levels associated with worker’s compensation, unemployment compensation, state highway programs and the department of health.

Table 8. Satisfaction with Programs, Policies and Agencies (highway supers)

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Sure	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
State Agencies					
	(# of highway or public works supers)				
Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	0	3	1	1	2
Dept. of Economic Development (DED)	0	1	4	2	0
Urban Development Corporation	0	1	4	2	0
NYS Job Service	0	3	3	1	0
Dept. of Labor (DoL)	0	4	2	0	1
Public Utility Commission (PUC)	0	2	3	1	1
Dept. of Agriculture and Markets	1	1	4	1	0
Dept. of Health	1	5	0	1	0
Dept. of Transportation	2	2	1	1	1
Job Development Authority	0	1	5	0	1
Federal Agencies					
Occupation Safety and Health (OSHA)	1	1	0	4	1
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	0	3	1	3	0
Small Business Administration (SBA)	0	1	5	1	0
US Dept. of Commerce	0	1	4	1	1
Farmer's Home Administration (FHA)	0	4	2	0	1
Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	0	0	2	5	0
State or Federal Policies and Programs					
Worker's Compensation	2	4	0	1	0
Unemployment Compensation	2	3	2	0	0
Highway Programs	1	4	0	1	1
State Welfare Programs	0	0	0	3	4
Liability Insurance	0	1	5	1	0
Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)	0	3	3	1	0
Minimum Wage Regulations	0	2	2	2	1
Energy Credit Program	0	1	4	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
County Departments, Agencies and Orgs.					
Dept. of Economic Dvpmt. & Planning	0	2	3	1	1
Health Dept.	0	5	1	0	1
United Way	2	3	2	0	0
Dept. of Employment and Training	1	3	3	0	0
Dept. of Social Services (DSS)	0	1	4	1	1
Association of Retarded Children (ARC)	1	4	2	0	0
Chamber of Commerce	1	2	4	0	0
Waterloo Downtown Business Association	1	1	5	0	0
Seneca Falls Downtown Business Assoc.	0	3	4	0	0
Cornell Cooperative Extension	2	4	1	0	0
Farm Bureau	2	3	2	0	0
Office of Social Ministries	0	1	6	0	0
County Mental Health	1	2	4	0	0
Soil and Water Conservation District	4	2	1	0	0
Community Action Program (CAP)	0	1	6	0	0
Seneca County Tourism Department	0	2	5	0	0
Office of Emergency Services	4	3	0	0	0
Office of the Aging	2	3	2	0	0
Real Property Tax Services	1	2	3	1	0
County Youth Bureau	0	4	3	0	0

Note: Of 12 highway or public works superintendents surveyed, only 7 answered these questions.

Only three written comments were submitted by this group of officials, and they therefore do not offer a comprehensive portrait of the views of these officials. Nevertheless, two individuals did single out the Soil and Water Conservation District as the organization with which they were most satisfied. Other “most satisfied” ratings were given by one of the superintendents to the state Department of Environmental Conservation (help given with flood problems), and by another to the Seneca County Chamber of Commerce and the Office of Emergency Management. On the “least satisfied” side of things, concern was expressed by one individual each about Department of Labor regulations, the lack of work incentives in state welfare programs, the state Department of Transportation (“too many people”), and problems, including as a source of inconsistent information, with the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

3.7.3 Comparison with BR&E Survey Results

General comparisons with these results can be made with those that were registered in the survey of 90 businesses completed for the Business Retention and Expansion project. First, it should be cautioned that for several reasons the answers cannot be strictly compared. Perhaps most importantly, eight local agencies were added to the list specifically for the local officials’ survey (Mental Health, Soil and Water Conservation District, CAP, Tourism Department, Office of Emergency Services, Office of the Aging, Real Property Tax, and County Youth Bureau) - i.e. no responses on these are available regarding the business community. Other differences, such as the addition of a “never used” category to the satisfaction scale presented to businesses, compel some caution in interpreting direct comparisons.

With this caveat it can be noted that there were slightly different perspectives on the programs and agencies between the business community and the local leaders we interviewed. For the business people, satisfaction (“very” plus “somewhat” satisfied) levels were highest with the county Chamber of Commerce and the United Way. While many local officials also were generally satisfied with these agencies, they ranked these two behind many other agencies. For business people, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), the Association of Retarded Children (ARC) and the County Health Department also rated relatively highly on the satisfaction scale. Of these, only the first two were among those rated most highly by the local officials. When the business people were asked to single out the few programs or agencies with which they were most satisfied, CCE, the county Chamber of Commerce, the United Way and the ARC were again mentioned most frequently (i.e. by 8 or more businesses).

As with the local officials, dissatisfaction among businesses was most widespread with programs identified with the state and federal governments, though the specific mix varied a little to directly reflect business economic interests. Business people were most critical of state welfare programs, worker’s compensation, unemployment compensation and liability insurance. At the county level, the Department of Social Services and County Chamber of Commerce each got a significant number of “dissatisfied” marks

(though note that the Chamber also was rated highly by many other businesses). The Department of Social Services was singled out most frequently by business persons (17 of them) as the agency with which they were “least satisfied”.

3.7.4 Summary

Business persons, like local officials, tended to express more satisfaction with local agencies and programs than those identified with state and federal governments. While there was significant overlap between the groups on agencies which “satisfied”, business persons gave the Chamber of Commerce and the United Way a higher ranking than did local officials. Dissatisfaction levels among business people were highest with several state and federal “social” programs, and likewise at the local level the Department of Social Services elicited “dissatisfied” responses. Perhaps most interesting (given the concerns expressed about negative economic impacts) is the local officials’ dissatisfaction with “code enforcement”, a result which is not readily apparent in the business responses.

4. Municipal Fiscal Conditions Survey - Perceptions of Local Issues Pertaining to the Seneca Army Depot and Willard Psychiatric Center

4.1 Background and Procedures

As a preliminary to later interviews, thirty-five local officials were mailed a short two-page "Municipal Fiscal Conditions Survey". The purpose of this survey was a) to serve as an initial contact relating to our project, b) to establish a baseline of information with each official about local circumstances, and c) to elicit information and opinions on several subjects. These subjects included the officials' perceptions of the effects of the Seneca Army Depot downsizing on their municipality and the general kinds of important issues they faced.

In general, the surveys were administered by county staff, while the surveys were designed and data processed and summarized by Cornell University. A total of thirty-five local government officials received the surveys. These leaders represented all the towns and villages in the county, and also included one official each from the Romulus, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and South Seneca school districts. Four of the leaders contacted were "county supervisors" elected exclusively to represent their towns on the county board. In addition to the chief elected official, highway superintendents or public works officials from each municipality were sent surveys. In another instance, a village administrator was included as well as the mayor. Thus, the statistical results do not reflect a "one municipality - one survey" principle.

The surveys were mailed initially in early December of 1994, and the majority were returned by mid January. Standard follow-up procedures (i.e. additional mailings) were used, and supplemented by phone call reminders. In several instances, the survey was not actually completed until the day of the personal interview (mid-February to mid-March). In four instances no survey was completed, leaving a total of 31 completed surveys.

While the results reported below are primarily based upon the survey just discussed, they also include responses to several related questions asked during interviews conducted a couple of months after the initial mail survey with the same people. The related interview questions dealt with identification of major issues facing the town, and further perceptions of the impacts (as of early 1995) of the Seneca Army Depot downsizing and the closing of the Willard Psychiatric Center.

4.2 Survey Results - Economic Future and Impacts of the Depot

Table 9. How does the economic future of your town or village look?

	<i>NUMBER</i>	<i>PERCENT</i>
GENERALLY POSITIVE	9	29%
UNCERTAIN	16	52%
GENERALLY NEGATIVE	6	19%
TOTAL	31	100%

Table 9 indicates the high level of uncertainty about the economic future of the region at the time the survey was completed. This feeling was widespread. It is nevertheless worthwhile noting that the officials responding “generally negative” were all from the central and southern parts of the county, while most of those with a more positive projection were from the northern end of the county. At the same time, there were some officials in the north who were pessimistic and some in the south who were optimistic.

These results are consistent with concerns about the changing status of the Seneca Army Depot and Willard Psychiatric Center. The issue of the Depot was addressed directly in the survey as shown in tables 10a-10c.

Table 10a. Has the Seneca Army Depot downsizing had an effect on your ability to raise revenues?

	<i>NUMBER</i>	<i>PERCENT</i>
POSITIVE	2	6%
NO EFFECT	16	52%
NEGATIVE	13	42%
TOTAL	31	100%

Table 10b. Has the Seneca Army Depot downsizing had an effect on your ability to provide municipal services?

	<i>NUMBER</i>	<i>PERCENT</i>
POSITIVE	0	0%
NO EFFECT	26	84%
NEGATIVE	5	16%
TOTAL	31	100%

Table 10c. Has the Seneca Army Depot downsizing had an effect on your ability to use services provided by the Depot?

	<i>NUMBER</i>	<i>PERCENT</i>
POSITIVE	0	0%
NO EFFECT	28	90%
NEGATIVE	3	10%
TOTAL	31	100%

Overall, it is clear that relatively few of these officials felt that, to date, there had been any unmistakable effect of the Depot downsizing on their abilities to raise revenue or provide municipal services. Unsurprisingly, to the extent that an impact was identified, it was negative. (Based on additional information received, it appears that the two officials indicating a positive revenue impact intended a negative response instead, though this is not absolutely confirmed.)

Twenty respondents provided some written commentary to help explain their answers, and these elaborations do emphasize the negative effects more strongly. The most common single theme (about 7 comments) is captured in the phrases, “Unable to raise revenues on empty property. Difficult to provide funds with decreasing tax base”, and “How to cut taxes?”. Similar comments note the loss of revenues associated with a “good neighbor” policy by the Depot, the loss of state aid to the schools, or note more generally that, “Residents are fearful about their future.” (This school official goes on to note that voters are indeed “hesitant about approving school budgets”.) Other comments refer to the dependency of several jurisdictions on the Depot water supply.

In contrast, a small number of comments noted that, despite the job cutbacks and homes for sale, there had not been much in the way of negative impacts on the government itself or, alternatively, that the situation of the particular town or village in question was affected much more strongly by forces other than the changes at the Depot.

The responses to the questions summarized in Table 11 give a richer sense of the official’s attitudes towards the Depot downsizing.

Table 11. Do you agree with the following statements?

	NUMBER AGREEING	
	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
We have no need to respond to the down- sizing because it doesn't really affect us.	4	13%
We have already taken measures to respond.	5	16%
We're uncertain how to respond.	12	39%
There is nothing our government should do.	0	0%
Taking steps is futile. Our future is determined by forces outside of our control.	11	35%

Two statements earned the strongest agreement. (See the note in the table about the meaning of “agreement and “disagreement”). First, twelve of the 31 officials noted that

they simply were “uncertain” how their town or village government should be responding to the Depot downsizing. Second, an almost equal number (different officials, generally) had determined that there was little to be done in any event, because larger forces than their governments controlled the future. Nevertheless, it is telling of the uncertainty and ambivalence felt by some that none of the officials were willing to agree with the statement, “There is nothing our government should do.” Despite this reluctance, four officials did indicate more particularly that there was no need to respond because their municipalities were unaffected. Finally, five officials, all in the immediate vicinity of the Depot, did indicate they had already taken measures to respond. Unfortunately, there is no clear indication of what those measures were.

Table 12 adds still further insight into the officials’ situations, as it documents their senses of preparedness for further impacts of the Depot downsizing. Only five were willing to say they were very well prepared to manage further impacts. Several of these officials were from municipalities in the immediate vicinity of the Depot, and presumably had the most at stake in being well prepared. The fact that about one quarter of the officials suggested that they were not well prepared at all and another quarter felt only somewhat well prepared suggests, again, a high level of uncertainty and even anxiety, about the situation. It also suggests that useful help in getting well prepared would be well received, at least by those who did not feel that there was nothing to be done in any event.

Table 12. How well prepared is your government to respond to any further impacts of the downsizing?

	NUMBER	PERCENT
NOT WELL PREPARED AT ALL	8	26%
SOMEWHAT WELL PREPARED	7	23%
VERY WELL PREPARED	5	16%
NO OPINION//DONT KNOW	11	35%
TOTAL	31	100%

In order to put the issue of the Depot downsizing in context, we asked the officials to identify the most important issue faced by the town or village at the time. About two-thirds (23) of the officials identified such an issue. They overwhelmingly (16 officials) identified some form of the generic issue of keeping property taxes in line while maintaining needed services. Another five officials identified water supply issues (the need to maintain or develop a supply in most cases, excess capacity to share in another), though in one case expanding service was explicitly defined as a mechanism to capture the benefits of needed growth. One other official mentioned a more general version of the latter point (planning for infrastructure development). Only one respondent raised an entirely different agenda (solid waste), and he also included a tax base/economic growth topic as a second issue (the need to retain Gould Pump in the area).

We also asked specifically how many of these officials felt that the major issue facing their municipality was in some way affected by the Depot downsizing. Nearly half of

responding officials (14) indicated that there was some effect. Explanatory comments explaining the answer to this question are listed below

“Loss of jobs.” “People are more reluctant to approve school budgets.” “People that worked at the Depot rented or bought houses and paid taxes.” “The board cut taxes because the county taxes are going up and because they don’t know what the prospects of the Depot and Willard are to remain open.” “Increase in school tax because of military student decline.” “No relationship, but I wish there was!” “The downsizing hurts individuals and related service businesses, but those that are left have taken up the slack.” “Only to the extent that revenues are flat and costs increase.” “People are losing their jobs and are not able to pay their taxes.” “Loss of people...Loss of business from direct purchases and loss of business from service personnel and workers who used to live in our community.” “Not as many rentals filled, not as many customers for village businesses.” “People can’t pay taxes without money.” “Loss of student’s negatively impacts the state aid the district receives. People are less willing to fund budget increases when there are significant job losses in the community.” “We are losing the tax base. People have moved out of our village to try to make a living.” “The south end of Seneca County is not affected as much as the rest of Seneca county. Being close to Tompkins County helps us out.” “They provide water.” “Spending dropped for every job loss.” “Loss of jobs - unable to keep real estate.” “Downsizing gave the county an opportunity to apply for grant funds to do studies - DOL and OEA grants were the major positive effect of downsizing.”

4.3 Summary

In sum, these survey results confirm the sense that there is widespread uncertainty and anxiety about the future on the part of many officials, particularly in the towns and villages and school districts in the central part of the county near the Seneca Army Depot. Economic issues and related tax base pressures and costs of maintaining municipal service levels were noted almost universally as the major issue facing municipal officials in all parts of the county. While relatively few officials were able to pinpoint direct fiscal impacts of the Depot downsizing at the time of the survey, many more did perceive a direct relationship between the Depot situation and the major economic issue. Finally, only a small minority of these officials felt they were “very well prepared” to respond to further impacts of the downsizing.

4.4 Addendum - Study Impacts and “Post-test” survey administration

The survey just summarized was administered through the mail in late 1994. At the time of the personal interviews (2-3 months later), the same officials were asked to review their prior answers to see whether or not they were still apt. Any changes made would be attributable largely to one of the following: a) a change in the political or fiscal climate, including the perceived policy relating to Willard or the Depot; b) corrections of simple mistakes filling out the survey the first time; c) changes in the official’s personal state of

mind; or d) affects of various interventions, including the work associated with this project. In the event, it was unsurprising that most officials did not perceive any need to change their answers. Among the mayor, supervisor, and school administrator group only two officials made changes. Among the highway officials group, about a half-dozen changes were made. Some of these changes were clearly made as corrections due to a closer reading of the question, or better understanding thereof. It is not clear what motivated the other changes. However, these other changes were, with two exceptions, changes in the direction of a more pessimistic answer in terms of impacts of the Depot downsizing on the municipality. Based on this evidence, we have no conclusive evidence that project activities led to changes in leadership planning and foresight in the short time period in question. We can only speculate that the longer term effects may become clearer.

APPENDIX I

SENECA COUNTY MUNICIPAL FISCAL CONDITIONS SURVEY



Conducted by:
Seneca County Local Government Assistance Task Force
1 DiPronio Drive
Waterloo, NY 13165
1994-95

MUNICIPAL FISCAL CONDITIONS SURVEY

Seneca County has absorbed a number of facility closings and layoffs over the past decade. The downsizing of the Seneca Army Depot is a recent important example. Some municipalities have been affected more than others. Your answers to this survey will help us understand how these events are affecting and being managed by your town or village.

- 1 In your opinion, does the economic future of your town or village look
(Please circle ONE number.)

1 GENERALLY NEGATIVE? 2 UNCERTAIN? 3 GENERALLY POSITIVE?

- 2 **To date**, what effect has the downsizing of the Seneca Army Depot had on your town or village government's....

NEGATIVE POSITIVE NO EFFECT
(Please circle ONE number per question.)

A. ABILITY TO RAISE REVENUES?	1	2	3
B. ABILITY TO PROVIDE MUNICIPAL SERVICES?	1	2	3
C. ABILITY TO USE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE DEPOT (e.g., fire, water, etc.)?	1	2	3

ANY OTHER? (Please specify.)

D. _____	1	2	3
E. _____	1	2	3

- 3 Please give some details to help us understand your answers to Questions 2.

4 Which of the following statements describe how you think your town or village government should be responding to the Depot downsizing? *(Please circle ALL that apply.)*

- a. We have no need to respond because it doesn't really affect us.
- b. We have already taken measures to respond.
- c. We're uncertain how to respond.
- d. There is nothing our town or village government should do.
- e. Taking steps is futile. Our future is determined by forces outside of our control.

5 In your opinion, how well prepared is your town or village government to respond to any *further* impacts of the downsizing of the Depot? *(Please circle ONE number.)*

- 1 NOT WELL PREPARED AT ALL
- 2 SOMEWHAT WELL PREPARED
- 3 VERY WELL PREPARED
- 4 NO OPINION/NOTSURE/DON'T KNOW

6 At present, what is the *most important issue* your town or village faces regarding the provision of municipal services?

7 Is this issue affected in any way by the Depot downsizing? *(Please circle ONE response.)*

1 YES

2 NO

Could you tell us why?

**WE APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.
THANK YOU.**

If you would like a copy of our report, please give us your name and address:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

If you have any questions about the study or this questionnaire, please contact:

GERRY MESSMER
Seneca County Local Government Assistance Task Force
1 DiPronio Drive
Waterloo, NY 13165
315-539-5655 EXT: 2197

SENECA COUNTY MUNICIPAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES SURVEY

AREA FORMS



Conducted by:
Seneca County Local Government Assistance Task Force
1 DiPronio Drive
Waterloo, NY 13165
1994-95

COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AREA FORMS

- A.** Please describe briefly the situation you had in mind. In other words, what is the cooperative activity that is taking place *(or might take place)*? Please give me a sense of the "who, what, where, when and why".

- B.** What do you think were the most important factors that led *(or could lead)* to this cooperative activity?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a Budget crisis | d Prior study |
| b Strong political leadership | e History of working together |
| c Demands of citizens | |

C. What were the most important factors that hindered (or could hinder) the negotiation and implementation of this cooperative activity?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| a Lack of geographic proximity | e Type or formality of negotiation process |
| b Size of service area | f Legal issues |
| c Uncertainty about dollar savings | g Number of governments involved |
| d Concern about quality of service | h Role of key decision makers |

D. Have the benefits and costs of this activity been analyzed in any way, even informally?

- 1 YES ☐
- 2 NO ☐

(If "YES"): Can you summarize what kind of analysis was done, and what was concluded? Is there any documentation of this that could be shared with other local governments? If so, what is it and who has it?

EXISTING COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

E.1. Suppose a group of local governments is considering whether to "start up" this activity in which you are already cooperating. What information or assistance do you think they should have?

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| a | Information on legal issues | d | Model agreements |
| b | An outside negotiator | e | Personnel implications |
| c | Estimate of costs and savings | f | Likely service impacts |

E.2. How successful do you think this existing cooperative activity has been? Let's use a scale of 1 (failure) to 5 (very successful). (Please circle the number the respondent chooses).

Failure					Very Successful
1	2	3	4	5	

Could you explain your choice?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATION

F.1. Suppose your government decided to explore with other governments this opportunity to cooperate. What information or other assistance would you want?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a Information on legal issues | d Model agreements |
| b An outside negotiator | e Personnel implications |
| c Estimate of costs and savings | f Likely service impacts |

F.2. If you and other local governments decided to pursue this opportunity for cooperation, how would you rate the difficulty of reaching a "deal" acceptable to all parties? Again, let's use a scale of 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult). (Please circle the number the respondent chooses.)

Very Easy

1

2

3

4

Very Difficult

5

Could you explain your choice?

- G. Do you have any other suggestions on how to improve this existing cooperative activity (or what the first steps should be to explore this opportunity for cooperation)?**

*(Interviewer, read the following paragraph the **first time** you use this form **only**.)*

Lastly, I'd like to ask a specific question about the possible role of local government associations in relation to this topic. You probably know that local officials frequently join together at the county or regional level in "local government associations". Some associations simply offer social events and the informal exchange of ideas, while others have more ambitious agendas. In this county, for example, I have heard about *(briefly identify a couple of associations we've heard about, such as highway superintendents, magistrates, and assessors.)* There may be others. My question is:

*(Ask the following question for **each** cooperative activity and opportunity unless it is clear from previous responses that the respondent has no relevant knowledge of local government associations.)*

- H. Do you know of any association of local government officials in this county that might play a helpful role in improving (or initializing) the specific cooperative activity/opportunity we are discussing?**

1 YES ☐
2 NO ☐

(IF "YES"): Please identify the association.

What role do you think this association might play?



**SENECA COUNTY
MUNICIPAL NEEDS
AND OPPORTUNITIES
CHECKLIST SURVEY**

Conducted by:
**Seneca County Local Government Assistance Task Force
1 DiPronio Drive
Waterloo, NY 13165
1994-95**

Cooperation Between Governments

In this first section, we would like you to help us identify service or function areas;
a) where your government already cooperates with other towns, villages, cities, counties
or school districts or b) where you think there is an opportunity to cooperate or contract.

We also want to know if the downsizing of the Seneca Army Depot *is* or *could be* an important factor affecting the actual or potential cooperative activity you identify. *(Please circle all that apply to each service or function area.)*

WE CURRENTLY COOPERATE OR CONTRACT WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS	WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO COOPERATE OR CONTRACT WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS	DEPOT IS OR COULD BE A FACTOR
--	--	-------------------------------------

SERVICE OR FUNCTIONAL AREAS

PUBLIC SAFETY

a. Law enforcement	1	2	3
b. Fire prevention and control	1	2	3
c. Emergency or rescue services	1	2	3
d. Animal control	1	2	3
e. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS

f. Sewage, including sewer district	1	2	3
g. Solid waste	1	2	3
h. Recycling	1	2	3
i. Water supply and distribution (include water districts)	1	2	3
j. Highway maintenance and improvements	1	2	3
k. Snow removal	1	2	3
l. Public transportation (e.g. bus, vans)	1	2	3
m. Building/facility construction or use	1	2	3
n. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

HEALTH AND RECREATION

o. Health services	1	2	3
p. Youth services	1	2	3
q. Senior citizen services	1	2	3
r. Parks and recreation programs	1	2	3
s. Public library	1	2	3
t. Historian, museum, other cultural	1	2	3
u. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

PLANNING

v. Land use planning and regulation	1	2	3
w. Code enforcement	1	2	3
x. Economic development	1	2	3
y. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER

z. Real property assessment	1	2	3
aa. Clerical or record keeping functions	1	2	3
bb. Legal services	1	2	3
cc. Purchasing	1	2	3
dd. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

OTHER SERVICE OR FUNCTIONAL AREA (Please specify.)

.....	1	2	3
.....	1	2	3

Information or Training Needs

Please help us identify the areas in which you think more information or training for local officials would be useful.

For each topic, please check the ONE response that best indicates *your local government's need* for either information or training assistance.

GREAT NEED	MODERATE NEED	NO NEED
---------------	------------------	------------

COMMUNICATION

a. How to get input from the public	1	2	3
b. How to present information to the public	1	2	3
c. How to better communicate within our own government	1	2	3
d. How to better communicate with other governments	1	2	3
e. Other (please specify)	1	2	3

MANAGEMENT

f. Managing board and committee meetings	1	2	3
g. Managing employees	1	2	3
h. Training for newly elected/appointed officials	1	2	3
i. Other (please specify)	1	2	3

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

j. Finding capable people for local elected and appointed boards	1	2	3
k. Creating a long term vision for the municipality	1	2	3
l. How to make the vision happen	1	2	3
m. Other (please specify)	1	2	3

BUDGETING

n. Annual budgeting	1	2	3
o. Administration of the annual budget	1	2	3
p. Calculating cost of services and related fees and prices	1	2	3
q. Other (please specify)	1	2	3

PLANNING

r. Planning and budgeting for capital improvements	1	2	3
s. Land use planning and regulation	1	2	3
t. Building code enforcement	1	2	3
u. How to find and contract with consultants	1	2	3
v. Other (please specify)	1	2	3

COMPUTING AND OTHER SKILLS

w. Introductory training in computer acquisition and use	1	2	3
x. Use of computers for specific tasks (budgeting, inventories, etc.)	1	2	3
y. Other (please specify)	1	2	3

Technical Assistance and Other Problem-Solving Help

This section provides a list of areas in which local governments might need individualized assistance from specialists. Your responses will help identify the needs shared by a number of local governments.

For each item, please check the ONE response that best indicates your local government's need for that type of individualized assistance.

GREAT NEED	MODERATE NEED	NO NEED
---------------	------------------	------------

FINANCE

a. Evaluating and using bond, BANS or other debt instruments	1	2	3
b. Major equipment purchases	1	2	3
c. Prioritizing and budgeting for road maintenance expenditures	1	2	3
d. Capital planning	1	2	3
e. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

DEVELOPMENT

f. Contract development	1	2	3
g. Development of bid documents	1	2	3
h. Annual budget development	1	2	3
i. Economic development	1	2	3
j. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

ADMINISTRATION

k. Insurance and risk management	1 ✓	2	3
l. Grant applications	1	2	3
m. Real property assessment	1	2	3
n. Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act	1	2	3
o. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

ENGINEERING

p. Engineering for specific road and bridge projects	1	2	3
q. Engineering for water and/or sewer projects	1	2	3
r. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

MAPPING

s. Improving and updating maps and map records for roads	1	2	3
t. Improving and updating maps and map records for water and sewer lines	1	2	3
u. Improving and updating maps and map records for land use planning	1	2	3
v. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

COMPUTING

w. Selection of computer hardware and software	1	2	3
x. Other (Please specify)	1	2	3

State or Federal Programs, Policies and Agencies

1. Please indicate your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the following city, county, state or federal programs, policies, agencies or organizations.

VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NOT SURE	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
-------------------	-----------------------	-------------	--------------------------	----------------------

State Agencies:

a. NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	1	2	3	4	5
b. NYS Dept. of Economic Development (DED)	1	2	3	4	5
c. Urban Development Corporation	1	2	3	4	5
d. NYS Job Service	1	2	3	4	5
e. NYS Department of Labor (DoL)	1	2	3	4	5
f. NYS Public Utility Commission (PUC)	1	2	3	4	5
g. NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets	1	2	3	4	5
h. NYS Department of Health (DoH)	1	2	3	4	5
i. NYS Department of Transportation (DoT)	1	2	3	4	5
j. NYS Job Development Authority	1	2	3	4	5

Federal Agencies:

k. Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA)	1	2	3	4	5
l. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	1	2	3	4	5
m. Small Business Administration (SBA)	1	2	3	4	5
n. U. S. Department of Commerce	1	2	3	4	5
o. Farmers Home Administration (FHA)	1	2	3	4	5
p. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	1	2	3	4	5

State or Federal Policies and Programs:

q. Worker's Compensation	1	2	3	4	5
r. Unemployment Compensation	1	2	3	4	5
s. Highway programs	1	2	3	4	5
t. State welfare programs	1	2	3	4	5
u. Liability insurance	1	2	3	4	5
v. Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)	1	2	3	4	5
w. Minimum wage regulations	1	2	3	4	5
x. Energy Credit Program	1	2	3	4	5
y. Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

County Departments, Agencies and Organizations:

z. County Department of Economic Development and Planning	1	2	3	4	5
aa. County Health Department	1	2	3	4	5
bb. United Way	1	2	3	4	5
cc. Department of Employment and Training	1	2	3	4	5
dd. Department of Social Services (DSS)	1	2	3	4	5
ee. Association of Retarded Children (ARC)	1	2	3	4	5
ff. Seneca County Chamber of Commerce	1	2	3	4	5
gg. Waterloo Downtown Business Association	1	2	3	4	5
hh. Seneca Falls Downtown Business Association	1	2	3	4	5
ii. Cornell Cooperative Extension	1	2	3	4	5
jj. Farm Bureau	1	2	3	4	5
kk. Office of Social Ministries	1	2	3	4	5
ll. County Mental Health	1	2	3	4	5
mm. Soil and Water Conservation District	1	2	3	4	5
nn. Community Action Program (CAP)	1	2	3	4	5
oo. Seneca County Tourism Department	1	2	3	4	5
pp. Office of Emergency Services	1	2	3	4	5
qq. Office of the Aging	1	2	3	4	5
rr. Real Property Tax Services	1	2	3	4	5
ss. County Youth Bureau	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please identify and briefly summarize your experience(s) with any local agency, program or policy with which you have been the *most satisfied*.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

3. Please identify and briefly summarize your experience(s) with any local agency, program or policy with which you have been the *least satisfied*.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Thank You Very Much!

If you are certain this survey will reach us before our interview with you is scheduled, please mail it in the enclosed, pre-addressed envelope.

If you are not certain, please keep the survey yourself.

SENECA COUNTY MUNICIPAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES SURVEY



Conducted by:
Seneca County Local Government Assistance Task Force
1 DiPronio Drive
Waterloo, NY 13165
1994-95

SECTION I: ABOUT YOU

In a minute, I would like to ask you some questions about the survey forms you already filled out for us. But I would like to begin this interview with a few questions that will help me understand a little about your background in government and the kind of government you have here. I'll start with a few brief questions about your background.

1. How many years have you lived in the county?

_____ NUMBER OF YEARS

2. How long have you held your current position in government?

_____ NUMBER OF YEARS

3. Is your position as an official full or part-time? *(Interviewer, please circle ONE response.)*

- 1 FULL TIME —> Go To QUESTION 4, BELOW.
2 PART TIME

- 3a. If part time, how many hours a week do you work on average?

_____ HOURS PER WEEK

4. Have you held other elected or appointed positions in government?

- 1 YES
2 No

- 4a. What were those positions?

5. Do you currently have an occupation outside of government?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

5a. What is that occupation?

6. In the past, what were your primary occupations?

SECTION II: YOUR VILLAGE OR TOWN

Next I'd like to ask you some questions about your local government.

1. **What boards and committees does your local government have in addition to the governing board?** *(Interviewer, boards are usually permanent organs of government with formal decision-making powers. Committees are generally advisory, and more likely set up to consider particular issues.)*

Let's start with boards first.

BOARDS

- a. Planning Board
- b. Zoning Board of Appeals
- c. Other *(Please specify.)*

COMMITTEES

2. **In your opinion, what is the most important issue, if any, facing your town or village government with respect to the closing of the Willard Psychiatric Center?**

3. At this point, what do you think is the most important issue, if any, facing your local government with respect to the downsizing of the Depot?



4. We included a fiscal profile of your municipality with the materials we mailed to you earlier. If you had a chance to look at it, I'd be interested in any comments you have. I should add that if you'd like to talk about the profiles in any detail, I should have someone from Cornell's Local Government Program get back to you on that. *(Interviewer, please write comments below.)*

SECTION III: COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS

Now, let's look at the survey forms you completed. Let me give you copies so that we can both look at your responses at the same time.

First, let's look at the form on intergovernmental cooperation.

I need to learn more about the cooperative activities and opportunities you've identified. This information will help us suggest opportunities for cooperation in our survey report, and in the subsequent discussions with local officials.

(Interviewer, proceed to  A if 4 or LESS responses in Columns 1 and 2
 B if MORE than 4 responses, Page 6.)

*Interviewer, if respondent **has not** filled out the checklist, **give respondent time to fill it out**. Then, proceed to A if 4 or LESS responses in Columns 1 and 2
B if MORE than 4 responses, Page 6)*

A. 4 or LESS RESPONSES IN COLUMNS 1 and 2 COMBINED

You checked _____ (number of) areas in the two columns combined.
In reviewing this now, do they still seem appropriate?

If YES -- I'll fill out a separate form for each area you've identified and we can discuss each as we go along. (Interviewer, please proceed with filling out AREA FORM for each area.).

If NO -- Review why not; then revise the responses on the checklist form and proceed with either:

- 1) "YES" response above or
- 2) skip to B on Page 6, as appropriate.

B. MORE than 4 RESPONSES IN COLUMNS 1 and 2 COMBINED

You checked _____ (a number greater than 4) areas in columns 1 and 2. Since I don't want to take up too much of your time, I suggest that you choose no more than four of these areas for our discussion.

Any combination is acceptable to me, but:

For column 1, you might want to choose those *cooperative activities* that you think have been *most successful*.

For column 2, you might want to choose those *opportunities* that you think it would be *most fruitful for your local government to pursue*.

(Interviewer, give your respondent some time to make his or her choices. Then complete a separate AREA FORM for each choice.)

Let's discuss each one of your choices now. I'll fill out a separate form for each one.

SECTION IV: INFORMATION OR TRAINING NEEDS

Now let's look at Section B on the checklist survey. You rated potential areas of information or training assistance for your local government in terms of "Great Need", "Moderate Need", or "No Need".

I would like you to review your answers with me and tell me which of the areas you checked represent the three *most important* information or training needs of your local government.

I would also like you to tell me why you rate these needs as the most important.

INFORMATION OR TRAINING AREA 2

Interviewer, use these questions to probe:

Why did you choose this topic? Can you tell me any more detail so I can understand the situation?

What is it about this area that is a problem?

Why isn't it working the way it should?

What should assistance in this area include that would make it most useful to your local government?

INFORMATION OR TRAINING AREA 3

SECTION V: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND OTHER PROBLEM-SOLVING HELP

Now let's do the same thing with your technical and other problem-solving help checklist. Again, I would like to know two things:

Which three areas are the most important to your government?
Why do you rank them as most important?

(Interviewer, circle respondent's three most important technical assistance areas.)

Finance	a	b	c	d	e
Development	f	g	h	i	j
Administration	k	l	m	n	o
Engineering	p	q	r		
Mapping	s	t	u	v	
Computing	w	x			

Why is this area important?

TECHNICAL OR PROBLEM-SOLVING AREA 1

*Interviewer, use these
questions to probe:*

Why did you choose this topic? Can you tell me any more detail so I can understand the situation?

What is it about this area that is a problem?

Why isn't it working the way it should?

What should assistance in this area include that would make it most useful to your local government?

TECHNICAL OR PROBLEM-SOLVING AREA 2

Interviewer, use these questions to probe:

Why did you choose this topic? Can you tell me any more detail so I can understand the situation?

What is it about this area that is a problem?

Why isn't it working the way it should?

What should assistance in this area include that would make it most useful to your local government?

TECHNICAL OR PROBLEM-SOLVING AREA 3

Now we would like to know about any past experiences your local government may have had with the kinds of assistance we have just discussed.

1. First, can you give me one or two examples of past assistance that your local officials found *productive or useful*?

a. _____

Why was it productive or useful?

b. _____

Why was it productive or useful?

2. Now let's talk about examples that were *not productive or useful*. Again, could you give me one or two examples and tell me why you think they were not productive?

a. _____

Why was it not productive or useful?

b. _____

Why was it not productive or useful?

(Ask the following question unless it is clear from previous responses that the respondent has no relevant knowledge of local government associations.)

Earlier in the interview, I asked you about county or regional associations and any role they might play in promoting intergovernmental cooperation. Now I'd like to ask the same questions about the educational and technical assistance needs we've just discussed.

3. Do you know of any existing county or regional association of local government officials that might play a helpful role with regard to any of these needs?

1 Yes

2 No

3a. (IF "YES") Please identify the association:

3b. How could the association help?

Thank you very much for your cooperation! We'd like to leave this short written survey with you now. This is basically the survey we mailed to you earlier. We're asking you to look at it again simply to see if you might have changed the way you feel about any of these issues. Please mail it back in the postage-paid envelope we're providing for your convenience. Or I'd be happy to wait another minute if you wanted to fill it in now. Thank you.

Background Questions Asked of Respondents During Interviews

The officials were first asked how many years they had lived in the county (Table 1). All but two of the officials in the mayor, supervisor and school official's group had done so for at least 18 years, with a median of 41 years. The median years for the highway group was 48 years, with only one having lived there less than 40 years.

Table 1. How many years you lived in the county?

SUPERVISORS, MAYORS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS		HIGHWAY AND PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIALS	
Years	Frequency	Years	Frequency
.25	1	30.00	1
8.00	1	40.00	1
18.00	2	43.00	1
20.00	2	45.00	1
25.00	1	47.00	1
30.00	1	48.00	1
31.00	1	51.00	2
32.00	1	60.00	1
40.00	1	63.00	1
41.00	1	65.00	1
44.00	1	68.00	1
45.00	2		
46.00	1	Total	12
50.00	1		
51.00	2		
54.00	2		
59.00	1		
60.00	1		
Total	23		

Next the officials were asked about the length of time they had held their current position (Table 2). While many had significant experience in their jobs, many were also relative newcomers. Seven of the mayors, supervisors and school officials had been in their positions for two years or less, but six had held office for 10 years or longer. The median length of time was four years. In contrast, the median length of time of holding office among the highway and public works superintendents was 14 years, with a range from 1 to 23 years.

Table 2. How long have you held your current position?

SUPERVISORS, MAYORS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Years	Frequency
0.08	1
0.25	1
1.00	3
1.50	1
2.00	1
3.00	4
4.00	3
6.00	1
7.00	1
8.00	1
10.00	2
11.00	1
12.00	1
15.00	1
20.00	1
Total	23

HIGHWAY AND PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIALS

Value	Frequency
1.50	1
3.00	1
3.50	1
8.00	1
10.00	1
14.00	1
15.00	2
16.00	1
17.00	1
19.00	1
23.00	1
Total	12

All but one of the responding highway and public works officials described their position as "full time" (Table 3). In contrast, only five of the other group (including the four school officials), described their position as "full-time". In terms of hours per week worked, the mayors, supervisors and school officials reported totals ranging from 9 to 60 hours, with a median of 22.5.

Table 3. Is Position Full or Part-Time?

	FULL TIME (#)	PART TIME (#)
Mayors, Supervisors, School Officials	5	18
Highway and Public Works Officials	11	1

Table 4. If part time, how many hours a week do you work on average?

SUPERVISORS, MAYORS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Years	Frequency
9.00	1
10.00	1
11.00	1
16.00	2
17.50	1
20.00	3
22.50	2
25.00	1
27.50	1
30.00	2
32.50	1
47.50	1
50.00	1
55.00	1
60.00	1

3 NO ANSWER

Total 23

HIGHWAY AND PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIALS

Years	Frequency
12 NO ANSWER	
Total	12

All but six of the mayors, supervisors and the four school officials had held other positions in government (Table 5). The list of other positions included town or village boards, planning boards, soil and water conservation district board, town justice, state police officer, fire and police commissioner, school board, and a small business grant screening committee. Six of the highway officials had also held other government positions, including deputy county fire coordinator, village trustee, county fire coordinator, prior experience as a highway superintendent, assistant highway superintendent and a school board.

Table 5. Held other positions in government?

	YES (#)	NO (#)
Mayors, Supervisors, School Officials	17	6
Highway and Public Works Officials	6	6

Although most of the mayors, supervisors and school officials had part-time government positions, only 6 noted that they had an occupation outside of government (Table 6). Current or pre-retirement occupations of these officials were diverse: consulting geologist and apple farmer; transportation supervisor, teacher; insurance broker; municipal accountant and treasurer; Gould's information specialist; winery owner; construction worker; math teacher; real estate broker; educator; grocery proprietor; recreation and food service industry; electrician, school maintenance worker and farmer; state police officer, private detective and military; Willard Psychiatric employee; school secretary and homemaker; municipal accountant and treasurer; winery owner; insurance

salesman; school administrator; printing company executive; education administrator, teacher, and counselor.

Table 6. Currently have an occupation outside of government?

	YES (#)	NO (#)
Mayors, Supervisors, School Officials	17	6
Highway and Public Works Officials	13	10

Fifteen mayors or supervisors listed the boards and committees in their municipality aside from the governing board (Table 7). This question was asked primarily to get a sense of the extent of citizen involvement in local public affairs. While some officials reported no board or committee structures in their municipality, others had a range of these additional institutions in place. In general, if there was one such board or committee, there was more than one. A number of officials reported formal planning boards and boards of assessment or zoning appeals. Others (both villages and towns) involved citizens in quite a variety of reported committees or commissions touching on highways, insurance, the fire department, water and sewer, cemeteries, solid waste, buildings, waterline and lake levels, budget, cable TV, historic districts, storm, sewer and floods, urban cultural park, justices, constable, library, youth programming, farmers market, local festivals, buildings and grounds, finance, publicity and promotion.

Table 7. Are there boards and committees aside from your governing board?

	ANSWERED (#)	NO ANSWER (#)
Mayors, Supervisors, School Officials	15	8
Highway and Public Works Officials	NOT ASKED	

OTHER A.R.M.E. EXTENSION BULLETINS

No. 95-13	Dairy Farm Business Summary New York Large Herd Farms, 300 Cows or Larger 1994	Jason Karszes Stuart F. Smith Linda D. Putnam
No. 95-14	Dairy Farm Business Summary Oneida-Mohawk Region 1994	Eddy L. LaDue Jacqueline M. Hiltz Charles Z. Radick Linda D. Putnam
No. 95-15	Dairy Farm Business Summary Central New York and Central Plain Regions 1994	Stuart F. Smith Linda D. Putnam Charles H. Cuykendall Michael L. Stratton
No. 95-16	Dairy Farm Business Summary Southeastern New York Region 1994	Stuart F. Smith Linda D. Putnam Stephen E. Hadcock Larry R. Hulle Colleen A. McKeon Gerald J. Skoda
No. 95-17	Dairy Farm Business Summary Eastern Plateau Region 1994	Robert A. Milligan Linda D. Putnam John S. Carlson Carl A. Crispell Karen Hoffman
No. 95-18	Dairy Farm Business Summary Northern Hudson Region 1994	Stuart F. Smith Linda D. Putnam Cathy S. Wickswat Anita W. Deming David R. Wood
No. 95-19	Dairy Farm Business Summary Eastern New York Renter Summary 1994	Stuart F. Smith Linda D. Putnam