

**CONSOLIDATE
WITH CAUTION:
ROCKS IN THE
ROADWAY!**

TOTAL CONSOLIDATION

CAN

- **produce greater efficiency**
- **save money**
- **eliminate redundancy**

ANTICIPATE THE ROCKS

IN THE ROADWAY

**Consolidation comes in
different shapes and sizes.**

**Achieve partial consolidation
through contracting.**

IS IT LEGAL?

**THE DECISION TO
CONSOLIDATE**

**IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE AND
ORGANIZATIONAL ONE.**

**BUT IT IS ALSO A POLITICAL
DECISION.**

**CONSIDER THE VARIED INTERESTS
AMONG STAKE HOLDERS.**

Resource pooling is a dynamic process.

It does not end when departments are merged.

Any program of coordinated or consolidated police services must be concerned with

COSTS!

CONSOLIDATE WITH CAUTION: ROCKS IN THE ROADWAY!

Totally consolidating two or more police agencies can produce greater efficiency, save money and eliminate redundancy. The same can be said for the consolidation of certain activities, like jailing, communications, training, purchasing and laboratory services.

Whether the goal is to totally amalgamate two or more forces or merely to consolidate a few specific activities, one must anticipate the rocks in the roadway.

Consolidation comes in different shapes and sizes. Partial consolidation could be an effective arrangement if a city and county can decide to merge certain public safety support services such as records keeping, jailing, communications and purchasing while leaving core operational activities like patrol and detective work separate.

The rationale behind this is that support service activities are easier to merge than are operations.

Two or more forces could achieve a form of partial consolidation through contracting for specific services. Contract policing is one of the least complicated means of accomplishing coordinated or consolidated governmental services, including law enforcement.

Under a contract program, one government agrees to provide certain specified services to another for a fee – in brief, to act as an agent of the other in its jurisdiction. The virtue of a contract is that it can be terminated without much fuss.

When thinking about a consolidation, an issue to resolve early in the planning stages is simply “Is it legal to do what we seek to do?” Most states have passed broad joint-exercise-of-powers legislation that enables many types of intergovernmental agreements to be implemented conveniently under which coordination and consolidation of police services can be accomplished. It should be ascertained if such

legislation enables different levels of government to provide services at another level, like a state providing services for a county or a county providing services for a township or city.

Of course, the decision to consolidate is an administrative and organizational one. But it is also a political decision. You must market and promote your proposed program with city council members and those on the county commission. A positive political will is an essential ingredient of a successful consolidation. The absence of political will can prove fatal. You must consider what the varied interests are among the stake holders. The stake holders include employee unions, the ranking officers of the forces and even state lawmakers from your area who may have constituencies to protect. Also, never overlook egos getting bruised. These scars can last a career and could result in covert actions to derail a consolidation program. You must make a deliberate effort to generate buy-in from these groups.

Resource pooling is a dynamic process and does not end when the departments are merged. For example, after a few years, the political landscape could be sharply different and be less supportive of joint services. Governments should not feel trapped. This feeling can be obviated by having in place an exit strategy to implement when it is apparent that the consolidation is not working out.

Any program of coordinated or consolidated police services must be concerned with costs! It is natural that residents as well as political figures will fear that the program will bring about increased costs. Unless convincingly shown otherwise, taxpayers in the principal jurisdiction may feel that it is being stuck with financing a program for the benefit of the recipient entities. These are problems of cost and underscore how costs must be distributed on an equitable basis. But what is an “equitable basis?” This is an open question, but an urgent one to be resolved. Herein is evidence that the political figures of the participating jurisdictions must be stake holders

who can negotiate effectively as they seek to come to reason, an acceptable accord.

For a comprehensive discussion of consolidating police agencies, please see: “Coordination and Consolidation of Police Service” which appears as Chapter 4 in *Task Force Report: The Police*, Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, The President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967), pp. 68 - 119.

For a case study of consolidation, see

Short of Merger:

Countywide Police Resource Pooling

by George D. Eastman and Samuel G. Chapman
Published by D.C. Heath & Co., Lexington, MA,
1976, 159 pages.

Samuel G. Chapman

680 Kane Court

Reno, Nevada 89512

(775) 786-9011

sgchapman@charter.net

