

MAKING DOLLARS & SENSE

THE KANSAS COLLABORATIVE



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Not big government, not small government – collaborative government

In today's political arena, there is no shortage of good ideas. They are discussed during legislative committee meetings, dissected in white papers and outlined in policy statements. Everyday, people on the frontlines of county and city government think of innovative ways to trim costs, increase efficiencies and serve more citizens more effectively.

The problem? All-too-often good ideas are slow to make it out of committee and into the community. How many times have you seen a creative idea languish in a policy discussion instead of thrive in action? Have you ever been part of a committee that sacrificed a good idea in the name of partisan politics? How often have you had a bright idea, a sure-fire solution to a pressing problem, but didn't pursue it because you felt it would never see the light of day?

Across Kansas, good ideas *are* making it out of committee and into the community. They're being piloted on the ground, then trickling up to shape policy – not the other way around.

Leading the effort is The Kansas Collaborative, a cross-government initiative dedicated to maximizing public resources by saving money and boosting efficiencies. The Collaborative brings the state, county and city together to cut through bureaucratic clutter and move good ideas into action.

"We're tackling problems from the ground up," says Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, a principal at TeamTech, Inc., the private consulting company that facilitates the Kansas Collaborative. "We launch on-the-ground pilots that solve problems, save money and build leadership.

"This is government working together for better results."

As you read through the following success stories, consider problems you think could benefit from a creative, cross-government approach. Share your ideas on collaborative government with us by visiting our Collaborative Government Blog at www.TheKansasCollaborative.com. Share your ideas, experiences – and hopes – about creating cross-government collaboration that continues to improve accountability, maximize resources – and lead to better results. ■

About the Kansas Collaborative



Back row: Joel Wright and Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, TeamTech; Randall Allen, KAC Executive Director
Front row: Gene Merry, KAC Board President; Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius and Don Moler, LKM Executive Director
Photo by PAG Photography



The Kansas Collaborative is a joint effort between the State of Kansas, the Kansas Association of Counties and the League of Kansas Municipalities, dedicated to fostering collaboration and improving government efficiencies. The Collaborative is

managed and facilitated by TeamTech, Inc., a private consulting group that works with all levels of government to cut through bureaucratic clutter and move ideas into action.

What we do: **We solve problems.** We maximize public resources. We improve government accountability. **We save money** – big money. With TeamTech, Inc. facilitating, the Collaborative creates cross-governmental Breakthrough Teams charged with solving one particular problem at a time. For example, we formed a Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team that cut the cost of medicating inmates in county and state facilities by over \$7 million across the state. Some counties trimmed as much as 50 percent of their prescription bill. And we did it in eight months.

We network leadership – We believe that state, county and city officials are capable of working together – as equals. We believe they can share data, resources and ideas – and create solutions to shared problems. We believe that policy can be strongly informed by this networking of leaders at the ground level.

The Kansas Collaborative – government working together for better results.™

Reducing inmate prescription costs

How the Kansas Collaborative tamed a budget buster

During the first state-county Kansas Health and Human Services Summit, conversations among county representatives routinely drifted to the ever-rising cost of providing healthcare for inmates. Because the vast majority of inmates at adult and juvenile detention facilities are uninsured, the burden of providing prescriptions falls to the county.

Officials knew the price of Depakote or Zyprexa wasn't busting the county budget, but they also knew that finding a less expensive purchasing option would save some money now – and lots of money in the future.

So in February 2004, the Kansas Association of Counties and the Governor's Health and Human Services Cabinet Team formed a partnership facilitated by TeamTech Inc, a Kansas-based consulting firm. Over the course of eight months, the group – eventually known as the Kansas Collaborative's Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team – worked together, transcending government rank and unit, to investigate more cost-effective and efficient ways to purchase prescription drugs. The result? The group created four distinct purchasing options designed to save counties from 30 to 50 percent on the cost of prescription drugs. Providing options meant counties could select a method that best suited their needs at the local level.

"This is proof that collaboration works," says Randall Allen, KAC Executive Director. "Collaboration is no longer something that would be nice to do - a best-case scenario. Rather, it's imperative that we take this approach to solve problems. Citizens expect government to work - and we're obligated to make it work. This approach works."

For some, working through the local pharmacist was a must. For others, finding the rock-bottom lowest price was key. In Crawford County, officials now spend 38 percent less on prescription drugs. In Atchison County, officials trimmed that portion of their budget by 33 percent. To date, the program has provided an estimated cost savings of over \$7 million statewide for both county jails and the State Department of Corrections – savings that will repeat annually.

What's most interesting, though, is that while the effort started out as an attempt to save taxpayers money, it ended up a lesson in the power of creative government.

"This group was the most exciting group I'd ever been apart of. We worked across agencies, up and down levels. We stayed focused on our goal and we never once talked about changing policy," said John Waltner, the mayor of Hesston, Kansas since 1985 and special projects administrator of Harvey County since 2001.

This wasn't a case of government stumbling onto a solution, however.

In fact, there was nothing accidental about the group's success, which is now rippling throughout the state, triggering the inception of similar "Breakthrough" teams. Other issues the teams are

tackling: streamlining transportation costs, lowering healthcare costs for inmate populations and implementing a cohesive GIS plan.

“This effort showed us that good ideas *can* become a reality,” said Viola Riggan, the Kansas Department of Corrections’ Senior Contract Management Consultant. “With TeamTech’s vision and leadership, we crossed government barriers and solved a real need – quickly and efficiently.”

Whatever the issue, this team and its subsequent spin-off teams share a commitment to:

- Solve a pressing need
- Involve invested partners
- Decide with data
- Allow action to inform policy
- Let a neutral party facilitate the collaborative effort
- Create options for all
- Secure sponsorship from above
- Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

“Collaborating across government lines ended up empowering each of us at the local level,” said Waltner. “This kind of government – collaborative government – makes good politics: efficient and effective and focused on solving problems.”

Solve a pressing need: Skyrocketing cost of meds

From beginning to end, the Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team was defined by its dedication to solve a pressing need – lowering the cost of providing prescription drugs for inmates. The financial burden of providing pharmaceutical drugs to inmates has risen throughout the country. In fact, a survey by the Bureau of Prisons showed that the cost of providing medicine to federal prisoners rose about 23 percent annually between 2000 and 2004, the time of the study. At the local level, counties absorb this cost at the expense of funding other initiatives.

“This group was different because it tapped into a real problem,” said Dave Unruh, Sedgwick County Commissioner. “It tapped into a need where the outcome, the result, could be measured over time and actually produce government efficiencies at the local level while maintaining services.”

Involve invested partners: Passion before politics

Because the group was formed around a need, rather than a government unit or political party, anyone interested in resolving the issue was invited to join, including county sheriffs, representatives from the state Department of Corrections and county commissioners. Others were invited to attend if members felt they had access to information that would help resolve the problem. For example, a representative from Medicaid was invited to participate when the group realized it had numerous questions that only someone from the agency could answer.

“Assembling the right people was key to the group’s success,” said Elizabeth Gillespie, director of the Shawnee County Department of Corrections. “By that I mean, those with information, those

touched by the issue, and those representing various potential stakeholders – by role, by area of the state and by size of community. The group was also open to adding new people as new needs arose and the appropriate people were identified.”

Again, because the group was focused on achieving an outcome, rank and unit weren’t important factors at the table. What did matter? Commitment and passion.

Everyone in the group moved constantly and steadily toward the goal, with constant guidance from TeamTech. Members had assignments between meetings, research to track down, phone calls to make, data to gather and speakers to organize.

Not only did these assignments help the group gain momentum, they also ensured that only invested partners sat at the table. Everyone at the meetings felt passionate about the need to cut costs – passionate enough to add to their already full workload – so that funds could be spent locally on other issues.

“Our philosophy is anyone can join the group – there’s no criteria nor hierarchy,” said Joel Wright, principal with TeamTech, the Kansas Collaborative’s project managers. “Our focus is on cutting through the clutter and solving problems so if you’re willing to roll up your sleeves and get to work – you can join.”

Decide with data: Focus on the facts

If the group had a mantra, it was: decide with data. The group’s commitment to fact kept emotions at bay and enabled the 20 members to stay on task, critical components to its success. First, group members defined the problem by researching how much each participating county paid for various medicines. Their findings? Costs varied wildly among counties, sometimes more than 600 percent for the same prescription drug.

For example, one 500 mg tablet of Depakote cost \$1.47 in one county and in another, \$9.20. A 5 mg tablet of Zyprexa cost \$5.18 in one county and \$11.14 in another.

“Work group members were stunned,” said Elizabeth Gillespie, director of the Shawnee County Department of Corrections.

Between meetings, team members were assigned to dig up specific data, a move that ensured the focus always remained on information. They surveyed the cost of the top 10 most commonly used medicines in small, medium and large facilities. They researched various purchasing options.

Focusing on information de-politicizes the effort. It ensures that all participants remain equal partners because fact trumps everything.

Allow action to inform policy: Ground-up collaboration jumpstarts good ideas

Novice and veteran government representatives alike know that all-too-often good ideas languish in policy statements and white papers. They sit on shelves instead of thrive in action. People in government want real solutions to everyday problems but sometimes experience that solutions that come down from above add more complexity without solving the problem at hand. The Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team never wavered from its commitment to an outcome. The goal: Together

create and implement solutions that work for local and state government and share the results with policymakers.

“There was no talk of policy,” said Waltner. “There was only talk of solving the problem.”

“It was really exciting as ideas and options began to leapfrog one another,” said Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, a principal with TeamTech, Inc. This building on ideas ultimately led Department of Corrections’ team member, Viola Riggins, to recommend to Corrections’ Secretary Roger Werholtz that in their new request for proposal for inmate healthcare services, the state’s prescription drug pricing be offered to local governments. “That is action informing policy,” said Harnish-Doucet.

Let a neutral party facilitate the collaborative effort: Neutral group keeps eye on goal

Wright and Harnish-Doucet, principals of TeamTech Inc, facilitated this group as well as others created through The Kansas Collaborative. For the group, their presence succeeded at keeping members focused on the goal and away from politics-as-usual.

They led every meeting of the prescription drug team, and kept things moving between meetings.

“The importance of their role cannot be overemphasized,” said John Waltner, mayor of Hesston and special projects administrator for Harvey County. “They were the neutral presence that kept us focused on task, made sure we didn’t slip into turf protection and kept the ball rolling between meetings.”

A third party like TeamTech also ensures accountability, group members said. Their presence made sure each member – regardless of rank or unit – stayed on task and contributed to the effort.

Create options: Know that one size doesn’t fit all

Because the group included county representatives from urban and rural alike, members knew they wouldn’t come up with one solution that worked for all. In the course of their research, members found four options that could trim costs.

“We didn’t leave any stone unturned,” said Debbie Donaldson, Human Services Division Director for Sedgwick County. “We looked for multiple solutions.”

In the end, the group presented four options to counties:

- Minnesota Multi-state Contracting Alliance for Pharmacy. The State of Minnesota created a voluntary group purchasing organization for government agencies that provide healthcare to specific populations, such as inmates. Through contract management and volume contracting, MMCAP offers reduced pricing for detention facilities with in-house pharmacies. Sedgwick County Commissioner Dave Unruh said they saved 65 percent on their first order with MMCAP. “These are not marginal savings,” he said.
- Correctional Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Companies. These companies outsource medicine and healthcare services. Correctional pharmacies obtain significantly reduced pricing on prescription drugs through volume purchasing, then pass those savings on to the prison or jail.
- Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) Contract. When KDOC sought a new contract for its services, the agency negotiated a requirement that its reduced prescription drug pricing be

extended to any state, county or local government entity. Now counties can purchase prescription drugs at the same price as the state, through its official provider, Correct Care Solutions - Diamond Pharmaceuticals.

- National Association of Counties Discount Drug Card. This drug card allows local pharmacies to sign up to offer reduced costs to card holders. This card is geared toward people going to a pharmacy to get their medicine, so it works best for inmates being released from jail.

Because of this team's work, 57 percent of jail beds in Kansas counties are under some formalized saving program for prescription drugs (up from 24 when the team started). This percentage will continue to increase with another 8 percent of jail beds currently "in process" and 13 percent "under consideration." 8.5 percent of jail beds stayed with a local pharmacist, using the team's information to negotiate lower pricing.

Secure support from above: Gain approval from the powers-that-be

While group members worked up and down hierarchies and across agencies, they still recognized that no good idea would gain momentum unless higher ups bought into the process. It's critical that the top echelon recognize – with enthusiasm – the importance of state bureaucracy collaborating with local government. That nod of approval is what drives ideas born from collaborative government into action. The state's Health and Human Services Cabinet Team (social services, aging, corrections, juvenile justice and health and environment) did just that.

"We committed both time and money to the effort because the savings were real and the progress rapid," said Secretary Gary Daniels of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and chair of the Governor's Health and Human Services Cabinet Team.

For Debbie Donaldson, Human Services Division Director for Sedgwick County Government in Wichita, this committee was like none other.

"I've gotten less tolerant over time just sitting in committees and processing information," she said. "But on this committee, we secured buy-in from the right people every step of the way. It was one reason we were always moving forward."

Communicate: Keep the lines open – up, down and across units

In collaborative government, talk is the fuel that ensures good ideas move into action. Keeping the lines of communication open ensures that implementation occurs broadly. In April 2005 the Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team published "Options for Detention Facilities to Reduce Prescription Drug Costs." In May the team "hit the road" for seven *Sharing Approaches that Work* forums held across the state. The forums were facilitated by TeamTech. Participants came to learn about the options for reducing prescription drug costs for inmates. They then had the opportunity to sign up for any of the options.

This same open lines of communication mirrored the work of the team. "It was the most exciting thing," said Waltner. "We worked across agencies, up and down levels. We kept the lines of communication open. I'd never seen anything like it."

Building on our success

How the Prescription Drug Team partnered to find savings for inmate medical care

As the Kansas Collaborative worked to cut more than \$7 million from the state and county budgets for inmate medications, they also learned that county detention facilities were often paying exorbitant rates for other medical costs. Empowered by their recent success with prescription drugs, the Collaborative added team members and formed the Healthcare Cost Breakthrough Team to trim hospitalization costs as well.

Not only will this Team's efforts save counties money – 59 percent on average – it shaped legislation in partnership with the Kansas Sheriffs' Association, a perfect example of ground-up politics. The effort was a success because the group followed the guidelines for Collaborative Government.

- **Solve a pressing need.** "Hospitalization costs for the incarcerated population can sometimes wreck a county's budget," said Randall Allen, Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Counties. Groups are more likely to be successful if they form around a well-defined goal – and stick to it without getting distracted.
- **Involve invested partners.** Effective teams have passionate people who are in the right positions. In this case, the team had a member from the Kansas Sheriffs' Association who was interested in this same issue. A partnership was formed which strengthened the chance of success.
- **Decide with data.** The group gathered one- to three-months of invoices from selected counties to analyze the cost of hospitalizing inmates. The invoices totaled more than \$268,000. Then the group, with the assistance of state Medicaid staff, projected the cost if counties had been charged the lower rate, in most cases, Medicaid. The seven counties in the study would have paid slightly more than \$104,000 – a savings of nearly 60 percent. By deciding with data – not opinions – the group had impressive evidence to pass on to lawmakers.
- **Allow action to inform policy.** When the group met, it didn't begin the push to change legislation. Instead, members launched a plan that documented the high cost of medical care for inmates. Riley County Commissioner and team member, Mike Kearns, compared his county's costs with Medicare and Medicaid rates and successfully negotiated a 35 percent discount with their local hospital. The team was exploring negotiation strategies and legislative solutions when the Sheriffs Association's efforts became known. Legislation was born out of cross-collaborative efforts. When House Bill 2893 passed, it mandated that county law enforcement groups pay the lesser rate of two rates – Medicaid or the health care facility's rate – for treating inmates.

"This effort showed us that good ideas can become a reality," said Viola Riggin, the Kansas Department of Corrections' Senior Contract Management Consultant.

"With TeamTech's vision and leadership, we crossed government barriers and solved a real need – quickly and efficiently."

- **Let a neutral party facilitate the collaborative effort.** TeamTech, Inc. helped bring critical players to the table when needed. Their strategy and process meant the team was already working on a Medicaid rate billing process before legislators asked. Their style assured people that multiple perspectives and options would be fully considered.
- **Create options for all.** When the Medicaid rate legislation passed, the Breakthrough Team had already developed options for counties to adjust medical bills to reflect the Medicaid rate – use the state’s Medicaid rate data, use the Department of Correction’s contracted provider, Correct Care Solutions (CCS), or use a county’s current managed care company.
- **Secure support from above.** The team included leaders from many of the state’s pivotal groups, including the Kansas Department of Corrections and the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Also on board: the Kansas Sheriffs Association’s lobbyist and the state’s Health and Human Services Cabinet Team.
- **Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.** Not only did the group keep lines of communication open during their meetings, they’ve spread the word of their success since then. County officials have been briefed on the new law and how to implement it. The Breakthrough Team also created a mechanism for tracking savings. These results, when available, will be communicated through various existing networks.

“This is proof that collaboration works,” said Allen. “Collaboration is no longer something that would be nice to do – a best-case scenario. Rather, it’s imperative that we take this approach to solve problems. Citizens expect government to work – and we’re obligated to make it work. This approach works.” ■

Assembling a GIS infrastructure

How the Kansas Collaborative is helping build a virtual highway system

Government officials throughout Kansas knew that a Geographic Information System (GIS) was a must-have tool – a virtual highway as critical as the state’s transportation infrastructure. But how to build it? Questions surrounding implementation of GIS were as vast and broad as the system’s potential uses. How would different units of government use GIS without duplicating initiatives? How could smaller counties tap into funds to implement their own system? Who should “own” the system and who should run it?

Hearing these concerns from seven “Sharing Approaches That Work” forums across the state, the Kansas Collaborative formed a 22-member, cross-governmental GIS Breakthrough Team to partner with the state’s already-formed GIS Policy Board. The Breakthrough Team’s initial goal was simple: to cut through the clutter to identify local concerns surrounding GIS and to build strategies to empower local groups to use GIS.

After two team meetings, the Kansas Collaborative, in partnership with the state’s GIS Policy Board, hosted six Local GIS Outreach Workshops across the state – all of them facilitated by the Collaborative’s project managers, TeamTech, Inc.

Like the Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team, this group shared a commitment to:

- Solve a pressing need
- Involve invested partners
- Decide with data
- Allow action to inform policy
- Let a neutral party facilitate the collaborative effort
- Create options for all
- Secure support from above
- Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

“I’ve never been involved on a committee that brought together so many government agencies in such a successful manner,” said Gary Doane, Osborne County Commissioner and GIS Breakthrough Team member.

“We could not have accomplished this much this fast if we hadn’t tackled GIS using TeamTech and their collaborative approach to problem solving,” says Ivan Weichert, GIS Director for the state of Kansas.

“They moved ideas into action quickly and efficiently. No waste. No redundancy!”

Solve a pressing need: Gaining a collective understanding of Geographic Information Systems

When county officials in Kansas first pondered implementing GIS, they were both encouraged and overwhelmed by the vastness of its potential uses. GIS promised to solve a need for every county department, from local fire departments – mapping evacuation routes, locating water sources – to the Sheriff’s Department – creating aerial photography for surveillance and tracking best routes for crisis response.

The challenge: Develop a comprehensive understanding of GIS, including its uses, cost, pitfalls and promises. In the six outreach workshops across the state, county representatives gathered to share ideas, swap suggestions and streamline the statewide effort to implement GIS in the most efficient way possible.

For instance, in Osborne County, commissioners wanted to update the GIS mapping system to replace their outdated equipment, but they struggled to develop a timeline for the process and to find the information resources they needed at a reasonable cost.

“We met with several groups and even contacted private sources about GIS,” said Osborne County Commissioner Doane. “But it wasn’t until we attended the Local GIS outreach workshops that we were able to see the process that needed to be followed.”

In Thomas County, Commissioner Paul Steele said the Breakthrough Team helped county department heads prioritize uses for GIS.

“It’s a complex matter not easily digested in one sitting,” said Steele. “With TeamTech’s guidance, the Collaborative helped us keep participants focused and moving toward action.”

Involve invested partners: Creating a county-state partnership

When the Breakthrough Team formed, TeamTech knew that a state GIS Policy Board already existed. A critical move: Form a partnership with the board. While team members would be focused on local implementation – not writing policy – they knew they needed the state’s buy-in to create any traction.

Efforts also needed to raise statewide awareness about the power of GIS and the potential savings in working collaboratively. As the project managers and facilitators for The Kansas Collaborative, TeamTech networked locally by making presentations at county commissioner gatherings. They worked the phones. They sent emails. Their efforts rippled throughout the state.

In the end, the outreach workshops involved 325 government representatives from 89 counties and 19 cities, reaching more than 90 percent of the target audience. 91 percent of those attending indicated the GIS outreach workshops met or exceeded their expectations.

“TeamTech’s efforts were successful in recruiting a broad range and depth of local people to the workshops,” said Ivan Weichert, the state’s GIS Director.

Decide with data: Sharing facts and busting myths

GIS has so many potential uses it can sound, at times, like a too-good-to-be-true tool, the perfect elixir for every department's information logjam. This Phase I work of the GIS effort brought clarity to the role GIS can play by allowing a forum where participants could share data, ask questions and swap ideas. For example, team members learned about:

- Data already available via GIS, from local utilities to the transportation department's data on bridge locations
- Grant sources with available funds
- State resources for GIS, from technical experts to experienced users
- GIS uses for counties – a comprehensive list

The workshops also ensured that participants linked up with peers who were experienced with GIS. This allowed newcomers to learn the ropes quickly – and not duplicate efforts or the mistakes of others.

For example, through the workshops, team members learned that with federal efforts like the census, state efforts like the Department of Transportation's All Roads Network and local efforts at E-911 implementation, the same information could be digitized three times if efforts weren't well-coordinated.

"I felt like the workshop was very informative," said Peggy McNeal, GIS Technician for Russell County Mapping Department. "There were a lot of good ideas about how GIS can be used at the local level. After the workshop, people felt hopeful that GIS wasn't out of reach for them."

Allow action to inform policy: Capturing the power of two-way dialogue

With a state GIS Policy Board already in place, the Breakthrough Team needed to ensure that its grassroots action informed policy – and that policy informed local action. The six outreach workshops held across the state were the perfect vehicle to capture the power of this two-way dialogue.

With 325 local participants, the workshops helped local governments understand the work of the GIS Policy Board – the data available, the standards already established, the strategic direction and the depth of experience. With Policy Board members present at each workshop, there was the opportunity to learn what was really happening at the local level and the challenges faced in implementing GIS, especially in the rural counties of Kansas.

"It is the two-way dialogue that matters," said Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, a principal with TeamTech, Inc. "The state/county dialogue has tended to be one-way and that is, top-down. When two-way circular dialogue gets sparked, local action is based on fact not myth and state policymaking can be more comprehensive and strategic."

Let a neutral party facilitate the collaborative effort: Creating an environment of collaboration

As principals of TeamTech, Inc., Joel Wright and Kathleen Harnish-Doucet facilitate all of the Kansas Collaborative's Breakthrough Teams. Their role: Keep the teams focused on moving ideas into action and staying away from politics.

As facilitators, they also serve as information filters. GIS implementation is a massive project. TeamTech made sure that the process stayed politically neutral – and moving. They sent emails to members between meetings reminding them of assigned tasks. They completed tasks themselves as well as continued networking between meetings so strategies for moving forward were continuously refined. They ensured that the conversation remained focused on fact, not anecdote. Representing no political agenda, they helped members network up, down and across government units. They brought a sense of equality around the table.

“The approach was so successful because everyone had an equal voice, the voice was being listened to and action was taken based on that voice,” said Chris Schmeissner, GIS Director, Jefferson County. “This approach isn't used enough – or perhaps not used successfully – when various government agencies sit down to solve a problem. But with TeamTech, it worked.”

Create options for all: Ensuring GIS remains open to all

Collaborative government operates from the idea that power comes from the systemic, strategic sharing of information and ideas. That same sharing – as it creates power – also creates an efficient government. Imagine a small, rural county striving to implement a GIS system on its own, starting from scratch. Now imagine that same county implementing an initiative after representatives have attended a GIS workshop. They've left the meeting with information, data, ideas – and support.

“The workshop was extremely informative,” said Peggy McNeal, GIS technician for the Russell County Mapping Department. “The Collaborative helped clear up misconceptions, gave us information we needed and let everyone – especially smaller counties – see how GIS wasn't out of reach for them.”

The workshops created options for counties by showing them:

- Grant sources to fund implementation
- A multitude of uses for GIS
- Resources for support

While Phase II of the GIS initiative will focus on implementing systems, Phase I uncovered what those systems might be. Among the options counties are pondering:

- Grow-your-own GIS department, including in-house software, technicians and training
- Outsource GIS, an option especially attractive to smaller, rural counties
- Grow-into-GIS by starting slowly with free data and eventually building a self-standing department

Secure support from above: Tapping people-in-power to create traction

When The Kansas Collaborative decided to launch a GIS Breakthrough Team, state Policy Board members were asked to join the Team from the beginning.

The Team also involved top county officials. Many times, front line employees knew that GIS would streamline systems and create efficiencies, but they needed buy-in from their leaders. County commissioners, appraisers, clerks and GIS department heads were among the county officials around the table.

Additionally, the Board of Directors for the Information Network of Kansas (INK) saw the potential of state and local governments working together in GIS implementation and provided grant funding for the facilitation efforts.

“That was a big difference to this approach to problem solving,” said Schmeissner. “TeamTech helped us move our ideas into action without alienating the policymakers.”

Communicate: Keeping lines open up, down and across government units

How many times have you attended a meeting only to discover that the same topics are being discussed AGAIN with no movement from the last time you met? Open communication during – and between – meetings is a critical component of collaborative government which moves ideas into action

One of the key communication outcomes from the GIS Outreach Workshops was the establishment of a GIS listserv – with 325 members – to ask questions, share information and maintain a cohesive group feeling of “we are in this together.” Keeping the collaborative message in front of these 325 people throughout Kansas has already generated more questions, enthusiasm – and idea swapping.

In addition, between meetings a document that outlines county department uses for GIS was created by the Breakthrough Team at TeamTech’s initiation and distributed through the listserv. The document was further refined and more ideas added. And all between meetings.

“We could not have accomplished this much this fast if we hadn’t tackled GIS using TeamTech and their collaborative approach to problem solving,” said the state’s GIS Director, Weichert. “They moved ideas into action quickly and efficiently. No waste. No redundancy.” ■

Paving the way for savings

How working cross-government is trimming big bucks from local public works' budget

When the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) gears up to repair wear-and-tear on the state's highways, it has the leverage to demand very competitive bids from contractors and vendors. Most counties and cities, on the other hand, don't wield nearly the buying power.

But what would happen if the county and cities could take advantage of the state's purchasing prowess? What if the state agreed to alert counties and cities of projects so they could join forces?

The Kansas Collaborative's Transportation Breakthrough Team formed to do just that – save money, avoid duplication and share resources.

"Typically, there's no interaction between the county, city and the state," said Hub Caspar, engineer for Coffey County. "People usually do their own thing with everyone reinventing the wheel. But with the Breakthrough Team, we've got people working together from all different levels – city, county, state. We're telling each other about projects. We're sharing information.

"It's just plain old common sense," Caspar said. "That's all it is, though you just don't see that happening a lot."

How has it happened here? The same way other Breakthrough Teams with the Kansas Collaborative have moved their ideas into action.

"We're keeping things moving. I think this new approach to government will change the future. Once it catches on and people see what we're doing, they'll want to be a part of the change," says Hub Caspar, engineer for Coffey County

"I'm very hopeful. Very, very hopeful."

Solve a pressing need: Trim the paving budget

It's the same everywhere: Transportation costs are on the rise, but the budgets designed to fund them aren't. What's more, government representatives from all levels know that duplication and waste are common and avoiding them could save bundles.

After hearing about the \$7 million saved by the Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team, county leaders who work in transportation were eager to see if they could duplicate the success. Though still in the planning stages, the team already sees great potential for saving money. One example: A commitment from KDOT to notify counties and cities of upcoming projects and contractor contracts immediately after the project is awarded. Because of the team's efforts, the state will now alert counties and cities in the summer where they'll be laying asphalt in the following year.

Counties can then plan to repair roads adjacent to where the state is working, by using the same contractor – they avoid paying the “move in and move out” costs for the asphalt crew. Florence Whitebread, County Commissioner in Geary County, said that could save from 10 to 15 percent of the cost of asphaltting.

“That adds up,” she said, “Especially for smaller counties whose budgets are spread thin.”

“The key to success,” said Chriss McDiffett, District 3 Engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation, “depends on how determined we are to communicate between KDOT, counties and cities.”

Involve invested partners: Ground up politics needs buy in from the top

While the idea of working across government agencies to strengthen the state’s transportation infrastructure sounds ideal, nothing would happen without support from the top. The Kansas Department of Transportation with its recent history of the Partnership Program, the League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Association of Counties all play a critical role on the Breakthrough Team – as invested equals in the effort to trim costs. “The players involved actually have the means to get things done,” said Rod Meredith, Assistant Director, Riley County Public Works. “But they’re not telling us what needs to get done. We’re working together, knowing they can open the door.”

Decide with data: Driving costs down with facts, not speculation

Breakthrough Team members wondered how much counties and cities could save on items like a three-quarter ton truck if they could purchase them at the state’s price. Team members took bids on items, then compared those prices to the amounts that vendors offer the state. Their findings? Big savings.

For example, Meredith solicited bids from Wichita to Kansas City on a three-quarter ton truck. Not only was it time consuming to solicit the bids, but the rock-bottom price was still \$1,000 more than the price vendors make available to the state.

The research confirmed what Meredith and others had always suspected: That the state’s buying power resulted in considerable savings. But in order to push for counties and cities to have the same access, the team needed tangible proof.

“We got it,” Meredith said. “And we saved time too.”

“The city of Hays has been using state pricing since 2004 to purchase vehicles for the fleet. “We have saved over \$10,000 during these three years,” says Brenda Herman, Director of Public Works for the city of Hays. “Local vendors are matching state pricing which allows the city to buy locally. We have already experienced savings of staff time as well as tax dollars.”

Allow action to inform policy: Piloting on the ground can trickle up to shape policy

“Our goal is to launch on-the-ground pilots that move ideas in to action,” said Joel Wright, principal of TeamTech, Inc. “We are piloting money-saving options that can be rolled out across the state.”

When Team members are launching pilots and slashing budgets, word of their success trickles up to policymakers. So while their initial buy-in may have seemed like a formality, in the end, it changes the way government works.

Let a neutral party facilitate the collaborative effort: TeamTech keeps efforts flowing – and on neutral ground

Anyone in public service has seen a committee suffocate a good idea; the political pecking order stifle a sound decision. It’s an inevitable part of bureaucracy. But with the help of skilled, neutral facilitators Breakthrough Teams are cutting through the bureaucratic clutter to move ideas into action.

TeamTech, Inc. worked with members to ensure that discussions focused on tangible actions not political agendas. The facilitators kept work moving between sessions. They reminded members of goals. They neutralized sticky discussions.

“They stepped in and got the job done,” said Hub Caspar, engineer for Coffey County. “Without a doubt, we couldn’t have done it without them.”

Create options for all: Members find there’s more than one way to save money

While trimming the public works budget was the Team’s shared goal, every county and city had different ideas on how to cut costs. The Team’s solution? Create a variety of money-saving options.

For example, some counties and cities will take advantage of the state asphaltting projects. When state crews come in to a county, the county saves money on move-in and move-out costs by coordinating jobs. Others hope to save on purchases by using the state contracts. To that end, the group has worked to make the list of state vendors widely available and accessible. It is posted on the state Web site and has been distributed at meetings.

“The greatest potential savings for local government is to access the state contract list,” said Chriss McDuffett, District 3 Engineer for KDOT. “Once you start thinking of ways to save, the list goes on and on. There’s something for everyone here.”

“The city of Hays is a classic example,” says Brenda Hermann, Director of Public Works for the city of Hays. “State prices have been recognized by local vendors allowing the city to buy tires, motor oil and air filters at a reduced rate. A local construction contractor honors the state bid price for UPM cold mix asphalt. We are just learning about the numerous items that can be purchased through the State of Kansas bid process.”

Secure support from above: Linking with leaders helps push ideas through

The Transportation Breakthrough Team is part of The Kansas Collaborative, a joint effort between the State of Kansas represented in KDOT, the League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Association of Counties. With all three levels of government sitting at the table, Breakthrough Team members had buy-in for the money-saving, efficiency-boosting ideas they generated.

“This Team has some serious credibility sitting at the table,” said Meredith. “The players involved actually have the means to get things done and the passion to want it done. If the county had tried on its own to get the state to help them, who knows how long it would have taken? This is a big change from the way government’s acted in the past – like separate entities. We see the state really trying to work with us on this team and we appreciate it.”

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

The members of the Transportation Breakthrough Team have been excited about their money-saving efforts, but the initiative has real impact when more people can take advantage of the changes they’ve instigated. To that end, the Team is traveling to meetings across the state alerting local people to the cost-saving opportunities that are available to them.

“We’ve actively communicated as a group – and to others – about our efforts, and it’s made a huge difference,” said Caspar. “We’re keeping things moving. I think this new approach to government will change the future. Once it catches on and people see what we’re doing, they’ll want to be a part of the change.

“I’m very hopeful. Very, very hopeful.” ■

Changing the way government works

Share your collaborative success stories



hat started as a simple goal – cut the cost of medications for inmates in county and state facilities – has become a demonstration of how local and state officials, working together, can change the way government works in Kansas.

We have heard the voices of Kansans who demand that all levels of government work together to serve all Kansans, without regard to location – and that state and local governments share a mutual responsibility to deliver programs and services effectively and efficiently.¹

The movement is building momentum. After the Prescription Drug Breakthrough Team saved over \$7 million on the cost of prescription drugs for inmates, they tackled the cost of hospitalizing inmates. That effort led to legislation mandating that county law enforcement groups be able to pay Medicaid rates, if they're less than the health facilities' rates. That's action informing policy. Now on to opportunities in GIS and Transportation.

Across the state, leaders are fueled by the Collaborative's pledge to break through structural boundaries and attack shared problems together, rather than attacking the same problems over and over again, alone.¹ Kathleen Harnish-Doucet, a principal in TeamTech, Inc., the private consulting group that facilitates the Collaborative, puts it this way, "We are passionate about creating an approach to problem solving that is long on common-sense and short on politics. We don't believe in big government or small government. We believe in collaborative government."

We know that state, county and city officials across the country can benefit from collaborative problem solving. We want to hear from you. Have you experienced collaborative problem-solving? What results did you have? If this is new to you, where would you like to put collaborative problem-solving to work? Join the dialogue at: www.TheKansasCollaborative.com. ■

¹ From "A Declaration of Commitment to The Kansas Collaborative" signed on November 22, 2005 by Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius, Commissioner Gene Merry, President of the Kansas Association of Counties and Don Moler, Executive Director for the League of Kansas Municipalities

“By working together, we’ll be able to give Kansans the services they deserve, and we’ll be able to do it at a lower cost. That’s good news for all of us, and it’s good news for Kansas.”

Governor Kathleen Sebelius



“We committed both time and money to the effort because the savings were real and the progress rapid.”

Secretary Gary Daniels

Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
and chair of the Governor’s Health and Human Services
Cabinet Team



“We back the Kansas Collaborative because it saves us real money, eliminates duplication and builds strong relationships across government units...there’s no turf protection, no political agendas. It’s just roll up your sleeves and get to work.”

Randall Allen

Executive Director of the Kansas Association of Counties



“The Kansas Collaborative provides an effective means for city, county and state governments to work together to solve real problems – from the ground up...this is the kind of approach to problem solving that makes good government; it maximizes resources and increases accountability.”

Don Moler

Kansas League of Municipalities



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