

Economic Development Cooperation Among Local Governments in the Tennessee Valley

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Local governments face many obstacles in promoting development. Among the most common are scarce fiscal resources, resistance to innovation, and for rural areas: low population density. Cooperating with other local governments, however, presents a real opportunity to overcome those obstacles and achieve development goals.

This report presents results of a survey of county and city governments in the TVA service region. The survey was conducted by TVA Rural Studies and the Association of Tennessee Valley Governments (ATVG). Its objectives were to identify the economic development programs used by local governments, assess the level of cooperation among local governments, discover obstacles to economic development and cooperation, and suggest how ATVG might promote cooperation among local governments and enhance economic development.

Conclusions include:

- A considerable amount of cooperation among local governments exists in the region—over 60 percent of governments that responded to the survey have collaborated with other communities.
- Cooperation helps economic development. Counties with higher rates of growth tend to cooperate more than their low-growth counterparts. On the flip side, low-growth communities implement relatively more development programs. They apparently are not as successful however.
- The ATVG (and other regional organizations) can facilitate cooperation and economic development by acting as a broker—bringing communities together and helping them cooperate—and an educator—providing them with training, success stories, and the like.

Lackey and Freshwater's report can be found at:

<http://www.rural.org/publications/Lackey99-11.pdf> or you can contact the TVA Rural Studies program at 606-257-1872 or by e-mail tvars@rural.org.