



Assessment of State Infrastructure Coordination Models - Arkansas Water/Wastewater Advisory Committee (WWAC)

Year of inception: 1992; initiated by request from the funding agencies.

Formality: Formal; the Governor issued a proclamation that communities can not receive public funding without application through the Committee.

Meetings: Monthly. Communities are allowed to attend but usually do not.

Membership: Six members, including three funding agencies. Arkansas recently consolidated their eight state funding programs into one agency - the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission. The Committee also contains federal (USDA) and non-profit funders (Community Resource Group). In addition, it includes two regulatory agencies: the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality and the Arkansas Department of Health.

Committees/Sub-committees: Before consolidation of the funding agencies, the group maintained a water committee and a wastewater committee. Now there are no committees.

Staff: There is no in-house staff. The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission provides staff and hosts meetings.

Budget: Few resources are needed to make this small group work.

Promotion/Outreach: The committee educates consulting engineers.

Description:

The Arkansas Advisory Committee has authority from the Governor to review a preliminary application and engineering report from all communities before they submit a final application for public funding. The committee reviews this pre-application package, and regulatory agencies comment on it before sending a recommendation back to the community. The Committee recommends a list of funding options, but the community makes its own choices. This model allows regulatory agencies to talk with funders about problems with potential projects and about recurring problems with particular types of water projects.

The model creates an additional step in the funding process, but it also provides engineers and communities with more security in receiving funds. The model was enacted for the purpose of preventing communities from submitting applications to multiple funding agencies to find the best deal (sometimes without intending to follow through on the proposal). Consolidating all state funding programs under one agency has also helped Arkansas facilitate a more simplified, coordinated funding process.

Shared Information:

- 1) Central Information Database – The committee has a database of all the projects it has ever reviewed. It is updated once a month after the meeting. An entry is made when the engineering report comes in and then is updated again after the committee meets.
- 2) Preliminary joint application / engineering report - Cities are required to hire a consulting engineer, and the consulting engineers usually draft the preliminary engineering report and fill out the application. Only a few large cities have their own engineers. Often, consulting engineers are expected to absorb the costs until the projects are funded. This “pre-application package” is reviewed by the committee and it makes recommendations about funding options.