



Assessment of State Infrastructure Coordination Models - Montana Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team (W₂ASACT)

Year of inception: 1982; initiated by a local government services employee. Members met on an ad-hoc basis during the first decade, until the state revolving funds were initiated at a national scale and it became advantageous to meet regularly.

Formality: There is an informal agreement for all funding agencies to participate.

Meetings: Bi-monthly. The chairperson rotates every two years and hails from one of three state agencies.

Membership: There are sixty members listed as members, but approximately twenty attend all of the meetings. Funding agencies and technical assistance providers both have representatives on the committee. Eight key funding agencies are involved, including the USDA. The state environmental regulatory agency is a member that informs funders about rule changes and keeps abreast of upcoming projects, but they attend infrequently.

Committees/Sub-committees: There are nine standing committees and additional sub-committees as needed. Some committees are more active than others - the Uniform Applications Committee and the Environmental Committee are the most active.

Staff: There is no in-house staff. Staffing is largely provided by the agency whose representative serves as chair.

Budget: Funds are contributed from agencies as needed.

Promotion/Outreach: There are spring and fall workshops for communities and additional outreach through conferences such as the Rural Water Conference.

Description:

All communities in Montana using public funding go through the coordinating body. There is an informal agreement among all of the funding agencies that they will bring every project application to the committee for review. The funding agencies and others involved all voluntarily agree to use the uniform applications and standards developed by their committees to facilitate coordination. The agencies all participate because they benefit from this coordination. Regulatory agencies also use these joint documents to comment on projects before funding is committed to ensure that the project will be structurally and operationally sustainable. Each agency will rate a potential project based on their agency criteria and then bring their priority projects to the meeting. W₂ASACT encourages agencies to prioritize projects that regionalize utilities. Members

then meet to determine how each agency's ranking affects other agencies' ability to fund and to decide if the project should be scaled back, co-funded, etc. Nearly every project is co-funded. Funding decisions take an average of six months (three W₂ASACT meetings). Since Montana's coordinating body operates informally, its success is dependent on the agreement and participation of each funding agency. The group must closely watch to make sure that each agency continues coming to the meetings.

Shared Information:

Summary of funder eligibility criteria – listed on their webpage.

Statewide Rates Assessments – conducted every few years and paid for by all agencies.

Central Information Database – updated by a Department of Commerce employee before every meeting from agency data collected by the employee. Projects do not change much from month to month, so the workload is usually minimal once a template is created.

Joint application – This is a single application used by all funding agencies. Agencies expect a community to provide this application to any agency if they want funding assistance. It includes financial, technical and environmental feasibility, managerial project administration, rates, and project alternatives. Most funders also use a supplemental application. Except for the state revolving fund program, all agencies will accept the uniform application as a stand alone package. In the past, each funding agency asked for similar basic information but in different ways. Communities now photocopy the uniform application and then add the supplemental before any decisions are made about who will fund which project.

Uniform budget and invoice sheets – These track expenditures by communities on co-funded projects to avoid confusion and increase transparency. They allow each funder to see whose funds are paying for which project.

Standard General Conditions of the Construction Contract – This document was prepared by the Engineers Joint Contract Documents Committee and published jointly by the ACEC, National Society of Professional Engineers, and the ASCE. It contains Supplemental Special Provisions for Montana Public Facilities Project.