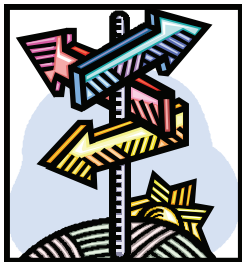
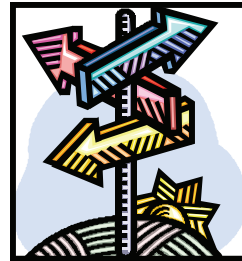

Leading to the Future: The role of local government

This guide is designed to inform citizens about metro government as one tool to consider for enhancing economic growth and government efficiency. But it is only one tool and not the answer for every region. According to researchers at the Center for Business and Economic Research at Marshall University: "Each proposed reorganization must receive careful study to ascertain what actions make good policy."



" A community that values education and participation in civic institutions has an engaged public that will have the tools needed to solve problems, advance the democratic process and adjust to changing times."

- Sustainable Kanawha Valley Initiative



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West Virginia Center for Civic Life

**For more information about West Virginia's
Local Government Consolidation Act:
www.communityadvisorypanel.org/scwvcap**

A Citizen's Guide to Metro Government



**Introduction to West Virginia's
Local Government Consolidation Act**

Metro Government: Options for Communities

The Local Government Consolidation Act was passed by the West Virginia Legislature in 2006 to give citizens more choices about how to organize their municipal and county governments. It offers consolidation as a tool to use, where appropriate, to encourage economic development and to help local governments become more efficient and effective. The Act (Section 7-A of the WV Code) allows three types of mergers:

- *Municipal consolidation*, involving two or more cities or towns
- *County consolidation*, involving two or more counties
- *Metro consolidation*, involving one or more counties and the principal city (the one with the largest population)

This guide focuses on metro government, but for all types, there must be local study of the issue, a locally designed charter for the merged governments, and local elections to approve the merger.

What is the process for forming a metro government?

1. Petition to consolidate: A petition to form a Charter Review Committee is submitted to the County Commission by 25% of qualified voters in the affected areas or by the affected governing bodies.

2. Creation of Charter Review Committee: Within 30 days, the County Commission establishes a Charter Review Committee that includes 2 members from the principal city, two county commissioners, 2 or 3 public members, including one from an unincorporated area.

3. Charter study and plan: The Committee studies the feasibility and desirability of metro government and holds at least 3 public hearings at 3, 6 and 11 months or sooner. If the Committee decides to pursue consolidation, it drafts a charter by the end of the second year.

4. Countywide election: 55% of those voting must approve the proposed consolidation. If voters reject the proposal, the Committee has a year to draft a second charter; if rejected twice, a new Committee may not be appointed for two years.

5. Additions to metro government: After the metro government has been in place for a year, other municipalities may request to join through a petition by 15% of qualified voters in the affected area or by resolution of the city or town council. If the metro government accepts the request, the issue must be put on the ballot for the next election and approved by 55% of those voting in the affected area.

What does the plan include?

- A. Territory, name & seat of government**
- B. Fiscal impact**, including projected costs, revenues and economies of scale.
- C. Representation plan** that addresses under-represented areas and minorities.
- D. Governing body**, including a least 5 officers, their qualifications, duties, terms of office, manner of election and compensation. The existing city council and county commission may have continued roles or be dissolved.
- E. Transition plan** for efficient and timely transfer of specified functions, and a method for the metro government to dissolve if so desired after at least 6 years.

What may be consolidated?

Metro government's authority may be as limited or broad as the locally-designed Charter allows, within the limits of state laws that govern counties and municipalities. The functions that may be merged include most public services, administration and finance, planning and development, and regulatory functions. Functions that may *not* be merged under this Act are school, library and fire districts; public service districts; and special taxing districts.



Get more information online about the West Virginia Local Government Consolidation Act:

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