



REGIONAL COORDINATION ROADMAP

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ProGov21 is a shared resource for progressive local policy makers and advocates alike. Operated and maintained by COWS, a national think-and-do tank based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, ProGov21 offers a fully searchable digital library of progressive policies, practices, and other resources for 21st century local government.

The Problems & Progressive Local Solutions

Local governments face various challenges across key policy areas. While each city, town, and county can accomplish much on its own, a progressive policy of regional coordination can help address major problems that might seem insurmountable for any single local entity. Policies promoting coordination and cooperation across an entire region can be effective in addressing a wide range of issues that are central to progressives.

Some regional coordination initiatives are established through a direct agreement between local governments. For example, elected officials from neighboring communities can agree to jointly provide a public service more effectively and economically. Other coordination initiatives establish a regional organization that serves all municipalities and counties in the area.

Either way, a regional coordination plan must outline a unified strategy for the region as a whole. It should strive to promote equitable development across municipalities and counties by sharing information, facilities, operational costs and revenues.

Available Local Levers & Targets for Reform

Rather than a discrete policy area, regional coordination can be designed to address various broad issues, including economic development,



planning, health, education, and sustainability.

Councils of Government (COGs), for example, serve as a planning body for an entire region. These associations, which already exist throughout the country, bring together elected local officials from around the region to find solutions for local and interlocal problems. Similarly, regional transportation organizations coordinate between providers and local service agencies to help fill provide more options and better service to local communities.

Regional Industry Clusters can add jobs, bolster entrepreneurship, and spark innovation, as a [brief from Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation](#) shows. The brief reviews notable regional clusters in the nation, including [Colorado Cleantech Cluster](#), [Northeast Ohio Polymers Cluster](#), [Indiana Life Sciences Cluster](#), and [New York Nanotechnology Cluster](#).

Current Reforms & Tools to Fight for Them

To prevent unhealthy competition between local communities, the [Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation](#) (MDEDC) requires its members to sign a [Code of Ethics](#). The code ensures information sharing and transparency and forbids member localities from soliciting businesses from other members.

The [Planning and Learning United for Systems Change \(PLUS\) Leadership Initiative](#), administered by the [Center for Cities & Schools at UC Berkeley](#) (CC&S), is a multi-year action research project designed to bring together educational, community, and civic leaders from the San Francisco Bay Area communities region to form a regional learning network that develops collaborative, mutually beneficial policies and practices.

Regional food hubs also have significant economic, social, and environmental impacts within their communities.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed a [Regional Food Hub Resource Guide](#), which is focused on strengthening the connection between farmers and consumers and support local and regional food systems.

The [Puget Sound Regional Council](#) (PSRC) is a metropolitan planning regional economic development organization in the central Puget Sound region in Washington. PSRC brings together representatives from over 80 jurisdictions, including counties, cities, towns, ports, state and local transportation agencies and tribal governments.

The [Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities Area](#), MN, prepares a [long-range plan for the region](#) that sets the direction for its growth and development. Municipalities in the region are required by law to provide the council with their own comprehensive plans that are consistent with its regional development guide.

The [Regional Housing Element](#) in the comprehensive plan of [Mid-America Regional Council](#) (MARC) leverage resources to strengthen the region's ability to finance a broad range of housing options. The [Washington Area Housing Partnership](#) compiled a [toolkit for affordable housing development](#) that includes policies and planning tools local governments can use to preserve and promote affordable housing development in their respective communities.

Taking it to the Next Level

Regional coordination is especially critical in economic development, and should be a top priority for progressives across the country. More often than not, competition over jobs and growth often leads to a “race to the bottom”, allowing large corporations and private interest to extract huge tax breaks and other benefits at the expense of local communities. Regional coordination can refocus our attention on infrastructure, supply chains and telecommunications instead of jurisdiction lines, and enable neighboring communities to find the best location for a business that would maximize the benefits for the region as a whole. This requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that businesses deliver the expected outcomes, provide accurate measures of costs and benefits, and utilize input from the public.

Regional coordination can also help bridge the widening rural-urban divide across our nation. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments, for example, established the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS), a group of professional planners who advise local officials on how to capitalize on the region’s agricultural sector while improving cities’ access to fresh food.

Allies, Comrades, and Helpers

The Center for Cities & Schools (CC&S)

CC&S in UC Berkeley engages in action-oriented research focused on the challenges and promise of regional cooperation on housing, planning, education and other policy areas.

National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)

A NARC serves as the national voice for regions by advocating for regional coordination as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning and development opportunities

We continue the conversation around local policy on **ProGov21's Podcast**. Our latest episode features experts from Policy Matters Ohio, and the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) on a panel discussion all about highroad progressive environmental policies.

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