



6/15/2012: Administration Urges Schools, Local Governments to Push 'Beyond Boundaries'

While many leaders in Ohio's school districts and local governments perceive barriers that prevent the creation of shared services, there are ways to reach simple agreements, according to a report written by the Governor's Office of 21st Century Education and assisted by the Office of Budget Management (OBM).

The collaboration entitled "Beyond Boundaries: A shared services action plan for Ohio Schools and Governments" is the product of a requirement in HB153 (Amstutz) to help in the preparation of legislative recommendations for cost-saving improvements.

At the top of the report is a letter signed by Richard Ross, director of the Governor's Office of 21st Century Education, and Tim Keen, director of the Office of Budget and Management, which discussed the potential of shared services in the state of Ohio.

In the letter the leaders wrote, "Ohio's local schools and governments have reached a critical juncture. Service expectations continue to grow and costs are rising faster than the economy. Our school systems and government entities must find ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency. The status quo simply can't continue. Shared services provide hope."

The report was released with ten recommendations, with four goals featured in the letter:

- Local government and education leaders need to utilize existing authority to enter into simple agreements.
- The state should continue to seek legislative approval, when necessary, to further remove identified barriers to shared services.
- Formation of regional shared service centers must become a priority.
- The state should continue developing tools to assist local collaboration and shared services.

In a survey regarding obstacles that local leaders believe stand in the way of creating shared services, most respondents said that they face legal and policy barriers (39 percent). Other issues noted as barriers to shared services include "no financial sense," "budget difficulties," "negotiated agreements" and "geographical obstacles."

The report went on to encourage leaders to bypass those barriers for the sake of a public that, through other studies, has shown support for the concept of shared services.

According to polling data from the Center for Government Research's "A Cost of Government Study for Northeast Ohio":

- 87 percent support collaboration on roads, sewers and highways
- 82 percent support regional coordination on land use
- 82 percent support fire and police collaborations
- 76 percent support public school collaborations

The full report is available at beyondboundaries.ohio.gov.