

Work Coordination in a Complex Organization: Are We Ready?

This heuristic includes general areas to be considered when deciding your organization's readiness for cross-agency work coordination efforts—particularly with a geospatial IT solution. These considerations are not meant to be exhaustive, nor are they a substitute for deep research and collaboration into deciding your next steps. Instead, they should be treated as accessible “conversation starters” to get stakeholders thinking – and hopefully kick-start your efforts.

Directions: There are three statements for each topic below. Circle the number of the statement that most closely resembles your organization. Once complete, review and see which topics may need more thought, analysis, and discussion relative to the others – 1s represent a lower level of readiness, with 3s representing those areas with higher capability and/or capacity.

Collaborative Culture

Environment for Coordination

- 1 – “Most everything is done in a silo with very little transparency.”
- 2 – “There is some transparency and coordination, but it is difficult to share data and get on the same page with how we do business.”
- 3 – “We have firmly established partnerships both internally and externally and willingly share data and workflows.”

Stakeholders

- 1 – “I am not quite sure who all I need to talk to get this started. I wish I had better relationships with my counter-parts and customers. I am not sure if they will be on-board.”
- 2 – “I know who all needs to be involved and I already have some stakeholders with buy-in. All roles and responsibilities are not clear, however.”

3 – “There is a clear vision to which most stakeholders throughout the organization buy-in. A project roadmap and an engagement plan would be relatively easy to construct and agree to.”

Accountability

1 – “People can, and often do, get away with not following standards or meeting goals. We have no way to monitor them or hold them accountable during performance reviews.”

2 – “We have a strong culture of doing the right thing, but few water-proof ways to track and report on metrics and performance. We are worried about being too transparent to our customers.”

3 – “We have very specific ways of doing business and strong systems in place to monitor. We employ responsible people and are able to hold them accountable.”

Resource Requirements

Budget

1 – “I have no money for this and doubt anyone does either.”

2 – “We have some money or can begin to work it into our budget. We are starting to determine how much it might cost to contract or do in-house.”

3 – “We have scoped out our needs and have sufficient funds approved to spend.”

Staffing

1 – “Unfortunately, we don’t have the right people with enough time now.”

2 – “We probably have the right people (or could contract them) to make this successful. Now we need to prioritize their time and work with their teams to see how we can make this possible.”

3 – “Fortunately we have the right people in the right places and with enough bandwidth to make this happen.”

Management Competencies

1 – “Our managers prefer to work in silos and are not interested in change. They are not the most technical people.”

2 – “Our managers are willing to work outside their comfort zones, but could do more to encourage their teams to work with others throughout the organization.”

3 – “Our managers are experts in what they do. They are tech-savvy, take ownership of their work, and are always looking for opportunities to partner with others to achieve success.”

Administrative and Support Capabilities

1 – “Trying to work with other departments will only increase our administrative workload. There is also no way we could support another system.”

2 – “We have competent support teams, but our track record for responding to customers could be a lot better. We also see a lot of turnover.”

3 – “We are able to establish new ways of collaborating and understand the give-and-takes of bringing new IT solutions online. We are able to maintain the institutional knowledge and oversight for this to be a success.”

Technology Landscape

IT Systems

1 – “Many work groups track their work separately with no real systems of record or interoperability.”

2 – “We have good systems of record that can talk to each other, but without a geospatial component.”

3 – “Our work activities are all tracked through one or two robust systems of record, including a strong geospatial component.”

Data Standards

1 – “Users are able to be ‘creative’ with their data entry. We have disparate systems with no data standards.”

2 – “Our systems have field-level definitions for the important things, but they are not monitored or governed by an overall architecture.”

3 – “We apply full data standards for all our systems and have compliance built-in to our performance measures.”

Political Environment

Council/Executive Management

1 – “We are generally off the radar – unless something bad happens. Then we just band-aid it as quick as possible. When we do start to go down the path of improving the way we do business, leadership changes.”

2 – “Our political leaders are sympathetic to our needs, but would not be too willing to spend more money or be public about getting behind anything that might require us to change the way we do business.”

3 – “Even despite elections or change in executive management, we have a record of getting political support through solid business cases supported by evidence.”

Public Interest

1 – “The public has very little interest in the work we do.”

2 – “Our more transformative projects garner a lot of citizen interest, but not the least publicized or more routine work.”

3 – “Our Council meetings almost always have citizens speaking about the work we do. We have very active neighborhood associations and development communities. They want to know about everything and are supportive when we attempt to improve the way we work.”

Go back to review which topics may need more thought, analysis, and discussion relative to the others – 1s represent a lower level of readiness, with 3s representing those areas with higher capability and/or capacity.