



## Editorial: Why some mergers work, others fail

March 24, 2010

There's been a lot of attention paid in recent years — much of it by this newspaper — to the concept of **local governments** consolidating in a particular area.

Whether it's two school districts partnering to offer a class, two counties combining their purchasing **power** or two cities merging their fire departments, there are many ways large and small that governments should be looking to consolidate.

To that end, a recent study commissioned by the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin is instructive. Its findings reinforce some key points for governments to keep in mind when considering a **consolidation**:

- Consolidation or pooling resources in a specific area by several units of government is often more effective — and more practical — than simply eliminating a unit of government.
- Consolidation efforts have to be specific to the local governments involved. A one-size-fits-all approach isn't going to work.
- And, there are six factors that contribute to the success of a consolidation effort: Trust between leaders, shared perception of need, clear fiscal benefit, improved **service** quality, collaborative leadership and community support. That last point is most important. If you look at the consolidation or merger efforts in the Fox Cities that have worked — and haven't worked — you can see why some have succeeded and some have failed. It's a

good lesson for local government officials to remember when they consider consolidation in the future — which we hope they'll do.

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