As an affiliate member of Mississippi Municipal League (MML), the Institute of Government (IOG) at Jackson State University accepted the invitation to participate in their 83rd annual conference which was held June 23-25, 2014 in Biloxi, Mississippi. IOG maintained a booth in the Exposition area along with more than 200 other exhibitors. Also, IOG was a presenter in the educational sessions for the 3,000 MML members attending the conference from throughout the state. Institute Associate, Marshand Crisler conducted a session on leadership development.

GOVERNING THROUGH COLLABORATION AND COMPROMISE: A NECESSARY ROADMAP FOR MUNICIPAL PROGRESS

JUNE 25, 2015
MML ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MS COAST COLISEUM
9:00 AM – D10

Executive Summary
Institute of Government Associate: Mr. Marshand K. Crisler, MPPA

Collaboration and compromise in local government are inherently linked by virtue of their purpose and intended impact which is to provide better, more efficient services to citizens. The purpose is to maintain a relationship based on trust and a shared vision potentially to enhance the ability of the parties to achieve qualitatively better outcomes. However, resistance to democratic compromise can and should be kept in check by a contrary cluster of attitudes and arguments--a compromising mindset--which favors adapting one's principles and respecting opponents. By having a mindset more appropriate for governing, it enables elected officials and administrators to more readily recognize opportunities for desirable compromise. Political scientists have exposed the harmful consequences of misplaced campaigning, but have not connected this problem with certain opposing mindsets and their implications for democratic compromise.
To further define these terms:

**Collaboration**: to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor, such as government officials or agencies (also referred to as “participating organizations” or “parties”, “partners” or “stakeholders”) working across sectarian boundaries to achieve common goals.

**Compromise**: a way of reaching agreement in which each person or group gives up something that was wanted in order to end an argument or dispute.

As a way to better understand collaboration, we can categorize and make comparisons. For instance, the benefits of collaboration may include:

- Cost reduction
- Establishing relationships between organizations
- Providing increased and better services to citizens
- Streamlining processes and speeding up transactions
- Improving information-sharing and quality
- Leveraging enterprise solutions
- Sharing risks
- Addressing fiscal constraints and lower administrative costs by leveraging mutual resources

However, with these benefits, there are areas that could be considered barriers as listed below:

- Turf
- Opposing Cultures
- Competition for Revenue/Growth
- Ideological Differences
- Historical Tensions
- Fear of Change
- Reduced Control and Accountability
- Lack of a Clear Vision, Sense of Purpose, and Clarified Responsibilities
- Dominance by One or More Participants
- Lack of Communication

As we continue to analyze and discuss collaboration, a good philosophy to adapt might be titled “Successful Collaborative Practices Begin at Home.” Examples of how to make it happen would include:

- Building a climate of trust
- Respect the values, priorities, policies, and working constraints of one another
- Be openly honest with regards to individual agendas, service seeds, and resources
- Establish the following:
  - efficient, accountable and transparent organizational structures
• standardized procedures
• sufficient funds, staff, materials and time
• participative decision making
• competent and collaborative leadership
• realistic time frames
• safe, non-threatening work environment.

Another area to discuss includes *The Art of Compromise: Campaigning v. Governing* which takes in consideration two opposite mindsets. First, we look at the uncompromising mindset and its parts covering:

• Principled Tenacity
  • Principles v. interests
  • Acceptable v. unacceptable compromises
• Mutual Mistrust

And secondly, the compromising mindset focuses on principled prudence and mutual respect. Connecting state and local government is done by exploring the role of state governments in a collaborative environment. There are typically three capacities in which the state may act as a finance stakeholder:

• State as leading entity – Lead funder and most influential
• State as partner entity – Grantor; adds credibility and stability to collaboration
• State as facilitator – Enact legislation or provide tax incentives

The collaborative options available are (1) *Informal Cooperation* which is an approach typically involving two local, usually neighboring government jurisdictions that offer reciprocal actions to each other; (2) *Interlocal Service Contracts* that involve a more formal agreement between two or more local jurisdictions and are widely used to handle servicing responsibilities, particularly between and among metropolitan communities, and they often can include nonprofit and civic organizations; and (3) *Joint Powers Agreements* that are agreements between two or more local governments provide shared planning, financing, and service delivery to residents of all involved jurisdictions, with all jurisdictions in the agreement receiving the same services from the same provider. Other civic and private organizations also may join. Joint powers agreements are used for a wide variety of services, including fire protection, job training and placement, and flood control. The key stakeholder groups that represent the various groups include:

• Business
• Government
• Nonprofit/civic groups
• Neighborhood leaders
• Educators
• Religious Leaders
• Media
Finally, it is important to put together an outline, a map that defines, *The Road to Success Starts with Effective Communication* by:

a. Communicating to Stakeholder
   i. An essential part of initial buy-in from an initiative's funding source (e.g. the legislature)
   ii. A vital aspect is effectively communicating the benefits and expected results of collaboration, and demonstrate, from the beginning, the positive outcomes that will result from the investment of both money and employee time

b. Communicating to Participants
   i. All participants must be kept aware of the progression of the collaboration via the issuance of official press releases, surveys and reports, or in less formal methods such as personal communication with individuals or providing project updates through monthly or bi-weekly emails
   ii. If feasible, establish shared performance measures that are simple, easy to track and transparent

c. Communicating to Citizens
   i. Keeping the public aware of the benefits and results of the collaborative efforts can be key to a successful initiative
   ii. Without public buy-in and support, some collaborative efforts could potentially collapse; therefore, make this aspect of the initiative a two-way conversation
   iii. Addressing collaboration challenges in a timely manner, and continuously communicating the advantages of collaboration to the citizens, can increase support and use of collaborative services

In conclusion, collaboration and compromise are the hallmarks for better services at every level of government. Research suggests that collaboration involves structuring an arrangement for the joint provision of outputs and outcomes, and has substantial policy implications. This seminar helped identify the conditions for, the barriers to, and the mechanisms contributing to the success of collaboration between government entities and elsewhere. It also revealed that there is parity between the findings across jurisdictions on the diverse aspects of collaboration. Furthermore, the research recognizes another relevant variable associated with successfully working together in terms of interagency cooperation; which is practicing the “art of compromise.” Political scientists posit compromise is difficult in American democracy even though none doubt it is necessary. It is difficult for many reasons; however, the compromising mindset—characterized by principled prudence and mutual respect—is more appropriate for governing. But to govern effectively, intergovernmental agencies must find ways to reach agreements with their opponents, including members of their own ideologically diverse organizations—even some compromises that their own supporters may see as betrayals. Nevertheless, collaboration and compromise are the foundation for effective and efficient governance.