

Ways that metropolitan areas coordinate governmental activities and services

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It seems there is no uniform way to do that and most metropolitan areas choose what works best for them. In answering the question, I want to use examples of two large metropolitan areas in the United States, Miami-Dade County, Florida, which utilizes a formal way of governance, and Portland, Oregon, which utilizes a functional form of local governance.

Miami-Dade County in Florida has a two-level local government, city governance, and county governance. This is a good example of the consolidated metropolitan area governance, where city and county divide and share the responsibility of providing core services and coordinating activities within its area. Thorough and organized planning between the city and the county helps to make the government more efficient and economical. The biggest city in the area, Miami, and 34 other towns provide a lower level of services, such as fire, water/sewer, parking, zoning, etc. At the same time, Dade County provides a higher level of services, such as school, emergency management, airport, regional transit, and public housing. At the same time, the County provides lower-level services for areas that are not incorporated under Miami-Dade County governance. There are some services that are provided at both levels, such as parks and recreation. Both levels of government that coordinate services and activities in the larger Miami area impose taxes. The Dade County operates under an Executive Mayor, who is appointed by the County Manager, and a County Commission.

In some regions, however, the above mentioned formal form of governance is not politically feasible, thus some forms of functional governance emerge.

An example of functional governance is Portland, Oregon. Oregon has a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). There are many MPO throughout metropolitan areas in the United States, which are considered an innovative form of functional governance. Their formal role is to develop and manage regional transportation plans. However, more and more responsibilities are delegated to MPOs by the local governments. Oregon has the most powerful MPO in the country, the power of which crosses 3 counties and 25 cities. Unlike typical MPOs, Oregon MPO manages not only transportation, but only parks and recreation, and public facilities, as well as oversees land use and urban growth boundary.