

ACIR – Initial compilation of potential topics and approaches (2/2/2024):

1. Subject matter experts, key legislators, and other guest speakers should be invited to ACIR meetings so the group can learn about their work and engage the people who will implement recommendations being developed. Guest speakers should sometimes be relevant for specific topics the ACIR is working on but sometimes should not.
2. Workforce Development, including local workforce (Ed & general gov) and key sectors such as industry. Workforce development for the growing manufacturing sector. Local high schools are developing job training programs but there often is a disconnect between relevant state agencies. The state Dept. of Education is making efforts in post-secondary readiness and workforce development, including grants for high school courses applicable to college course credit, to industry, and meeting municipal employment needs.
3. The ACIR should do more regarding municipal staffing/service delivery so municipal governments and boards of education can deliver cost-effective and better services. Where is service sharing desired and where can it be most impactful? Sharing a service is not necessarily cost effective and must be analyzed. Is there a role for the Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) and can COGs and RESCs house shared local staff? A group of towns near an urban center should not be able to get together to share a service and lock out the urban center.
4. There should be an increased focus on education in the ACIR's work. The costs of education & special education are major part of local spending and could encourage shared services, but no new regional school district has been formed since 1987. The ACIR should put together a presentation about issues that legislators might not recognize that school districts face. State funding is unavailable for a building problem because there are not enough students but the regional school structure does not allow students to be moved as necessary. Many school systems are experiencing declining teacher availability and declining enrollment, but it is difficult to share resources, in part due to difficulties resulting from the definition of "school district" and this is driving up property taxes.
5. The ACIR should have a greater role in considering the potential impacts of legislation during a session. Not a formal role but instead the ACIR should seek to encourage a culture in which the legislature would ask the ACIR for such a review.
6. The ACIR should balance between working on 2-3 topics across a 1-2 year period and being nimble and responsive: not replicating the legislature's former Office of Program Review & Investigations. There are multiple sources of research the ACIR can bring in and synthesize and then move on. The ACIR should avoid duplicating efforts like the Comptrollers's working groups re municipal employee retirement and retention.
7. The ACIR could screen state agency plans for intergovernmental impacts during public comment periods. The ACIR tends to focus on the municipal and council of governments (COG) level in its work, but the state level is important too.
8. There should be a greater emphasis on regional economic development, not town-by-town.
9. Digital government
10. Pension plan debt

11. Change management
12. Don't lose focus on property taxes.
13. Opportunities for sharing state services