

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of regionalism is not a new one. It had its beginnings many years ago. However, through the years, a few "key words" have entered the description of how regionalism should work. Words like "area-wide," "cooperation," "coordination," "duplication," and "overlap" now play an important role in describing regional efforts.¹

In Kansas, regionalism and regional planning are just beginning to become effective means for inter-governmental cooperation and economic and community development. Since the first regional planning commission was established in Kansas in 1968, regional schemes for planning and administration within the state have grown to quite a number.

There are presently three basic approaches to regionalism in Kansas. These are multi-county regional councils, regional planning commissions, and special districts. Present Kansas Planning Laws, K.S.A. 12-716 through 12-721 and 12-2901 through 12-2904 (See Appendix A), provide for the establishment and operation of regional planning organizations in Kansas. Multi-county special districts are legally authorized under either specific creating legislation or statutes referring to the state department or agency under which they operate.

MULTI-COUNTY REGIONAL COUNCILS

A Council of Governments is a voluntary, multi-county organization of locally elected officials who rather than creating a new level of government, merely meet to discuss inter-related problems and implement plans to solve those problems. There are two regional councils affecting the state at the present time. These two councils, the Mo-Kan Regional Council and the Mid-America Regional Council, are both multi-county, inter-state organizations with member counties from both Missouri and Kansas.

¹Leland R. Edmonds, A GUIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS IN KANSAS, (Unpublished), Kansas Department of Economic Development, Planning Division, November, 1973, p. A-1.

One other organization in the state tends toward a council type organization. The Central Plains Tri-County Planning Committee has a body of both elected officials and private citizens with representation being on the county level only. Each county remains responsible for its own planning and implementation, with the committee meeting to discuss the coordination of related county programs and plans.

MULTI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS

Multi-county regional planning commissions are another form of regional councils in that they are also a multi-county, voluntary organization. Rather than being mandatory they are organized as a cooperative organization to achieve governmental coordination and are not intended to create another level of government.

Funding of all commissions and councils in the state is handled through local contributions by member counties and cities, federal grants and funds, state funds in some cases, and some private donations.

MULTI-COUNTY SPECIAL DISTRICTS

These districts are Federal or State agencies which use a multi-county, regional delineation for the administration of their programs. Among these special districts are two private, non-profit organizations, Greater Northwest Kansas, Incorporated and Mid-America, Incorporated which are engaged in economic development.