



2019 Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Member Survey - Results



Background

The provincial government confirmed its commitment to Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs) through recent amendments to the *Municipal Government Act*, which were set out in [Bill 25](#) and passed on December 5, 2019. The Minister of Municipal Affairs also confirmed the deadline for completing rural to urban ICFs remains April 1, 2020. The deadline for rural to rural ICFs remains April 1, 2021, as long as the parties are in agreement with this timeline and the Minister of Municipal Affairs is notified that the extended deadline is being applied.

The AUMA invited its members to participate in a short online survey on experiences with the process of developing ICFs. 91 members participated in the survey. Not all participants responded to all survey questions, and there is 1 test response reflected in the response numbers.

RMA provided a similar survey to their members, so AUMA will also be working with RMA to share and compare information related to ICF development across all types of municipalities.

Summary of Survey Results

63% of participant municipalities indicated that their ICFs will be complete, or they are confident that they will be complete, by the April 1 deadline; 22% were unsure about completion, 14% were not confident that their ICFs will be complete, and 1% indicated that their ICF will not be complete. These numbers indicate that municipalities are reasonably well-positioned to complete their ICFs by the deadline despite the challenges that the process may present.

The biggest challenges with the ICF process faced by the municipalities that responded to the survey are lack of time and resources and difficulties negotiating with neighbouring municipalities. Many of the additional comments provided elaborated on these concerns, with several participants referring to issues engaging with neighbours.

34% of survey participants indicated that more time (i.e. a timeline extension) would be most helpful for them in completing their ICFs. Many comments provided by participants suggested other factors and resources that would be helpful, including a clearer stable mandate and direction from the province; more access to technical experts (e.g. planning, engineering); increased cooperation between municipalities; and templates to guide drafting.

21% of survey participants expect to need to enter into arbitration in order to complete their ICFs. Considering that 36% of participants were unsure, not confident or not expecting to complete their ICFs by April 1, this proportion expecting to enter into arbitration reveals alignment between the responses to these two survey questions. The estimated costs reported by participants were around \$10,000 and \$50,000, and one estimate was \$185,000.

Lastly, survey participants submitted a variety of open-ended comments on their experiences with working through the ICF process. These comments touched on specific themes, with many of the comments expressing concerns related to the lack of commitment and action by other parties and the use and availability of resources (including value or benefit for expending these resources), as well as process considerations and tips (e.g. advantages of using a mediator). A few positive comments were also provided highlighting the benefits of the process, such as increased interaction and improved relationships between municipalities, and the opportunity to streamline processes with a rural neighbor.

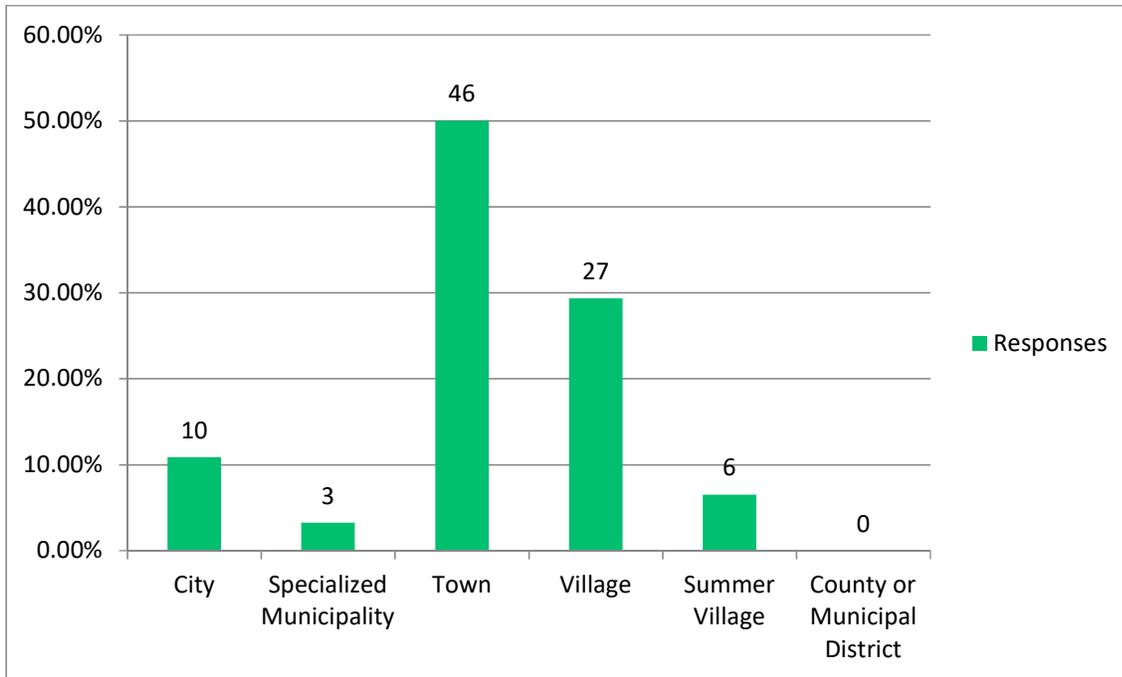
Question #1

Please state the name of your municipality

Names of municipalities that participated in the survey were collected but are not being identified in this report. Names of municipalities included in comments submitted are also not being included.

Question #2

Please state the type of your municipality



*Please note: one set of responses was submitted on behalf of five (5) Summer Villages.

Question #3

How many Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs) is your municipality required to complete?

90 Responses	# of ICFs Required to Complete						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	7
# of Municipalities	3	76	3	3	1	3	1

Total # of ICFs to be completed by survey participants (at December 31, 2019): **117**

Question #4

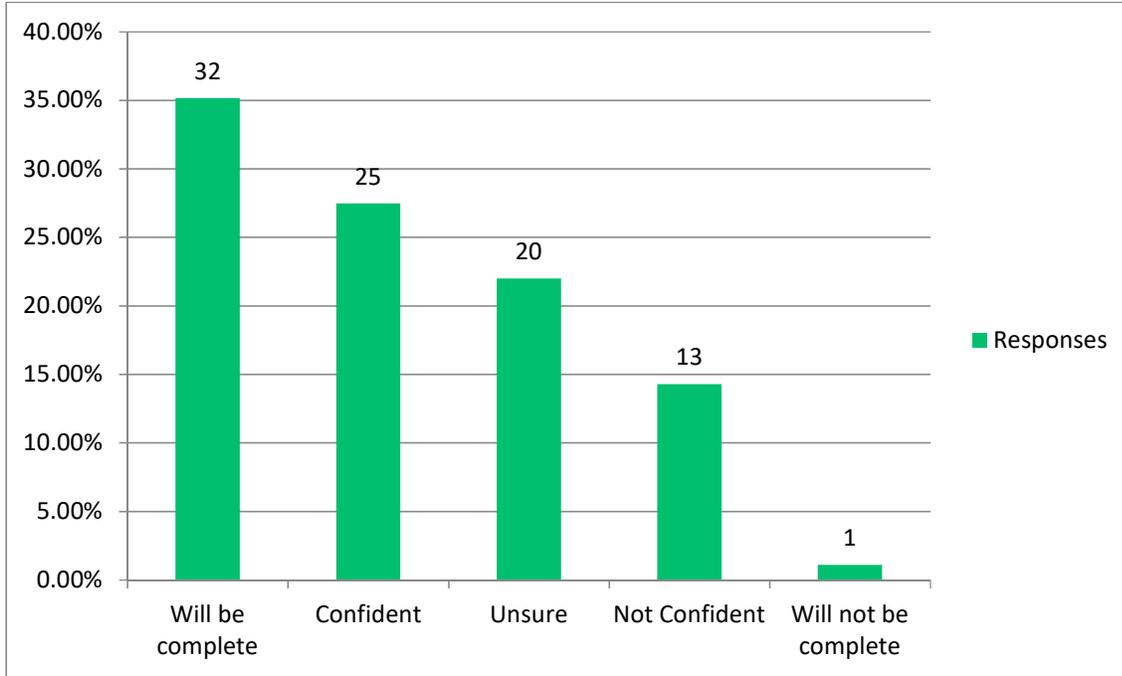
How many Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs) has your municipality completed at this point?

90 Responses	# of ICFs Completed			
	0	1	3	4
# of Municipalities	62	26	1	1

Total # of ICFs completed by survey participants (at December 31, 2019): **33/117**

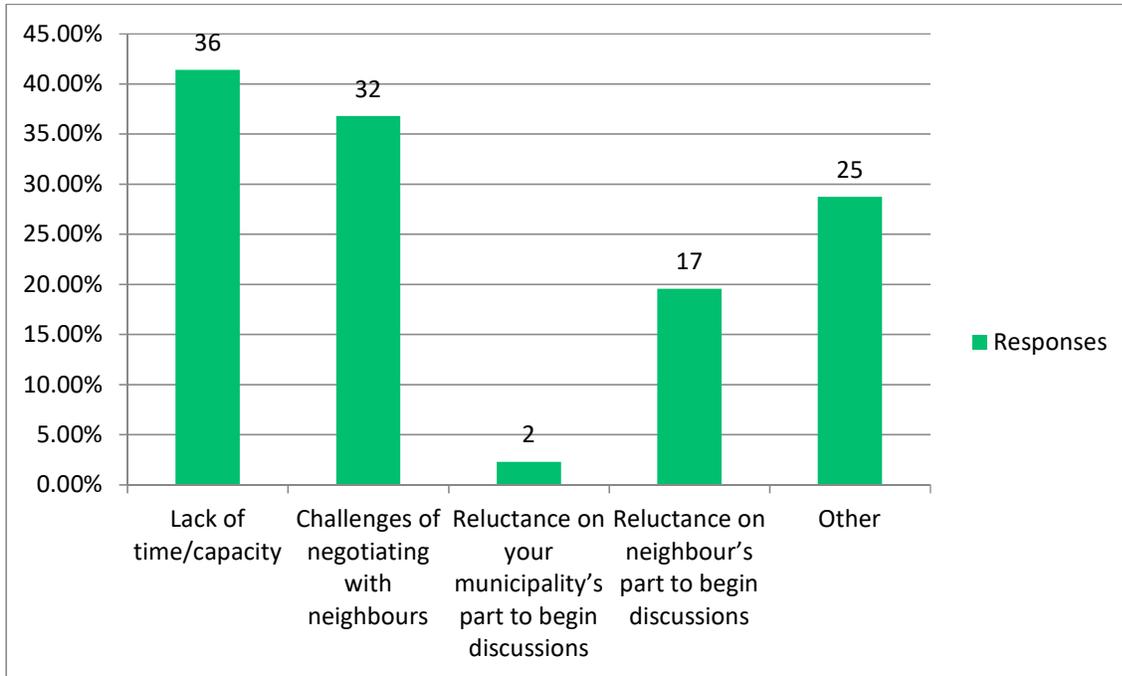
Question #5

How confident are you that your municipality will complete all required ICFs before the April 1, 2020 deadline?



Question #6

What have been your municipality’s biggest challenges in completing ICFs? (select all that apply)



Other Challenges

Time and resource requirements:

- Expensive. Small villages don't have full time council members, so they often have to take time off their jobs to do this.
- Staff changes at County and Villages, many other projects with similar deadlines and too few resources to complete in the timeframes allotted.
- Time consuming exercise with VERY LITTLE teeth - please come up with more useful municipal contributions - no value for tax payer here.
- Our first ICF Committee meeting is only scheduled for December 18th.
- No real challenges, other than time.

IDPs:

- On top of IDP's, it has been a lot all at once.
- IDP discussions will impact the ICF.

Process difficulties:

- Ensuring all parties understand the agreement's goals
- Deliberately pushing the deadline as a negotiating strategy.
- Lack of a "Starting Point" or sample ICF Framework - It was left to each municipality to come up with their interpretation of a good/workable ICF whereas this, like many universal policies/bylaws/agreements, would surely have been better received and easier to complete if

an ICF template was available from the start (from Municipal Affairs perhaps) which each municipality could then tweak to suit their particulars. Many of us just waited until a larger municipality with deeper pockets paid a consultant to do the background work and developed a template - then we piggy-backed off their documents, which takes time.

- Challenges with the hired facilitator to book meetings.
- Autonomy challenges in reference to financial inputs and say.

Unwilling/unavailable neighbours:

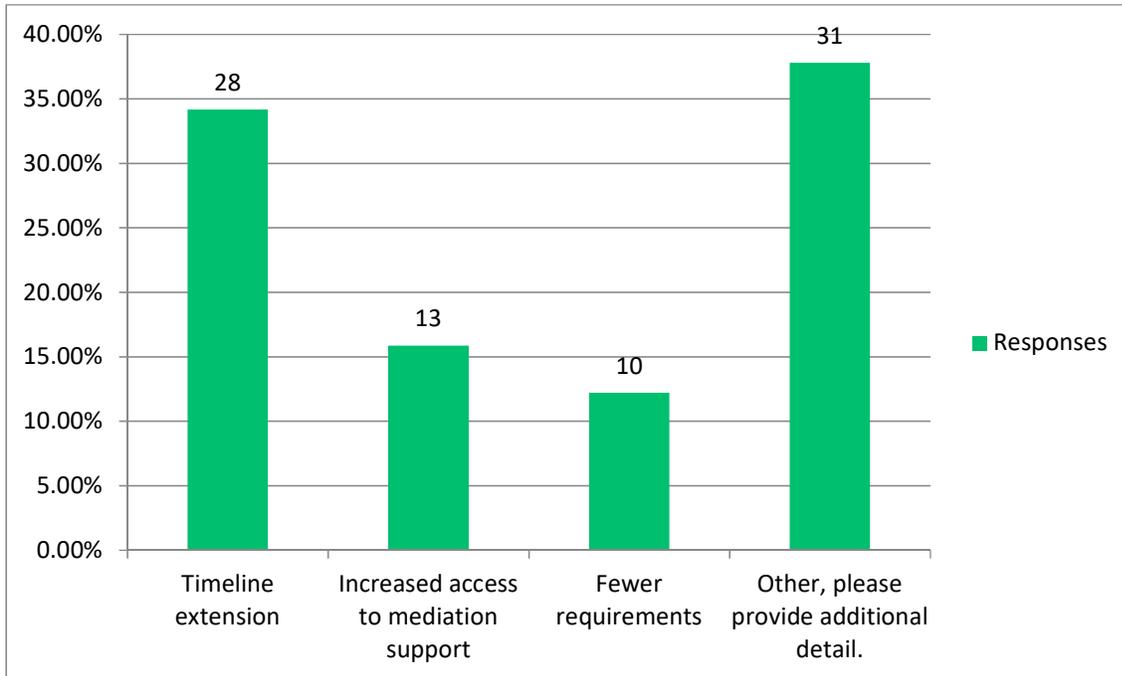
- The process initiated and funded avoids tangible discussions and negotiations, while outwardly appearing that we're actually having said discussions.
- Neighboring County is not interested at all in ICF. They are sitting at the table because they are "mandated" by the legislation, otherwise, they won't be there.
- Adjacent County has many more ICF's to complete. Fortunately, we both feel very comfortable in all aspects of our existing collaborative relationship.

Lack of impact:

- Perceived lack of impact from both municipalities. This has been viewed as complete waste of time and has made no meaningful impact on developing a more collaborative relationship. In fairness, we already enjoy a functional working relationship with our rural neighbour.

Question #7

What would be most helpful to your municipality in completing ICFs?



Other Helpful Factors/Options

Mandate and direction:

- Legislated revenue sharing.
- Clarification of requirements.
- Stronger mandate from province.
- Strict rules with respect to elected official involvement, negotiation format that cannot be ignored/ overridden.
- Fewer meaningless requirements and so MUCH reliance on useless meaningless paper documents - please try a paradigm shift in municipal governance...please.
- No more changes to regulations until ICFs have been completed and changes to be reflected in next rendition of ICF.

Templates:

- A clear purpose statement - and resulting sample template.
- Recreational funding agreement templates.

Commitment and actions of parties:

- Two municipalities coming to agreement on cost sharing.
- If the other municipalities we deal with would get to it, it would be done.
- The resources are there, and there is sufficient time, but the issues lie with the parties.
- Autonomy and an open mind to understanding the shared benefit for the whole community in the larger scheme of needs.

Increased or different resources:

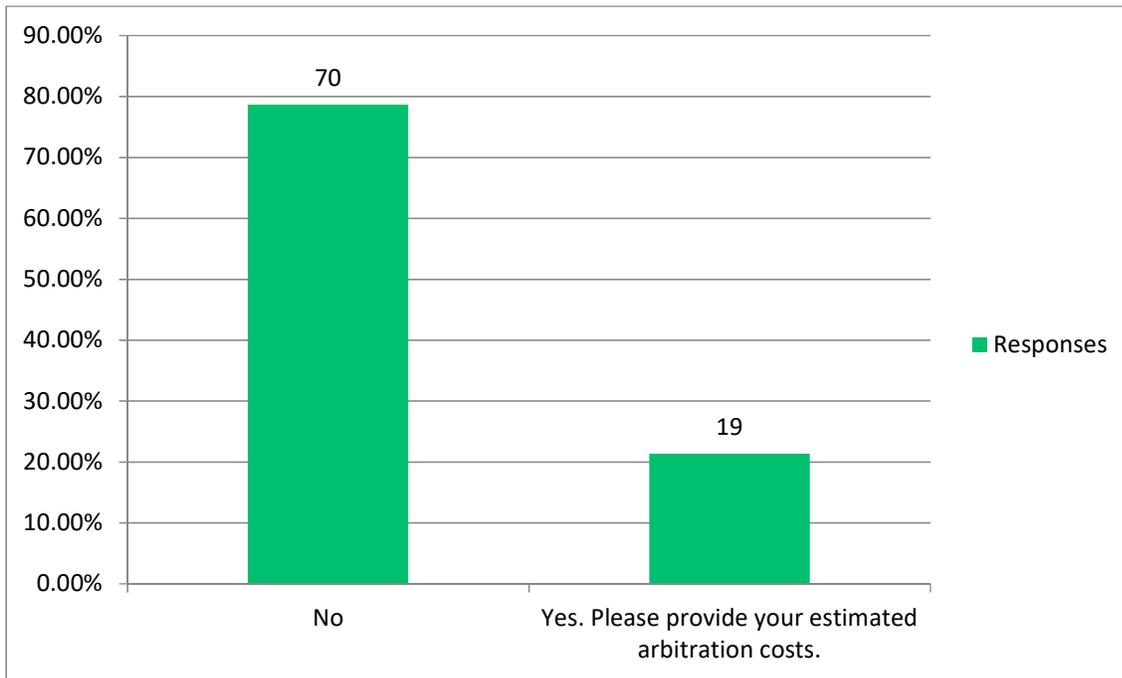
- The availability of internal resources with the necessary competencies (planning, engineering) at the right times can be challenging.
- The access to an ACP grant allowed the 3 participating municipalities to jointly hire a project manager.
- We just need to dedicate the time to get it done. This will happen as our budget process is almost complete.

Process considerations:

- Possible timeline extension may be required. Recreation continues to be a difficult discussion.
- More fairness in cost sharing formulas, i.e. % of users in each municipality should factor into equation.

Question #8

Does your municipality expect to enter into arbitration to complete one or more ICFs?



Estimated Arbitration Costs

- \$10-15K
- 5.21% of \$200,000 = \$10,420
- No idea. I would estimate well north of \$10,000 if we have to pay a lawyer from "the list" or people to help us build data for arguments.
- \$50,000
- Hard to estimate but in the order of \$50,000, depending how many issues / cases are presented to the arbitrator.
- \$185,000

Question #9

Please provide any other comments on your experience working through the ICF process.

Positive outcomes:

- This process has resulted in a greater level of interaction between politicians and administration from neighbouring municipalities. The result has been greater familiarity and a more positive relationship.
- It's been a good chance to streamline our administrative processes with the county.
- The experience was relatively positive.
- Easy process.

Requirements:

- More clarity on the exact requirements (sufficiency) following the simplified announcement by the Minister. Can a resolution be really simple? Perhaps AUMA & RMA could now draft a template resolution that could be individually customized yet still compliant?

Process considerations:

- Confusion between what the deliverable must include by the April 1, 2020 deadline. We think it outlines how the costs for providing shared services will be shared, they think that the framework is all that is required by the deadline and that dollars can be negotiated afterwards.
- These agreements are not tools for municipalities to extract funds from one another.
- Our rural neighbour identified that this is a working document and will see ongoing changes hence we have completed the process.
- We hired a consultant to complete our ICF which was paid by the provincial grant.
- Mediation seems to have enhanced communications and enabled both parties to focus on specific ICF requirements.
- We hope to complete our negotiation without arbitration, but a time extension would be beneficial at this juncture.
- Creating the ICF agreement is one thing, addressing the service agreements for shared services is quite another.
- While I view the concept of and ICF as positive in terms of building and maintaining an inventory/asset/service/agreement register which can be used by partners to find synergies and share resources, the reality is that good relationships foster these naturally and bad relationships will just this process to further slow progress or deflect meaningful action on important multilateral topics - adding a layer to the consultation process is always risky and usually comes at the cost of meaningful results in the field.
- We are a rural area dealing with other rural areas. ICFs are important for Alberta but not necessarily for us.

Commitment and actions of parties:

- Feeling the rural is non-negotiable and leaving the Village feeling like their being bullied by the larger rural municipality.

- I think the challenge for a town surrounded by, but not in, counties, is the lack of urgency from our neighbours to get started. It seems the counties are so busy dealing with communities within their own borders that they are leaving others, like towns, to the end.
- The county does not seem overly concerned about starting discussions.
- Our County is reluctant to sign any agreement with us until they have an agreement in place with the other Town in their area. The other Town is dragging their heels getting started on the talks.
- Challenged with the county not being interested in meeting as they expect they will need to pay more.
- ICF is a good tool to use between neighbors if there is "good will" to collaborate and to put "customers first" and to make services more effective and efficient for them. If one party doesn't have the good will to collaborate, the whole ICF process won't work and just created more animosity and frustrations between the parties.
- No issues so far, but I'm guessing that County will not be happy to share funding and will likely cause more conflict between councils.
- Take it or leave it attitude has been difficult.
- Has been difficult bringing the neighbour to the table to discuss required agreements.
- It has created tension amongst municipalities.
- It has been an added pressure in small municipalities. Our neighbor is using this to their advantage not understanding the pressure they are causing by continuing to ask for revisions to costs of servicing provided to them.

Use of resources:

- A lot of money is being wasted to formalize something that has already existed and worked well for years.
- The amount of time taken from our limited administration resources has been significant. Since this is the first time for the ICF process, the time it has taken to go through the process are quite time consuming for many small municipalities like ours. MD has been the lead role with the ICF and without them it would not have been complete. Full credit to them.
- This is a waste of time and resources where there has been some incremental information and knowledge building of benefit. I don't understand why Provinces fear top-down reform of local government - it's the only way you'll get meaningful, consistent change. Doing it by consensus is a bad joke, quite frankly.
- Please come up with value for money for tax payer - so much reliance on documents that mean nothing and takes up all employees' time - make contribution to visible things please no wonder the environment is in the dump - you require so MUCH paperwork - meaningless...thanks for opportunity to comment.
- We had no problem completing the ICF, the problem is now the cost, control, autonomy and downloading factors which is now creating an issue with existing agreements and equalization of service needs.