National Center for Interstate Compacts

The National Center for Interstate Compacts helps bolster the position of the states in our federalist system and provides assistance to an underserved population: the administrators, commissioners and agencies of the more than 200 interstate compacts currently active among the states.

A New Initiative

Despite their legal and structural differences, states share many common problems in a world in which economic and political issues are often discussed in global terms. These complex problems arise in many contexts, including homeland security, environmental concerns, an aging infrastructure, pioneering technology and an ever-evolving citizenry.

As we become more integrated socially, culturally and economically, the volume of these issues will only increase and interstate compacts may well prove to be an apt mechanism for developing state-based solutions to supra-state problems.

The last two decades have seen a resurgence in the development of new interstate compacts and the revision of existing, though outdated compacts. As a tool reserved exclusively for the states, interstate compacts can provide states the means to address problems with state-led solutions, avoiding federal intervention and preemption.

More than 200 interstate compacts are currently in effect between and among states, each housed independently within a member-state agency most closely associated with the policy identity of the compact. While it seems every sector of state government has an established membership and support association (for example, state budget officers, emergency managers, transportation officials, legislators), the interstate compact community has gone largely unnoticed and underserved.

To that end, The Council of State Governments’s new National Center for Interstate Compacts combines policy research with best practices, and functions as a membership association, serving the unique needs of compact administrators, compact commissions and the state agencies in which interstate compacts reside. The center promotes the use of interstate compacts as an ideal tool to meet the demand for cooperative state action, to develop and enforce stringent standards, and to provide an adaptive structure for states that can evolve to meet new and changing demands over time.

A distinctly American invention, interstate compacts promote multistate problem solving in the face of complex public policy and federal intervention.
Survey Findings

In February 2004, CSG conducted a 50-state survey of interstate compacts. This in-depth survey sought detailed information on compact administrators’ interstate compact experiences, the experiences of their state in regards to compacts and their assessment of current needs in the compact field. With a 51 percent response rate (p=444, s=226), the surveys results are sound. When combined with CSG’s observations and compact experience, the results reinforce the specific need for a national center and help outline the specific duties and role such a center would play in assisting states.

Summary survey findings include:

• 78 percent said they could use additional resources and assistance in their compact work;
• 73 percent of respondents stated that they wanted more networking opportunities with their compact colleagues;
• 71 percent of respondents said they needed legal assistance in interpreting compact requirements;
• 65 percent of respondents stated that they desired common tools for use in the compact process;
• 61 percent of survey respondents said they needed a national information clearinghouse on compacts;
• 61 percent said they wanted more ways to build coalitions and partnerships to promote compacts;
• 53 percent said they encountered obstacles to enforcement and compliance within their compact;
• 52 percent said they needed assistance monitoring and evaluating the impacts of federal activities on compacts;
• 52 percent said they wanted non-technical explanations of compact requirements;
• 47 percent said they needed support in determining the costs associated with their compact;
• 46 percent of respondents stated that they thought the need existed to make changes to their compact;
• 42 percent of survey respondents claimed they had encountered difficulties in educating legislators and other state officials about compacts;
• 40 percent stated they had encountered obstacles in the drafting of compact language;
• 35 percent said they had difficulty in determining their funding needs and potential revenue sources; and
• 31 percent thought the need existed for the development of new compacts.
Mission

The National Center for Interstate Compacts is designed to be an information clearinghouse, a provider of training and technical assistance, and a primary facilitator in assisting states in the review, revision and creation of new interstate compacts as solutions to multi-state problems or alternatives to federal preemption.

The national center is research-based and member-driven with significant services provided to and participation sought from the interstate compact community. The national center combines policy research with best practices in order to serve the needs of compact administrators, compact commissions and the state agencies in which interstate compacts reside.

The goals of the National Center for Interstate Compacts are:

- **Education and Information**: educate stakeholder groups, compact staffs, state and local officials on the background, history, legality, structure, mechanics and use of interstate compacts and promote their use to solve multi-state and cross-jurisdictional problems.
- **Technical Assistance and Training**: provide technical assistance to states in determining the need for new interstate compacts, and to examine and, where appropriate, revise existing interstate agreements.
- **Administration and Resources**: assist states in streamlining administrative structures and procedures, promote the use of technology in compact activities, assist states in gaining federal support for their compact efforts, and create standards for compact operations and rules and regulation development and publishing.

Services

CSG is uniquely positioned to offer a full-range of services to states that are in need of not only information and expertise, but also guidance and technical assistance in dealing with interstate compacts and other interstate agreements. Since 1933, CSG has been at the forefront of promoting multi-state problem solving and championing the role of the states in determining their respective futures. CSG has played an integral role in the development of numerous interstate compacts, tracking the progress of more than 200 active interstate compacts, researching innovative problem solving solutions for the states and bringing the states together to build consensus on national issues.

Most recently CSG has been involved in the development and implementation of the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision, the Interstate Compact for Juveniles and the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children. CSG also houses the Emergency Management Assistance Compact through its affiliate, the National Emergency Management Association, as well as the new Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision.

The National Center for Interstate Compacts offers a range of services to states, compact administrators and compact commis-

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"Modern compacts are a reinvigoration of our federalist system in which states may only be able to preserve their sovereign authority over interstate problems to the extent that they share their sovereignty and work together cooperatively through interstate compacts."
sions. Based on CSG’s extensive interstate compact experience, coupled with the results of the national survey, activities are tailored for information gathering and dissemination, technical and legal assistance, training, and compact revision and creation. Specific services and activities of the National Center include:

- **Information Sharing**: comprehensive and consistent source of reference and advisory information on compact issues with an online library/repository containing the language, bylaws, rules and assorted documents for every compact currently in existence as well as a variety of general interstate cooperation materials.

- **Federal and State Activity Updates**: updates on compact activities from around the country, including the impacts of federal and state activities on current compacts, compact law and administration.

- **Education and Outreach**: educational outreach on a state, regional and national basis for compact administrators and their staffs, other state officials and stakeholder groups, and other levels of government, where applicable, encourage membership in regional and national compacts.

- **Technical Assistance**: technical assistance, both remote and on-site, to states, compact commissions and other identified parties as related to compact reviews and evaluations, compact implementation, compact amendment and revision and drafting new compacts as policy responses to emerging trends and/or federal intervention.

- **Training**: training curriculum for compact administrators, their staffs and key stakeholder groups, i.e. judges on compact issues; conduct an annual training institute; convene an annual compact technology conference to share information and practices relative to the administration of compacts and the implementation of technology tools.

- **Standardization**: assist states to streamline and standardize the compact administration process, i.e. forms, timelines, procedures, etc.; assist states in defining budgetary needs for compact operations and in gaining federal support for compact efforts and activities; develop interstate compact standards relating to compact structure and language, rules and regulations, commission administrative authority, and compliance and enforcement.