



**Town of Cochrane**  
**“Cochrane”**  
**&**  
**Rocky View County**

**Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework**  
**Terms of Reference**

## Contents

1.0 Background and Context.....	2
2.0 Principles .....	2
2.2 Accountability .....	2
2.3 Collaboration.....	2
2.4 Continuous Improvement .....	3
3.0 Direction .....	3
4.0 Purpose .....	4
5.0 Goals .....	4
5.2 Guide service delivery and growth.....	4
5.3 Promote collaboration.....	4
5.4 Framework for partnerships and communication .....	4
5.5 Be proactive .....	5
6.0 Responsibilities and Decision Making .....	5
6.2 Council and Committee Responsibilities .....	5
6.3 Administration Responsibilities.....	6
7.0 Communications .....	7
8.0 Engagement.....	7
9.0 Project Stages.....	8
10.0 Dispute Resolution .....	8
10.1 .....	8
10.2.....	8
11.0 Budget.....	10
12.0 Term of Reference Approval.....	10
Appendix A: Legislative Requirements <i>Municipal Government Act</i> .....	11

## 1.0 Background and Context

**1.1** Under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), municipalities with shared boundaries that are not part of a regional growth board must adopt an Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF). An ICF establishes a framework for the provision, funding, and administration of intermunicipal services and sets out a process for collaboration and dispute resolution between municipalities.

Cochrane and Rocky View County have a long history of cooperation and collaboration, as demonstrated through the *RancheHouse Accord* (2010), which provides a framework for intermunicipal collaboration and coordination. The *RancheHouse Accord*'s core principles of commitment, respect, and trust will be embedded within the ICF, as well as the Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP). By incorporating these values into the statutory frameworks that guide intermunicipal services, the *RancheHouse Accord* will no longer be required as a stand-alone agreement.

## 2.0 Principles

**2.1** The following principles guide the comprehensive development of the ICF. They reflect a shared commitment by Cochrane and Rocky View County to accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

### 2.2 Accountability

- a. **Trust:** Conduct all discussions and negotiations in good faith to foster collaborative and productive partnerships.
- b. **Respect:** Acknowledge that each municipality is best positioned to determine its individual priorities while balancing intermunicipal goals for mutually beneficial planning.
- c. **Transparency:** Ensure that both municipalities have access to relevant and timely information throughout the process.
- d. **Mutual Benefit:** Ensure that overall outcomes and decisions provide value to both municipalities and their residents.

### 2.3 Collaboration

- a. **Ongoing and Effective Communication:** Maintain respectful and collaborative intermunicipal relationships through frequent, open, and deliberate communication, supported by timely responses, realistic expectations, and proactive information sharing at all organizational levels.

- b. **Evidence-Based Support:** Decisions between municipalities should be data-driven and based on evidence.
- c. **Exploration of Opportunities:** Approach emerging issues with openness to collaboration and innovation, recognizing that joint efforts may create new benefits for both municipalities.
- d. **Commitment:** Establish an equitable commitment between municipalities to undertake this project.

## 2.4 Continuous Improvement

- a. **Proactive Approach:** Anticipate and prepare for challenges and opportunities early in the process.
- b. **Change Control:** Adopt an approach that strives for continuous improvement.
- c. **Resiliency:** Foster resilient relationships that can withstand challenges, adapt to change, and reduce the potential for conflict.
- d. **Efficiency:** Strive for streamlined processes and outcomes that maximize efficiency and effectiveness in governance and service delivery.

## 3.0 Direction

**3.1** Section 708.28 of the MGA provides the enabling legislation for the preparation and approval of an ICF (Appendix A).

**3.2** An ICF addresses the following mandatory services:

- a. transportation;
- b. water and wastewater, including stormwater;
- c. emergency services;
- d. recreation; and
- e. solid waste.

**3.3** Additional services can be included under the ICF, if agreed to by both municipalities.

**3.4** *Ministerial Order No. MSD:025/25* took effect on May 1, 2025. This Ministerial Order required former participating municipalities of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board to enter into an ICF and IDP where common boundaries are shared by November 30, 2027.

## 4.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Terms of Reference is to guide the development of the ICF between Cochrane and Rocky View County in accordance with the requirements of the MGA, Ministerial Order No. MSD:025/25, and direction provided by Council.

## 5.0 Goals

**5.1** The following goals establish a shared vision for collaboration and long-term prosperity between Cochrane and Rocky View County. They provide a strategic framework to foster effective partnerships and to meet the purposes of the ICF, as outlined under the MGA:

- (a) to provide for the integrated and strategic planning, delivery and funding of intermunicipal services,*
- (b) to steward scarce resources efficiently in providing local services, and*
- (c) to ensure municipalities contribute funding to services that benefit their residents.*

### 5.2 Guide service delivery and growth

- a. **Promote Alignment with Planning and Growth:** Support the long-term prosperity of both municipalities by coordinating the delivery of shared and intermunicipal services in a manner that is efficient, collaborative, and consistent with the principles established in the IDP.
- b. **Support Fiscal Responsibility:** Support sustainable and coordinated growth by recognizing and addressing shared impacts on municipal services, ensuring residents continue to receive quality infrastructure and reliable services.

### 5.3 Promote collaboration

- a. **Share Knowledge and Data:** Work cooperatively to share regional knowledge, information, and data that facilitates the ICF and IDP projects.
- b. **Encourage Innovation:** Embrace new ideas for innovation, including collaboration on joint projects of mutual benefit.
- c. **Advance Regional Outcomes:** Foster intermunicipal coordination that generates benefits at the regional level, including economic and social, and environmental interests.

### 5.4 Framework for partnerships and communication

- a. **Establish Collaborative Frameworks:** In conjunction with the IDP, establish a comprehensive framework for collaboration between the municipalities,

incorporating and building upon the principles of the *RancheHouse Accord* so that over time, the *Accord* is no longer required as a standalone agreement.

- b. **Strengthen Relationships:** Foster long-term, trust-based relationships between the municipalities.
- c. **Maintain Regular Communication:** Establish intermunicipal meetings to reinforce a process-oriented approach at a regular interval.
- d. **Establish Communication Protocols:** Develop communication protocols to administer the ICF, identifying shared opportunities, and addressing issues in good faith.
- e. **Formalize Conflict Resolution:** Create formal processes for conflict resolution, framework amendments, and potential repeals.

### 5.5 Be proactive

- a. **Anticipate Opportunities and Challenges:** Identify emerging opportunities and challenges to avoid delays.
- b. **Strengthen Issue Resolution:** Develop forward-thinking guidelines to collaboratively resolve matters of shared intermunicipal interest.

## 6.0 Responsibilities and Decision Making

**6.1** Cochrane and Rocky View County will develop the ICF as equal partners. Both municipalities will provide balanced representation at the Council and Administrative levels.

### 6.2 Council and Committee Responsibilities

Cochrane and Rocky View County will employ the Intermunicipal Committee (IMC) to support the development of the ICF. As outlined in the Town of Cochrane – Rocky View County Intermunicipal Committee Terms of Reference (adopted December 2, 2021), the IMC facilitates ongoing information sharing between the two municipalities' elected officials and administrative staff to provide a forum in which to review and comment on a range of topics of mutual interest.

The respective Councils of each municipality will be responsible for approval of the ICF through a formal resolution or bylaw.

### 6.3 Administration Responsibilities

Administrations from both municipalities will be responsible for the establishment of a work plan for the project and for developing the ICF with input from the IMC. Both municipalities agree to equitable dedication of administrative resources and cost-sharing throughout the process of ICF preparation and adoption.

#### 6.3.1 Project Team

Team Role	Responsibilities
Executive Sponsor	Provides strategic oversight and executive-level support, ensures alignment with broader organizational goals, and secures necessary project resources.
Project Sponsor	Champions the project internally: supports decision-making, terms of reference, and ensures alignment with municipal priorities.
Project Lead	Leads day-to-day project execution: Acts as the key contact between municipalities; manages timelines, budget, and resources; oversees overall project delivery; and facilitates coordination across the project team and working group.
Communications Lead	Coordinates messaging, communications materials, and timelines with project partners to ensure consistency and transparency.

#### 6.3.2 Working Group

Team Role	Responsibilities
Project Lead	Leads the development, coordination, and drafting of the ICF document; provides technical planning guidance and direction to ensure alignment with statutory plans, policies, and legislative requirements; and ensures deliverables meet quality standards.

### 6.4 Decision Making

Decisions will be made by consensus among the Working Group members. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the matter will be escalated in accordance with the dispute resolution process outlined Section 10: Dispute Resolution of this Terms of Reference.

## 6.5 Coordination with Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP)

An Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) is an agreement that establishes a coordinated framework for land use, development, and infrastructure planning along shared municipal boundaries. Cochrane and Rocky View County adopted an IDP through their respective bylaws in 2001, which remains in effect, but requires a comprehensive review and update. Both municipalities agreed to work towards the November 30, 2027, deadline, as set out in Ministerial Order No. MSD:025/25, to complete this review. The IDP project will progress independently from the ICF; however, Administration will share updates and information regarding the ICF and IDP to ensure coordination and avoid conflicts. Opportunities for collaboration between the ICF and IDP projects will be sought wherever possible.

## 7.0 Communications

**7.1** Cochrane and Rocky View County will jointly develop a Communications Plan to ensure consistent messaging for three audiences: municipal councils, intermunicipal committees, and the public.

**7.2** Communications materials will use clear language, visuals, and appropriate detail for each audience.

**7.3** Updates will appear on both municipalities' websites with agreed messaging.

**7.4** Before a municipality makes any public communication respecting the ICF or the intermunicipal relationship contemplated by this Terms of Reference, that municipality will provide advance notice to the other municipality of the intended communication, for the purpose of awareness and coordination, where practicable. Where advance notice is not possible, the communicating municipality will provide notice as soon as practicable following the communication.

**7.5** Information shared between Cochrane and Rocky View County as part of the ICF development work is expected to be treated as confidential unless the municipality providing the information indicates otherwise. Each municipality will take reasonable care to protect information shared by the other, consistent with how it protects its own internal information and in accordance with applicable legislation.

## 8.0 Engagement

**8.1** Where public engagement is required, a third-party consultant may be procured between the municipalities to ensure consistency.

**8.2** Cochrane and Rocky View County will develop an Engagement Strategy jointly with the IDP that will outline public engagement activities that reflect the needs of each project.

**8.3** Public engagement for the ICF will be undertaken in a targeted and proportionate manner, recognizing that the ICF primarily addresses intermunicipal service delivery and cost-sharing matters. Engagement will focus on providing clear information about the ICF to the public and, where appropriate, seek input from key stakeholders and interested parties.

## 9.0 Project Stages

**9.1** The project is organized into five stages, with a mandatory completion date of November 30, 2027.

**9.2** The five project stages include:

Project Stage	Description	Anticipated Timeline
Stage 1	Initiation	Q4 2025 - Q2 2026
Stage 2	Analysis and Background	Q1 2026 – Q3 2026
Stage 3	Draft Framework	Q2 2026 – Q1 2027
Stage 4	Revisions	Q1 2027 – Q3 2027
Stage 5	Framework Approval	Q3 2027 – Q4 2027

## 10.0 Dispute Resolution

**10.1** This dispute resolution process is intended to support timely and collaborative resolution of any issues that may arise during the review and updating of the ICF.

**10.2** Unless otherwise agreed to by both municipalities, any disagreement that cannot be resolved through regular administrative communication during the review and update of the ICF shall be addressed through the following dispute-resolution steps, in sequence and in a timely manner, and the Parties shall participate in good faith at each stage to support resolution:

- a. **Elevation:** The municipality initiating the dispute shall notify the other municipality in writing and will specify the nature of the dispute in the written notice (“Notice of Dispute”). The Parties will elevate the discussion to their

respective CAOs (or designates), who will have thirty (30) business days to resolve the dispute through collaborative discussion, unless otherwise agreed to by the CAOs (or designates).

- b. **Facilitated Discussion:** If the Municipalities do not resolve the dispute within thirty (30) business days, the dispute will be referred to the Intermunicipal Committee. The Municipalities may select a mutually agreed upon Facilitator, the costs of which will be shared equally by the Parties. IMC members will discuss the issues outlined in the Notice of Dispute with the intention of resolving the dispute. Unless otherwise agreed to by the IMC members, the municipalities have thirty (30) business days to resolve the dispute.
- c. **Mediation:** If the municipalities fail to resolve the dispute by way of discussion between IMC members, the dispute may be referred to mediation. Any one of the municipalities shall provide the other municipality with written notice ("Mediation Notice") specifying the subject matters remaining in dispute, and the details of the matters in dispute that are to be mediated. The Mediator shall be mutually agreed upon by both Parties and selected from the Municipal Dispute Resolution Services roster maintained by the Government of Alberta's Municipal Affairs. Unless otherwise agreed to by the municipalities, if the mediation is not completed within sixty (60) days from the date of receipt of the Mediation Notice, the dispute shall be deemed to have terminated and failed to be resolved by mediation. The cost(s) of any mediation shall be paid equally by both Parties unless the Mediator deems otherwise, and therefore, would indicate in their decision.
- d. **Arbitration:** In the event that:
  - i) The Municipalities do not agree on the appointment of a mediator within thirty (30) days of the Mediation Notice; or
  - ii) The mediation is not completed within sixty (60) days after the appointment of the mediator; or
  - iii) The dispute has not been resolved within ninety (90) days from the date of receipt of the Mediation Notice;

either party may by notice to the other withdraw from the mediation process and in such event the dispute shall be deemed to have failed to be resolved by mediation. If mediation fails to resolve the dispute, the dispute shall be submitted to arbitration. Either of the Municipalities may provide the other party with written notice ("Arbitration Notice") specifying that the subject matters remaining in dispute and the details of the matters in dispute that are to be arbitrated. The Arbitration Act

(Alberta) and the MGA in force from time to time shall apply to arbitration proceedings commenced pursuant to this Terms of Reference.

## 11.0 Budget

**11.1** Each municipality will provide an equal portion of the total costs and adequate staffing and resources to support the project.

**11.2** Additional budget may be required, and in such case a budget adjustment will be brought to the respective Councils for approval.

## 12.0 Term of Reference Approval

**Rocky View County**

**Town of Cochrane**

---

**Sunny Samra**  
**Reeve**

---

**Morgan Nagel**  
**Mayor**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A: Legislative Requirements *Municipal Government Act*

### Requirements for framework

**708.28(1)** *Municipalities that have common boundaries must create a framework with each other by April 1, 2020 unless they are members of the same growth management board.*

**(1.1)** *Subject to subsections (1.2) and (1.3), subsection (1) does not apply to municipal districts with common boundaries if they determine and agree that they do not require a framework.*

**(1.2)** *A municipal district referred to in subsection (1.1) may revoke its agreement at any time by giving written notice to the other municipal district or municipal districts, and where that notice is given, the municipal districts must comply with subsection (1) within one year from the date of the notice.*

**(1.3)** *The municipal districts referred to in subsection (1.1) must review all existing agreements between them prior to determining and agreeing that a framework is not required.*

**(1.4)** *A municipal district that under subsection (1.1) does not enter into a framework must*

- a. adopt a resolution that intermunicipal services have been and will continue to be adequately provided by other means,*
- b. notify the Minister of its decision not to enter into a framework by sending a copy of the resolution to the [Minister](#), and*
- c. publish, on the municipal district’s website, the reasons for not having a framework.*

**(2)** *Municipalities that are members of the same growth management board may create a framework with other members of the same growth management board in respect of matters that are not addressed in a growth plan.*

**(3)** *Municipalities that do not have common boundaries may be parties to a framework.*

**(4)** *A municipality may be a party to more than one framework.*

**(5)** *Despite subsection (1), the [Minister](#) may by order exempt, on any terms and conditions the Minister considers necessary, one or more municipalities from the requirement to create a framework.*

**(6)** For greater certainty, a municipality that is a member of a growth management board must create a framework with a municipality that is not a member of the same growth management board if they have common boundaries.

**Contents of framework**

**708.29(0.1)** In this section,

- a. “costs for intermunicipal services” means operating, capital and other non-operating costs required to deliver the services;
- b. “third-party services” means services provided by a third party that is
  - i. a corporation independent from the municipalities to whom the services are provided, and
  - ii. the only services provider authorized under an enactment to provide the services it provides in or to the municipalities that are parties to a framework.

**(1)** A framework must describe the services to be provided under it that benefit residents in more than one of the municipalities that are parties to the framework.

**(1.1)** The content of the framework required under subsection (1) must address the provision of the following mandatory services:

- (a) transportation;
- (b) water and wastewater;
- (c) solid waste;
- (d) emergency services;
- (e) recreation.

**(1.2)** Municipalities may include additional services in the framework, other than third-party services.

**(1.3)** Where [section 708.34](#)(a) or (b) applies to municipalities because of a matter other than a matter regarding a mandatory service, the municipalities must create a framework in accordance with this Part that addresses mandatory services.

**(1.4)** Municipalities may establish in a framework a cost calculation model respecting the costs for intermunicipal services.

**(1.5)** Each municipality in a framework must disclose to the others any information, data or assumptions it is relying on in arriving at its proposal for a cost calculation model.

**(1.6)** Subject to the regulations and subsection (1.7), capital costs may be included in a framework.

**(1.7)** *The capital costs for a new facility providing mandatory services may only be included in a framework if, by a prior agreement, all municipalities that are party to the framework have participated in the design of and decision to construct the facility.*

**(1.8)** *The prior agreement referred to in subsection (1.7) must contain provisions reflecting that the municipalities have addressed and agreed to the nature of the participation of each municipality in the decision to design and construct the facility.*

**(1.9)** *Subsection (1.7) applies to frameworks entered into after the coming into force of that subsection.*

**(1.91)** *The [Minister](#) may make regulations relating to the inclusion of capital costs in a framework.*

**(2)** *In developing the content of the framework required by subsection (1), the municipalities must identify which municipality is responsible for providing which services and outline how the services will be delivered and funded.*

**(3)** *Nothing in this Part prevents a framework from enabling an intermunicipal service to be provided in only part of a municipality.*

**(3.1)** *Every framework must contain provisions establishing a process for resolving disputes that occur while the framework is in effect, other than during a review under [section 708.32](#), with respect to*

- (a) the interpretation, implementation or application of the framework, and*
- (b) any contravention or alleged contravention of the framework.*

**(4)** *No framework may contain a provision that conflicts or is inconsistent with a growth plan established under Part 17.1 or with an ALSA regional plan.*

**(5)** *The existence of a framework relating to a service constitutes agreement among the municipalities that are parties to the framework for the purposes of [section 54](#).*