

Local Government Collaboration Model Development in Local Development Plan Collaboration in Nonthaburi Province, Thailand

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Abstract

There are three objectives in this study which are 1) to explore the current situation of the collaborating in local development plan in Nonthaburi province 2) to examine problems and challenges of the collaborating in local development plans in Nonthaburi province and 3) to develop the model of the collaborating in local development plan in Nonthaburi province. This is an applied research which draws on a participatory research. There is five population group which applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The finding is comprised of three issues. First, the local development plan coordination is for decreasing the duplicate activities and make the efficiency of the government budget. Second, the local development plan coordination contains six processes and two formal mechanisms. The output of the local development plan coordination is satisfactory. However, it is unable to decrease the duplicate projects as well as to spend annual government budgeting efficiency. The problems and obstacles are grounded by four reasons which are 1) formal communication 2) different perception and understanding among stakeholders 3) time constraints and 4) goal setting and mutual learning condition. Collaborative Model for local development plan has been developed another mechanism which is the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Subcommittee in order to lessen the formal of processes. There are five major roles which are vertical coordination, collecting, check and screen the coordinating projects. There are ten processes for local development plan coordination. The time period has been extended because of two reasons. First, the local organization can have more time to communicate and consult. Second, this timeline is intended to be aligned with the period of the provincial development plan.

Keywords: Local Development Plan Coordination, Collaborative Model, Horizontal Coordination

Introduction

The merit of strategic plan linkage between grand national level and local administrative organization (LAO) level is one of the most critical condition of key successful for national development goal. Considerably, the amount of national annual budget in 2014, which had been allocated to this strategy, was 622,625 billion baht. In the case that the vertical coordination of local administration is failing, its impact would be high on the efficiency of

public spending.

It is a mandate for a central government agency and local administrative organization (LAO) to coordinate and collaborate on their annual development plan. It is in need of ensuring that the duplicate activities will not occur. In this consequent, any Provincial Administration Organization (PAO), is responsible for provincial development plan coordination, has been introduced in a number of Acts of legislation. This is including Government Administration Act, B.E. 2534, Provincial Administrative Organizations Act, B.E. 2540, and Determining Plan and Procedures in Decentralization to the Local Administrative Organization B.E. 2542. The Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee and the District Development Plan Coordinating Committee are main mechanisms for reviewing the linkage between grand national strategy and local development plans. In so doing, O'Donnell (2012) states that the local development plans have to be aligned both vertically and horizontally. In the practice, there is a series of challenging for PAO to coordinate the local development plans. The issues are involved with the delivery of local development plans as well as the body of knowledge and technique of collaborating development plan. Consequently, the collaboration among local governments is still very limited. Moreover, the collaborating in local development plans are unable to meet the qualification since the overlapping and inefficiency activities still occur.

Ansell and Gash (2007) find that shared understanding is the important process for designing collaborative system in the successful organizations. More specifically, there are a series of factors that are crucial to the collaborative process itself. These factors include trust building and the development of commitment and shared understanding. All of them are the product of the mutual learning process. Moreover, collaborative governance is a difference between two alternative patterns of policy making: adversarial and managerialism (Busenberg, 1999; Williams and Matheny, 1995). In the contrast, Ansell and Gash (2007) believe the cooperative relationships among stakeholders is a positive impact for collaborative governance.

Nonthaburi province is the high expansion city which is a result of being the extended Bangkok metropolitan region. In this circumstance, the administration of Nonthaburi city has to face the complex and wide range of problems due to the development forces. The collaborative governance could be the potential solution. This approach could steer the local development plans into the same direction as well as resulted in the economics of scale from reducing the overlapping activities.

However, there is still an understudy of collaborative governance at the local level in Thai context. Therefore, the three objectives of this study are 1) to explore the current situation of the collaborating in local development plan in Nonthaburi province 2) to examine problems and challenges of the collaborating in local development plans in Nonthaburi province and 3) to develop the model of the collaborating in local development plan in Nonthaburi province.

Research Methods

This applied research draws on a participatory research. Since the ultimate research goal is the practical collaboration in the local development plan model that fits into the setting for local managers. We design to bring localities and authorities to be participating in building up the distinguished body of knowledge.

The research approaches are both quantitative and qualitative with five population groups. These are 1) the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee 2) the District Development Plan Coordinating Committee 3) the Local Development Plan Commission 4) Department of Local Administration and 5) The expertise.

Table 1 Population and sample size

Population Group	Number of Population	Sample Size (Quantitative Method)	Sample Size (Qualitative Method)
The Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee	17	17	17
The District Development Plan Coordinating Committee	184	184	30
The Local Development Plan Committee	828	828	30
Department of Local Administration	15	15	15
The expertise	10	0	10
Total	1,054	1,044	92

Designing two set of questionnaires for quantitative approaches, there are 1) the survey of current situation and problems of collaborative in the local development plan and 2) the survey of a proposed model for collaborative in the local development plan. On the other hand, the qualitative approach was applied another two techniques into five population groups in order to seek for other two set of information. These are 1) focus group and 2) structural in-depth interview. More specifically, the research would like to identify the in-depth of current situation and problems of collaborative in local development plan as well as the output and condition of the collaborative local development plan.

In term of quantitative data collection, there are four population groups, which is all but omitting the expertise group, for the study with the total 1,044 samples. The problems of collaborative local development plan were identified by covering these issues; the condition of collaboration, the process, and the output.

There are five activities for collecting qualitative data. First, the activity is to study the current situation of collaborative in the local development plan. Second, the activity is to study the problems of collaborative in the local development plan. Third, the activity is to develop a collaborative model for the local development plan. Fourth, the activity is to trial the collaborative model. Fifth, the activity is to assess the collaborative model for the local development plan in Nonthaburi province. The focus group technique was used with all of five population groups for twice time. The sample size of each group is 17, 30, 30, 15, and 10 sample respectively. To develop the model of collaborative in the local development plan, two samples from each population group were selected in order to conduct the in-depth interview.

To trial the collaborative model of the local development plan, the research team were given an authorization from Nonthaburi Provincial Administration Organization in order to hold the workshop. This workshop is explicated as the formal channel. The contribution is to build the mutual learning as well as to examine the actual problems and obstacles during the implementation process. After the trial session, the workshop participants are able to assess, adjust and modify the proper model. This practice could be ensuring that the model, process as well as other instruments are applicable to the real situation.

The analysis of quantitative data is a descriptive statistic which is the percentage, mean, and standard deviation. On the other hand, the analysis of qualitative data is content analysis by transcribing, coding, and data triangulation.

Research Results

Current Situation of Local Development Plan Coordination in Nonthaburi Province

According to section 17(2) of the Determining Plan and Process of Decentralization to Local

Administration Organization Act B.E.2542, "Provincial Administrative Organization shall give power and duties to systemize the public service for benefit of local communities... (1) establish local self-development plan and coordinate to develop a provincial development plan according to the rules determined by the Council of the minister". There is a couple rationale for the provincial administrative organization (PAO) in order to have a duty to coordinate the local development plan. They are 1) to decrease the duplicate administration of the local organization and 2) to bring about the efficiency of government annual budget. Moreover, there are four attributions of the local organization's project that considered to be coordinated. First, the people in more than two local administration will have benefit from the project. Second, the project is a large scale and spend the high cost, Third, the project is complicated and in need of specialization. Fourth, the project is at the provincial level and has an impact on natural resources, environment and social conditions and stakeholders. However, the intention, as well as the practicing of coordinating in localities development plan, is related to the concept of project portfolio management. This implies that the strategic project is one form of group project management that contain the mutual objective and goal. Project portfolio management (PPM) can be broadly defined as the coordinated management of a collection of projects or programs to achieve the specific organizational objective. Furthermore, project portfolio management support ranges from information gathering, dissemination to process development and reducing cost.

There is two formal mechanism for coordinating local development plan which is the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee and the Development Plan Coordinating Committee. Arguably, this structural design reflects the effort of adaption bottom-up approach. The premise of the bottom-up model is that each policy actor has different experiences and capacities and as such have something of value to bring to the table likely to follow the tradition planning which supports the vertical coordination by adopting the bottom-up perceptive. The public policy and implementation (Elbert, 2008). Likewise, the concept of networked government and coordination among the various entities recognizes that no one has all the knowledge and resources or controls all the levers to bring about sustainable solutions to complex issues. However, the survey points out the respondent attitude regarding the role of coordinating local development plan is at the moderate level. Although there is an effort to apply the bottom-up approach to the mechanism of inter-local coordination, the conventional planning is still existing (Voogd and Woltjer, 1999). In this respect, the formal mechanism could not function effectively which led to the contradiction between principle and practice of the coordination of inter-local development plan.

The inter-local development plan coordination contains six processes. To be more extent, the District Development Plan Coordinating Committee has a duty on collection each local government development plan in the district. Next, the process of selecting and prioritizing is to be done by the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee. Later that, the selected project will propose to be a part of the provincial development plan. The attitude towards the process of coordinating the inter-local development plan from the survey is at a moderate level. However, the respondents agree at the high level that the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee formulate the strategy for the local development plan. There is a plausible explanation that the process of coordinating the inter-local development plan is the conventional planning principles. Its emphasis on instrumental rationalism while omitting collaborative planning principles. In the contrast with the conventional one, its focus is on communicative oriented through the informal structural channel to reach the consensus (Voogd and Woltjer, 1999: 844).

Table 2 The current process of coordinating in the local development plan

The current process of coordinating in the local development plan	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. The Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee formulates the strategy for the local development plan.	3.71	0.83	High
2. The Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee delivers the over-capacity project list to the Integrated Provincial Commission.	3.67	0.87	Moderate
3. The Development Plan Coordinating Committee approve the projects that the District Coordinating in Local Development Plan proposed to	3.61	0.85	Moderate
4. The Development Plan Coordinating Committee sets the criteria for being the coordinated project.	3.51	0.91	Moderate
5. The Provincial Coordinating Inter-Local Development Plan Commission holds the meeting to select and prioritize the project.	3.47	0.84	Moderate
Total	3.60	0.86	Moderate

The output from Nonthaburi's coordinating inter-local development plan during 2018-2021 is fundamental infrastructure which particularly involves with the road project. Another selected type is the project that under the duty of the Provincial Administration Organization. More specifically, it is a water source project which explicitly seen as the urgent project. In term of process, most of the selected project has the similar attributes which are including the engineering standard, the mutual understanding among stakeholders related to the goal, benefit as well as procedure. This approach is related to conventional planning that based on utilitarian ethics- emphasize scientific knowledge and instrumental rationalism (Voogd and Woltjer, 1999: 844), They are focused mainly on what Healey (1997) calls the 'hard' infrastructure, such as policy measures.

However, the outcome of Nonthaburi's coordinating inter-local development plan during 2018-2021 is unable to reduce the duplicate projects as well as to spend annual government budgeting efficiency. This is because there is no place for the stakeholder to discuss and shared goal-setting. Even though, the mechanism has allowed stakeholders to participate. The selected projects could not lead to the same goal due to the unstructured communicative design and process intervene by the influence stakeholders. (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 2018) the high-power stakeholder to influence the process.

Problems and Obstacles in Coordinating Local Development Plan

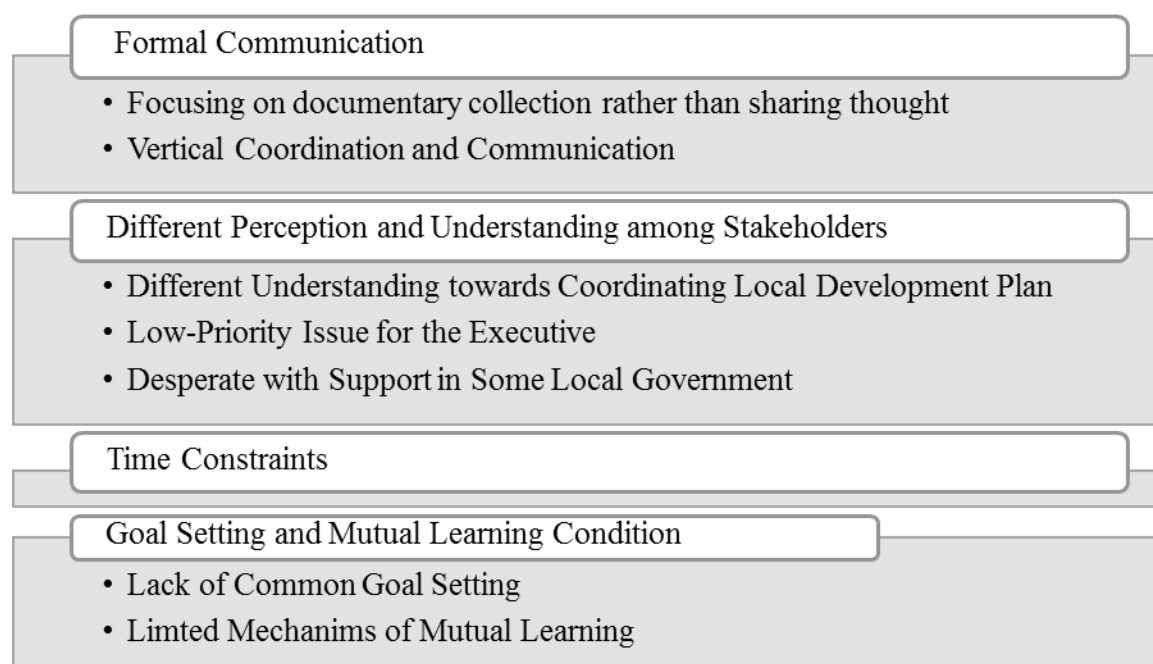


Figure 1: Problems and Obstacles in Coordinating Local Development Plan

Formal Communication

The formal communication problem which comprised of 1) vertical coordination and communication and 2) focusing on documentary collection rather than sharing the thought.

The first issue reflects that there is no supporting condition for coordinating in Nonthaburi local development plan. Osifo (2013) pinpoints that coordination should contain collective behavior among the stakeholders in order to communicate, intention and goal setting. Principally, the process of coordination in local development plan is designed to have a communication mechanism for common goal setting. This is particularly focused to is vertical coordination. Moreover, most the governments apply the conventional approach to coordinate which is concentrated on formal organization structure. The existing approach causes the efficiency and effective coordination which New South Wales Department of Local Government (2017) states that coordination and cooperation would decrease the duplicate works as well as integrate resource. Organizations will benefit from the advantage of integration while the autonomous of local organizations remain.

The focusing on documentary collection rather than sharing thought leads to the bold formality. To extend this more, the coordinating in local development plan gives the prioritize to the timeframe and the formal process. The effects of the time constraints, which are considered as the obstacle of collaboration planning, are very limited to consult vertically as well as to set the common goal. Moreover, this current coordinating inter-local development plan stresses on technical and instrument coordination. This approach rarely supports the integration and strategic thinking that Patanakul and Shenhar (2012) claim that would help many projects to achieve the common goal. Additionally, Shenhar et.al (2005) states that the effective coordinating must have clear thinking regarding organizational goal, plan, output, and outcome. Furthermore, the adaptive strategic at the project level, which led by the common learning among stakeholder, bring about the effective coordination.

Simply following formal procedures, the vertical communication, and coordination in conventional planning often based on the institutional arrangement. To extend this more, the

communication across the organizations have to completely done by the formal document. Even though many scholars condemn that it contains many unnecessary processes, they are unable to against the conservative regulations. Even though the Nonthaburi Provincial Administration Organization had already circulated the coordinate local government plan framework which already established provincial goal and strategies, its characteristic is the hierarchy that flows the information from top to bottom. This practice led to many project duplications because each local organization has to submit the overcapacity projects to the Provincial Organization Administration. In the vertical communication method, the exchange of information between the local government is pretty rare to occur. The duty of the District Coordinating in Local Development Plan, which is a formal mechanism, is to select and merge the projects in the project. However, the formal process and mechanism without communication since the beginning hardly lead to the trustworthiness among the stakeholders.

This practice related to the finding of Harwood and Zapata (2006), their work approve that collaborative planning is more flexible than conventional planning in term of the procedures. While the conventional planning is too technical and rigid, the collaborative planning presents the informal communication and trust among stakeholders. Moreover, Varunyoowattana (2011) asserts that the horizontal coordination contains its intrinsic substance and requires the unity. However, it is not necessary to completely have the same procedures yet the same direction among the inter-local governments. The significant contribution of horizontal integration is to reduce the duplicate activities in the same provincial area.

Different Perception and Understanding among Stakeholders

The different perception and understanding among stakeholder's problem comprised of three issue which is 1) different understanding toward coordination local development 2) the low priority in the executive perception and 3) the desperate attitude in getting the support. These three problems clearly reflect that the coordinating inter-local development plan with the vertical approach could not create the effective outcome. There are some rational explanations. The formal coordination does not support share goal setting of development plan among the stakeholders. When there is no consensus building, the tendency of effective coordinateness is extremely low (Healey, 1997).

There are two reasons that cause the different understanding among stakeholders towards coordinating the local development plan. First, the citizen demands the budget be allocated in the project their own area rather than given the prioritize to the integrated project. Bouckaert, Beuselinck, and Verhoest (2007) explain that it is unnecessary to coordinate if there is no reciprocity among the organization. Second, most of the District Coordinating in Local Development Plan Commission believe that the coordinating inter-local development plan is the activity of Nonthaburi Provincial Administration Organization because the source of budget and criteria are both established by the Provincial Administration Organization. This situation relates to Huber & Lewis (2010), they state that coordination has been conceptualized as a cognitive phenomenon and as a behavioral phenomenon

In this regard, coordinating inter-local development plan has been processed just because it is the duty of the law even though the mechanism and approach have not yet fit into the circumstance. Elbert (2008) states that today is the era of citizen-centric. In order to achieve the goal of public management, any level of government has to be integrated for the delivery of public service.

Many of local government executives do not place the priority into the activities related to coordinating inter-local development plan. This is due to the perception of the possible allocated budget. Moreover, it is not the duty to participate in mutual goal setting. In the contrast, it potentially leads to the conflict when the executive has a roleplay in coordinating

inter-local development plan. Elbert (2008) and Theerawet et.al (2009) have the common prepositions on the key success factor for horizontal coordination which is the organization decision authority towards the local situation. If the power and authority rest at the central government level, then local entities may not have the independence to form partnerships or may be conflicted in their relationship with other organizations because of inconsistent expectations.

When the criteria of coordinating inter-local development plan still unclear as well as the potential to have the external conflict, some of the local government choose not to participate. Moreover, the capable local governments would not expect much the result of their proposed projects. In this circumstance, these local government proposes the projects just to complete the process and to comply with the law. Consequently, the development of coordinating inter-local government in Nonthaburi could not simply formulate the coordinating guideline. On the contrary, it is a prerequisite for creating the mutual understanding among the stakeholders as well as encouraging them to participate in sharing the thought.

Time Constraints

Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch (2009) argue that the principle of coordination for inter-local development plan is the horizontal coordination. The critical process is the communication process which is the meeting room in order to attain the collective goal-setting. In so doing, one of the mutual learning for the stakeholders is to reframe their working style to be more open and adaptive. This is, particularly in bureaucracy organization. However, most of the local government employees recognize the coordinating activity as a local politic instrument. Since the local governments have to submit their proposed coordinating project within two months. Most of them contain the very incomplete information. Consequently, both of the commission at district and provincial level have to face the difficulty to screen, compare and, prioritize the projects which result in misleading cognitive perception.

Goal Setting and Mutual Learning Condition

Goal setting and mutual learning problem are comprised of two causes which are 1) lack of common goal setting and 2) limited mutual learning mechanism. Kożuch & Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2016) argue that coordination characteristics contains the using of informal interactions as well as paying less attention to the valid procedures and organizational structures. These mechanisms, in particular, enable sustainable local governance through building durable relations between collaborating organizations. However, the coordinating inter-local development plan has not been effective in reducing the duplicate works because they miss the key components. Those are the collective goal-setting as well as the limited mutual learning mechanism.

The collective goal-setting is the common ground collaboration which the relevant organizations have to acknowledge and realize the significance of collective goal. However, the formal mechanism of vertical coordination is mostly done by law and regulation while omitting the informal communication to create the collective understanding. Even though the public meeting is one strategy of the development plan. In fact, this is only a process of collecting and categorizing people's demand before moving to another step. Ruangrong (2009) refers to a significant coordinating inter-local development plan problem in Nan province which is the process of public meeting for the local development plan. Similar to Elbert (2008), the local community should involve or recognize the collective of development goal unless either the cooperation or the coordination tends to face the obstacles and the ineffective outcome. Likewise, the study of The New South Wales Department of Local Government (2017) finds out the merit to coordinate and cooperate in public service which able to integrate resources and reduce the work duplication. However, each organization is still able to enjoy their administration autonomously.

Since both of the commissions were institutionally designed with the premise of formality.

Their main duty is to prioritize local governments' proposed projects but not involve with the project assessment process. Follow this logic, their working is already completed since the projects were considered with the established criteria. It can be said that there is no mutual learning happen during this stage which is one of the significant obstacles of horizontal coordination. Likewise, the proposition of Kożuch & Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2016) regarding inter-organizational collaboration have to create mutual learning across the organizational boundary. The mechanism has to be the formal and informal body. Moreover, The New South Wales Department of Local Government (2017) recommends that the inter-organizational collaboration successful require the continuous interaction and working collaboratively. These working approaches help to create the interchangeable information, skill development, cultural development support, connected the diversify community. Ideally, this is very worthwhile in the future if the approach could create the potential model for the expansion of sharing resources.

Collaborative Model for Local Development Plan

The principle of developing a model for coordinating local development plans consists of 5 principles. These are 1) efficiency and effectiveness principle 2) the four project characteristics which are (1) public value size (2) project scale and cost (3) project complexity and (4) project impact. 3). align with the Ministry of Interior regulation 4) the ability to mitigate the existing problem and weakness and 5) stakeholder's acceptance. In order to develop the outcome, Theerawet et.al (2009) states that the first prerequisite of inter-local development plan collaboration model has to comply with Ministry of Interior regulation. This is because local development plan coordination is a duty of the Provincial Administrative Organization. The second prerequisite is the stakeholder's acceptance of the proposed model whether it is practicable or not.

Therefore, there are three commissions in the proposed model. While the present two commissions exist, the proposed model develop a new mechanism which is the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Subcommittee. Elbert (2008) and Kożuch and Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2016) agree that the success of horizontal coordination and collaboration needs the mechanism that supporting horizontal communication. Therefore, the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Subcommittee's roles are as followed 1) to propose the first draft of local development plan coordinating framework 2) to communicate the provincial development plan coordinating framework to the whole local administrative organization in the province 3) to support the area-based integrated project which is the sharing point of local administrative organization in each district 4) To collect and check the completeness and duplication of proposed projects, to integrate the area-based development plan in the district, and to propose the project for an approval from the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Committee. And 5) To propose the criteria for budget allocation for each coordinating project.

The rationale of establishing the subcommittee is to break the limitation of formal and vertical communication which perceived as the obstacle for integrating the project. Another reason is to make a clear understanding of the process and criteria for inter-local development plan coordination. Chamchong (2016) highlights the necessity of "collaboration entrepreneurs" who initiate collaboration to solve immediate shared problems of resource scarcity and dependency facing small councils. Plus, the importance of "collaborative managers" who maintain the sustainability of the collaboration and facilitate further integration across councils. Another point of interest is that building a coalition for change and developing a collaborative culture is essential for enduring collaboration. Additionally, Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Subcommittee pays another role as being the horizontal coordination unit. This is correspondent with INLOGOV (2015) that collaboration does not accidentally occur. In fact, collaboration is geared by boundary spanners or

collaborative entrepreneurs.

The existence of ten processes for inter-local development plan coordinating still remain. However, the subcommittee is added up to screen and integrate the proposed projects. Elbert (2008) advise that stakeholders have to hold the accountability of collaboration. Since each local organization is independent, the collaboration outcome has to be much qualified than the individual. Moreover, the subcommittee has to coordinate the information and create interaction among the relevant organization.

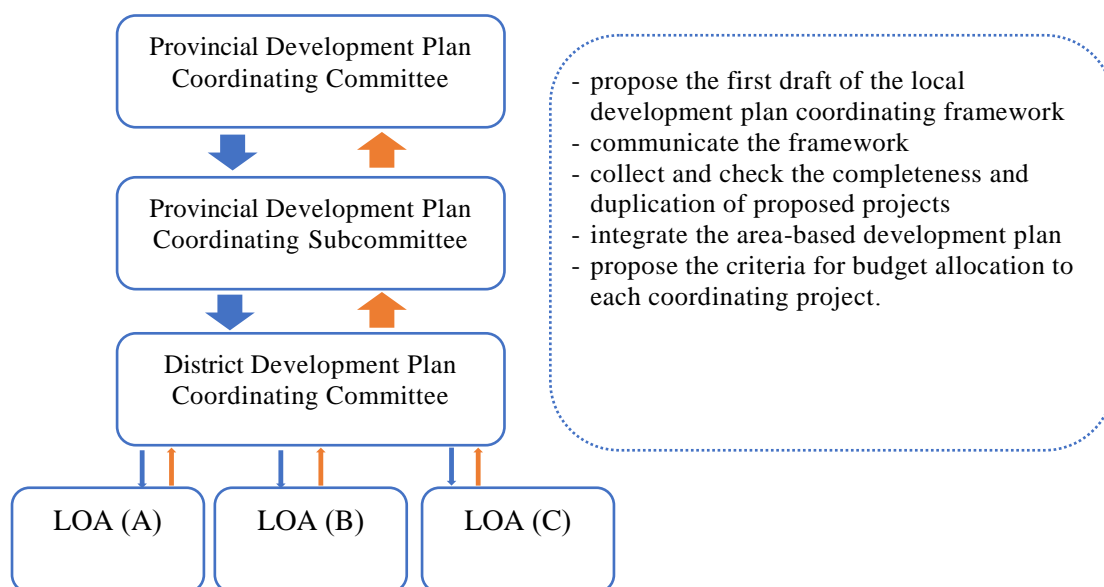


Figure 2: Local Development Plan Coordinating Model in Nonthaburi Province

Presently, the local development plan coordinating has the timeframe only from April to October which considered as ineffectiveness. There are two reasons for extending the time period. First, the local organization will have more time to communicate and consult. Second, the timeframe should adjust to be aligned with the period of the provincial development plan. Varunyoowattana (2011) states that the planning framework is the powerful instrument to link government organization together at all level. In doing so, the local development plan should systemize to relate to the provincial development plan which is the vertical integration. Despite the fact that the development plan at all levels do not necessary to be the same pattern, they should be unity with the same direction. Similarly, the area-based administration that avoid the duplicate activities. The strong recommendation is to apply the horizontal integration between local administrative and provincial government.

Ruengrong (2009) reveals that the clear criteria are supported the horizontal coordination because it helps the organization to mutually understand goal and procedures. In this regard, the proposed local development plan coordination model has three criteria which are 1). comply the law and within the capacity 2). relevant to four provincial strategies (environmental development, quality of life, education, and water management) and, 3). possible with the given budget (50 million in grants to each district).

Conclusion and Recommendation

There are only two reasons for applying the local development plan coordination. The first reason is to eliminate the duplicate activities. The second reason is to bring about the efficiency of the government budget spending. To achieve the objectives, there are four attributions for coordinating the local organization's project. Also, there are six processes of

local development plan coordination which driven by the two formal institutions. Even though, the current output is at satisfactory level, the objectives have not been reaching.

The problems and obstacles are grounded by four reasons which are 1) formal communication 2) different perception and understanding among stakeholders 3) time constraints and 4) goal setting and mutual learning condition.

Accordingly, the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Subcommittee has been added up into the model which aims to lessen the impact of formal processes. Moreover, the duty of subcommittee is comprised by the five major roles. Most of them are related to smoothen the coordinating plan which are vertical coordination, collecting, checking and screening the projects. There are ten processes for local development plan coordination. Additionally, the timeframe has been extended owing to the couple reasons. First, the local organization will have more time for vertical communicating and consulting. Second, the proposed timeframe would be likely to aligned with the period of the provincial development plan.

The recommendation from the research is to sustain the model effectively which the following applications. First, the stakeholder workshop is a strong suggestion for informing them the latest local development plan coordination framework and guideline. Second, the Provincial Development Plan Coordinating Subcommittee, which is the horizontal coordinating organization, should hold the meeting regularly. Third, the Nonthaburi provincial administrative organization should allocate the sufficiency resource and budget for the coordinating activities. Fourth, Nonthaburi provincial administrative organization should develop the capacity of the planning department to become the think-tank for the local administrative organization in Nonthaburi.

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