Background Information

About the Study

The Dyson Foundation is a private foundation in the Mid-Hudson Valley of New York State. In addition to its core work of grantmaking, the foundation also initiates major projects that benefit the region as a whole, and sponsors critical research that examines issues that impact the Hudson Valley.

In recognition of the growing number of nonprofits with sometimes overlapping programs and missions, the Dyson Foundation began a regional grants initiative in 2004 to help nonprofits explore the risks and benefits of strategic restructuring; mergers, consolidations and other shared business models. Since then, the foundation has provided 48 grants of almost $2.5 million to nonprofits to examine the feasibility of strategic restructuring opportunities. The findings of those studies illustrate the great complexity of debate surrounding strategic restructuring. The foundation has learned that, while not all mergers are successful and not all organizations are suited for restructuring, some efforts have definitely generated clear economic savings and greater organizational efficiencies.

In recent years there has also been considerable discussion about the number of local governmental units in New York State. There have been efforts to merge or coordinate local government both in the Hudson Valley and beyond. New York State has explored ways to coordinate and even merge its array of separate local government agencies, authorities, and districts. Most recently, Governor Andrew Cuomo is also looking to streamline government. Governor Cuomo’s Spending And Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission plans to release a study on May 1, 2011 giving its recommendations on state-level government consolidation.

The Dyson Foundation and Marist College decided to partner on a first ever statewide survey on local government consolidation, Striking a Balance: New Yorkers Speak Out on Rightsizing Local Government. This groundbreaking examination drills deeply into New Yorkers’ opinions on local government consolidation. Its interviews with more than 4,500 New Yorkers offer the first comprehensive study of residents’ views on the subject. It provides both a statewide perspective and data broken out by nine distinct regions including the Capital Region, the Adirondacks, Western New York, the Finger Lakes, Central New York, the Mid-Hudson Valley, the Lower Hudson Valley, New York City, and Long Island. In addition to a statewide view, it gives a regional perspective that will help provide a more localized understanding of residents’ opinions on the issue.

We believe this is an extremely important time to release these results of the Marist Poll’s survey of more than 4,500 New Yorkers. We anticipate this survey will serve government and public policy makers in their deliberations on this important and somewhat volatile subject. It is our hope to provide a balanced and comprehensive public perspective to inform and aid in the coming debates.
About the Dyson Foundation

The Dyson Foundation is a private, family-directed grantmaking foundation established in 1957 and headquartered in Dutchess County, New York. The Foundation’s activities include a significant grants program in the Mid-Hudson Valley that seeks to improve the quality of life in the region, create opportunities and support for economically disadvantaged individuals and families, and strengthen the nonprofit sector. The Dyson Foundation’s assets presently stand at approximately $270 million and in the year 2010 it awarded grants in excess of $17.5 million.

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About the Marist Poll

Founded in 1978, the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion (MIPO) is a survey research center at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. The Marist Poll has conducted independent research on public priorities, elections, and a wide variety of social issues. Through the regular public release of surveys, MIPO has built a legacy of independence, reliability, and accuracy. Its results are featured in print and electronic media throughout the world.

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