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Adds Service Cooperatives to the definition of governmental unit for the purposes of joint powers. Service Cooperatives are made up of “governmental units” as defined in the joint powers act.

Service Cooperatives (formerly called Educational Cooperative Service Units or ECSUs) are a type of joint powers and are specifically established by statute and operate under Minnesota Statutes, sections 123A.21 and 471.59.

Voting members of a Service Cooperative are representatives of public school districts, cities, counties, and other governmental units as defined in the joint powers act. Nonvoting memberships is available to nonpublic school administrative units and other partnership agencies or organizations within the service cooperative’s area.

A service cooperative board of directors has six to 15 members, a majority of which must be current members of school boards of participating public school districts. Other board members may be representatives at large, appointed by the board members or elected as representatives by other participating agencies, such as cities, counties, or other governmental units.

There are nine regional Service Cooperatives offering cooperative programming to school districts and other units of local government. Each Service Cooperative may choose to offer an array of services depending on the needs of its member municipalities. Minnesota’s joint powers statute allows governmental units to act cooperatively to provide services, including joint purchasing and contracting. The Service Cooperative located in North Central Minnesota is named the National Joint Powers Alliance and its primary specialty area is providing cooperative purchases for its members (which include local units of government located both within Minnesota and outside of Minnesota).