



GUIDELINES and APPLICATION

Recognizing strong, vibrant **communities** governed by **township boards** that adhere to **best practices** to deliver quality programs and services, and accomplish **community-driven goals.**





The Michigan Townships Association (MTA) announces a prestigious designation program exclusively for townships—“***Township of Excellence.***”

The benchmark criteria that identify a ***Township of Excellence*** reflect a variety of perspectives on what constitutes excellence in township government, including recommendations of township officials, state administrators and other practitioners, as well as the MTA Board of Directors and staff. Merely complying with state statutes does not qualify a township for this designation.

The goals of the ***Township of Excellence*** program are to:

- 1 Encourage townships to achieve objective benchmarks of excellence.
- 2 Recognize and reward truly exemplary township governments, specifically where excellence is practiced in a broad array of township functions and operations.
- 3 Enable township residents to appreciate that they live in a township recognized for a high level of excellence as identified by objective benchmarks.
- 4 Continue MTA’s tradition of encouraging townships to strive for higher levels of quality constituent services.
- 5 Create an identity and sense of community pride for residents.

To qualify as a ***Township of Excellence***, an applicant township must demonstrate superior processes and outcomes in governance, along with adherence to best practices involving its statutory duties of financial stewardship, assessing, tax collection and election administration. If the township provides the following services—emergency services, land use management and economic development, transportation, utilities, and cemeteries—applicants must also demonstrate excellence in those areas.

ELIGIBILITY

A township board member, superintendent or manager may apply on behalf of an MTA member township. Township officials may apply for the designation after the current township board has served together for a minimum of six months. The application must be accompanied by a resolution adopted by a majority of the township board attesting that, to the best of its knowledge, all statements made in connection with the application are truthful and the township is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. (See attached sample resolution.)

A township may apply for the full designation or for a certificate of achievement for one or more individual sections. If a township submits an application for a full designation, but does not meet the criteria for all of them, the township has the option to receive the certificate of achievement for the section(s) it has completed. A township may work toward a full designation within a township term by applying for one or more sections at a time.

Townships must reapply for each term in which they wish to receive an award. If documentation from a previous application is still current, that documentation does not need to be resubmitted.



DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicant townships must submit copies of board policies, plans and other documents demonstrating that the board has achieved specific benchmarks. (See attached checklist.) MTA will be the sole judge of whether submitted materials adequately document compliance with all benchmarks. In cases where there may be some question as to whether the township has adequately complied with a particular benchmark, MTA may submit the applicant's documents to an outside panel for an independent recommendation. *De minimus*, or token, efforts at policies or plans will not be regarded as sufficient compliance with benchmark standards.

MTA reserves the right to ask for further documentation at any time prior to or after making a determination as to whether the applicant township qualifies as a **Township of Excellence**. In addition, MTA may check the Association's database to verify attendance at MTA programs. All entries become the property of MTA and will not be returned.

SELECTION PROCESS

A committee of MTA executive staff will evaluate whether the application meets all criteria for the designation. If staff determine that the application does not meet the requirements, a memo will be submitted to the township outlining the staff findings. The applicant may appeal. Either committee may seek the advice and assistance of outside parties in determining whether a submitted policy, plan or other documentation demonstrates compliance, or is an unacceptable, *de minimus* effort.



NOTIFICATION AND PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

MTA will review the application and notify the township of its determination within 60 days from the time the complete application is received at the MTA office. For each township designated a **Township of Excellence**, MTA will release a statement to the township's local media, and an article highlighting the township's achievement will be published in the *Township Focus* magazine. The township will also be recognized at the next upcoming MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo.

LENGTH OF DESIGNATION

Designation as a **Township of Excellence** continues until the end of the four-year township board term. A township may reapply for the designation in each new term, with no limit to the number of terms that a township may be recognized as a **Township of Excellence**.

DISCLOSABLE UPON REQUEST

In the interest of transparency and to ensure accuracy, applications and any supporting documents will be disclosed to any interested party upon request.



PART 1: MTA TOWNSHIP OF EXCELLENCE APPLICATION

ALL applicants for the full designation must complete the following sections: **Governance, Financial Stewardship, Assessment Administration, Tax Collection and Election Administration**. If the township provides the following services—**Emergency Services, Land Use Management and Economic Development, Transportation, Utilities and Cemeteries**—complete those sections as well.

Check each box as indicated to confirm compliance. When documentation is required, follow instructions for attaching and labeling the required documents. Where documentation is NOT required, the specified official must sign where indicated.

GOVERNANCE

ACCESSIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION

- ☐ The township publishes a newsletter (*print or electronic*) at least twice a year.

✓ **Attach the most recent township newsletter; label Exhibit G-1.**

- ☐ The township maintains a website that is updated at least quarterly.

✓ **Provide the website address:**

www. _____

- ☐ The township posts office hours for officials working at a township facility or home office either at the township hall or on the township Website, **OR** publishes them in the township newsletter or a newspaper of general circulation.

✓ **Attach the most recent posted or published officials' hours; label Exhibit G-2.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A majority of the township board have each participated in **ONE** TGA Foundations class and in **ONE** or more of the following MTA educational programs every year since the current township term began (*check all that apply*):
 - ☐ Annual Educational Conference & Expo
 - ☐ MTA On the Road Regional Meeting
 - ☐ Professional Development Retreat
 - ☐ Township Governance Academy (TGA) class (at any level)
 - ☐ Other MTA workshop, webcast or training program [*excluding legislative and National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) events, which are addressed under ADVOCACY*]

✓ **Records will be verified by the MTA Knowledge Center.**

STRATEGIC PLAN

- ☐ The township board has adopted a multi-year strategic plan that identifies township strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and identifies multi-year goals, objectives and strategies to achieve a long-range vision. (*NOTE: Information on strategic planning is available at www.michigantownships.org.*)
- ☐ The township board reviews and updates the strategic plan at least annually.

✓ **Attach the township strategic plan; label Exhibit G-3.**

ESSENTIAL BOARD POLICIES

- The township board has adopted written policies regarding **ALL** of the following:
 - ☐ Ethics
 - ☐ General administration
 - ☐ Public meeting rules, including public comment and board decorum
 - ☐ Public records inspection
 - ☐ Freedom of Information Act requests
 - ☐ Official, employee and volunteer conduct

✓ **Attach each policy; label Exhibit G-4a through f (in order as listed above).**

POLICYMAKING

- ☐ At least three days prior to each board meeting, all township board members receive a meeting packet, including a proposed agenda and background information on agenda items.

✓ **Attach policy regarding meeting packets; label Exhibit G-5.**

- ☐ The township board has adopted written policies that delineate department head authority and clarify which matters require township board approval.

✓ **Attach each policy; label Exhibit G-6.**

- ☐ The township board routinely monitors and evaluates township functions and addresses deficiencies in those functions through policies and the appropriations process.

✓ **Attach policy regarding this practice; label Exhibit G-7.**

ADVOCACY

- Check **AT LEAST ONE** of the following:
 - ☐ One or more of the township board members communicates with the township's state representative or state senator at least twice a year on issues affecting the township, **AND** one or more of the township board members communicates with the township's U.S. representative or U.S. senator at least once a year on issues affecting the township.
 - ☐ One or more of the township board members attended an MTA Legislative Advocacy Day in the last two years.

✓ **Attach a list of advocacy activities; label Exhibit G-8.**

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

- ☐ The township board creates advisory citizen task forces to provide research on issues, define alternatives and make recommendations to the board. *(Exclude statutorily required commissions and boards such as a planning commission, board of review, zoning board of appeals, etc.)*

✓ **Attach a list of advisory citizen task forces; label Exhibit G-9.**

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- ☐ A majority of the township board members are personally involved in community organizations.

✓ **Attach a list of township board members and the community organizations in which they personally participate; label Exhibit G-10.**

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

- Check **AT LEAST ONE** of the following:
 - ☐ The township board participates in at least one organization focusing on intergovernmental or regional collaboration.
 - ☐ The township board participates in at least one intergovernmental agreement or contract.

✓ **Attach a list of township board members and the organization(s) in which they participate OR a copy of an intergovernmental agreement or contract; label Exhibit G-11.**

BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ☐ The township board strategically sets and implements goals to improve or protect the community's quality of life.

✓ **Attach a description of goals that have been accomplished in the last two years; label Exhibit G-12.** *(Examples include a new project, program or service, or improvements to an existing township program or service, to enhance the community's strength, correct a community weakness, or effectively address one or more community opportunities or threats.)*

x

Signature of township supervisor attesting to compliance with all criteria in the GOVERNANCE section.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

ACCESSIBILITY

- ☐ The township's financial reporting process is accessible to the public.

✓ **Attach documentation identifying how financial reports, records, audits, etc., are made available to the public; label Exhibit FS-1.**

ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING

- ☐ The township provides education and training for township officials and other personnel involved in financial administration.

✓ **Attach policies, or describe current practices; label Exhibit FS-2.**

- ☐ In the last four years, a majority of the township personnel involved in financial administration have attended **AT LEAST TWO** training seminars or webcasts offered by MTA or other organizations on accounting procedures, investments, budgeting or fraud prevention.

ESSENTIAL POLICIES

- The township board has adopted and regularly updates a depository and investment policy resolution that addresses **ALL** of the following:
 - ☐ Allowed financial institutions
 - ☐ Allowed investment instruments
 - ☐ How the township minimizes various forms of risk
 - ☐ Return on investments
 - ☐ Targeted liquidity *(availability of cash)*

✓ **Attach depository and investment policy resolution; label Exhibit FS-3.**

- ☐ The township board and staff have adopted administrative policies regarding financial internal controls and segregation of duties.

✓ **Attach policies; label Exhibit FS-4.**

- ☐ The township board has adopted policies regarding administrative review, and approval of all current financial claims against the township.

✓ **Attach policies; label Exhibit FS-5.**

FINANCIAL PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

- ☐ The township's financial reporting system provides useful information to board members to fulfill their fiduciary duties.

✓ **Attach at least two recent examples of periodic financial reports provided to the board; label Exhibit FS-6.**

- ☐ The township budget process is aligned with the township's multi-year strategic planning process.

✓ **Attach the most recent budget, including the narrative or public summary of budget plan, documenting alignment with the strategic planning process; label Exhibit FS-7.**

- ☐ The township utilizes benchmarks, cost/benefit analysis or other data in considering appropriations, including a periodic evaluation of the township's compensation and benefits system, to assure financial stewardship, efficiency and effectiveness of appropriations.

✓ **Attach documentation; label Exhibit FS-8.**

- ☐ The township board sets and implements policy regarding target general fund unrestricted net fund assets, and reserves are consistent with the township's strategic plan.

✓ **Attach policy regarding target general fund unrestricted net fund assets, and documentation that reserves are consistent with the strategic plan; label Exhibit FS-9.**

- ☐ The township board uses a capital improvement plan for public improvements and capital asset purchases, depreciation and replacement.

✓ **Attach the plan (or other document) that describes planning process; label Exhibit FS-10.**

- ☐ The township reduces costs by contracting, cooperating and/or collaborating with another entity or organization to provide a township program or service.

✓ **Attach documentation; label Exhibit FS-11.**

- ☐ The township reduces costs by using technology.

✓ **Attach documentation identifying at least one township program or service where the township has or will reduce costs by using technology; label Exhibit FS-12.**

- ☐ The township board reviews the township's audit and has taken steps to address concerns and recommendations included in the management letter.

✓ **Attach documentation identifying steps taken to address any concerns or recommendations in the management letter; label Exhibit FS-13.**

- ☐ The township board reviews the Auditing Procedures Report form filed with the township's audit and has taken steps to address conditions identified in the report.

✓ **Attach the township's most recent Michigan Department of Treasury Form 496 Auditing Procedures Report (L-3147); label Exhibit FS-14. If any "No" boxes are checked, identify steps taken to address the condition(s).**

x _____
Signature of township clerk attesting to compliance with all criteria in the FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP section.

x _____
Signature of township treasurer attesting to compliance with all criteria in the FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP section.

ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

ACCESSIBILITY

- ☐ The township provides the public with access to assessing information from a public computer or kiosk within the township hall **OR** via the Internet (*either through the township's website or other Internet service*).

✓ **Provide the website address:**

www. _____

ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING

- ☐ All board of review members attend MTA Board of Review Training, or an equivalent program conducted by the county equalization director, every two years.
- The township supervisor has attended **AT LEAST TWO** of the following every year (*check all that apply*):
 - ☐ MTA Board of Review Training
 - ☐ MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo
 - ☐ MTA Supervisors Professional Development Retreat
 - ☐ MTA Workshops or webcasts (*related to assessment*)
 - ☐ Michigan Assessors Association (MAA) Conference
 - ☐ MAA seminar

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

- ☐ The township provides information to the public on poverty exemptions, including the township’s poverty income guidelines and asset test.
- ☐ The township provides information to the public on the tax exemption for veterans’ specially adapted housing.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

- ☐ Assessing personnel conduct site visits and update assessment information for all properties at least once every five years.
- ☐ The assessor has a quality assurance program in place to identify all new buildings and additions.
- ☐ Regardless of whether a Michigan Department of Treasury Audit of Minimum Assessing Requirements (AMAR) or 14-Point Review has been conducted, the assessor is in compliance and has notified the township board of compliance with the AMAR requirements as of the date the **Township of Excellence** application is submitted.
- ☐ The township board periodically reviews assessing operations, and the assessor annually reports to the township board on assessing issues.

x

Signature of township supervisor attesting to compliance with all criteria in the ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION section.

TAX COLLECTION

ACCESSIBILITY

- ☐ The contact information and hours the treasurer or deputy treasurer are available for tax collection purposes are either posted at the township hall or on the township website, **OR** published in the township newsletter or newspaper of general circulation.
- ☐ The township uses a system to accept tax payments after hours, such as a drop-off box, **OR** has arranged for payments to be made at a local bank or other financial institution.
- ☐ The township provides the public with access to property tax information from a public computer or kiosk within the township hall **OR** via the Internet (either through the township’s Website or other Internet service).

✓ Provide the website address:

www._____

ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING

- The township treasurer has attended **AT LEAST TWO** of the following every year (check all that apply):
 - ☐ MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo
 - ☐ MTA Treasurers Professional Development Retreat
 - ☐ MTA Workshops or webcasts (related to treasurers’ duties)
 - ☐ Michigan Municipal Treasurers Association (MMTA) Conference
 - ☐ MMTA seminar

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

- ☐ The township provides contact information on agencies that provide human services assistance to residents.
- ✓ Attach the human services agency contact information; label Exhibit TC-1.
- ☐ The township offers information on the availability of summer tax deferments.
 - ☐ The township offers information on the Homestead Property Tax Credit income tax.

TAX PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

- ☐ The township collects the State Education Tax (SET) and the county operating millage and, if applicable, also collects school summer property taxes.
- ✓ If the township collects school summer property taxes, attach one agreement to collect; label Exhibit TC-2.

x

Signature of township treasurer attesting to compliance with all criteria in the TAX COLLECTION section.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

ACCESSIBILITY

- **ALL** of the following informational items, or links to the information on other websites, are posted on the township’s website:
 - ☐ Voter guide
 - ☐ Election results
 - ☐ Precinct map
 - ☐ Instructions for registering to vote
 - ☐ Downloadable absentee voter application
 - ☐ Office hours and contact information

✓ Provide the website address:

www._____

ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING

- ☐ The township clerk has completed the State of Michigan Election Officials Accreditation Program and is current with the specific continuing education requirements.
- The township clerk has attended **AT LEAST TWO** of the following every year (*check all that apply*):
 - ☐ MTA Annual Educational Conference & Expo
 - ☐ MTA Clerks Professional Development Retreat
 - ☐ MTA Workshops or webcasts (*related to clerks' duties*)
 - ☐ Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks (MAMC) Conference
 - ☐ MAMC election seminar

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

- ☐ The clerk maintains a permanent absentee voter mailing list of senior citizens and other qualified voters who ask to be added to the list.
- ☐ The clerk engages in election outreach by conducting mock elections, making election equipment available for voter practice prior to elections, presenting programs in local schools, using qualified high school students as election inspectors, and/or other methods.

ELECTION PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

- ☐ The clerk regularly updates the Qualified Voter File (QVF). Inactive voter names are purged consistent with voter laws.
- ☐ The township provides computer equipment and Internet services at the township hall or clerk's office to facilitate using the QVF, Elections e-Learning Center and other online election administration resources.

✓ **Attach documentation identifying whether the township uses QVF at the township hall or clerk's home office or at the County Clerk's office; label Exhibit EA-1.**

- ☐ The township clerk administers all elections within the township, including school elections.
- ☐ The township has developed an election emergency operations plan for election facilities, equipment, personnel and other resources necessary for the township's polling places.

✓ **Attach plan; label Exhibit EA-2.**

x _____
Signature of township clerk attesting to compliance with all criteria in the ELECTION ADMINISTRATION section.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

- ☐ The township provides fire protection services through its own fire department **OR** a department operated jointly by written agreement with another unit **OR** under contract with a separate unit's fire department **OR** as a member of a fire authority (*NOT solely by a mutual aid agreement*).

✓ **If the township provides fire protection through an agreement, contract or as a member of a fire authority, attach documentation; label Exhibit ES-1.**

- ☐ The fire department achieves response times consistent with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1710 or 1720, as applicable.
- ☐ The fire department is either in compliance with all NFPA standards, or the township board has been informed in writing of all standards with which the fire department is not in compliance.
- ☐ As directed by the township board, the fire department provides or contracts for specialized services, such as confined space rescue, hazardous material incident response, water rescue, extrication, etc., that are appropriate to the township's specific circumstances.
- ☐ The fire department operates according to written policies or standard operating guidelines.

✓ **Attach the department's policies or standard operating guidelines; label Exhibit ES-2. If it is the township's own fire department, attach any additional board-adopted policies regarding the fire department; label Exhibit ES-2.**

- Check the box that describes your township:

- ☐ If the township is protected by a municipal **water system** and served by a **career** department, at least one area of the township has received an ISO rating of 4 or better.
- ☐ If the township is protected by a municipal **water system** and served by an **on-call** department, at least one area of the township has received an ISO rating of 5 or better.
- ☐ If the township is **NOT** protected by a municipal water system, at least one area of the township has received an ISO rating of 7 or better.

✓ **Attach the township ISO rating notification; label Exhibit ES-3.**

- ☐ The township has one or more written mutual aid agreements to supplement current fire services.

✓ **Attach one mutual aid agreement; label Exhibit ES-4.**

- ☐ All **on-call** fire fighters have successfully completed the Fire Fighter I test within two years of joining the department, **OR** all **career** fire fighters have successfully completed the Fire Fighter II test.

- ☐ The fire chief has completed a command officer program recognized by the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council.
- ☐ The fire department annually conducts community education programs on fire safety, performs fire safety inspections on commercial and industrial exposures present in the township, and reviews site plans of proposed commercial and industrial development.

x
Signature of the fire chief of department having jurisdiction attesting to compliance with all criteria in the FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES section.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Check the box that describes your township:
 - ☐ If the township does **NOT** provide law enforcement through its own police department or under contract with another governmental entity, the township board is in regular communication with entities that have responsibility for law enforcement within the township, such as the Michigan State Police (*MSP*), sheriff's department, tribal police, etc. The board is aware of typical law enforcement emergency response times, and the township's crime and accident statistics.
 - ☐ The township **DOES** provide law enforcement through its own police department **OR** under contract with another public entity **OR** as a member of an emergency services authority (*not SOLELY by county sheriff or MSP general road patrol*).

✓ **If the township provides law enforcement through an agreement, contract or as a member of an authority, attach documentation; label Exhibit ES-5.**

- ☐ The police department operates according to written policies and/or standard operating guidelines.
- ✓ **Attach the department's policies and/or guidelines; label Exhibit ES-6. If it is the township's own police department, attach any additional board-adopted policies regarding the police; label Exhibit ES-6.**
- ☐ Police department personnel are trained consistent with the requirements of a departmental plan.
- ☐ Police department personnel are deployed consistent with an analysis of community needs, including crime and emergency incident statistics.
- ☐ The police department has developed a long-term plan identifying projected resource requirements, equipment acquisition, maintenance and replacement.
- ☐ The police department conducts ongoing crime prevention activities.

- ☐ As directed by the township board, the police department provides or contracts for specialized services, such as drug enforcement, marine safety, detective bureau, special weapons and tactics, etc., that are appropriate to the township's specific circumstances.

x
Signature of police chief of department having jurisdiction attesting to compliance with all criteria in the LAW ENFORCEMENT section.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting that the township board is knowledgeable of available LAW ENFORCEMENT resources and needs.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- ☐ The township has an emergency operations plan assigning roles and responsibilities in the event of a major disaster or emergency.
- ☐ **AT LEAST TWO** township board members have completed National Incident Management System (*NIMS*) 100 and 700 training.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

- Check the box that describes your township:
 - ☐ The township does **NOT** provide emergency medical services.
 - ☐ The township **DOES** provide emergency medical services through a licensed first responder **OR** ambulance service offered through the township's fire department **OR** through a separate department **OR** by contract or franchise with a licensed public or private entity.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting to compliance with all criteria in the EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT and EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES sections.

LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING

- ☐ The township has a planning commission, has adopted a master plan, and the current plan has received a full review or has been revised within the past five years.
- ☐ The planning commission has at least 80 percent member attendance during the previous three years. (*Multiply the number of planning commission meetings in the past three years by the total number of members serving, and multiply that product by 0.8 to get the target number.*)

- ☐ The township employs or contracts with a planning and zoning professional or firm.
- ☐ The township requires all planning commissioners to attend a training program within three months of their initial appointment.
- ☐ Within the past three years, all current planning commissioners have attended at least one land use seminar offered by MTA, the Michigan Association of Planning or Michigan State University, **OR** completed at least six hours of in-service training conducted by the planning commission's staff or consultants.
- ☐ Township staff offer consultation meetings for developers and other applicants before they submit land use applications.

ZONING

- ☐ The township has **NOT** adopted a zoning ordinance, due to the absence of significant township growth, but the township has adopted a police-power blight ordinance or other ordinances to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the township.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting that these criteria describe the township.

➤ If the township has NOT adopted a zoning ordinance, skip to the next section.

- ☐ The township **HAS** adopted a zoning ordinance that is consistent with, and is updated regularly to remain consistent with, the master plan. If the ordinance includes site plan review and planned unit development (PUD) provisions, then it uses illustrations, in addition to text, to clearly explain the intent of the ordinance.
- ☐ The township consistently enforces zoning ordinance violations when voluntary compliance is not achieved.

x
Signature of planning commission chair or chief township land use administrator attesting to compliance with all criteria in the **PLANNING and ZONING** sections.

CONSTRUCTION CODE ENFORCEMENT

- ☐ The township does **NOT** enforce the state construction code.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting that the township does NOT enforce the state construction code.

➤ If the township does NOT enforce the state construction code, skip to the next section.

- If the township **DOES** enforce the state construction code, the township must comply with **ALL** of the following:
 - ☐ The township has established performance standards for its building plan and permit approval process.
 - ☐ The township has established procedures for expedited building plan and permit review, if certain criteria are met.
 - ☐ The township has established policies regarding the time between when a building inspection is requested and the inspection is performed.

x
Signature of the construction code enforcement official attesting to compliance with all criteria in the **CONSTRUCTION CODE ENFORCEMENT** section.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ☐ The township has **NOT** included economic development as a goal of the township strategic plan or developed an industrial park.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting that these criteria describe the township.

➤ If the township has NOT included economic development as a goal of the township strategic plan or developed an industrial park, skip to the next section.

- If the township **HAS** included economic development as a goal of the township strategic plan, or the township has developed an industrial park, the township complies with **ALL** of the following:
 - ☐ In its strategic plan, the township identified the barriers to economic development and has adopted strategies to overcome those barriers.
 - ☐ To assist developers, the township has created a list of vacant property that is eligible to be developed or redeveloped for commercial or industrial use.
 - ☐ The township maintains regular contact with local, county and regional economic development entities, such as a county or regional planning commission, chamber of commerce, metropolitan council, strategic alliance, etc.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting to compliance with all criteria in the **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** section.

TRANSPORTATION

- ☐ The township has made efforts to provide for recreational trails **OR** non-motorized and pedestrian traffic.
- ☐ The township has a private road standards ordinance.
- Complete the next two criteria **ONLY** if the township spends money on road projects:
- ☐ The township's capital improvement or strategic plan addresses new construction and replacement of hard-surfaced local roads.
- ☐ All road projects are performed under the terms of a written contract between the township and road commission (*or other entity*) that limits the township's financial exposure to cost overruns.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting to compliance with all criteria in the TRANSPORTATION section.

UTILITIES

- If the township does NOT provide such services, please sign below and skip to the next section.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting that the township does NOT provide these services.

- Complete the following section **IF** the township provides water or sewer service by its own department, through a contract with another unit of government, through a joint authority or by regulating privately owned community (*multi-user*) septic systems:
 - ☐ All areas of the township currently zoned or identified in the master plan for high-density residential, commercial or industrial land uses are served by water, sewer or both, **OR** the township has identified the provision of those services to all such areas in its master plan or capital improvement plan.
 - ☐ The township utilities have surplus capacity for the growth identified in the master plan, **OR** the township has included specific steps in its capital improvement plan or strategic plan to expand capacity to meet projected future needs.
 - ☐ If the township operates a wastewater treatment facility, that facility accepts and treats seepage.
 - ☐ The township has separated, or is in the process of separating, all combined sewer overflow connections.
 - ☐ The township has policies and procedures to address complaints regarding its utility services.

- ☐ The township has established utility fee structures that adequately fund bonded indebtedness, maintenance, depreciation and facility replacement.
- ☐ The township has an emergency sewer back-up plan in place.

✓ **Attach the back-up plan; label Exhibit U-1.**

x
Signature of the sewer system administrator attesting to compliance with all criteria in the UTILITIES section.

x
Signature of the water system administrator attesting to compliance with all criteria in the UTILITIES section.

CEMETERIES

- If the township does NOT operate a cemetery, sign below and skip to the next page to complete the application.

x
Signature of township supervisor attesting that the township does NOT operate a cemetery.

- Complete the following section **IF** the township operates a cemetery:
 - ☐ The township has a cemetery ordinance.
 - ☐ The township cemetery ordinance provides that burial rights are sold by permit instead of deed.
 - ☐ The township cemetery ordinance provides for forfeiture of unused lots.
 - ☐ Original (*paper*) cemetery records are protected from fire, water damage, pests and theft. Back-up copies of cemetery records are stored at an off-site location on microfilm or other stable format as recommended by the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget Records Management Services (www.michigan.gov/dtmb).
 - ☐ Upon request, the township provides public access to cemetery records for up to four hours a day during regular business hours.

x
Signature of township cemetery administrator attesting to compliance with all criteria in the CEMETERIES section.

Please turn to the back of the
brochure to complete
the application.

PART 1: TOWNSHIP OF EXCELLENCE APPLICATION

Please type or print clearly.



Before mailing your completed application, use the **DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST** (insert) to make sure you have attached and clearly labeled all necessary supporting documents.

Township _____

County _____

Submitter _____

Phone (_____) _____ - _____ Ext. _____

Township Supervisor _____

Phone (_____) _____ - _____ Ext. _____

Township Address _____

City _____, MI Zip Code _____

Email _____

Application For:

☐ **Township of Excellence**
Full Designation

☐ **Certificate of Achievement**

A township may apply for the full designation or for a certificate of achievement for one or more individual sections. If a township submits an application for a full designation, but does not meet the criteria for all of them, the township has the option to receive the certificate of achievement for the section(s) it has completed. A township may work toward a full designation within a township term by applying for one or more sections at a time.

Townships must reapply for each term in which they wish to receive an award. If documentation from a previous application is still current, that documentation does not need to be resubmitted.

List Sections:



Mail the complete application (PART 1) and your township's Resolution to Submit Application (PART 2) to:

MTA Township of Excellence, P.O. Box 80078, Lansing, MI 48908-0078.



Thank you for submitting your application to become a **Township of Excellence**. MTA will notify you within 60 days of receiving the complete application if your township qualifies to receive the designation or a *Certificate of Achievement*.

The Michigan Townships

Association advances local

democracy by fostering

township leadership and public

policy essential for a strong and

vibrant Michigan.



P.O. Box 80078
Lansing, MI 48908-0078
Phone (517) 321-6467
Fax (517) 321-8908
www.michigantownships.org

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MTA TOWNSHIP OF EXCELLENCE CHECKLIST

ALL applications for full designation MUST include the following materials and documents. Label each document as indicated and organize them in the order listed below. You may wish to use a binder with section dividers to organize your documents. This checklist does not need to be turned in; it is provided to assist you in preparing your application.

GOVERNANCE

- ☐ **G-1** The most recent township newsletter.
- ☐ **G-2** The most recent posted or published officials' hours.
- ☐ **G-3** The township strategic plan.
- ☒ **G-4** Township board policies regarding all of the following, **in the order listed below**:
 - ☐ **G-4a** Ethics
 - ☐ **G-4b** General administration
 - ☐ **G-4c** Public meeting rules, including public comment and board decorum
 - ☐ **G-4d** Public records inspection
 - ☐ **G-4e** Freedom of Information Act requests
 - ☐ **G-4f** Official, employee and volunteer conduct
- ☐ **G-5** Township board policy regarding meeting packets.
- ☐ **G-6** Township board policies that delineate department head authority and clarify which matters require township board approval.
- ☐ **G-7** Township board policy specifying how the township board routinely monitors and evaluates township functions and addresses deficiencies in those functions through policies and the appropriations process.
- ☐ **G-8** A list of township board member advocacy activities.
- ☐ **G-9** A list of advisory citizen task forces established by the township board.
- ☐ **G-10** A list of township board members and the community organizations in which they personally participate.
- ☐ **G-11** A list of township board members and intergovernmental or regional organization(s) in which they participate **OR** a copy of one intergovernmental agreement or contract.
- ☐ **G-12** A description of goals that the township board has accomplished in the last two years, demonstrating that the township has improved or protected the community's quality of life. *(Examples include a new project, program or service, or improvements to an existing township program or service, to enhance the community's strength, correct a community weakness, or effectively address one or more community opportunities or threats.)*

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

- ☐ **FS-1** Documentation identifying how financial reports, records, audits, etc., are made available to the public.
- ☐ **FS-2** Policies, or descriptions of current practices, that identifies what financial training or professional development opportunities the township provides for township personnel.
- ☐ **FS-3** The township board depository and investment policy resolution.
- ☐ **FS-4** Administrative policies regarding financial internal controls and segregation of duties.
- ☐ **FS-5** Township board policies regarding board and administrative review and approval of all current financial claims against the township.
- ☐ **FS-6** Two recent examples of periodic financial reports provided to the board.
- ☐ **FS-7** The most recent budget, including the budget narrative or public summary of budget plan.
- ☐ **FS-8** Documentation that the township utilizes benchmarks, cost/benefit analysis or other data in considering appropriations, including a periodic evaluation of the township's compensation system, to assure financial stewardship, efficiency and effectiveness of appropriations.
- ☐ **FS-9** Township board policy regarding target general fund unrestricted net fund assets, and documentation that reserves are consistent with the township's strategic plan.
- ☐ **FS-10** The township capital improvement plan or other document that describes planning for public improvements and capital asset purchases, depreciation and replacement.
- ☐ **FS-11** Documentation identifying how the township has reduced costs for one township program or service by contracting, cooperating or collaborating with another entity or organization.
- ☐ **FS-12** Documentation identifying one township program or service where the township has or will reduce costs by using technology.



- ☐ **FS-13** The township's most recent audit report and management letter. Identify steps taken to address any concerns or recommendations in the management letter.
- ☐ **FS-14** The township's most recent Michigan Department of Treasury Form 496 Auditing Procedures Report (L-3147). If any "No" box is checked, identify steps taken to address the condition(s).

TAX COLLECTION

- ☐ **TC-1** The contact information the township provides on agencies that offer human services assistance to residents.
- ☐ **TC-2** If the township collects school summer property taxes, attach a copy of one agreement.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

- ☐ **EA-1** Documentation identifying whether the township accesses QVF directly or through the County Clerk.
- ☐ **EA-2** A copy of the township election emergency operations plan.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

- ☐ **ES-1** If the township provides fire protection through an agreement, contract or as a member of a fire authority, attach a copy of the documentation.
- ☐ **ES-2** A copy of the fire department's policies or standard operating guidelines. If it is the township's own fire department, also attach a copy of any additional board-adopted policies regarding the fire department.
- ☐ **ES-3** A copy of the township ISO rating notification.
- ☐ **ES-4** A copy of one mutual aid agreement to supplement current fire protection services.
- ☐ **ES-5** If the township provides law enforcement through an agreement, contract or as a member of an authority, attach a copy of the documentation.
- ☐ **ES-6** A copy of the police department's policies or standard operating guidelines. If it is the township's own police department, also attach a copy of any additional board-adopted policies regarding the police department.

UTILITIES

- ☐ **U-1** A copy of the township emergency sewer back-up plan.

No documentation required for
the following sections:

ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATION

LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION

CEMETERIES



Resolution to Submit Application
for Michigan Townships Association
Township of Excellence Designation/*Certificate of Achievement*

WHEREAS, the _____ Township board strives to adhere to best practices to deliver quality programs and services, and to accomplish community-driven goals; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Townships Association *Township of Excellence* designation program recognizes townships where excellence is practiced in a broad array of township functions and operations; and

WHEREAS, as part of the application process, _____ Township submits the accompanying township documents and policies for the designation committee to review; and

WHEREAS, the township board attests that, to the best of its knowledge, all statements made in connection with the application are truthful; and

WHEREAS, the township board attests that, to the best of its knowledge, the township is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the _____ Township board submits this application for the Michigan Townships Association *Township of Excellence* (insert "Designation" or "Certificate of Achievement") _____.

Motion made by: _____.

Seconded by: _____.

[The resolution must be adopted by a majority of the township board (three members of a 5-member board or four members of a 7-member board).]

Upon roll call vote, the following members voted:

Yes: _____

No: _____

The Supervisor declared the resolution adopted.

Signature of Clerk

Date

