

State FY 2024 budget signed this week

This week, the governor provided the final approval on the budget bill approved in June for the state's Fiscal Year 2024 budget, an additional \$6 billion in spending for the current fiscal year and approval of the Natural Resources Trust Fund projects. Budget highlights that impact townships include:

- \$64 million over current year funding for constitutional revenue sharing payments
- \$14 million increase in the base for Cities, Villages and Township (CVT) revenue sharing (4% in the base plus 1% tied to a requirement that the local unit obligate all its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds by the end of 2023)
- \$6 million (2%) one-time appropriation for CVTs for public safety initiatives such as public safety employee recruitment, retention, training, equipment and infrastructure improvements
- \$1.6 billion through the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to expand high-speed internet access to Michiganders in unserved and underserved areas
- \$80 million for local bridge bundling for the repair and replacement of local bridges
- \$30 million (one-time funding) for renewable ready community grants to assist local governments with the establishment of wind, solar and energy storage facilities
- \$233 million (one-time funding) for water infrastructure projects, including lead line replacements and wastewater infrastructure improvements
- \$280 million for local water infrastructure projects
- \$46 million for the implementation of Proposals 1 and 2, with up to \$30 million for incentive grants to counties to coordinate implementation of early voting by local governments and incentivize multijurisdictional coordination and \$11.5 million (one-time funding) for implementation of Proposals 1 and 2 to include software updates and drop boxes
- \$15 million for fire gear equipment grants not to exceed \$3,500 per full-time member of the fire department
- \$18 million for in-service training for licensed law enforcement officers
- \$1.8 million for firearm safety and response—\$500,000 (one-time) grant program for local law enforcement agencies to distribute firearm safety equipment and \$1.3 million for active shooter response training
- \$10 million for missing middle housing to increase supply of housing stock, with 30% of grants to go to rural community projects
- \$5 million for local units to access grants (up to \$50,000) for zoning updates to increase housing and address affordability issues
- \$50 million in recurring funding for the Revitalization and Placemaking grant program for rehabilitation of vacant, underused and blighted structures
- \$50 million in recurring funding for the Housing and Community Development Fund to expand access to affordable housing
- \$23.3 million for 15 land acquisition projects and 30 land development projects from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

Watch MTA updates for additional information on grants included in the budget when application information becomes available.

Qualified townships must act by Sept. 6 to receive opioid settlement funds

[Eligible local units of government](#)—including 102 townships—must sign up to participate in the Walgreens [National Opioids Settlement](#) by **Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023** (the Wednesday after Labor Day) to receive direct payments from the \$338 million settlement to Michigan over 18 years. The settlement, reached earlier in June, allows 278 local units of government to participate and puts opioid remediation dollars directly into affected communities across Michigan to combat the opioid epidemic. Eligible subdivisions that have not completed participation forms can [email the Michigan Department of Attorney General](#) for additional instructions **before the Sept. 6 deadline** to participate and receive direct payments.

Election Day reminders from BOE

Support desk. The state Bureau of Elections (BOE) support desk will be operational beginning Saturday, Aug. 5, through Election Day. Weekend hours are from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. and Election Day from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. For Qualified Voter File (QVF) technical questions, call (800) 310-5697; for administration questions, call (517) 335-3237.

Weekend hours. Jurisdictions with an election next week must be available at the clerk's office for at least eight hours over the Saturday/Sunday weekend. This can be done in one day or combined over both days, and is primarily so that voters may register to vote and receive absent voter (AV) ballots.

In case of emergency. Clerks cannot shorten or extend polling hours unless directed to do so by the proper authority. If an emergency occurs that could potentially disrupt the voting process, take direction from local law enforcement and call the BOE as soon as possible. If it is necessary to evacuate a polling place, instruct the precinct captain to take possession of the pollbook before leaving. If power is lost, voting can continue. Tabulators and some voter assist terminals (VATs) will run for a significant amount of time if properly charged. Be sure to use auxiliary bins for ballots and paper backup pollbooks if electronic equipment is not available. In the event of a large-scale emergency, the BOE will send an "Urgent News" update.

MOVE ballots. [Public Act 25 of 2023](#), enacted in May, requires military and overseas voter (MOVE) ballots postmarked on or before Election Day and received within six days after Election Day to be considered timely received and must be counted. If the postmark is unclear, the local clerk should deliver the envelope to the county clerk who would make the determination. On the seventh day after the election, local clerks shall deliver all MOVE AV ballots to the county clerk who shall tabulate them. Instructions for processing these ballots are available in the BOE's [eLearning Center](#).

Drop box collection. Clerks should collect election materials from each drop box in their jurisdiction every day that the clerk’s office is open for business. All ballots collected from a drop box must be transported in an approved ballot container and be immediately returned to the clerk’s office, unless the person collecting the ballots is travelling to another drop box. Ballots collected from a drop box not located on the grounds of the clerk’s office must be documented in a collection log. The BOE has placed a “Drop Box Collection and Inspection Form Template” in the [eLearning Center](#). If you choose to create your own log, you must ensure it captures the required information. All clerks should also take this opportunity to confirm that their drop box locations in the QVF are up to date.

HAVA security grants. BOE is still working through Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Security Grant requests for FY 22 and FY 23. The reimbursement process has transitioned ownership and BOE is working to catch up on any outstanding requests and communications. In the interim, if your last contact was with a specific user, ensure that the last communication and any requested documentations are forwarded to MDOS-BOEReimbursement@Michigan.gov to make sure BOE has the most up-to-date information.

MDOT invites public comment on draft five-year plan

Local officials can comment on the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) [draft 2024-2028 Five-Year Transportation Program](#) and [interactive map](#) from Aug. 7 to Sept. 8. Additional information, a summary video and options to provide comment are available at [MDOT Five-Year Program webpage](#). The plan contains a list of planned projects for the MDOT Highway Program (state-maintained roads, bridges and facilities), as well as information on the public transportation, rail and aviation programs. The plan, required to be delivered to the Michigan Legislature by March 1 each year, aids in the development of the annual state budget.

New Form I-9 released, remote document verification expires

Starting **Nov. 1, 2023**, all employers, including townships, must use the [new Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification](#). Employers can use the current Form I-9 (edition date 10/21/19) through Oct. 31, 2023. All U.S. employers must complete and retain a Form I-9 for each individual hired for employment, including elected officials. On the form, the employer must verify the employment eligibility and identity documents presented by the employee and record the document information. [Temporary flexibility](#) implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic for employers to remotely verify Form I-9 documents expired July 31. If your township inspected I-9 documentation remotely between March 20, 2020, and July 31, you must complete an in-person physical document inspection by Aug. 30, 2023. Eligible employers, enrolled in the [federal E-Verify](#) system in good standing, may use [an alternative procedure](#) to satisfy the document physical examination requirement.

Member input sought for 2024 MTA legislative policy platform

MTA is seeking review and input from members on its legislative policy platform. Reviewed and updated annually, the legislative policy objectives guide MTA's government relations efforts and reflect emerging issues and goals. MTA members are encouraged to review the current [MTA 2023-24 Policy Platform](#) and share any proposed revisions and suggested additions by **Monday, Nov. 27**. Member-proposed policy changes will be reviewed by MTA committees for word selection and legality, and to ensure they conform with the Association's overall goals and objectives. The proposed policies will be presented at the 2024 MTA Annual Meeting in conjunction with our Annual Educational Conference in April. Contact legislation@michigantownships.org with questions, comments or suggestions.

Federal grant opportunities available for townships

Townships are eligible for several new federal grant opportunities and grant assistance, as well as tax incentives, including:

- The [Weatherization Assistance Program](#), funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, has \$25 million for projects that expand the impact of existing residential weatherization programs to enable deep energy retrofits of low-income housing. Concept papers are due by **Aug. 31, 2023**.
- The [Climate Ready Workforce for Coastal States and Territories Competition](#), supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Department of Commerce, will award and assist communities in coastal and Great Lakes states so they may form partnerships that train workers and place them into jobs that enhance climate resilience. Approximately \$50 million is available and applications are due **Feb. 13, 2024**.
- **Grant support.** Local governments can get one-on-one technical assistance to help identify and apply for grants. Contact Kate@KateMadigan.com to learn more. Additionally, the Michigan Infrastructure Office has a [Technical Assistance Center](#) that funds communities to directly contract with consultants through metropolitan planning or economic development organizations for grant writing, administration and other services.
- **Tax incentives.** In addition to grants, the federal Inflation Reduction Act authorized billions of dollars in tax incentives. For the first time, tax-exempt entities including local governments can claim the direct monetary benefits of tax credits. A recent [report](#) explores the potential of "direct pay" tax credits to save millions off the cost of clean energy projects.

August Township Focus—read online now!

The August issue of *Township Focus* is hitting mailboxes soon, but you can [read it online now!](#) In this month's cover story, *Angry citizens, 'constitutional auditors' and more—When does freedom of speech cross the line?* authored by Attorney Steve Joppich, learn what can—and can't—be done when responding to these challenging situations if and when they arise in your township. We also share additional insights into early voting, required by Proposal 2022-2, from former state Director of Elections Chris Thomas, and highlight a county program helping to

preserve township farmland. You'll also find MTA's 2023 Township Vendor Directory (also available on [our website](#)), perfect for reference when your township is looking for products or services to help you serve your community. The "Hello, MTA ... ?" Q&A column delves into regular versus special meetings, while "Financial Forum" offers tips for finding a township auditor. Get details on our [upcoming educational opportunities](#), including MTA's [Professional Development Retreats](#) coming to The Highlands in Harbor Springs this fall.

Can you spend township dollars on that? Find out in next week's live MTA webinar

Wondering whether your township can spend money on an activity? Townships need statutory authority to spend public money. Why all the restrictions? Because it's "other people's money." If you can't point to a law authorizing the use of public funds on a particular activity then it's an "unlawful expenditure." Join MTA Staff Attorney Catherine Mullhaupt at noon on **Aug. 9** for "Spending Township Money," our latest [Now You Know](#) webinar, offering a review of the general guidelines and specific examples of lawful and unlawful expenditures, all in just one hour! Get your questions answered during this live lunchtime event. [Click here to register online now.](#)

The National Association of Towns and Townships *Weekly Legislative Update* will pause publication during the congressional August recess and will resume in September. The Senate returns to Washington, DC on Sept. 5 and the House on Sept. 12.