

Aug. 31 deadline for Rural Readiness Grant letters of intent

[Letters of intent](#) for a second round of [Rural Readiness Grant Program](#) funding are due **Aug. 31** by 3 p.m. to the state Office of Rural Development. The grants will provide funding of up to \$50,000 to help invest in underserved rural areas and populations for planning, capacity-building activities, development readiness initiatives and plan formation. Round two grant guidelines include an [expanded definition of eligible rural communities](#). Submit letters of intent, outlining a proposed project summary, how it meets parameters of program goals and total estimated project cost, to witalam@michigan.gov.

Urban and Community Forestry grants available

Townships can apply for Urban and Community Forestry grants to fund tree planting in their communities. Through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the grants will provide reimbursement of \$10,000 to \$50,000 for projects that increase urban tree canopy cover, or improve community forest care and citizen engagement. Eligible activities include data collection, plan development, tree planting and maintenance, training and workforce development, food forests, and wood utilization. Projects should align with [Statewide Forest Action Plan](#) goals and support Michigan's pledge to plant 50 million trees by 2030 as part of the DNR's [MI Trees initiative](#). Applications are due **Oct. 13, 2023**. For more information and [to apply](#), visit the [Community Forestry Grants website](#). An [informational webinar](#) will be held on **Aug. 30**, from 1 to 2 p.m. Contact (517) 582-3209 or (313) 316-4137 with questions.

Updates on early voting grants, address confidentiality

Early voting grants. Townships may be eligible for grants to provide funding for implementing and executing early voting for next year's elections. The grants will be distributed to counties largely based on population and expected early voting turnout, so counties and locals must collaborate to ensure grant applications capture the needs of all jurisdictions in the county. The grant application, which was mailed to county clerks and elections directors, is also available in the state Bureau of Elections [eLearning Center](#). To be eligible for funding, county clerks must complete and submit the application along with the countywide early voting plan by **Sept. 8, 2023**. This date is earlier than the statutorily required date so that funding may be distributed as early as possible. **Township clerks must work with their county clerk to be eligible for funding.**

Address confidentiality training. The [Address Confidentiality Program](#) (ACP) provides certain protections for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or those who fear that disclosure of their physical address will increase the risk of harm. The program is set to begin at the end of August. Because participants' voter registration (residential address) is protected, the program also impacts how participants receive election mail, and appear in the Qualified Voter File (QVF) and electronic pollbooks. An [ACP training module in the eLearning Center](#) helps clerks understand how to conduct voter registration and ballot issuance tasks in the QVF, along with best practices for mailing and record-keeping responsibilities for ACP participants.

State upgrades free cybersecurity app

Michigan ranks eighth among states for cybercrimes. Officials and residents can use a free [Michigan Secure](#) app to protect themselves from threats to digital devices. The app, available in the App Store or GooglePlay, alerts users if they are connected to a network containing suspicious activity, giving an opportunity to disconnect before information is stolen. To learn more about Michigan's cybersecurity efforts, including tips and tricks, visit the [Michigan Cybersecurity website](#).

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 the MTA Government Relations Department at legislation@michigantownships.org with questions, comments or suggestions.

EGLE hosting algal blooms and drinking water webinar

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is hosting a [Blooming Waters: Understanding Harmful Algal Blooms and Safe Drinking Water](#) webinar on **Oct. 3**, from 1 to 2 p.m. Key topics to be covered include safeguarding drinking water, understanding the science on what fosters the algal bloom formation and growth, and how EGLE monitors Michigan's waterways.

Contact pearsons@michigan.gov with program questions; send registration questions to bertholda@michigan.gov or roseberryj@michigan.gov.

Master 'The Art of the Agenda' at MTA's September webinar

Transform your lunch break into a learning experience with MTA's online webinar series, [Now You Know](#). Join us live at noon on **Sept. 13**, watch the recorded version later or both! Our September episode features insights from MTA's Member Information Services Director Mike Selden including who's responsible for creating the meeting agenda, what goes on it, how items get added and when should it be distributed—and more! [Register online now](#) or [learn more here](#).