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PRESS RELEASE

Murphy Administration Announces \$7.5 Million for Next Round of Shared Services Grant Funding

Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) Grant Applications Now Open for Fiscal Year 2024

TRENTON, NJ – The Murphy Administration, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and Shared Services Czars today announced that applications are now being accepted for \$7.5 million in available funding through the Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) that was allocated in the fiscal year 2024 state budget.

The LEAP, which is administered by DCA’s Division of Local Government Services (DLGS), provides financial assistance to local government entities such as counties, municipalities, school districts, authorities, and fire districts across the State of New Jersey to identify, study, and implement shared services initiatives. The program is aimed at encouraging towns to streamline their government services to increase efficiency and help save taxpayer dollars.

Former Mayors Nicolas Platt, Harding Township, and Jordan Glatt, City of Summit, who were appointed by Governor Murphy in 2018 to serve as Shared Services Czars, are also available to help guide local governments that are interested in applying to LEAP and are considering a shared service agreement.

“Helping our communities and New Jersey residents achieve savings through shared services is a primary goal of the Murphy Administration and this department,” **said DCA Acting Commissioner Jacquelyn A. Suárez.** “LEAP has proven to be very effective at motivating local governments to pursue shared services, with more intensity and urgency, as an option for driving down costs and providing more efficient services.”

“Shared services are proven to be a win-win situation for local governments regarding taxpayer savings. They also help eliminate the stand-alone mindset that hampers collaboration,” **said Shared Services Czars Nicolas Platt and Jordan Glatt.** “LEAP and the shared service efforts the grants have encouraged throughout the state have already improved the quality and breadth of resources available to residents. They have also allowed many local governments to work together to overcome hurdles to efficiency and taxpayer savings.”

The LEAP is comprised of three primary components: Challenge, Implementation, and County Coordinator Fellowship Grants.

The Challenge Grants promote innovation and collaboration on more expansive projects and levels of participation that produce shared services with increased significance to local communities.

The Implementation Grants support costs associated with the implementation of shared services, consolidation, and school feasibility studies.

The County Coordinator Fellowship Grants support the identification and advancement of shared services opportunities through the hiring of a new employee or designating an existing employee to work with the county and any entity within the county, including local units of government, to identify and advance shared service opportunities. For those counties already employing or engaging coordinators, this grant is still available to supplement the coordinator function.

Since the program launched in December 2019, a total of 96 LEAP grants, amounting to nearly \$15 million, have been awarded. With the assistance of the Shared Services Czars, DCA recently helped facilitate and execute the following shared services agreements:

- City of Garfield - Joins Bergen County 911 Dispatch - \$400,000
- City of Woodbury and Woodbury Heights - Police Dissolution - \$500,000
- Atlantic City - Sharing a Pothole Machine with 4 Municipalities - \$400,000
- Jamesburg - Shared Street Sweeping Services with Milltown - \$225,000
- Toms River - Shared Service with Island Heights Solid Waste Collection - \$171,000
- Seaside Heights - Shared Street Sweeping Machine with Seaside Park- \$243,750
- Atlantic County - Purchase of a Portable Traffic Light with 6 Municipalities - \$45,000
- Jamesburg - Police and Dispatch Services with Helmetta Borough- \$363,327
- North Plainfield - Shared Ladder Truck with Watchung Borough- \$400,000
- Point Pleasant Borough - Shared Street Sweeper with Bay Head Borough- \$220,713

Eligible entities are invited to apply for grant funds under each of the LEAP Grants: Challenge, Implementation, and County Coordinator Fellowship.

A full description of each grant is outlined below.

- **Challenge Grants** will allocate funds to the most compelling projects in potentially each of New Jersey's 21 counties. This grant program is designed to promote innovation among peer communities and counties across New Jersey and challenge municipalities and counties to collaborate on more extensive partnerships that produce shared services of notable significance. LEAP Challenge Grants provide reimbursement for qualifying expenses incurred in the development of approved programs and services authorized under the Uniform Shared Services and Consolidation Act (N.J.S.A. 40:65-1 et seq.). Local

units are invited to compete for a share of up to \$150,000 in available funds within each county. New Jersey counties, municipalities, school districts, commissions, authorities, and fire districts may apply. Any two or more of these entities may submit a joint application seeking funding for a proposal. Application Deadline: April 15, 2024.

- **Implementation Grants** will allocate funds to help cover costs associated with shared services implementation, such as one-time reimbursable costs for project completion or transition support, which may include, but are not limited to, new technology costs incurred as part of equipping a shared services program, rebranding costs, equipment and vehicle outlays, professional services, rent for facilities, payroll system conversion costs, and training. Funding is based on the total transition or implementation cost of a project. This grant program also provides monies for reimbursement of expenses associated with school consolidation and countywide school district studies that support the creation of meaningful and implementable regionalization plans. K-12 regionalization and countywide school district studies will be given first priority. This is a rolling application process; however, the application submission deadline is 5:00 p.m. on April 15, 2024, for the application to be eligible for grant funding. Limited funding is available under the applicable FY2024 appropriation, and awards under the FY2024 funding cycle must be encumbered before June 30, 2024.
- **County Coordinator Fellowship Grants** will allocate funds to each county for the purpose of hiring a new employee or designating an existing employee to act as a county coordinator fellow, working with the county and any entity within the county, including local units of government, to identify and advance shared service opportunities. Each New Jersey county is encouraged to apply for up to a \$75,000 grant for the purpose of funding a one-year, full-time position or part-time position at 20 hours per week. This is a rolling application process; however, the application submission deadline is 5:00 p.m. on April 15, 2024, for the application to be eligible for grant funding. Limited funding is available under the applicable FY2024 appropriation, and awards under the FY2024 funding cycle must be encumbered before June 30, 2024.

For further information about LEAP Grant guidelines and required documentation, visit the DLGS website at https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlgs/programs/Leap_grants.shtml. To request information about LEAP Grants, please email DLGS.LEAPgrant@dca.nj.gov. For information on shared services more broadly, please email sharedservices@nj.gov.

DLGS serves as an advocate for local government interests and provides technical and financial assistance in budgeting, financial reporting, joint services, purchasing, and management issues. It is responsible for the financial integrity of all local government units and reviews and approves all municipal, county, and fire district budgets. The Division also reviews many local government financial actions and governs and guides the conduct of local government officials.

In addition to local government services, DCA offers a wide range of programs, including affordable housing production, fire safety, building safety, community planning and development, disaster recovery and mitigation, historic preservation, and information privacy.

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