

VOLUNTEER-LED GRANTS COMMITTEE REAPS \$\$ Berkeley Heights Township

Berkeley Heights, facing the common challenge of balancing annual budgets without large tax increases, was looking for additional sources of revenue to fund its citizens' current and future needs. They recognized there was a lack of municipal staff to pursue grant funds effectively. Their solution was to draw from their own community, a rich resource, to form a committee that pursues grants in support of municipal staff and departments.



The Township recruited volunteers to the grants committee with specific expertise in researching, applying, and managing grants and put their expertise to good use. The committee is developing a grants database with status updates. They coordinate the grants application and management activities with staff who have service area expertise. This collaboration is augmented with additional coordination and oversight by Township Administration and other relevant township committees. The team approach will help sustain this innovation even as participants change over time.

The tangible end result will be additional funding for otherwise unmet needs and improved follow-up in managing the grants awarded. Although the committee was officially formed only recently, the results are already positive – the Township was awarded a \$410,000 Safe Routes to Transit grant because of volunteer efforts. The committee is actively pursuing many other grant funding opportunities.

This joint effort between the volunteer-led grants committee, Township Administrator, Department Heads and other Township officials will help reduce the tax burdens on Berkeley Heights residents and businesses, while helping to maintain, improve and expand the Township's parklands, roadways, municipal facilities and resources for the betterment of the Berkeley Heights community. In addition to the obvious funding benefit, the program has created a positive "we did it!" culture with a collaborative mindset.

Award nomination submitted by:
Liza Viana, Township Administrator