

OVER \$500,000 TO BE AWARDED TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC VITALITY PROJECTS IN MANISTEE AND BENZIE COUNTIES

MANISTEE AND BENZIE COUNTIES - The Michigan Department of Treasury has issued a notice of intent under the State Economic Vitality Incentive Program to award over \$500,000 in grants to support two groundbreaking projects involving government consolidation and intergovernmental cooperation involving Onekama Township and the Village of Onekama and 7 townships in Manistee and Benzie counties.

One grant of \$355,365.55 would support a project involving the potential disincorporation of the Village of Onekama into Onekama Township. Funds would support the completion of a Disincorporation Plan by a six-member Disincorporation Commission and help implement the Disincorporation Plan if approved by local voters, including construction to expand a government center in the community.

A second grant of \$157,000 would support a pioneering collaborative effort involving seven townships covering portions of Manistee and Benzie counties to prepare master plans and an implementation strategy for collaboration among the partnering governmental jurisdictions, including the development and updating of local ordinances and cooperative agreements. Participating townships include Onekama, Arcadia, Bear Lake and Pleasanton Townships in Manistee county and Blaine, Gilmore and Crystal Lake Townships in Benzie county. Additional governmental jurisdictions may be added.

Applications for the grant funding were developed in partnership with the local government bodies by the Alliance for Economic Success. The local governments must certify that they will meet the grant award conditions.

Onekama Township Supervisor David Meister and Onekama Village President Robert Blackmore said that the grant award could not have been more timely since the disincorporation commission has been formed and work is underway to complete the disincorporation plan under the provisions of Act 3 of the Public Acts of 1895. Once the plan is completed, it will be submitted to the Village and Township Trustees for approval. Meister and Blackmore said that the community would have been hard pressed to fund the disincorporation process without the state support. Pending approval, the matter of disincorporation will be decided by the registered voters of the Village and Township. The disincorporation process was initiated following a series of collaborative initiatives involving the Township and Village, including a Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan, the formation of

a joint planning commission and completion of a joint Master Plan and resolutions by the Village and Township boards to investigate a merger.

"We deeply appreciate this grant that will enable at least seven townships to embark upon an unparalleled collaboration initiative," said Brad Hopwood, Chair of the Arcadia Township Planning Commission, about the \$157,000 grant to support the multi-township master plan and implementation strategy. "Timing is everything and the partnering townships have all passed formal resolutions and signed partnership agreements to work together in crafting master plans and implementation strategies to improve our quality of life and economic well-being. Just as the collaborative effort will respect the unique features, needs and priorities of each participating township, it will also identify the sweet spots for partnering that will help us reduce costs and address shared opportunities that may involve things like agri-business, various forms of recreation, resource management and protection and more - the opportunities are endless!"

A leadership team consisting of two representatives from each participating township has been formed to lead and guide the project. The Alliance for Economic Success, coordinator of the project, said an announcement was forthcoming about the consultant that has been selected by the leadership team to facilitate the project to completion.

"These two grants will support initiatives that are at the core of the transformational process in Michigan and within our local communities," said Cyndy Fuller, Executive Director of the Alliance for Economic Success. "Both of these projects are about government efficiency, intergovernmental partnerships, community engagement and the development of pathways for public and private investment. We congratulate and thank the Governor, Legislature and Treasury Department staff for creating and administering the Economic Vitality Incentive program just as we commend and thank everyone in our townships and villages who are dedicated to the betterment of their communities. Our economic development strategy is about making places where people want to live, work and play and these grants provide rifle-bulleted support for that strategy. These projects forge new ground for our region as well as Michigan."