



NEW YORK STATE COMMISSION ON
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
EFFICIENCY &
COMPETITIVENESS

Submit Your Suggestions

The New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness continues to seek your input as to how local government can be improved to make New York a better place to live and conduct business. The simplest way to provide input is to send your suggestions via the Commission website by clicking on “Submit Your Ideas” at <http://www.nyslocalgov.org> or by e-mailing the Commission at localgov@empire.state.ny.us.

View the Long Island Hearing

The Commission held two days of hearings on July 24-25. Commission members heard from Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi and Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy, who both explained their ideas for improving local government. Two panels, one on school issues and one on local government structures, also addressed the Commission, as did many local officials and residents. The hearings were sponsored by the Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University, which is hosting the web casts of the hearing and Commission meeting. You may access them from http://www.nyslocalgov.org/web_casts.asp.

Buffalo Hearing Details

The Commission will hold a public hearing on October 24 beginning at 9:00 AM at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1285 Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo. Bruce Katz, founding Director of the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, will address the Commission. Mr. Katz regularly advises public officials on policy reforms that advance the competitiveness of metropolitan areas, focusing particularly on reforms that promote the revitalization of central cities and older suburbs. The Commission will receive suggestions relating to the state of Upstate urban areas and the regional response to these problems, as well as smart growth issues. Time will be reserved for comments and testimony from the audience. Written testimony is encouraged, and should be submitted by e-mail to localgov@empire.state.ny.us. No pre-registration is required to attend the hearing.

New Grants Encourage Joint Activities

The Department of State (DOS) and the Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) have both recently released applications for grants designed to encourage multi-municipal, countywide or regional approaches to local government. DOS has programs aimed at reducing health insurance costs, as well as making local government functions more efficient. ORPS has a program that will encourage counties to explore countywide assessing and/or tax collection. Details are below.

ORPS Centralized Property Tax Administration Program

The Office of Real Property Services has established a program to encourage more integrated cooperative efforts among municipal governments in conducting real property assessment and tax collection. This program consists of four parts:

- (1) **County Assessing:** \$25,000 in advance for counties to prepare a study for the implementation of county assessing or county coordinated assessing for all municipalities within the county. \$25,000 following completion of the study.
- (2) **County Tax Collection Information:** \$25,000 in advance for counties to prepare a study for the implementation of a county-level database through which the taxable status and tax and payment history of every real property parcel in the county may be ascertained. Up to \$25,000 to defray the cost of implementation.
- (3) **Tax Parcel Bonus:** Any new county assessing unit will receive \$2 per parcel upon submission of proof that a referendum to establish a county assessing unit has been approved by the voters.
- (4) **County Coordinated Assessment Programs:** Counties will receive \$2 per parcel for new Coordinated Assessment Programs (CAPS) in which the assessment function is managed by counties and in which are incorporated all real property parcels in the county. Counties will receive \$1 per parcel for new CAPS in which the assessment function is managed by counties, but in which less than 100% of the real property parcels in the county are incorporated.

Applications are due December 31, 2007. For complete guidance and applications, go to the ORPS website at <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/cptap/index.cfm>.

DOS Health Insurance Incentive

The Department of State has re-released the application for the Local Health Insurance Incentive Grant program offered as part of the 2006-07 SMSI program. Under this grant program, counties, cities, towns, villages, and school districts are eligible for grants of up to \$500,000 for the following purposes:

- (1) To support local health consortiums under which two or more municipalities seek cost savings by pooling health insurance risk and ensuring reasonable employee cost sharing;
- (2) To match savings achieved by joining the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP); or
- (3) To provide collective bargaining incentives that promote employee cost sharing of health insurance premiums.

Applications are due October 1, 2007. For complete guidance and applications, go to the Department of State website at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/smsi/healthlist.html>.

DOS Shared Municipal Service Grant Program

The Department of State has released the application for the 2007-08 Shared Municipal Service Incentive (SMSI) Grant program. Under this program, counties cities, towns, villages, special improvement districts, fire districts, school districts, and BOCES will be able to apply for grants of up to \$200,000 per municipality for consolidations, mergers, dissolutions, cooperative agreements, and shared services between two or more municipalities.

In the selection of awards, priority will be given to applications that plan or study consolidations, mergers, and dissolutions; include municipalities that qualify for additional State aid under the Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) program because they meet fiscal distress criteria used to determine AIM funding levels; promote shared services between school districts and other municipalities; implement shared highway services projects; and develop countywide shared services plans. Applications are due December 14, 2007. For complete guidance and applications, go to the DOS website at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/smsi/stateassistance.html>.

2007-08 Consolidation Incentive

The State currently provides general purpose aid to cities, towns and villages under the Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) program. This program replaces unrestricted State aid and revenue sharing programs that existed in the past. The 2007-08 Consolidation Incentive awards a 25 percent increase in the combined AIM funding, up to one million dollars, for any municipalities that consolidate. This increase in aid will continue to be part of the consolidated municipality's base aid in future years. This incentive is administered by the New York State Division of the Budget and is part of the SMSI grant program. For more information on AIM funding levels or the 2007-08 Consolidation Incentive, go to the Division of Budget website at <http://www.budget.state.ny.us/localities/local/aim.html>.

Local Initiative Announcement Imminent

In April, the Governor sent letters to local officials asking them to identify initiatives in the areas of local government merger, consolidation, regionalized government, shared services and smart growth that are either already underway or that can be initiated this year. Nearly 150 local initiatives have been accepted for special assistance from state agencies. The list of these initiatives will be announced mid-September.

Visit the Commission Website at www.nyslocalgov.org
