

MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP

2023 Innovation in Governance Application - Submission #3

Date Submitted: 10/20/2023

First Name & Last Name of Person Submitting Form*

Tara Berson

Mayor*

Tony Perry

Address*

One Kings Highway

City*

Middletown

State*

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07748

Municipality*

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County*

Monmouth

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Description of Initiative

The judges will be looking for successful innovative efforts by a municipality or a partnership among several municipalities or a municipal/county joint effort. Innovations must have been initiated or completed during the time period June 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023

Project Specific Details:

- o How is your innovation original and distinctive?
- o How has this initiative successfully met the local needs of your municipality?
- o How have the stakeholders benefited & responded to this initiative?
- o Are there any measured savings or program improvements?
- o Please include whether the innovation is temporary or permanent
- o How can this innovation be replicated in other communities across the state?

Please attach supplemental documents noting the details of your initiative. (Supplemental attachments NOT to exceed three pages)

Application Deadline: Applications must be received no later than **Friday, October 20, 2023.**

Option to Mail Applications: NJLM Innovation in Governance, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608, Attention: Ciara Bradley or send by email to CBradley@njlm.org

If you have any questions, please contact Ciara Bradley at the League of Municipalities: 609-695-3481 ext. 128 or CBradley@njlm.org.

Initiative Title*

Next Generation Support Program

Description of Innovation

<p>Middletown Township is proud to nominate its Next Generation Support Program (NGSP) for the 2023 Innovation in Governance Awards Program.</p> <p>The Township created this tutoring program to help students who suffered from learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The NGSP provided free tutoring services in core subjects for residents enrolled in elementary school through high school.</p> <p>Middletown Township dedicated funds from the American Rescue Plan to implement this free program to help get students back on track.</p>
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Upload Documents

Innovation in Governance Award Submission 2023.pdf
Please condense your documents into one file for upload.

Electronic Signature Agreement*

By checking the "I agree" box below, you agree and acknowledge that 1) your application will not be signed in the sense of a traditional paper document, 2) by signing in this alternate manner, you authorize your electronic signature to be valid and binding upon you to the same force and effect as a handwritten signature, and 3) you may still be required to provide a traditional signature at a later date.

I agree.

Electronic Signature*

Tara Berson

TOWNSHIP OF MIDDLETOWN

Town Hall, One Kings Highway
Middletown, NJ 07748-2594

ANTHONY S. PERRY
Mayor

RICK W. HIBELL
Deputy Mayor

RYAN M. CLARKE
Committee Member

KIMBERLY KRATZ
Committee Member

KEVIN M SETTEMBRINO, AIA
Committee Member

ANTHONY P. MERCANTANTE, P.P., AICP
Township Administrator

HEIDI R. PIELUC, RMC/MMC, CPM
Township Clerk and Registrar

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Settled in 1664

"Proud of Our Rich Heritage"

Project Information:

Middletown Township is proud to nominate its **Next Generation Support Program (NGSP)** for the 2023 Innovation in Governance Awards Program.

In January 2023, Middletown Township launched the NGSP which provided free tutoring services in core subjects for residents enrolled in elementary school through high school. The tutoring program was created to help students who suffered from learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Township dedicated funds from the American Rescue Plan to implement this free program to help get students back on track.

Throughout 2022, the Mayor and Township Committee had been raising awareness about the desperate need for Middletown and governments at every level to address the often overlooked and underreported effect the pandemic had on our students. To help combat this issue, the NGSP was formally introduced with a call-to-action in July 2022.

Middletown distributed a press release accompanied by a promotional graphic to make the community aware of the initiative and shared the information in its weekly e-newsletter *Middletown Minutes*, as well as on the Township's website, social media channels, and TV station. Interested residents could respond to surveys asking if a) their children needed a tutor or b) they wanted to be a tutor. Media outlets also helped advertise the program. Within two weeks, the two surveys collected a total of over 500 responses, which indicated to Township officials the desire and need for a program like this.

In January 2023, the Township announced that it was partnering with Middletown-based business Bright Connections Tutoring Center to run this program. Parents who filled out the initial survey had the opportunity to have their children assessed to see if they would qualify for the tutoring program. Bright Connections assessed over 300 students in both reading and math and then reviewed all the evaluations to create small groups based on students' reading levels, areas of growth, and grade levels. About 250 students qualified for the program. Bright Connections was also able to add to their pool of tutors through the town's survey responses to help meet the demand.

The program began in January and ran for six weeks, with each session taking place at the Middletown Township Public Library and lasting an hour-and-a-half long. Lessons followed the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and were created differently for each group based on areas of concern found in the assessments.

Following the success of the NGSP, the Township partnered with Bright Connections once again in September 2023 to run a tutoring program for income-eligible students who suffered learning loss due to the pandemic. The program is being funded through a special allocation of the Community Development Block Grant CARES Act the Township received and will run through May 2024.

Project Specific Details:

- **How is your innovation original and distinctive?**

No other town used COVID-related funding to address the devastating educational impact the pandemic had on students. It was innovative to dedicate funds from the American Rescue Plan to execute the NGSP. Tutoring can be expensive, but this program made it free and accessible for all. Additionally, through Bright Connections' assessments, the tutors were able to target which kids needed it most and fine-tune the lessons for maximum learning.

- **How has this initiative successfully met the local needs of your municipality?**

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted students both academically and emotionally, and Middletown witnessed that firsthand. According to Bright Connections' assessments, over 90 percent of the students were measured to have significant learning loss due to the pandemic. Middletown Township's initiative successfully met the community's needs by investing in our youth so they could receive the educational support they needed and the opportunity to catch up in school. This in turn helped increase students' self-esteem and reminded them that the community has got their backs.

- **How have the stakeholders benefited & responded to this initiative?**

This initiative was a win-win for all stakeholders. Local business Bright Connections was thrilled to partner with the Township for this program. Through the American Rescue Plan, they were paid for their services and gained new clients and tutors who stayed on even after the program ended. Bright Connections was also mentioned heavily in the Township's communications channels, so their business benefited from free advertising. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from the community overall. Parents and students

benefited from this free program, and the Township was proud to be able to afford them this opportunity.

- **Are there any measured savings or program improvements?**

As grant funds were used to execute this tutoring program, which was free to students, there was definitely a measured savings for all stakeholders. Bright Connections also held the program free of charge at the library and did not have to expend any additional funds to run it.

- **Please include whether the innovation is temporary or permanent.**

The program has been evolving. Right now, Middletown is running the same tutoring program for students who live in income-eligible households. This rendition of the program is funded through a special allocation of the Community Development Block Grant CARES Act the Township received. Parents and students have been extremely receptive to the program, so it has been extended through the end of the school year.

- **How can this innovation be replicated in other communities across the state?**

This program can easily be replicated in other communities across the state. Municipalities can work with their local Board of Education to see how students are doing, create surveys to see what the demand is like for students, and then decide the best way to finance the program. The Next Generation Support Program is a wonderful way to shape our next generation and ensure they have the necessary foundation to build a successful future.