

The 2017 Innovation in Governance Awards Program

Contact Information: Michael J. Venezia

Municipality: Bloomfield Township

Population: Approximately 49,000 **County:** Essex

Address: 1 Municipal Plaza, Room 209

City: Bloomfield, New Jersey **Zip:** 07003

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Title: Mayor

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Project Information

Initiative Title: Bloomfield Township Open Public Records Portal

Description: Portal Containing Signed Township Legislation

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 implemented during the time period June 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017.

Project Specific Details: *(Please explain your innovation. Include up to 3 supplemental pages if needed.)*

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

Please Attach a Supplemental Sheet(s) Noting the Details of Your Initiative.

(Supplemental Attachments NOT to exceed 3 pages)

Application Deadline: Applications must be received no later than Monday, October 2, 2017. Mail applications to NJLM Innovation in Governance, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608 or send by email to CBradley@njslom.org

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



BLOOMFIELD OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS PORTAL

OPRA (the Open Public Records Act) is the state statute that gives the public access to government maintained documents while maintaining privacy for citizens. The Municipal Clerk's Office is in charge of processing requests for government records under the OPRA statute.

The Municipal Clerk's Office receives hundreds of OPRA requests each year and has, therefore, decided to establish a system that will allow for faster and easier accessibility to public information.

Prior to the summer of 2016, the Clerk's Office maintained government documents such as signed Ordinances, Resolutions, Appointments, Contract Awards, and RFP's in the office's main computer system. Because of the way the Township's network was arranged for security purposes, this made it so that only the Clerk's Office had access to these frequently requested documents.

The open public records portal project was initiated because citizens, as well as Township employees from various departments, were requesting the same documents consistently and repetitively, and this became a time-consuming process. Once the decision was made to create the portal, the process needed to be determined:

- The first step was to create a one-stop shop for the most frequently sought out documents.
- The Township's IT Director was able to create a permanent portal on the Township's website which would allow the Clerk's Office to upload all of already scanned documents to the portal and organize them in a way that was searchable and easy to navigate.
- A proper naming convention was created, and previously scanned documents were renamed to conform to the created convention.
- Once the portal and naming convention were created, the previously scanned files were sorted by category and date, renamed and uploaded.

The Bloomfield Open Public Records Portal is up and running since August 2016 and continues to be updated monthly. As council meetings continue, the site will continue to remain updated with the latest adopted documents.

Having the signed Ordinances/Resolutions at the public records portal has reduced the number of OPRA requests submitted for these types of documents by at least 15%. Also, the Clerk's Office no longer has to send individual departments copies of signed legislation – each department, user, employee or citizen can go to the portal and have direct access. Implementing the public records portal has made the Township more transparent and accessible to everyone.

The documents available on the site are all Ordinances, Resolutions, Appointments and Contract Awards that have been adopted beginning with 2010 to the present.

Anyone requesting a record through OPRA can now be redirected to this site in which they can view desired records in pdf form meaning they will be able to save and print. Our Department Heads, staff, residents, the community and even the media and our professional consultants are pleased with the accessibility and convenience of our "Bloomfield Open Public Records" portal. Mayor Venezia hears many compliments about the portal when he is out and about in the community.

Other communities can replicate this public records site by following the simple process indicated above. IT departments can contact our IT Director for assistance or questions and begin scanning recent documents today. When time permits, a community can scan older documents and work backwards. That's what we did - we started with 2016 and now have documents available on the site beginning with 2010. We will continue adding older documents to the portal as time and work assignments allow.

The website will continue to be updated on a regular basis and will, therefore, continue to serve as a way to keep the citizens of Bloomfield involved and up-to-date with Township business.

The Township of Bloomfield considers transparency of the utmost importance and with this innovation, the public has a very easily accessible window – 24/7 – to look inside the workings of the Township of Bloomfield.