



January 2025 Newsletter

Subject Line: Happy New Year from MI Funding Hub

January Webinar

The January webinar will be held on **Thursday, January 23, 2025**. Join us for an overview of community spotlights and advice on building strong partnerships.

[Register for the January Webinar.](#)

Help Us Write Our New Year's Resolutions

Our goal is to support municipalities in their search for federal and state funding by providing a searchable grants database and accessible technical assistance. Help us help you! Tell us what content has been most useful and what you would like to see from this program. Please provide your feedback [in this survey](#).

New to MI Funding Hub: The Justice40 Video Series

Are you interested in learning more about the Justice40 initiative and whether your community is eligible? MI Funding Hub has launched a new series detailing the ins and outs of the program. The series includes background information about the program, detailed explanations and demonstrations of the screening tools, and grant proposal tips for Justice40 opportunities. Check out the series coming soon to MI Funding Hub.

Have You Checked Out the Grant Basics Toolkit Yet?

New to MI Funding Hub is a comprehensive tool kit with grant writing tips, tools, and templates. The toolkit includes a step-by-step grant guide detailing each stage of the proposal writing process and supplementary resources tailored to each task along with templates for proposal development and implementation. Let us help you develop that winning proposal. Check out the [Grant Basics Toolkit](#).



Money Talks: What Does the Budget Say About Your Grant Proposal?

As you develop a grant proposal, keep in mind that your proposal narrative and financial elements work together to tell a story about your grant initiative and how you will achieve its goals. It's vital that you create a realistic budget that demonstrates your municipality's ability to be good stewards of grant funds.

Your organization budget, project budget, and budget narrative comprise the financial section of the proposal. This section helps reviewers to understand your municipality's financial picture. The organizational budget shows the municipality's financial plan for the year. The project budget details the projected costs associated with the project and sources of income. The budget narrative gives context to the financial figures in the project budget. Use any required templates provided by the funding agency to put together the financial elements of the proposal... continue reading the grant guide on [the MI Funding Hub website](#).

MI Water Navigator Celebrates Three Years, Transitions to MI Funding Hub

The Michigan Municipal League launched the MI Water Navigator (MWN) program in 2022 for municipalities and utilities to find and apply for state and federal water infrastructure funding. The MWN program has been incredibly successful—helping more than 55 communities pursue funding opportunities for water projects. As additional infrastructure and Inflation Reduction Act programs began rolling out over the last year or two, we determined that we could best serve communities by integrating the MWN program into the MI Funding Hub program. **So, beginning January 1, 2025, MWN is now part of our more comprehensive MI Funding Hub.** All of the MWN resources and much more are available at www.mifundinghub.org.



Building Partnerships: An Interview with Kathy Szenda Wilson, Executive Director of Pulse at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.



In continuation of November's webinar on public-philanthropic partnerships, MI Funding Hub interviewed Kathy Szenda Wilson with Pulse at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. [Pulse](#) uses data-driven solutions to promote positive systemic change in how organizations leverage resources to benefit an equitable early childhood ecosystem. Pulse has worked closely with the City of Battle Creek to establish a strategic approach toward child care in the community. Check out Pulse's [municipal roadmap](#) for more information on how municipalities can support access to affordable and high-quality child care.

How was the partnership with the city established for this project? (Was there an existing relationship? Who reached out to whom?)

I have had a long-standing relationship with the City of Battle Creek staff dating back to my role as leadership officer at the Battle Creek Community Foundation from 2005 to 2012. Since then, the relationship has been maintained through my role with Pulse and deepened in 2020 when I was elected as Ward 4 City Commissioner. It was there that my efforts to engage the City around the issues of child care were productive and resulted in systemic changes.

How was alignment found between the individual goals of the W.E. Upjohn Institute and the City of Battle Creek?

When Pulse at the W.E. Upjohn Institute was selected to lead the Regional Child care Planning process (through the Early Childhood Investment Corporation), they organized themselves around critical stakeholder groups, including municipalities, to assess their level of awareness of the issue and to identify workable strategies that would improve the conditions for child care supply building, sustainability, and expansion. Utilizing an assessment built from a National League of Cities report that outlined the ways in which municipalities can support child care, Pulse led in-person and virtual workshops to begin establishing a baseline understanding of the region's engagement in this issue. From there, we lifted up those who are actively engaged in making systemic change. Battle Creek rose to the top with their efforts that I believe were possible due to the seeds planted during these many years of authentic partnership.

While developing this program, in what areas was collaboration with the city most beneficial to the Upjohn Institute?

The work we've done with the City of Battle Creek has not resulted in a "program"—but systemic change as to how the City leverages its relationships, tools, and resources in support of child care. This partnership (and especially our deep relationships within its leadership structure) allowed us an intimate understanding of where change was possible, and to walk alongside them while changes were enacted. They remain open to feedback and made their decisions based on data



provided by Pulse as well as data they reviewed about their own experiences (i.e., how many [submitted] child care business [applications] had been approved by the Planning Commission—which was 100 percent).

How can we reignite relationships between organizations that have fallen off—or nurture existing relationships?

Pulse's approach to systems change is entirely dependent on authentic, collaborative relationships. Which takes time and patience. We spend a great deal of time, and are very intentional, in nurturing these relationships by meeting one on one; sharing relevant data; lifting each other up for webinars, publications, etc., and informally through phone calls when things come up. Often this can look like, who [does] the City call when a crisis arises that is child care related? An example of this happened this past year when a child care center director who leased a city-owned building unexpectedly passed away without a succession plan. The center closed overnight (thankfully our coordinated approach in the City was able to respond and place all 48 families within five days), leaving the City to decide what to do with the building. They called Pulse, and we brought in additional partners (such as IFF, a mission-driven nonprofit) to develop a request for proposals process to identify a new operator. That process is underway now.

What is one piece of advice you would give to communities seeking philanthropic partners?

Develop independent relationships with key funding partners by inviting them in as strategic thought partners. Embed them into the fabric of your efforts so they aren't there just to provide financial resources. As they walk alongside you in your collective/collaborative efforts, there will be a more holistic response and approach to funding.

Check Out These Grant Opportunities

[Community Museum Grant Program](#)

Deadline: Thursday, January 30, 2025

Awards: Up to \$1 million

"The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Community Museum Grant Program, providing up to \$9 million in funding to support museums and nonprofit foundations across Michigan that operate educational programs that foster artistic, scientific, technological or cultural exhibitions." LEO anticipates awarding multiple grants for amounts up to \$1 million for projects and expenditures. Project proposals should demonstrate the museum's efforts to stabilize, grow, and/or thrive within its exhibitions and/or educational programs.



Deadline: Thursday, January 30, 2025

Awards: Up to \$1.5 million

“The Revitalization and Placemaking program provides access to gap financing for place-based infrastructure development, real estate rehabilitation and development, and public space improvements. Eligible applicants are individuals or entities working to rehabilitate vacant, underutilized, blighted, and historic structures and the development of permanent place-based infrastructure associated with traditional downtowns, social-zones, outdoor dining, and placed-based public spaces.”

Materials Management Planning Grant

Deadline: Until funds are exhausted

Awards: Up to \$370,000

“The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy’s (EGLE) Recycling Unit is establishing a materials management planning grant program as described in section 324.11587 of Part 115, Solid Waste Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended.”

Events and Resources

Michigan Municipal League: [Why Storefronts Are Your Best Local Economic Development Strategy](#)

Date and Time: Wednesday, January 8, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Description: “Storefronts are the lifeblood, the culture, and the window into what makes each of our communities unique. Yet, these places are struggling with vacancies ... because of a lack of foot traffic post-pandemic. Join this conversation to learn about why storefronts are key to our local economic power; the small-scale manufacturing businesses thriving in these spaces today, and actions local leaders can take to make it all happen.” [Register here.](#)

Catalyst Communities: [Zero Food Waste Planning: Strategies for Local Governments](#)

Date and Time: Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 11:00 a.m.

Description: “This webinar will delve into how communities can approach planning around food waste reduction to realize its environmental, economic, and social benefits. By developing and implementing food waste reduction strategies, cities, townships, and villages have an opportunity to support their county’s Materials Management Plan. Hear from one city about how they created a food waste reduction implementation plan focused on source reduction, food rescue, upcycling, and organics recycling.” [Register here.](#)



Nonpoint Source Watershed Implementation Funding Webinar

Date and Time: January 16, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

“Nonpoint Source Program staff will describe and discuss the FY25 Implementation RFP (Request For Proposals), the application process and schedule, program priorities, eligibility criteria, application requirements, tips for successful applications, and answer questions from the audience. Guidance for coastal communities and communities with environmental justice impacts will be a covered.”



MI Funding Hub Team Spotlight

Jennifer Morris, Principal at OHM Advisors



Spotlight

Jennifer joined OHM in late 2021 after 15 years as a chief administrative officer, department head, and municipal planner and 18 years as a municipal consultant in Michigan and Florida. She now plays a unique role with OHM Advisors as a cross-discipline project manager. Jennifer uses her municipal management and planning background to assist multiple teams and their associated client communities, while also serving as the principal in charge for two Jackson County municipalities. Her focus has been water and sewer related due to extensive prior knowledge. She also provides funding assistance for parks and other municipal assets.

In Jennifer's most recent role, she served as the director of neighborhood and economic operations for the City of Jackson. During her tenure, the City of Jackson became the state's benchmark for redevelopment readiness. Additionally, she helped to realize greater than \$100 million in private investments; streamlined the development review process to incentivize redevelopment; and received the Daniel Burnham Award for a Master Plan from the Michigan Association of Planning.

In her role as the village manager for Brooklyn, Michigan, her responsibilities were all-encompassing, with an emphasis on budgeting, project funding and grants, and human resources. Key accomplishments included the funding, design, and construction oversight of a new Department of Public Works garage, a self-sufficient sewer operations and maintenance program for six neighboring communities, the negotiation of a reimbursement agreement for payback of the Clean Michigan Initiative Brownfield Redevelopment Loan, and the negotiation and administration of a historically accurate rehabilitation of the exterior of the Village Hall.

Why do you work in community advancement?

I enjoy assisting communities to become more financial sustainable while improving their aging infrastructure. I seek opportunities to enhance municipal functionality through streamlined processes and identifying economic development opportunities. These are the key reasons why I work for a company focused on community advancement and why teaming with the Michigan Municipal League and Public Sector Consultants through MI Funding Hub further enhances what we already achieve on our own.

What is one thing you wish communities seeking funding knew?

Don't just make it a one-time task. Funding opportunities are made available throughout the year. Having a community-vetted plan in place and a continual feedback mechanism makes the grant process much easier and compliance more achievable.