



Post-event questions from Workshop on Economic Development, April 21

Answers by Harmony Gmazel, MSU Extension

1. Will COVID-19 reduce grant opportunities?

We will need a clearer picture of state funding and deficits in the coming year in order to know the status of state grant programs.

2. What's the status on MEDC grants for community development?

It is doubtful that the Michigan Economic Development Corp. (MEDC) has a clear picture right now. Once grants become available again, we might assume that the programs will come highly competitive between a higher number of applicants.

3. Are there any new/creative (e.g. selling broadband to rural areas) ideas for county revenue growth beyond collecting taxes?

Acknowledging first that local governments are not for-profit businesses, there are strategies out there that help with county revenue issues.

Crowdfunding is a new way to raise community capital for public projects, particularly for park, trail and other local projects. As was stressed in the presentation, partnerships with fellow communities, counties and regions on revenue sharing projects and on grant applications are proven ways to aid county budgets or to complete capital improvement projects with outside funding. As far as selling broadband service to residents, there are bureaucratic barriers to that idea. I believe a county might be able to lease its infrastructure to broadband companies -- but be sure to consult with your legal counsel before moving forward with this idea.