

County Government Efficiency Plans



New York State Association
of Counties



October 2015

County Government Efficiency Plans

OVERVIEW

Under the terms of the 2014-15 State Budget, counties and municipalities seeking a property tax rebate for their homeowners submitted local government efficiency plans to the state Division of Budget no later than June 1, 2015. These plans projected savings of 1 percent of their respective 2014 property tax levies for years 2017, 2018 and 2019. In order for residents to receive a rebate, the municipality must also stay within the parameters of the State's cap on the growth of the property tax levy.

As NYSAC has previously indicated in published reports (PAYGO NY, Working Together, County Efficiency Toolkit), counties and municipalities have been working together to share services for decades.

For the purposes of the program enacted last year, only projects implemented between January 2012 and January 1, 2019 will qualify for the rebate program.

NYSAC has collected data from 48 counties that had their government efficiency plans accepted by the State Division of Budget. When tallied, these counties are saving more than \$290 million annually, for a three year total of close to \$882 million (see tables on pages 4 and 5). Counties logged more than 1,300 different projects to be conducted over the seven year period among the 556 municipalities included in the submissions.

Savings and efficiencies came from a number of different categories. Counties and local governments are finding energy and purchasing efficiencies, exploring new employee benefit models, selling or leasing assets, ending subsidized programs, reducing staff, sharing equipment and facilities, restructuring debt, and streamlining business processes. An abridged list of submitted projects (listed by category) can be found on the following pages.

Under the statutory program, the Division of Budget (DOB) had until July 31, 2015 to notify counties, local governments and school districts whether their local government efficiency plans were accepted and approved. The county plans received final approval on October 14, 2015.

Under the terms of the 2015-16 State Budget, the Governor and State Legislature have allocated \$150 million in competitive grant funds for local governments to implement innovative efficiencies, shared services and consolidations. The Department of State, Local Government Division, has said the Governor is expected to hold a local government summit in November 2015 to announce the application process for these funds.

SHARED SERVICES, EQUIPMENT AND STAFF

Notable highlights for shared service programs include, but are not limited to the following projects that were submitted as part of county efficiency plans:

- Cattaraugus County has entered into a cooperative agreement with Olean General Hospital for medical examination services.
- Municipalities in the Hudson Valley are sharing an ambulance building and sharing the cost of heat and electricity.
- The Town of Orchard Park is planning to share its full time assessor with the Town of Hamburg.
- Several municipalities have entered agreements to share a range of heavy equipment including pavement rollers, street sweepers, plows, sewer trucks, wood chippers, and lawn tractors.
- Municipalities in Yates, Dutchess, Rensselaer and Steuben plan to share dog control and/or kennel operations.
- Municipalities and schools in one county are purchasing building space that can be used jointly by police and schools for educational resources and public safety.
- The Chemung County Department of Public Works will work with the Town of Big Flats and other municipalities to build and maintain several miles of the local road systems.
- In Cortland County all municipalities will share one GIS coordinator for fire services.
- Steuben County municipalities are going to put together a joint summer recreation program, rather than having each municipality run their own solo programs.
- Schoharie and Otsego counties are planning to partner on a joint program designed to boost economic development.
- Erie County, Buffalo, and Niagara County created a land bank called the Buffalo-Niagara Land Improvement Corporation.
- The Dutchess County Town of Washington and Village of Millbrook plan to share office space and staff.

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County	2014 Levy	Savings Target	2017 Savings	2018 Savings	2019 Savings	3 year savings	Municipalities in Plan
Albany County	\$ 89,947,275.00	\$ 899,472.75	\$ 6,209,204.00	\$ 6,209,204.00	\$ 6,209,204.00	\$ 18,627,612.00	29
Allegany County	\$ 29,776,530.00	\$ 297,765.00	\$ 1,097,131.00	\$ 1,100,281.00	\$ 1,097,881.00	\$ 3,295,293.00	39
Broome County *	\$ 69,110,223.00	\$ 691,102.00	\$ 1,193,818.00	\$ 1,258,520.00	\$ 1,331,396.00	\$ 3,783,734.00	10
Cattaraugus County	\$ 51,042,822.00	\$ 510,428.00	\$ 656,055.00	\$ 676,562.00	\$ 676,915.00	\$ 2,009,532.00	1
Cayuga County	\$ 37,247,280.00	\$ 372,472.00	\$ 491,141.00	\$ 491,141.00	\$ 491,141.00	\$ 1,473,423.00	1
Chautauqua County	\$ 61,529,248.00	\$ 615,292.00	\$ 2,953,568.00	\$ 2,903,568.00	\$ 2,903,568.00	\$ 8,760,704.00	45
Chemung County	\$ 34,062,076.00	\$ 340,620.00	\$ 1,607,636.00	\$ 1,607,636.00	\$ 1,607,636.00	\$ 4,822,908.00	15
Chenango County *	\$ 23,619,400.00	\$ 236,194.00	\$ 1,789,533.00	\$ 1,789,533.00	\$ 1,789,533.00	\$ 5,368,599.00	1
Clinton County	\$ 22,122,926.00	\$ 221,229.00	\$ 2,829,645.00	\$ 3,114,889.00	\$ 3,260,294.00	\$ 9,204,828.00	16
Columbia County *	\$ 40,960,941.00	\$ 409,609.00	\$ 4,200,000.00	\$ 4,300,000.00	\$ 4,300,000.00	\$ 12,800,000.00	21
Dutchess County	\$ 111,518,995.00	\$ 1,115,190.00	\$ 21,665,831.00	\$ 22,555,520.00	\$ 22,464,833.00	\$ 66,686,184.00	28
Erie County *	\$ 241,721,087.00	\$ 2,417,211.00	\$ 8,323,887.00	\$ 9,139,183.00	\$ 9,981,259.00	\$ 27,444,329.00	34
Franklin County	\$ 16,173,297.00	\$ 161,732.00	\$ 300,463.00	\$ 303,751.00	\$ 307,106.00	\$ 911,320.00	16
Fulton County	\$ 27,443,889.00	\$ 274,438.00	\$ 4,294,851.00	\$ 4,306,404.00	\$ 4,318,207.00	\$ 12,919,462.00	1
Genesee County	\$ 26,581,613.00	\$ 265,816.00	\$ 2,844,721.00	\$ 2,839,856.00	\$ 2,834,696.00	\$ 8,519,273.00	13
Greene County *	\$ 22,426,028.00	\$ 224,260.00	\$ 367,000.00	\$ 367,000.00	\$ 367,000.00	\$ 1,101,000.00	1
Herkimer County	\$ 25,840,436.00	\$ 258,404.00	\$ 567,362.00	\$ 567,362.00	\$ 567,362.00	\$ 1,702,086.00	1
Jefferson County *	\$ 50,265,644.00	\$ 502,656.00	\$ 536,633.00	\$ 536,633.00	\$ 536,633.00	\$ 1,609,899.00	1
Lewis County	\$ 14,877,268.00	\$ 148,772.68	\$ 385,512.00	\$ 385,512.00	\$ 385,512.00	\$ 1,156,536.00	22
Livingston County	\$ 26,078,664.00	\$ 260,786.00	\$ 1,400,000.00	\$ 922,145.00	\$ 922,145.00	\$ 3,244,290.00	25
Madison County	\$ 29,799,300.00	\$ 297,993.00	\$ 1,706,392.00	\$ 1,904,812.00	\$ 2,127,439.00	\$ 5,738,643.00	1
Monroe County	\$ 369,682,484.00	\$ 3,696,824.84	\$ 18,381,968.00	\$ 18,671,968.00	\$ 17,781,968.00	\$ 54,835,904.00	29
Montgomery County	\$ 26,517,462.00	\$ 265,174.00	\$ 621,254.00	\$ 772,213.00	\$ 1,013,549.00	\$ 2,407,016.00	19
Nassau County *	\$ 807,049,409.00	\$ 8,070,494.00	\$ 52,800,000.00	\$ 52,800,000.00	\$ 52,800,000.00	\$ 158,400,000.00	2
Niagara County	\$ 72,739,177.00	\$ 727,392.00	\$ 1,300,000.00	\$ 1,300,000.00	\$ 1,300,000.00	\$ 3,900,000.00	1

County	2014 Levy	Savings Target	2017 Savings	2018 Savings	2019 Savings	3 year savings	Municipalities in Plan
Oneida County	\$ 72,220,752.00	\$ 722,207.00	\$ 2,728,365.00	\$ 2,787,910.00	\$ 2,849,084.00	\$ 8,365,359.00	1
Onondaga County	\$ 163,086,973.00	\$ 1,630,869.00	\$ 10,663,688.00	\$ 11,862,841.00	\$ 13,254,140.00	\$ 35,780,669.00	15
Ontario County *	\$ 51,934,777.00	\$ 519,348.00	\$ 3,511,532.00	\$ 5,215,933.00	\$ 4,520,676.00	\$ 13,248,141.00	6
Orange County	\$ 116,642,752.00	\$ 1,166,427.00	\$ 1,570,882.00	\$ 1,485,632.00	\$ 1,485,632.00	\$ 4,542,146.00	1
Orleans County	\$ 16,441,366.00	\$ 164,413.00	\$ 2,894,323.00	\$ 2,894,323.00	\$ 2,894,323.00	\$ 8,682,969.00	10
Oswego County	\$ 49,453,211.00	\$ 494,532.00	\$ 7,203,649.00	\$ 7,213,544.00	\$ 7,223,554.00	\$ 21,640,747.00	12
Otsego County *	\$ 11,507,600.00	\$ 115,076.00	\$ 4,448,823.00	\$ 4,448,823.00	\$ 4,448,823.00	\$ 13,346,469.00	1
Putnam County	\$ 39,253,434.00	\$ 392,534.00	\$ 895,077.00	\$ 925,236.00	\$ 957,096.00	\$ 2,777,409.00	1
Rensselaer County *	\$ 60,183,995.00	\$ 601,840.00	\$ 2,093,589.00	\$ 2,317,865.00	\$ 2,409,578.00	\$ 6,821,032.00	14
Rockland County	\$ 117,998,617.00	\$ 1,179,986.00	\$ 8,126,883.00	\$ 8,126,883.00	\$ 8,126,883.00	\$ 24,380,649.00	1
Schenectady County	\$ 70,408,000.00	\$ 704,080.00	\$ 771,175.00	\$ 771,175.00	\$ 771,175.00	\$ 2,313,525.00	8
Schoharie County	\$ 19,131,768.00	\$ 191,317.00	\$ 222,000.00	\$ 253,000.00	\$ 292,000.00	\$ 767,000.00	1
Schuyler County	\$ 10,887,348.00	\$ 108,873.00	\$ 142,142.00	\$ 144,142.00	\$ 145,142.00	\$ 431,426.00	8
Steuben County	\$ 41,213,481.00	\$ 412,134.00	\$ 1,614,000.00	\$ 1,614,000.00	\$ 1,614,000.00	\$ 4,842,000.00	47
Suffolk County	\$ 617,584,294.00	\$ 6,175,842.00	\$ 24,380,157.00	\$ 25,211,911.00	\$ 20,865,340.00	\$ 70,457,408.00	1
Sullivan County *	\$ 55,518,109.00	\$ 555,181.00	\$ 855,000.00	\$ 917,500.00	\$ 917,500.00	\$ 2,690,000.00	2
Tioga County	\$ 22,012,554.00	\$ 220,125.00	\$ 1,743,449.00	\$ 1,743,449.00	\$ 1,743,449.00	\$ 5,230,347.00	1
Ulster County *	\$ 78,730,408.00	\$ 787,304.00	\$ 15,785,308.00	\$ 16,351,331.00	\$ 16,901,731.00	\$ 49,038,370.00	2
Warren County	\$ 39,583,991.00	\$ 395,839.00	\$ 1,983,684.00	\$ 1,890,858.00	\$ 2,040,667.00	\$ 5,915,209.00	14
Wayne County *	\$ 37,227,520.00	\$ 372,275.00	\$ 3,004,205.00	\$ 2,968,063.00	\$ 2,931,256.00	\$ 8,903,524.00	13
Westchester County *	\$ 548,423,468.00	\$ 5,484,235.00	\$ 55,000,000.00	\$ 56,000,000.00	\$ 57,000,000.00	\$ 168,000,000.00	23
Wyoming County	\$ 18,606,278.00	\$ 186,062.00	\$ 825,414.00	\$ 825,962.00	\$ 826,521.00	\$ 2,477,897.00	1
Yates County	\$ 15,453,200.00	\$ 154,532.00	\$ 329,090.00	\$ 333,740.00	\$ 338,544.00	\$ 1,001,374.00	1
	\$ 4,601,637,370.00	\$ 46,016,358.27	\$ 289,316,040.00	\$ 297,127,814.00	\$ 295,932,391.00	\$ 882,376,245.00	556

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REDUCING STAFF AND/OR PUBLIC PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Several of the efficiency plans examined by NYSAC include reductions in full-time staff, elimination of positions, or restructuring of offices and departments. The list includes, but is not limited to, the following plans:

- The county administrator's office was restructured in Allegany County.
- Broome County eliminated their CIO position and reduced their printer operator from full time to part-time status.
- Westchester County, the Village of Endicott (Broome County) and others submitted plans for retirement incentives to reduce the workforce and ongoing operational costs.
- Cattaraugus County is reducing the size of the legislature from 21 to 17 members; and they abolished their civil service commission in favor of a director of human resources.
- Municipalities are realigning administrative duties in recreation, parks, and water resources departments.
- The Board of Elections in one county reduced the total number of election districts from 63 to 55, reducing the cost of equipment, poll watchers, and associated election costs.

SELLING OR LEASING PUBLIC ASSETS, AND CLOSING FACILITIES

Local governments are also leveraging or shedding assets and closing facilities that are underused or too heavily subsidized by local property taxpayers.

- Wayne, Genesee, Jefferson, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Orleans counties all sold, privatized, closed or contracted out services at their county nursing facilities, certified home health agencies, senior centers, and dental clinics.
- Broome, Cattaraugus, Dutchess and Oswego counties closed or privatized transfer facilities to reduce solid waste costs.
- Counties and local governments sold or privatized the operations of ice rinks, amusement parks, golf courses and recreation centers.

IMPROVING WORKPLACE OPERATIONS AND/OR LOWERING THE COSTS OF SERVICES

Counties and local governments are providing additional training services, reviewing existing contracts, partnering with community agencies, and using information technology solutions to improve operations and lower the cost of doing the people's business at the local level.

- Clinton County, the City of Binghamton and others are implementing document management systems or managed print services designed to consolidate leases and maintenance of multi-function printers and copiers.
- Several counties are contracting with community agencies such as the YMCA or social service organizations, which can often provide services and programs more efficiently or effectively than the locality.
- One county sheriff's office established a weekend work program to keep non-violent offenders out of jail for the weekend and give them experiences and skills that can help them find employment and reduce incidents of recidivism.

OPERATIONAL AND PURCHASING EFFICIENCIES

Changing workers' compensation carriers, finding lower premiums for property and casualty insurance, building solar arrays, installing energy efficient equipment, and leveraging cooperative purchasing contracts counted for many of the projects that local governments submitted as part of their efficiency plans.

- Several counties and towns are implementing solar energy system projects to leverage renewable energy incentives, lower reliance on fossil fuels, and reduce the long term costs of electricity.
- Several towns, villages, cities and counties are leveraging the aggregate purchasing power of the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA) to lower their monthly and yearly energy costs.
- The New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal (NYMIR), which was created by NYSAC, the Association of Towns and the Conference of Mayors, has added dozens of new local government member owners that are taking advantage of lower premiums, expanded risk management services, and reduced litigation costs.
- Municipalities across the state are evaluating their workers' compensation costs and going to market to explore the potential of lowering their rates. Several towns, villages and cities have moved to the Public Employer Risk Management Association (PERMA) and the Comp Alliance for reduced costs.
- Many local governments have enacted local laws that allow them to piggy back off other municipal bids to purchase equipment and services from vendors participating in national cooperative purchasing groups like US Communities, which is endorsed by NYSAC, the Conference of Mayors and the School Boards Association.

County Government Efficiency Plans

FINANCE AND BENEFITS RESTRUCTURING

Finally, counties and local governments took advantage of the low interest rates of the past ten years to refinance bonds and loans for a considerable savings to local taxpayers. Additionally, public employers, wherever possible, worked closely with their public employee bargaining units to modify agreements to achieve mutually beneficial terms that also save tax dollars.

- Counties and towns restructured bonds to lower interest rates, principal and payments.
- Local government employers either modified existing collective bargaining agreements or ratified new labor contracts with salary and benefit adjustments that reflected the economic times and the localities' ability to pay.
- A select number of municipalities refinanced their governmental buildings to achieve terms that would enable them to lower annual expenses.
- Local governments contracted with accounting firms, auditing companies or banks to investigate areas where they could find savings on contracts and services.
- Counties are implementing procurement cards that are streamlining their procurement processes and generating rebate revenues on items they already purchase.



The New York State Association of Counties is a bipartisan municipal association serving the counties of New York State including the City of New York. Organized in 1925, NYSAC mission is to represent, educate and advocate for member counties and the thousands of elected and appointed county officials who serve the public.

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