**SHARED SERVICES INITIATIVE**

In 2017, the State enacted the Countywide Shared Services Initiative. The initiative required county leaders to convene other municipal leaders and together develop a shared services plan that would save property tax dollars. Of the 57 counties in New York, 34 submitted taxpayer savings plans for the CWSSI in 2017. The other 23 counties are expected to develop their plans in 2018, following the same deadlines set for 2017 submissions.

**2018 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL**

The Executive Budget proposal includes language to make the County-wide Shared Services Panels permanent to facilitate continued intergovernmental collaboration and generate new and recurring local property tax savings. The proposal would provide fire districts and fire protection districts with the option to participate, in addition to school districts, boards of cooperatives educational services (BOCES), and special improvement districts. The Secretary of State would be authorized to seek guidance and recommendations from the panels regarding certain local government efficiency and shared services grant programs.

The Governor proposes to amend various provisions of law impacting town justice courts and zoning functions to remove obstacles related to local government shared services. The proposal would amend the Uniform Justice Court Act to allow adjoining towns to share one or more town justices and to streamline the local process for implementation. It would also amend the General Municipal Law and the Statute of Local Governments to allow counties to provide certain functions at the request of, and in agreement with, another local government. Counties would be authorized to regulate, administer, and enforce planning, zoning, and other land use regulations at the option of, and in agreement with a request from a city, town, or village.

**COUNTY SOLUTION**

NYSAC supports a stronger incentive to expand the participation of other local government jurisdictions in the process, especially school districts and fire districts. The State should also be required to participate on any service sharing panel, since they have resources and assets that could be drawn upon to help reduce the costs, and therefore property tax burden, in each of our counties.

Since the counties were required to spend resources, time, and funding to coordinate these shared services panels, including hiring additional staff members, or contracting with research agencies or consulting firms, we recommend the State provide up to $100,000 that could be drawn down for expenses, reports, or seed money.

The State should also consider modifications to arcane requirements within the State’s property tax cap calculation that places barriers to the most comprehensive shared services reforms when functions are fully transferred from one level of government to another. Currently, the one-size-fits all approach of cutting the property tax levy base of the entity that loses a function does not consider local budget circumstances and the ability of smaller jurisdictions to absorb the loss of the tax cap growth. The cap adjustment in these situations should allow entities given up a function to retain at least half of the value of the function transfer.

Finally, all of the shared services that counties submit to the State should be catalogued and made available online for local leaders looking for best practices and innovative ideas. We recommend that State lawmakers provide funding for the development of this online database. This funding could come from the $225 million allocated in the Governor’s Executive 2018-19 State Budget proposal.

For more information on the county position regarding this issue, visit www.nysac.org/publisafety or call 518-465-1473 to speak to Katie Hohman, NYSAC Legislative Director.