



Funding Your Priorities

Partnering with a grants firm to seek alternative funding

By Lester E. Taylor, III, Mayor, East Orange

Since assuming office in 2014, I have sought innovative ways to help move East Orange forward. In order to expand our resources to seek alternative funding for the City’s priority projects, we partnered with a professional grant consulting firm and the results have far exceeded our expectations.

With the consultant’s help, the city has secured more than \$5,504,817 in grant funding, including \$3,272,690 to date. Our experience in East Orange highlights three critical elements for grant procurement: strategy, coordination, and execution.

Since beginning our partnership, the staff at Millennium has worked closely with my administration to create a comprehensive grants strategy that reflects the City’s unique mission and vision. A cohesive plan was developed by meeting with individual department directors and administrators in order to understand both our short-term goals and long-range objectives.

Our strategies succinctly identified the priority projects covering a wide range of topics including: arts and culture, economic development, historic preservation, parks, public safety, and transportation. The purpose was to utilize new grant funding to offset the City’s budget for projects or to provide additional services that would not be possible without alternative financing.

The strategy also incorporated features such as how to best leverage municipal assets and community partnerships to enhance the City’s capacity for implementing programs, thus creating more opportunities for funding.

Coordination is the key to implementing a successful grants strategy. The narrow window of time between the grant announcement and ultimate submission deadline is often one of the greatest hurdles facing municipalities.

Clear and consistent communication with our consultant has enabled the firm to prepare and submit timely, quality, and successful applications. On a regular basis, we receive detailed memoranda of potential funding opportunities that include an

explanation of what our grants consultant will do and what the City’s responsibilities are in order to complete and submit the best possible grant application.

The firm provides valuable guidance, yet does not inundate department directors and administration with minute details or information that is not vital.

In the end, it all comes down to precise execution that produces consistent results. Our consultant’s research capability gives them an understanding of the myriad grants offered by government agencies, as well as private foundations. As a result, we have aligned our vision to set the standard for urban excellence with our ability to reach objectives for specific City projects.

One recent example includes securing \$1,500,000 from the United States Department of Justice’s Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to hire 12 School Resource Officers (SRO).

Before we applied for this grant, the City’s number of SROs had dwindled from 34 to four. Having only four SROs to patrol 22 schools put enormous pressure on an already overburdened police department. If a problem arose at East Orange Campus High School and required the attention of more than one SRO, 21 schools were left without adequate coverage or no coverage at all.

The addition of 12 SROs will enable East Orange to be divided into zones where teams of SROs can cover each zone and the schools located within each zone. This gives each SRO an opportunity to patrol a fixed area and get to know that area along with the people in it. This synergy between the SROs, students and staff in a fixed zone has led to better monitoring of the schools and cooperation amongst the entire student body. ♻️

GRANT FUNDING PROGRAM	PURPOSE	AWARD
FEMA - Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)	22 firefighters	\$2,813,690
USDOJ - Community Oriented Policing Services	12 school resource officers	\$1,500,000
NJDEP - Green Acres	Elmwood Park tennis courts	\$495,000
NJDOT - Municipal Aid	Various streets	\$417,000
FEMA - Assistance for Firefighters Grant	New PPE for firefighters	\$190,127
NJDOT - Urban Gateway Enhancement	Enhancement of Gateway Areas	\$32,000
NJDEP Trails	Soverel Park Trail	\$21,000
Firehouse Subs Foundation Grant	Fire and emergency responder equipment	\$16,000
SNY. Coldwell Banker, NY Mets – Play ball	Equipment and visit to Mets game for kids	\$15,000
Essex County Local Arts Grant	EO MAC Fest	\$5,000
	TOTAL 2015 - 2016	\$5,504,817