



### MPPS Policy Brief

## Michigan local governments' ability to find, get, and manage state and federal grants

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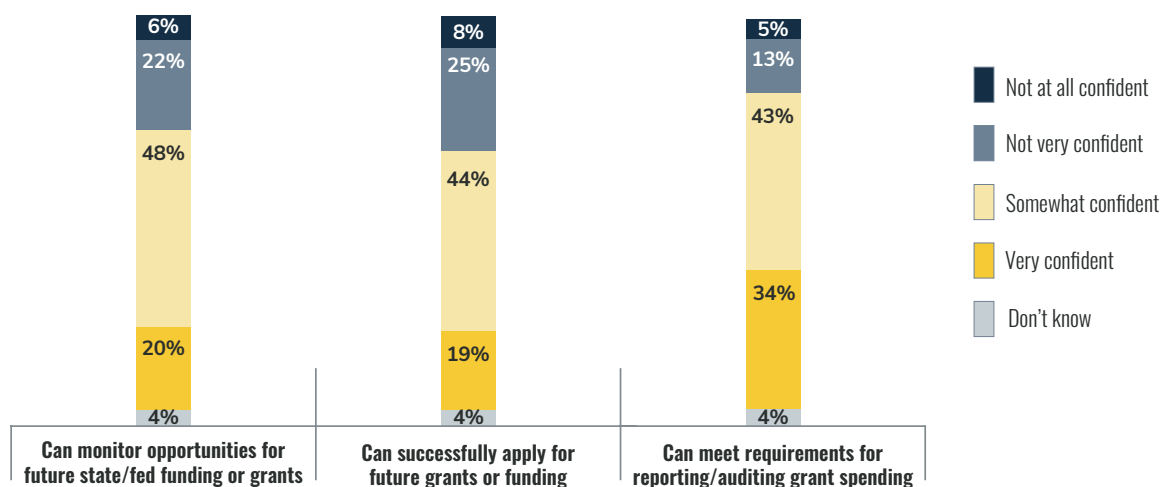
The spring 2023 wave of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) asked local government officials to assess their jurisdiction's capacity for pursuing external grant funding from the state and federal governments. Most Michigan local government leaders believe their jurisdiction has at least some ability to pursue future state or federal grant funding, but their confidence is generally subdued. As shown in *Figure 1*, a majority of local officials are at least somewhat confident that their jurisdictions can monitor opportunities for future state/federal funding or grants (68%), successfully apply for future grants or funding (63%), and meet requirements for reporting or auditing grant spending (77%).

However, only 20% are very confident their jurisdictions can monitor future funding opportunities and only 19% are very confident they can successfully apply for those funds. Confidence is highest regarding reporting and auditing requirements for grant spending, with 34% very confident, and just 18% either not very confident (13%) or not at all confident (5%) in this ability.

Meanwhile, over a quarter (28%) statewide are not confident that their jurisdictions can monitor future grant opportunities, and one-third (33%) are not confident they can successfully apply for future grants or funding.

**Figure 1**

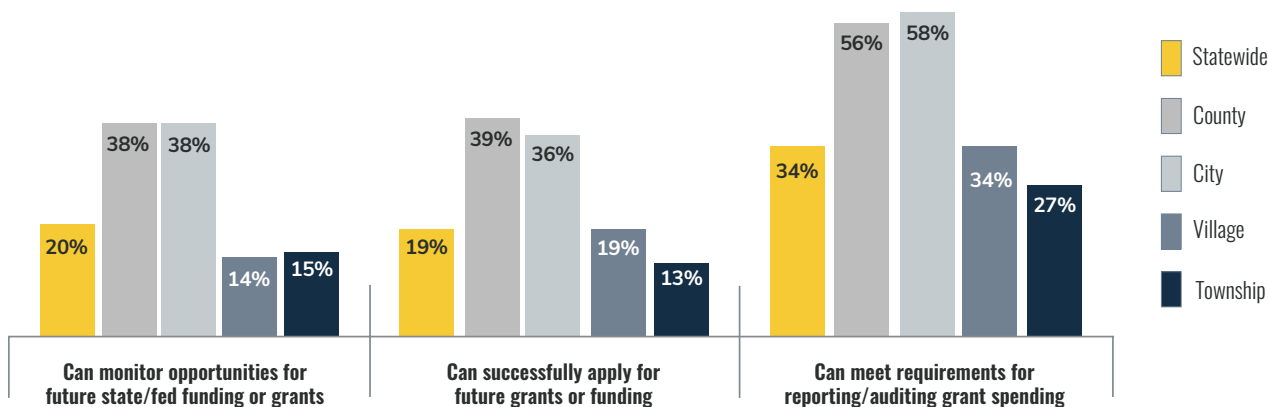
Local officials' confidence in their jurisdiction's ability to find, apply for, and administer future state and federal grants



## Confidence is lowest in small jurisdictions

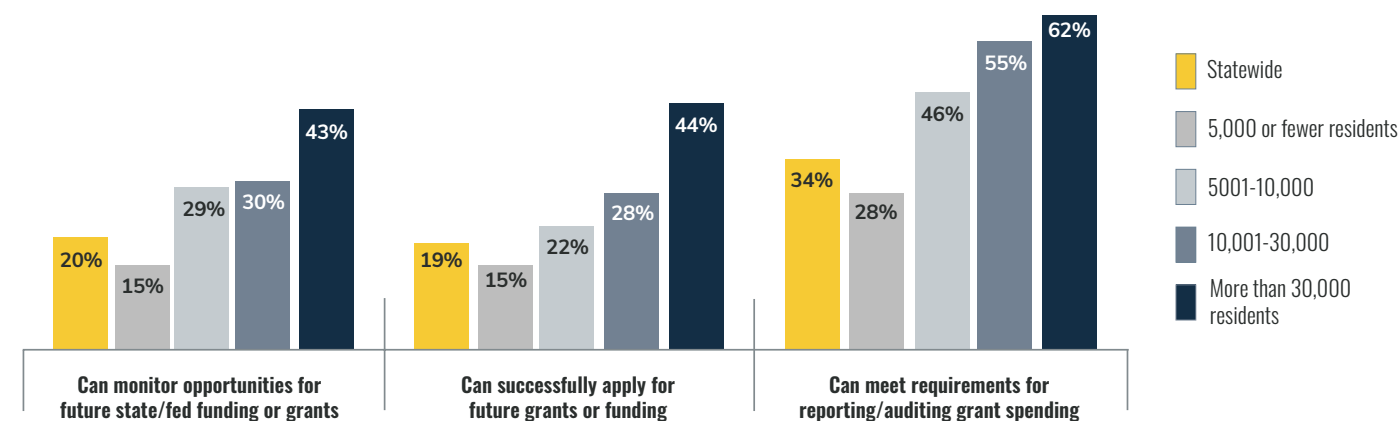
Although most local governments are at least somewhat confident in all three of these areas, not surprisingly, confidence in the ability to pursue and administer grant funding is much higher in Michigan counties and cities than in townships and villages. For example, more than a third (38%) of leaders from counties and cities are very confident they can monitor grant opportunities, compared to just 15% from townships and 14% from villages (see *Figure 2a*). Cities and counties are more likely to have larger and more specialized staffs to allow for these activities, compared with most townships and villages.

**Figure 2a**  
Percent of local officials who are “very confident” in their jurisdiction’s ability to find, apply for, and administer future state and federal grants, by jurisdiction type



Similarly, confidence is also significantly higher in larger jurisdictions than in smaller ones. Among the state’s largest jurisdictions (with more than 30,000 residents), 43% are very confident in their ability to monitor future funding opportunities, compared to about 30% of jurisdictions with 5,001-30,000 residents and just 15% of jurisdictions with 5,000 or fewer residents (see *Figure 2b*). Also, confidence is higher in jurisdictions that self-identify as urban or mostly urban compared to those that identify as mostly rural or rural. For example, 41% of leaders from jurisdictions that identify as urban are very confident they can monitor opportunities for future grant opportunities, compared to just 16% in those that identify as rural.

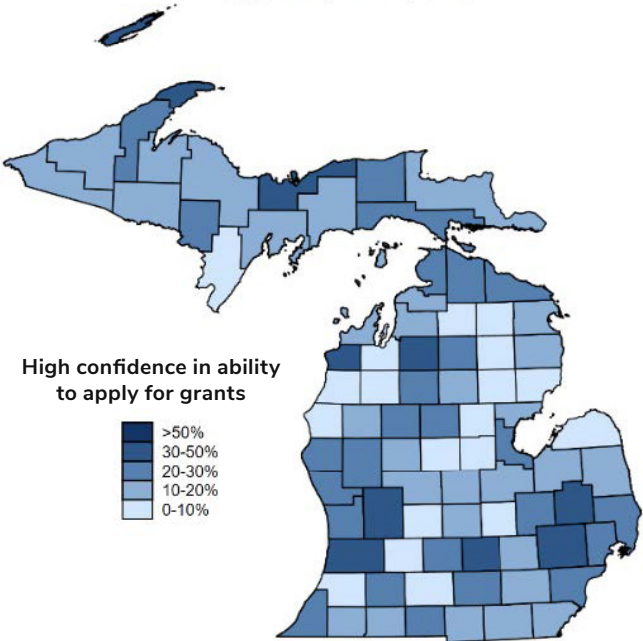
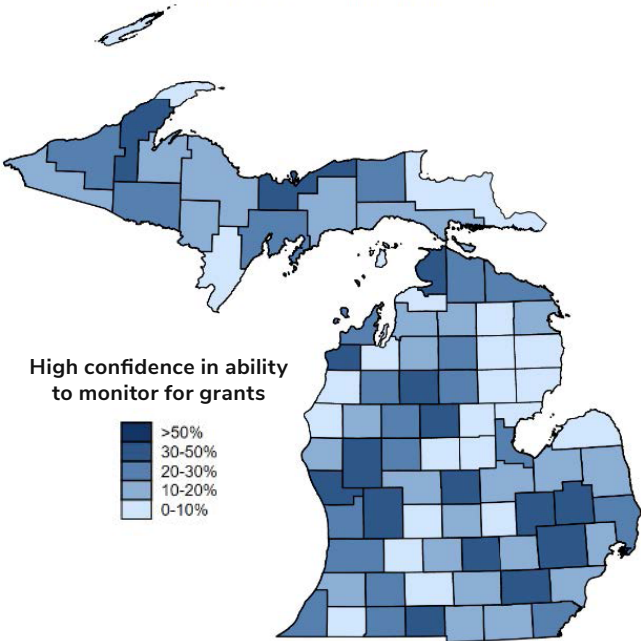
**Figure 2b**  
Percent of local officials who are “very confident” in their jurisdiction’s ability to find, apply for, and administer future state and federal grants, by population size



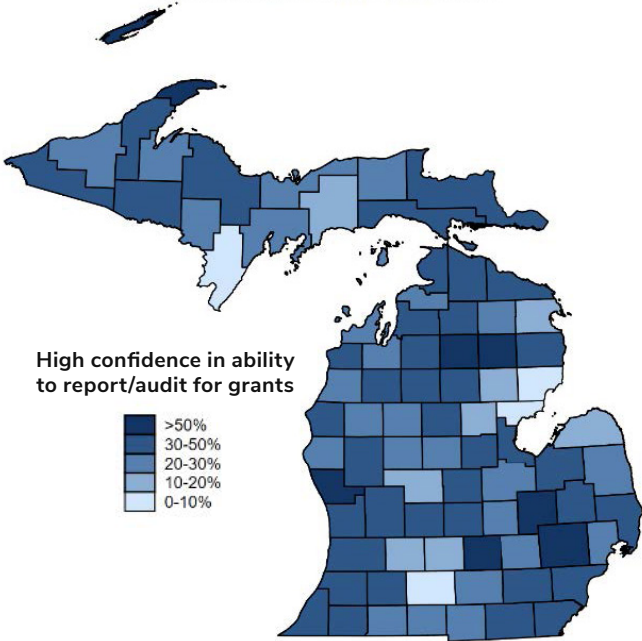
The maps below display the percentage of local officials who are “very confident” in their jurisdiction’s ability to monitor opportunities, apply for, and manage future state and federal funding or grants, aggregated at the county level. The lighter shades show where a relatively lower percentage of local officials within that particular county are very confident, while the darker shades indicate a higher percentage of local officials who are very confident.

**Figure 3a**  
Percentage of jurisdictions who are very confident in their ability to monitor opportunities for future state and federal funding, by county

**Figure 3b**  
Percentage of jurisdictions who are very confident in their ability to successfully apply for future state and federal funding, by county



**Figure 3c**  
Percentage of jurisdictions who are very confident in their ability to meet requirements for reporting/auditing grant spending, by county



## Local officials describe need for better communication about grant opportunities, expanded expertise in applying for funding

In a follow-up open-ended question, the MPPS also asked local officials to describe any additional resources or assistance that would help their jurisdiction find, apply for, and/or administer state and federal grants. More than 450 officials provided responses, which overwhelmingly fell into two categories. Around a quarter the comments mention a need for and/or a current lack of **expertise** in applying for grants (e.g., need for a grant writer, current staff don't know how to write grants, need training, etc.). Another quarter cite the need for better **communication** about available grants (e.g., would like emails with updates, a website with list, a database, etc.). Other types of comments mentioned challenges with **staffing** (e.g., insufficient current staffing, staff don't have enough time, can't afford staff, etc.), **costs** (e.g., lack of ability to provide matching funds, expenses associated with applying for grants that the jurisdiction doesn't receive, inflation / changing costs, etc.), and **eligibility** for grants (e.g., the jurisdiction is too small, jurisdiction demographics don't match requirements, etc.).

### Voices Across Michigan

#### Quotes from local leaders about additional resources or assistance that would help their jurisdiction pursue state and federal grants

"The application process is what holds small townships back. Navigating federal systems is very intimidating. My hope is that now the state has the rural development agency that is similar to the USDA rural development program, this organization may be able to help small, rural areas use grant opportunities properly. This township qualifies for many, but they barely ever get submitted or even applied for because of the lack of staffing and expertise."

"We are a village of [less than 500 residents]. Our lack of professional grant writing ability has been a large liability. The Council is reluctant to hire an outside consultant to find and write grants with the limited funds we have available. Small municipalities like ours are at a distinct disadvantage when accessing available funds due to these limitations. I feel that the MEDC should be reaching out to smaller municipalities and providing them with the resources they need to compete for grant monies."

"We are a small Village and need information on grant sources....Would like to see links with all communications in order to save time trying to find such locations to investigate.....State employees write and discuss accessing sites like it is common knowledge. It may very well be for them, but there are institutionalized barriers to access that seem to be by design....We need plain talk, government department sites that are easy to access, and don't change every year or two."

"A "one-size-fits-all" mentality is always used on these grants. We are a very small township in Northern Michigan and 95% of the requested information does not apply to us making it nearly impossible to submit for funding unless we hire a professional which is not in the budget..."

"A consolidated list of grants for all grants for State of Michigan agencies. There are so many different agencies sending newsletters with grants buried inside; EGLE and MDOT especially. It would be great if there was one specific location to find all active state and federal grants. There may already be such a site that I am not aware of."

"Workshops for staff and elected officials. (Both in-person and virtual.)"

"Voice support - While the help screens and resources are available, sometimes they are just not clear enough for someone with no experience. ARPA was a nightmare. And then the [redacted state agency] Department was unavailable - I was on the phone waiting for 4 hours for help."

Note: open-end survey responses may have been edited for spelling and grammar.



## Survey Background and Methodology

The data presented in this policy brief come from the Spring 2023 Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS). The MPPS is an ongoing census survey of all 1,856 general purpose local governments in Michigan conducted since 2009 by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan's Gerald R Ford School of Public Policy. The program is a partnership with Michigan's local government associations. The Spring 2023 wave was conducted February 6 – April 17, 2023. Respondents include county administrators, board chairs, and clerks; city mayors, managers, and clerks; village presidents, managers, and clerks; and township supervisors, managers, and clerks from 1,307 jurisdictions across the state, resulting in a 70% response rate by unit. More information is available at <https://closup.umich.edu/michigan-public-policy-survey/mpps-2023-spring>.

See CLOSUP's website for the full question text on the survey questionnaire. Detailed tables of the data in this report, including breakdowns by various jurisdiction characteristics such as community population size, region, and jurisdiction type, are available at <http://mpps.umich.edu>.

*The survey responses presented here are those of local Michigan officials, while further analysis represents the views of the authors. Neither necessarily reflects the views of the University of Michigan, or of other partners in the MPPS.*



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