

## The 2021 Innovation in Governance Awards Program

### Contact Information:

**Municipality:** Township of Robbinsville

**Population:** 14.6K

**County:** Mercer

**Address:** 2298 Route 33

**City:** Robbinsville

**Zip:** 08691

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### Project Information

**Initiative Title:** Paperless purchasing

**Description:** Totally electronic system for the purchasing procedure

The judges will be looking for successful innovative efforts by a municipality or a partnership among several municipalities or a municipal/county joint effort. Innovations must have been initiated or completed during the time period June 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021

**Project Specific Details:** *(Please explain your innovation and include up to 3 supplemental pages if needed.)*

- How has this initiative successfully met the local needs of your municipality?
- How have the stakeholders benefited & responded to this initiative?
- Are there any measured savings or program improvements?
- Please include whether the innovation is temporary or permanent
- How can this innovation be replicated in other communities across the state?

***Please attach a supplemental sheet(s) noting the details of your initiative.***  
*(Supplemental attachments NOT to exceed 3 pages)*

***Application Deadline:*** Applications must be received no later than Friday, October 1, 2021. Mail applications to NJLM Innovation in Governance, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608, Attention: Ciara Bradley or send by email to [CBradley@njlm.org](mailto:CBradley@njlm.org)

*If you have any questions, please contact Ciara Bradley at the League of Municipalities  
609-695-3481 ext.128 or [CBradley@njlm.org](mailto:CBradley@njlm.org)*

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### Robbinsville Township - Paperless Purchasing

With the restrictions placed on local governments to retain materials in order to meet legal requirements, including OPRA, an unintended negative consequence has been the accumulation of paper.

Like every other municipality, Robbinsville is no different. This is evident by the amount of file cabinets we possess. When that storage reaches capacity, documents go to boxes, then to outside storage locations to make room for – more boxes!

None of this is either efficient, nor cost effective.

In Robbinsville, we plan as best as we can and then adjust when faced with obstacles. When COVID-19 reared its ugly head, our response was no different. As a result of restrictions, and health concerns, we needed to adjust on how we provide services to the public. This required a reset on how we operated as a municipality. We converted to remote working and split shifts fairly quickly, we installed both fixed and removeable bins outside as a way to share documents so they could be received, reviewed and processed safely.

One of the bigger challenges was the purchase order approval process, which required printing several copies and multiple approvals with signatures.

We reached a point where taking it to the next level with a paperless system simply made the most sense. This was a major step and we were keenly aware that it may not be a popular or easy venture for our staff to take on.

Additionally, we were not aware of any other towns actually going to a paperless system. Be that as it may, Robbinsville found itself in a situation where its staff had become extremely efficient at working remotely using the split shifts model within the office. From there, we all started to think about how we could possibly make the transition to paperless. After researching the legalities and contacting Edmunds for its insights, we realized it was indeed possible.

After research, planning, training, setting and then meeting a goal of July 2021, our process is now entirely electronic.

Our software company informed us we are their first New Jersey municipality to accomplish this! By using email, scanning and electronic approvals with signatures, our entire process - from requisitions to payment approvals - is now paperless. Gone are the days when employees have to spend

unnecessary time printing, signing, mailing, filing and moving paper between departments.

In addition, Robbinsville was able to save money due to cutting the costs of paper, envelopes, postage, etc. Once the retention period expires on the paper documents we currently have in our storage rooms and file cabinets, those areas will eventually be opened up for a variety of other uses.

Along with the obvious cost savings for materials and temporary employees for filing and archiving impacting our municipal budget, the time saved allows employees to work on other projects and future cost-saving ideas. Our next project is eliminating payment-by-check and compensating all vendors electronically via ACH; another tremendous cost savings in both materials and time.

Not only are we more efficient, with a smaller budget, the feedback we've received from team members has been very positive. Although the transition was difficult at the outset, they ended up enjoying the new process better.

We are very proud to have successfully completed this initiative, and are excited for the future of a paperless Robbinsville Township!