


SUSTAINABLE JERSEY PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT

2020 PIE TECH ASSESSMENT PROGRAM APPLICATION PACKET

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: AUGUST 9TH

VISIT: [BIT.LY/PIETAAPP2020](https://bit.ly/pietaapp2020)





Why?

Why is Public Information and Engagement (PIE) Important?

Sustainability rests on a foundation of democratic decision making. But without a public that is both well informed and actively engaged, that decision making process cannot perform properly and produce its best results.

Through the Public Information and Engagement (PIE) program, Sustainable Jersey helps to equip local governments with the tools and resources to build an infrastructure that supports increased transparency and produces more efficient decision making. We believe this can scale up as more and more stakeholders are connected and information is shared between municipalities and their constituents.

As we've seen in how the COVID-19 threat became a crisis in 2020 - globally, nationally, regionally, and locally - there are significant challenges in how the institutions that serve the public plan, prepare, react, adapt, implement, and communicate.

Now, we will move forward in a world where new public health concerns force us to confront questions that are no longer optional, such as how governments use technology to engage with their communities.

But we don't want to only think about the how - we want to keep in mind the **why** - remembering that all of our work in informing and engaging both communities and their governments is to help improve the quality of decision making in an effort to produce better results.

How does the 2020 PIE program confront these challenges?

The Sustainable Jersey 2020 PIE program is built with an eye towards the present and likely future of civic life in the United States.

This is a future where local governments cannot afford to be absent from the online arena where virtual civic worlds are created and information is shared, ideas are discussed, minds are made up, and decisions which impact the communities and world around us are made.

But these spaces shouldn't be created by accident. These virtual worlds, and indeed platforms for all forms of public engagement, need to be created with thoughtfulness, care, and deliberation. They need to be created in the interests of and involve the members of the public and local stakeholders who will use them to learn, engage, and ultimately make more sustainable decisions.

Participants in this year's Technology Assessment will gain access to not just our library of best practices, but to consulting services geared specifically to help municipalities use technology to leverage better engagement and better local decision making. This technical assistance will include learning about your community's vision, needs, and challenges related to communication and public engagement, and producing a practical action plan you can actually implement.

How?





What?

What does the PIE Technology Assessment offer municipalities?

Recipients of the award will receive a **PIE Consultant** to develop a **Local Public Information and Engagement Action Plan** which will lay out a framework to improve decision making through better communication and engagement with their community. In addition to making recommendations on a variety of program and policy areas to accomplish these goals, the consultant will help each municipality identify if there are ways they can also save money or improve staff use of time by creating efficiencies in the way they accomplish these goals and use technology more effectively. This **Action Plan** will be designed with the municipality to accomplish the Sustainable Jersey actions under the Public Information & Engagement category, including:

- Digitizing Public Information,
- Improve Public Engagement in Municipal Government,
- Improve Public Engagement in Planning and Zoning,
- Municipal Communications Strategy,
- Online Municipal Public Service Systems, and
- Open Data Inventory and Management.

The **Action Plan** will be developed through a process alongside key local stakeholders, and include activities such as:

- Initial survey of local communication and public engagement vision, needs, challenges and capacities,
- Virtual visioning workshop with key local stakeholders,
- Interactive virtual triage and prioritization exercises with key stakeholders,
- Draft Action Plan,
- Review/discussion period,
- Final Action Plan,
- Optional: Presentation for governing body and/or key stakeholders, and
- 6 and 12 month follow up surveys.

The **Action Plan** will be a vision-driven practical toolkit for local stakeholders. It will lay out:

- **Strategy:** Discussion and review of the ideologies and values that should be identified, deliberated, and codified among the local government, as well as strategies for financing/purchasing, implementation, and communication.
- **Tactics:** Specific best practices and guidance will be provided to help your team turn the Action Plan into tangible results.
- **Tools:** Access to our catalog of solutions and interactive discussion of available tools that might work best for your municipality.

What?

Some examples of projects that might be identified by the **PIE Consultant** in your **Action Plan** include the identification, evaluation, and possible implementation plan for:

- Accessible and productive virtual meetings for various stakeholder or local public bodies;
- Digitized public-facing administrative functions, such as sharing public meeting agendas and minutes, or collecting service requests, municipal forms, applications and permits submitted online through your website;
- Policies that help drive the local government's use of various new technology tools, including social media, online meetings, and more;
- Surveys and polling products to collect feedback from residents or other local stakeholders;
- Comprehensive local engagement strategies that help create clear pathways for the discussion and implementation of large-scale local programs or innovations;
- Live streaming capabilities so that residents can view public meetings from work or home; or
- Platforms that provide the public with the ability to request services and report issues, including the capacity for internal workflows (such as non-emergency public works type requests).

The PIE Technology Assessment is a valuable program benefit for New Jersey municipalities participating in Sustainable Jersey. It will help the four selected communities develop a comprehensive plan that helps leverage technology for better decision making and public engagement, create efficiencies, and may identify ways these can be implemented at minimal/no cost (or cost savings).

Over a three-month period the PIE Consultant will conduct information gathering through a series of primarily virtual meetings and surveys with various local stakeholders. This is to gain a baseline of where things are currently, as well as understand the current challenges and goals. This will include the municipality's overall goals related to Sustainable Jersey's PIE actions, as well as what technologies it has already implemented and/or unsuccessfully tried before. Key municipal stakeholders may include: the mayor and/or other elected officials, the chief administrative officer, technology and public information officers, key departments heads including communications, public works, planning, etc. and a sampling of front line staff throughout the organization, as well as any community organizations or other local stakeholders.

Each of the four municipalities will be asked to designate a key point of contact for the PIE Consultant to help coordinate the stakeholder meetings. In addition to several individual and group meetings, follow-up conversations with specific stakeholders via email and phone may be required.

Although the PIE Consultant will be leading the creation of the Action Plan, municipalities will be required to dedicate time and work to the project as well (see next section).

Who?

Who can apply?

Municipalities interested in applying to become one of the four PIE Technology Assessment participating communities must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- A NJ municipality registered in the Sustainable Jersey certification program AND an active green team.
- Have a population of no less than 2,000 and no more than 60,000.
- Agree to provide the support outlined on page five of this application packet. The amount of time municipal stakeholders will be asked to commit to this effort will vary from 1-3 hours for front-line staff, to 3-6 hours for department heads, to 5-8 hours or more for the chief administrative officer, point of contact and/or the chief technology officer.

Applicants are encouraged to provide details in their application not just about their goals and needs responsive to the questions, but also their ability to commit to providing the necessary support to ensure that the PIE Consultant time is maximized and the municipality is left with the most valuable plan possible.

When?

When do we have to apply?

Applications are due by: 11:59pm, August 9th, 2020

Where?

Where do we apply?

View application questions in the attached appendix.

[When you are ready to apply, click here.](#)

Or, for more information, you can contact the PIE Consultant, Alex Torpey at PIETech@sustainablejersey.com.

Meet your PIE Consultant

Alex Torpey is currently a municipal business administrator and graduate professor, and formerly a mayor and entrepreneur. With fifteen years working with digital media and technology and ten years in local government, Alex has directly implemented and advised on the implementation of a number of innovative policies and programs, including many which relate to technology, communications, and community engagement.



Selection

How are municipalities selected?

A committee of Sustainable Jersey staff and the PIE Technology consultant will review and evaluate the applications. During the selection process, the committee may want to interview selected stakeholders to assess the community's potential match with the PIE Technology Assessment program. Applicants must be responsive to this interview request to be considered for the program.

Applications will be screened based on the eligibility requirements outlined on Page 6 and evaluated based on the criteria outlined below:

- The applicant is registered or certified with an active green team in the Sustainable Jersey program;
- Completion of an authorization form, signed by the mayor and administrator, stating support for this PIE Technology Assessment process and submission of the application;
- Responsiveness to selection committee interview request;
- Demonstrated commitment to support the consultant's assessment process and findings as seen through application responses related to past experience and clear goals for updating public communications and engagement processes;
- Implementation or current progress toward completing the appropriate Public Information & Engagement actions.

Timeline

Timeline

Participating communities will be notified at the end of August and work with the PIE Consultant will begin in September through the end of November.

A Local Public Information & Engagement Plan will be provided to each of the four participating communities in December.

APPENDIX: PIE Technology Assessment Application Questions

The following sections outline the information needed to complete the online applications:

1. Eligibility Inquiry

The applicant must confirm the following:

- It is registered or certified in the Sustainable Jersey program ([click here to view currently certified municipalities](#));
- Has an active green team; and
- The municipal population is between 2,000 and 60,000 residents

Sustainable Jersey staff will verify the information provided. Applicants that do not meet the eligibility requirements will be excluded from the application review process.

2. Applicant Information

- Municipality Name
- County
- Population

3. Application Questions

- Please list the municipal stakeholders (include titles) that will provide input for the PIE Technology Assessment and be accessible to the consultant. Stakeholders can include municipal staff and elected or appointed officials.
- Has your municipality completed any strategic planning efforts for the use of information technology strategies, tactics, or tools related to public engagement? When did your latest effort take place?
- Briefly describe the effort, including the: a) goal(s) of the planning effort(s) that took place, b) stakeholders involved, c) outcomes of the planning effort(s) and (d) if they are currently in practice.
- How are your IT/technology needs handled currently?
- What is the title of the person currently managing your IT needs (e.g. Director of IT, Clerk, Administrator, consultant, etc.)?
- Provide a link to where your municipal meeting documents are posted online (e.g. agendas, resolutions, minutes, etc).
- Do you currently live stream or record Council meetings in a video format?
- Does your municipality have experience with new Gov 2.0 technologies, such as online or social media platforms used to communicate publicly and solicit public participation? If so, please describe the purpose of the technology, whether it was successful, and if your municipality is currently using it.
- On a scale of 1-5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, please rate each of the following statements relating to your municipality's public engagement baseline.
- Where do your community members engage in local issues with others, including elected officials and municipal staff? Please rank each on a scale of 1-5, from "Does not use at all" to "Uses heavily" (options provided).
- List two municipal goals regarding making public information more accessible, communicating with residents, and/or more effectively involving residents in decision-making.
- What is the top area you feel your municipality should focus its technology investments on to further its

public information and engagement goals.

- Please list the Sustainable Jersey Public Information & Engagement actions your town has successfully completed or is in the process of completing, noting whether the action is “Completed” or “In Progress”.
- Please share any challenges your town has experienced, or is currently experiencing in relation to completing these PIE actions. If your town has not completed or begun implementing the PIE actions, indicate whether any of these actions are planned and whether challenges exist in starting those actions.

4. Application Contacts

- Primary Application Contact (Name, Title, Phone, Email)
- Business Administrator (Name, Phone, Email)
- Mayor (Name, Phone, Email)

5. Required Attachments

- For non-certified municipalities: a list of green team members and a summary of current green team activities
- Authorization to Submit Application Form to be signed by both the mayor and business administrator
- Optional additional supporting documentation