

Defining the

VALUE

of the OTA

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines association as an organization of persons having a common interest.

However, the OTA is more than just people sharing a common interest in townships. The OTA is a statewide organization dedicated to promoting and preserving township government, Ohio's oldest form of government.



The OTA was formed in 1928 as a collaborative effort to respond to an attack on the township form of government. Since then, the OTA has worked tirelessly to preserve township government.

Although we continue to pursue the original mission, the Ohio Township Association's scope of work has grown immensely in the past 94 years. We are your one-stop shop for all things townships!

We want to be sure all members, new and old, know that the Ohio Township Association is an organization that serves their needs.

Above all else, an OTA membership offers VALUE.

VALUABLE ALLY ARDENT ADVOCATE LEARNED INFORMANT USEFUL RESOURCE ENDLESS EDUCATOR

Valuable Ally

The OTA is a valuable ally for all townships across Ohio. Not only do we stand up and defend townships, but we are the only organization that is here to serve you, Ohio's township officials and employees. No one understands township issues better than your state association, and the OTA has 94 years of achievements to show for it.

Ohio is the home to 1,308 townships, which vary greatly in size. We know that not every township will have the same needs, but we represent them all. That is why the OTA offers a wide range of services to encompass these needs, and we continue to grow.

We are working to provide the same high-quality information and resources for township trustees and fiscal officers to your township employees in your township. We are a primary source for zoning boards, park boards, fire departments, and all other township employees.

At the OTA, we understand how vital your work is to maintain your township's high standards. We work to make it easier for you to sort through the red tape and complicated codes so you can focus on what's important – your residents.

The OTA also works to celebrate townships and all they provide. In 1998, the OTA encouraged the passage of House Bill 652, which designated February 1st as Ohio Township Day. Thanks to efforts led by Ashland

County, today February 1st recognizes the hard work and dedication of township trustees and fiscal officers.

Ardent Advocate

Perhaps one of the most critical functions, and one that has been a pillar of this association from the beginning, is being an ardent advocate for townships across the state. The OTA was founded because townships needed to band together to protect their form of government. Due to their action, no bill was ever introduced that would eliminate the township form of government. This could be viewed as the Ohio Township Association's first successful act of lobbying.

As one of the primary functions of the OTA, we lobby at the state and federal levels. OTA lobbying has two main facets - defending against any potentially damaging legislation and introducing new legislation that can help townships and their government.

When creating new legislation for townships, the OTA considers the most prominent issues townships face. For example, early in the COVID-19 pandemic, when our communities were under lockdown, the OTA advocated for townships to be included in House Bill 197, which permitted townships to temporarily hold official meetings electronically. Without the OTA's efforts, this may not have occurred.

In recent years, townships have faced budget cuts due to local government funding being slashed at the state level. We at the OTA have worked tirelessly

to prevent further cuts to your budgets through building relationships with legislators, cultivating allies across all agencies, and showing our support and thanks to those who've helped us in the past.

The OTA's most prominent successes result in increased funding opportunities for Ohio townships. The OTA has successfully advocated for township inclusion in the American Rescue Plan, CARES Act, gas tax funding, indigent burial support, and cemetery grants in just the past four years. These efforts meant nearly \$779 million for townships!

The funding opportunities in the last few years may not have happened without the OTA's lobbying efforts. We are your representation in the Statehouse and on Capitol Hill. It is one of the many reasons a robust and unified association is important.

Learned Informant

The OTA has grown to offer numerous communications avenues to allow members never to miss an update. Gone are the days when you had to wait at the mailbox for news! We now can get information to members quicker than ever!

Here are some of the ways the OTA communicates with you:

- *The Ohio Township News*
- *Grassroots Clippings*
- OTA Newsroom
- Social Media
- *New* Resource Center

("Defining the Value..." continued on page 22)

If you're reading this, you already know what the *Ohio Township News* magazine can offer. This bi-monthly magazine provides in-depth articles from various experts on timely topics, upcoming event information, the latest products from our trusted affiliates, and local township updates submitted by you.

Grassroots Clippings is another OTA publication sent to all township fiscal officers and other township officials, per their request. The monthly newsletter focuses on the more technical information, deadlines, and statewide educational opportunities available. While only mailed to fiscal officers, all OTA members can receive an electronic copy of the newsletter by logging onto our website.

The OTA Newsroom, located on our website's homepage, is a great place to find all the OTA's recent and archived press releases. These often include information on training, grants, and ways for townships to get involved. You can log onto www.ohiotownships.org anytime.

We also use social media to connect with members! Find us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. While we often send reminders on deadlines pertinent to members, we also highlight what is going on at the OTA office, past events, and special township stories. If you haven't already, be sure to like and/or follow our pages so we can connect!

We are also excited to give OTA members a new way to find information and articles from all our publications, the OTA Resource Center. On this new site, you will be able to find all archived OTA publications easily. You can also search by keyword to see all the resources we have on different topics. The best part is that all members will only need to use their OTA website login to access this site. No additional passwords. This is an excellent new benefit that can help you answer many of your township questions and can be accessed on your desktop, smartphone, or tablet. See the above right image for how to get started.

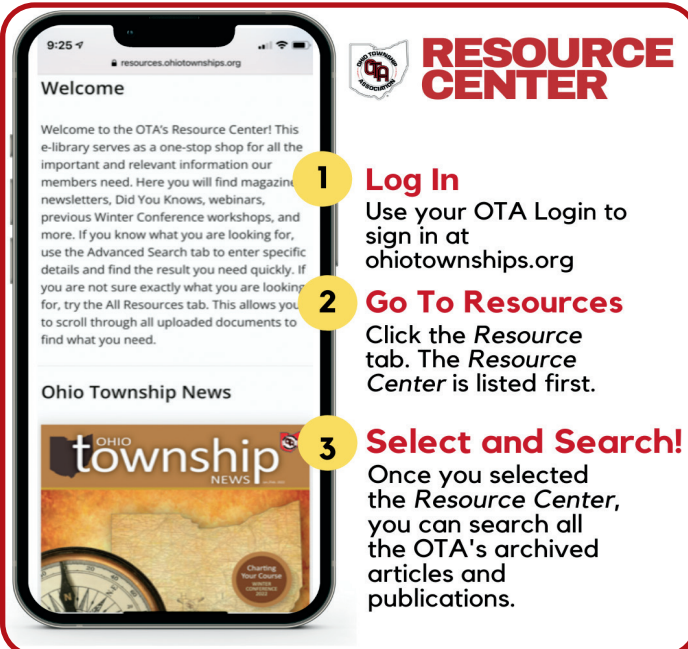
In all, the OTA has made it easier than ever for members to find whatever information they need, and we keep improving! But it's not just how the OTA communicates that increases our membership value, but what we share.

Useful Resource

OTA members can always count on us to help keep them on the right side of the law. Trustees and fiscal officers have more responsibility than ever to remain ethically compliant and legally sound. Every day the OTA staff develops resources that you can use in your position. We work tirelessly to stay on top of changing rules and the latest developments to not only ensure you remain compliant but give you peace of mind.

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the OTA staff went into overdrive, providing up-to-date resources for townships and businesses that reside in their jurisdictions. Not only did we provide details on how to apply for relief monies, but we hosted webinars, created packets for fiscal officers, and provided expert legal opinions on frequently asked questions.

In addition, the OTA encourages members to participate in its long-standing endorsed programs. OTARMA, the OTA Risk Management Authority, is a program for townships to receive the necessary coverage to protect their assets while also providing stable pricing and broad coverage. The OTA also has a Workers' Compensation Program that gives



RESOURCE CENTER

- 1 Log In**
Use your OTA Login to sign in at ohiotownships.org
- 2 Go To Resources**
Click the *Resource* tab. The *Resource Center* is listed first.
- 3 Select and Search!**
Once you selected the *Resource Center*, you can search all the OTA's archived articles and publications.

townships across Ohio significant savings on their workers' comp costs.

With additional sample policies, compensations charts, and township census data, the information the OTA can provide your township is endless.

Perhaps the greatest resource available to members is the OTA staff. If members call or email the office with questions, someone will help find the answer. Whether they can answer it over the phone or locate webinars, articles, and other relevant resources, they will always point members in the right direction.

Endless Educator

The OTA has endless educational opportunities for township officials to learn important information vital to their roles and responsibilities. No one has better information on up-to-date topics than the OTA. We hold regularly scheduled webinars for trustees, zoning inspectors, and fiscal officers, as well as general township webinars. TDiscounted for members, these webinars feature highly qualified speakers on topics ranging from How to Conduct Meetings to Fraud Prevention to Disaster Planning and are often CPIM or CE certified. In 2021, the OTA hosted nearly fifty hours of online learning alone. Members can still take many of these sessions online through our website.

For those who wish to commit to furthering their education in decision-making and leadership skills, the OTA has the Leadership Academy (OTALA). In partnership with OSU's Office of Community Development and Miami University's Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs, OTALA is a comprehensive program that requires individuals to complete six of the ten provided elective workshops and participate in a federal component to be considered a graduate. Each registrant has three years to satisfy these requirements. Graduates are recognized and awarded a diploma each year at the OTA Winter Conference & Trade Show.

("Defining the Value..." continued from page 22)

Graduates of OTALA were surveyed and overwhelmingly wanted ways to develop further the skills learned in the first program. New for 2022, the OTA is excited to announce the OTALA 2.0 program. This advanced course takes leadership skills one step further. This hybrid-model course will launch in June and is open only to the first OTALA program graduates. A small participation fee will be required, and information on how to get signed up for the program will be available soon.

The OTA Winter Conference & Trade Show is also one of the best ways to get this information. With countless workshops with expert speakers, the OTA Winter Conference should be on your schedule to attend at least once in your term. This event also features some of the required courses that fiscal officers and township trustees must complete during their terms. With over 80 workshops designed explicitly for township officials and employees, not to mention over 100 vendors at the Trade Show, there is no other event in Ohio like it!

VALUE

The Ohio Township Association is the primary ally, advocate, informant, resource, and educator for all Ohio townships. For less than \$4 a month, on average, the OTA is a terrific value for members! We fight for you every day to ensure that you can focus on your township.

The **VALUE** in an OTA membership is the benefits provided for each of you, and we are not slowing down. We will continue to grow and offer you all these resources, representation, and information at a great price.

We all believe in the importance of townships to Ohio. That is why we show up every day for you, but the OTA's **VALUE** also comes from the combined efforts of all its members. We are a strong association because of your membership and support. We cannot continue to provide these same benefits without you.

As OTA Executive Director Heidi M. Fought said at this year's winter conference, "If we aren't moving forward, we are either stuck or going backward. But we can't afford that anymore. We must look to the future and chart a new course to improve our townships. On behalf of the staff and OTA Board of Directors, we look forward to helping you wherever that may lead."

For more information about OTA resources, please visit www.ohiotownships.org. ■

The concept of this article is recreated, with permission, from the November 2021 edition of PA Township News, published by the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors.

about the author



Nicole Ganim is the Director of Communications at the Ohio Township Association. She is the primary editor and designer for the OTA magazine, Ohio Township News, as well as coordinates the press and marketing efforts for the association.

Welcome OTA's Newest Staff Member

The Ohio Township Association staff has a new member in the office. Help us welcome her to the OTA.

Nicole Ganim is Director of Communications

Nicole is a resident of Sharon Township in Franklin County. Nicole graduated from The Ohio State University in 2012 with a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations. She has over eight years of communications experience, possessing a background that includes both association and government experience. Nicole joined the Ohio Township Association staff in December 2021.

In her free time, Nicole spends time with her husband, Andrew, and their dog, Gordo. She enjoys cooking, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.



8691 Wadsworth Road, Ste 100 Wadsworth, OH 44281

Phone: 330-335-8232 www.landprosinc.com

llp-info@landprosinc.com



Specializing in:

Cemetery design and surveying services

Parking lot / paving plans

Storm water detention design

OEPA approved commercial septic system design