



## Ohio Township Association Risk Management Authority

# UPDATE

SPRING 2021

### A Profile of the Ohio Township Association

The Ohio Township Association (OTA), founded in 1928, is a statewide organization dedicated to promoting and preserving township government. The OTA does this by lobbying state and federal lawmakers and educating and informing its members through workshops, an annual conference and trade show, and regular publications. Below is an overview of the OTA's services:

- Lobbying, Legislative Analysis, and Policy Development
- Training
- Communications
- Endorsed Programs
- Affiliate Associations



Today, the Association represents 1,308 member townships. Headquartered in Jefferson Township in Franklin County, the OTA operates under the direction of four officers and a 16-member Board of Directors. The office, staffed by six full-time employees, is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the Association and staff routinely answer questions on a variety of subjects pertaining to the operations of townships. In addition, the Association has five standing committees that oversee specific aspects of its operations.

The OTA has more than 5,200 active members, made up of trustees and fiscal officers, and more than 4,000 associate members, which include township employees, board and commission members, county officials and former township officials. Benefits of active membership in the OTA include: discounts to educational sessions; access to publications; access to OTA partner programs; and membership in the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT). Associate members enjoy several of the same benefits as active members. Associate members are eligible for discounts

*Cont'd on pg. 2*

### OTARMA Board of Directors

#### Marsha Funk

Chair  
Brownhelm Township, Lorain County

#### Philip Cox

Vice-Chair  
Monroe Township, Miami County

#### Tim Lynch

Secretary  
Liberty Township, Seneca County

#### Joyce Fetzer

Board Member  
Perry Township, Stark County

#### Heidi M. Fought

Board Member  
Ohio Township Association

#### Ed Huff, Jr.

Board Member  
Brown Township, Darke County

#### Nick Schwab

Board Member  
Reily Township, Butler County



*The OTARMA Program is exclusively endorsed by the OTA*

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this newsletter. Professional counsel should be sought before any action is taken or decision is made based on this material.

[www.OTARMA.org](http://www.OTARMA.org)

Photo courtesy of Canaan Township, Madison County.

for the winter conference and other sessions, and they receive the bimonthly magazine and monthly newsletter.

## Lobbying, Legislative Analysis, and Policy Development

The OTA works with the General Assembly with regard to legislation that affects township government. The OTA is committed to securing legislative changes to provide Ohio's townships with the tools needed to strengthen their communities.

## Training

One of the main goals of the OTA is to educate its members. This is done in a variety of ways, primarily through the annual winter conference and numerous one-day sessions and monthly webinars.

The Ohio Township Association Leadership Academy (OTALA) program gives members an opportunity to enhance their leadership and decision-making skills through a series of courses. Graduates are required to attend the General Workshop, six of ten elective courses and either the NATaT legislative fly-in in Washington, DC, or a one-day federal session held at the OTA office.

To assist in the education of future generations, the OTA sponsors six scholarships of \$1,500 each year for high school seniors. Additionally, the OTA supports 4-H as the sponsor of multiple categories at the Ohio State Fair.



## Communications

The OTA publishes a bimonthly magazine, the *Ohio Township News*; a monthly newsletter, *Grassroots Clippings*; and maintains a website, [www.ohiotownships.org](http://www.ohiotownships.org). Weekly legislative updates to requesting subscribers are

emailed when the General Assembly is in session. County association officers are provided a quarterly newsletter with State Association news and updates.

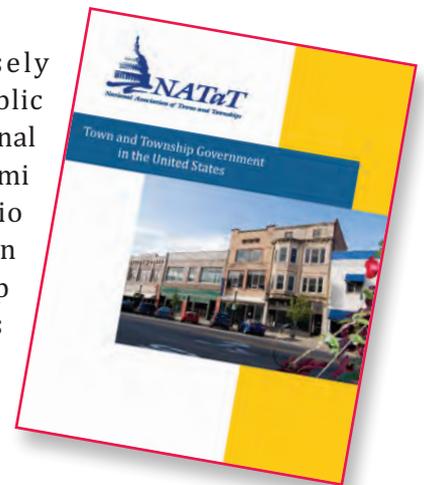
The OTA created a 15-minute video titled "Township Government in Ohio: Our Grassroots of Democracy." The video highlights the duties and responsibilities of township officials and educates the viewer about the history of township government in Ohio. The video and supplemental materials, including brochures describing the current responsibilities of townships, are well-suited for classroom presentations, county fair booths, and county meetings.

## Endorsed Programs

The OTA has partnerships with several entities in order to provide programs and services to townships, including the Ohio Township Association Risk Management Authority (OTARMA) for property and casualty insurance; the Public Employee Benefits Association (PEBA) for health, disability, and life insurance; CareWorksComp for group workers' compensation coverage; and Sedgwick Managed Care as the BWC managed care organization.

## Affiliations

The OTA works closely with the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs (CPMRA) at Miami University and The Ohio State University Extension Services to develop educational programs for townships and to provide resources to aid in township operations.



At the federal level, the OTA is a member of NATaT, which assists in tracking and influencing federal legislation affecting townships. NATaT is comprised of eight states that have townships or towns.

OTARMA is proud to be the only property and casualty insurance program in Ohio that is fully endorsed by the OTA.

To learn more about the OTA, please visit [www.ohiotownships.org](http://www.ohiotownships.org).

# ATTENTION OTARMA MEMBERS WITH POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS!

**For 2021, the Police & Fire Grant has been expanded to include *training and safety equipment!***

When the Police & Fire Policy Grant was launched in 2018, it was designed to assist OTARMA Members with either developing or updating policies and procedures for their police and fire departments.

Effective January 1, 2021, the OTARMA Board of Directors *expanded* the Grant to include more than policies and procedures. The Grant now includes *training and safety equipment* for OTARMA Members' police and fire departments. To reflect this change, the grant has been renamed the **Police & Fire Grant**.

## What Qualifies for the Police & Fire Grant?

An OTARMA Member that has a police and/or fire department (it must be a member's department and not a contracted service) can apply for Grant funds for:

1. developing or updating policies and procedures for police and fire departments;
2. training for police and fire personnel; and
3. purchasing safety equipment for police and fire departments.

## Which Members Can Apply?

All OTARMA Members with township police and/or fire departments are welcome to apply. Grant recipients must be an OTARMA Member at the time of application and when funds are issued.

## How Much Grant Money is Available?

Up to \$1,000 for a police department and up to \$1,000 for a fire department is available for qualifying items, per calendar year.

## If an OTARMA Member Applies for the Police & Fire Grant, Can It Also Apply for the MORE Grant in the Same Calendar Year?

**Yes.** OTARMA Members can receive up to a total of \$2,500 in grant funds if approved for the MORE Grant (\$500) and the Police & Fire Grant (\$1,000 for police and \$1,000 for fire).

## How Does an OTARMA Member Apply?

Grant applications are available at [www.OTARMA.org](http://www.OTARMA.org). OTARMA Members complete a brief, one-page application and provide proof of payment for services.

Send the completed application and a copy of a paid invoice from a specialized

police and/or fire provider to:

Wendy French, OTARMA Customer Service Representative  
315 South Kalamazoo Mall  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
[wfrench@bfgroup.com](mailto:wfrench@bfgroup.com)  
Fax: (269) 276-4095  
Phone: (888) 748-7966, ext. 3136

For more information, please visit [www.OTARMA.org](http://www.OTARMA.org) or contact your OTARMA Representative at (800) 748-0554.



## OTARMA Board of Directors - Election Results



Ms. Marsha Funk

We are pleased to announce the OTARMA Board of Directors election results for the two four-year terms (2021-2025). Ms. Marsha Funk and Mr. Nick Schwab have retained their positions on the Board of Directors.

The OTARMA Board of Directors is comprised of member-elected representatives who are involved in township government. There are three officers and four directors who are responsible and responsive to its membership. The Board is accountable for the program's oversight, including supervision, finances, policies, and administration.



Mr. Nick Schwab

## Considerations and Alternatives for Dog-Friendly Areas

Dog parks, while nowhere near as ubiquitous as ball fields, picnic tables or tennis courts, are starting to become part of the American park landscape. Particularly in urban areas, where dog owners are unlikely to have adequate residential space for their pets to run, the dog park serves as a community's backyard.

Various concepts exist to make parks dog friendly. In addition to the traditional fenced enclosure, other models include unfenced areas within parks where dogs are allowed to be unleashed, and the institution of off-leash hours in regular parks.

While the fenced dog park, unlike the other two, does represent a significant investment and a modification to existing areas, it is probably the best accepted alternative in a community that includes both dog owners and those who prefer not to share their parks with unleashed dogs. This article, therefore, will focus on that model, although ideas for amenities, accessories, hygiene and more can be applied to all dog-friendly areas.

### The Particulars

Many fenced dog parks are areas within larger parks that have been set aside for dog use. Some have successfully seen so-called "pocket parks" (unused space at the end of a block, between houses or in other vacant tracts of city- or county-owned land) converted to dog parks, as well.

No matter what area is under consideration, the location must be noted carefully. If a dog park is built too close to residences, homeowners may be bothered by the dogs' barking and their owners calling them.

Decide in advance whether the park will be open 24 hours a day or locked between dawn and dusk. If the park is to be open at night, it should be well-lit for the safety of all users, canine and human. However, lighting must not trespass into residential areas. Investigate all zoning regulations for the area under consideration.

The American Kennel Club's website ([www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)) recommends space for a dog park to be "one acre or more of land surrounded by a four- to six-foot high chain-link fence. Preferably, the fence should be equipped with a double-gated



entry to keep dogs from escaping, and to facilitate wheelchair access."

Admittedly, not every park has one or more acres lying unused; as a result, many dog parks are smaller than the desired acreage. If yours falls into this category, work with the health department or local humane associations and kennel clubs to get recommendations on rules regarding the number of dogs allowed in the area at a time.

### The Surface

Dog-park surfaces are limited only by the budget or by the fundraising ability of those who will be supporting and maintaining them. Prior to construction, always have soil testing done to determine whether or not an area is capable of handling the biological load a dog park will place upon it. A soils engineer will be able to conduct this type of testing and make recommendations.

### Landscaping

The design of the park will be dictated by available space, budget, etc. Many dog parks are simply fenced areas, while others contain natural structures, such as rocks, logs, hills and even small swimming pools where dogs can play. Some parks even feature non-working fire hydrants for dogs' convenience.

### Hygiene

The easier it is for users to keep the dog park sanitary, the more likely it is that users will become stewards of the park and encourage others to be good citizens as well. Many dog parks offer receptacles filled with plastic bags that owners can use to pick up and dispose of dog waste.





parks have rules governing the presence of children as well. The AKC's website includes a list of suggested rules for dog parks, as well as case studies of various parks.

### Who's In Charge?

Some dog parks are strictly the responsibility of the local recreation and parks department, while others may be governed by a group of volunteers who have developed an agreement with the township which clearly states who is responsible for expenses associated with the park, as well as for maintenance.

### Amenities and Accessories

Some designs include upper fountains for humans, while drinking basins at the ground level can be filled for dogs' use. A hose bib and power outlet will come in handy for cleanups and can also be used if the dog park will host special events, such as animal-rescue festivals, pet blessings, or presentations by dog-agility groups or trainers.

Since owners are usually required to remain in the park with their dogs and to take responsibility for them at all times, benches as well as gazebos are recommended. Other amenities might include weatherproof donation or storage boxes to hold durable dog toys, such as Frisbees, balls, etc. Some storage units can double as benches.

The rules of the park should be clearly posted both inside and outside the fence. A covered bulletin board can be used to showcase announcements, news of upcoming programs or activities, cleanups or improvements or the address of the dog park's website.

If the facility has synthetic turf, check with the manufacturer of the surfacing system for any recommendations regarding snow removal and other weather-related maintenance issues.

### Safety First

Over the years, dog-park design has advanced, and many groups now advocate for separate areas of the park (divided by a chain-link fence): one for smaller or older dogs, and one for larger, younger or more boisterous animals.

Of course, the size and shape of a park may preclude this type of design, in which case it may be wise to post recommendations regarding the age, size or number of dogs allowed in the enclosure at various times. Some dog



### Maintenance

If the fenced dog area is large and grassy, it must be mowed, weeded, seeded, fertilized, and aerated, just as with any sports field. During rainy weather, the park will turn into mud very quickly.

Unfortunately, there's no getting around two points: dogs are hard on natural grass, and the smaller the park, the more heavily used its surface will be. In a compact area, the area may become skinned and bare because of dog and foot traffic (and dog urine). You may want to consult a soils engineer about periodic testing for possible contamination from heavy dog use. Occasionally, soil remediation may be necessary for some facilities.

Artificial turf must also be kept clean, and all manufacturers' recommendations regarding maintenance and repair must be followed. Before attempting any procedures on such turf, consult the installer for advice, as mistakes may be expensive (if not impossible) to fix.

### Community Benefit

Dog parks can be a touchy subject. For every person who supports them, there is someone who is opposed to the idea. However, over time, dog parks have gone from an esoteric concept to a desirable community amenity, particularly in urban areas, where opportunities for exercising dogs may be limited.

Despite the expense of installation, fenced dog parks can be a great selling point as long as they are well designed, well built, well located, well maintained and governed by a group of individuals who take their stewardship seriously. Keep them in good repair, enforce the rules, work with committed volunteers, and you'll see a return on your investment.

This article originally appeared in *Parks & Rec Business* magazine. For the full version, visit [www.parksandrecbusiness.com](http://www.parksandrecbusiness.com). Reprinted with permission.

# CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR REMOTE LEADERS

By Allison Horak and Antoinette Joy  
**Horak and Joy**

Whether we like it or not, 2020 brought many changes upon us. Personally, you may have experienced some significant losses – or gains – during the last 11 months. It’s likely your workday looks different, too. Perhaps you now work remotely all or part of the time. You’re probably processing more emails daily and seeing coworkers less. What impact has this had on you personally and professionally?

A recent survey about remote work yielded some interesting data. Perhaps the most statistically overwhelming finding was that 98% of employees surveyed said they would like to work remotely, at least some of the time, *for the rest of their career*. Wow! That’s significant – and something employers must acknowledge.

In the graphic at right, you’ll see more data from the same study; specifically, notice that the top two struggles of remote workers are (1) collaboration and communication, and (2) loneliness. We’ll look at these challenges individually.

## Collaboration and Communication in a Remote Environment

Collaboration is the ability to effectively work with others toward a common goal. Communication is necessary for that to happen. In remote work, one striking difference is the lack of spontaneous, organic conversations. Many of us probably took those conversations for granted, but we feel their absence now that they’re gone.

Since these casual, work-related conversations aren’t happening

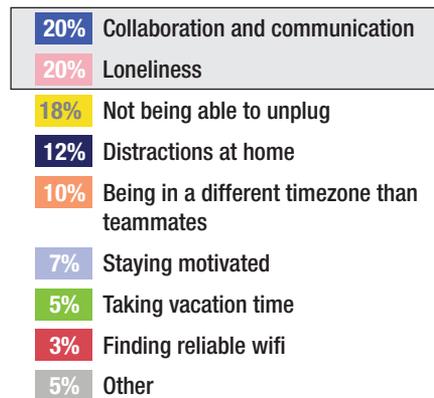
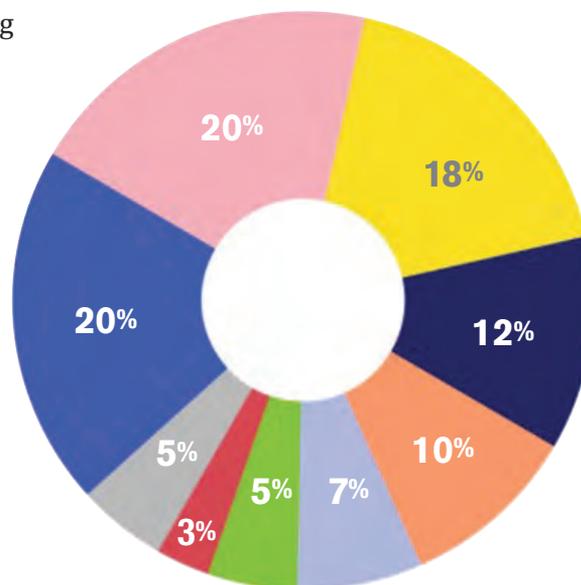
“...98% of employees surveyed said they would like to work remotely, at least some of the time, *for the rest of their career*.”

naturally anymore, we’ve got to plan for them. That may seem counterintuitive, but there’s nothing wrong with planning to be spontaneous: schedule online brainstorming sessions focused on new ideas, problem-solving, etc. – whatever business need you have.

Here are a few other ideas you can implement to improve collaboration with your remote teams:

- **Office hours:** Similar to the approach of most college professors, establish a virtual room (via Zoom or something similar) where you’ll be at a designated time. Set the expectation that you’ll be there to talk – about anything. Anyone on your team can join at any time, yet no one is obligated to show up. This accessibility to you without restrictions may reveal some ideas, concerns, and issues that might not otherwise have come to light.
- **Open-air work groups:** Sometimes we’re inspired to work because we see other people working. Set up an online room specifically for “writing projects,” for instance, where employees log on to work relatively quietly, but with others. The requirement that cameras stay on is a necessary part of this approach. Everyone in the work group can see others working, somewhat simulating the physical work environment. This

## What’s your biggest struggle with working remotely?



can be particularly helpful for people who feed off the group dynamic. (Recommendation: set ground rules for each work group, like a defined start and end time and guidelines for communication within the room.)

- **One-on-ones:** A best practice – whether remote or not – is to meet regularly with each member of your team. One of the primary advantages is the chance to speak privately with your employees and build trust. If you want your employees to come to you with challenges and ideas for improvement, they have to believe you genuinely listen to and care about them. Meeting every week (or every other week) with each person who reports to you helps foster those relationships.

## Loneliness Experienced by Remote Workers

Interestingly, the problem of loneliness – or isolation – largely has to do with communication, too. Like those spontaneous work-related conversations we just discussed, casual social interactions are significantly diminished in the remote world; for many, they're now non-existent. These “water cooler moments” aren't about work *per se*, but they serve to build community within the team. The power of this connection can't be overstated. We want team members to care about each other; they're more likely to contribute at a high level when they know their actions impact others.

How can we recreate the in-person communication that was commonplace before the pandemic? An ingenious



idea from Wayne Turmel of the Remote Leadership Institute is creating a “water cooler channel” in MS Teams or a similar platform. This channel is dedicated exclusively to non-work talk. Employees can share vacation photos, academic and sports news about their children, and silly jokes

and gifs. These unscripted, social exchanges result in the same camaraderie as our previous in-person interactions.

A necessary part of the water cooler channel's success is making contributions to the channel mandatory. You may feel reluctant to mandate participation in a social endeavor, but the channel is easy to ignore otherwise. Our suggested mandate would look like this: Each week, everyone on the team must (1) post at least one new item about themselves, and (2) respond to at least two other posts. Then, you (as the leader) have to follow up and make sure these posts are happening. And – perhaps this goes without saying – you must hold yourself to the same contribution standard as everyone else on the team.

## Conclusion

With a little bit of effort, planning, and creativity, you can increase collaboration and communication and decrease loneliness in your remote workers. Everyone will be rewarded with feelings of significance, contribution, and value – resulting in an engaged and productive workforce.



Allison Horak

a degree in Communication from UC San Diego.

Allison Horak is a consultant and trainer. She helps organizations work more efficiently through better leadership and communication practices. She's an expert in plain language, technical and business writing, and the process of editing and proofreading. Allison offers relevant and insightful in-person and virtual training for professional development. Her client list includes over 30 state agencies and over 20 California counties, cities, and special districts. Allison is an attorney licensed in both California and Oregon and has



Antoinette Joy

professional certifications include PHR, SHRM-CP, and DiSC.

Antoinette Joy is a training consultant with over 20 years' experience creating and maintaining healthy work environments. As an HR Director, she influenced organizational culture, designed training and recognition programs, and partnered with executives on strategic initiatives. Antoinette works with organizations to deliver engaging course content, both in person and virtually. She has a BA in Business Administration and Human Resources from California State University, Sacramento; some of her



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## OTARMA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

### Brush Creek Township, Jefferson County

Brush Creek Township is one of 14 townships in Jefferson County, located on the eastern Ohio border. The county is named for Thomas Jefferson, who was vice president at the time of the township's creation in 1797. Brush Creek Township consists of nearly 24 square miles with a population of slightly over 400 residents. The township was organized in the 1830s and named after Brush Creek, which flows through it. A historical marker created in 1913 was placed at the location where Confederate General John Hunt Morgan passed through Brush Creek Township in 1863, shortly before he was defeated at the nearby Battle of Salineville. Brush Creek Township became an OTARMA Member for increased coverage and benefits such as the MORE Grant.

### Mill Creek Township, Williams County

Mill Creek Township is one of 12 townships in Williams County, located in the northwest corner of Ohio. The township was organized in 1835. It consists of 24 square miles with a population of nearly 950 residents, most of whom live in the unincorporated areas. The township joined OTARMA for better coverage at a lower cost.

### Northwestern Joint Fire District

Liberty, Taylor, and York Townships of Union County collaborated to address challenges facing today's fire and emergency medical services. In doing so, they adopted a resolution to create a new joint fire district. This collaborative effort between

Liberty, Taylor, and York Townships – all members of OTARMA – represents a commitment to the future by pooling resources to create the new Northwestern Joint Fire District.

### Nottingham Township, Harrison County

Nottingham Township is one of 15 townships in Harrison County, located in eastern Ohio. Harrison County was formed from parts of Jefferson and Tuscarawas Counties in 1813. The county was named after General William Henry Harrison, who became the 9th U.S. President. Nottingham Township consists of 30 square miles with a population of approximately 325 residents. Nottingham Township joined OTARMA for increased coverage, better pricing, and the many benefits available to members.

### Ross Township, Jefferson County

Ross Township is one of 14 townships in Jefferson County, located on the eastern Ohio border. The township consists of 31 square miles with a population of nearly 700 residents. The township was founded in 1812, and named in honor of James Ross, a lawyer who represented Pennsylvania in the U.S. Senate during George Washington's presidency. Ross Township became an OTARMA Member for increased coverage and benefits such as the MORE Grant.

### Salem Township, Washington County

Salem Township is one of 22 townships in Washington County, located on the

southeastern Ohio border. Washington County, named for George Washington, is the oldest county in the state. In 1833, Salem Township contained a meeting house, store, and a steam sawmill. Today, there are approximately 1,100 residents, the majority of whom live in the rural, unincorporated areas. Salem Township joined OTARMA for improved coverage.

### Vermillion Township, Ashland County

Vermillion Township is one of 15 townships in Ashland County, located in northeastern Ohio. The township was surveyed in 1807, and the first settlement was made in 1811 by George Eckley, who built a cabin in the locality that would later be known as Goudy's Mills. Mr. Eckley's closest neighbors were two Native American villages, Jerometown and Greentown. In 1815, the first public road was built, running from Wooster to Mansfield, providing a direct route from the eastern portion of the state to the western. As a result, the lands along the road were bought and settled in a short time. Today, Vermillion Township has nearly 2,800 residents. The township joined OTARMA for better coverage than what they had.

### **If your township is not yet an OTARMA Member...**

We invite you to consider joining. Please call (800) 748-0554 and ask to speak with an OTARMA Representative or visit [www.OTARMA.org](http://www.OTARMA.org). We welcome the opportunity to meet with you, learn more about your township, and discuss how OTARMA can best serve you.