



October 18, 2021

Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

I am pleased to share with you the Department of Civil Service's Government Transparency Plan.

The Department of Civil Service is the central personnel agency for the Executive Branch of New York State government, serving approximately 150,000 employees. In this capacity, the Department oversees the administration of the civil service merit system, as well as the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP).

At the Department of Civil Service, we are dedicated to our mission of building tomorrow's workforce today by promoting a diverse, inclusive, and talented workforce. We strive to be open and accountable in carrying out our mission by providing superior customer service, fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion, and engaging in effective communication and collaboration with all our stakeholders, including the public.

Some of the Department's core duties include:

- Providing workforce management services to State agencies including classifying and allocating positions; developing, administering, and scoring civil service examinations; establishing and maintaining eligible lists; and providing policy advice and assistance with respect to personnel recruitment and placement, diversity efforts and workforce restructuring
- Administering NYSHIP, one of the largest public employer sponsored health insurance programs in the nation, serving more than 1.2 million lives;
- Assisting municipal agencies with civil service administration of more than 360,000 local government employees;
- Overseeing the Governor's Program to Hire Individuals and Veterans with Disabilities to place individuals with disabilities in State jobs and the New New York Leaders Initiative Student Intern Program.

As you will see, all of our programs and services benefit from an atmosphere in which transparency, collaboration, and participation are valued.

The Department's Government Transparency Plan outlines ongoing efforts toward maintaining a high degree of transparency in Department of Civil Service programs and initiatives and identifies areas in which new initiatives are being implemented to enhance efforts toward a more transparent and open government.

If you have any questions regarding the Department's Government Transparency Plan, please contact me at your convenience at 518-457-3701 or [Rebecca.Corso@cs.ny.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Corso@cs.ny.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca A. Corso".

Rebecca A. Corso  
Acting Commissioner



Department of  
Civil Service

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# 2021

## Department of Civil Service Government Transparency Plan



Kathy Hochul  
Governor

Rebecca A. Corso  
Acting Commissioner



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## Executive Summary

The Department of Civil Service's Government Transparency Plan details efforts currently underway within the agency to be more transparent and accountable to stakeholders and the general public. As the central personnel agency for the Executive Branch of New York State government, engagement and communication are at the core of the Department's mission and strategic plan.

The Department has long been focused on improving transparency, communications, and engagement in a wide range of areas – from proactively disclosing frequently sought-after information, to making exam-taking more accessible through remote proctoring, to educating and assisting local governments in providing benefits and managing their own civil service program – and many more.

The Plan also addresses additional changes the Department plans to undertake to increase the transparency of our work and outlines a key future initiative: a multi-agency strategic human resources platform that will increase transparency, ensure reliable and timely information, provide end-to-end visibility of transactions, and empower stakeholders with more and better self-service capabilities.

## Publication of Information

The Department of Civil Service currently makes a wide variety of information available to the Department's stakeholders and the public. The information is of particular interest to the following groups:

**Job Seekers:** The Department's website has a large breadth of information that enables job seekers to access important resources regarding upcoming civil service examinations for state and local positions, learn about and apply for internships, view their standing on eligible lists for State positions, apply for the 55b/c Program for Individuals and Veterans with Disabilities, and much more.

**NYSHIP Members:** The Department's website also provides a wealth of information about the New York State Health Insurance Program's (NYSHIP) benefits and program guidelines for state and local employee members. It also contains extensive information for local benefit administrators. In addition to the information available on the website, NYSHIP regularly mails key informational materials to the membership.

**General Public:** The Department makes an ongoing effort to proactively post information that is frequently requested by the public on its public website to make the information available without having to formally request it using the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) process. In addition, the Department's website also has a Catalogue of Records that is available for FOIL requests, so the public knows what information is maintained by the Department.

**Vendors and Potential Vendors:** Requests for Proposals, vendor contracts, and other information identified as frequently requested by the public, are proactively posted on the Department's website to make the information available without having to formally request it through the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) process.

**Individuals with Business before the Civil Service Commission:** The Commission has adopted a practice of annually posting the dates and times of its meetings. It also publishes copies of its agenda to the Department's website at least 48 hours in advance of the upcoming meeting. Each agenda includes links to relevant documents and descriptions of the agenda items so that the public can understand the purpose of the business. In addition, the Commission meetings are webcast live and videos of the previous meetings are on the Department's website.

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

The Department of Civil Service has recently posted, or will post, before the end of April 2022, the following new information to the Department's website:

- Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan
- Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan
- Procedures for Implementing Reasonable Accommodation for Applicants and Employees with Disabilities and Pregnancy-related Conditions in New York State Agencies
- NYSHIP Enrollment Reports
- Wage Disparity Study Final Report

The Department will also begin publishing a calendar of recruitment events and activities that jobseekers may be interested in attending. In addition, the Department will evaluate additional opportunities for making information available on our website that may be of interest to individuals seeking employment with New York State. These updates to the website will be done routinely and will begin in the spring of 2022.

## Timely Preparation and Publication of Legally Mandated Reports

The Department of Civil Service maintains a comprehensive list legally mandated reporting to ensure timely preparation and submission of such reports. The Department publishes most of these reports on its public website, including:

- Annual New York State Workforce Management Report
- Annual Report of New York State Government Employees' Workers' Compensation Claims
- Annual Summary Reports from Local Civil Service Agencies
- Annual Report on Women in the State Workforce
- Triennial Report on Alternative Work Schedules and Flexible Work Hours
- Workforce Diversity and inclusion Strategic Plan (required under Executive Order 187)
- Workforce Diversity and inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

The Department will review requests made by the public for data and information included in mandated reports and identify opportunities to make this information more accessible on the Department's website. The review is targeted for completion by March 2022.

## Project Sunlight

Project Sunlight is a searchable online database established by the Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011. It provides the public with unprecedented transparency regarding the appearances made by individuals and entities before the New York State government.

The Department of Civil Service continues to actively report interactions covered by Project Sunlight. These interactions largely relate to appearances involving procurement and NYSHIP rate-development proceedings. In addition, the Department adopted a Compliance Plan to provide staff with guidance on processes and monitoring to ensure requirements are met and interactions are appropriately reported. This Plan, along with the Statewide Policy, FAQ document, reporting form, and training information are posted to *Civil Service Connects* (the Department's intranet) to assist with staff awareness and compliance.

### **NEW INITIATIVES:**

The Department has begun conducting a review of its participation in Project Sunlight. Specifically, the Department's management is:

- Reviewing the Compliance Plan and the related policies and procedures to ensure full compliance. This includes references to the program in existing policy manuals and online resources provided to Department staff.
- Reviewing the current methods used to inform Department staff of the requirements of the program and identifying alternatives which would enhance staff awareness of program requirements and the procedures for complying with them.
- Preparing information about the Department's participation in Project Sunlight to be posted to the Department website. The information will include lists of the types of appearances that must be reported and those that are exempt from reporting.
- The next revision of the Department's General Administration Manual will include an updated Compliance Plan.

This review is targeted for completion by April 2022.

## FOIL Requests and Proactive Publication of Frequent Requests

The Department remains firm in its commitment to providing timely access to government records. Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests are fulfilled free of charge to requestors unless the request requires a large amount of paper to be provided. The Department's website provides members of the public with a wide range of options for submitting FOIL requests and information regarding the FOIL process. The Department is also a participant in Open FOIL NY, which is a convenient, centralized website that allows people to file a FOIL request to more than 50 State agencies and authorities.

Wherever possible, requestors are directed to information made publicly available on the Department's website to provide instant access to the desired information. The Department also works to publish information frequently identified in FOIL requests. For example, eligible list

information, Requests for Proposals, and vendor contracts are proactively posted on the Department's website.

If a FOIL involves the assembly of records not available online, the request is processed efficiently. To date in 2021, the Department's Office of Public Information has processed 161 of the 163 requests received, with the oldest FOIL request in process received less 30 days ago.

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

While the Department has always sought to publish frequently requested information, the Department's management will undertake a fresh analysis of past FOIL requests to identify additional opportunities to publish commonly requested information online. This will be complete by April 2022.

## Open Data NY

As required by Executive Order 8.95, the Department actively participates in, and publishes data to, the Open Data NY website including the complete listing of job titles and salary grades in New York State's Classified Civil Service.

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

The Department is reviewing and by September 2022 will re-catalogue its existing data sets to determine if they are publishable and should be included on Open Data NY. The review has already identified the potential for some additional data, such as eligible list information, already provided on the Department's website, to also be included on Open Data NY.

Additionally, the Department is working with other State agencies to create an integrated Human Resource Management System, which will significantly increase the availability of publishable data sets for inclusion on Open Data NY.

## Providing Public Meeting Materials with Meeting Agendas

The Civil Service Commission (Commission) is the only part of the Department of Civil Service that regularly conducts meetings that are open to the public. The Department publishes a wide variety of information related to the Commission's meeting agendas and the business it conducts, with the goal of meeting and exceeding all legally mandated posting requirements. For example:

- The Commission annually posts the dates and times of its meetings. This exceeds the requirement that upcoming dates are to be posted in the State Register two weeks prior to the meeting.
- The Commission publishes copies of its agenda for each meeting at least 48 hours in advance of the upcoming meeting.
- Each Commission agenda contains links to a description of the business conducted (such as jurisdictional classification requests submitted by State and local agencies, leave extensions for State employees, and certain appointments to State positions) so members of the public understand the purpose of the business being conducted.



- Many meeting materials are posted online so members of the public understand the relevant facts being considered at the meeting. In selecting the documents posted online, the Department's management performed a detailed review of the information contained in each class of documents to ensure that the information reflects the facts being considered, while respecting individual privacy rights and maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information.

Information related to business conducted at prior Commission meetings is also provided online to the extent practicable.

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

The Department will complete a review of the materials provided for the Civil Service Commission meetings to determine whether there are any additional materials that can be included with the agendas. This review will be complete by December 2021.

## Records Retention

The Department maintains its records retention program in compliance with existing records retention schedules set forth by the Cultural Affairs Law and Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. The Department's Records Management Officer (RMO) works with the New York State Archives to determine the appropriate handling of each record series maintained by the Department. Most recently, the RMO worked with State Archives to establish the proper retention of annual employment reports submitted by State contractors. The RMO also works with Division Directors, supervisors, and staff to determine the appropriate disposition of the records they maintain and advises staff on the proper handling of new record series' when they are created. The Department's Office of Finance and Administration is the custodian of Department's records identified as inactive and appropriate for long-term storage.

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

The RMO is currently working to develop a new record series for records created to administer the Paid Family Leave program that is currently available to certain State employees. Additionally, the Department has initiated a review of policies and procedures related to the storage and disposition of records. These two projects are expected to be completed by October 2022.

Longer term improvements planned by the Department's management involve design and implementation of a Human Resources Management System (HRMS). This project, which is currently in the procurement phase, will allow the Department to replace multiple outdated and unsupported systems and will be more efficient at managing employee records, position management, and health benefits data. The Records Management Officer has been actively consulting with the project team to ensure the system's business logic is constructed to manage the records contained within the system in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

## Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The Department is committed to building a talented, inclusive, and diverse state workforce through effective communication and collaboration with our stakeholders, including the public. Public engagement is at the core of achieving this mission.

Almost all the Department's operational divisions engage with the public in various ways. For Example:

- The **Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management (ODIM)** actively engages in recruitment activities, including but not limited to job fairs for State and City Colleges/Universities and targeted public recruitment activities for diverse populations. ODIM also conducts Implicit Bias training to professional organizations, other state agencies, local governments, and public colleges and universities.
- The **Municipal Services Division (MSD)** provides ongoing support and technical assistance to local governments, including field visits. MSD also annually conducts a training conference with the NYS Association of Personnel and Civil Service Officers and oversees the Civil Service Institute for municipal governments, which provides comprehensive training for individuals newly appointed to local civil service administration positions.
- In addition to holding exams and engaging with jobseekers and current State employees, the **Testing Services Division (TSD)** holds meetings with stakeholders before and after exams to plan the scope of the exam, develop test material, and review exam results to ensure tests are appropriate, up-to-date, and fair. TSD also conducts presentations and answers questions at conferences for professional organizations and local governments
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department initiated a new **remote proctoring** program for select civil service exams. The remote proctoring program is a secure, web-based test delivery method that uses professional test proctors and technology to monitor applicants while they complete exams from a safe location. The Department is in the process of expanding this program which increases public access to employment with New York State by eliminating the need to travel to a test site. In addition, remote proctoring also provides the Department flexibility to provide special accommodations for test takers who are unable to report to a test site due to medical/religious reasons.
- The **Staffing Services Division (SSD)** engages stakeholders and the public in numerous ways, including but not limited to:
  - Holding career mobility workshops attended by thousands of state employees, ensuring that participants have the resources necessary for career planning and/or change;
  - Hosting New York State Personnel Council meetings;
  - Conducting regular presentations to professional organizations;
  - Participating in exam scope planning meetings;
  - Overseeing the Civil Service Institute for State government, which educates Human Resource Trainees and professionals; and
  - Through its clinics and nurse stations, Employee Health Services (EHS) engages state employees and candidates for employment for certain New York State positions.

- The **Classification & Compensation (C&C) Division** regularly provides training to professional organizations and gatherings of other agencies' staff, and SUNY staff.
- The **Employee Benefits Division (EBD)** manages NYSHIP and provides in-person and virtual live training conferences for Healthcare Benefit Administrators from local governments, public authorities, and other State agencies. In addition, EBD makes presentations at pre-retirement seminars for New York State employees, as well as at conferences for professional organizations and the Retired Public Employees Association.

In addition to the Department's vast amount of live public engagement, we have significantly expanded the agency's digital footprint. The Department has increased our social media following by more than 70% since 2018, promoting civil service exams to more than 17,000 social media followers. In addition, the newly redesigned public website is now accessed by approximately two million unique viewers each year.

#### **NEW INITIATIVES:**

In the coming months, the Department will be expanding its public outreach efforts, including offering virtual information sessions for individuals interested in working for New York State. We will also continue to expand the use of remote exam proctoring.

## **Key Future Initiative: Human Resources Management System**

The Human Resources Management System (HRMS) is a multi-agency initiative to implement a strategic human resources platform that will transform the maintenance and processing of many of the Department's information and records. HRMS will consolidate multiple human resources software systems into a modern system and incorporate several business process changes that will change the way NYS human resource staff work in the future. The projects goals include:

- Streamlining business processes to improve efficiency;
- Increasing transparency of services and information via improved workflows and notifications;
- Empowering stakeholders with integrated data, task management, and self-service capabilities;
- Incorporating a shared service model expanded to all New York State government for delivery of Human Resources transactions;
- Ensuring that reliable and timely information is available for reporting and for informed decision-making;
- Enabling end-to-end visibility with a holistic view of transactions;
- Eliminating legacy State agency HR systems;
- Reducing data redundancy and duplication of effort; and
- Reducing the number of data transfers and the associated issues and effort.

The Department is working collaboratively with the Office of General Services (OGS), the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER), the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS), and the Division of Budget (DOB) to enter into a contract with a system integrator.