

## **AGENCY TRANSPARENCY PLAN UPDATE**

**DATE:** February 17, 2024

**AGENCY NAME:** Department of Public Service

### **DELIVERABLES ACHIEVED SINCE 2021**

#### Agency Website

The Department worked with the New York State Office of Information Technology over the course of 2022 and early 2023 to migrate the Department's previous out-of-date website to a new modern, more accessible, and consumer-friendly platform.

As part of the migration, existing content was reviewed to determine if it should be updated, retained, or removed, and new content was added. The new website was launched in the first quarter of 2023. The redesigned website has improved transparency by increasing accessibility through cleaner and easier to navigate menus and a search option. Additionally, the website can now be translated into 13 languages in addition to English.

The transparency of the Department's website has also been improved by adding helpful content to give consumers an overview of what the Department does and is working on, and how the public can get involved. Improvements include adding a "First Time Here?" button at the top of the Department's homepage, which links to a page with "Helpful Information About the PSC," such as "How a Major Rate Case Works," "How to File a Complaint," and "How to Comment and Receive Updates on Commission Cases." In addition, the Department has added a "Notable Cases and Matters" page which gives overviews and information about non-rate case proceedings that DPS is addressing.

- [How to File a Complaint](#) (February 28, 2023)
- [First Time Here?](#) (June 26, 2023)
- [How a Major Rate Case Works](#) (May 15, 2023)
- [How to Comment and Receive Updates on Commission Cases](#) (Jan 25, 2023)
- [Notable Cases and Matters](#) (September 14, 2023)
- [Language Access Plan](#) (October 1, 2022)
- [Language Identification Tool](#) (January 25, 2023)

#### Public Participation

In conjunction with the Department's review of its website, the Department also undertook efforts to ensure that opportunities to involve the public in the Public Service Commission's (Commission, PSC) decision-making process are more prominent on the website. The new DPS website has detailed calendar listings that make it easier for the public to participate in Commission events. Each event has its own

page, including PSC Sessions, public statement hearings, evidentiary and procedural hearings, technical conferences, outreach events, and comments sought or due on specific cases. Details about each event are included or linked to, such as date, time, location, WebEx (or similar) links to join or watch when applicable, a link to the relevant case files and related notice, and a direct link to post comments on a case. PSC Sessions are easy to access live on session day from the DPS website homepage, and current and past agendas, transcripts, and videos are organized on one “PSC Sessions and Materials” page.

- [PSC Sessions and Materials](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Master Calendar](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Public Statement Hearings & Evidentiary and Procedural Hearings](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Technical Conferences](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Outreach Events \(Calendar\)](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Comments Due, and other Deadlines](#) (Frequently updated)
- [PSC Session Recordings on YouTube](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Session Agendas](#) (Frequently updated)
- [PSC Transcripts](#) (Frequently updated)
- [Past PSC Sessions](#) (Frequently updated)

#### Language Access

The Department conducted a full review of language access resources with the goal of enhancing public engagement with our consumers with limited English proficiency (LEP). All the Department’s Language Access vital documents have been translated into the State’s 12 most commonly spoken non-English languages and made available to the LEP population through the Department’s outreach and education events and Department’s public website, which includes a dedicated language access page. The Department’s website has also been updated to allow non-English speakers to review the Department’s entire website in 13 different languages with the click of a button. In addition, based on requests from the public, the Department has made Spanish interpreters available to the LEP public at recent Public Statement Hearings and published the notice of hearings in both English and Spanish to provide more transparency of the Commission’s proceedings. Finally, the Department has also provided more in-depth in person training to our call center and analysis staff on the Language Access Plan/Law which was signed on July 1, 2022 (Executive Law 202-a).

- [Language Access Plan](#) (October 1, 2022)

#### Project Sunlight

In 2021, DPS’s Director of Enterprise Risk Management performed an audit of Project Sunlight Compliance. Since then, the Director regularly reviews staff’s reported meetings, provides quarterly reports to executives in the agency, and maintains updated lists of staff subject to mandatory reporting and training. In 2022 and 2023, DPS Staff reported more than 500 meetings in Project Sunlight.

#### Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

Since 2021, the DPS has stayed current with timely responses to FOIL requests. Since January 2021, the DPS has received 622 FOILs, and has responded to 614. The oldest outstanding FOIL is from December 2023, which has already been partially responded to and the remainder is due on March 8th. The next oldest outstanding FOIL is from January 15, 2024.

- [FOIL](#) (January 25, 2023)
- [DPS Records Subject Matter List](#) (November 6, 2023)

### Records Retention

During 2022, the Department reviewed all its records retention schedules and made updates as necessary. In addition, the Department conducted a thorough review to determine if any official records (not already archived in the Department's publicly accessible electronic filing system, Document & Matter Management, known as "DMM") needed to be archived, which resulted in additional records being moved to State Archives. The Department's review of its records management determined that the vast majority of Department records are already publicly available through DMM. Files in DMM include all public and utility filings, public comments, Commission Orders, and annual reports. DMM allows the public to have easy access to critical Commission and Department records, and documents filed in DMM are electronically archived and available indefinitely. Records in the system date back to 1985, and records dating back to the late 1970's have been digitized and are publicly available on the Department's website. Going forward, the Department has established a process for an annual review of records retention related matters to ensure continued compliance with best retention practices.

- [Document and Matter Management System \(DMM\)](#) (January 25, 2023)

## **INITIATIVES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2024**

### Rate Case Public Awareness

The Department will utilize its website to further expand upon its efforts to make it easier for the public to follow along with a rate case proceeding, including summarizing the rate increases being sought in a rate case and making milestone dates in a proceeding more easily accessible to the public. This change is expected to increase transparency in the rate case proceedings and enable the public to more closely follow and actively participate in the proceedings.

### Stakeholder Outreach and Input

The Department will build on and expand transparency through its website and on social media by making sure the Department continues to post timely meetings, hearings, comments sought, programs available, outreach events, and continues to add more timely details to pages such as pending rate cases and "Notable Cases and Matters."

### Consumer Outreach

To raise public awareness of the State's energy policy goals and consumer programs and protections, the Department's Office of Consumer Services (OCS) continues to participate in hundreds of local and statewide events like the Great New York State Fair. Starting in 2024, OCS will begin to shift its attendance at smaller events to a more community-based, grass-roots focus, which will enable OCS to expand its reach to more New Yorkers.

### Consumer Education

Beginning in 2024, OCS plans to begin a project to transform all its written materials – brochures, FAQs, handouts, one-pagers, etc. – from a text-heavy presentation to a presentation that utilizes graphics and pictures as much as possible, to further the Department's education efforts and bridge the gap between highly technical Agency actions and a less technical audience. OCS also anticipates creating and disseminating video products that will educate consumers on their utility bills, low-income and other assistance programs, consumer rights, and the complaint process.