



AGENCY TRANSPARENCY PLAN UPDATE: 02/21/2024

AGENCY NAME: Empire State Development

As New York State's chief economic development agency, Empire State Development (ESD) is committed to implementing Governor Hochul's mandate to broaden transparency and ensure information and data are publicly accessible. Under Governor Hochul's leadership, ESD will continue to evaluate its practices and identify ways to promote transparency, even beyond its initial [plan](#) released in 2021.

Inspired by Governor Hochul's vision and at the direction of President, CEO & Commissioner Hope Knight, ESD is focused on implementing the goals laid out in its plan and has fostered a culture of transparency and accountability across all its programs. The following highlights key deliverables achieved since the release of ESD's transparency plan:

DELIVERABLES ACHIEVED SINCE 2021

1. Launched a Transparency Page to Make ESD Reports More Accessible:

ESD has ensured all ESD public information and reporting are highly visible and easily accessible online. A [landing page dedicated to ESD's transparency efforts](#) has been added to the ESD website and is being promoted via social media and promotional call-out on the ESD homepage. ESD now ensures that all material posted to the agency's website is machine readable to make the information more accessible.

2. Notified the Public of ESD Updates:

A [new opt-in email alert](#) feature has been added on the new transparency page that allows the public to sign up for emails alerting them each time a report, meeting notice, agenda etc. is published on the website. ESD regularly notifies the public via social media and the opt-in email alerts when agency information is updated.

3. Ensured Timely Release of Reports and Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) Requests:

ESD has adopted a more robust management process to ensure all statutorily required reports are delivered on time. ESD has continued to focus on timely responses to FOIL requests and has prioritized the proactive disclosure of documents associated with large projects of broad public interest to minimize the need for interested parties to submit FOIL requests.

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4. Expanded the Database of Economic Incentives:

ESD has expanded ESD's [Database of Economic Incentives](#). The Database provides user-friendly searchable, downloadable, and regularly updated accounting of ESD-supported projects.

In November 2022, the Database was expanded from 26 to 54 fields. The Database now includes project-level data from other state agencies/authorities engaged in economic development projects. This database is one of the most comprehensive state-level databases of economic incentives in the nation, in terms of number of fields, number of programs, number of projects, frequency of updates and ease of use. Most recently, ESD updated the user interface of the database to make the resource more user friendly.

5. Fostered Increased Public Engagement:

ESD has encouraged greater public participation in its Board of Directors' meetings by posting simultaneously, as early as possible, the meeting agendas and materials. In addition, while continuing its practice of providing submitted public comments to the Directors for their information and review prior to a meeting, ESD now posts any received comments to the meeting's webpage for the public's information.

6. Fostered Increased Community-Level Engagement:

A [new opt-in email alert](#) feature has been added on the new transparency page that allows the public to sign up for emails alerting them each time a report, meeting notice, agenda etc. is published on the website. ESD regularly notifies the public via social media and the opt-in email alerts when agency information is updated.

Also, ESD has re-launched the Spotlight Presentation item to its board agendas, where a member of the ESD team presents on a specific program, project, or region. These presentations are copied from the full recording of the meeting and are individually posted to the Transparency page under the "[Spotlight Presentation Videos](#)" tab.

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INITIATIVES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2024

1. Launch New Independent Evaluations of ESD Programs:

ESD is committed to principles of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. Building on the work done to date to evaluate programs, including the Department of Tax and Finance's recent independent analysis of economic development tax credits, ESD is in the process of securing an independent third party to conduct additional evaluations over the next two years to examine, analyze, and report on the programmatic fiscal and economic impact and return on investment of each of the chosen programs. In the first year, the selected firm will produce an evaluation of the Entrepreneurship Assistance Centers Program, which is legislatively required, as well as the Linked Deposit Program and the Centers for Advanced Technology (CAT). Additional studies will be identified for the second year of the contract.

2. Implement Regular Training on Project Sunlight for Senior Staff:

ESD will continue to ensure the use of the Project Sunlight database in accordance with the Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011. In addition, ESD will implement a biannual training on the Project Sunlight reporting requirements for ESD staff. ESD senior staff will be expected to attend at least one session per year.

3. Continue to Update the ESD Website to Make Information Accessible:

ESD will continue to update its website and digital content to ensure all relevant programs and information are highly visible and easily accessible to the public. Specifically, ESD will update the online pages housing all industry-specific content, including those for Life Sciences, Semiconductor and Clean Energy. Additionally, ESD will be updating the Small Business webpage in an effort to provide small business owners clear and easy access to programs and resources available to them. The agency will also continue to regularly promote its overall website and various programs and initiatives on social media.