Welcome Robert J. Rodriguez, Acting Secretary of State

Greetings! As you may have heard, I recently started serving as Acting Secretary of State under the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul. And I am thrilled.

For the past 11 years, I served as member of the New York State Assembly representing East Harlem. During my time as a legislator, I focused on supporting community-based development projects, including creating and preserving affordable housing, and bringing good paying jobs to the community.

As Secretary of State, I will focus on carrying out this important work through the Division of Community Services which gives me a great opportunity to continue delivering programs that improve the lives of millions of New Yorkers.

We all know this is a unique moment in our society due to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Division of Community Services and all of you as part of its broad network provide the foundation to offer opportunities to New Yorkers to move on and recover from the pandemic to the next stage of progress and growth.

One of our priorities is to break down the barriers that keep our residents economically stagnant. And all of you, as our on-the-ground partners play an integral role in this effort. You are working hard to help New Yorkers in job training, skill matching, community outreach, virtual career fairs and other ongoing endeavors to move job seekers to permanent work; including your own needs to fully staff and be able to serve the community.

And as you know, there are many other economic hardships resulting from the pandemic. With the eviction moratorium now expired, thousands of New Yorkers are facing a new housing reality. I know you are working hard to address these needs and I want you to know that I am here to help you carry out this extraordinary mission.

We know there is a better future for all if we work together and bring the necessary tools to our neighborhoods. COVID-19 brought hardship to everyone; however, New Yorkers are resilient, and they are ready to move forward. I applaud you and I look forward to meeting each of you to learn how to best support your ongoing endeavors to move New Yorkers in need overcome the present economic hardships and lead us to a brighter economic environment.

All the best,
Robert J. Rodriguez, Acting Secretary of State
“Together We Dine” MLK Celebration

In celebration of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, the Economic Opportunity Program of Chemung and Schuyler counties hosted a virtual MLK celebration. Life’s most persistent and urgent question asked by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “What are you doing for others?”

"Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. upheld the tenets of community harmony, unity, peace, and justice for all. Dr. King's dream continues to inspire us daily. At the Economic Opportunity Program, we envision a future where all people of our community live with dignity and have the opportunity and ability to live economically productive and satisfying lives,” says Andrea Ogunwumi, Executive Director of Economic Opportunity Program, Inc. of Chemung County (EOP).

Twenty-four years ago, EOP began its Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. EOP continues this tradition annually by celebrating “Together We Dine”. Volunteers and staff prepared individual meals for community residents. Each year community partners participate in this service project. They spend the day helping to deliver meals to the home bound, assisting in packaging meals and even serving from hot food stations. Deliveries focus on serving disabled and elderly community members. Elmira is host to two of the largest seniors and disabled high-rise buildings.

Over the years, the utilization of these services has grown to over 1,000 community members. During the COVID pandemic, EOP refused to cancel the event, and instead adapted. A special partner, New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG) Corporation delivered meals to our high-rise housing facilities while the agency created a drive-through for the community to pick up dinners. This year 847 meals were delivered/served. Twenty-four years later this is “Together We Dine”.

Office for New Americans Recognizes Human Trafficking Prevention

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. In recognition of this important topic that directly impacts the new American community in New York State, ONA hosted a webinar on January 25, 2022, for its network on this topic. This webinar builds upon previous trainings and highlights the risk factors for both sex and labor trafficking for immigrants, and new Americans with disabilities.

This training offered participants the opportunity to learn how to identify and assist survivors of human trafficking. It also provided an update on recent trends, including a spotlight on the North Country region and on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cases of human trafficking. Finally, the training shared information on where to get resources and reach out for additional information and assistance.

For more information about this webinar, or to sign up to receive invitations to future ONA webinars, contact NewAmericans@dos.ny.gov.
Department of Labor is Here to Help!

Employers everywhere are looking for good candidates to fill open positions. Meanwhile, thousands of New Yorkers are looking for rewarding jobs offering competitive salaries. The New York State Department of Labor’s (NYSDOL) JobZone is where everyone’s interests align.

If you are an employer and would like to add your job openings to the pool of available employment opportunities accessed by JobZone users – those looking to upgrade their current jobs and those re-entering the world of work, alike – follow these simple instructions:

1. First, you should know that JobZone pulls all job openings from the New York State (NYS) Job Bank, so you will need to visit the Job Bank website to create an account.
2. To create an account, click on the ‘Employers’ link in the top righthand corner. From there, enter your email address and submit.
3. Next, fill out the form to register your company information with the U.S. National Labor Exchange. When completed, hit ‘Register’.
4. You can now post new jobs, manage the jobs you’ve already posted, and search resumes.

Once you have posted a new job on the NYS Job Bank, it will automatically populate in the JobZone search options and every user in your area will be able to search and find your job post instantly. Posting your job openings in JobZone is the fastest way to connect job seekers with your business.
Be #PrivacyAware during Data Privacy Week!

On January 28th, we recognize Data Privacy Day- an international initiative that spreads awareness on the importance of protecting one’s data. Started in 2008, Data Privacy Day commemorates the signing of Convention 108, the first legally binding international treaty dealing with privacy and data protection, signed on January 28, 1981. The NYS Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) joins consumer advocates in observing the first-ever Data Privacy Week from January 24-January 28, 2022.

Protecting your privacy is as important as protecting your home or your valuables. Anything done online generates data, and if that data falls into the wrong hands, the results can be disastrous. In 2020, there were 4.7 million reports of fraud, identity theft, and other kinds of consumer reports, up over one million cases from 2019, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Fraud resulted in money lost in 34% of cases, resulting in $3.3 billion dollars lost across the U.S. that year. One’s credit score and reputation can also be impacted, in addition to the effects on one’s wellbeing from the stress of responding to identity theft and fraud.

Fortunately, there are preventative measures one can take to protect their data. Be more #PrivacyAware with these tips:

- **Protect your passwords.** Never share your password with anyone and never write them down. Change your passwords periodically to prevent hackers from gaining access. Strong passwords have at least 15 characters and contain upper- and lower-case characters and special symbols. Use a verified password manager to help keep track of passwords across different websites.

- **Review your privacy settings.** Consumers often unknowingly opt-in to sharing data on websites and social media networks, simply by logging in. Make it a habit to review privacy settings and opt-out of data collection. This is especially important on social media networks, which often connect across multiple websites and collect information about users.

- **Use multi-factor authentication.** Many websites include an option to use multiple credentials to log in, such as a text message or an email with a temporary code after entering the password. This makes it more difficult for scammers to log onto an account. Opt-in to multi-factor authentication wherever it is available.

- **Educate others.** Help others protect their data by being a data privacy advocate. Teach youth about protecting their privacy online. Share these tips with loved ones who struggle when using technology. Running a business or organization? Teach employees about protecting their own and the company’s privacy and adopt a privacy framework to create a culture of privacy.


If you are concerned that your data privacy may have been compromised, the NYS DCP can help. The NYS DCP provides information to respond to identity theft, in addition to other resources to resolve consumer concerns. The Consumer Assistance Helpline 1-800-697-1220 is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding State Holidays, and consumer complaints can be filed at any time at [https://dos.ny.gov/file-consumer-complaint](https://dos.ny.gov/file-consumer-complaint).

The NYS DCP offers these tips and more to educate and support New York’s consumers. To find more information, go to the NYS DCP website at: [https://dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection](https://dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection).

The NYS DCP will be sharing helpful advice and resources all throughout Data Privacy Week through its social networks. Connect with the Division on social media by following us via Twitter at @NYSConsumer or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nysconsumer](http://www.facebook.com/nysconsumer).
NEW! Did You Know……

DCS Program: Reminder – N-PCL § 519

New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law (N-PCL) requires specific reports to be reviewed by a not-for-profit’s board of directors during each annual meeting? N-PCL § 519, Annual Report of Directors, requires:

- At the annual meeting the board shall present a report verified by the:
  - Board President and Treasurer or
  - Majority of the directors or
  - Certified by an independent public or certified public accountant or a firm selected by the board.

- Detailing:
  - Assets and liabilities, including trust funds, of the agency as of the end of a twelve-month fiscal period terminating not more than six months prior to the annual meeting.
  - Principal changes in assets and liabilities, including trust funds, during the above referenced fiscal period.
  - Revenue or receipts, both unrestricted and restricted to particular purposes during the above referenced fiscal period.
  - The expenses or disbursements, for both general and restricted purposes, during the above referenced fiscal period.
  - The number of members of the corporation as of the date of the report, together with a statement of increase or decrease in such number during said fiscal period, and a statement of the place where the names and places of residence of the current members may be found. A not-for-profit that does not have members does not need to include this in the report.

- And the report is filed:
  - With the minutes of the annual meeting of the board.

Should you have any questions regarding this section of N-PCL, the NYS Department of State (DOS) encourages you to seek legal counsel for guidance. Your assigned DOS Program Analyst can provide training and technical assistance on best practices to address this board requirement.

Training Announcement: NYS Community Action Plan Templates

The NYS Department of State (DOS), Division of Community Services (DCS), along with the New York State Community Action Agency (NYSCAA) are pleased to release the newest version of the NYS Community Action Plan Templates. The templates were a joint effort between the DCS, NYSCAA and staff from the NYS Community Action Network.

The Community Action Plan templates are a resource for the network and not mandatory to use. The Community Action Plan Templates are intended to highlight the use of Result Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) concepts, principles, and best practice approaches for reporting benchmarks and outcomes on specific programs.

Training Announcement with NYSCAA: Webinar title: Community Action Plan Training

When: February 1, 2022 - 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST    Registration Link: [Click here to register]

Description of training: This webinar will be facilitated by Jackie Orr, CEO of NYSCAA, and Jessica Lowell, Supervising Analyst, Division of Community Services. They will provide a history of the workgroup including, how and why the group got started, what the group has accomplished to date, and share a completed work plan template. In addition, workgroup members Sue Kervin, Action for a Better Community; Katrina Chaffee, Community Action of Orleans and Genesee; and John Rossi, Westchester Community Opportunity Program, will share their experience as workgroup members and how they plan to use/implement the templates at their agency.

DOS would like to thank NYSCAA, and the Community Action staff who have contributed to the work of the group and the success of the templates. Please visit DOS website to view the templates.
DOS Fiscal: Reminder – MWBE

Article 15-A of the NYS Executive Law was enacted on July 19, 1988, to promote equality of economic opportunities for Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs) and to eliminate barriers to participation in state contracting. The law establishes goals for New York State agencies to include MWBEs in procurements and discretionary spending, with an annual goal of 30%. The MWBE requirement applies to expenditures, including contracts and grants. MWBE goals apply to qualified budget lines of all contracts including contracts supported by federal funding which do not have a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) component. Expenditures which are excluded from goal calculations include personal services, travel, and items which are not subject to competitive purchasing such as utilities and subscriptions.

Under 5 NYCRR §142.8, subrecipients (grantees) are required to make “Good Faith Efforts” (GFEs) to provide meaningful participation to MWBEs as subcontractors or suppliers in the performance of their contracts. What constitutes a GFE varies but will generally include the following:

All subrecipients must search the Directory of NYS certified MWBEs for every purchase or solicitation on an MWBE applicable budget line. Failure to do so will result in non-approval of a request for waiver, even when otherwise eligible MWBE outreach is documented. Additionally, subrecipients must:

- Demonstrate that search criteria are reasonable. Search criteria should anticipate a common vendor category, e.g., accountant, auditor, computer equipment. A search for a “CARES Analyst” will not reveal qualified vendors who would not classifying their organization in this way. There should be a justification for limiting searches to a specific geographic area (it should not be limited). Use the broadest search criteria possible to generate a list of potential subcontractors.
- Conduct outreach to MWBEs. To demonstrate a GFE, it is a best practice to reach out to a large portion of MWBEs identified through the database search.
- Reach out to your Program Analyst or the MWBE unit for assistance with search criteria, particularly if no MWBEs are found.
- Maintain documentation of the directory search such as screenshots or printouts.
- Maintain documentation of solicitation of MWBEs found on the Directory and the responses received, if any. Best practice is to conduct all solicitations in writing; however, email is sufficient.
- Maintain copies of all advertisements in general circulation, trade and minority- or women-oriented publications along with the date(s) of such advertisements to ensure the broadest audience is being reached. Posting opportunities in the Contract Reporter is a good start.
- Document the justification for selection of the subcontractor/supplier if responses (bid submission or offer rejection) were received from MWBEs and a non-MWBE vendor was selected. Such documentation includes but is not limited to price comparison, bid tabulation sheet, a copy of existing agreement limiting procurement from other businesses, negotiation with non-MWBE contractors to identify MWBE subcontracting opportunities, meeting notes, etc.

Subrecipients should check their subcontractors or suppliers’ NYS MWBE certification status on a regular basis.

Subrecipients should always follow their internal procurement policies in procuring services or commodities. Subrecipients are not obligated to select an MWBE vendor if that selection methodology contradicts the grantees procurement policy. Subrecipients must ensure they have the appropriate documentation to support selection of the subcontractor or supplier. Submission of the policy may be included with documentation of a GFE.

Please keep these best practices in mind when soliciting services or commodities which are part of approved grant budgets. Subrecipients should maintain all documentation for submission to DOS in support of MWBE waiver requests. As always, let your Program Analyst or the MWBE unit know if you have any questions. Fiscal MWBE contact info: dos.sm.mwbe@dos.ny.gov or call (518) 474-2754.

The NYS MWBE Directory and additional information can be found at https://ny.newnycontracts.com/.
Additional Resources for the CSBG Network

Emergency Broadband Benefit

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program created to help families and households who cannot afford or are struggling to afford internet service. This new benefit will connect eligible households to jobs, critical healthcare services, virtual classrooms, and more.

For more information, including eligibility requirements, visit: https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit.

Outreach kits are available in multiple languages: https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-outreach-toolkit.

It is important to note that the program runs as long as there are funds to support it, all eligible participants are encouraged to apply ASAP!

Reach out to Gregg Collar (Gregg.collar@dos.ny.gov) from the NYS Department of State, Division of Consumer Protection, who will be able to provide you with further direction and answer any specific questions you might have regarding the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

Child Tax Credit (CTC)

The Office of Community Services recently released a Dear Colleague Letter regarding the expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in the American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021. Visit whitehouse.gov/child-tax-credit for more information. Since the CTC has ended, here is what families need to know about the CTC in 2022:

- Families with children can still get the rest of their 2021 credits—but only if they file a 2021 tax return. Families who got monthly CTC payments in 2021 received six months’ worth of payments (from July through December). To get the remaining half of the credit they are eligible for, they must file a tax return this year. This is true even if a parent made little or no income last year—they are still eligible for the CTC and must file a tax return to get it. The CTC non-filer portal is closed, so all parents should file a 2021 tax return. Parents who opted out of receiving the monthly payments last year using the IRS website will need to file a tax return to get their entire 2021 CTC payment. Parents should also file their tax return to claim new babies who were born in 2021 or any other children for whom they didn’t get advance payments in 2021. Even if a baby was born as late as December 2021, that baby would still be eligible for the full $3,600 CTC payment when their family files a 2021 tax return.

For further information regarding updates on the CTC please visit: The Center for Law and Social Policy and Internal Revenue Service

Resources for Responding to COVID-19

- Community Action Partnership: COVID-19 Community Needs Assessment
- CAPLAW: Coronavirus Updates for the Community Action Network
- NASCSP Coronavirus Resources
- NYSCAA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources
- Food Pantries across New York State
- New York State Department of Health
- NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance - Local Departments of Social Services

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