



OFFICE OF FAITH & NONPROFIT DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

January 2026 Newsletter

Greetings and welcome back! Please use this newsletter for information on upcoming events, funding opportunities, and resources to ensure your organizations can thrive.

OFNDS Monthly: Honoring Heritage, Building Community



The New York State Office of Faith and Non-Profit Development Services January 2026 Newsletter highlights how faith communities and nonprofits across New York are advancing unity, service, and community impact in the new year. This edition spotlights Muslim American Heritage Month, shares timely updates on statewide initiatives and resources, and features opportunities for collaboration, capacity-building, and funding support. As we begin 2026, we remain committed to strengthening partnerships that expand access to services, uplift local leaders, and help communities thrive in every region of the state.



UPCOMING: 2026 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS



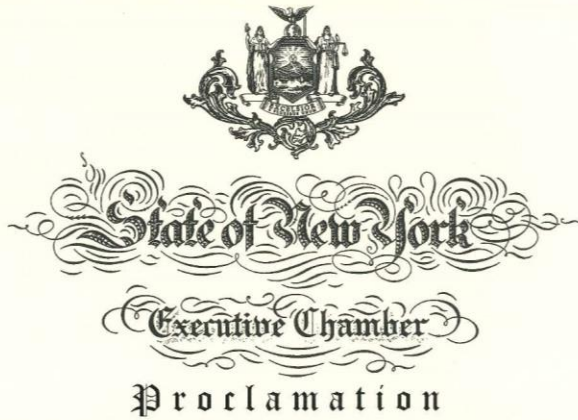
MEDIA ADVISORY:

GOVERNOR HOCHUL DELIVERS 2026 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

- **WHEN:** Tuesday, January 13, 2026
- **TIME:** 1:00 PM
- **WHERE:** Hart Theater at The Egg, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12220
- *Details on media logistics to follow on www.governor.ny.gov/*



Governor Kathy Hochul's proclaimed the Month of January as Muslim American Heritage Month in the State of New York for the First Time



Whereas, New York State takes great pride in the varied religious and cultural traditions of our residents and continually encourages the people of New York to take the opportunity to better appreciate, recognize, and understand the rich cultures, histories, and principles of Muslim Americans; and

Whereas, Muslims—the second largest religious group in the world with an estimated 2 billion adherents, representing around 25 percent of the world's population—have made significant contributions to society throughout history, including in the arts, sciences, mathematics, technology, literature, music, medicine, and philosophy; and

Whereas, there are approximately 3.45 million Muslims who live in the United States, with close to approximately 1,000,000 currently residing in New York; representing the largest Muslim American population in the nation, our state is uniquely fortunate to benefit from their advocacy, civic engagement, humanitarianism, charity, culture, and business; and

Whereas, this diverse populace includes descendants of Muslims who have lived in the United States' geographical area since before its founding, arriving in America as early explorers and enslaved Africans, as well as recent immigrants from many nations across the globe; and

Whereas, the Muslim community includes individuals of all races, ethnicities, and cultures, and as such, New York remains committed to being a beacon of hope, tolerance, and inclusivity that celebrates the diversity of its communities and protects them from Islamophobia, hate, bias, and harm; and

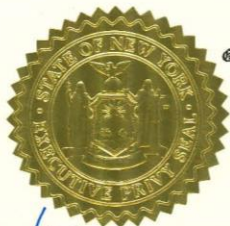
Whereas, today, Muslim Americans have a significant impact on our political landscape, currently holding many elected offices and public roles and serving at all levels of government in our state and nation, and we are committed to ensuring that New York State's leadership reflects the diversity of our communities; and

Whereas, New York recognizes the positive impact that Muslims have made—and continue to make—to the advancement of our state and the nation as a whole; as such, we are proud to join in this month-long celebration and extend gratitude to our Muslim communities for their contributions;

Now, Therefore, I, Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim January 2026 as

MUSLIM AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

in the Empire State.



Given under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State at the Capitol in the City of Albany this second day of January in the year two thousand twenty-six.

Kathy Hochul
Governor

Karen Persichilli Keogh
Secretary to the Governor
Karen Persichilli Keogh



Governor Kathy Hochul issued the first ever proclamation declaring January as Muslim American Heritage Month across New York State on Friday, January 2nd, 2026. Governor Hochul further directed 16 state landmarks to be illuminated green this evening in observance this month, and in celebration of the heritage and culture of Muslim Americans.



Faith Leaders of New York Spotlight Monthly Feature:

Recognizing Governor Kathy Hochul's proclamation of the month of January as Muslim American Heritage Month in the State of New York for the First Time

**NEW YORK STATE EXECUTIVE INTERFAITH COUNCIL MEMBER:
CAROLYNN B. SOZEN**

What does this first statewide recognition mean to you and to the Muslim New Yorkers you serve - especially in how young people see their place and future in New York?

This momentous and humbling recognition is celebrated by Muslims across New York State! Growing up as a Muslim girl in America, I never saw myself reflected in books, movies, or television - and unfortunately my faith was rarely acknowledged in classrooms or by my government. Now, as a mentor and educator, I deeply understand how vital such recognition is for the healthy development of young people's identities. That is why this commendation feels truly remarkable! All young people deserve to be seen, heard, and celebrated - and this acknowledgement is due!



Your community's impact goes far beyond worship. What's one initiative (service, education, health, housing, civic engagement, etc.) you're most proud of - and what can other New Yorkers learn from how your faith motivates that work?

I am deeply proud of the work I do with organizations that combat domestic violence in Western New York. I currently serve as chair of RAHAMA, Resources and Help Against Marital Abuse, and we support women and children who are survivors of DV. In Islam, we are guided by the principle of seeking justice for those who face injustice, and I am taught that all people deserve to live with dignity and respect. These values fuel my drive to support deserving members of my community.



Faith Leaders of New York Spotlight Monthly Feature:

Recognizing Governor Kathy Hochul's proclamation of the month of January as Muslim American Heritage Month in the State of New York for the First Time

**CONTINUED - NEW YORK STATE EXECUTIVE INTERFAITH COUNCIL MEMBER:
CAROLYNN B. SOZEN**

As we build stronger New York relationships across faiths and cultures, what's one misconception about Muslims you want to correct and what's one practical step everyday New Yorkers (and institutions) can take to be better partners against hate and for belonging?

In the Holy Quran, God said He created us into different nations and tribes 'to know one another.' As Muslims, we hold tight to this message and believe we have a duty to cherish and celebrate our rich diversity. This can be achieved by simply spreading a smile and kind greeting to those around us. Through kindness we build trust, and through trust we build appreciation and love.

A false narrative about Muslims that needs to be corrected is that we are unwilling or unable to fully integrate with American culture and society. In fact, we love our state and country and contribute immensely. We are teachers, doctors, students, nurses, researchers, volunteers, law enforcement officers, business owners, and serve in the armed forces. Regardless if we are first, second, third, fourth, or fifth-generation Americans like me, we all work hard every day to better ourselves, help our neighbors, support our families and strengthen our communities. And just like all other diverse communities in New York State, we challenge the status quo, demand for our voices to be heard, and deserve to be treated as dignified citizens hand in hand with everyone else.

This Proclamation and honor, recognizing Muslims as valued and integral members of our diverse communities, is deeply affirming and means so much!



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**NEW YORK STATE EXECUTIVE INTERFAITH COUNCIL MEMBER:
IMAM MANSOOR RAFIQ UMAR**

What does this first statewide recognition mean to you and to the Muslim New Yorkers you serve - especially in how young people see their place and future in New York?

Having been born in this great state, the most influential of our union, New York has always been the place I call home. For our Governor, Kathy Hochul, to be the first to establish this initiative says a great deal about her firm belief that, despite our creedal differences, we are all New Yorkers. It speaks to our government's desire to ensure that this sentiment is shared across the entire state, from Long Island to Buffalo, and its commitment to uphold it into the future. The first statewide recognition of Muslim-American Heritage Month impacts our community in a very real way. It allows us the freedom to feel safe both inside and outside of our faith centers, and it encourages others to echo those honorable voices in agreement.



Your community's impact goes far beyond worship. What's one initiative (service, education, health, housing, civic engagement, etc.) you're most proud of - and what can other New Yorkers learn from how your faith motivates that work?

In my capacity as the Head Chaplain for Muslim students at the University at Albany, I see firsthand how meaningful this month is for our young future leaders. This gesture gives them the confidence to see themselves as a part of the solution, as opposed to the problem, and it invites them to contribute to the growth and development of our country at large.

The most important accomplishment of our community that I am proud of is our efforts in opening the first masjid in the town of Bethlehem, the Muslim Community of Bethlehem. Our doors remain open to all members of our faith, and those of different religions, to meet us, learn about who we are, and understand that our concerns as neighbors are not so different.



Faith Leaders of New York Spotlight Monthly Feature:

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As we build stronger New York relationships across faiths and cultures, what's one misconception about Muslims you want to correct, and what's one practical step everyday New Yorkers (and institutions) can take to be better partners against hate and for belonging?

One of the biggest misconceptions about Muslims is the idea that being a Muslim and an American are mutually exclusive titles. Many Muslims and non-Muslims alike carry this prejudice and do not realize the impact this errant idea carries. It means that Muslim-Americans are "othered" outside of our community, and American-Muslims are "othered" within our community. The idea that these identities must be distinct and segregated from either side keeps those who carry both banners marginalized and identity-confused. "Not American enough," and "not Muslim enough." This must change.

I am both an American-Muslim and a Muslim-American, and I am proud of it. I have no "back home" to reference. This is my home. I have no "family overseas", for the roots of my family tree are anchored many generations deep into American soil. Being American is not determined by one's Faith, skin tone, or country of origin, and being a Muslim is not determined by one's ethnicity, culture, or race. When this misunderstanding is overhauled, our faith and identities are no longer insurmountable barriers, but part of the diverse fabric that makes our state great, and our country exceptional.



OFNDS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE: *STRONGER TOGETHER: Shared Services, Affiliations, & Mergers*

Date: Thursday, January 15th, 2026

Time: 1:00pm

REGISTRATION LINK: [Register Here for FREE](#)

Experts from the New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON) will discuss various ways nonprofits and faith-based organizations can collaborate to enhance financial stability, efficiency, and resources, ultimately leading to a greater impact on the community. The discussion will examine the advantages and disadvantages of shared services, as well as affiliations and mergers relevant to nonprofits.



MICHAEL WEST, ESQ

Senior Vice President and the Senior Attorney at
New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON)

Michael West is the Senior Vice President and Senior Attorney at the New York Council of Nonprofits, Inc. Since 2002, he has overseen the organization's Legal Services Group, focusing primarily on issues related to tax-exempt nonprofit organizations, including corporate, tax, contract, real property, and employment law. Mr. West provides legal services to charitable organizations, educational institutions, and religious orders. His extensive experience includes corporate

restructuring, property tax exemptions, and worker classification. He is known for his dedication and empathy in helping nonprofits navigate financial, regulatory, and public relations challenges. He also leads training sessions for nonprofit boards and staff, offers Continuing Legal Education classes for attorneys, and speaks on nonprofit issues to the public and regulatory bodies. Michael West is licensed to practice law in New York and is a graduate of Rutgers University and Albany Law School, where he was recognized as a New York Chief Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo scholar and served as Executive Editor for the Albany Law Review.



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Jeffrey Kosmacher

New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON)

Jeffrey Kosmacher has deep staff, consulting, and service experience with varied nonprofits, as a communicator, advisor, fundraiser, and facilitator. Kosmacher particularly enjoys disseminating stories that strengthen the public's connection to these organizations. He was Vassar College's director of media relations and public affairs for more than a decade, and has held positions with *The Christian Science Monitor*, World Learning/School for International Training, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, and *The Progressive*. His consulting clients have included historic preservation and sustainable transportation nonprofits, and his board leadership spans Hudson River Housing, TRANSART and Cultural Services, and Mirage Theater Company. Kosmacher holds a Master's in Community Development Practice and Policy from the University of New Hampshire. He recently began leading a new oral history program with the Dutchess County Historical Society, and has written features and op-eds for Washington Report on the Middle East, Hudson Valley, Chronogram, The Poughkeepsie Journal, and Rural Intelligence.



GRANTS AND FUNDING

Grant Title	Grant Type (technology, capital, security, health, food, etc.)	Organization	Application Link	Due Date
MH253010 - Health-led Community Behavioral Health Crisis Response: Daniel's Law Pilot Program	Health	Office of Mental Health	https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/rfp/2025/daniel-s-law-pilot-program/index.html	1/12/2026
NYS Improvement Grants for Arts and Culture	Capital	NYC Council on Arts	https://arts.ny.gov/FY2026OpportunityGuidelines	1/13/2026
FY2025 Nonprofit Security Grant Program	Security	Division of Homeland Security	https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/nonprofit-programs	1/13/2026
Services to Older Refugees Program (SORP) RFP	Capacity Building	Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance	https://otda.ny.gov/contracts/2025/SORP/	1/16/2026
Green Jobs for Youth - Skills Training	Capacity Building	Department of Environment Conservation	https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/environmental-justice/grant-programs#greenjobs_youth	1/28/2026
ZBGA Capital Grant Program	Capital	Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	https://parks.ny.gov/grants/zbga-capital-grant-program	1/30/2026
Recovery Residences Request for Applications – SETT 24029	Capacity Building	Office of Addiction Services & Supports	https://oasas.ny.gov/request-applications-sett-24029	1/31/2026
Aging in Place Pilot	Capacity Building	New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH)	Aging in Place Pilot	2/17/2026
MH253016 - Adult Assertive Community Treatment	Health	Office of Mental Health	https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/rfp/2026/aact/index.html	2/17/2026
NYC Capital Funding Requests For Not-For-Profit Organizations	Capital	NYC Capital Grants (Borough Presidents & NYC Council)	Capital Grants	2/19/2026
MH253013 - Youth Safe Spaces (Round 2)	Security	Office of Mental Health	https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/rfp/2025/yssp2/index.html	2/19/2026



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State and National Registers of Historic Places	Capital	Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	State and National Registers of Historic Places - NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Rolling Basis
Certified Local Government (CLG) Program	Capital	Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	https://parks.ny.gov/preservation/programs/certified-local-government	Rolling Basis
Nonprofits-Building Upgrade Funding Opportunity	Capital	NYSERDA sponsored	www.climategfl.org	Rolling Basis
The Far Fund	Capacity Building	The Far Fund	https://farfund.org/apply-2/	Rolling Basis
Connect Kids to Swimming Instruction Transportation Grant Program	Capacity Building	Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	https://parks.ny.gov/get-involved/connect-kids	Rolling Basis
Reserve Replenishment Program Application	Capital	NYS Homes and Community Renewal	https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=6rhs9AB5EE2M64Dowcge5zKkxoPMgxFLnJ3BOggrdyJUQUPEWUhFMUxXN1hQNUJYMFpRWEIWVDBLSiQIQCN0PWcu&route=shorturl	Rolling Basis
Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program	Capacity Building	Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	https://parks.ny.gov/get-involved/connect-kids	Applications must be submitted four (4) weeks before the field trip is planned to occur and no earlier than six (6) months prior to the field trip.



Recent Highlights





Events from our New York State Partner



Behind the Seal: Inside New York State Agencies and Initiatives

 Thursday, January 15, 2026

 6:30 PM

Featuring The Office of Victim Services

Under the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul, the Office of African American Affairs presents *Behind the Seal* — a briefing series offering an inside look at New York State's leading agencies and initiatives.

This session highlights the New York State Office of Victim Services, showcasing programs and initiatives that provide critical assistance to victims of crime and their families.

- Learn about statewide resources available to crime victims
- Hear directly from agency leadership
- Discover ways to stay informed and connected

REGISTER AT:

[HTTPS://BIT.LY/INSIDENYSOVS](https://bit.ly/insidenysovs)

**For All Inquiries, Please Feel Free To Email:
Jessica Douglas - Director Of African American Affairs at
jessica.douglas@exec.ny.gov**



Connect with us!



Important Interfaith Dates in January

- January 1st: (Roman Catholic) - Solemnity of Mary
- January 1st: (Shinto) Shogatsu/Gantan-sai
- January 5th: Twelfth Night (Christian)
- January 5th: (Sikh) Birth of Guru Gobind Singh
- January 6th: (Protestant/Orthodox Christian/Roman Catholic) Epiphany
- January 6th: (Christian) Dia de Los Reyes
- January 7th: (Orthodox Christian) Christmas
- January 13th: (Sikh) Maghi
- January 14th: (Orthodox Christian) New Year
- January 16th: (Muslim) Isra & Miraj

Does your organization have public events coming up?

Fill out our form to have your event included in our next newsletter.

Need to be added to our database of Faith Leaders?

Please fill out this form.