NEW YORK STATE EXPERIENCE

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

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In 2025, New York State focused on building a stronger, more dependable experience for its customers. For many New Yorkers, accessing state services has too often meant long wait times, unclear requirements, and repeated follow-up, particularly for programs that affect livelihoods, safety, and stability. Building on Governor Hochul's commitment to a more responsive government, customer experience (CX) efforts concentrated on addressing these long-standing challenges through clearer processes, stronger accountability, and better use of data.

Under the direction of the nation's first Governor-appointed Chief Customer Experience Officer, Tonya Webster, agencies strengthened how services function, day to day, with a focus on reducing avoidable friction rather than shifting responsibility to our customers—New Yorkers, businesses, and visitors. Over the past year, this work led to measurable reductions in backlogs, processing times, costs, and administrative burden.

To support this work, the Office of Customer Experience (CXO) established a set of measures to assess whether improvements were reaching New Yorkers in meaningful ways:

Closing Gaps
Address disparities in participation rates by ensuring that all eligible people have equal access to vital state programs or services.

Reducing the Time Tax
Eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic processes that hinder timely service delivery.

Enhancing Operational Efficiency
Streamline internal workflows to improve overall productivity and employee experience.

Improving the Digital Experience
Modernize online interactions to make them more user and mobile friendly.

Increasing Customer Satisfaction
Work to ensure that every New Yorker feels supported, heard, and valued throughout their interactions with state services.

The Governor's customer experience agenda is guided by three key principals: **Commitment to Excellence, Customer-Centric Design, and Innovative Solutions.** The CXO has continued to embed these pillars into everyday operations. In 2025, agencies have moved beyond standalone improvements and begun integrating CX infrastructure into governance, staffing models, and core service delivery. This shift reflects systemic change affecting millions of government interactions. As a result, New Yorkers are accessing services in greater numbers and in shorter time frames, and agencies are redesigning workflows in ways that improve experiences for both customers and employees.

Statewide, CX is taking hold. The Office of Customer Experience will continue to support teams to scale evidence-based models, deepen measurement, expand cross-agency coordination, and integrate feedback loops. Together, we will continue to build a government experience that is faster, clearer, and more responsive for all New Yorkers.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Operational excellence focuses on making government services reliable and efficient in day-to-day operations. The work centers on fixing processes that are slow, unclear, or inconsistent, and replacing them with streamlined workflows that reduce backlogs and wait times. Attention is given to how work moves between teams, where delays occur, and where unnecessary steps create rework. When internal processes function well, staff can spend more time serving the public, and services are delivered on predictable timelines that people can rely on.

The accomplishments that follow highlight how agencies applied these principles to reduce backlogs, shorten wait times, and improve day-to-day service delivery.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

In 2025, the Department of Motor Vehicles absorbed a sharp increase in demand driven by REAL ID requirements while continuing to improve day-to-day service delivery. The average call response times fell by 7% and queue-rejected callers declined by 28% as the **DMV issued 1.6 million more REAL IDs** from January through November 2025—more than double the prior year's volume. As a result, customers experienced fewer dropped calls, shorter wait times, and more reliable access to services, a shift that is reflected in sustained improvements in customer satisfaction across all support channels over the preceding 7 months.

Department of State (DOS)

In 2025, the Division of Licensing Services made significant improvements that enabled the agency to reach more customers and respond faster when New Yorkers needed help. The agency increased customer service call center staffing by 30% which **cut the average wait times by approximately 83%** and reduced call rejections by 65%, meaning New Yorkers can get answers quickly instead of spending hours on hold.

The Division of Licensing Services launched the Appearance Enhancement and Barber Online Database, allowing professionals to apply for licenses and schedule exams completely online. This modernization improved access to information and streamlined the licensing process, cutting processing times by approximately 70% from the 2023 average and more than 90% from peak backlogs, with most applications now completed in about 4 business days. As a result, New Yorkers can move into licensed work more quickly and avoid delays that could slow career and business decisions.

Within its Division of Corporations, State Records, and Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), DOS improved workflows and increased staffing capacity, driving major reductions in backlogs. Processing times for UCC documents, search requests, and summonses fell by 66%. DOS has now eliminated nearly all processing delays, **cutting average wait times by more than 99%**—from 676 days to same-day service. Together, these improvements replace long waits and uncertainty with predictable, same-day or near-immediate processing for critical business and legal filings.

DOS also modernized their walk-in customer service centers to improve both workflows and better meet accessibility standards. Among the changes were redesigned and expanded service windows, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible automatic door openers, and enhanced language access services. In Binghamton, Buffalo, Hauppauge and Utica, the agency reopened offices to provide walk-in services for individuals seeking apostilles and general licensing support. These improvements allow more New Yorkers to access services and improve both in-person and online customer experiences.

Division of Human Rights (DHR)

In April 2025, DHR established a dedicated Intake Unit to strengthen the accuracy and efficiency of its complaint intake process. The unit now oversees the receipt and processing of every discrimination report filed with the Division, applying a standardized jurisdiction review and ensuring that each submission contains the information necessary for a proper filing. Since its founding, the Intake Unit has **processed 3,906 reports** of discrimination. The unit, along with broader modernization efforts, have saved DHR an estimated 100 staff hours per week, enabling faster movement of cases through the system. As a result, the Division's **backlog has decreased by 44%** from its highest point. At the same time, the agency's modernization efforts strengthened case handling and contributed to a more than 100% increase in Housing Investigations Unit case closures compared to the same period in 2024, helping reduce delays for New Yorkers seeking relief.

Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)

In 2025, HESC's Grants and Scholarship team eliminated a backlog of more than 8,000 unprocessed awards by streamlining review workflows and removing internal bottlenecks. Processing timelines shortened significantly, replacing months of uncertainty with clearer, more predictable decisions. For students and families, this meant timely financial aid to support enrollment and affordability decisions.

HESC has also streamlined its internal operations by consolidating leased office space, reducing its footprint by 47% and **generating $6.7 million in savings** over the next several years. By lowering fixed operating costs, the agency can redirect resources toward service delivery, staffing, and tools that directly support students and families.

Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs (Justice Center)

In 2025, the Justice Center improved how cases move through the system by strengthening processes, clarifying follow-up, and improving communication with provider and State agency partners. A new triage model and quality dashboard brought earlier visibility to cases awaiting additional information, while shifting from email-based follow-ups to direct phone outreach allowed questions to be resolved in real time. These changes reduced administrative back-and-forth and shortened delays that once slowed investigations. As a result, case cycle times for matters requiring additional information fell by 49 percent, helping ensure concerns affecting the safety and well-being of vulnerable New Yorkers are addressed more quickly and with greater clarity.

State Liquor Authority (SLA)

In 2025, SLA created a dedicated Refunds Unit to modernize and accelerate the agency's refund process. Refunds are issued when applications are withdrawn, denied, overpaid, or when a license is surrendered with time remaining, impacting thousands of small businesses across the State. The new unit introduced standardized workflows, strengthened internal controls, and digitized manual processes to reduce delays that previously strained rent, payroll, and startup budgets. Since launch, SLA has processed more than 10,000 refunds, returning over $7 million to New Yorkers, typically completed within 2 weeks of becoming eligible. Pending refund requests have dropped from thousands per day to only a few hundred, a sustainable and predictable workload. These changes have improved consistency, transparency, and customer satisfaction while allowing staff to focus more fully on the agency's core mission of licensing and enforcement.

> "Since launch, SLA has processed more than **10,000 refunds,** returning over **$7 million** to New Yorkers."

SLA also created the new Licensing Review Committee to streamline and accelerate the review of certain license applications. Bringing together executive leadership and licensing teams from all zone offices, this cross-functional group established clear eligibility criteria for expedited review, developed simplified review guides, and built new training for participating staff. A dedicated communication channel for applicants and improved tracking and reporting further strengthened transparency and consistency. Under this modernized workflow, **examiners are now reviewing as much as three times as many applications daily, representing a 200% increase.** These reforms have reduced processing times, increased throughput, and delivered a more consistent and responsive licensing experience for businesses across the State. Feedback from applicants and stakeholders has been positive, noting clearer expectations, improved responsiveness, and a smoother licensing process.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation means updating how services are delivered so they reflect how people live and interact today. It involves moving away from paper forms, mailed documents, and in-person requirements when they are not necessary, and replacing them with online tools that are easier to use. This includes clearer websites, simpler forms, mobile-friendly services, and digital options that allow people to complete tasks on their own time. It also means using data to understand where online experiences break down and improving them over time, so digital services are faster, clearer, and more accessible for everyone.

The accomplishments below show how agencies translated these efforts into clearer online experiences and simpler ways to complete essential tasks.

Department of Civil Service (Civil Service)

In 2025, Civil Service simplified how members engage with the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) by modernizing communications and access to information. Digital communications now deliver timely updates in formats people already use, with more than 50% of enrolled members fully paperless. Short, plain-language videos replaced dense materials, making coverage options and processes easier to navigate, while a digital-only Empire Plan provider directory gives members faster access to current information. These changes improved day-to-day usability while **reducing ongoing administrative costs by more than $5 million each year.**

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

The Department of Motor Vehicles launched a new online web form this year to enable customers to determine their eligibility for no-fee duplicate documents. Following its release, the DMV saw a **36% reduction in incoming emails** to their contact center, as well as 51% decrease in LiveChat interactions from January to October compared to the previous year. This digital change enabled customers to access the information they needed more easily and more quickly and helped the agency to improve operational capacity overall.

Department of Labor (DOL)

In 2025, the Department of Labor piloted a self-service check-in and queue management tool at the Brooklyn Career Center to modernize in-person visits. Customers checked in independently, selected the reason for their visit, viewed estimated wait times, and received a text when it was their turn, allowing them to wait without uncertainty or congestion. Nearly **27,000 visits were processed during the pilot, with average wait times dropping to 10 minutes**, and veterans automatically prioritized in the queue. The effort more than doubled customer flow efficiency, reduced crowding, and streamlined the overall visit. Staff were able to focus on one-on-one support instead of managing lines and leadership gained clearer insight into visit patterns and peak demand.

Department of State (DOS)

The Division of Licensing Services (DLS) within DOS launched the Be Your Own Boss Marketing Campaign, a collaborative multi-pronged campaign to promote professional licenses for individuals pursuing additional income or career changes. Since the campaign's launch, DLS has sought to center customer service by improving the user experience. Using user analytics, the team **revamped over 200 Licensing webpages** and its call center recordings to make information accessible and applicable to clients. As part of the campaign, the agency designed licensing-focused marketing cards and released a series of video profiles, highlighting different professions on their social media and website. To expand their reach, they partnered with the Department of Labor (DOL) to target customers in the latter's database who were actively "looking for work," reaching over 700,000 individuals. Through their collaboration, DOS and DOL were able to share information with over 1 million customers across New York State.

Department of Taxation and Finance (DTF)

In the fall of 2024, DTF launched the Homeownership Benefit Portal, replacing a paper-based process that relied on mailed checks with a simpler online experience. Since launch, nearly 250,000 new or updated registrations for the STAR program have been completed, and approximately 175,000 homeowners have enrolled in direct deposit. By moving registrations and payments online, the portal shortens the time it takes to receive benefits, reduces paperwork and mailing delays, and provides homeowners with a more reliable way to manage their STAR benefits.

Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)

Throughout 2025, HESC has modernized existing processes to more efficiently respond to the needs of their customers. Earlier this year, HESC launched the Applying for Aid page and Financial Aid Navigator to simplify the process of exploring financial aid opportunities for New Yorkers and improve the user experience. The Applying for Aid page consolidated three financial aid pathways—the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), New York State DREAM Act, and Alternate Eligibility Pathway—for a more user-friendly experience. The new Financial Aid Navigator provides customers with a personalized list of grants, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs they may be eligible for based on individual responses. With the website enhancements, HESC has seen a jump in interactions, reporting over 4 million unique visitors, enabling more New Yorkers to access timely and relevant information and resources. HESC also released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the forthcoming Student Aid Processing Portal to further these efforts. Through the process, the agency will consolidate documentation and streamline application processes within a single platform.

HESC also implemented a new social media strategy to better share resources and information for students. As a result of its new strategy, the agency saw a **400% overall increase in followers** across their social media following. Their efforts included expanding text outreach to include middle school students and adult learners. As of December 2025, the agency's number of text subscribers has also grown by approximately 40,000.

These efforts have complemented ongoing engagement efforts. During FY24-25, HESC hosted **256 events that were attended by over 10,000 students**, family members, and academic partners across New York State.

Hudson River–Black River Regulating District (HRBRRD)

In 2025, HRBRRD has improved access to the permit renewal process by developing an online portal. The new system replaced a paper-based process that required in-person or mailed payments and significant staff handling. In its first year, 70% of customers used the online renewal option, **saving New Yorkers approximately $46,000 in fees** while decreasing the administrative burden on the agency.

Office of Information Technology Services (ITS)

In 2025, ITS strengthened how digital services are built and improved by expanding user interaction analytics and **launching the NYS Design System, a library of approximately 50,000 design and infrastructure components.** By giving agencies shared tools to build websites and applications more consistently and up to 40% faster, these efforts reduce errors, improve accessibility, and speed up fixes when something is confusing or broken. The result is state digital services that are clearer, more consistent across agencies, and quicker to improve based on customer use.

To further scale these improvements, ITS established its first Accessibility Team, a group of ten specialists dedicated to supporting more than 57 state agencies. The team works directly with agencies to ensure digital products, content, and environments meet accessibility standards and can be used by people with disabilities, those using assistive technologies, and others who may face barriers online. This dedicated support helps make state digital services more usable from the start and reduces the need for retrofits that delay access.

New York State Digital Service (Digital Service)

In 2025, the Digital Service partnered with agencies to review and improve 40 agency and program websites using Digital First Standards, making it easier for people to find information, programs, and services through clearer content, simpler navigation, and more accessible design. To strengthen data-driven decision-making, the team also expanded statewide analytics capacity by launching website-specific dashboards that give agencies real-time insight into website performance and user behavior. During the year, the Digital Service expanded statewide analytics capacity by nearly 270%, giving agencies real-time insight into how customers interact with state websites and enabling faster identification and resolution of digital friction.

> “Digital Service expanded statewide analytics capacity by nearly **270%**”

To help the state continuously improve digital services, the team launched a standardized customer feedback form in August 2024 modeling the standards developed by the New York Experience. Since launch, the form has collected nearly 30,000 responses that are reviewed daily to identify service pain points and opportunities for improvement. Year over year, this has led to a **10% increase in the Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT).**

In late 2024, the Digital Service began re-evaluating how state services are featured to meet the needs of real New Yorkers. User research revealed that New Yorkers increasingly preferred using search rather than browsing website service listings. In response, the team launched the "All Services Search" on ny.gov in January 2025, a single search tool that connects residents directly to services across state agencies. With ~1.9 million searches across ~2.4 million users, the search volume equates 80% of total users, showing a high reliance on this search feature. This user-first approach makes it faster and simpler for people to find what they need, whether they're renewing a license, applying for benefits, or locating program information.

Office for People With Development Disabilities (OPWDD)

In 2025, OPWDD developed a new Capacity Management platform to enhance the process for individuals accessing certified residential care settings, transitioning from a paper-based system to an IT platform. The first phase launched in July 2025 and will allow the agency to maximize efficiencies and better respond to consumer needs. The transition will streamline tracking and matching of housing requests and provide improved data to support short and long-term agency planning to continue to improve service delivery. For individuals and families seeking residential placements, the platform brings clearer visibility into options and supports more timely, accurate decisions about care.

Workers' Compensation Board (WCB)

WCB is modernizing the workers' compensation system, a multi-phase digital transformation replacing multiple legacy, paper-based claims systems with a single, secure, web-based platform. By transitioning paper forms to electronic submissions, XML workflows, and online tools, the Board strengthened data security, reduced manual processing, and improved reliability across the system.

These digital changes have delivered measurable results. **Medical billing dispute timelines were reduced by 92%**, allowing providers to be paid more quickly and strengthening participation in the system. Prior authorization for medical treatment is now handled online, with more than 3 million requests processed to date; 95% are resolved within one day, fewer than one percent require a hearing, and most proceed without escalation, helping injured workers receive timely care.

The Board has continued to refine the system based on real user feedback, implementing more than 75 enhancements to improve usability, expand provider delegate capabilities, and strengthen dashboards for case review. Additional digital improvements are expanding access to care, including electronic access to medical case information through the redesigned eCase system and reforms that support broader provider participation statewide. Together, these changes demonstrate how digital modernization can reduce delays, improve access, and deliver faster, more predictable outcomes for injured workers and the providers who care for them.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Innovative service delivery rethinks how support is provided, especially during moments that are complex, time-sensitive, or high-stakes. Services are designed to reduce effort by anticipating needs, offering proactive outreach, and creating alternative ways to engage that do not require people to navigate systems on their own. New models focus on removing barriers rather than shifting responsibility onto individuals. The result is support that reaches people sooner and services that better fit the realities of everyday life.

The accomplishments that follow illustrate how new service models reduced barriers and improved access.

Department of Civil Service (Civil Service)

In 2025, Civil Service removed critical barriers to public service careers by continuing to modernize hiring and qualification requirements. Through the New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide (NY HELPS) Program, civil service entrance exams were temporarily waived for most positions open to the public, accelerating hiring and expanding access to state and local government jobs. Since launch, NY HELPS has enabled more than 36,000 appointments into New York State roles and over 12,000 appointments across participating local governments. The agency also updated qualification standards to recognize relevant experience in place of college degrees across approximately 20,000 positions in 800 titles, creating clearer pathways into public service.

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Civil Service also expanded how New Yorkers learn about and connect to public service careers through statewide outreach and direct engagement. The NYS is Hiring and You Belong Here campaigns reached a broad, statewide audience, **delivering more than 527 million impressions, reaching approximately 93% of adults across the State** with clear, accessible information about public service opportunities. This outreach was complemented by in-person support through Centers for Careers in Government, where staff met directly with more than 182,000 jobseekers across New York, helping individuals navigate options and next steps in real time.

Department of Taxation and Finance (DTF)

To improve how customers receive support, DTF redesigned its contact center approach by introducing a courtesy callback standard. Instead of waiting on hold or repeatedly calling for help, customers can request a return call at a more convenient time. In 2025, courtesy callbacks accounted for 24% of all contact center calls, with **more than 442,000 requests fulfilled**. This shift reduced time spent waiting for assistance and provided a more predictable, respectful way for customers to get help when they need it.

New York State of Health (NYSOH)

In 2025, New York State of Health took advantage of digital capabilities to expand their reach across the State during the 2026 Open Enrollment period. Starting in November, NYSOH launched three consecutive messaging campaigns to provide reenrollment support for individuals in need of health care coverage. Over 650,000 total messages were sent to New Yorkers utilizing SMS and Whatsapp and across 7 different languages—English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Russian and Arabic. **Over 12,600 consumers directly responded** to NYSOH messages to request a callback from a customer service center representative. Forty-one percent of message recipients were found to be enrolled in health care coverage by the end of 2025. This innovative approach proved effective in reducing the time tax in the health care enrollment process, enabling NYSOH to more efficiently and effectively connect New Yorkers to coverage.

NY State of Health also implemented a one-question survey text to re-engage consumers who missed their renewal after coverage had already expired, a point at which many individuals permanently lose access to care. In the outreach campaign, NYSOH sent a combination of 48,700 texts and WhatsApp Messages to New Yorkers who had not yet renewed coverage. Nearly 8% of the survey results responded that they wanted assistance in enrolling in coverage, and the call center made outbound calls to assist. Approximately 12% of those who engaged in the NYSOH campaign were ultimately reenrolled in coverage, helping New Yorkers maintain access to their health care.

Office for People With Development Disabilities (OPWDD)

In collaboration with Georgetown University's Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC), OPWDD and NCCC analyzed ways that the agency can strengthen cultural and linguistic competence in their community engagement work. Throughout 2025, OPWDD and Georgetown led provider conversations and family listening sessions to hear about their customer experiences accessing and providing culturally and linguistically competent services, gathering insight from over 300 providers and nearly 300 families.

Similarly, OPWDD also conducted an evaluation of their care coordination program, gathering feedback from over 3,000 advocates, families, and providers. The agency fielded surveys and led interviews and focus groups with participants across the State. The findings will inform care coordination processes, improving health care experiences for thousands of New Yorkers. The agency released their findings in February 2025 and is currently developing recommendations to improve consumer experience.

In 2025, OPWDD published a series of Front Door Video modules—available in English, Spanish, and Chinese—to increase understanding of how to access agency services, covering a range of topics from housing support to care management. By the end of December, the agency recorded over 50,000 views across 45,000 individual users, citing the significant interest from consumers for their services. Along with these modules, the agency released a survey to gather feedback from stakeholders, allowing for continuous improvement on the modules.

> **“ OPWDD published a series of Front Door Video modules that garnered over 50,000 views across 45,000 individual users.”**

Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB)

WCB redesigned key aspects of care delivery to reduce barriers for providers and speed access to treatment for injured workers. Residents and fellows can now treat injured workers under faculty supervision, **potentially adding 20,000 providers across nearly 70 hospitals statewide.** The Board also eliminated custom billing forms by adopting the CMS-1500 universal billing form, reducing administrative burden for providers and making participation in the system easier.

Additional reforms allow insurers to pay for medical treatment for up to one year without accepting liability, removing delays that previously prevented timely care. As part of the system modernization, WCB is also redesigning eCase to give treating providers electronic access to medical information in the case folder. Together, these changes expand provider participation, reduce friction, and help injured workers receive care sooner and with fewer obstacles.

Finally, to strengthen navigation and improve outcomes across the system, WCB launched a series of stakeholder communication efforts designed to support both external users and injured workers. An efficiency enhancement campaign has helped stakeholders adopt best practices that reduce errors and improve the success of their submissions, while a support services campaign has increased awareness of vocational rehabilitation and social work resources available to individuals recovering from workplace injuries.

CONCLUSION

Across agencies, customer experience is shaping how work is prioritized, how systems are designed, and how results are measured. The outcomes documented in this report reflect real progress: faster decisions, fewer backlogs, reduced administrative burden, and clearer paths to essential services for New Yorkers.

What makes this work durable is not any single initiative, but infrastructure. By embedding CX into governance, staffing, and daily operations, in addition to using shared measures and customer feedback to identify issues earlier and respond more effectively, agencies are better positioned to serve the public, and leaders have clearer visibility into where services succeed and where they must improve.

As New York looks ahead, the focus is on scale and sustainment. The Office of Customer Experience will continue to expand proven models, deepen measurement, and strengthen cross-agency coordination. With these capabilities in place, New York State will continue to deliver government services that are faster, clearer, and more dependable—today and in the years ahead.