

# NYSERDA's Plan to Increase Government Transparency

## Report

January 2022



# Introduction

---

In response to the Government Transparency Initiative memo (Memo) dated September 20, 2021, the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) conducted a review of internal policies and procedures and addressed each bullet point from the Memo to assess NYSEDA's current and ongoing efforts regarding transparency and accountability. The following is a summary of NYSEDA's existing, extensive transparency efforts, as well as action items that describe the changes NYSEDA will implement to increase the transparency of its work, along with schedules and monitoring plans to ensure the effectiveness and timeliness of the action items.

## Review of Agency/Authority's Current Public Engagement and Action Items

"Making additional Information available to the public on your website, or through the use of social and/or media, while upholding the State's commitment to language access."

NYSERDA's website features robust content that is accessible and available in multiple languages. The website is a key part of NYSEDA's strategy to offer objective information and analysis, innovative programs, technical expertise, and support to help New Yorkers increase energy efficiency, save money, use renewable energy, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

NYSERDA frequently features social media posts on various web pages, including the NYSEDA home page. Social media content includes NYSEDA press releases, program announcements, webinars, research reports, case studies, web pages with consumer resources such as the electric vehicle charging map and energy use dashboard, solicitation deadlines, public comment period deadlines, third-party press releases, events either sponsored by NYSEDA or other parties, State government updates, relevant clean energy news articles, and general energy tips.

NYSERDA's social media posts frequently tag stakeholders and partners and NYSEDA regularly shares content from stakeholders across its social media channels. Stakeholders regularly tag NYSEDA as well, which provides insight into areas of concern and awareness of questions that staff are able to answer or share with program teams for consideration and further engagement with key stakeholders.

### Progress to Date

Execute a Website Enhancement Plan:

- An initiative is underway to enhance the customer experience on the NYSEDA website. Based on research and feedback, NYSEDA has developed a website enhancement plan focused on improving its site structure and content to help visitors more easily locate information (e.g., improving the usability of templates, search functionality, and navigation structures) and to enhance the platform for communicating NYSEDA priorities.
- NYSEDA staff assessed the site performance and user engagement using heat mapping, baseline site analytics, high/low performing content, and existing user testing results. This

showed how visitors use the site and led to prioritization of changes, including updating the navigation while ensuring each recommendation supports NYSERDA's overall goals and mission.

NYSERDA's goals are to:

- Display fresh, engaging, and responsive design that can be used across devices and audiences to create a seamless experience for the public.
- Provide easy access to incentives, programs, services, and board governance materials.
- Deliver informational/educational content as an objective and trusted resource on NYSERDA and New York State actions, clean energy topics, and technologies. This approach—making improvements to site elements that will have the biggest impact—will allow significant improvements to the user experience without undertaking a complete redesign of the site.
- ADA Compliant Website: NYSERDA uses a proprietary quality assurance tool to monitor the website for common issues, including accessibility. NYSERDA is generally above the industry average, compared to other sites in the government sector. A recent internal NYSERDA audit, in conjunction with third-party consultation, observed the website as very accessible by those with disabilities.
- Language Accessibility: Translation services have been added to nearly every page of the website, translating content into a minimum of 20 different languages, including the top 10 non-English used languages in New York State.
- Robust Website Content: NYSERDA's website currently has more than 2,000 pages and 5,000 documents (PDF, Excel, PowerPoint, Word). The site features a program finder to make it easier for visitors to locate the program information relevant to them. As new programs are launched, program pages are added and/or updated to reflect the latest opportunities. NYSERDA's Strategic Outlook provides insight to strategic priorities, mission outcomes, and program focus areas. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are core values at NYSERDA, and the website includes a section dedicated to DEI initiatives and goals. Website content also includes several dashboards of real-time data for high-visibility projects such as solar installations, clean transportation, heat pumps, and distributed energy resources.

The NYSERDA website publications section contains a multitude of reports going back several years, including the following:

- [Toward a Clean Energy Future: A Strategic Outlook 2021-2024](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#)
- [Building Stock Baseline and Potential Studies](#)
- [Case Studies and Feature Articles](#)
- [Clean Energy for Agriculture Task Force Strategic Plan](#)
- [Energy Analysis Reports and Studies](#)
- [Green Jobs - Green New York Reports](#)
- [New Efficiency: New York](#)

- [New York Power Grid Study](#)
- [New York Solar Study](#)
- [New York State Data Center Market Characterization](#)
- [NYSERDA Annual Reports and Financial Statements](#)
- [Program Planning Status and Evaluation Reports](#)
- [Research and Technical Reports](#)
- [West Valley Reports](#)

**Website Dashboards:** NYSERDA regularly publishes significant amounts of information on Open Data NY, as indicated below, but additionally, NYSERDA invested heavily in the use of interactive dashboards, which provide as close to real-time data as is attainable, taking transparency to the highest level possible. These dashboards aggregate and communicate vast amounts of data in more meaningful and accessible ways. Currently, there are more than 40 dashboards on the website, published for both desktop and mobile platforms, with approximately 600,000 combined views as of October 2021. These dashboards allow all users to search and filter data. For example, the NY-Sun web pages include a dashboard for the public and contractors to search by region/utility area for available incentives and for consumers to search for community solar companies in their area or find a contractor/solar installer that has achieved a quality solar installer rating. Some of NYSERDA’s dashboards along with views (as of October 2021) include the following:

Dashboard	Views
NYSERDA Heating Fuels Report	400,000
NY-Sun & Statewide Solar	39,000
Clean Energy Community & CEEP	35,000
Clean Energy Dashboard	23,000
Community Distributed Generation	20,000
Clean Heating & Cooling Campaigns	14,000
Electric Vehicle Rebate	14,000

**Quality Assurance:** The proprietary quality assurance tool scans the website every four days, providing a constant and up-to-date inventory of issues (broken links, typos, search engine optimization) related to NYSERDA’s website as well as accessibility issues so that we can prioritize and address them.

**Social Media:** NYSERDA regularly posts on a variety of social media channels including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to reach all demographics on their preferred channel and increase consumer awareness. For instance, NYSERDA has 20,000 followers on LinkedIn and 11,000 followers on Facebook.

**Media Responses:** NYSERDA's Communications team fields and responds to all media inquiries meeting the deadlines requested. Inquiries range from national media outlets, State and local, trade publications and student reporters. Interviews with program area experts are scheduled upon request as well as providing written responses to questions. Reporters often ask for statistical information, which is provided via email response, or when possible, by directing the reporter to Open Data NY as a resource for compiled data.

**Media Advisories/Press Releases:** The Communications team announces funding opportunities, awards, and program launches through press releases that are distributed to extensive national, State, local, and trade media lists, with targeted lists for energy, environmental justice, transportation, solar, offshore wind, etc. Press releases are written to be understood by the average person using simplified terms in order to provide information in a way that is understandable and digestible. NYSERDA's meetings open to the public are announced through media advisories and social media providing information on how to join virtually or access meeting minutes or recordings following a meeting.

#### Action Items

- Continue to leverage NYSERDA's website to provide objective information to all New Yorkers.
- Continuously improve by utilizing the quality assurance and accessibility tools and processes established, while seeking out best practices from others.
- Continue to maintain accurate and vast media contact lists and add new contacts on an ongoing basis.
- Implement website enhancement plan.
- Inventory, prioritize, and update NYSERDA's public-facing website and other digital properties (social media, brochures, etc.) to reflect DEI efforts and commitments, and the State and utility resources that are available to the diverse communities they serve.

"Ensuring the timely preparation of legally mandated reporting and identify ways to make useful information available to the public."

#### Progress to Date

NYSERDA files more than 250 reports annually that are required by a Public Service Commission (PSC) Order, Public Authorities Law (PAL), Financial, Executive Orders (EO), and NYSERDA's Board of Directors. Many of NYSERDA publications are posted on the [website](#), while others are made publicly available by the reporting recipient agencies. NYSERDA's PAL-required annual reports are submitted through the Public Authorities Reporting Information System (PARIS).

NYSERDA files semi-annual reports to the legislature and the governor, which provide for frequent and detailed reporting of competitive solicitations, project awards, expenditures, and financials, which are also posted on NYSERDA's website. These reports include every solicitation issued during the period which includes the evaluation criteria for how projects will be selected for funding as well as the contracts executed and awarded amounts.

Through its own internal procedures and with the guidance and oversight of its Board, NYSERDA provides significant financial analysis detailing how it develops, implements, and administers funding. These documents, which describe the Authority's operations, policies and procedures, independently audited financial statements, program status reports and contracting, are posted on the Authority's website or publicly filed with the Department of Public Service.

In recent years, NYSERDA has worked to improve the format and contents of many reports, increasing clarity, and reducing administrative burden at the same time. NYSERDA's development and deployment of the [Clean Energy Dashboard](#) was an important component of this evolution, the Clean Energy Dashboard (referenced above under Website Dashboards) transformed static oversight reporting into a public dashboard where NYSERDA staff, the Department of Public Service, and the public can see progress towards goals.

Diligent effort has gone into improving these documents in the past to reduce the length, improve the visuals, and ensure easier readability without compromising the content of documents and reports.

#### Action Items

- Continue to ensure the timely preparation of legally mandated reporting.
- Continue to identify additional useful information to make available to the public.

"Ensuring use of the Project Sunlight database in accordance with the Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011."

#### Progress to Date

Staff members designated as policymakers are required to take Project Sunlight training on an annual basis. The Ethics Officer notifies all first-time policymakers of their Project Sunlight obligation. After the first year, human resources notifies all policymakers of the obligation through NYSERDA's annual mandatory training email. In the email, policymakers are notified of all training obligations that appear on New York's Statewide Learning Management System (SLMS). NYSERDA created a Project Sunlight PowerPoint presentation, which appears on the SLMS system. The ethics officer maintains a record with the date the staff member completed the training and notifies those same staff members when their trainings are due and requirements to be compliant.

With respect to populating the Project Sunlight database, when a policymaker has a reportable appearance, the policymaker completes a form located on NYSERDA's internal SharePoint site. This form is emailed to the ethics officer who submits the information to the Project Sunlight database.

#### Action Items

- To improve reporting, the Ethics Officer proposes to create quarterly communications that will be sent to the policymaker reminding them of the Project Sunlight reporting requirements. In addition, the ethics officer will update the human resources department on any incoming or departing staff members who are required to take the Project Sunlight training.

"Improving response time for all Freedom of Information Law requests, including by tracking monthly backlogs of outstanding requests and new requests, and by proactively posting frequently requested information or completed requests online."

#### Progress to Date

The Records Access Officer (RAO) maintains a spreadsheet of all Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests NYSERDA receives through the OPEN FOIL NY site, NYSERDA's dedicated FOIL email account, and via first class mail. The spreadsheet includes the following information: date request received; tracking number; due date; requester's name; and text of the request. The majority of the requests received are for information submitted in response to a solicitation and the resulting agreements. Requests are assigned an initial due date that considers the estimated time needed to satisfy the request, and this date is placed on the RAO's calendar. Although most requests are completed prior to the initial due date, some take longer because of the scope and breadth of the responsive records, and requests for confidentiality from those submitting records to NYSERDA. To facilitate the timely processing of requests, the RAO advises requesters of any change in deadlines, and will often communicate with the requester to obtain a better understanding of the request. This method has been effective in expeditiously addressing NYSERDA FOIL requests.

As explained more fully in the Open Data NY section, NYSERDA strives to post non-confidential data on the Open Data NY site and on NYSERDA's website. For example, NYSERDA previously received many FOIL requests for information pertaining to its NY-Sun program. After the NY-Sun information was published on Open Data NY, the number of future FOIL requests related to NY-Sun was significantly reduced.

#### Action Items

- NYSERDA proposes to review the FOIL requests it has received over the past five years to see whether there are any trends or frequently requested information it could place on Open Data NY. In addition, NYSERDA will review and revise the "helpful tips" section that appears on the FOIL website to provide requesters guidance on request language, including date parameters and identifying specific records, to move away from the "any and all" language frequently seen in requests.
- NYSERDA will explore and coordinate with ITS to see if there is a statewide solution to improve FOIL tracking.
- The RAO will also conduct more in-house FOIL trainings to explain the RAO's role in processing FOIL requests and obtain feedback on records to potentially place on Open Data NY or on NYSERDA's website.

"Complying fully with Executive Order 8.95 "Using Technology to Promote Transparency, Improve Government Performance and Enhance Citizen Engagement" regarding Open Data NY."

Summary of EO 95 Open Data NY: "...the State can use powerful tools to enhance public access to government data and make government in NYS more transparent in order to promote public trust through:

1. Online Website. An online Open Data Website for the collection and public dissemination of Publishable State data at [data.ny.gov](http://data.ny.gov); and
2. Designated Data Coordinator. A designated Data Coordinator shall create a catalogue of Publishable State data with a schedule for making the data publicly available."

#### Progress to Date

- NYSERDA is fully compliant with Executive Order 8.95.
- As of October 2021, NYSERDA has published 74 data sets and data files on Open NY; 38 are refreshed with current data on a regular frequency and 27 have a corresponding interactive dashboard. In addition, NYSERDA created on the Open NY platform 58 filtered tables, charts, and maps. Below is a summary of the types of published Open NY data sets and data files:
  - Electric Vehicle Rebates and Alternative Fuel Stations
  - Agriculture
  - Audit programs
  - Transportation and Heating Fuel and Energy Prices and Sales
  - Electric Generation and Sales
  - Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) Auction Proceeds, Funds, Benefits, and Projects
  - Residential Loans
  - Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - HVAC Market Share
  - Interim Disadvantage Communities and LMI Population Analysis
  - Large Scale Renewable projects and Offshore Wind Supply Chain
  - Building Assets and Energy Consumption
  - Single-family Residential and multifamily energy efficiency projects and measures
  - Residential and Commercial Building Stock Assessment
  - Appliance Rebates
  - Clean Energy Fund Participants, Portfolios, and Programs
  - Clean Energy R&D projects
  - Air-Source and Ground-Source Heat Pump equipment and projects
  - Regional Economic Development Councils



- Energy Storage projects
  - NYSERDA Solar PV and Statewide Solar PV projects
  - Environmental Mercury Loads
  - Utility Energy Usage by Community, ZIP Code, and County
- NYSERDA completed a LEAN project to increase the number of Open NY publications, which resulted in a 200% increase in the number of new datasets published annually.
  - NYSERDA prioritized publications based on the number of FOIL and other requests and regulatory reporting requirements.
  - NYSERDA has a 100% response rate to inquiries from Open NY end users.
  - NYSERDA solicits Open NY end users for new data set requests.
  - NYSERDA adopted a strategy of publishing raw, underlying data to Open NY with many of the data sets feeding into interactive maps and dashboards hosted on NYSERDA's website. All NYSERDA-hosted dashboards are made accessible using industry best practices.
  - NYSERDA regularly hosts internal and external webinars and training sessions focused on increasing awareness and use of existing Open NY data sets.

#### Action Items

- Continue to publish NYSERDA's public data on Open NY, including the full history of NYSERDA's residential energy efficiency programs, commercial and industrial program data, all funded project data, and financial data.
- Continue to publish spatial data sets to Open NY like the Interim Disadvantaged Communities and Regional Economic Development Councils GIS Shapefiles.
- Continue to communicate with data through interactive maps, dashboards, and story boards.

"Posting documents required for meetings open to the public at the same time the agenda is posted, to the extent practicable."

#### Progress to Date

NYSERDA Board meeting and other NYSERDA advisory meetings, agendas, and materials, are made publicly available and posted on the NYSERDA website pursuant to the Open Meetings Law (NY Public Officers Law Article 7) and New York State Authorities Budget Office (ABO) guidance. PowerPoint presentations from NYSERDA Board meetings can be viewed during the meeting and after the meeting when the video is posted to NYSERDA's website. Once items are approved such as financial reports, by either the committees or board, they are posted to NYSERDA's website. Meeting minutes, once approved, are also posted to NYSERDA's website.

For the Climate Action Council (CAC), an agenda is posted in advance of a meeting on the climate.ny.gov website under "Meetings and Materials," and any meeting documents such as PowerPoint presentations are posted at the conclusion of the meeting. The CAC also posts other materials, such as studies mentioned during a meeting, or requested to be posted by a Council Member. The CAC also

posts the recording of the meeting in its entirety, typically within one to three days after the meeting. The approved minutes are posted immediately after each meeting. The draft minutes for consideration at the next upcoming meeting are not publicly posted – they are provided only to the Council Members; however, the minutes are drafted within the two-week timeframe set forth in the law.

#### Action Items

- NYSERDA will review its practices against the recent amendment to the Open Meetings Law (chapter 481 of the laws of 2021) and continue to monitor the Open Meetings Law and ABO guidance to determine whether any changes will affect either the CAC or NYSERDA Board and continue to pursue opportunities to provide open access to information.

"Reducing or eliminating the costs associated with providing data or records."

#### Progress to Date

One important note is that NYSERDA, per its FOIL regulations, does not charge fees for inspection or search of records, except if excessive copying is required. Within institutional memory, NYSERDA has satisfied all FOIL requests with no cost to the requester, including with respect to copying.

NYSERDA has done significant work to help reduce and eliminate costs associated with providing data or records through the FOIL Request Process. Specifically, NYSERDA's Records Management team has been working diligently for the past several years to improve, organize, and implement controls for physical records management. This has drastically improved NYSERDA's ability to search and locate physical records.

In addition, NYSERDA has been working toward improving the Electronic Records approach. While NYSERDA is just beginning this undertaking, a recent example of a successful outcome was updating the Contracting and Solicitation Records network drive to align with NYSERDA's Records and Retention Policy.

Lastly, the creation of the Clean Energy Dashboard has transformed NYSERDA's ability to real-time share data with the public and oversight entities, significantly reducing the administrative effort and workload in curating and developing static PDF reports. The NYSERDA Clean Energy Dashboard aggregates the energy-related program reporting of all NYSERDA and utility programs against plans and targets. Stakeholders can visualize progress and performance details of investments that New York State is making, as well as individual initiatives in the market.

#### Action Items

- To further reduce the cost for providing records and data to stakeholders, NYSERDA will continue to carry out the workplan of the Records Management Team, focusing on the inventorying, updating, and organizing electronic records that are publicly available.

- NYSERDA is also considering the procurement of a new backend search tool to help make the searching of records and data faster, easier, and more accurate. An additional area of improvement would be to explore a statewide legal compliance and software solution.
- Continue to explore ways of creating robust public-facing dashboards and reports as an alternative to static PDF Reports, which will continue to see administrative savings over time through the preparation and sharing of data.

"Updating records retention policies, including ensuring the timely transfer of pertinent records to the State Archives."

### Progress to Date

NYSERDA recently undertook a successful multi-year effort to update all its retention schedules, working in close collaboration with State Archives staff. Through its Records Management Officer (RMO), NYSERDA adheres to the State Archives' General Retention and Disposition Schedule, and for records not captured by the State Archives' schedule, its own retention and disposition schedule. Each NYSERDA program area has a Records Management Coordinator (RMC) who works with the RMO to maintain compliance with applicable schedules. As any further needs arise to establish new schedules, the RMO works with the State Archives staff to update the schedule.

NYSERDA created a Records Management System (RMS) to catalog its print records, define disposition dates, notify staff members when records are up for disposition, and seek approval from the RMO to dispose of records. All records that are scheduled to be transferred to the State Archives are done so in a timely manner.

### Action Items

- NYSERDA is in the process of creating procedures for the inventory, cataloging, and destruction/transfer of its electronic records. The RMO will work closely with the RMCs to establish a workable framework for this project.
- The RMO will conduct more training sessions with the RMCs and other interested staff members to explain general records management principles, define what is a record, review the destruction approval process, and offer opportunities for feedback. The RMO will engage with the State Archives staff on challenging records management issues. The RMO also suggests agencies/authorities work more closely with one another to establish records management best practices and share ideas.

"Increasing participation of agency personnel in community events and town meetings and providing new avenues for public participation in government decision-making."

## Progress to Date

**Events:** NYSERDA makes every effort to accommodate requests received from external organizations and entities for participation or support for all types of events, virtual or in-person, including community events, training opportunities, ribbon cuttings, conferences, forums, panel discussions, and roundtables. NYSERDA's Event Request Form (ERF) is a fillable form easily accessed on the [website](#), and allows consumers to directly submit requests for a speaker, sponsorship support, or other levels of participation.

NYSERDA's executive level and program staff speak at numerous in-person and virtual events around New York and out of state. Requests are often emailed directly to program staff and NYSERDA recently implemented a new streamlined internal process for staff coordination for participating in external events through an event management platform. NYSERDA engages with attendees through the distribution of invitations, registration confirmations, reminders, and post-event communications for NYSERDA-hosted events to facilitate the education of and engagement with New York's energy consumers to drive awareness of and participation in NYSERDA initiatives.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Program teams are required to complete a Public Outreach and Stakeholder Awareness Plan prior to announcements that includes a list of key stakeholders. Additionally, the extensive stakeholder engagement conducted across programs directly informs program design when launching a new program as well as in identifying needed changes in existing programs and decisions.

## Examples

### Large-Scale Renewables

NYSERDA's Large-Scale Renewable Energy Program issues annual competitive solicitations for utility-scale, land-based wind, solar, hydro and energy storage projects. These solicitations include provisions ensuring communities that will host successfully awarded projects are fully involved in the development process, and that proposers demonstrate a commitment to frequent and active community engagement.

- As these projects proceed, NYSERDA will continue to work with their developers, other State agencies, and stakeholders to preserve and protect New York State's valuable agricultural and environmental resources as part of the projects' development process, including monitoring and ensuring compliance with environmental/agricultural mitigation requirements and commitments.
- In addition, NYSERDA is developing an Agricultural Technical Working Group to bring together State agencies, non-governmental agricultural organizations, local governments, and solar developers to identify actions that each of these stakeholder groups are taking to address agricultural concerns alongside renewable energy development.

- The Agricultural Technical Working Group provides support and guidance to the Farmland Protection Working Group, established as part of this year's enacted State Budget, which will include leadership from key New York State agencies with support from municipal organizations and farmland protection boards to make recommendations regarding responsible siting of solar on the State's agricultural land.

### Clean Energy Siting

- NYSERDA offers several resources to help local governments understand how to manage responsible clean energy development in their communities.
- These resources include step-by-step instructions and tools to guide the implementation of clean energy, including permitting processes, property taxes, siting, zoning, and more.
- If local governments have questions on clean energy siting in their community or need help with a chapter of the guidebook, NYSERDA's Clean Energy Siting team will respond within 24 hours.
- Free training and technical assistance opportunities include the following:
  - Understanding Solar PV Permitting and Inspecting in New York State: Provides an in-depth review of the entire process of permitting and inspecting solar systems in New York State from start to finish, including the NYS Unified Solar Permit. The workshop includes topics on code enforcement and administration, uniform fire prevention, and building code.
  - Overview of the Model Solar Energy Law: Offers a review of the Model Solar Energy Law developed by NYSERDA as a best practice guidance. NYSERDA reviewed solar laws statewide and nationally to develop an all-inclusive model for municipalities to use to adopt a solar law.
  - Overview of the Model Battery Energy Storage Law: Offers a review of the Model Battery Energy Storage Law developed by NYSERDA as best practice guidance. This course also reviews battery energy storage technology basics, along with important code considerations about siting battery storage projects.
  - Battery Energy Storage for First Responders: Identifies potential hazards and safety considerations associated with battery energy storage systems. This course covers fire prevention, compliance with the updated New York State Uniform Code, and emergency response considerations.
  - The Clean Energy Siting Team attends approximately 50 meetings with local communities per year.

### Integrated Energy Data Resource

The Integrated Energy Data Resource (IEDR) webinars are another example of stakeholder engagement informing design as the top use cases identified by stakeholders will be built out first to make searchable data available. The IEDR itself is intended to increase access to and transparency of

energy data to facilitate easier analysis of important grid insights to help researchers, clean energy project developers, and the public to determine policy, investment, and operational decisions.

### Disadvantaged Communities

- The Regional Clean Energy Hubs will play an instrumental role in engaging disadvantaged communities (DAC) to ensure they have access to and benefit from the clean energy economy. The organizations serving as Regional Clean Energy Hubs will develop outreach and engagement strategies to elevate the needs of communities and residents in program and policy development.
- As a member of the Climate Action Council, and through the development of a Climate Action Scoping Plan as called for in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act), NYSERDA is engaging members of disadvantaged communities represented in various Climate Action Council Advisory Panels and the Climate Justice Working Group when drafting the Scoping Plan. In addition, later this year when the draft Scoping Plan is released, NYSERDA will support outreach to and engagement from DAC representatives in public hearings to provide feedback on the Scoping Plan. NYSERDA and DEC are also holding focus groups with individuals from DACs to inform the development of a report called for in the Climate Act focused on barriers to DAC engagement and ownership of clean energy.
- As a State agency member of the Climate Justice Working Group, NYSERDA will support a public comment process regarding the development of disadvantaged communities criteria as directed by the Climate Act. The public comment process includes six public statement hearings and publication of draft criteria that are open for public comment.
- In collaboration with the New York utilities, NYSERDA is holding two stakeholder forums each year to inform the development and implementation of the Statewide Low- to Moderate-Income initiatives.
- The Climate Justice Fellowship initiative supports applicants who currently reside in a disadvantaged community or who are from a priority population to work within organizations and businesses that advance climate justice and clean energy priorities for disadvantaged communities. Eligible host organizations may be advancing work that informs government decision-making.
- NYSERDA is working closely with disadvantaged community stakeholders to collaborate on development of several initiatives, including co-design of a community-ownership model for Inclusive Community Solar, the development of a roadmap and strategies tied to beneficial electrification of housing for low-to-moderate income households, the development of the DAC-focused Clean Green Schools program, and work with local governments to incentivize partnerships and projects with disadvantaged communities as part of the Clean Energy Communities program.

### Action Items

- NYSERDA will continue to explore ways to increase participation of agency personnel in community events and town meetings and provide new avenues for public participation, with a

focus on disadvantaged communities and environmental justice stakeholders, in government decision-making.

"Review of Agency's Policies and Practices."

Progress to Date

NYSERDA includes board approved policies on the NYSERDA website:

- [Code of Conduct for NYSERDA Contractors](#)
- [Code of Conduct for NYSERDA Employees](#)
- [Guidelines for Property Disposal](#)
- [Internal Control Manual](#)
- [Whistleblower Policy](#)
- [Investment Guidelines](#)
- [Procurement and Program Contract Guidelines, Operative Policy, and Instructions](#)

NYSERDA also maintains a dedicated page on its Intranet for Policies and Procedures and Reference Guides. The intranet is available to all NYSERDA staff:

- Personnel Handbook
- Operations and Procedures Manual
- Numerous User Guides and Reference Materials, and Specialized Policies and Procedures

NYSERDA is committed to the importance of diversity with its DEI Strategic Plan 2021, located on the NYSERDA website.

Action Items

- NYSERDA will add a policy regarding Open Data NY to its Operations and Procedures Manual to ensure ongoing adherence to this initiative.
- NYSERDA will review policies and procedures for any disparate impacts, as per the 2021 DEI Strategic Plan.
- NYSERDA will review pertinent policies and procedures to assess if any revisions are necessary to increase the transparency of NYSERDA's work.

Summary of Action Items to Expand Transparency and Expected Timeline:

Area of Action	Action Item	Timing	Resources
Website	Continue to leverage NYSERDA's website to provide objective information to all New Yorkers.	Ongoing	NYSERDA's Corporate Communications and Marketing

Area of Action	Action Item	Timing	Resources
			Department
Website	Continuously improve by utilizing the quality assurance and accessibility tools and processes established, while seeking out best practices from others.	Ongoing	NYSERDA's Corporate Marketing and Website Operations Departments
Website	Implement Website Enhancement Plan.	Estimated 2022	NYSERDA's Corporate Marketing and Website Operations Departments
Website	Inventory, prioritize, and update NYSERDA's public-facing website and other digital properties (social media, brochures, etc.) to reflect DEI efforts and commitments, and the State and utility resources that are available to the diverse communities they serve.	Estimated 2022	DEI Officer, Support and Program Teams, DEI Council
Reporting	Continue to ensure the timely preparation of legally mandated reporting.	Ongoing	Various NYSERDA Departments, Performance Management, and Counsel's Office
Reporting	Continue to identify additional useful information to make available to the public.	Ongoing	Data, Mapping and Visualization Team, Corporate Marketing
Project Sunlight	To improve reporting, the Ethics Officer proposes to create quarterly communications that will be sent to the policymaker reminding them of the Project Sunlight reporting requirements. In addition, the Ethics Officer will update the human resources department on any incoming or departing staff members who are required to take the Project Sunlight training.	Ongoing	Counsel's Office, Training Management Team, and Human Resources
FOIL	NYSERDA proposes to review the FOIL requests it has received over the past five years to see whether there are any trends or frequently requested information it	Ongoing	Various NYSERDA Departments, Information



Area of Action	Action Item	Timing	Resources
	could place on Open Data NY. In addition, NYSERDA will review and revise the helpful tips section that appears on the FOIL website to provide requesters guidance on request language, including date parameters and identifying specific records, to move away from the any and all language frequently seen in requests.		Technology, and Counsel's Office
FOIL	NYSERDA will explore and coordinate with ITS to see if there is a statewide solution to improve FOIL tracking.	Ongoing	Information Technology and Counsel's Office
FOIL	The RAO will also conduct more in-house FOIL trainings to explain the RAO's role in processing FOIL requests and obtain feedback on records to potentially place on Open Data NY or on NYSERDA's website.	Estimated 2022	Various NYSERDA Departments, Training Management Team, and Counsel's Office
EO 8.95	Continue to publish NYSERDA's public data on Open NY, including the full history of NYSERDA's residential energy efficiency programs, commercial and industrial program data, all funded project data, and financial data.	Ongoing	Data Governance; Data sets, Maps, and Visualizations team; Finance Department, Performance Management, and Program Teams
EO 8.95	Continue to publish spatial data sets to Open NY like the Interim Disadvantaged Communities and Regional Economic Development Councils GIS Shapefiles.	Ongoing	Data Governance; Data sets, Maps, and Visualizations team
EO 8.95	Continue to communicate with data through interactive maps, dashboards, and story boards.	Ongoing	Data Governance; Data sets, Maps, and Visualizations team

Area of Action	Action Item	Timing	Resources
Meetings	NYSERDA will review its practices against the recent amendment to the Open Meetings Law (chapter 481 of the laws of 2021) and continue to monitor the Open Meetings Law and ABO guidance to determine whether any changes will affect either the CAC or NYSERDA Board and continue to pursue opportunities to provide open access to information.	Ongoing	Counsel's Office
Data/Records	To further reduce the cost for providing records and data to stakeholders, NYSERDA will continue to carry out the workplan of the Records Management Team, focusing on the inventorying, updating, and organizing electronic records that are publicly available.	Ongoing	Counsel's Office, Strategic Operations, Information Technology, Records Management Coordinators, Team Leads
Data/Records	NYSERDA is also considering the procurement of a new backend search tool to help make the searching of records and data faster, easier, and more accurate. An additional area of improvement would be to explore a statewide legal compliance and software solution.	Estimated 2022	Counsel's Office, Information Technology
Data/Records	Continue to explore ways of creating robust public-facing dashboards and reports as an alternative to static PDF Reports, which will continue to see administrative savings overtime through the preparation and sharing of data.	Ongoing	Information Technology, Performance Management, Counsel's Office, Governmental Affairs
Record Retention	NYSERDA is in the process of creating procedures for the inventory, cataloging, and destruction/transfer of its electronic records. The RMO will work closely with the RMCs to establish a workable framework for this project.	Ongoing	Counsel's Office, Strategic Operations, Information Technology, Records Management Coordinators, Program Teams
Record Retention	The RMO will conduct more training sessions with the RMCs and other interested staff members to explain general records management principles, define what is a record, review the destruction approval process, and offer opportunities for feedback. The RMO will engage	Ongoing	Counsel's Office, Strategic Operations, Records Management

Area of Action	Action Item	Timing	Resources
	with the State Archives staff on challenging records management issues. The RMO also suggests that agencies/authorities work more closely with one another to establish records management best practices and share ideas.		Coordinators, State Archives staff
Agency/Public Participation	NYSERDA continues to explore ways to increase participation of agency personnel in community events and town meetings, providing new avenues for public participation, with a focus on disadvantaged communities and environmental justice stakeholders, in government decision-making.	Ongoing	Corporate Communications, Marketing, Events, Program Teams, Governmental Affairs, Clean Energy Siting, Energy Affordability and Equity
Policies and Practices	NYSERDA will add a policy regarding Open Data NY to its Operations and Procedures Manual to ensure ongoing adherence to this initiative.	Estimated 2022	Operations
Policies and Practices	NYSERDA will review policies and procedures for any disparate impacts, and communicate about resulting updates and revisions, as per the 2021 DEI Strategic Plan.	Estimated 2022	DEI Officer, Support and Program Teams, DEI Council
Policies and Practices	NYSERDA will review pertinent NYSEERDA policies and procedures to assess if any revisions are necessary to increase the transparency of NYSEERDA's work.	Estimated 2022	Transparency Working Group, Executive Team, Counsel's Office

Measures of Success and Long-Term Monitoring

NYSERDA maintains a list of reports that staff are required to update annually with due dates, descriptions, recipients, etc. In addition to submitting reports on time, staff are required to review and update annually. Updates are monitored to ensure staff have reviewed and updated the report details as applicable.

NYSERDA maintains a list of those individuals (policymakers) required to report Project Sunlight appearances. The policymaker list is updated each time a staff member is onboarded or departs.

The Records Access Officer (RAO) will continue to monitor the FOIL request spreadsheet to assess whether response time is linked to specific types of requests and develop a plan accordingly.

NYSERDA's Data Coordinator tracks number of new data sets published; number of data stewards publishing to Open NY; number of data sets automatically refreshed regularly; new data set publication

cycle time; number of new spatial data sets published to Open NY; and number of new dashboards published on NYSERDA's website. NYSERDA's data coordinator and CIO meet weekly with ITS Open Data team members.

The Social Media Manager reports monthly on social media activity and impacts. The Performance Management team monitors a dashboard that shows the number of views each external dashboard receives.

The Web Operations team monitors web page analytics daily to understand volume of traffic and validate potential changes to the website that may impact user experience. The web team also uses specialized software to identify broken links, misspellings, search engine optimization issues, and other facets of website usability. The software scans the website every four days, tracking issues in near real-time, and monitoring progress of solutions.

Stakeholder engagement is a key activity tied to solicitations and program launches, public events, and announcements. This process is documented in the Knowledge Base and includes executive leadership. Stakeholder engagement provides critical insight used to inform program design and improved program execution.

NYSERDA routinely reviews and updates the operations and procedures manual and internal control manual to ensure ongoing communication and adherence to processes and ensure they include policy changes.



**New York State  
Energy Research and  
Development Authority**

17 Columbia Circle  
Albany, NY 12203-6399

**toll free:** 866-NYSERDA  
**local:** 518-862-1090  
**fax:** 518-862-1091

[info@nyserda.ny.gov](mailto:info@nyserda.ny.gov)  
[nyserda.ny.gov](http://nyserda.ny.gov)