

Letter from NYSERDA's President and CEO

To NYSERDA Colleagues, Members of the Board, and the Clean Energy Community in New York:

Reflecting on all that has transpired in our Nation, the last two years have provoked a deep sense of social awakening in so many dimensions. I feel this markedly not only with respect to the public health impacts of the global pandemic we've all endured, but also in light of how starkly that pandemic, more frequent extreme weather events, and other related circumstances have laid bare the many inequities and injustices that still sadly pervade our society and institutions in America. Among the most pressing of these awakenings was of course the mass outcry and mobilization against continued racial injustices affecting the Black community, which emerged in 2020 and still carries momentum today. And other calls-to-action for social progress have risen to the forefront as well, seeking to promote gender equality, stop violence against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, protect and celebrate LGBTQ+ individuals, honor the heritage of Hispanic and Latinx populations, welcome immigrants and refugees, and so many others. I know these events have had a resounding impact on me personally and for so many of our colleagues here at NYSERDA and neighbors across New York State — they shape our collective psyche and day-to-day outlook, and we bring parts of them with us wherever we go. And that includes in the workplace, to which we all can and must feel comfortable bringing our full selves.

In this context, it is with tremendous excitement and gratitude that we're able to share with you all the outputs of the critical work NYSERDA has been conducting related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) over the last two-plus years. Just as equity has risen in prominence for society at large and for NYSERDA's external, market-facing activities, so too must equity be elevated as an internal priority — promoting and sustaining an equitable, engaging environment and a diverse, inclusive workplace. This prioritization reflects the implicit, intrinsic importance of DEI on its own, but also as a catalyst to allow NYSERDA to meet the charge of New York's Climate Act and best serve the people of New York State — one of the top 10 most diverse states in the U.S., and increasingly so in the last decade. And so, going back to 2019 and even further ago, NYSERDA commenced a robust internal process designed to identify and implement the self-examination and improvements that will be needed to help us meet this moment. To make this happen over the past two or so years, dozens of NYSERDAs have stepped up in a variety of capacities — formal, informal, voluntary, and beyond — to guide us through a structured Strategic Planning process for DEI, coordinated by an external consultant (TH Easter Consulting). The output of that months-long effort is what you read today: NYSERDA's first-ever DEI Strategic Plan, a guiding document that outlines the goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics that we've developed to effectuate the progress we envision.

Like so many peer organizations, we at NYSERDA all have learning to do and progress to make, individually as colleagues and collectively as an organization. We recognize simultaneously that our progress and implementation must be swift and decisive, while understanding that effectuating enduring progress will be a long road — exactly why this DEI Strategic Plan is designed to be a roadmap for a ~five-year effort that also contains priorities for critical early action. We also have learned and reemphasized that the foundation for enduring DEI is the basic engagement of our employees and the environment of collaboration, creativity, and openness we seek to provide at the Authority. That Engagement is the silent 'E' that accompanies and really precedes all of our DEI efforts, as you will read in this DEI Strategic Plan.

I want to make it abundantly clear to all that the implementation of this DEI Strategic Plan is a top priority for me as President and CEO and for the full NYSERDA leadership team. While we have a long road ahead, I am thoroughly buoyed with confidence and enthusiasm for this work, owing largely to a few main reasons:

- **First, our people.** NYSERDAs have shown remarkable resilience over the last two years, pivoting to the unprecedented remote and hybrid work environments, raising their hands time and time again for urgent projects to help with the State's COVID response, and dedicating countless hours to this DEI work — recognizing its vital importance despite the fact that it historically was not always a part of their respective job descriptions. Our people have also shown exemplary leadership through our Resource Groups (RGs) — the People of Color RG, the Women's RG, and the LGBTQ+ RG — which have each individually and jointly grown even more engaged and impactful in their efforts to lead NYSERDA through conversations focused on learning, awareness, and improvement. Our people make NYSERDA what it is, plain and simple, and they will continue to shape our evolutions in the future.
- **Next, is our newly formed DEI Team.** I was so glad that we were able to appoint Michelle Andry to serve as NYSERDA's first ever Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer this summer to lead the implementation of this work, and — as I wrote at the time — I cannot think of a better person to assume this critical new position at the Authority following her 'untitled' leadership throughout the bulk of our DEI Strategic Planning effort. Michelle will be supported as DEI Officer through several internal teammates, which we're now hiring for, and additional external support resources. While Michelle and her new team will be leading the implementation of this DEI Strategic Plan, this is not work that can be fulfilled by one person or one team — it will take each and every one of us participating, partnering, learning, and growing for us to mark progress as an organization. But with the DEI team helping us forge ahead in this new role, I have every confidence that we can and will realize success. And ultimately, I recognize and embrace the fact that I am, and will remain, the number-one point of accountability for getting this critical work done and done right.
- **Finally, the rising importance of Our Vision and Mission.** Our work on climate change and clean energy has never been more pressing and important, and the only way we will be able to get it done and best serve the people of New York State is by embracing this work to strive for continual internal improvement and growth. With Our Vision and Mission as our north star, we'll use this DEI Strategic Plan as the key navigational aide on the trail that we seek to blaze for New York, for the US, and for the world as a whole.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the immense work of our colleagues on the DEI Strategic Planning Team, whose work and support over the last year was vital to the DEI Strategic Plan now before us: Elizabeth Boulton, Brian Cabezas, Pooja Chawda, Andre Davis, Kim Erle, Sara Jayanthi, Matt Miller, Davetta Thacher, Jamie Dickerson, Donna Rabito, and John Williams. On behalf of all of us at NYSERDA, I want our Strategic Planning Team members to know that your work on the DEI Strategic Plan has provided such great value for our organization, and we are so appreciative of the hard work you poured into this project.

Ever onward and upward, we strive ahead to the hard but rewarding work of implementing this DEI Strategic Plan. I look forward to partnering with all of you in those efforts in the months ahead.

Sincerely,
Doreen M. Harris



OUR VISION:

New York is a global climate leader building a healthier future with thriving communities; homes and businesses powered by clean energy; and economic opportunities accessible to all New Yorkers.

OUR MISSION:

Advance clean energy innovation and investments to combat climate change, improving the health, resiliency, and prosperity of New Yorkers and delivering benefits equitably to all.