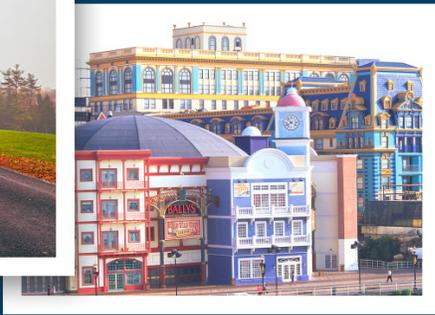


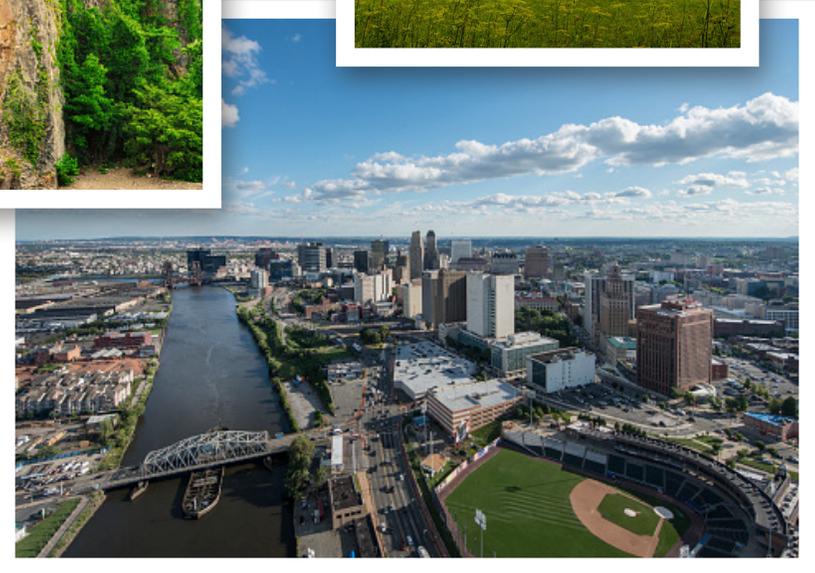
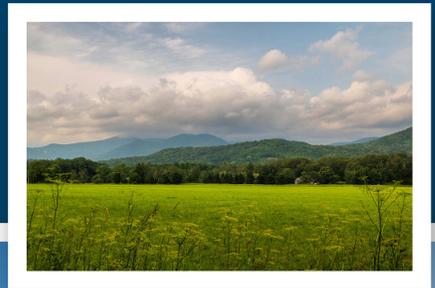
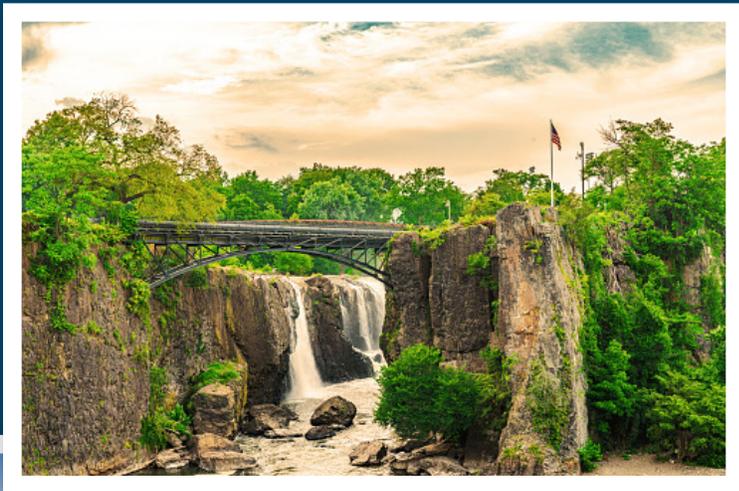


NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STATE



2024 ANNUAL REPORT





STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

P.O. Box 300
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0300

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

LT. GOVERNOR TAHESHA L. WAY
Secretary of State

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the New Jersey Department of State's 2024 Fiscal Year Annual Report. We are delighted to share our remarkable accomplishments and ongoing efforts in serving the people of New Jersey. This report highlights our commitment to democracy, economic growth, preserving history, celebrating our state's arts and cultures and supporting diverse communities.

In my capacity as Secretary of State, I am proud to serve as New Jersey's chief election officer and share our achievements in expanding voter access, enhancing voter experience, and ensuring the integrity of our elections. Our ongoing partnerships at the local, state, and federal level support statewide New Jersey elections every year. We work with our peers in other states to implement best practices and learn from each other's experience. This year, the onboarding process for membership in the Electronic Registration Information Center should conclude, strengthening our ability to maintain accurate, current voting rolls and identify potential voters who may need registration information.

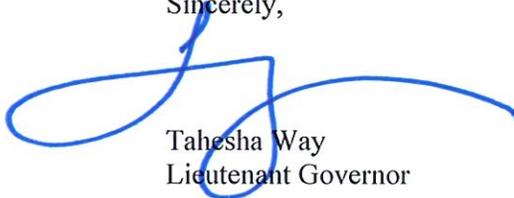
In addition to elections, we support work that makes New Jersey a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. Our Division of Travel and Tourism has been an active participant in bringing the FIFA World Cup 2026, including the Final Match, to New Jersey. Beyond the historic significance, hosting the tournament will be tremendously beneficial to the region. FIFA World Cup 2026 matches played at MetLife Stadium, including the Final, are projected to generate over \$2 billion in economic impact for the NYNJ region and support over 14,000 jobs.

Our commitment to arts, culture, and history is evident through grant funding and projects. The State Council on the Arts continues to be the largest funder in New Jersey. This year, the New Jersey Historical Commission has selected 32 sites to receive markers for the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail and now are working towards installing the first markers by the end of 2024. We are also diligently preparing for the Semiquincentennial in 2026, celebrating our revolutionary heritage through educational programming and exhibits.

At the Department of State, inclusivity is at the core of our work. We support diverse initiatives and organizations through grant funding and partnerships, ensuring that all residents of New Jersey can thrive.

Thank you for joining us as we reflect on our accomplishments and work towards a prosperous and inclusive future for New Jersey.

Sincerely,



Tahesha Way
Lieutenant Governor





STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

P.O. Box 300
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0300

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

LT. GOVERNOR TAHESHA L. WAY
Secretary of State

Dear Residents,

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for taking the time to review our annual report. It is a testament to your commitment to staying informed about the workings and accomplishments of the New Jersey Department of State.

Our Department takes immense pride in the diversity of our portfolios and our unwavering commitment to efficiency. None of this would be possible without the dedicated efforts of our exceptional division directors and the entire team. Their hard work and devotion form the backbone of our success.

Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Governor Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Way for their outstanding service to our state. It is indeed a privilege to work alongside them in their administration.

Once again, thank you for your continued support and interest in the New Jersey Department of State. Your engagement and partnership are invaluable to us as we strive to serve our community better each day.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Corey Wolkenberg".

Corey Wolkenberg
Chief of Staff



Table of Contents

Administration.....	5
Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development.....	13
Governor’s Office of Volunteerism.....	16
Jersey Civic Engage.....	20
New Jersey Business Action Center.....	21
New Jersey Cultural Trust.....	26
New Jersey Division of Elections.....	30
New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism.....	34
New Jersey Historical Commission.....	37
New Jersey-India Commission.....	40
New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission.....	42
New Jersey State Archives.....	44
New Jersey State Council on the Arts.....	49
New Jersey State Museum.....	52
New Jersey-Israel Commission.....	54
Office of Faith Based Initiatives.....	56
Senior Leadership.....	59



ADMINISTRATION

Administration

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
DANA BALDOROSS

MISSION:

The Division of Administration Team provides the groundwork of support and resources required to keep the day-to-day operations running efficiently. The team currently oversees the areas of Budget Operations, Grant Administration, Fiscal Management/Procurement, Information Technology, and Human Resources. Our goal is to support all Divisions within the Department of State with providing excellent customer service, assistance, and support. We ensure that the short- and long-term goals of the Department are being met and attained every day.

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

- Completed the relocation of the Department to 225 W. State Street with minimal disruption to division operations.
- Support execution of grant agreements as needed to support over \$64 million in FY24 appropriations to grant-making departments.
- Support staffing and procurement activity to enable State Museum to use its \$1.7 million budget increase in FY24.
- Implement new fiscal reporting and analytical functions to enhance forecasting and support program planning.

Goals for 2025:

- Achieve full staffing for the Department, up to budgeted Full-Time Employee (FTE) and temporary staff as needed.
- Begin planning and execution of divestiture from Division of Revenue Services (DORES) support and creating an in-house IT team to support DOS and its technical initiatives.
- Continuously evaluate division operations and allocate State appropriations as needed to support new program initiatives.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

“Andrew has proven to be a key team player within Administration. Andrew has many valuable strengths but one of his greatest is his “How can I help Attitude” towards all employees. Andrew has worked for the Department of State for 28 years and through his tenure, he has been involved in a number of assignments gaining valuable knowledge of the Department’s processes. Andrew enjoys the variety of tasks from the divisions and the unique nature of their requests as economic and cultural entities of State Government.

Andrew Bartone, Administrative Analyst 3, Procurement Unit

Fiscal Planning & Analysis

The mission of Fiscal Planning & Analysis is to inform decision-making and optimize resources in support of Department goals and objectives. Activities include development and preparation of the annual State Budget, ongoing assessment of program funding needs and budget reallocations, analysis of program operations and staffing levels, routine reporting of fiscal performance, and management of fiscal year closeout. Additionally, staff supports division programs as needed by coordinating the execution of interagency agreements, performing ad hoc fiscal analyses, and acting as liaison with the Governor's Office to administer new funding.

In FY24, the Department's fiscal performance for all State-funded operations is summarized below and on Attachment A.

FY24 Fiscal Summary State-funded Accounts

(\$000)

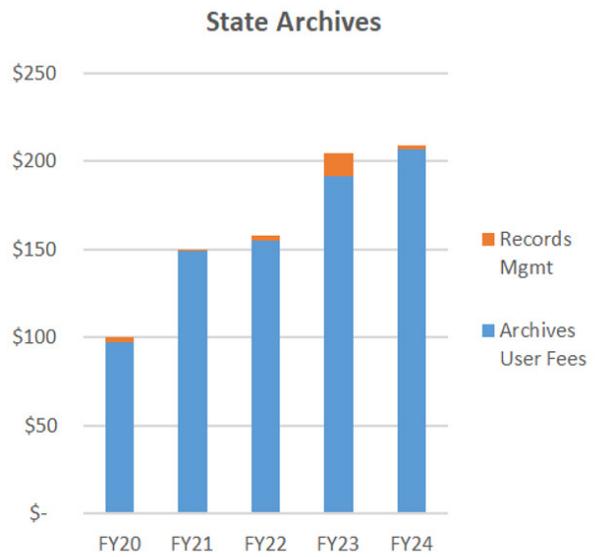
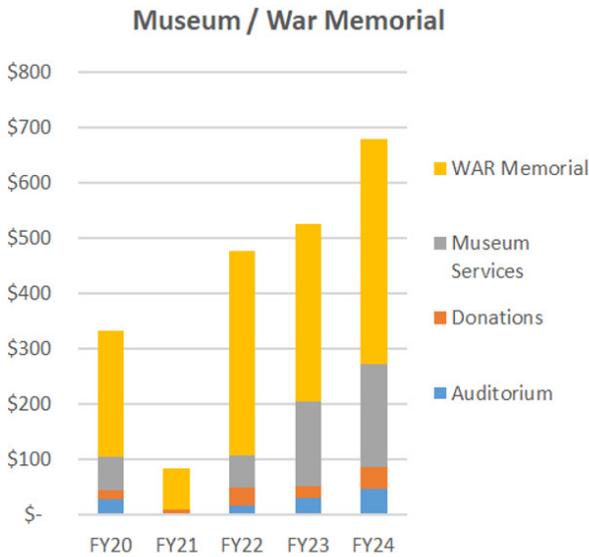
Division	Funding Need (a)				Total State Funding (b)	Ending Balance (c)
	Salaries	Direct State Services	Grants & State Aid	Total		
Office of the Secretary	\$ 2,789	\$ 403	\$ -	\$ 3,192	\$ 3,193	\$ 1
Cultural Trust	148	17	2,189	2,354	2,354	-
Programs & Commissions	955	477	4,581	6,014	6,211	197
Business Action Center	2,620	1,657	9,250	13,527	13,531	4
Travel & Tourism	1,142	14,503	4,455	20,100	20,100	0
Elections	1,276	4,658	15,828	21,762	64,432	42,671
Council on the Arts	812	428	44,394	45,634	45,851	216
State Museum	2,198	510	-	2,708	4,269	1,561
Historical Commission	743	304	15,234	16,281	18,190	1,909
State Archives	1,113	37	-	1,150	1,157	7
Total	\$ 13,797	\$ 22,993	\$ 95,932	\$ 132,722	\$ 179,289	\$ 46,567

(a) includes FY24 expenses and year-end encumbrances

(b) includes FY24 appropriations and prior-year carryforward

(c) \$31.1 million will carry forward to FY25 (Elections \$27.5m; COA \$.1m; Museum \$1.6m; Historical \$1.9m)

**Revenue
(\$000)**



FY24 FP&A Highlights:

- Enhanced fiscal reporting to divisions, including salary allocations and central charges
- Implementation of quarterly fiscal reviews with divisions to communicate fiscal status and inform program decision-making
- Adjustments to Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) data and execution of quarterly salary reimbursements to improve accuracy of fiscal reporting
- Reallocation of division budgets to address structural deficits and better align funding with program needs
- Review and execution of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to receive \$3.3 million of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding for Archives gallery and display projects in support of RevolutionNJ
- Review and funding approval for 27 staff additions

For FY25, the Department’s State appropriations total \$124.8 million, reduced from FY24 due primarily to elimination of non-recurring items and decreased funding needs for Elections. Changes versus FY24 are summarized below:

FY24 Adjusted Appropriation (\$000)	\$ 150,335
--	-------------------

FY25 Approp Act Changes	vs. FY24
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Additions:

various	division operations	\$	422
Programs	new NJ India Commission		250
Programs	new NJ Ireland Trade Commission		250
Programs	new NJ Muslim Voice for Progress		250
Programs	Puerto Rico Commission		100
Programs	CHPRD grants		50
Line item grants:			
COA	Count Basie Center - Capital Impr		1,000
COA	Montclair Film -- Oper & Educ Workforce		500
COA	Count Basie Center For The Arts		475
Historical	Two River Theatre, Red Bank		250
various	various \$200k or less (7)		685

Reductions:

Elections	reduced Early Voting expenses		(5,000)
Museum	non-recurring pandemic revenue loss		(1,700)
Elections	Election results reporting (FY24 carryforward)		(1,500)
Cultural Trust	non-recurring State match		(1,469)
BAC	discretionary MEP grant		(500)
Elections	reduced Election Day poll worker expenses		(400)
Elections	reduced vote-by-mail expenses		(385)
BAC	NJ SBDC		(300)
Line item grants:			
Historical	Battleship New Jersey Dry-docking		(5,000)
BAC	Business Marketing Initiative		(3,000)
COA	WBGONewark Public Radio - Capital		(2,700)
Historical	Paterson Museum - Capital Improvements		(2,500)
COA	Newark Symphony Hall Infrastructure		(1,750)
COA	The Papermill Playhouse - Capital Impr		(875)
COA	New Jersey Ballet		(500)
Historical	NJ Fire Museum		(400)
Historical	Battleship New Jersey Museum		(375)
COA	State Theatre New Jersey - Capital Impr		(300)
various	various under 250k or less (8)		(1,071)

Total Changes	\$ (25,493)
----------------------	--------------------

FY25 Appropriation	\$ 124,842
---------------------------	-------------------

Grants

The mission of the Grants Unit is to be responsible for the oversight and management of grants-making activity for the Department of State. Each of its Divisions (Grantors) carry out various programs and activities to provide funding to organizations throughout the state in accordance with their mission and award process. The Grants Unit provides support and establishes policies and procedures to monitor grants through the award/contract phase of the grants making process. This includes official award action, contract preparation and execution, financial reporting and payment processing while ensuring compliance with rules and regulations established by the State of NJ and the Federal Government.

State-funded and federal grants activity is summarized below.

State-funded Grants (\$000):

Cultural Projects	\$	30,710
NJ Historical Commission		5,269
Business Marketing Initiative		5,000
Battleship New Jersey Dry-Docking		5,000
Travel and Tourism Advertising And Promotion		4,461
Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development		3,105
Economic Vitality - The Partnership for Action		2,500
Paterson Musuem - Capital Improvements		2,500
New Jersey Symphony - Centennial Support		2,000
The Papermill Playhouse - Capital Improvements		1,750
All Other		8,480
Total	\$	70,776

Federally-funded Grants (\$000):

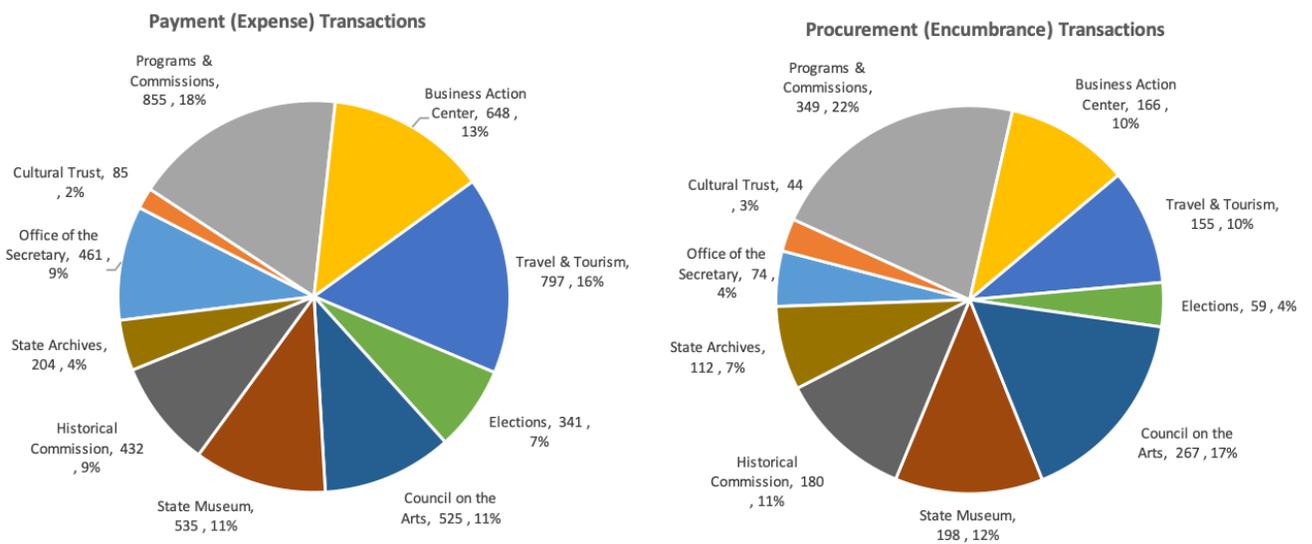
AmeriCorps Grants	\$	4,554
Public Health AmeriCorps		1,664
VGF Grant		500
National Endowment for the Arts Partnership		354
State Trade and Export Promotion Pilot Grant Program		350
AmeriCorps-Competitive		151
Total	\$	7,573

Procurement

The mission of the Procurement Unit is to support Department operations and programs by performing all transactions necessary to obtain the goods, supplies, and services requested by divisions. Additionally, the Unit is responsible for developing and enforcing procedures to maintain compliance with State and federal procurement law and Treasury policy. Procurement transactions can include new actions or actions necessary to supplement or modify current encumbrances, including purchase orders, grant agreements, or other contracts obligating the State to pay for supplies or services.

In FY 24, the Procurement Unit processed almost 6,500 transactions, including over 1,600 to encumber funds and over 4,800 to make payments and record expenses.

Transactions by type are summarized below:



Payment (Expense) Transactions:

Division	Number of Transactions					Total
	AV	EM	PV	TV	UA	
Office of the Secretary	1	53	177	69	161	461
Cultural Trust	21	6	20	26	12	85
Programs & Commissions	310	80	239	61	165	855
Business Action Center	42	17	253	206	130	648
Travel & Tourism	120	9	501	112	55	797
Elections	-	35	92	34	180	341
Council on the Arts	221	36	55	86	127	525
State Museum	6	15	361	54	99	535
Historical Commission	114	10	120	49	139	432
State Archives	-	5	125	46	28	204
Total	835	266	1,943	743	1,096	4,883

Procurement (Encumbrance) Transactions:

Division	Number of Transactions			Total
	AO	GO	PO	
Office of the Secretary	4	-	70	74
Cultural Trust	-	21	23	44
Programs & Commissions	5	230	114	349
Business Action Center	19	48	99	166
Travel & Tourism	15	77	63	155
Elections	3	-	56	59
Council on the Arts	2	235	30	267
State Museum	12	-	186	198
Historical Commission	1	123	56	180
State Archives	1	-	111	112
Total	62	734	808	1,604

Information Technology

The mission of the Information Technology (IT) Unit is to enhance collaboration, security, and knowledge across the Department by strategically deploying IT resources in a manner that is secure, innovative, and aligned with the Department's vision and goals. The IT unit's vision is to implement necessary and efficient operational changes, strengthen collaboration, and enhance analytics across the Divisions.

The Department is updating its approach to IT service management and delivery. Through innovation and data security, it seeks to foster greater interconnectedness among Divisions and effectively allocate IT resources. The Information Technology Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024 details key objectives and goals to advance the mission of the Department of State and support its workforce.

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Enable Modernization

Deliver modern, secure, integrated solutions that enable the Department's mission in New Jersey and enhance the user experience.

Objectives

- Modernize legacy networks and systems and improve user experience.
- Leverage shared secure solutions and improve business intelligence and automation.

Enhance Cybersecurity

Safeguarding the Department's mission involves protecting its data from increasing threats.

Objectives

- Modernize cyber defense.
- Rapidly meet cybersecurity requirements with end-to-end visibility.
- Implement mission-effective risk management through continuous monitoring.

Expand Governance

Increase collaboration and enterprise-wide approaches across the department.

Objectives

- Modernize policies and processes.
- Streamline adoption of new technology.
- Enable economies of scale.

Workforce Excellence

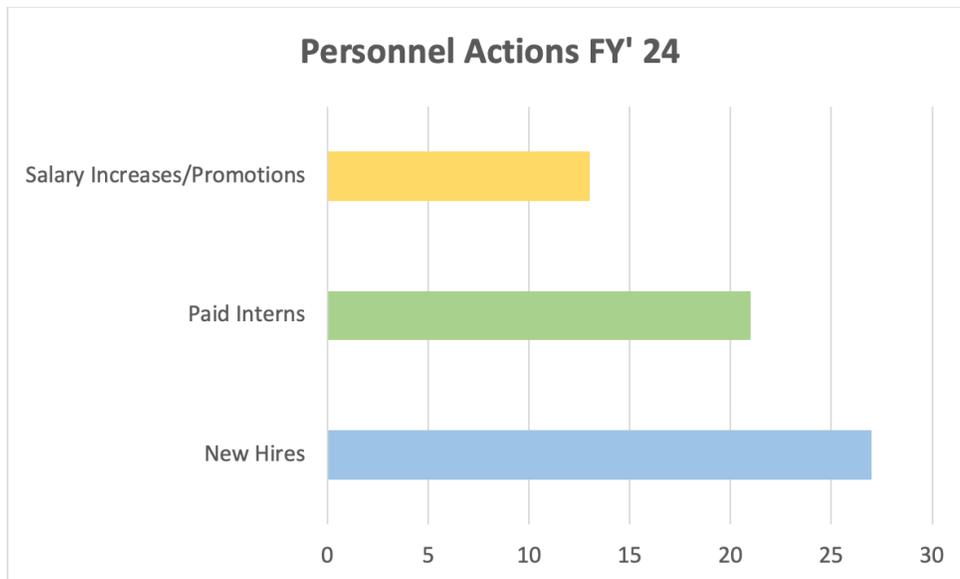
Hire and retain a talented and diverse IT workforce supported by continued learning.

Objectives

- Identify, attract, hire, and support a talented and diverse IT workforce.
- Promote employee learning and development.

Human Resources

The mission of the HR unit is to support the goals and challenges of Department of State by providing services that promote a work environment that is defined by fair treatment of staff, open communication with employees and the HR unit, personal accountability, trust and mutual respect. We seek and provide solutions to support and optimize the operating principles of this Department.



New Hires: 27

Paid Interns: 21

Salary Increases/Promotions: 13

In addition to the Personnel Actions accomplished during FY24, the HR Unit has also provided support for payroll, onboarding, employee benefits, union liaisons and managing the employee job cycle.

- Ensured timely staffing for all divisions.
- Ensured all staff has completed all required Statewide training.
- Successfully generated interest in the job opportunities by participating in job fairs.
- Implemented the Civil Service Commission as a Model Employer (CSC SAME) Program requirements into recruitment process.
- Supported HR needs of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

“Marie loves to learn and be challenged. She enjoys the relationships she has built working with fellow staff members & divisions and appreciates those collaborative efforts as they work towards fulfilling their mission. Marie has worked for the Department of State for over 17 years. Recently, Marie has taken on a fiscal related role within the unit encompassing both grant and fiscal related duties. Marie continues to participate in procurement activities and is considered a widely respected and valuable resource to her team.

Marie Lloyd-Mboya is an Administrative Analyst 3 in the Procurement Unit

Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: MARELYN RIVERA

Marelyn Rivera serves as the Executive Director of the New Jersey Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development. With experience in both the public and private sectors, Marelyn has worked extensively with local and state governments as well as nonprofit organizations.

MISSION:

The Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development (CHPRD) was established in 1975 to address the needs of the Hispanic community, acknowledging the importance of focusing on this historically underserved population. Mandated to provide funding for Hispanic initiatives in New Jersey, the CHPRD operates with a director and an advisory committee, all appointed with the Governor's approval, with the Secretary of State serving as an ex-officio member of the advisory committee.

The Center administers an annual appropriation from the State of New Jersey to empower, financially support, and provide technical assistance to primarily Hispanic community-based organizations across the state. Additionally, CHPRD keeps the executive and legislative branches informed about legislative initiatives that could impact the Hispanic community. The CHPRD is dedicated to promoting a new model of community development that aims to create tangible impacts in people's lives while helping community-based organizations achieve greater self-sufficiency.

The CHPRD has proudly supported the Hispanic community for 50 years, focusing on four main areas:

- Administering grant funding to Hispanic-based community organizations that offer social, educational, and entrepreneurial services to low- and moderate-income NJ residents. Grant categories include Hispanic Entrepreneurship, Citizenship and Integration, Workforce Development, Youth Services, Community Service, and Health and Wellness.
- Providing employment and training opportunities for youth through the Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program.
- Offering program and technical assistance, as well as referral services, to community-based organizations to enhance their ability to serve Hispanic communities effectively.
- Conducting and supporting research and policy initiatives focused on Hispanics and Latinos in New Jersey.

2023 Notable Accomplishments: recap

In fiscal year 2023, the Center received 77 grant applications requesting nearly \$5 million. Of these, 37 Hispanic-based community organizations were awarded funding. A total of 60 programs that directly impacted communities across New Jersey received grant awards totaling \$3,175,000. This represents a 19% increase in the number of organizations receiving funding and a 34% increase in grants and direct programs compared to 2022.

In 2023, the CHPRD proudly welcomed 27 students into the Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program. The graduation ceremony took place on July 31, 2023. This marks a 58% increase in the number of fellows compared to 2022.

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

Grants in Aid: A total of 86 grant applications were submitted, requesting nearly \$5 million in funding. Of these, 63 grants were awarded, resulting in total funding of \$3,105,404. Direct services were provided by 39 Hispanic-based community organizations to Hispanic and Latino communities across New Jersey.

Note: 12% increase in the number of organizations receiving funding and a 5% increase in grants and direct programs compared to 2023.

Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program: The CHPRD hosted 30 students in the Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program. For nearly 40 years, the program has equipped hundreds of fellows with essential skills like communication, negotiation, public speaking, organization, time management, and professional etiquette. The program offers hands-on experiences, classroom instruction, and guest presentations, enhancing workplace readiness and professional growth. Fellows also had the opportunity to intern at over 25 prestigious organizations. The graduation ceremony was held on July 31, 2024, at the NJ State Museum Auditorium, with remarks from Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State Tahesha Way.

Note: 11% increase in fellows compared to 2023. We proactively engaged state agencies to serve as internship sites, resulting in an increased level of participation compared to previous years.

Events: The Center hosted and celebrated a Hispanic Heritage Month with an event that brought together CHPRD Advisory Committee members, GHPF alumni, and grantees. The event focused on networking to foster future collaborations.

Goals for 2025:

Celebrating 50 years: The Center for Hispanic Policy, Research, and Development (CHPRD) will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year. To mark this milestone, we will host a special event and revamp our website, social media channels, and communications. Our goal is to ensure that the Hispanic and Latino communities of New Jersey are informed about the Center's achievements and actively engaged with our work and state resources.

Grants:

- Revise the grant application process for the upcoming fiscal year 2025 to accommodate the projected increase in funding of \$5 million or more.
- Expand the number of workshops and webinars for grantee training.

Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program:

- Increase the total number of fellows to 35.
- Extend leadership session days from 8 to 16.
- Expand the number of internship sites across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.
- Partner with a higher education institution to allow program participation to count toward academic credits.

Staff and Capacity Building:

- Expand the team by adding two full-time employees and two consultants to support the growing programmatic needs.
- Undertake a new research study. *Note: the last study was conducted in 2019.*



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

“Seeing how we empower our community to recognize and harness their strength by helping individuals work on their abilities and achieve their goals. We create positive changes, one person at a time. Watching people grow and realize their dreams fills me with immense pride.”

Arely Hernandez, Program Development Assistant, CHPRD



Photo of fellows with the Governor in the State House rotunda.



Photo with fellows and LG on graduation day.



Governor's Office of Volunteerism

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
ROWENA MADDEN

MISSION:

The mission of the New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism is to encourage and recognize volunteerism and national service, promote an ethic of civic engagement, commemorate the cultural contributions of New Jersey's multi-faceted communities, respond to disasters and emergencies, and promote respect and understanding among people of all ages and backgrounds.

Mission of Subunits



**Governor's Advisory Council
on Volunteerism and
Community Service:**

The Advisory Council supports volunteer recruitment, training, and recognition for New Jersey's

1.4 million volunteers through the Volunteer Generation Fund (which uses federal funds to support 11 volunteer organizations statewide), the annual Governor's Volunteerism Awards, and Governor's Volunteerism Conference in partnership with NJ Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters. The Office works with the NJ Office of Emergency Management on preparation for and response to emergencies and disasters.



**NJ Commission on National and
Community Service:**

The Commission guides and oversees national service programs throughout the state; each year the Commission administers 22 programs that deploy over 500 AmeriCorps members to address issues related to education,

social services, environmental protection, public and mental health, and economic development.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



**What makes you proudest about your time in
public service?**

“Is the way it has allowed me to rediscover and reconnect with my community and cultural identity.”

Lewis Fragoso, Program Manager, NJ Commission on American Indian Affairs



Governor Phil Murphy
Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver
Secretary of State Tahesha Way

NEW JERSEY
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Commission

New Jersey Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission:

The Commission was established to recognize



New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs:

The Commission was established by State legislation to develop programs relating to the cultural, educational, and

social development of New Jersey's American Indian communities. It promotes cooperation among all Native American communities in the state; serves as a statewide reference and resource center to increase public knowledge of New Jersey's Native American heritage; and acts as a liaison among Native American communities, state and federal governments, and educational, social and cultural institutions.

the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. The Commission is responsible for annual commemorative events in honor of Dr. King's national holiday; providing opportunities for young people through conferences and scholarship awards, and recognizing key events of civil rights history, including the 60th anniversary of the I Have a Dream speech at the March on Washington in 1963 and 1964.

New Jersey Hellenic American Heritage Commission:

The Commission was established to recognize the cultural and democratic contributions of Hellenic communities to our state, nation and the world; commemorate important dates of Greek and Cypriot history and provide scholarships to young people of Hellenic background.

NJ Foster Grandparent Program (FGP):

FGP's mission is to empower seniors to contribute to their communities through volunteer service. The FGP engages 80 to 100 low-income Senior Citizens to assist approximately 800 children with special needs in pre-school, elementary schools, and developmental centers.

NJ Volunteer Generation Fund Program (VGF):

VGF's mission is to engage volunteers who will link with local infrastructure organizations and state programs to deliver needs-based service aligning with two funding priority areas: (1) innovative approaches in removing barriers to engage volunteers from historically underrepresented areas and (2) programs that expand, launch, or improve high-impact tutoring, mentoring and other school-based or out of school time programs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Commemorative Commission:

MLK Day of Service Grants: were provided to AmeriCorps and non-profit programs for special service events.

Provided MLK Scholarships to 10 outstanding high school seniors to attend colleges and universities, including Howard, NJIT, Notre Dame, Princeton, and Rutgers. Students were chosen based on essays related to Dr. King's life and work; school transcripts, participation in community service, and letters of recommendation.

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

AmeriCorps:

Children and youth (4,177 in total) were served with classroom assistance, mentoring, tutoring, summer programs, and nutritional services; provided opioid/drug intervention services to 603 individuals; supported, cleared, and beautified 90 acres of public land.

The state commission held its annual end of year celebration for members and program directors. The day included sharing of program accomplishments, as well as a service project: collecting personal care products for donation to TASK.

The New Jersey AmeriCorps State Commission continued to offer Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA):

The Office created a DEIA Committee, open to National Service Programs, to share information and resources on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

DEIA workshop topics included:

- Recognizing Unconscious or Implicit Bias;
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Their Effects on Health and Well Being in Adulthood;
- Discussion of State and National Disability Accommodations Requirements.

AmeriCorps Youth Mental Health Corps Grant:

The commission has received a planning grant of \$100,000 from the Schultz Family Foundation to develop an AmeriCorps program for youth to address the mental health needs of New Jersey schools and communities. The planning grant will chart service-to-career pathways for AmeriCorps members ages 18 to 29.

Foster Grandparents Program (FGP):

FGP held its 14th annual Foster Grandparent Volunteer Recognition event at the Bridgewater Marriott which is a mandatory requirement. At the event, 72 volunteers were acknowledged, including recent retirees. Our eldest volunteer, Mr. Clarence Joseph is 97 years old and has been with FGP for 22 years!

Office of Volunteerism/NJ Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF):

Recruited 8,529 volunteers;
Provided services to 2,504 at-risk youth;
Served 1,015 seniors;

The NJ Volunteer Generation Fund program was selected as one of 5 state recipients and 20 overall grant recipients for the Volunteer Generation Fund grant program. NJ received \$579,360 in funding to increase volunteerism throughout the state.

The VGF Program was selected to receive 2 grants totaling \$70,000, from the Association of State Commissions/ Mott Foundation to implement youth service training, service-learning resources and provide opportunities for youth to engage in meaningful service.

In partnership with the NJ Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (NJVOAD), the NJ Governor's Office of Volunteerism hosted its in-person statewide conference in April, "The Power of Community: Sparking Innovation." From across our region, 419 participants came together and focused on learning, networking, and sharing best practices in community resilience and volunteerism.

In June, the NJ State Governor's Awards were hosted at Grounds for Sculpture and honored 24 medalists and 180 honorees during its awards ceremony.

NJ Commission on American Indian Affairs – Substance Use Disorder Grant from the NJ Department of Human Services:

- Tribal Resource Board: The commission put together an outline of mental health and substance use resources provided by SAMHSA's TTA Center in the form of a bulletin board. This can be used by anyone as a quick reference for help.
- Prevention Education Materials: Over the past couple months, the commission has attended a number of conferences and coalition meetings. Through these meetings the commission has acquired a large number of educational materials including brochures, flyers, and packets on substance use and prevention. These materials have been distributed to the tribal communities and at tribal community events.
- Newsletter: The commission has designed a tribal newsletter that will contain information on tribal community events, commission activities, and community health updates. This newsletter will be pushed out monthly on the commission website.

NJ Commission on American Indian Affairs – COVID-19 Grant from the NJ Department of Health:

In the FY24 year, the commission conducted 43 clinics, administered 1,320 vaccinations, and distributed 1,659 test kits and 17,793 masks. Between April and May 2024, the Nanticoke coordinator trained 50 members. In June 2024, 122 members were trained in class and during the Pow Wow celebration.

Hellenic American Heritage Commission:

The commission commemorated OXI Day 2023, with a major event at Liberty State Park, highlighting the migration crisis that has directly affected Greece and Cyprus. OXI Day represents the response to threats of invasion by the Axis Powers in World War 2; the Prime Minister responded with 'No.'

The commission partnered with the NJ Israel Commission on an event focused on democracy and commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean countries of Greece, Israel and Cyprus.

Goals for 2025:

AmeriCorps Youth Mental Health Corps: The FY25 goal would be to develop an AmeriCorps program for youth to address the mental health needs of New Jersey schools and communities.

Foster Grandparents Program (FGP): The goals of the FGP are: to increase volunteer enrollment which will increase our annual volunteer service year requirements; add more volunteer stations to our current regions and expand to other areas; enhance volunteer training curriculum for upcoming monthly meetings; and add part-time staff to assist with various aspects of our program.

NJ Volunteer Generation Fund Program (NJVGF): The goals of the NJVGF are: to implement youth service programming throughout the state; expand the program's volunteer network; and to add part-time staff to assist with various aspects of our volunteer and youth service programs.

Board Development for the various Commissions and Council: The goal is to revitalize board appointments, identify areas of interest and participation, and setting annual goals. This work has been undertaken with the NJ Commission on National and Community Service.

Disaster Response/Homeland Security: The ongoing work of emergency and disaster preparedness and response continue in collaboration with the NJ Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP), NJ Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, NJ Volunteer Centers, and Faith-Based groups. The office is the lead agency for recruitment, training and deployment of "spontaneous volunteers," that is, individuals who seek to serve during emergencies and disasters, who are not already affiliated with disaster organizations, such as the American Red Cross. The office is also part of the Donations Coordination Team that is led by NJ Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), and the Mass Care and Sheltering team, led by the NJ Department of Human Services.

NJ Commission on American Indian Affairs: Achieve funding, through public and private sources, bring on a staff person to work on development of indigenous curriculum materials that can be shared

with teachers across the state of New Jersey, work with the NJ Historical Commission and NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) and continue to develop the work of the Substance Use Disorder grant from the NJ Department of Human Services, with special outreach to tribal youth.

Intertribal Youth Conference: Our team is organizing an intertribal youth conference that will be open to all tribal youth from New Jersey communities. This conference will be an opportunity for tribal youth to interact with each other while also being able to learn about their culture, their community, and prevention.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission: Highlight the life and legacy of Dr. King through annual commemorative events in January; the MLK Scholarship program, which awards 10 grants of \$5,000 each to graduating high school seniors; and provide mini-grants to community, faith-based, and public organizations for special programming in the summer of 2025.

NJ Hellenic American Heritage Commission: Work on traditional annual events, including OXI Day, Greek Independence Day, and commemorating the 50th anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus and human rights issues.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

“Making a positive difference in quality-of-life issues for people.”

Ivette Ramos, Director, AmeriCorps New Jersey



Jersey Civic Engage

Jersey Civic Engage is an initiative to promote and support civic and voter engagement across our state's diverse communities. Jersey Civic Engage seeks to educate and empower New Jersey residents to engage in the civic and public life of their communities and understand the importance of voting in every election for which they are eligible. Jersey Civic Engage encompasses multiple outreach programs within the Department of State, including the NJ Alliance for Civic Engagement (NJACE), The NJ Ballot Bowl, NJ High School Voter Registration Week, and a partnership with Vet the Votes, a program to sign up veterans and their families as poll workers.

NJACE is a non-partisan statewide collaborative coalition, supporting individuals, organizations, and teams who are working on civic and voter engagement and serving as a platform to share ideas, best practices and resources. NJACE is leading an effort to build grassroots Local Civic Engagement Teams, and has created an LCET organizing toolkit to help these groups develop outreach plans that suit their communities' unique needs.

Since 2018, Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, in her capacity as Secretary of State, has led the New Jersey Ballot Bowl, a friendly non-partisan competition among NJ's college campuses to engage young voters across our state. The Ballot Bowl is conducted in conjunction with our national partner the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. A separate contest within the Ballot Bowl, Ballot Bowl Community Engage, will again take place. It focuses on increasing civic and voter engagement in the broader community that their campus is part of by registering voters and asking for pledges to vote.

The 2023 Ballot Bowl sea-son was a great success; 23 campuses participated and accounted for over 900 new voter registrations and over 5,800 pledges to vote. Since 2022, the Ballot Bowl Program has accounted for approximately 3,000 new voter registrations and 14,000 pledges to vote.

In April 2024, Jersey Civic Engage hosted the third annual New Jersey High School Voter Registration Week. The program focuses on registering New Jersey 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds to vote while providing them with non-partisan information about how our elections work and their role as a voter. Together with our lead state partner, the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) and community partners at the League of Women Voters' Energizing Young Voters Program and the NJ Center for Civic Education, the 2024 New Jersey High School Voter Registration Week added nearly 6,500 voter registrations to our state's voter rolls, a 14% in-crease over last year's total. Over the past two years the program has influenced over 12,000 high school voter registrations.

Vet the Vote is a national campaign to recruit veterans and military family members to be the next generation of poll workers. The New Jersey Department of State's Jersey Civic Engage initiative is proud to support this great project to strengthen our democracy. Veterans and military family members understand the true meaning of service. They don't stop serving when they take off the uniform and they always step forward to serve our country. For thousands, many from New Jersey, that has meant answering a call to serve as poll workers. We are thankful and grateful for their service to our country and our communities.

New Jersey Business Action Center

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
MELANIE L. WILLOUGHBY

MISSION:

The mission of the Department of State's New Jersey Business Action Center is to provide exceptional technical assistance, customer service, resources and information as advocates and mentors for New Jersey businesses of all sizes, categories and diversities.

Six new laws were passed in 2023 and signed by the Governor placing responsibility within the NJBAC. During 2024, the NJBAC has designed the technological workflows and/or partnerships to implement these laws:

1. Create metrics for the customer service delivered by the NJBAC to the businesses reaching out for assistance in every office of the division.
2. Create a hardcopy of the business manual for small businesses, draft it from the www.business.nj.gov website, widely disseminate it, and make a Spanish translation available.
3. Create a mentorship matchmaking program for startups and small businesses.
4. Create an e-commerce, internet presence program for startups and small businesses.
5. Create a resource guide to promote the products or services of manufacturing businesses, establish a business referral service and assist in the promotion and support of career pathways in manufacturing.
6. Collaborate with the Department of Treasury's Chief Diversity Officer to support an annual small business procurement matchmaking event.
 - 2025 Goals – to have all 6 of the new laws fully implemented and ready for use by the business community

Office of State Planning

This Office's purpose (officially, the Office of Planning Advocacy) provides administrative support to the State Planning Commission in implementing the State Planning Act (NJSA 52:18A197 et seq).

Its role is to coordinate statewide planning to protect the environment and guide future growth into compact, mixed-use development and redevelopment. The office implements the goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan to achieve comprehensive, long-term planning; and integrates that planning with programmatic and regulatory land-use decisions at all levels of government and the private sector.

In 2024, among the notable accomplishments is completion of a draft to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, a top priority of the Governor's Office. Included in that priority is to include two environmental goals: environmental justice and climate change and to update the municipal planning across the state. In order to accomplish these goals, the Office has:

1. Conducted stakeholder sessions and in person events to receive input; reached over 1,100 stakeholders through sessions and presentations.
2. Interagency workgroup meetings were held monthly; a communications plan developed and Cross-Acceptance Manual was developed, approved and distributed to counties. The Commission and Office continue to coordinate with planning partners, interagency engagement and technical assistance to municipalities on an as-needed basis.

Goals for 2025:

The major goal for 2025 is to complete the update of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, prepare the final draft plan and hold the six additional required public hearings in the fourth quarter of 2024 and present for approval to the Commission, the final draft plan and proposed State Plan Policy Map.

Business Enhancement Special Projects

Business Enhancement Special Projects provides significant lead generation for all of the offices of the NJBJAC. Through its outreach to business improvement districts, downtowns, economic development offices, and towns, many significant business projects are brought to the NJBAC offices for assistance.

Overview

In FY2024, NJBAC provided Business Enhancement Services in the following forms to over 140 municipalities, counties, district management organizations, other NJBAC Offices, and other State Agencies or Departments:

Outreach & Education	77	43.3%
Technical Assistance	81	45.5%
Special Assessment	7	3.9%
Advocacy	3	1.7%
Partnerships	6	3.4%
Internal NJBAC Support	4	2.2%
178		100.0%

2. Business Enhancement Special Projects:

- To date have completed 178 Special Projects for NJBAC, municipalities, Economic Development Organizations, Regional Authorities, Counties, and District Management Entities

Building on the outreach with more than 345 municipal district management stakeholders and leaders reached in FY '24, a variety of Special Projects, Special Assessments are in process for NJBAC, municipalities, Economic Development Organizations (EDOs), Counties, and District Management Entities.

Goals for 2025:

- Continue providing an array of Business Enhancement Services to municipalities, district management entities, and counties, as requested.
- Continue to provide Business Enhancement Connection outreach emails twice each month to all Business Enhancement Services clients, email subscribers, and other municipal and district management officials.
- Launch and promote the Business Enhancement Best Practice Ordinances Toolkit for municipalities and district management entities.
- Create, launch and implement a Municipal and District Revitalization Census in FY2025.
 - Analyze and share the data with relevant State, County and other agencies.
 - Create additional Business Enhancement best practices that can be accessed online by interested officials.

1. Business-Friendly/Municipal Business

Enhancement Toolkit:

- Distribute toolkit across multiple levels of jurisdiction (municipal, national, state, regional, provincial, and county.)
- Provide online access to the Toolkit through the NJBAC website.

Office of Small Business Advocacy

This Office's purpose is to educate and train small businesses to be the best they can be at growing their businesses. They do this through the educational programs they host and participate in as well as managing the Helpline and online chat to answer all business questions. In order to accomplish these goals, the Office has:

1. Live online chat conversations: 20,609
2. Helpdesk Calls: 12,490
3. Participated in 35 business events, both live and virtual, attended by approximately 3,500 individual businesses and exhibitors. Virtual events were also recorded and posted for non-attenders to view multiplying their impact beyond the live attendees.
4. Hosted three of the signature NJBAC events, "Resources for Growth for your Small Business," in Atlantic, Hudson and Sussex Counties. These brought over 45 state, federal, local government partners that provide resources to small business to these events and were attended by approximately 500 small business owners and startups. The goal for the Resource for Growth expo is to educate the business community about the array of resources available from both governmental and not for profit organizations.
5. Updated our call center from an Avaya Call Center Platform to an Amazon Web Services (AWS) platform and increased staff training and customer service education.
6. Assisted in the creation of "New Jersey Small Business Manual" hardcopy version and provided more than 230 hard copies and 1,484 electronic downloads.

Goals for 2025:

- Continue with our Resources for Growth events, targeting to do 3-4 in Fiscal Year 2025.
- Working with the other NJBAC units, improve our use of our CRM system, Salesforce.com.
- Continue to explore ways to expand our collaboration with partners both internally and externally to more efficiently and effectively to deliver services to the business community.
- Develop a partner for taxation outreach as the Taxation University has been reorganized for internal training and no longer are involved in outreach
- Promote the services available from other NJBAC units, including the Cannabis Training Academy, Export Promotion and Business Enhancement.

Office of Business Advocacy

This Office's purpose is to provide resources and services to mid-large size businesses looking to expand or relocate in New Jersey and encourage the retention of companies and create economic growth for the State of New Jersey. The resources and services provided include permitting, financing options, government navigation, and site-selection, training grants, energy efficiency grants and workforce development. In order to accomplish these goals, the Office:

1. Worked with **536 companies** to provide business advocacy services.
2. Assisted in the creation of over **300 jobs** through companies expanding and moving into New Jersey.
3. Closed FY '24 with **\$435.5 million** worth of successfully closed construction/cap-ex projects, both new construction and gut-rehab as well as more than \$400 million in other projects, including acquisition.
4. The office also created over **\$3 billion of new projects** and facilitated more than **\$9 million in grants being awarded to businesses**.
5. With a total of three staff, the Office closed 536 cases, is currently working on an additional **\$1 billion** worth of projects with a goal to create over **1500 jobs** all which began in 2023. We hope to close a majority of those projects this year.

Goals for 2025:

OBA Goals for 2024/2025 begins with projects closed.

- \$1 billion worth of new projects in 2025
- \$1 billion in closed projects in 2024/2025
- \$10 million in grants in 2025
- 700 cases closed in 2025

Office of Export Promotion

This Office works with New Jersey's small and mid-sized companies to increase sales around the world while growing jobs in the state. Companies interested in global business activity can tap into a number of resources available through the NJBAC Export Promotion unit. In order to accomplish these goals, the Office has:

1. The New Jersey 2024 Summer Fancy Food Pavilion showcased 19 New Jersey new-to-export NJ exporters to buyers/agents/distributors from around the world. Preliminary highlights from the three days of the show include: Participating companies generated over 1,500 leads – one company recorded more than 200 leads – for developing and expanding

international sales and growing jobs in the state.; Fifty-six countries participated in Fancy Food; The organizer advised overall attendance was up 10% from 2023 and international buyers - the key demographic group for participants - was up 4%. Participating NJ companies would not have had access to this type of international exposure without the support of NJ STEP.

2. The 2023-2025 \$850 thousand federally-funded New Jersey STEP program for the direct benefit of 85 small companies from all business communities. Highlights include: \$200 thousand is budgeted to support 19 new to export New Jersey businesses at the 2024 Summer Fancy Food Show which includes meetings with foreign buyers and access to programming for selling U.S.-made products in foreign markets the participating companies would not have access to otherwise. Along with support for other companies, \$300 thousand is being awarded to eligible and qualifying New Jersey companies to attend export-promotion trade shows, foreign trade missions, and participate in other federally approved activities.
3. The 2022-2024 \$500 thousand federally-funded New Jersey STEP program for the direct benefit of small companies from underserved/underrepresented communities. Highlights include: Over \$499 thousand has been awarded; Less than \$1,000 remains to be awarded; The program funded the 2023 New Jersey Fancy Food Pavilion; In addition to the pavilion, another 25 NJ firms have received awards
4. 100% utilization of the 2021-2023 \$2.4 million federally-funded NJ State Trade Expansion Program (NJ STEP program) for the direct benefit of small companies and businesses from underserved/underrepresented communities. Highlights include: \$2.4 million was the largest in the country and largest in NJ STEP's history; 184 firms received 328 awards; Participating NJ STEP clients reported \$55.4 million in actual export sales and created/retained 1,124 New Jersey jobs.

Goals for 2025:

- NJ STEP programs:
 - 1) Closeout NJ STEP 2022-2024
 - 2) One hundred percent utilization of 2023-2025
 - 3) Seventy-five percent utilization of NJ STEP 2024-2026
 - 4) Successful application of anticipated SBA STEP for 2025-2027

- Develop and refine a list of two-three industries for focused promotion in the manner of food and beverage industries
 - Ideally, the immediately above bullet point would include actionable items such as, but not limited to, webinars or training / information sessions
- Add 25 non-NJ STEP exporters to the Office's client list

Cannabis Training Academy

The New Jersey Business Action Center (NJ BAC) has been designated by the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission (NJ CRC) to build and launch the Cannabis Training Academy (CTA), a no-cost technical assistance, training and mentorship program that supports local cannabis entrepreneurs who wish to apply for a cannabis license in New Jersey. To help CTA students through the cannabis application process, NJBAC will contract with qualified instructors and mentors who are currently supporting, consulting, teaching or working within the cannabis industry. This support is critical to ensure that prospective cannabis applicants get the support they need to confidently apply for a cannabis license within the state of New Jersey. Notable accomplishments in FY '24 include:

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

- Fielded more than 250 applications for NJ CTA Instructor roles.
- Selected first 25 CTA Instructors to assist in NJ CTA course development.
- Finalized NJ CTA portal desktop and mobile design and experience.
- Attended more than a dozen cannabis conferences locally, regionally and nationally to promote NJ CTA and reached more than 500 attendees across events; added more than 100 contacts to the CRM and spoke at the National Cannabis Festival Event that drew more than 30,000 attendees over two days.

Goals for 2025:

- CTA plans to formally launch in September of 2024;
- Attract and register more than 500 enrolled students;
- Have at least 100 students complete all 10 levels;

- Produce more than 12 virtual supplemental webinars;
- Host more than three in-person workshops across CRC-designated Impact Zones;
- Launch a Legacy to Legal webinar series and
- Complete and upload all Spanish translations.

Office of Events

The events office supports the NJBAC in identifying, registering, creating and attending outreach events that will continue to educate business of all sizes across the state so they know about the services and resources available to them that can help them grow and thrive.

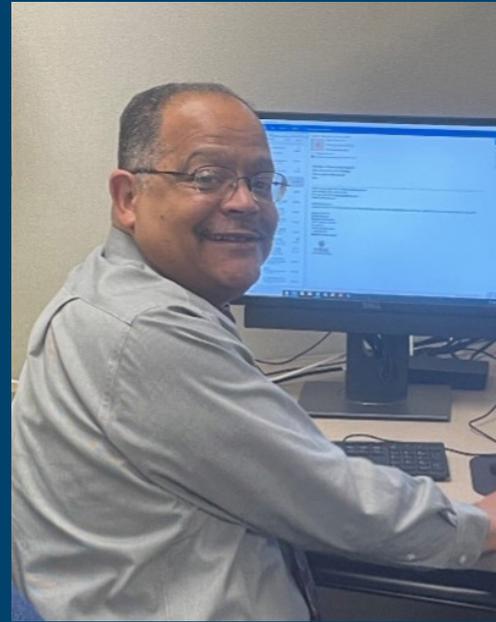
2024 Notable Accomplishments:

- Northern Resources for Growth (April 3, 2024) – 153 attendees
- Small Business Big Grants Webinar (May 7, 2024) - 325
- Sussex Resources for Growth (June 11, 2024) – 140
- Successfully coordinated webinars, exhibits, presentations, and attendance to 88 events that reached an audience of 12,174 (not including fancy foods)

Goals for 2025:

- Create more in-house media content from events (Video Shorts)
- Streamline ethics and approval process
- Facilitate walking tours or NJBAC event for National Small Business Month
- Outreach and connect to with more ethnic and diverse business communities

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



Myles Pressey is a Business Advocate for the State of New Jersey. What makes Myles proud of his time in State Government is the ability to positively affect projects. Myles works hard on behalf of his clients to ensure that they are getting every incentive available and that the company has access to the agencies and people needed for their project to be successful.



New Jersey Cultural Trust

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
 ISABEL (IZZY) KASDIN

MISSION:

The mission of the Cultural Trust is to ensure a stable and healthy cultural industry in New Jersey that is sustainable for years to come and under fluctuating economic conditions. The Cultural Trust Fund is a permanent, interest-generating fund that is an additional source of revenue for nonprofit arts, history and humanities organizations, specifically for the building of endowments, the improvement of institutional and financial stability, and the capital improvement of cultural facilities. Cultural Trust grants address critical needs often not eligible for funding from other state agencies. Since its inception, the Cultural Trust has awarded more than 400 grants totaling \$10,447,130 to 218 different cultural organizations in all 21 counties.

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

Increased Grant Funding: Increased investment from the Governor and Legislature, with rising interest rates, enabled the Trust to grow support for the cultural sector at a time of great need.

- **Historic FY24 Grant Awards:** In FY24, the Cultural Trust awarded \$798,395 in Capital Historic Preservation grants to 21 nonprofit organizations across the state, with 34% of funding going to organizations in Southern New Jersey. The awards, recommended by the New Jersey Historic Trust, are critical investments in the sustainability and visitor-readiness of the state's cherished historic sites.

- An unprecedented thirty-nine applications requesting a total of \$1,389,677 in support were received, nearly double the amount requested in the most recent Capital Historic Preservation grant round.
- The FY24 total award amount represented a 47% increase over the previous fiscal year's grants, the largest amount of grant funding authorized since 2011, and the largest Capital Historic Preservation grant round ever.
- Annually, the grant-supported organizations collectively welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors, drive over \$30 million in total spending, and support over 300 jobs.
- **Completing Certified Donation Matching Payments:** In FY24, the Cultural Trust received a historic \$2,189,000 appropriation, its largest since FY03. This empowered the Cultural Trust Board to vote to use a portion of the appropriation to fulfill all outstanding matching payments owed to cultural organizations with certified donations to their endowments.
 - The matching payments, totaling up to \$1,324,740, will be deposited into the organizations' permanent endowments and will generate additional revenue for the organizations every year in perpetuity.
 - Annually, the five organizations stabilized by these endowment funds collectively serve over half a million people, conduct over \$100 million in total spending, and create nearly 500 jobs.

Responsible Fund Management: Throughout FY24, the Cultural Trust Board continued to provide responsible, attentive, and timely stewardship of the Trust Fund, regularly convening to monitor its performance and consider allowable investments.

At the Annual Meeting in FY24, the total fund balance for the Cultural Trust Fund was reported as \$25,894,716.

- **Diligent Investment Activity:** Over the course of FY24, the Cultural Trust and the Division of Investment purchased 16 different Treasury Bills and Notes with laddered maturities in order to maximize interest income available for grantmaking. At the close of FY24, the Trust's holdings had yield rates ranging from 4.3% to 5.4%.
- **Increased Interest Income:** Fund management efforts and high interest rates resulted in FY23 interest earnings of \$791,800. This interest income is triple the previous year's interest income and represents the most interest earned in a single fiscal year since 2010.

Expanding Outreach: The Trust increased its focus on communications and directly interfaced with constituents in order to expand awareness of its programs in all corners of the state.

- **Communications Plan:** Trust staff developed a comprehensive communications plan for the agency, which will guide communications goals and tactics for years to come.
- **Establishing and Growing Essential Channels:** The Trust launched its first-ever social media channels, including Facebook and X. The Trust also grew its email list by nearly 38%. Cultural Trust emails have an average open rate of 61%, which is well above the industry benchmark for government entities. This demonstrates the high level of interest and enthusiasm for the Trust's programs.
- **Adopting a Logo:** The Cultural Trust designed and adopted its first-ever logo, an important tool for increasing recognition of the Trust's work all over the state.
- **Developing Print Collateral:** The Trust developed an updated agency brochure, the Trust's first since the mid-2000s, which will serve as a template for future messaging.
- **Strengthening Website Content:** Staff updated website content with general grant information as well as profiles of recent grant projects. The profiles serve as a technical assistance resource for applicants and highlight the public value of the Trust's programs.

- **Frequent Attendance at Events:** Trust staff conducted outreach at a variety of statewide events. Examples include events presented by: ArtPride New Jersey, NJ Association of Museums, Council of NJ Grantmakers, and the Friends of NJ Heritage. Trust staff also attended the American Alliance of Museums' annual national conference.

Enhancing Qualification: The Cultural Trust Board reviews applications from nonprofit cultural organizations to become designated "qualified," a process established by the Cultural Trust Act. The "qualified" designation means the organization is eligible to participate in Cultural Trust funding opportunities and requires organizations to prioritize their institutional health. At the end of FY24, 267 organizations were designated qualified.

- **Greater Tracking of Qualified Organizations:** Staff researched all previously qualified organizations and added them to the database of qualified organizations created in FY23. This addition of nearly 100 previously excluded organizations has allowed for better historical and precedent analysis, as well as renewed outreach. This resulted in some organizations applying for qualification after being expired for more than a decade.
- **Increasing Clarity and Ensuring Consistency:** In November 2023, the Cultural Trust Board established the Ad-Hoc Committee on Qualification Requirements, which continues to meet and advise on enhancements to the qualification process.

Improving Grant Processes and Prioritizing Technical Assistance: The Trust built transparency through greater technical assistance and clearer processes. These efforts increased and diversified access to public dollars, as demonstrated by the fact that about 20% of the Trust's FY24 grantees were organizations that had never before received a Cultural Trust grant.

- **Updated Qualification Workshops and Video:** Trust staff updated its existing qualification technical assistance workshop. Staff held two live Zoom qualification workshops, which garnered 72 live attendees. A recorded version has received 203 views as of July 2024.

- **Active Individual Technical Assistance:** Staff responded to 257 individual technical assistance inquiries about the Cultural Trust in general, qualification, grants management, and the FY25 grant program. The inquiries were from organizations in all 21 counties, demonstrating the extent of increased awareness about the Cultural Trust and the breadth of interest in its programs. The Trust's new general phone line enhanced staff reachability.
- **Enhanced Grant Guidelines:** The Cultural Trust organized the Grant Guidelines Working Group. Informed by grantee and panelist feedback, past application data, and frequently asked questions, the Working Group focused on standardizing and refining eligibility and application requirements for the Trust's Institutional and Financial Stabilization grants. The resulting template, used for the first time in the development of the FY25 grant guidelines, will create greater consistency and clarity for applicants and staff.
- **Site Visits to Grantees:** Staff conducted 16 interim check-in meetings with each of the FY23 grantees. These site visits and virtual meetings, a new oversight procedure, provided opportunities to hear about grantees' progress, connect organizations to relevant State resources, and discover new ways the Trust can better support the cultural sector.

Internal and Procedural Improvements at the Agency

- **Re-establishing In-Person Annual Meeting:** In November 2023, the Trust held its first in-person Annual Meeting since 2019. This was an important step to bolster Board member connections and enable the public to interface directly with the Cultural Trust.
- **Board Development:** The Trust established two new Board committees, which will boost Board engagement and provide further advisory counsel to Trust programs and operations.
- **Rules Readoption:** The Trust adopted its expired rules as new rules without amendments, which will provide a consistent framework for program operations until 2031.

Goals for 2025:

Grow the Cultural Trust Fund: Demand for the Trust's unique type of financial stabilization support remains high. Increasing the Fund principal would yield increased interest income, enabling the Trust to grow its grant program to protect the cultural sector's long-term viability.

- The Board will continue to work with the Division of Investment to implement a prudent investment strategy that generates maximum revenue from the Fund.
- The Trust will seek to secure the outstanding balance of \$7.9 million from the public sector to match private donations that have already been certified, which would increase the Trust's grantmaking capacity by 27% every year in perpetuity.

Enhance Outreach: Increase awareness of and access to Cultural Trust grant programs by:

- Continuing to improve and add website content.
- Creating outreach materials for targeted distribution.
- Increasing in-person outreach to cultural organizations.
- Analyzing results of grants to reveal the public benefits of stable cultural organizations.

Develop New Ways to Support the Institutional/Financial Stability of the Cultural Sector: In keeping with its founding mission, the Trust will continue efforts already underway to:

- Digitize and streamline the Cultural Trust's application and reporting processes.
- Develop more regular technical assistance programming for cultural organizations on topics that will help them enhance their institutional and financial stability.
- Develop and cultivate relationships with professional service organizations, associations, and partners aligned with the goals and work of the Trust.



Algonquin Arts Theatre presents *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in October of 2023. Algonquin received a \$40,000 grant to grow its existing cash reserve/working capital fund through the Cultural Trust's FY23 Institutional and Financial Stabilization Grants for Arts Organizations program.

Photo courtesy of Algonquin Arts Theatre.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

Through the process of qualification, we see hundreds of applications come through from cultural organizations all over the state. As a lover of arts and history myself, I am just thrilled to see the tremendous breadth and depth of the world class programming that New Jersey's arts and culture organizations offer. There is truly exciting and meaningful work happening in every corner of our state. It not only makes me further appreciate what a great place New Jersey is to live and work, but it also makes me proud to know that the Cultural Trust has been able to help sustain the state's exceptional cultural vibrancy for so many years.

Isabel (Izzy) Kasdin, Executive Director



New Jersey Division of Elections

ACTING DIVISION DIRECTOR:
DONNA BARBER

MISSION:

The Division of Elections is committed to ensuring free and fair elections across New Jersey's 21 counties. The division strives to provide accessible and transparent processes for all eligible voters while maintaining the highest standards of integrity and accuracy.

Overview:

The New Jersey Division of Elections is pleased to present its annual report in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, demonstrating its commitment to excellence in election administration throughout New Jersey. The Division of Elections coordinates the safe and secure conduct of elections in all 21 of New Jersey's counties and helps build a robust and enduring culture of civic engagement in our communities. Under the leadership of Acting Director Donna Barber, the Division has continued to oversee and support free, fair, and secure elections in New Jersey.

Elections:

In FY24, the Division of Elections oversaw the 2023 General Election, the 2024 Presidential Primary Election as well as the preparation of the 10th Congressional District U.S. House of Representatives Special Elections set to take place in the early part of FY25.

2023 General Election

The 2023 General Election was held on November 7, 2023. County early voting sites were open for in-person early voting between October 28 and November 5. County Clerks began mailing ballots to voters in September. New Jersey had 6,459,097 registered voters and 1,760,049 votes were cast.

2024 Presidential Primary Election

The 2024 Presidential Primary Election was held on June 4, 2024. County early voting sites were open for 5 days of in-person early voting between May 29 and June 2, 2024. County Clerks began mailing ballots to voters in April. There were 2,497,951 registered Democrats and 1,564,964 registered Republicans eligible to participate in their respective political party Primary Election. There were 2,420,522 registered voters with no party affiliation, eligible to declare a political party at their polling locations and vote in that party's Primary Election. For this primary election, a total of 910,700 New Jersey voters cast ballots, with 563,612 voting in the Democratic Party primary and 347,003 voting in the Republican Party primary.

Projects:

Training

In FY2024 the Division of Elections achieved significant advancements in election infrastructure and security. In February, the Division of Elections hosted a statewide tabletop exercise at the Princeton Hyatt Regency Hotel, involving county representatives such as Superintendents, Boards, Clerks, Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Public Information Officers (PIOs), County Prosecutors, and other key election stakeholders, alongside state agencies like the NJ State Police (NJSP), Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Board of Public Utilities (BPU), New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP), and federal agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and others.



In addition to county, state, and federal partners, the exercise also involved Municipal Clerks acting as facilitators and evaluators at each county table, ultimately contributing to the success of the statewide tabletop exercise (TTX). Furthermore, the exercise featured timed early voting, Election Day, and post-election scenarios that required rapid responses from county tables. These scenarios, tailored to impact each election office within a county, included man-made and natural disasters such as cyber-attacks, swatting incidents, and generative AI challenges. Feedback from county partners indicated the exercise was highly relevant given the current election threat landscape and helped identify and remediate weaknesses in their continuity of operation plans.

Voter Education

Voter education remains a top priority with ongoing concerns about mis/dis/malinformation reaching voters and impacting their understanding of how our elections work. Voters who are well informed about election administration and their roles as voters are less likely to fall prey to false or malicious information intended to undermine their trust in democracy.

Vote.NJ.GOV is the state's voter information hub, serving as the one-stop shop for information about how to participate in our elections as a New Jersey voter. The Division of Elections works with county election officials to ensure that the site always has the latest information voters need for the next election. The site serves as a reliable resource for voters to check their registration status, find their designated polling locations, and access other election-related information. To combat misinformation and assist voters, local, county, and state election officials remain readily available to address any concerns or provide necessary guidance. Voters are encouraged to contact their respective County Clerk, County Board of Elections, County Superintendent of Elections, or reach out to the state's voter information/protection hotline at 1-877-NJVOTER (1-877-658-6837). For comprehensive voting information, individuals can visit Vote.NJ.Gov.

Grants and Awards

The Division of Elections received a grant award from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) in the sum of \$167,000. This grant will help enhance UOCAVA voters' experience with receiving mail in ballots. This project will strengthen the means by which ballots are delivered electronically to New Jersey's UOCAVA population. This grant will be utilized to reinforce system capabilities and ensure timely delivery of ballots.

Router Replacement

In March, prior to the Presidential Primary Election, through the use of Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State Tahesha Way's HAVA funding, the Division successfully rolled out over 3,200 Cradlepoint routers, replacing the Nighthawk routers used by county election offices. The new Cradlepoint routers, a substantial upgrade from the previous iteration of the Netgear Nighthawks, provide stronger connectivity and reliability. Post-election feedback from county partners highlighted their exceptional performance, with these routers working remarkably well with electronic pollbooks and no reported connectivity issues on Primary Election Day, indicating a successful implementation.

Periodic Reporting Implementation

The Division of Elections provided for additional election transparency with the implementation of P.L. 2023, c.131 for the 2023 General Election and the 2024 Primary election. The new law requires nightly reporting of voting machines deployed, and not included in the election tally for Early and Election Day voting, as well as the numbers of paper ballots issued, received and not yet processed from election night through county certification of election results. Reports are posted to the County Clerk's website and on the Division of Elections' website.

Accessible Ballot Delivery

Accessible ballot delivery was provided for voters who are unable to complete a paper ballot without assistance through Democracy Live for Primary and General elections. Voters may request an accessible ballot from their County Clerk. Once the Clerk's office approves the ballot set up by Democracy Live, the voter is provided a link directly to their requested ballot, which may be navigated, completed, and printed using a variety of adaptive and assistive technologies.

The completed ballot and an alternate form of voter certification are returned to the County Board of Elections in a standard return envelope set provided by the County Clerk.

Guidance Review

The Division completed an annual review of nine Elections guides which, taken together form a set of best practices for the conduct of New Jersey elections. Eight guides were reissued without changes, and the Periodic Reporting Guide was updated to allow reporting by Congressional District in years when state Legislative offices do not appear on the ballot.

Posters

As part of the NJ Division of Elections continuing effort to inform all eligible citizens of their voting rights, the Division works closely with county election officials to display Bill of Rights and Vote by Mail posters. These posters are supplied by the Division on a yearly basis and are displayed at all Polling locations on Election Days.

Seals

The security of our state's voting machines is of utmost importance to the Division of Elections. The Division ensures that county election officials are equipped with the necessary equipment to guard against potential tampering of the equipment. The Division provides training to county election officials on the importance of securing our voting machines and also conducts background checks on any individual that works on the machines.

Community Events and Speaking Engagement Events:

- National Association of State Elections Directors Summer Conference 2023 (Charleston, SC)
- National Association of State Elections Directors Winter Conference 2024 (Washington, DC)
- National Association of Secretaries of State Summer 2023 and Winter 2024 Conferences (Washington, DC)
- NJAEO Regional Meetings (statewide regions)
- New Jersey Association of Election Officials Fall Conference 2023 (Trenton, NJ)
- New Jersey Association of Election Officials Spring Conference 2023 (Atlantic City, NJ)

- New Jersey State League of Municipalities 2024 (Mercer County, NJ)
- Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey Fall Conference 2023 (Absecon, NJ)
- Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey Spring Conference 2024 (Atlantic City, NJ)
- Division-led monthly meetings, educational webinars, and trainings with county election officials and community groups.

Important Dates for 2025:

- August 4, 2024: Commencement of Mailing of Mail-in Ballots for Special General Election
- August 28, 2024: Voter Registration Deadline for the Special General Election
- September 8 –September 16, 2024: Early Voting Period for Special General Election
- September 18,, 2024: 10th Congressional District U.S. House of Representatives Special General Election
- September 21, 2024: County Clerks Commence Mailing Ballots
- October 14, 2024: Deadline for Meeting of Board of State Canvassers to Certify Special General Election Results
- October 15, 2024: Deadline to Register to Vote for the 2024 Presidential General Election
- October 23, 2024: Sample Ballots Mailed to Voters for Presidential General Election
- October 26 – November 3, 2024: Early Voting Period for the 2024 Presidential General Election
- November 5, 2024: 2024 Presidential General Election Day
- December 5, 2024: State Board of Canvassers Meets to Certify 2024 Presidential General Election results
- Key Dates and Deadlines for the 2025 Primary and General Elections will be available after January 1, 2025.

Goals for 2025:

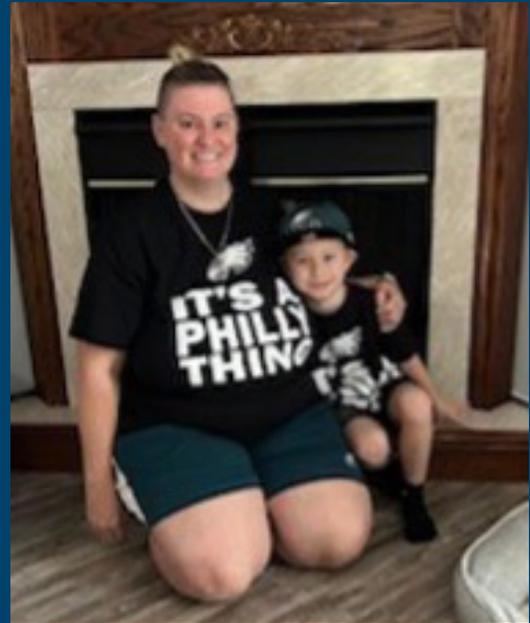
In a proactive approach, the Division of Elections is planning to establish a communication platform to streamline communications and encourage collaboration among county election offices. The “New Jersey Connected - Information Sharing Network” initiative is designed to bolster collaboration and foster a unified approach among New Jersey’s diverse election bodies. This streamlined, central platform specifically for County Election Offices—including Boards of Elections, Superintendents of Elections, and County Clerks—aims to advance New Jersey’s election administration and security. It will provide a consistent foundation for onboarding new employees, offering immediate access to necessary resources, and facilitating integration into the county-community network. The platform will also serve as a trusted conduit for disseminating crucial updates and information, ensuring all stakeholders are aligned and informed. The mission of this initiative is to deliver a secure, intuitive platform that empowers County Election Offices to communicate effectively, access pertinent resources, and engage in meaningful collaboration with peers.

Participate in Tabletop the Vote 2024: National Election Exercise (TTV2024), sponsored by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in coordination with the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the National Association of State Election Directors (NASED). The purpose of this exercise is to explore common practices and techniques to navigate, prepare for, and mitigate potential cyber and physical impacts to election infrastructure, including the identification of essential practices and areas for improvement in election security planning and risk identification.

Support successful in-person early voting for the Presidential General Election (the first time New Jersey voters will have the option for a Presidential General Election) and New Jersey’s Gubernatorial elections.

The Division will partner with The Elections Group to develop a training and certification program. The program will provide relevant training to New Jersey’s local election officials. The Division will review and approve all course materials and course content before they are published.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



“I am incredibly honored to work alongside staff who are just as dedicated as I am to serve the public. Committing yourself to public service is an honor and a privilege.

I am most proud of my time in public service when I along with my fellow coworkers, election officials in our great state and election officials around our nation navigated our offices through the COVID pandemic. All of the challenges we have faced, all of the hurdles we have passed have all been worth it. I am incredibly proud of all of the hard work, dedication and commitment we have all put forth.”

Dawn Schilling is a dedicated mother; avid Eagles fan and the unsung hero of the Division of Elections.

Dawn Schilling, Elections Manager



New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
JEFFREY VASSER

MISSION:

New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism (NJTT) aims to provide diverse and memorable experiences for New Jersey’s visitors, while engendering pride among its residents about where they live, work and play. Our organizational values focus on collaborative and proactive processes where we function as state ambassadors with a commitment to serve. NJTT is the only organization in New Jersey providing marketing strategy and industry leadership for tourism industry stakeholders through:

- Domestic and international marketing programs
- Grant programs
- Cooperative marketing programs
- Comprehensive economic research
- Tradeshow collaboration
- Public relations training and education
- Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and stakeholder outreach and consultation services

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

Key Achievements

- +5% growth in visitor volume in calendar year '23 (120.5 million visits) vs. '22
- +8.1% growth in visitor spending in calendar year '23 (\$49.1 billion) vs. '22
- Visitnj.org website garnered 12.8 million visits in FY '24 (6% increase vs. '23).
- NJTT awarded \$4.5 million in grant funding to DMOs, tourism organizations and attractions throughout the state.

- Digital metrics signaling consumer intent to travel rose 4% versus prior year.
- NJTT launched its new, “[Little State, Lotta Wow](#),” marketing initiative in fall 2023.

Geographic Marketing Coverage

Primary markets included New York and Philadelphia’s designated market areas (DMAs). Secondary markets included: Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Albany, Harrisburg and Wilkes-Barre. This represents a significant expansion of our historical market coverage of core markets: New York (N.Y.), Pennsylvania (Pa.) and New Jersey (N.J.).

Media Campaigns & Activations

Digital and traditional advertising campaigns ran throughout the year and highlighted New Jersey’s diverse tourism assets with tailored campaigns, spotlighting the best of New Jersey for every season. In 2024, NJTT launched the new, four-wheeled vehicle named the “[WOW Experience](#)” in the heart of Times Square. Inside, visitors are immersed in video screens that depict scenic attractions from across New Jersey. Activations were scheduled throughout the year in primary and secondary markets and were supported by signage, transit vehicle wraps, transit boards displays, social media promos and radio spots.

Website, Digital & Publication Efforts

With a refreshed look, feel and style for the VisitNJ.org website, we continued to update with new contemporary visuals. These were strategically featured to optimize marketing content and strengthen NJTT’s branding and digital presence. VisitNJ.org online visits rose by 22% compared to 2022, with a new all-time monthly high visitation rate in June 2023, totaling more than 1.54 million sessions.

Social media remained an important component of reaching NJTT's target audience. Our strategy shifted from increasing number of followers to increasing engagement, which rose by 33% compared to the previous year.

Distribution of the [The Official New Jersey Travel Guide](#) increased from 341,046 guides in FY23 to 371,772 in FY24. Online, e-book views, downloads and orders totaled 37,458.

Travel Tradeshow Activity

NJTT sponsored the American Bus Association's 2024 Travel Trade Show. NJTT and DMO partners also promoted New Jersey at USTA's International Travel Trade Show (IPW) in 2024, meeting with 350 tour operators and 30 journalists.

Consumer Travel Show Activity

NJTT partnered with the New Jersey Tourism Industry Association to promote New Jersey in five strategic cities, including: New York City, N.Y.; Chicago, Ill.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Philadelphia, Pa; and Washington, D.C., reaching over 270,200 consumers, trade and press.

New Jersey Welcome Centers

Garden State Welcome Centers greeted a combined total of 3,857,676 visitors. Visitors who are residents of the following states were the most frequent guests to New Jersey: California, Arizona, Indiana, Texas and Maryland. International visitors to the Garden State throughout FY24 hailed from Canada, England, Germany and Ireland.

International Marketing

Utilizing the gateway airports of Newark and Philadelphia, NJTT markets to countries with frequent service to New Jersey. The international visitor provides significantly more economic impact than a domestic one. NJTT continued to expand international marketing initiatives in our existing markets of UK, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Canada.

- Established relationships with consultants in each market
- Created dedicated web landing pages to support tourism from each market, allowing for better result tracking and the ability to speak in native visitor languages

- Created media plans specific to each market to run through 2024
- Developed UK and Germany market-specific travel guides
- Participated in Brand USA Travel Week 2023 and the Brand USA South America Sales Mission

Marketing Awards Earned in 2023

- Bronze Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association (HSMIA) Adrian Awards for Integrated Campaign Content Marketing
- Bronze Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association (HSMIA) Adrian Awards for Integrated Campaign Experiential Marketing
- Travel Weekly Gold Magellan Award for Brand Activation
- Travel Weekly Silver Magellan Award for Monthly E-Newsletter

Press Tours Hosted in FY24

NJTT executed multiple familiarization media tours (FAMs) for domestic journalists with the key assistance of state DMO partners in FY24. FAMs focused on the Garden State's wine country, the Anthony Bourdain Food Trail, voluntourism, coastal attractions and LGBTQ-friendly destinations. NJTT secured editorial placements in top U.S. media outlets as a result of its dedicated efforts to host media members.

New Jersey Culinary & Press Annual Event with Lt. Gov. Way

In May 2024, NJTT held the second annual Garden State culinary press event, themed as "Plates Around the World," which was held at Platform by the James Beard Foundation in New York City. Lt. Governor Tahesha Way made a special appearance and baked the event's dessert course. Media in attendance were able to sample dishes and learn more about New Jersey's diverse culinary scene, which resulted in press coverage in Forbes, USA TODAY and Honest Cooking.

Public Relations Awards Earned in FY24

- Conde Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards (2023 & 2024)
- Travel & Leisure World's Best Awards (2023 & 2024)
- Oprah Daily "Hotel-O" Awards (2024)
- USA TODAY 10Best Readers' Choice Awards (2023 & 2024)

Goals for 2025:

- Increase FY '25 visitation and tourism spend by at least 4% over FY '24
- Continue to aggressively market to potential visitors beyond our traditional tristate footprint to bring in new tourists to the state. Beyond creating a new visitor base, tourists who travel from these areas are desirable because they stay longer and spend more during their stay.
- Continue to promote New Jersey to the international market, primarily Canada, Ireland/UK and Germany. International visitors are high-end travelers who stay longer and spend more.
- Create significantly more tourism content (articles, photography and video, social media, etc.) to inspire potential visitors and communicate all the “Wows” New Jersey offers.
- Feature diversity and exclusivity in all our campaigns. New Jersey is one of the most diverse states in the nation and we aim to celebrate all the diversity our state has to offer.
- Revamp the Travel Guide in 2025 to give it a fresh new look; intended to inspire visitors and motivate them to experience the incredible diversity the Garden State offers.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



“My overall proudest moment in public service is knowing I have exhausted every effort to satisfy whomever I encounter, no matter the task. The goal is not only to serve with a manner of respect, it’s also considering a reciprocated act in receiving the same courtesy. To ‘be nice’ epitomizes who I am, and that’s me with an ‘r’, Bernice!”

Bernice Harris, NJTT Tourism & Grant Program Assistant





New Jersey Historical Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
SARA CURETON

MISSION:

The New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) is a state agency dedicated to the advancement of public knowledge and preservation of New Jersey history. Established by law in 1967, its work is founded on the fundamental belief that an understanding of our shared heritage is essential to sustaining a cohesive and robust democracy.

The NJHC receives its funding primarily by legislative appropriation. It fulfills its mission through various initiatives, as well as an active grant program. The goal of the grant program is to engage diverse audiences and practitioners in the active exploration, enjoyment, interpretation, understanding, and preservation of New Jersey history. In addition to other awards and prizes, the NJHC offers a free archival evaluation service called the Caucus Archival Projects Evaluation Service (CAPES).

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

Grants

The NJHC grant programs this year were impactful and robust. In fiscal year 2024, forty-one General Operation Support (GOS) Grant recipients received \$2,900,000 to provide critical support to organizations engaged in preserving, researching, and interpreting New Jersey history. This funding has leveraged \$34 million in overall matching dollars, \$27 million in total spending, offered on-and-off-site programs to more than 1.8 million visitors, hosted nearly 11 million website visitors, and supported approximately 600 full and part-time jobs statewide.

In addition to GOS grants, the NJHC awarded twenty-seven Project Grants (\$393,741) to support New Jersey-based historical research, exhibits, educational and public programs, and archival work statewide, as well as Inclusive History Grant Program (IHGP) funding to seven recipients. This was the third round of IHGP awards since FY 2023, where a combined 32 organizations received \$657,673 to support the exploration of under-represented narratives in New Jersey history with a goal of expanding inclusive, community-centered interpretation and resources offered by historic sites and history organizations. The end results are research and/or interpretative plans to tell a more diverse and complex story for a public audience.

The County History Partnership Program is in the middle of its 2024 grant cycle, but interim reports indicate that the counties will fund a total of 230 organizations. NJHC's investment in the program is \$1,508,358.00 and the counties estimate that re-grantees will raise \$3,109,571. County programs have attracted 774,801 visitors and re-grantee programs have attracted 2,852,348 visitors. In 2023 the counties funded 235 re-grantee organizations. NJHC's investment in the program was \$1,508,358 and re-grantees raised \$3,169,115 in matching dollars. County programming attracted 2,704,211 visitors and re-grantee programs attracted 5,870,411 visitors.

The NJHC also increased its co-sponsored project grants to include six organizations for a total investment of \$288,500. The roster includes the Thomas A. Edison Papers at Rutgers University, New Jersey History Day, New Jersey Association of Museums, Caucus Archival Projects Evaluation Service, the Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series, and the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey.



Programs

The NJHC's programmatic offerings engage diverse audiences across the state on a variety of topics within the history field.

African American History Program

During the past year the African American History Program partnered with universities, historical societies, schools and other institutions, groups, and individuals in a collaborative statewide effort to develop African American history in New Jersey. In addition to supporting the annual Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series, the African American History Program held seven public webinars, provided research tools in their monthly "In the Archives" section of the NJHC newsletter, and awarded the Mildred B. Garvin Prize for excellence in teaching African American history. All of the African American History Program's webinars are available on the NJHC's YouTube Channel.

New Jersey Black Heritage Trail

The creation of the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail accelerated this past year due in large part to the addition of two new staff members, Project Manager Dr. Synatra Smith and Assistant Project Manager Greg Odey.

In March 2024, the NJHC Black Heritage Trail team received over 60 responses to their first call for nominations. After passing eligibility and historical accuracy reviews, 32 sites were brought before the New Jersey Historical Commission at their public meeting on April 19th, 2024. All of the recommended sites were approved in a unanimous decision by the New Jersey Historical Commission. Markers will be placed at sites across New Jersey with 15 counties receiving at least one marker during this initial round. The markers are not only geographically diverse, but also thematically and temporally.

New Jersey History Conference

On November 17, 2023 the NJHC hosted its annual New Jersey History Conference at the War Memorial in Trenton, NJ. The keynote presentation was provided by National Book Award Winner Dr. Ned Blackhawk, who shared insights on the impact of Indigenous communities on the trajectory of the American Revolution.

The keynote was followed by panel sessions discussing under-researched experiences of the Revolution such as that of women, African Americans, and Loyalists. The afternoon featured workshops from the New Jersey State Archives and the Old Barracks Museum as well as the option to tour the Old Barracks Museum. In total, 184 people attended the conference coming from the history, public history, and education fields in addition to members of the public.

RevolutionNJ

RevolutionNJ, the state's official partnership to commemorate America's 250th, continues to serve as a national leader in programming and preparations for the upcoming semiquincentennial. To help the public connect with the history of the American Revolution, RevolutionNJ launched its popular Tavern Talks series, which brings historical reenactors to craft breweries throughout New Jersey, and the History Pinned program, which provides unique buttons to visitors at select New Jersey historical sites.

To encourage wide-spread participation across the state, RevolutionNJ introduced two key partnership programs, RevolutionNJ Communities and RevolutionNJ Proud Partners. Municipalities and counties are encouraged to pass resolutions to become RevolutionNJ Communities, thereby embracing the mission and goals of this initiative and initiating planning for their own commemorative activities. Similarly, organizations of all kinds can apply to become Proud Partners and support the effort through their own programs.

In the fall of 2024, RevolutionNJ will begin its pilot of the History Happened Here educational program for grades 6-12; the program will launch state-wide in the fall of 2025. Partners at New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) are developing a civics toolkit for grades K-5. A traveling exhibit, titled Revolutionary Lives: Living the American Experiment Then and Now, is ready for design and fabrication; it will be available to libraries, community centers, and other public spaces around the state in 2025 free of charge. RevolutionNJ is also coordinating with the NY/NJ World Cup Team and Sail4th250 to prepare for a large-scale festival in July, 2026.

Goals for 2025:

Over the course of the 2025 fiscal year, the New Jersey Historical Commission plans to expand its resource offerings for historical organizations and researchers while continuing to share New Jersey's history with the public.

The grants team intends to grow its outreach to spread awareness of its various grants and prizes opportunities. On the programmatic side, the African American History Program plans to create a system to connect potential volunteers to African American history sites and projects, promote Black history and cultural events throughout the state, and present new scholarship on African American history in New Jersey. The New Jersey Black Heritage Trail team will begin the installation of historical markers in the spring of 2025 and open two additional nomination cycles. The annual themes programming will explore the history of political participation in New Jersey with the New Jersey History Conference "Imperfectly Civil: History of Politics & Civics in New Jersey."

Finally, RevolutionNJ will continue to prepare for America's 250th in 2026 by increasing its programmatic offerings and developing new partnerships. Specific plans include producing a podcast series, expanding the Tavern Talks program, collaborating on the creation of a RevolutionNJ app, launching a RevolutionNJ historical markers initiative, and coordinating a public arts program with the New Jersey Council on the Arts and Monument Lab. RevolutionNJ will also continue to work with national commemorative initiatives such as Keep America Beautiful and America's Field Trip.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



"The most rewarding part of my public service is having the opportunity to work together with folks from all walks of life and regions in our state. I particularly enjoy being able to get out into communities and visit the numerous historic sites we have in our state, listening to members of the public, and finding creative solutions that address their needs."

Marc Lorenc, Chief Public Historian

New Jersey-India Commission



New Jersey-India Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
RAJPAL S. BATH

MISSION:

The Commission was established by Executive Order No. 354 on February 6th, 2024. It is charged with advancing bilateral trade and investment and encouraging economic development in both New Jersey and India, the most populous country in the world with one of the fastest-growing economies.

The New Jersey-India Commission consists of two legislators and 37 members and is fully operational with an Executive Director that handles the day-to-day operations. The Commission, under Department of State, strives to strengthen the state's relationship through this special and unique relationship.

New Jersey is proud to have the second-largest Indian-born population in the United States. Towns like Edison, Iselin, and Carteret are some of the largest hubs. And "Little Gujarat" in Jersey City- also known as India Square- has one of the highest concentrations of Indians in the country.

During Governor Phil Murphy's 2019 visit to India, New Jersey signed two sister state agreements with Gujarat and Telangana. The recent creation of the New Jersey-India Commission further strengthens our economic ties, along with the New Jersey India Center, which has offices in Delhi and Bengaluru, to assist Indian companies looking to expand into the North American market.

The bilateral trade between New Jersey and India has seen continuous growth, reaching a value of \$10.7B since 2022. With continued partnerships between New Jersey & India's public/private sectors, we look forward to future growth and being the model state to set the stage of innovation.

Over the past three months, the New Jersey-India Commission has been active and represented at various events throughout the state. The Commission was hosted by the Indian Counsel General in New York City to discuss the framework of what the Commission hoped to achieve. Executive Director Rajpal S. Bath & Commission member Dr. Gurbir S. Johal gave remarks at the first Annual New Jersey Kabaddi Cup (hosted by the New Jersey Sports & Cultural Association), which is the traditional wrestling form from the state of Punjab. Chairman Wesley Mathews gave remarks on behalf of the Commission at the celebration of the second showroom opening of "Joyalukkas Jewelry" a celebrated and famous jeweler from the state of Kerala. Fun fact: the first Joyalukkas showroom to open in North America was here in Edison, New Jersey! The Commission in partnership with the NJ-Symphony helped advertise the screening of the major Bollywood film 'Baahubali' with a live orchestra.

As the Commission prepares for its first delegation trip to India in December with Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, we feel confident that the foundational groundwork that will be laid down on that trip will set the path for a successful 2025.



Goals for 2025:

- Continue to work with Choose NJ to create brand awareness to attract Indian foreign direct investment (FDI) and promote New Jersey as a top choice for startup expansion.
- Coordinate with New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) to support Indian companies seeking to expand to the New Jersey market by creating partnerships with NJ incubators.
- Expand tourism relations and encourage travel and cultural exchange between educational institutions.
- Enhance collaborations between NJ cities & Indian states that have a shared community immigration connection.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

“Serving as the inaugural Executive Director of the NJ-India Commission has been a deeply rewarding experience.”

Rajpal S. Bath





New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
AWILDA POMALES-DIAZ

MISSION:

To promote and support the New Jersey-Puerto Rico Relationship

- Business Exchanges with Puerto Rico to stabilize its economy
- Bilateral Trade and Investment
 - Technology, Tourism and Agriculture
- Academic and Education Exchanges
- Initiation of Joint Action on Policy Issues of Mutual Interest to PR and NJ
 - Extension of reciprocity for certificated/licensed professionals
- Addressing other issues the commission deems important to furthering its mission, such as:
 - Culture and Community Engagement
 - Disaster Relief Preparedness (e.g., Hurricanes)
 - Chronic Health Issues disparately impacting Puerto Ricans
 - Tourism

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

- PR Commission met with the Governor of Puerto Rico in Atlantic City.
- PR Commission Collaboration with New Jersey State Police and Office of Emergency Management in preparation for hurricane season.
- PR Commission hosted its first New Jersey-Puerto Rico Commission Heritage Event.
- Participation in various community facing events on issues that directly impact the Puerto Rican community, such as the First Lady's Family Day in Elizabeth.
- PR Commission hosted its first Starting Your Business in New Jersey event at Kean University to assist with closing the disparity gap for Hispanic business owners.
- There was a panel presentation including representatives from NJBAC, NJEDA, Choose NJ and NJ Start. There were also volunteer attorneys available to assist participants with the expertise to properly establish their business in the Garden State.
- Established partnerships with State Universities and Colleges to deliver presentations on topics of interest to the Puerto Rican community such as, Rutgers and the Latino Action Network Legislative Assembly.
- Recruitment of Rutgers University students as Interns to work with PR Commission
- PR Commission hosted a health fair to discuss health issues, New Jersey's health insurance and other resources the state provides for New Jersey residents.

- PR Commission organized and executed an event bringing together all the Puerto Rican parade organizations from throughout the state. The event included a panel of Commissioners and other parade organizers whom have planned Puerto Rican Parades across the state and they provided tips, tools and resources to attendees for the future generation of cultural event planning, such as the Puerto Rican parade which dates back to April 13, 1958 in honor of our roots. Each parade board received recognition as cultural ambassadors of PR culture.
- PR Commission continues to engage with PR parade leaders as a form of outreach since these groups have a large following of Puerto Ricans who care about the needs of Puerto Ricans in NJ and on the island.
- PR Commission is participating in Puerto Rican Parade events throughout the state that serve to amplify the importance of the culture and its representation in policy and government.

Goals for 2025:

- A second Starting Your Business in New Jersey event to further engage the business community.
- Puerto Rico Mission with a delegation of business professionals and government officials from NJ to join us.
- Additional health fairs and/or resource fairs to educate on the resources the state offers.
- Establishing an official Emergency Response Activation for when PR is impacted by hurricanes.
- Commission delegation at League of Municipalities Conference.
- Higher Education event in partnership with a state university whom has the highest concentration of Hispanic students.
- Establish mutually beneficial trade arrangements.
- Bringing Puerto Rican studies and education into all Schools.



New Jersey State Archives

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
JOSEPH R. KLETT

MISSION:

New Jersey State Archives (NJSA) has statutory responsibility for the management and preservation of public records of enduring historical value. This includes materials in all formats (paper, microfilm, other physical media, and electronic), either designated as permanent by law/regulation or deemed historically significant through appraisal. The Archives' mission is tied, historically, to the records-filing functions of the Secretary of State's Office. Organizationally, the agency is successor to the former New Jersey Public Records Office (created in 1920) and the State Library's Bureau of Archives and History (or BAH, created in 1945). The services and holdings of the BAH were vested in the Division of Archives and Records Management (DARM), created in the Department of State in 1983 by an executive reorganization plan. Under a memorandum of understanding between the departments of State and Treasury, DARM's records management, records storage, and micrographics functions have been overseen by the Division of Revenue and Enterprise Services (DORES) in the Department of the Treasury since July 1, 2012.

Authority for NJSA's operations derives generally from N.J.S. Title 47 (Public Records), Title 18A:73 (Executive Reorganization Plan), and Title 22A:4-21 (Fees). The director of DARM (i.e., the State Archives) holds a seat on the State Records Committee, which is charged with records retention policy, scheduling, and regulation under N.J.S. 47:3-20.

Sub-Units:

Administration – This unit consists of three full-time employees (the Executive Director, the Supervising Archivist, and a Technical Assistant 1). It is responsible for management of the division's policies and statutory mission as a whole, and day-to-day operation of NJSA as a records repository and research facility.

Collection Management – This unit consists of two full-time employees (an Archivist 1 a.k.a. Collection Manager, and an Archivist 2) and three part-time employees (Processing Assistants). Its responsibilities include: the appraisal ("archival review") of potential acquisitions from other government agencies and private donors; orchestrating and documenting accessions/records transfers; arranging, describing, sorting, and weeding materials at the time of appraisal or after accession; archival housing of collections and maintenance/monitoring of storage and vault environments; production of collection guides, inventories, and database records for public research use; collaboration with Records Management Services (in DORES) and the State Records Committee on records retention policy.

Reference and Outreach Services – This unit consists of four full-time staff (an Archivist 1 a.k.a. Head of Reference Services, a Senior Library Assistant, a Library Assistant, and a Confidential Clerk) and four part-time staff (Reference Assistants). It is responsible for: the delivery of public reference services in-person and by mail/email; public reception; certification of records; development of research aids and resource guides; and presentations on NJSA's historical/genealogical holdings and services.

Data and Digitization Services – This unit consists of four full-time staff (an Archivist 1, an Archivist 2, a Technical Assistant 1, and a Library Assistant) and one part-time staff (a Publications Assistant). It is responsible for: database development/management and oversight of data-entry projects contributed to by the other units; digitization of documents, maps, and photos; photo-reproduction services; and the development of website pages and online resources.

Electronic Archives Program – This unit, established in FY 2023, consists of two full-time staff (an Archivist 1 and an Archivist 2). It is responsible for: development of procedures/workflows, standards, and policies relative to historical/permanent public records in electronic form (including born-digital and digitized documents); surveying state agencies’ holdings of permanent records in electronic form; working with the Collection Management Unit to appraise and transfer electronic files to the State Archives; maintenance and preservation of NJSA’s holdings of electronic records (currently utilizing the Preservica platform).

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

Electronic Archives Program – Over the past year, the Electronic Archives Program has given presentations to all Department of State agencies about NJSA’s capacity to receive electronic records. Electronic Archives staff also presented at numerous conferences and webinars on the processes and workflows the team has developed. These include the New Jersey Library Association’s Annual Conference, the (national) Best Practices Exchange, and a Council of State Archivists (CoSA) – State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI) webinar. Working with CoSA’s consultant, the Electronic Archives Program finalized a workflow and began ingesting materials into Preservica, starting with the permanent records of NJSA. Additionally, the program was recognized through CoSA’s 2024 “Advocacy for Archives Award,” which acknowledges significant contributions to the preservation and availability of the American historical record by state, territorial, and local government archives.

Public Reference and Outreach Services – During FY 2024, NJSA continued to expand in-person public reference services. While NJSA is not yet open to walk-in researchers five days per week, in March 2024 we expanded research-by-appointment opportunities to 92 three-hour slots: 80 in our Microfilm Reading Room on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, mornings and afternoons; and 12 in our Manuscript Reading Room on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons.

NJSA also expanded its microfilm holdings as well as technological capabilities. Service copies of vital statistics microfilm were increased to include marriage records up to 1950 and death records up to 1964. Our Microfilm Reading Room is now home to three new ScanPro microfilm-to-digital readers which the staff use to fulfill orders for copies of documents. This equipment has streamlined the email reference process for remote researchers.

Archives staff were invited to share information on our services and holdings at several venues during the course of the last year. We gave presentations about new resources and research opportunities to Hudson County (NJ) Genealogical Society, Monmouth County (NJ) Genealogical Society, and the Downstate Delaware Genealogical Society. We also gave a workshop at the NJ Historical Commission conference titled *Unfinished Revolution: New Perspectives on the American Revolution in New Jersey*. The session delved into under-researched Revolutionary War-era topics and documentation. The staff also shared information on our holdings at Monmouth County Archives and History Day and the South Jersey History Fair.

Additionally, the following were among the many research and publication projects supported by NJSA staff and collections during the course of the fiscal year:

- A PBS series, *Travels with Darley*, filmed a special New Jersey episode in which they toured the State Archives’ stack and vault areas.
- A PBS 4-part docuseries, *Hope in the Water*, explores the work of dedicated fishermen and -women, aqua farmers, and scientists who are attempting to harvest aquatic species to feed the planet while not harming the oceans.

A research project exploring the role of renting and the provision of housing at historic sites, museums, and heritage organizations in New Jersey (using our Works Progress Administration and Department of Environmental Protection collections).

- Images of Cedar Grove, NJ, will be used in an episode of My Haunted Hometown, to air in Canada in Fall 2024.
- A research project using historic road returns to document transportation routes.
- Morven Museum and Garden used a petition for their gradual abolition of slavery in their Striking Beauty exhibit. The petition contained the signature of clockmaker Peter Hill, a former slave who bought his freedom.
- The Governor’s social media accounts used older photographs of Drumthwacket and the State House during the holiday season.

Tours - The State Archives proved a popular tour destination for a myriad of groups and individuals. Among those who toured were the State House Tour Office docents, New Jersey State Library staff, the New Jersey Library Association’s (NJLA) History and Preservation Section, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archival Conference’s (MARAC) New Jersey Caucus, the Hudson County Genealogical and Historical Society, and the Department of State’s Take Your Child to Work Day participants. Among our distinguished guests was the Mayor of Patan, Nepal, Chiri Babu Maharjan.

Development of Research Tools and Online Resources

– During the fiscal year, major online resources were developed and posted to NJSA’s website through the work of our Data and Digitization Services Unit, as well as an intergovernmental agency project. They included:

- **New Jersey Tax Ratables.** This multi-year digitization and indexing effort has resulted in a major new resource on NJSA’s website. The project began in 2020 by Archives staff during the pandemic-related work-from-home period. The collection consists of 1,431 booklets listing New Jersey property tax payers (including owners and lessees), municipality by municipality, during the 1770s-1820s period. The information is extremely important for local history and genealogy due to the federal government’s loss (by fire) of all

New Jersey census records from 1790, 1800, 1810, and 1820. The scanning and indexing of these materials captures vital information about landholding, slavery, militia exemptions, etc. Currently, researchers can access over 1,300 booklets online, with a completion date set for Fall 2025. Indexing is ongoing for these books, and will result in an online database.

- **New Jersey Network (NJN) Production Tapes Catalog.** The New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority (NJPBA), with which NJSA has had a long and productive relationship, approached the State Archives in late 2023 requesting assistance with moving their production tapes data out of a vendor-based catalog to a State-controlled environment. This data tracks NJN media assets (broadcasts, documentaries, etc.) that will eventually come to the State Archives. After many hours of conversion and streamlining, Archivist Vivian Thiele provided NJPBA with a user-friendly product to track the location and content of the NJN materials.

Recovery of Alienated Public Records – Director Klett (working with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the New Jersey State Police (NJSP)) exerted claims to, and successfully recovered, several alienated public records on behalf of the State during FY 2024. Recoveries during the fiscal year included the following (listed in chronological order):

- “An Act for Rendering Void the Lottery lately made by Peter Gordon for the Sale of certain Lands Lying in the County of Middlesex ...” 1762;
- “An Act to enable the Owners and possessors of certain Meadows in the Township of Newark in the County of Essex to erect a Dam ...” 1779;
- Papers of David Thompson, Jr. (1782-1831), including muster rolls and military records from his service as Paymaster of the Militia during the War of 1812, ca. 1811-1820;
- “An Act Directing the Treasurers of this Colony to pay the Commander in Chief of all his Majesty’s Forces in North America the Sum of One Thousand Six Hundred and Two Pounds ...” 1762; and
- Estate inventory of James Thatcher, Kingwood Township, NJ, 1799.

Other Notable Acquisitions – NJSA also accessioned (acquired) historical records from multiple state and local government agencies, as well as several private donors. This amounted to 513 cubic feet of paper records and microfilm during FY 2024 (81 distinct collections). Acquisitions of special note include:

- **Travel and Tourism Video Cassettes.** Included are 120 videos promoting New Jersey tourism.
- **Pre-1948 County Court Records.** Included are dockets, minutes, judgment books, and indexes from the former courts of Atlantic, Hudson, Middlesex, and Warren counties dating back to the mid-1800s.
- **Governor Chris Christie Video Cassettes.** These camcorder video cassettes include recordings of press conferences, interviews, town hall meetings, and bill signings during the Christie administration.

Partnering with outside organizations – NJSA has developed partnerships with outside organizations to develop resources for researchers.

- **Rutgers University Scarlet and Black Research Center.** This group, based at the Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice, is partnering with NJSA to use archival manuscripts to track the history of enslaved people across the United States. Initially, NSJA and Rutgers staff searched through Supreme Court case records. We will also look into several other collections, such as Overseer of the Poor records and slave manumissions (freedom papers). The Scarlet and Black Research Center is building a database which will link to images of items in NJSA's holdings.
- **Canal Society of New Jersey.** NJSA has partnered with the Canal Society to develop a map website initially showcasing digitized Morris Canal maps. Larger maps documenting the entire length of the northern New Jersey canal have already been digitized. The Canal Society is funding this project while NJSA arranges for scanning at The Athenaeum in Philadelphia's Regional Digital Imaging Center.

Other Notable Accomplishments

- **Civil Service Commission's Innovation and Efficiency Award.** The State Archives received this award in May 2024 during Public Service Recognition Week. The award recognizes employees who demonstrate a willingness to identify and implement business processes that make services more accessible to clients and implement more efficient methods of service delivery.
- **N.J.A.C. Title 15:3 Readoption.** State Archives staff reviewed Title 15:3 of the Administrative Code to make it align with current workflows and record formats. This chapter deals with the Division of Archives and Records Management's responsibility for establishing the framework for the management of New Jersey public records in a systematic and comprehensive fashion.

2024 Statistics Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

NJSA tracks two *Key Performance Indicators*. Totals for FY 2024 are as follows:

- **Reference Inquiries Responded To:** approximately 89,783 (these range from telephone calls and emails seeking historical facts and information on NJSA's holdings, to requests for specific genealogical records and complex searches for court cases, military service documentation, land titles, etc.)
- **New Database Records Created:** approximately 208,801

Goals for 2025:

U.S. Semiquincentennial Planning – The contract for guest curation of NJSA's planned exhibition at the State Museum in 2026-27 was awarded in Fall 2023. The curator, Claudia Ocello of Museum Partners Consulting, LLC, is researching and developing the script for the exhibit. The exhibition will focus on the State Archives' unique holdings of Revolutionary War and civil rights-related material, and how revolutionary ideals have played out through New

Jersey history. Planned for a 3,000-SF gallery space on the State Museum's street level, the content will tie into RevolutionNJ's "Interpretive Framework" developed, in part, by the New Jersey Historical Commission. It will tell stories of: 1) the experiences of New Jersey citizens in the Revolutionary Period and during the war itself; 2) how the ideals of the Revolution and early statehood years had evolved during the colonial period and have continued to evolve; and 3) how they are relevant today. NJSA received funding through the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund for the exhibit curation, design, and fabrication. Funds from this source will also cover the construction of a new gallery space at 225 West State Street. The Division of Property Management and Construction (DPMC, in the Department of Treasury) completed their feasibility study and received approval to proceed with the construction of the gallery. The project is set to be completed by December 2025.

Public Reference Services – Now that the staff vacancies that arose during and after the pandemic have been filled, NJSA will expand its open public hours during FY 2025. We will start by opening on Fridays beginning Labor Day week.

Electronic Archives Program – The Electronic Archives Program aims to expand its presentations on electronic records to agencies outside the Department of State. Additionally, program staff will collaborate with the Office of Information Technology to identify records of prior administrations that can be transferred to NJSA. Program staff will also set up a backup server to act as a dark archive for the protection of all electronic records.

Creation of Exhibits Unit – We anticipate the development and staffing of an Exhibits Unit during FY 2025, to produce content for and oversee the management of NJSA's new gallery space at 225 West State Street (noted above). Costs for the first year, including operational expenses and salaries, have been funded by the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

New Acquisitions – NJSA's Collection Management Unit anticipates that we will accession over 1,000 cubic feet of paper records in FY 2025. We will also take in another major addition of vital statistics (birth, marriage, and death certificates) from the Department of Health's Office of Vital Statistics and Registry. NJSA's holdings of original marriage and death records (which we will certify going forward) will be expanded to include certificates from 1941-1950. Birth certificates will be extended to 1924.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



"I love helping researchers 'find' the people they were looking for and finally solve the mysteries they were wondering about. I'm very proud of the work we do to assist and educate the public in this way."

Edna Velez



New Jersey State Council on the Arts

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
ALLISON TRATNER

MISSION:

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, created in 1966, is a division of the NJ Department of State, and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Council was established to encourage and foster public interest in the arts; enlarge public and private resources devoted to the arts; promote freedom of expression in the arts; and facilitate the inclusion of art in every public building in New Jersey. The Council believes the arts are central to every element we value most in a modern society including human understanding; cultural and civic pride; strong communities; excellent schools; lifelong learning; creative expression; and economic opportunity.

In New Jersey, we recognize that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. The State Arts Council embraces the principles of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of our work. With a focus on learning, data, and accountability, we will continue to assess and challenge inequities, identify gaps in engagement and service, and focus on the details that shape change.

The Council staff is organized in four units with distinct but overlapping responsibilities: Grants & Strategies; Operations & Technical Assistance; Communications; and Community Partnerships & Artist Services.

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

- In FY24, the State Arts Council invested \$31,158,500 through 957 grants to NJ artists and organizations of all sizes, in all artistic disciplines, that impacted communities, families, and individuals in all 21 counties.
- 64% of the Council's FY24 funds were invested in operating support grants – the most challenging type of funding for nonprofits to obtain. The Council increased these awards in FY24 to help offset the rising costs of doing business, grow stability in the field, and help New Jersey maintain footing as a state rich with vibrant cultural assets and attractions. The Council leaned further into an equity-centered strategy through these increases to help smaller organizations continue to build capacity.
- With an increased investment of \$2 million in the Individual Artist Fellowship program, the Council supported a historic 160 artists. We instituted a new structure with two levels – finalist and fellow – with awards as high as \$31,000.
- The Council focused funding on projects that serve the field at large, incentivizing investment in the industry, and helping us meet shared goals. Projects like the Cultural Access Network, the five regional folklife centers, the Creative Aging Initiative, artist residencies in schools, and public art programs.

- Council staff launched a new, multi-session professional development series – The Business of Being an Artist – while also continuing our Making It Public series for artists interested in expanding their art making practice into public spaces. Both of these programs were offered free of charge to artists of all disciplines, at any stage in their careers. The Council reached nearly 900 artists through our professional development programs in FY24.
- The Council offered a new, multi-session professional development series focused on critical financial services for arts nonprofits – the Nonprofit Finance Fund Watch Party series, which engaged 430 arts workers.
- To increase access to the first open application for our multi year grants in 5 years, the Council overhauled grant guidelines, with a focus on clear and direct language, and added a longer timeline to help ensure broader and deeper understanding of the funding opportunities. This effort included a robust schedule of resource sessions, webinars, office hours, customized 24-7 assistance, and a grant writing tips social media campaign.
- The Council’s grant review panel process was further refined through the addition of an anti-bias orientation for panelists, and strategic efforts to engage specialists from diverse racial, gender, educational, and geographic backgrounds.
- Internally, Council staff implemented a new planning strategy with a newly articulated structure to align resources, goals, capacity, and communications. This has helped the Council become more efficient and effective.
- Technical tools were improved, including SAGE, in order to simplify the process both internally and for the public. This has also provided by organization and use of data.
- Staff continue to refine high-quality constituent relations and assistance across all teams and strengthened communications assets on line and in print, such as the Year In Review.

Goals for 2025:

FY25 marks year 2 of the Council’s current [Strategic Plan](#), and this year’s priorities are a continuation of last year’s foundational work and the ongoing operationalizing of values of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all that we do.

The priorities the Council has established for FY25 are the result of ongoing self-assessment and field communication, accounting for initiatives underway, as well as current circumstances, and agency capacity. These priorities guide the Council’s [FY25 Program and Operations Plan](#), which is available on the Council’s website.

1. Make grants to organizations and artists that strengthen the arts sector and contribute to statewide vitality in equitable and accessible ways.
2. Provide professional services for the field based on current needs and opportunities.
3. Grow the Council’s multifaceted communications strategy with enhanced tools, information, and materials.
4. Further embrace principles of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in grantmaking and services.
5. Build internal capacity, streamline operations, and capitalize on expertise.



Council Artist Fellow Allison Strong performs at the Council’s FY24 Annual Meeting



Photo courtesy of Peters Valley School of Craft



Octavius Catto School,
photo courtesy of Symphony in C

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

As a Program Officer, I am so fortunate to work with an amazing team of people to move millions of dollars into the field every year, directly impacting New Jersey arts organizations and artists, and infusing the state with masterful artwork, performances, and programs. As Access Coordinator, I am most proud of being able to carry out programs that reflect our agency's longstanding and deep commitment to help New Jersey arts organizations meet and surpass the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards. In my role, I also work to ensure the Arts Council's offerings are accessible. This year, we were able to offer a livestream option for our in-person Annual Meeting for the first time, which allowed those with accessibility, transportation, or other barriers the opportunity to view the meeting.

Lindsay Dandeo (she/her), Access Coordinator,
Program Officer – Theatre, Service



New Jersey State Museum

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
MARGARET M. O'REILLY

MISSION:

The New Jersey State Museum is a center for the exploration of science, history and the arts. We preserve and share stories that inspire curiosity and creativity for the enrichment of our communities.

VISION:

The New Jersey State Museum is a trusted resource for shared cultural and natural heritage. Through engaging, authentic and inclusive experiences, we celebrate individuality and broaden awareness of the world.

Core Values

At the New Jersey State Museum, we value...

- Respect for people, cultures and the natural world Integrity, accountability and the highest ethical standards of stewardship
- Pursuit of knowledge through collecting, scholarship and interpretation
- Accessibility for all
- Diversity, inclusivity, collaboration and kindness
- Flexibility and responsiveness to meet challenges and opportunities
- Supportive, trusting and positive workplace environment

The **New Jersey State Museum** is our state's Smithsonian! Established by legislation in 1895, the NJ State Museum was the first state museum in the country to place education at the core of its mission. Today, education remains the core mission.

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the NJ State Museum holds collections, and develops and presents exhibitions, programs and research in *Archaeology & Ethnography* – particularly focused on the lifeways of the original people of this land; *Cultural History* – telling stories of New Jerseyans through material culture; *Fine Art* – exploring the broad range of American art and artists, highlighting the contribution of New Jerseyans within that story; and *Natural History* – discovering the flora and fauna of the earth, explaining the delicate balance between humans and the environment, and performing research to advance our collective knowledge of the natural world – past, present and future. These subjects are brought to life through relevant, meaningful *Education* programs for visitors of all ages to encourage curiosity, promote lifelong learning, and place our state's natural, historic and artistic treasures in both national and global contexts.

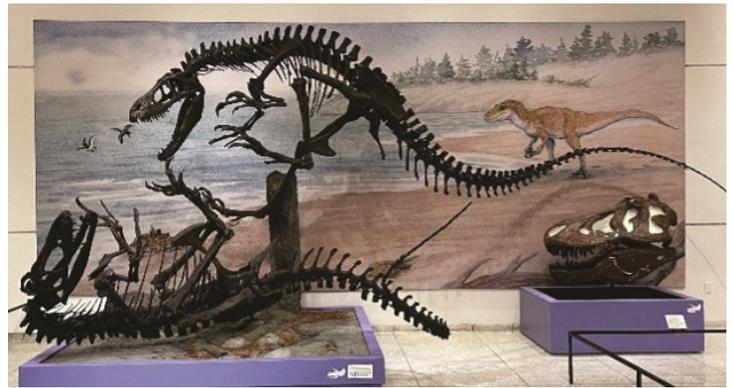
The **War Memorial** has been administered by the State Museum since 2011. This historic venue, the site of inaugurations, concerts, performances and more, continues to serve NJ's communities as an important regional venue, providing a grand rental facility with modern amenities for graduations, recitals, weddings, meetings, press events and a variety of performances.

2024 PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

- The Museum's Education programs continue to serve the public and school/community groups through a range of reserved and drop-in programs, and program service data is near or at pre-pandemic levels.
 - In-person Education reserved service for FY24 is at 90% of FY19 figures;
 - In-person Planetarium reserved service for FY24 is at 96% of FY19 figures;
 - In-Person public (drop-in) program service has increased 23% over FY19.
 - FY24 Public Planetarium service increased 39% over FY19.
Overall, FY24 educational program service is divided nearly in half between reserved and public programs – 53.3% reserved and 46.7%public. This compares to 61% reserved and 39% public service in FY19.
- The Museum continued its long-standing and well-regarded small group program for early learners (age 6 months to 5 years) and their caregivers, to promote literacy, and provide opportunities for focused and fun learning which enhances school readiness. This program is presented with the support of the PNC Grow Up Great initiative through the New Jersey State Museum Foundation.
- Staff in the Museum's four collecting bureaus – Archaeology & Ethnography, Cultural History, Fine Art and Natural History:
 - Answered 183 research inquiries – many requiring extensive staff research - for the public and scholars.
 - Identified 153 scientific specimens and archaeological artifacts for the public.
 - Facilitated 227 inquiries related to 1,025 Archaeological Site Files.

Museum Hours:

- Tuesday-Sunday, 9 am to 4:45 pm
- Closed Mondays and State Holidays
- General Admission is free
- www.statemuseum.nj.gov



Written in the Rocks: Fossil Tales of New Jersey exhibition

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

What makes me proudest about my time working in the planetarium is seeing kids come in excited about learning astronomy and space science and further igniting their interest.

My curiosity in astronomy was sparked by a mentor when I was young and it produced a lifelong interest that lead to my career choices. First as an engineer, then as a teacher, and finally as a planetarium presenter. The planetarium is a unique learning environment and resource for the state. I've enjoyed every minute that I've worked here teaching astronomy.

Bill Murray, Planetarium Technician, retired,
June 2024



New Jersey-Israel Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
JOSH BERLINER

MISSION:

The mission of the New Jersey-Israel Commission (NJIC) is to foster economic, scientific, educational and cultural ties with the State of Israel, one of New Jersey's most important trading partners.

The NJIC has four subcommittees:

1. Business and Trade
2. Culture and Community Engagement
3. Education
4. Science and Technology

2024 Notable Accomplishments:

- **Increase in NJ-Israel Trade** despite the war: 2-way trade in goods between NJ and Israel increased from 2022-2023 by 6%, to \$1.84B. This tracks with NJ GDP which grew by nearly the same percentage from 2022-2023.
- **BIRD Foundation: 2 projects awarded in New Jersey for over \$1M**
 - South Jersey Transportation Authority (Hammonton) and Pentera (Israel)
 - Molex (Bridgewater Township) and CyberRidge (Israel)
- (June) Governor Murphy welcomes Ambassador Ofir Akunis, Israel's new Consul General.
- (June) Spring Meeting at Rutgers/ 35th Anniversary: NJIC Celebrated 35 years since our inception. The NJIC held its first Commission meeting of 2024, and included 2 lawmakers, more than 20 commission members, and a contingent of NJSP. The meeting resulted in the formation of task force against Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (BDS), and momentum for our "Brotherhood" program in 2025.
- (June) Jerusalem Post Summit Tech Happy Hour: NJIC sponsored the annual star-studded conference, where NJIC highlighted opportunities for Israeli orgs and companies in our state. Several commission members attended, and NJIC has had a number of follow-up meetings with Israeli institutions.
- (June) **Celebrate Israel Parade:** 20 commission members and Governor Jon Corzine joined a NJSP contingent with our New Jersey Israel Commission parade float down Fifth Avenue in NYC.
- (May) **BioNJ BioPartnering** delegation from Israel: 8 Israeli startups attended the annual Biotech conference virtually and in-person.
- (May) **Liberty Drones:** NJIC teamed up with Interfaith Advisory Council (IAC) to sponsor a high-profile event in Liberty State Park calling for the release of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Hundreds of people were in attendance The highlight of the activity was a drone show. The activity received extensive news coverage: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2RIVij_v6Q

- (March) Israeli Smart Cities Delegation: 8 Israeli companies with solutions for smart cities and next-gen transportation were hosted by New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), followed by a conference in Princeton with academics and professionals from the transportation and infrastructure industries.
- (Feb) **Kaplen Business Seminar in Tenafly:** NJIC teamed up with NJEDA, NJBAC, and ChooseNJ to host a seminar aimed at helping relocated Israelis, families, and immigrants to our state establish businesses in New Jersey.(Jan)
- **Symphony of Brotherhood MLK Concert:** This annual event took place in Jersey City, where our commission led an activity that used music to strengthen the ties between NJ's Jewish, Israeli, and Black communities.



Goals for 2025:

- Activity in **South Jersey:** NJIC is committed to more comprehensive programming in South Jersey.
- Hosting **Israeli business delegations** to our state in areas such as
 - Foodtech
 - Smart Cities
 - Health Innovation
 - Biotech
- Revisiting and revitalizing **academic partnerships** between NJ and Israel.
- Bringing the **Symphony of Brotherhood programs into the schools**, to promote unity and combat antisemitism.
- Leverage the **BioNJ partnership** to highlight great stories of innovation and collaboration opportunities for Israelis in NJ.
- Continue to **grow bilateral trade** into the next year between New Jersey and Israel.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

“I love working in a position where I can realize my ideas, collaborate, and take action to make a difference. It is incredibly meaningful for me to support our NJ communities and make them the best in the nation. I love being a connector. My favorite memories are from when I am able to direct people who feel they do not have a voice or need assistance and connect them to resources.”

Patty Arnold, Special Assistant, NJ Israel Commission



— NEW JERSEY —
OFFICE OF FAITH BASED INITIATIVES

Office of Faith Based Initiatives

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
EDWARD LAPORTE

MISSION:

The Office of Faith-Based Initiatives (OFBI) in New Jersey plays a crucial role in supporting nonprofit organizations by allocating critical funding to enhance their capacity and reach. During the last funding cycle, OFBI approved \$1.18 million in grants benefiting over 80 organizations across 19 counties. This investment has been pivotal in breaking down barriers, fostering partnerships, and amplifying the impact of faith and community-based initiatives.

Despite OFBI's efforts, the demand for resources surpassed current capacity, as evidenced by receiving applications totaling over \$2.4 million this year alone. While rigorously vetting applications, OFBI could fund only 57% of the total received, underscoring the urgent need for sustained and increased funding. This gap emphasizes the critical necessity to support organizations dedicated to serving socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

OFBI's grants support a diverse array of programs including Project ATLAS, SE2D Growth and Start-up, Freedom Schools, Youth Entrepreneurship, College/Vocational Readiness, Food Security, and Civic and Community Engagement, to just name a few. Ranging from \$10,000 to \$80,000, the grants provided crucial operational stability and enabled program expansion, ensuring essential services reach communities in need.

A total of \$1.136 million was allocated for these various programs. Organizations that received funding spanned over 19 counties including but not limited to Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Hudson, Passaic, Salem and Ocean counties. Beyond financial support, OFBI actively engaged with grantees, attended community events, and continuously assessed evolving needs. This proactive approach informed the strategic planning for new funding categories and initiatives, ensuring OFBI resources effectively address the evolving challenges faced by the communities at large.

OFBI at partner events and Site Visits:

Team OFBI had the privilege of participating in community partner and federal partner events and making site visits to see the organizations in action. They visited their grantee sites: Bessie Mae, Inspira NJ, Humble Beginnings, Wow Center, WCEC, Elijah's Promise, federal partners, Chase Bank and NJOAG's Juneteenth event, amongst many others.



OFBI team was honored to participate in the Hearts of Hope community event at the Westmount Country Club on April 24, where supporters and advocates came together to celebrate resilience, unity, and foster hope for those in need.





OFBI represented by Zainab Syed and intern Cymantha Blackmon, joined the United Way's Women United event at Perth Amboy's yacht club on June 7, 2024. The gathering highlighted collective impact and community spirit, celebrating women's resilience, empowerment, and pivotal role in shaping a brighter future.



OFBI team also participated in the Chase Business Workshop "Access to Capital," engaging with both staff and participants to understand investment credit/capital and explore opportunities for community development funding.



OFBI witnessed bustling offices addressing food insecurity, long lines of community members awaiting fresh produce upstairs, and a kitchen below ground producing over 300 healthy meals daily during their visit to Elijah's Promise in New Brunswick, which serves 375,000 free meals annually. With distributions tripled during the pandemic, Promise cookies were developed by their chefs, an innovative approach to creating funds, showcasing their commitment to empowering communities and fostering a more equitable future.

On June 12th, 2024, members of the OFBI team participated in the Chase Business Workshop "Access to Capital," engaging with both staff and participants to understand investment credit/capital and explore opportunities for community development funding.



OFBI August 16th Project ATLAS orientation at Rutgers Business School featured the "Food Truck Challenge," promoting strategic planning and collaborative problem-solving to enhance entrepreneurial skills and foster sustainable community development.



OFBI Unlock the Potential: Faith in Action Symposium held on March 9th at Kean University united 150+ organizations, partnering with leaders across housing, policy, and community development to inspire collaboration and spark lasting change in social justice and urban revitalization efforts.

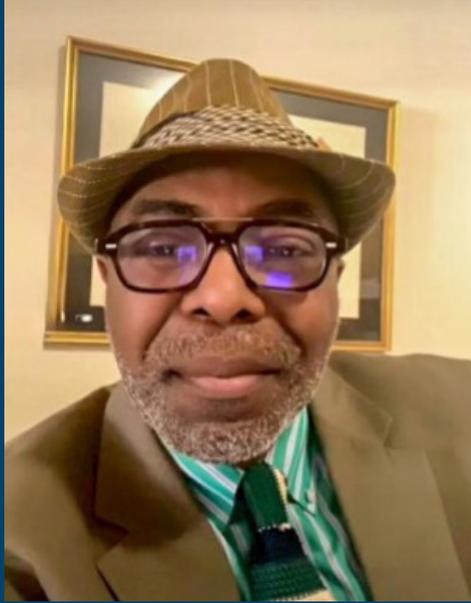


OFBI May 22nd event spotlighted CDF Freedom Schools, addressing educational disparities and empowering youth to drive community change, led by Jayne Johnson and Dr. Diane Hill, fostering dialogue and collaboration statewide.

Goals for 2025:

- Funded a total of 77 organizations for a total of \$1,215,000
- Increase the number of NJ Freedom Schools from 15 grantees to 25 total grantees
- Expand the Sustainable Development Initiative role in providing training and technical assistance to faith and community based organizations
- Partner with the Federal Region II Partners to launch the South Jersey Nonprofit Empowerment Summit
- Collaborate with NJRA, DCA, and Kean University's Faith Based Policy Institute and the New Brunswick Theological Seminary to host Sustainable Development event.
- Collaborate with NJRA, DCA, Kean University's Faith Based Policy Institute to host the 2nd annual Faith in Action Through Sustainable Development.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



“I find such joy in serving the faith-based organizations and the communities they represent. I am proud to be able to make a marked difference in New Jersey through our office.”

Pastor Milton Hobbs

Senior Leadership

Tahesha Way, Esq.

New Jersey Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State

Corey Wolkenberg

Chief of Staff

Marelyn Rivera

Deputy Chief of Staff and Executive Director, Center for Hispanic Policy Research and Development

Dana Baldorossi

Director of Administration

Porter R. Strickler

Chief Advisor

Awilda Pomales-Diaz

Executive Director, New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission

Allison Tratner

Executive Director, New Jersey Council on the Arts

Donna Barber

Acting Director, Division of Elections

Edward LaPorte

Executive Director, Office of Faith Based Initiatives

Isabel Kasdin

Executive Director, New Jersey Cultural Trust

Jeffrey Vasser

Executive Director, Division of Travel and Tourism

Josh Berliner

Executive Director, New Jersey-Israel Commission

Joseph R. Klett

Executive Director, New Jersey State Archives

Margaret M. O'Reilly

Executive Director, New Jersey State Museum

Melanie Willoughby

Executive Director, New Jersey Business Action Center

Rajpal S. Bath

Executive Director, NJ-India Commission

Rowena Madden

Executive Director, Governor's Office on Volunteerism

Sara Cureton

Executive Director, New Jersey Historical Commission

We extend a special thank you to Kaity Assaf, Joe Forte, Alicia D'Alessandro, Dana Baldorossi, Paulo Rojas, and Thomas Fanelli for assembling and editing this report.

We also thank Elizabeth Vouk and Wendy McVicker within the Office of the Secretary of State for their support.

