

2025 Annual Report





STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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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 2025 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 culture, 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.

In addition to elections, we are actively fostering economic growth by attracting investments to our state. Through partnerships with the Business Action Center's Office of Business Advocacy, we have facilitated millions in capital expenditures, benefitting existing businesses and attracting new opportunities. We are also supporting the burgeoning cannabis industry through the New Jersey Cannabis Training Academy, providing technical assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs with a focus on social equity and inclusivity.

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 arts funder in New Jersey. The New Jersey Historical Commission has done tremendous work in establishing the Black Heritage Trail. Together with the Commission, State Archives, State Museum, and other partners, we are ready to commemorate 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.

Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State



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ADMINISTRATION

Division of Administration

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
DANA M. BALDOROSI, MBA

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.

2025 Notable Accomplishments:

- Continued divestiture from DORES to create an in-house IT team, funded by annual appropriations:
 - Allocated funding and initiated procurement of IT hardware and software;
 - Identified key staff to complete DOS's IT team, expected to be fully operational in FY26.
- Completed transition of telecomm service for all but two divisions from Verizon ISDN to Microsoft Teams, expected to result in operational efficiencies and cost savings.
- Continued improvements to HR functions and recruitment, resulting in full staffing for most divisions and total DOS staffing approaching budgeted (and funded) level.
- Continued fiscal reporting improvements and coordination with divisions to inform funding allocations and State Budget preparation.

Goals for 2026:

- Support an effective and efficient gubernatorial transition.
- Work with all divisions to achieve optimal staffing levels, rationalizing FTE, hourly staff, and contract temp usage as needed to achieve programmatic goals in a cost-effective manner.
- Modernize and enhance security of the department's information technology, including replacement of legacy hardware and software, continuous monitoring and support by the in-house IT team, and staff training as needed.
- Complete transition from ISDN phone service to Teams calling for Museum and Archives.
- Support the State's modernization of the NJ Comprehensive Financial System (NJCFS) and transition to the new platform (NJHive).
- Support implementation of an online system for public notices for all public entities, including all State agencies and local government units, required by statute to be in place by March 1, 2026 (P.L.2025, c.72).
- Support the planning and implementation of RevolutionNJ, including U.S. Semiquincentennial events and ongoing State Museum and State Archives exhibits, with all required procurement, reporting, and project management.
- Coordinate with the Division of Elections to conduct procurement (or renewal of the current multi-year contract) for maintenance and enhancement of the Statewide Voter Registration System, including changes to comply with new statutory requirements for youth and mail-in voting.
- Continue to streamline grant administration – needed to support increased grant volume from pre-pandemic levels – including enhanced coordination between grant management and fiscal operations and support of the planned SAGE modernization.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

This year, we proudly shine a spotlight on a member of our dedicated Human Resources team, Linda Pressey. Linda's unwavering commitment, professionalism, and exceptional customer service have made a lasting impact across every division within the department. From onboarding new talent to supporting employee development and well-being, Linda has consistently gone above and beyond to ensure that every staff member feels valued, heard, and supported. Her ability to navigate challenges with empathy and efficiency has strengthened our workplace culture and fostered a more connected and resilient organization.

Linda Pressey is a valued colleague in the HR Unit. Whether responding to employee needs, streamlining internal processes, or championing initiatives that promote equity and inclusion, Linda has exemplified what it means to serve with heart and purpose. Her efforts have been instrumental in helping our departments thrive.

We extend our deepest appreciation to Linda for her hard work, dedication, and the positive energy that she bring to our organization every day.

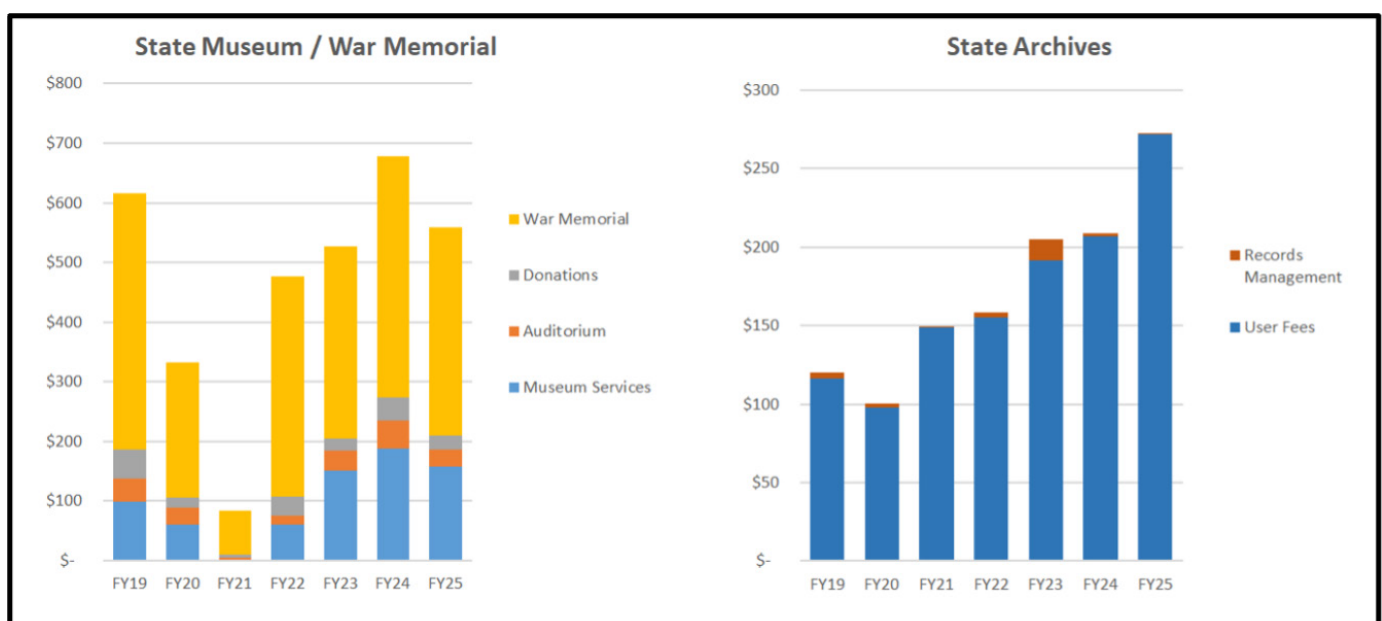
Fiscal Planning & Analysis

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 support 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 FY25, the Department's fiscal performance for all State-funded operations is summarized below and on Attachment A.

FY25 Fiscal Summary State-funded Accounts							
(\$000)							
Division	Funding Need (a)				Total State Funding (b)	Ending Balance (c)	
	Salaries	Services	Grants & State Aid	Total			
Office of the Secretary	\$ 3,249	\$ 863	\$ -	\$ 4,112	\$ 4,116	\$ 4	
Cultural Trust	128	37	720	885	885	-	
Office of Programs	997	315	4,880	6,192	6,194	2	
Cultural Commissions	402	202	132	736	890	154	
Business Action Center	2,797	1,115	5,650	9,561	9,582	21	
Travel & Tourism	1,364	14,028	4,704	20,095	20,100	5	
Elections	1,185	5,207	25,274	31,665	46,760	15,094	
Council on the Arts	1,016	297	39,584	40,897	41,270	373	
State Museum	2,223	394	-	2,617	2,618	1	
Historical Commission	675	301	7,198	8,174	9,685	1,511	
State Archives	1,206	40	-	1,246	1,250	4	
Total	\$ 15,242	\$ 22,798	\$ 88,141	\$ 126,181	\$ 143,350	\$ 17,169	

(a) includes expenses and year-end encumbrances, net of reimbursements
 (b) includes appropriations and prior-year carryforward, net of transfers and lapses
 (c) \$15.1 million will carry forward to FY26



FY25 FP&A Highlights:

- First full year of quarterly fiscal reviews, with enhanced dialogue around funding allocations, central charges, and staffing.
- Continued alignment of division budgets with funding needs to address structural deficits and support Department goals, including funding allocations to support 22 staff additions.
- Support of RevolutionNJ with reporting template to monitor ARP funding sources and uses.
- Constructive relationship with OMB to preserve FTE budget and avoid unanticipated lapses.
- Efficient fiscal year closeout, minimizing the need for late transfers and reimbursements.
- 98% utilization of State funding in accounts subject to year-end lapse.

FY25 Adjusted Appropriation (\$000)		\$ 125,312
Additions:		
BAC	Business Marketing & Events Initiative	4,250
<i>Line item grants:</i>		
COA	WBGONewark Public Radio - Capital	900
BAC	TechUnited Mentorship Cohort	500
COA	Count Basie Center For The Arts	475
COA	McCarter Theatre Center	450
COA	Montclair Film -- Oper & Educ Workforce	400
COA	Mayo Performing Arts Center	375
COA	Crossroads Theatre Company	300
BAC	LISC NJ's Emerging Developers Program	250
COA	Barrymore Film Center	250
Historical	Historic Village at Allaire	100
Historical	Cumberland Co Historical Society	100
Historical	High Bridge Borough - Solitude House	91
COA	Luna Stage - Theatre	90
Historical	Ewing Twp Historic Preservation	82
BAC	NJ Jewish Business Alliance	70
COA	Project Write Now	25
Reductions:		
Travel & Tourism	Agritourism Fund (P.L. 2023, c.87)	(2,500)
BAC	Manufacturing Extension Program	(1,000)
Travel & Tourism	Travel and Tourism Promotion	(1,000)
Elections	County VBM Reimbursement	(915)
Elections	Extended Polling Place Hours	(600)
Programs	CHPRD Grants	(260)
Commissions	NJ Ireland Trade Commission	(250)
BAC	BAC - Services	(200)
Commissions	NJ Israel Commission	(70)
<i>Line item grants:</i>		
COA	Newark Symphony Hall Infrastructure	(2,250)
COA	Count Basie Center - Capital Impr	(1,000)
COA	State Theatre New Jersey - Capital Impr	(700)
COA	New Jersey Symphony	(500)
Historical	COVID-19 Healthcare Worker Mem	(500)
Programs	NJ Muslim Voice for Progress	(250)
Historical	Thomas Edison Center at Menlo Park	(200)
COA	Two River Theatre, Red Bank	(150)
BAC	NJ Pride Chamber Of Commerce	(125)
COA	The Paper Mill Playhouse - Capital	(125)
BAC	NJ SBDC	(100)
COA	Jersey Shore Arts Center	(100)
COA	Capital Philharmonic	(75)
BAC	Women's Business Centers Of NJ	(60)
COA	Alice Paul Institute	(57)
Historical	Humanities Council	(50)
Historical	Monmouth Museum	(50)
Historical	Antique Fire Apparatus Association	(15)
Total Changes vs. FY25		\$ (4,394)
FY26 Appropriation		\$ 120,918

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 grant activity for FY25 (expenses and year-end encumbrances) is summarized below.

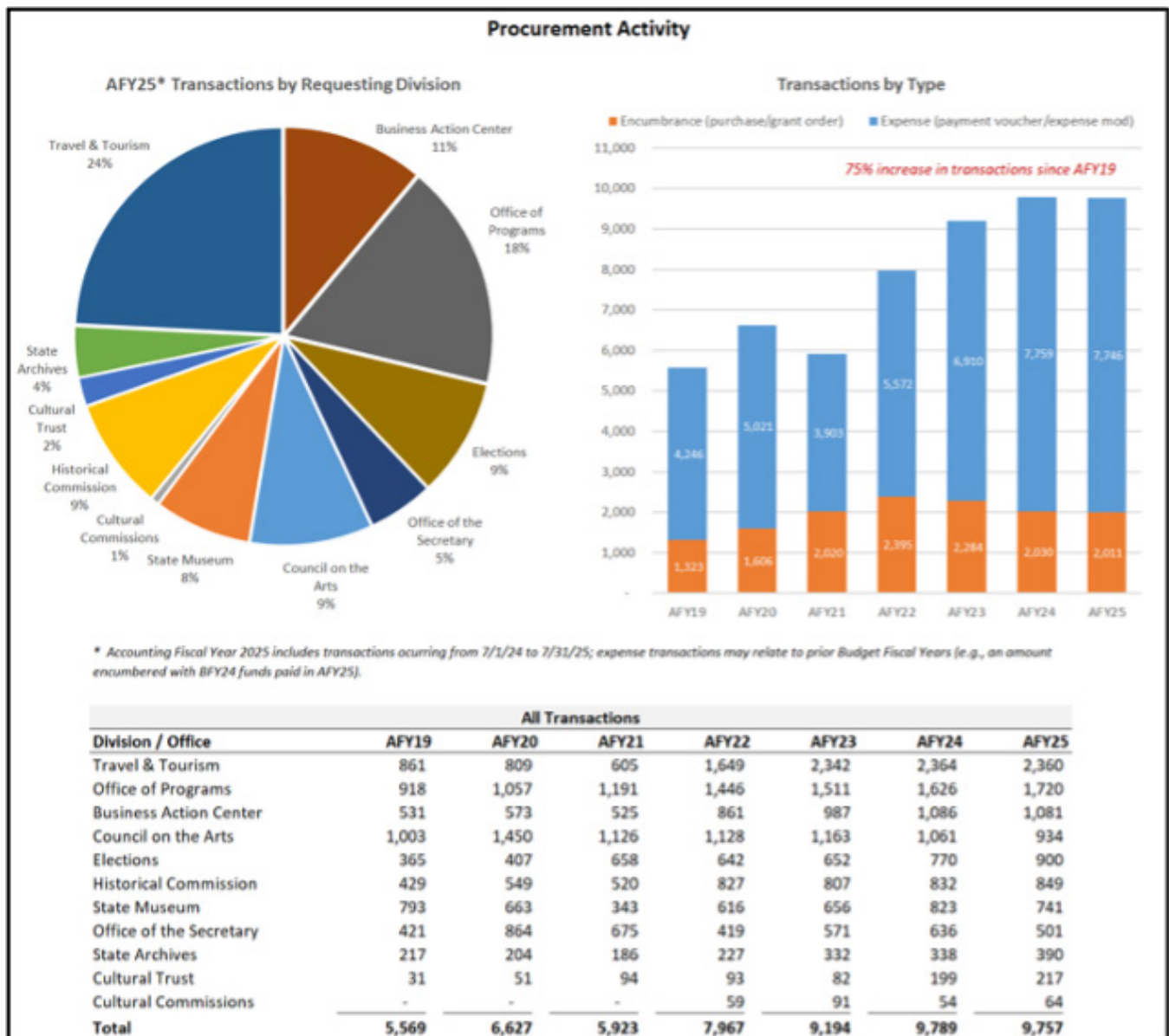
	Amount	Share of Total
State-funded Grants (\$000):		
COA - Cultural Projects	\$ 30,680	46%
NJ Historical Commission	5,281	8%
Travel and Tourism Advertising and Promotion	4,704	7%
Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development	3,135	5%
NJ Cultural Trust	2,974	4%
Newark Symphony Hall Infrastructure Project	2,250	3%
New Jersey Symphony	2,000	3%
Economic Vitality - The Partnership For Action	2,000	3%
Business Marketing Initiative	2,000	3%
Freedom Schools	1,765	3%
Office of Programs	1,294	2%
Small Business Development Centers	1,200	2%
Count Basie Center for the Arts - Capital	1,000	1%
The Papermill Playhouse - Capital	875	1%
Battleship New Jersey Museum	875	1%
State Theatre New Jersey - Capital	700	1%
Count Basie Center for the Arts	525	1%
Montclair Film	500	1%
All Other (20 programs)	3,128	5%
Total	\$ 66,886	100%
Federally-funded Grants (\$000):		
AmeriCorps Grants	\$ 4,760	79%
VGF Grant	500	8%
National Endowment for the Arts Partnership	359	6%
AmeriCorps-Competitive	173	3%
Public Health AmeriCorps	151	3%
State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP)	55	1%
Total	\$ 5,997	100%

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.

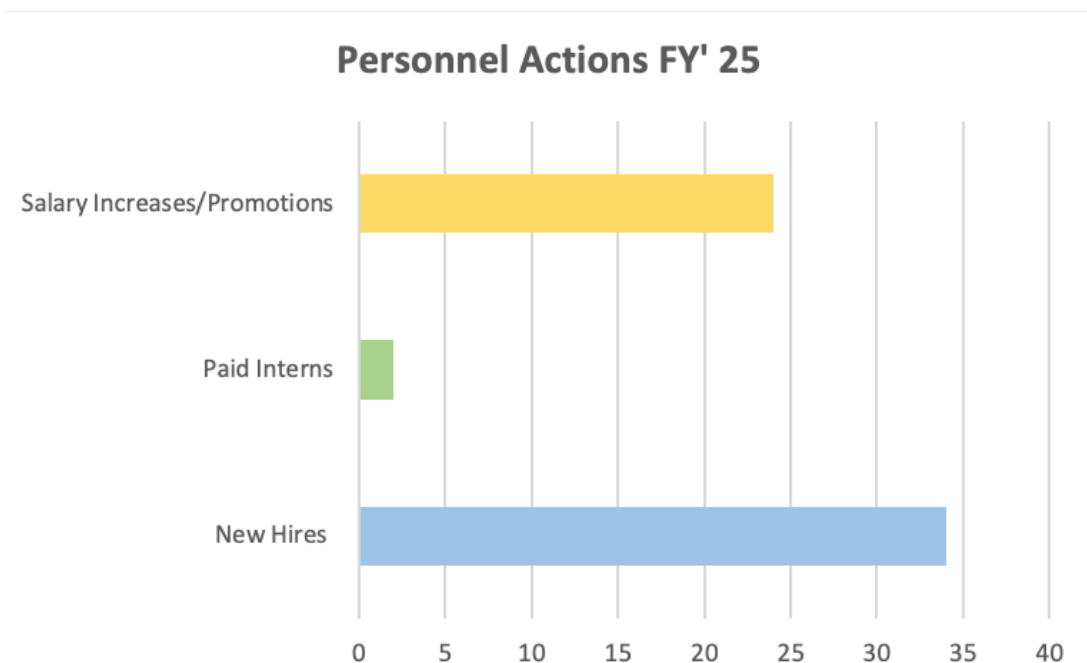
During Accounting Fiscal Year 2025 (from 7/1/24 to 7/31/25), the Procurement Unit processed over 9,700 transactions, including over 2,000 to encumber funds and over 7,700 to make payments and record expenses.

Procurement activity by requesting division and transaction type is summarized below:



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: 25

Paid Interns: 2

Salary Increases/Promotions: 24

In addition to the Personnel Actions that have been successfully processed during FY' 25, HR also supported the Department with:

- Payroll
- Employee Onboarding
- Employee Benefits
- Employee Leaves
- Union Matters
- Statewide Training Requirements

Information Technology

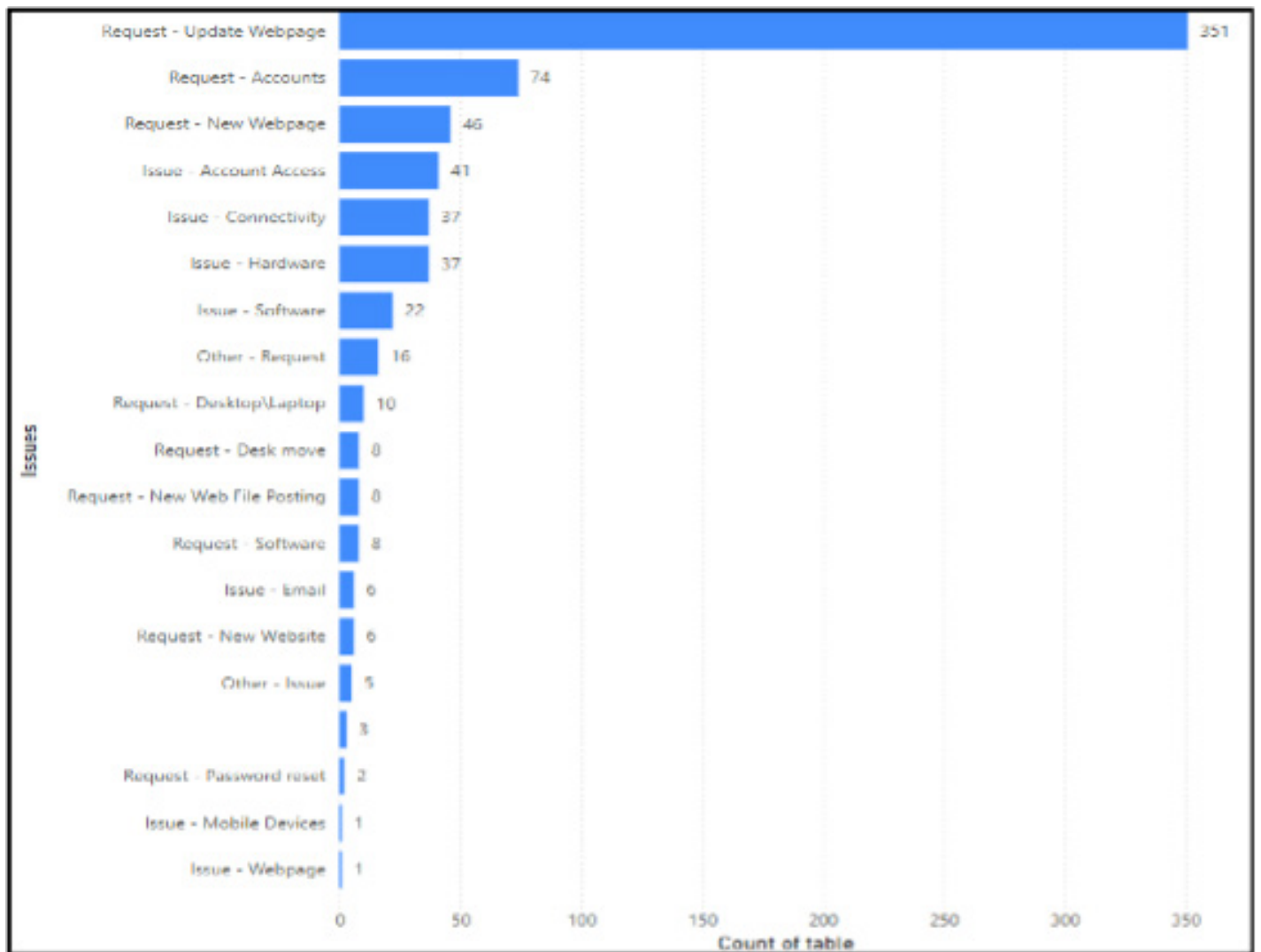
The mission of the Information Technology (IT) Unit is to empower innovation, strengthen cybersecurity, and foster collaboration across the Department of State by strategically deploying secure, modern, and data-driven solutions. In 2025, the IT Unit continues to align its efforts with the Department's evolving vision—supporting digital transformation, enhancing user experience, and enabling informed decision-making through advanced analytics.

Our vision is to lead with agility and purpose—modernizing legacy systems, fortifying cyber defenses, and cultivating a skilled, diverse workforce—to ensure the Department remains resilient, efficient, and future-ready.

Key 2025 Strategic Trends and Highlights

Based on the IT Strategic Plan for FY2024–2025, the following trends and priorities are shaping our path forward:

- **Modernization Momentum:** Legacy systems are being replaced with secure, integrated platforms that improve user experience and operational efficiency.
- **Cybersecurity First:** With rising digital threats, the Department is investing in end-to-end visibility, continuous monitoring, and modern cyber defense frameworks.
- **Enterprise Governance:** A shift toward enterprise-wide collaboration and streamlined technology adoption is enabling smarter resource allocation and economies of scale.
- **Workforce Excellence:** The IT Unit is committed to attracting and retaining top talent, while promoting continuous learning and professional development.



Total: 682 service desk tickets from across the divisions since January 1, 2025.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



With over 21 years of dedicated service to the State, George has become an invaluable member of the Department of State's IT team. Known for his can-do attitude and unwavering willingness to help, George is the go-to person for staff seeking assistance—whether it's updating the website or resolving IT issues. Throughout his tenure, George's responsibilities have evolved, and he has embraced each new challenge with enthusiasm. His drive for growth and adaptability make him a key contributor to the success of DOS IT. George's passion for helping others and his commitment to excellence continue to inspire those around him every day.

George Losse is a valued colleague in the IT Unit

Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: VACANT

Mission:

The Center for Hispanic Policy, Research, and Development (CHPRD) was established in 1975 to address the needs of the Hispanic community. It focuses on empowering community-based organizations across New Jersey through financial support and technical assistance. CHPRD is dedicated to promoting community development that generates meaningful impacts in people's lives while fostering greater self-sufficiency among organizations.

The Center administers an annual appropriation from the State of New Jersey to support primarily Hispanic community-based organizations throughout the state. Additionally, CHPRD provides updates to the executive and legislative branches regarding legislative initiatives that may affect the Hispanic community. The CHPRD is committed to advancing a model of community development that strives to create significant positive changes while aiding organizations in achieving greater independence. The CHPRD has proudly supported the Hispanic community for 50 years, focusing on four main areas:

- **Administering grant funding to community organizations:** Support organizations that offer social, educational, and entrepreneurial services to low- and moderate-income NJ residents. Grant categories include Entrepreneurship, Citizenship and Integration, Workforce Development, Youth Services, Community Service, and Health and Wellness.

- **Providing employment and training opportunities for youth:** Facilitate growth and skill development through the Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program.
- **Offering program and technical assistance:** Provide guidance and referral services to community-based organizations to enhance their capacity to serve communities effectively.
- **Conducting and supporting research and policy initiatives:** Focus on advancing understanding and solutions for issues affecting Hispanics and Latinos in New Jersey

2025 Notable Accomplishments:

Grants in Aid: Grants in Aid: 82 grant applications were submitted, requesting nearly \$5 million in funding. Of these, 76 grants were awarded, resulting in total funding of \$2,311,495. Direct services were provided by 49 Hispanic-based community organizations to Hispanic and Latino communities across New Jersey.

Note: From 2025 to 2026, the number of grant applications submitted decreased. The number of grants awarded increased significantly.

Total funding decreased substantially from 2025 to 2026. The number of organizations providing direct services to Hispanic and Latino communities increased notably.

Overall, while 2026 saw fewer applications and significantly reduced funding compared to 2025, it experienced improvements in the number of grants awarded and organizations involved, suggesting a broader distribution of resources despite the reduced overall funding.

Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program

The CHPRD hosted 33 students in the Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program. For nearly 40 years, the program has provided hundreds of fellows with essential skills such as communication, negotiation, public speaking, organization, time management, and professional etiquette. The program includes hands-on experiences, classroom instruction, and guest presentations, enhancing workplace readiness and professional growth.

Fellows also had the opportunity to intern at over 25 respected organizations, including: AT&T, Bloomberg, Bristol Myers Squibb, Verizon, Novo Nordisk, PSEG and UPS. The graduation ceremony took place on July 30, 2025, at the NJ State Museum Auditorium, featuring remarks from Deputy Secretary of State Lauren Zyriek and Alexander Diaz, the Head of AI for Social Good at Google.org.

Note: 6.67 % increase in fellows compared to 2024. We proactively engaged state agencies to serve as internship sites, resulting in an increased level of participation compared to previous years.

Events:

- **Hispanic Heritage Month:** 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.
- **Grant Training:** CHPRD held its annual in person grant training in January. This training ensures grantees understand the grant process and gives them an opportunity to ask questions.

Goals for 2026:

Our continuing 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 2027.
- Expand the number of workshops and webinars for grantee training.

Governor's Hispanic Fellows Program:

Increase the total number of fellows to 35: Aim to expand the program to accommodate more participants, providing additional opportunities for skill development and professional growth.

Expand the number of internship sites across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors: Broaden the range of internship experiences by increasing partnerships with diverse organizations, enhancing the fellows' exposure to various work environments.

Partner with a higher education institution to allow program participation to count toward academic credits: Collaborate with universities or colleges to integrate the program into academic curricula, enabling fellows to earn credits while gaining practical experience.

Create an annual event featuring the fellow summer project scopes: Organize a yearly gathering to showcase the projects undertaken by fellows during the summer, celebrating their achievements and contributions.

Social Media

Revamp the social media presence of CHPRD, prioritize content that highlights the impact of funding initiatives and showcases the success stories of Hispanic community-based organizations.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

“I am proudest of seeing communities come together to protect their environment and actively participate in the stakeholder process. Coming from an environmental background, it is inspiring to witness sites that were once dumping grounds or abandoned being transformed into valuable spaces for their neighborhoods. I take pride in seeing cleanups that contribute to making our neighborhoods healthier places to live.”

- Gladys Giron-Ricci



NJ Governor's Hispanic Fellows Kick-off at the Princeton Area Community Foundation (5/29/25)



NJ Governor's Hispanic Fellows Graduation at the New Jersey State Museum (7/30/25)



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 1.9 million volunteers through the Volunteer Generation Fund (federally funding of 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/AmeriCorps

The Commission guides and oversees national service programs throughout the state; each year the Commission administers 24 programs federal funded at \$5 million, to deploy over 400 AmeriCorps members addressing issues related to education, social services, environmental protection, public and mental health, and economic development.



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.



New Jersey Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission

The Commission was established to recognize

and keep vibrant 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.

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 by enhancing the lives of the volunteers and those whom they serve and providing communities with valuable resources. The FGP engages 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 to (1) support programs developing innovative approaches in removing obstacles to engage volunteers; (2) support programs that expand, launch, or improve high-impact tutoring, mentoring and other school-based or out of school time programs (3) support efforts that expand the capacity of connector organizations to recruit, manage, support, and retain individuals in high quality

assignments; and (4) provide technical assistance and support to strengthen the capacity of local infrastructure organizations, address areas of state/national need, and expand the number of volunteers nationally.

2025 Notable Accomplishments:

AmeriCorps Impact: The AmeriCorps programs had a significant impact this year, serving over 13,430 children and youth through various initiatives, including classroom assistance, mentoring, tutoring, summer programs, and nutritional services. In addition to educational support, AmeriCorps members provided opioid and drug intervention referral services to 826 individuals, addressing the ongoing opioid crisis. Environmental initiatives were also a focus, with members supporting and improving 1,077 acres of public land and managing the removal and recycling of 19 tons of trash.



Community Engagement: The AmeriCorps Career Day, held in April 2025, in Ewing, NJ, offered career readiness and professional development training for AmeriCorps members. Participants engaged in workshop sessions tailored to different career aspects including "Building your Resume and Creating an Impactful Cover Letter", "Pursuing Jobs within Civil Service" and "Managing Student Debt, Financial Planning for Furthering your Education".

AmeriCorps Resilience: Navigating Change with Strength and Commitment

This year, AmeriCorps faced national-level changes that impacted program operations across the system. In February, the State Commission and sub-grantee programs ensured compliance with the Executive Orders issued by the new Administration.

In April, we were informed by national AmeriCorps that 13 of our operating programs would be terminated, affecting 209 AmeriCorps members. Despite this challenge, through close collaboration with Department of State leadership and the Office of the Attorney General, we successfully secured guidance that allowed affected programs to enter a suspension status rather than an immediate shutdown. This adjustment enabled AmeriCorps members to continue their vital service and maintain their benefits through May 9th, while program staff were supported during the wind-down period. During this period, the District Court of Maryland court responded to a lawsuit brought by 24 states, including NJ, and the District of Columbia, reversing the program terminations and reinstating AmeriCorps programs and members in the plaintiff states. Additionally, our Foster Grandparent Program remained unaffected, and the Volunteer Generation Fund Program was reinstated under the court's order. We are appreciative for the steadfast support from the Department of State and beyond, and above all, for the unwavering resilience of our AmeriCorps members and program teams throughout NJ.

AmeriCorps Youth Mental Health Corps Grant

NJ AmeriCorps achieved a planning grant of \$100,000 from the Schultz Family Foundation to develop an initiative addressing the mental health needs of NJ children and adults charting service-to-career pathways for AmeriCorps members. Working with the Governor's Office and several departments of State government, plans were submitted for an operating AmeriCorps program to begin in program year 2025-26 led by Montclair State University. AmeriCorps members will be deployed to schools and colleges, peer recovery programs, mental and community health programs, shelters for homeless families, and the Office of the Public Defender to work with youth in the court system.

Foster Grandparents Program (FGP)



FGP held its 15th annual recognition event, a mandatory requirement for the FGP grant, in May 2025, in Bridgewater, NJ. The Senior Volunteers were acknowledged and celebrated. The volunteers had up to 23 years of service-with 23 volunteers having over ten years with the program.

Mr. Clarence Joseph, a recently retired volunteer received the NJ State Governor's Volunteerism Award in the category of *Lifetime Service Award* in 2025. He is 97 years old and has been with FGP for 23 years. The FGP volunteer groups in the North and Mercer Regions were also selected as honorees for the *NJ National Service Program Award*.



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

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. Though the service of its 11 sub-grantees, the programs recruited 10,360 volunteers, provided 367 technical assistance and outreach sessions, provided services to 6,326 at-risk youth and served 4,509 seniors.



The GOV/ VGF Program was selected to receive 4 foundation grants totaling \$92,000, from the Association of State Commissions and Youth Service America to implement youth service training, provide service-learning resources and promote opportunities for youth to engage in meaningful service deepening their civic responsibility. Making it a Day On for Service, NJ Lt. Governor Tahesha Way joined over 60 youth volunteers at the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank (a NJ VGF Sub-grantee) for their MLK Day of service activity. Volunteers packed 1,728 of bags of food supporting the organization's Send Hunger Packing program.

"I'd like to thank the young volunteers who, following the footsteps of Dr. King, are stepping up to serve in their communities and honoring his legacy," said. Lt. Gov. Way. "No matter what season of your life, you can have an impact right where you are."



The NJ Governor's Office of Volunteerism was featured in **The DOS Way** in April for Global Volunteer Month! Lt. Governor Tahesha Way spoke with her guests about how NJ supports volunteers and the opportunities for residents to get involved. You can listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drR7TxescAU>

The Governor's Office of Volunteerism - VGF welcomed a new cohort of Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development (CHPRD) fellows bringing a unique set of talents, fresh perspectives, and an inspiring energy in the office. This group is as dynamic as they are driven. Their diverse skills and



bold ideas are more than just impressive—they're the spark that will help propel volunteerism into new and exciting direction for NJ.

New Jersey State Governor's Volunteerism Awards

The awards were hosted at Grounds for Sculpture in June and honored 25 medalists and 170 honorees during the ceremony. Over 60 volunteer judges reviewed the nearly 300 nominations received.

Pictured: House and Home Award Recipient Team Exalt – is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting foster children, orphans, and homeless individuals by meeting their immediate needs and creating long-term opportunities. Committed to restoring dignity and offering hope, Team Exalt creates lasting support systems that help individuals rebuild their lives.

Emergency and Disaster Response

As designated by the NJ Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Volunteerism is a key partner in emergency and disaster response; the lead agency on recruitment and training of spontaneous volunteers; a team partner on donations management; and supports the work of the Department of Human Services on mass care and sheltering. The Office represents the Department of State on the Domestic Security Task Force, and the Interfaith Advisory Council, receiving briefings on security issues and, during 2025-26, on the FIFA World Cup competition.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission

In January, Commission Chair George Guy, Jr. raised public awareness of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ideals and philosophy as he represented the Commission during the Community segment of PHL 17 in Philadelphia.



The Commission provided MLK Day Commemorative mini Grants to support 22 NJ non-profits for activities ranging from recovery outreach, spoken word presentations, to a ‘read-in’ and more. The mini grants supported 41 events across the state promoting Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement.

In the spring, the Commission’s annual scholarship contest attracted more than 400 entries from NJ high school students. Essays were submitted reflecting the significance of Rosa Parks’ refusal to move to the back of the bus igniting the 381-day Montgomery bus boycott that brought the desegregation of the state of Alabama’s bus service. Ten recipients, chosen by an independent panel of readers, received \$5000 to continue their education at institutions including Rutgers University, Kean University, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and Stanford University.

 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Cheryl Djan Rutgers University, New Brunswick Technology High School</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Nathaniel Esubonteng Stanford University Science Park High School</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Aydan Howell Widener University Middle Township High School</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Braylie LaFisca Chestnut Hill College Allentown High School</p>
 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Emily Laiting Rutgers University, New Brunswick Naphtuna High School</p>	 <p>2025 SCHOLARS Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Lisandro Moron Blanco Saint Peter's University José Martí Steam Academy</p>	
 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Nysalee Rosa Kean University Newark School of Global Studies</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Jeremy Shore University of Southern California Cherry Hill High School East</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Marco Villet Carnegie Mellon Technology High School</p>	 <p>MLK25 SCHOLAR Alexia Zambrato University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Holmes High School</p>

NJ Commission on American Indian Affairs

In partnership with the NJ Historical Commission and NJ Department of Education, the Commission began implementation of its five-year school curriculum work, the first year focusing on reviewing and curating existing writings, materials, and resources that can become part of NJ school curricula. The commission is working with the NJ Holocaust Commission, within NJDOE, on curricular materials related to first contact between Tribal Nations, European and colonial settlers; boarding school histories; and the sesquicentennial.

- **Intertribal Youth Conference 2024:** Open to all tribal youth from NJ communities, over 40 youth from 3 state recognized tribes participated in the conference held in November 2024. This was an opportunity for tribal youth to interact with each other while also learning about their culture, community, and prevention.



- **Newsletter:** The Commission has designed a tribal newsletter containing information on events, commission activities, and community health updates. This newsletter is pushed out monthly on the commission website.
- **SAIVA Veterans’ Luncheon:** The Commission partnered with the Society of American Indian Veterans and their Allies, to hold a native veterans’ luncheon at the Cohanzzick Nature Reserve. The luncheon allowed the community to come together, share stories, and get access to mental health and wellbeing resources.
- **Commission Website:** The AI Commission website has been updated with resources including mental and physical health information, and resources for native veterans.
- **Elder Voices Project:** Interviews with native elders are being conducted to record their stories and establish an oral history record. The first voice is of Lew “Gray Squirrel” Pierce who is the spiritual leader for the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape.

New Jersey Hellenic American Heritage Commission

The Commission held an event for OXI Day 2024 at Liberty State Park, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974. Presentations were made by historians and individuals who had experienced the invasion, loss of family members, and eventual reuniting of families. The Commission also celebrated Greek Independence Day and joined with the State Legislature in recognition of the independence of the founders of the concept of democracy. The word democracy comes from two Greek words that mean people (demos) and rule (kratos).

Goals for 2026:

AmeriCorps Youth Mental Health Corps: To develop an AmeriCorps program for youth to address the mental health needs of NJ schools and communities, charting service-to-career pathways for members ages 18 to 29.

Foster Grandparents Program (FGP): To increase volunteer enrollment, increasing the annual volunteer service year requirements; add more volunteer stations in the current regions while expanding to other areas; enhance volunteer training curriculum for monthly meetings; and add part-time staff to assist with various aspects of the program.

NJ Governor's Office of Volunteerism: To host the 40th NJ Statewide Volunteerism Conference in partnership with the NJ Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (NJVOAD) to be held in May 2026 bringing participants together to focus on learning, networking, and sharing best practices in community resilience and volunteerism; to focus on initiating a youth led board to engage and promote youth service/volunteerism throughout the state; to increase engagement in the corporate community; and add part-time staff to assist with the volunteer and youth service programs.

NJ Volunteer Generation Fund Program (NJVGF): To increase funding to implement youth service programming throughout the state; expand the volunteer network; and enhance volunteer training curriculum and resources for all agencies.

Board Development for the various Commissions and Council: Continue to seek appointments and reappointments to the various Commissions and Councils some of which are required to have appointees with specific affiliations and expertise; and to focus on revitalization of board appointments.

NJ Commission on American Indian Affairs: To bring on staff; develop indigenous curriculum; increase grant and program funding; continue to focus on native youth education and resources; continue to support native veterans and veteran initiatives; and continue to engage more with native elders.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission: Continue to highlight the life and legacy of Dr. King through annual commemorative events; support the celebration of the Sesquicentennial and the role of Civil Rights; continue the MLK Scholarship program; and continue the summer 'civil rights' mini-grants.

NJ Hellenic American Heritage Commission: To work on traditional annual events, including Oxi Day and Greek Independence Day; and to establish a policy committee to address current issues.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

Lori Barrows: "As part of the NJ State Commission, I am proud to support and guide new AmeriCorps members as they embark on their own journeys of service. I take pride in fostering a culture of service and commitment, ensuring that our programs are effective and impactful. Witnessing the dedication and passion of current members reminds me of the transformative power of service and the ripple effect it creates."



Jersey Civic Engage

Jersey Civic Engage is an initiative to promote and support non-partisan 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 Ballot Bowl, the NJ High School Voter Registration Week Program, NJ Alliance for Civic Engagement (NJACE), and a partnership with Vet the Votes, a program to sign up veterans and their families as poll workers.

Since 2018, the NJ Ballot Bowl has conducted a friendly statewide non-partisan campus based voter registration and engagement competition led by and for students. Its goal is to promote civic and voter engagement among our state's college students. This year Ballot Bowl 2025 will again count both pledges to vote and voter registrations as part of the competition. The program is conducted in collaboration with college campuses across the state and with our national partner, the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. The Ballot Bowl will again conduct an additional parallel program called Ballot Bowl Community Engage, which encourages our Ballot Bowl teams to work in those communities around each campus to register voters and ask them to pledge to vote. In 2024, 29 campuses participated in the NJ Ballot Bowl and produced 4,133 voter registrations and 10,452 pledges to vote. Since 2022, the Ballot Bowl Program has accounted for over 7,000 new voter registrations and over 24,000 pledges to vote.

This past April 2025, Jersey Civic Engage conducted the fourth annual New Jersey High School Voter Registration Week Program. The program focuses on registering New Jersey 17 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 and community partner at the League of Women Voters Energizing Young Voters Program, the 2025 New Jersey High School Voter Registration Week Program affected over 7,500 voter registrations, a 15% increase over last year's total. Over the past two years, the program has influenced almost 14,000 high school voter registrations in New Jersey.

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 engaged in 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.

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:

To provide exceptional technical assistance, customer service, resources and information as advocates and mentors for New Jersey businesses of all sizes, categories and diversities.

2025 NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) witnessed years-long efforts and hard work come to fruition on several key fronts, most notably: the approval of the first update of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in 23 years; the launch of the nation's first of its kind Cannabis Training Academy; the launch of referral services for businesses in several areas (finding a mentor, establishing or growing an internet presence, and support for manufacturers); and the publication and distribution of the New Jersey Small Business Manual.

The milestones and accomplishments highlighted below offer a snapshot of the no-cost services and resources the NJBAC provides to the broad New Jersey business community.

The First Updated Land Use Plan in 23 Years:

NJBAC's Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) provides administrative support to the State Planning Commission (SPC) in implementing the State Planning Act (NJSA 52:18A197 et seq). This office is guided by the State Development and Redevelopment

Plan in coordinating statewide planning to guide future growth into compact, mixed-use development and redevelopment while protecting the environment.

In December 2024, SPC approved the release of the OPA's Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan, marking the first update in 23 years. The approval of the updated plan is the culmination of collaboration, initiated by OPA's outreach in 2023, across all levels of government to promote a balanced and inclusive strategy for managing and guiding growth across New Jersey. The updated Plan adds a new focus on environmental justice and builds upon ongoing initiatives to address Economic Development, Housing, Infrastructure, Revitalization and Recentering, Climate Change, Natural and Water Resources, Pollution and Environmental Cleanup, Historic and Scenic Resources, Equity, and Comprehensive Planning.

1. The approval of the updated plan kicked off the process of **Cross-Acceptance**, comparing municipal, county and state land use plans with the State Plan to achieve maximum consistency across all levels of government.
2. OPA has received Cross Acceptance Responses Documents from all 21 Counties and the NJ Highlands Council, will have completed the **Negotiation Sessions** to discuss what changes may be made to the State Plan draft by the end of July.

Launch of the Cannabis Training Academy: In supporting Governor Murphy’s call for diversity and equity in the cannabis industry, and aiding communities most harmed by the war on drugs to participate in the cannabis industry, NJBAC was designated by the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission (NJ-CRC) to build and launch the Cannabis Training Academy (CTA), an online technical assistance and educational program that supports local cannabis entrepreneurs seeking a cannabis license in New Jersey or other pathways to work inside this multi-billion dollar market, all at no cost.

Last October, NJBAC launched the Cannabis Training Academy (CTA), offering 10 levels filled with at least 60 learning modules of video and PowerPoint presentations. Upon completion of the final level, students receive an official CTA certificate that can be included as proof of prior business experience in a NJ-CRC cannabis license application. In addition to this core curriculum, a training course was created to help business owners and others navigate the various complexities and requirements of the industry’s badging process as they seek or renew a Cannabis Business ID Card, which is required to work in the industry.

1. As of July 2025, **more than 1,560 students have enrolled** in the CTA’s comprehensive, learner-led program that provides information about the licensing application process, cannabis industry badging, municipal approval, zoning issues, raising capital, post-licensing topics, and general operations. The increasing enrollment numbers month over month since its launch in October 2024 underscores the demand for the kind of service that the CTA provides.
2. CTA students are diverse in race (43% Black, 27% White, 19% Latino, 6% Multi-racial, 4% Asian, and 1% other) and gender (51% Female, 45% Male, and 4% N/A). Many come from underserved communities, with at least 27% of the entire CTA entrepreneur body self-identifying as qualified **Impact Zone applicants**.
3. Out of over 3,000 applications submitted applications, 251 cannabis businesses have generated \$61 million in sales tax revenue, averaging \$243,000 per license (according to NJ-CRC September 2024 data). With a \$1.5 million annual budget, CTA could help generate more than **\$23 million in sales tax revenue**, providing a ROI of 15x the State’s investment.

Launch of a Mentor and Internet Presence Referral Service: Mandated by two separate laws, NJBAC launched an online referral program to assist eligible New Jersey businesses find a mentor or establish/grow their presence on the internet. The new services facilitate the sharing of knowledge, helping businesses understand the complexities of doing business in the 21st century.

1. NJBAC partnered with chambers of commerce and other local organizations to develop the Mentor Matchmaking referral program, which is available to any New Jersey small business that has been in operation for five years or less to search for a mentor from a list of participating nonprofits that have agreed to provide services at no cost.
2. NJBAC, in consultation with the NJEDA and the NJ Small Business Development Centers, created the Internet Presence referral program for established New Jersey small businesses at any age or stage that would like assistance to develop or boost their internet presence. Companies that use the program are referred to a nonprofit that best matches their search criteria.

Launch of a Manufacturing Advocacy Program: Pursuant to the “Manufacturing in Higher Education Act,” NJBAC, as the designated Manufacturing Advocate, led a public-private collaboration of organizations and State agencies to promote manufacturing career pathways for students and provide assistance to the manufacturing industry.

1. This public-private partnership produced a one-stop website (njmanufacturingnetwork.org) where New Jersey manufacturers can now locate programs, incentives, services and support to get the help they need, whether it means finding qualified workers, training current employees or understanding what financial support is available to them.
2. This one-stop resource acts as an online referral service where manufacturing businesses are referred to State, federal or private business resources organizations, such as the NJ Manufacturing Extension Program, the State’s Small Business Development Centers, and other business organizations that provide specialized business development assistance, workforce training, technology information, consulting management, and customized counseling.

Small Business Manual Made Available in English and Spanish: Mandated by law, NJBAC made available print and digital versions of a Small Business Manual in English and Spanish. NJBAC worked in collaboration with NJEDA, the Office of Innovation, and other community-based partners to create a resource to help small businesses grow and thrive in New Jersey. The manual provides information and guidance on establishing, maintaining, and expanding a small business, and includes information about state and local permits and inspections, financial assistance programs, lease contracts, commercial real estate transactions, and a variety of other topics related to owning and operating a small business.

1. It is available online for download at www.nj.gov/state/bac/small-business-manual/ or print via an online order form or by calling 1-800-Jersey-7
2. More than 3,900 Small Business Manuals have been mailed and more than 3,300 downloaded since its release in May 2024.

GOALS FOR 2026:

1. **Adopt and implement the revised draft State Development and Redevelopment Plan.** The State Planning Commission (SPC) will authorize the release of the revised plan at its September 10 meeting. There will be public hearings on the revised plan in early October to allow public comment on the revised draft plan. The current schedule anticipates the SPC adopting the final State Plan in December 2025. NJBAC's Office of Planning Advocacy will then implement the goals of the Plan and integrate that planning with administrative and State agency programs and priorities to achieve comprehensive, long-term planning at all levels of government and the private sector.
2. **Continue to build out the New Jersey Cannabis Training Academy** to serve Impact Zone licensees and their employees to be compliant with state laws and regulations that help them to open their doors and be sustainable as ongoing entities that assist in the industry's economic development.

3. **Grow the Manufacturing Referral Program** and roll out the program to the State's manufacturing business community. As a key partner, NJBAC will provide advocacy and project management services to manufacturers, assisting manufacturers with building renovations, hiring and training new employees, regulatory issues and permitting, and overall project management for facility upgrades and site selection.
4. **Promote the State's Small Business Mentor Matchmaking and Internet Presence Referral platforms** to small businesses so that they become more efficient with the support and technology they need to succeed through online presence, sales and guidance from organizations that provide those services.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



**Donald Newman, Manager,
Office of Small Business Advocacy**

Q: What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

A: I don't always see the end results of the help and advice we provide, but when I do, it is very heartwarming and fulfilling. For example, a small business owner at a major industry trade show reminded me that I was their first contact with the NJBAC a couple of years before. I had referred them to our export team at the time. He went on to say he would not have dreamed of opening their business up to new possibilities and attending the trade show we were at if it had not been for my suggestion, saying, "I would not be here today if it hadn't been for you." Hearing that confirmation of the value my team and I add was perhaps my proudest moment.







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 serves as 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. Stable cultural organizations can contribute the most to their communities and to the state. Investments in these organizations' institutional and financial resilience safeguard the future of New Jersey's cultural industry, which constitutes 3.6% of the state's economy. Since its inception, the Cultural Trust has awarded more than 450 grants totaling \$11,488,065 to 218 different cultural organizations in all 21 counties.

2025 Notable Accomplishments:

Record 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 2025 Grant Awards:

In FY25, the Cultural Trust awarded \$1,040,935 in Institutional and Financial Stabilization Grants for Arts Organizations (IFS Arts grants) to 29 nonprofits across the state, with 25% of funding going to organizations in Southern NJ.

- The FY25 total award amount represented the largest amount of grant funding authorized in a single fiscal year in the history of the Cultural Trust and a 92% increase over the previous IFS Arts grant round.
- The funded projects are important infrastructure and capacity investments, such as the creation of cash reserves and working capital funds, upgrades to critical technology, the purchase of essential capital equipment, and the creation of strategic plans.
- An unprecedented 148 applications requesting a total of \$4,811,212 were received, a 20% increase over the total amount requested in the previous IFS Arts grant round, and the largest total amount ever requested in a Cultural Trust grant round.
- Annually, the grant-supported organizations welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors, drive over \$100 million in total spending, and support over 1,000 jobs.

Achieved Record Trust Fund Interest Income:

Strong interest rates and responsible stewardship of the Trust's permanent fund yielded interest earnings of \$1,418,185 in FY24, the largest amount of annual interest income earned in the agency's history and nearly an 80% increase over interest earned in FY23.

- **Direct Public Benefit:** Interest income earned on the Trust Fund is the only source of funding for the Trust's unique grant programs. Increased interest income directly benefits New Jersey's cultural nonprofits.



- **Responsible Fund Management:** Throughout FY25, the Cultural Trust Board provided responsible, attentive, and timely stewardship of the Trust Fund, regularly convening to monitor its performance and consider allowable investments. The principal balance for the Cultural Trust Fund at the beginning of FY25 was \$25,848,231. This represents growth of \$864,260 from the beginning of FY24. Over the course of FY25, the Cultural Trust and the Division of Investment purchased 17 different Treasury Bills and Notes with laddered maturities in order to maximize interest income available for grantmaking.

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.

- **Updated Website Content and Structure:** In FY25, the Trust restructured its website, enhancing its effectiveness as a communications tool for both constituent services and for highlighting the Trust's public value. Content that was originally divided between four text-heavy pages was redistributed between 10 topic-specific pages, making information easier for constituents to find. Staff added up-to-date general information about the Trust and its programs, profiles of recent grant projects, new images, and a useful "Resources" page.
- **Digital Audience Growth:** Over the course of FY25, the Trust's email list grew by over 15%. 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 in and enthusiasm for the Trust's programs.
- **Acknowledgement Guidance for Grantees:** The Trust developed specific guidance for organizations regarding how to fulfill the Cultural Trust's contractual acknowledgement requirements. The guidance document has made acknowledgement of State support more consistent and helps grantees remain in compliance as they complete their grant projects.
- **Stayed Active in the Field:** Trust staff were featured speakers at events presented by the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey and the South Jersey Cultural Alliance, sharing

information about the Trust in general as well as upcoming grant opportunities. The Trust also shared resources at a table at the 2025 New Jersey History and Historic Preservation Conference. Additionally, Trust staff attended the annual conferences of the American Association for State and Local History and Grantmakers in the Arts, which allowed them to uplift Trust programs and services at a national level and to stay current with best practices.

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 FY25, 325 organizations were designated qualified.

- **Developed Online Qualification Application:** In FY25, Cultural Trust staff developed and launched a digitized version of the qualification application. The new online application replaced bulky hard-copy applications, eliminating printing and postage costs for constituents and incorporating automated completeness checks. The digital format has streamlined, standardized, and sped up the application submission, review, and revision process, benefiting both applicants and staff. The Trust accepted 81 applications in the new system after it launched in spring 2025.

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 24% of the Trust's FY25 grantees were organizations that had never before received a Cultural Trust grant.

- **Updated Workshops and Video:** Trust staff updated its existing qualification technical assistance workshop. Staff held two live Zoom qualification workshops, which garnered 62 attendees. A recorded version has received 142 views as of July 2025. Live grant workshops and office hours welcomed 136 participants and recorded grant workshops received more than 450 views.

- **Surge in Individual Technical Assistance:** Staff responded to 647 individual technical assistance inquiries in FY25 about the Trust in general, qualification, grants management, the FY25 grant program, and the FY26 grant program – a more than 150% increase over FY24. The inquiries were from organizations in 20 counties, demonstrating the extent of increased awareness about the Cultural Trust and the breadth of interest in its programs.
- **Created New Self-Assessment Resource:** Trust staff developed a new recorded webinar that provides a framework for organizations to conduct a basic self-assessment to identify stability and capacity challenges that might be addressed through the IFS grant programs. The workshop helps IFS applicants develop stronger projects and applications and also serves as a general resource for the field at large.
- **In-Person and Virtual Check-Ins with Grantees:** Staff conducted interim check-in meetings with all 21 FY24 Capital Historic Preservation grantees (14 in-person, 7 virtual), and 12 of 29 FY25 IFS Arts grantees (all virtual). These site visits and virtual meetings 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.

Improve Constituent Experience: The Cultural Trust will continue efforts to improve and streamline processes for cultural organizations seeking to engage with Trust programs. This will include further digitizing required forms and updating grant contracts for clarity.

Enhance Outreach and Communications: Increasing awareness of and access to Cultural Trust programs requires a comprehensive outreach strategy, including: growing social media channels; continuing to improve and add website content; increasing print, digital, and in-person outreach to cultural organizations; and analyzing results of grants to reveal the public benefits of stable cultural organizations.



Goals for 2026

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 \$7.27 million from the public sector to match private donations that have already been certified, which would increase the Trust's grantmaking capacity by 22% each year forever.





EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

Employee: Avery Wehrs, Grants and Operations Coordinator

What makes you proudest about your time in public service?

I'm most proud of the ways in which I have been able to improve constituents' experience with the Cultural Trust's programs. This occurs not only through direct assistance to constituents but also enhancements to application forms, the creation of new technical assistance materials, and behind-the-scenes tweaks to internal processes. It's especially gratifying to work directly with new organizations, help them successfully navigate the application process, and see them become first-time grantees.



New Jersey Division of Elections

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
DONNA BARBER

Overview:

The New Jersey Division of Elections is pleased to present its annual report in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, 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 Executive Director Donna Barber, the Division has continued to oversee and support free, fair, and secure elections in New Jersey.

Mission of the Division:

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.



Elections:

In FY25, the Division of Elections oversaw the 2024 Presidential General Election, the 2025 Primary Election as well as the 10th Congressional District U.S. House of Representatives Special Elections that took place in the early part of FY25.

2024 Presidential General Election

The 2024 Presidential General Election was held on November 5, 2024. County Clerks began mailing voters ballots in September. The Early Voting period was October 26-November 3. New Jersey had 6,682,699 registered voters and 4,321,921 votes were cast.

2025 Primary Election

The 2025 Primary Election was held on June 10, 2025. County Clerks began mailing ballots to voters in April. The Early Voting period was June 3- June 8, after recent changes to state election law expanded the number of early voting days for the Primary from three days to six days. New Jersey had 2,462,041 registered Democrats and 1,629,504 registered Republicans eligible to participate in their respective political party Primary Election. There were 2,408,835 registered voters with no party affiliation, eligible to declare a political party at their polling locations and vote in that party's Primary Election. A total of 1,331,450 New Jersey voters cast ballots, with 855,627 voting in the Democratic Party primary and 475,823 voting in the Republican Party primary.

Projects:

Youth Voters

January 2024 the City of Newark passed an ordinance permitting 16 and 17 year olds to both register and vote in school board elections. The Division led the technical implementation for this initiative. The SVRS was appropriately modified to ensure both the City of Newark and any other municipality that opts in can accurately and successfully support the effort. In addition to the technical changes required, the Division created an informational flyer for outreach efforts in Newark. This flyer was made available in English, Spanish and Portuguese. As of the registration deadline for the April 2025 school election, approximately 2,000 youth voters were registered in Newark.

Training

In FY2025, the Division of Elections offered two educational sessions to county election officials regarding the American's with Disabilities Act and serving voters with disabilities. The training was hosted by the Division and the Northeast ADA Center, out of Cornell University. The Northeast ADA Center is authorized by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) to provide information, materials, and technical assistance to individuals and entities that are covered by the ADA. The trainings covered the importance of access to voting for all and how the ADA applies to the voting process; New Jersey's Polling Place Accessibility Checklist and effective poll place inspection techniques; reasonable modification of policies to assist voters with disabilities and effective communication provisions; and tips for communicating respectfully with people with disabilities.

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

Accessible Ballot Delivery

Accessible ballot delivery was provided for voters who are unable to complete a paper ballot without assistance 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, 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 Elections guides which, taken together form a set of best practices for the conduct of New Jersey elections. All guides were reissued to ensure county election officials are equipped with all best practices to successfully support the elections.

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 Winter Conference 2025 (Washington, DC)
- NJAEO Regional Meetings (statewide regions)
- New Jersey Association of Election Officials Fall Conference 2024 (virtual)
- New Jersey Association of Election Officials Spring Conference 2024 (Atlantic City, NJ)
- Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey Fall Conference 2024 (Absecon, NJ)
- Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey Spring Conference 2025 (Atlantic City, NJ)
- United States Election Assistance Commission Standards Board Meeting 2025 (Charlotte, NC)
- Division-led monthly meetings, educational webinars, and trainings with county election officials and community groups.

Important Dates for FY2026:

- **September 20, 2025:** County Clerks Commence Mailing Ballots for the 2025 General Election
- **October 14, 2025:** Deadline to Register to Vote for the 2025 General Election
- **October 22, 2025:** Sample Ballots Mailed to Voters for the 2025 General Election
- **October 25 – November 2, 2025:** Early Voting Period for the 2025 General Election
- **November 4, 2025:** 2025 General Election Day
- **December 4, 2025:** State Board of Canvassers Meets to Certify 2025 General Election results

Key Dates and Deadlines for the 2026 Primary and General Elections will be available after January 1, 2026.

Goals for 2026:

The Division will develop a training and certification program for county election officials. 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. The Division has created an education committee in collaboration with the New Jersey Association of Election Officials that will develop the charter and review all training materials prior to Division approval.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



Brittany Giampola, Deputy Director

For the past 21 years, Brittany has dedicated her life to ensuring that a citizens' right to vote is upheld to the highest standards. She has achieved this by working in many capacities of the electoral process; first with Gloucester County Elections Offices in various roles for 11 years, then moving to a Project Manager/Business Analyst position for the NJ SVRS for 6 years, before landing at her current home, the New Jersey Division of Elections in 2021. Through these unique positions, she specialized in tactical implementation and user support and has extensive experience in crafting implementation plans and large-scale user training projects as well as drafting supporting materials and user guides. These experiences have helped her be successful in her current role as Deputy Director of the Division of Election and have been vital in serving the Division's mission to ensure free and fair elections throughout New Jersey.

When not working, Brittany values spending quality time with family and friends. She can usually be found at her son's sporting events, with her fiancé, Zach and her Mom, Paula.



New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
RACHEL FERGUSON

MISSION:

New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism (NJTT) works 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, outreach, consultation services, training, education and industry leadership for tourism industry stakeholders through the following programs: Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) outreach, domestic & international marketing, media & public relations, grant funding, cooperative marketing, and tradeshow collaboration. In addition, NJTT conducts comprehensive economic research to understand the impact of tourism on the state's economy.

2025 NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Key Achievements

- NJTT awarded \$4.7M in grant funding to DMOs, tourism organizations and attractions throughout the state, which represents an increase of 4.5% from last year.
- +2.7% growth in visitor volume to New Jersey in 2024 (123.7M total visitors) vs. 2023
- +3.1% growth in visitor spending in New Jersey during 2024 (setting an all-time record of \$50.6B) vs. 2023

- [VisitNJ.org](https://www.visitnj.org) garnered 13.3M visits in FY2025 vs. 12.8M visits in FY2024.
- Digital metrics signaling consumer intent to travel to New Jersey rose 23% over the prior year.
- The “*Little State, Lotta WOW*,” marketing initiative continued its multimedia rollout with a major push in summer 2025, showcasing a myriad of new tourism options for consumers.
- NJTT launched an initial RevNJ 250 advertising campaign, leading up to America's 250th anniversary in 2026.
- NJTT launched its third mobile guide, “*Jersey Gardens Trail*,” and the new landing page on [VisitNJ.org](https://www.visitnj.org), “*Gardens of the Garden State*,” which are both devoted to supporting agritourism in New Jersey; the mobile guides have a collective total of 4,115 domestic and international users.

Geographic Marketing Coverage

Primary markets included New York and Philadelphia DMAs. Secondary markets included: Baltimore, Md., Washington, D.C., Harrisburg, Pa. and Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Marketing Campaigns

NJTT produced many extensive and supporting marketing campaign materials, communications and assets, resulting in total online and offline impressions of 16.5B. All of these efforts steered to [VisitNJ.org](https://www.visitnj.org), which has driven more the 66,530 signals of intent to travel with organic traffic up 38% versus the previous year. Drivers included: 22K TV & radio ads, 12,803 digital assets/ads, 268 print ads, 15 Facebook campaigns, 1,851 organic social posts, 54 SEM campaigns, 960 content articles and images, 11+ mobile experience activations and appearances, and 557 out-of-home ads.



Website, Digital & Publication Efforts

VisitNJ.org

NJTT continued to innovate on [VisitNJ.org](https://www.visitnj.org) to include even more editorial and photography with enhanced navigation, better ease and timely updates, including the improved “Plan Your Trip” feature. A number of topic-focused landing pages were added to the website, including: “Gardens of the Garden State,” dedicated to promoting agritourism; “FWC26,” dedicated to world-class sporting events coming to New Jersey; and “NJ 250,” dedicated to the celebration of New Jersey’s role in the American Revolution and America’s 250th anniversary in 2026. Agritourism content led for most-visited pages throughout FY2025.

VisitNJ Social Channels

NJTT’s organic and paid social media strategy in FY2025 shifted from the previous metrics of “likes/follows,” to those prioritizing intent-to-travel to New Jersey, such as “shares/saves.” This pivot resulted in high-performing Instagram Reels at 1.78M views, delivering 128K+ engagements and 38K+ shares. Meanwhile, comments on Facebook increased from 1,714 in the previous year to over 3K, fostering a better community-style practice of engagement. Followers on Instagram increased 10.5% and 4.27% on Facebook from the previous year, with total reach for both at 1.1M+ and 23M, respectively.

Travel Guide

NJTT redesigned the “*The Official New Jersey Travel Guide*,” released in January 2025, with a more editorial-centric format, richer photography, added user-generated content, and the reduction of 60 pages of business listings. The guide’s distribution increased from 371,772 in FY2024 to 395,509 in FY2025. Online, e-book views, downloads and orders increased from 37,458 in the previous year to 48,511 in FY2025.

Travel Tradeshow Activity

NJTT sponsored the American Bus Association’s 2025 Travel Trade Show. NJTT and DMO partners also promoted New Jersey at USTA’s International Travel Trade Show (IPW) in 2025, meeting with nearly 500 travel professionals collectively. IPW alone resulted in over \$3M in hotel revenue in New Jersey (2024 results).

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.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Washington, D.C.; and Quebec and Montreal, reaching over 300,000 consumers, trade and press.

New Jersey Welcome Centers

Garden State Welcome Centers redefined what it means to be a visitor at our four state centers in FY2025, counting only those tourists who directly interact with staff and engage with VisitNJ tourism collateral material. As such, our four Garden State Welcome Centers greeted a combined total of 287,559 visitors. Visitors who are residents of the following states were the most frequent guests to New Jersey: California, Minnesota, Tennessee, Virginia and Maryland. International visitors to the Garden State throughout FY25 hailed from Canada, England, Germany and Ireland.

Marketing and Public Relations Awards Earned in FY2025

- Gold Awards (2), Travel Weekly Magellan Awards: “WOW Experience” Activation and “*Little State, Lotta WOW*” TV Commercial
- Silver Award, Travel Weekly Magellan Awards: “*Little State, Lotta WOW*,” Advertising Campaign
- Bronze Awards (4), HSMIA Adrian Awards: “*Little State, Lotta WOW*,” Campaign
- Bronze Award, The Boston Globe’s “Best Feature Placement in Consumer Newspaper:” Anthony Bourdain Food Trail

Domestic Press Tours Hosted in FY2025

NJTT executed multiple familiarization media tours (FAMs) for domestic journalists with the key assistance of state DMO partners in FY2025. U.S.-based journalists conducted the following top 5 FAMs in New Jersey: Shore Pride Journeys, 7-day Road Trips, Lonely Planet’s Guidebook to the Mid-Atlantic States, Coastal Family Travel, and The Fall Lighthouse Challenge. NJTT secured editorial placements in top U.S. media outlets as a result of its dedicated efforts to host media members.

GOALS for 2026

- Increase FY2026 visitation and tourism spend by at least 3% over FY2025
- 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, U.K. 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.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



“I love connecting the public to all of the opportunities New Jersey has to offer, especially by way of VisitNJ’s three convenient mobile passes and our business and event listings, which I enjoy developing and managing. By attending tradeshows across the country, I have been able to reach even broader markets to assist and guide audiences to enjoy New Jersey to its fullest.”

Kaitlyn Kurfuss, NJTT Marketing Program Specialist







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 Caucus Archival Projects Evaluation Service (CAPES).

2025 Notable Accomplishments:

Grants

The NJHC's grant programs this year were impactful and robust. In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), forty-one General Operation Support (GOS) Grant recipients received \$2,900,000 to provide critical support to organizations engaged in programs to preserve, research, interpret, and promote New Jersey history. In FY24 alone, this funding leveraged nearly \$29

million in total spending, generated over \$32 million in total income, offered on-and-off-site programs to about two million people (including more than 300,000 K-12 students), enjoyed in excess of 5.7 million website visitors, and supported 700 full and part-time jobs statewide. The grants teams continued this support by awarding \$2.9 million in Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) GOS funding.

In FY25, 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. The NJHC also awarded Diversity grants to seven organizations for a total investment of \$139,375. These grants allowed organizations to receive training from professional consultants with the goal of expanding their outreach efforts and audiences.

The County History Partnership Program is in the middle of its 2025 grant cycle, but interim reports indicate that the counties will fund a total of 250 organizations. The Commission's investment in the program is \$1,508,358.00 and the counties estimate that re-grantees will raise over \$3.1 million in private matching dollars.

Finally, the Commission provided co-sponsored project grants to six organizations for a total investment of \$269,555. 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 program offerings over the past year have engaged audiences across the state on a wide variety of topics.

African American History Program

During the past year the African American History Program partnered with universities, historical societies, schools, groups, and individuals in a collaborative statewide effort to develop African American history in New Jersey. The Program continues to connect with the public through presentations at conferences, teacher institutes and local and international press. In spring 2025, the Program held a gathering for six State agencies and departments that offer African American history programming to share objectives and priorities. In addition to contributing to the annual Marion Thompson Wright lecture series - which the program co-founded and is now in its 43rd year as the longest running African American history conference in New Jersey - it also collaborated in and presented at a week-long conference celebrating the Black Revolutionary War soldier Cudjo Banquante.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2025, the African American History Program held five public webinars, published *Bibliographic Resources Relating to Experiences of People of African Descent, Native Americans, and Women in Revolutionary New Jersey*, awarded the Mildred B. Garvin Prize for excellence in teaching African American history, and collaborated on two public media campaigns with NJTRANSIT and USATODAY. The Program also created a Black History Events in New Jersey calendar which promotes grantee, Black Heritage Trail and other institutional sites which can be found at <https://linktr.ee/blackhistorynj>

New Jersey Black Heritage Trail

During Fiscal Year 2025, the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail opened two nomination rounds. In total they received over 88 applications from sites that have strong historical connection to Black heritage and history in New Jersey. All sites promote awareness and appreciation of Black history, heritage, and culture and connect the stories of Black life and resiliency throughout the state of New Jersey.

The Black Heritage Trail hosted three virtual meetings to assist the public with applications. In addition to processing new marker applications, the team worked with a designer on branding for the Black Heritage Trail based on feedback from the public. They also developed a public bid process and selected Sewah Studios to design and fabricate historical markers for the Trail. The first of these was installed in June 2025 commemorating the Franklin Street School in Cape May, New Jersey. Each marker has an additional sign on its pole to connect visitors with the State of New Jersey's website including more information about the Black Heritage Trail program and events connected to the sites. To provide additional information and enhance visitors' experiences at sites without pre-existing historical interpretation, the team developed digital augmented reality museums that can be accessed through a QR code on the markers.

New Jersey History Conference

On December 4, 2025 the NJHC hosted its annual New Jersey History Conference at the Douglass Student Center on the Rutgers University – New Brunswick campus. The keynote presentation was provided by Executive Director of the Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics, Dr. Elizabeth Matto, who discussed the important relationship between studying history and fostering civic engagement. The keynote was followed by panel sessions exploring the history of politics and political participation in New Jersey. During lunch, lightning session presentations shared new and developing research on the connections between history and civics. In total, 180 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 terms of programming and preparations for the upcoming semiquincentennial. To help the public connect with the history of the American Revolution, RevolutionNJ launched its RevolutionNJ race series which features a 5K race and family fun walk at historical sites around the state.

Other signature programs from RevolutionNJ include the award-winning Tavern Talks series, which brings historical interpreters to craft breweries, and the History Pinned program, which provides unique pins to visitors at featured New Jersey historical sites.

To encourage wide-spread participation across the state, RevolutionNJ facilitates 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. At the end of Fiscal Year 2025, 166 communities and 260 organizations had joined these initiatives.

In the fall of 2024, RevolutionNJ began its pilot of the History Happened Here educational program for grades 5-12. Students from six schools from around the state explored local history topics and presented their findings through a final project. For younger students, partners at the New Jersey Department of Education developed Foundations of Democracy a civics toolkit for grades K-5. To connect schools with these resources, RevolutionNJ launched the Revolutionary Schools program in spring 2025.

General Goals for 2026:

Over the course of the 2026 fiscal year, the New Jersey Historical Commission will continue to support history organizations and researchers through its grants opportunities and educational programs while continuing to share New Jersey's history with the public.

The grants teams 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 present new scholarship on African American history in New Jersey. The New Jersey Black Heritage Trail team will continue the installation of historical markers and will open a new nomination

cycle in the spring of 2026. The annual themes programming will explore the historical process with the New Jersey History Conference "Memory and Memorialization."

Finally, RevolutionNJ will focus on engaging as many New Jerseyans as possible in the commemoration of American's 250th. The team plans to do this by expanding the RevolutionNJ Proud Partners, Communities, and Schools programs to inspire and facilitate programming at the local level. They will also present programs that can be used statewide by communities such as the Tavern Talks program, the installation of RevolutionNJ historical markers, the distribution of a traveling exhibit titled "Revolutionary Lives: Living the American Experiment," and the coordination of a public arts program with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and Monument Lab. RevolutionNJ will also continue its collaboration with the NY/NJ World Cup Team and Sail4th250 to prepare for a large-scale event in July 2026.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



Rachel Thimke, Programs & Outreach Manager

Quote: New Jersey's history practitioners do an incredible job connecting audiences with the past. Knowing that our work at the Historical Commission helps support their research and programming is what makes me proudest about my time in public service.



6 Tavern Talks events were held across the state to a total audience of 190 people.

180 people attended the 2024 New Jersey History Conference. 27 presentations were given on the history of politics in New Jersey.



In December 2024, First Lady Tammy Murphy observed student presentations from the History Happened Here pilot at the Monroe Township Middle School in Monroe Township, NJ.

New Jersey-India Commission



New Jersey-India Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
RAJPAL S. BATH

Executive Summary

The New Jersey-India Commission, established by Executive Order No. 354 on February 6, 2024, serves as the State of New Jersey's dedicated platform for advancing economic diplomacy, trade, and cultural engagement with the Republic of India. Positioned under the Department of State, the Commission acts as a high-level, cross-sectoral vehicle to operationalize Governor Phil Murphy's vision of global economic connectivity, inclusive growth, and strategic international partnerships.

Strategic Mandate

With India now recognized as the most populous nation and among the world's fastest-growing economies, the Commission is charged with the following priorities:

- **Bilateral Trade & Investment:** Strengthening commercial flows and attracting Indian FDI into New Jersey.
- **Educational & Cultural Exchange:** Deepening people-to-people ties through academic collaboration and cultural diplomacy.
- **Global Market Positioning:** Promoting New Jersey as the premier North American entry point for Indian innovation, capital, and talent.

The Commission consists of 39 members, including two legislative appointees and a full-time Executive Director. It reflects the state's commitment to institutionalizing international engagement with India, one of its most important global partners.

New Jersey's Indian diaspora—America's second-largest by state—anchors this engagement. Communities such as Edison, Iselin, Carteret, and Jersey City's India Square ("Little Gujarat") represent vital engines of cultural, entrepreneurial, and economic exchange.

Governor Murphy's 2019 mission to India and the formation of sister-state agreements with Gujarat and Telangana laid the foundation for this work, which now includes permanent overseas presence through the New Jersey India Center in Delhi and Bengaluru.

Key Achievements & Milestones

December 2024: Inaugural Economic Mission to India

The Commission led a high-impact mission alongside Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, with strategic engagements in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Amritsar, and Delhi. Outcomes included early-stage partnerships in clean energy, life sciences, higher education, and advanced technology.

May 2025: India Recognized as New Jersey's #1 Source of FDI

A landmark NJEDA report named India as the leading source of foreign direct investment into the state. This shift is directly attributable to strategic outreach by the Commission and its close coordination with Choose New Jersey and the NJEDA.



Business Demand Surge

In 2025, the Commission has observed a marked uptick in inbound interest from Indian companies—particularly in life sciences, IT services, fintech, and manufacturing. Soft landing inquiries and partnership requests have increased substantially.

September 2025: Upcoming Governor-Led Trade Mission

Governor Murphy is slated to return to India from September 17–24, 2025, to build on the momentum of prior missions. The upcoming visit is expected to yield new academic MoUs, bilateral industry forums, Jobs announcement and expanded state-to-state cooperation.

Community & Cultural Engagement

The Commission recognizes the power of cultural exchange as both a diplomatic tool and an economic catalyst. Highlights include:

- **Sports Diplomacy:** ED Bath and Commissioner Dr. Gurbir Johal served as keynote speakers at the 1st Annual New Jersey Kabaddi Cup—celebrating traditional Punjabi sport and strengthening community engagement.
- **Diaspora-Driven Commerce:** Chairman Wes Mathews addressed the grand opening of Joyalukkas Jewelry’s second U.S. showroom in Edison—elevating one of Kerala’s most iconic brands in a key diaspora hub.
- **Arts & Innovation:** Partnered with NJ Symphony for a cinematic orchestral screening of Baahubali at NJPAC and State Theatre NJ, driving new audiences to Indian cinema through classical performance.
- **Institutional Collaboration:** Continued engagement with the Indian Consulate in NYC to co-host delegations from Indian states and industry associations such as NASSCOM, which launched its first NYC CEO Forum with attendance by Commission leadership.

FY2025 Strategic Goals

1. Accelerate Indian FDI Pipeline

- Deepen collaboration with Choose New Jersey to position NJ as the preferred U.S. destination for Indian capital.
- Launch sector-specific roadshows across Indian metros focused on clean energy, biotech, and tech services.

2. Enable Soft-Landing Support for Indian Companies

- Expand onboarding services through state incubators and innovation hubs.
- Provide regulatory guidance, site selection support, and access to R&D partnerships with NJ universities.

3. Advance Tourism & Education Diplomacy

- Facilitate reciprocal university exchanges and cultural diplomacy programs.
- Work with India’s tourism boards to promote New Jersey as a destination for diaspora and experiential travel.

4. Strengthen State-to-State & Municipal Engagement

- Leverage diaspora roots to build direct linkages between NJ municipalities and Indian states.
- Pilot city-level MoUs focused on clean tech, smart infrastructure, and workforce development.

Recent Activity Brief (April–July 2025)

Organizational Development

- Welcomed Rita Santiago as Executive Administrator; formerly with the Governor’s Office, she brings a strong background in state operations.

Leadership Visibility

- ED Bath delivered keynote remarks during AAPI Heritage Month at the Governor’s Mansion and at HESSA, highlighting the Indian-American journey in public service.
- Participated in the inaugural Montgomery Innovation Summit hosted by Mayor Neena Singh. ED Bath addressed investors and entrepreneurs on NJ–India startup collaboration via the Choose NJ–India Center.

Strategic Networking

- Commission members engaged at the annual TiE New Jersey Gala, spotlighting the IPO success of a leading Indian-American entrepreneur and amplifying NJ’s startup ecosystem.
- Strengthened ties with the Government of Karnataka during their NYC visit, led by Dr. Ekroop Caur. The Commission participated in a panel at the Indian Consulate focused on tech-sector alignment and investment readiness.
- Delegation from State Govt. of Assam held a roundtable in July to discuss business and investment opportunities.

Closing Outlook

The New Jersey–India Commission remains focused on its mission to position New Jersey as the most globally engaged and culturally inclusive state for Indian enterprise and innovation. As India’s global influence continues to rise, the Commission stands ready to convert shared values into shared prosperity—through investment, education, diplomacy, and dynamic people-to-people partnerships.



New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
AWILDA POMALES-DIAZ

Mission:

The 35-member bi-partisan New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission was first established in the wake of Hurricane Maria with a law signed by Governor Murphy on January 9, 2020. The Commission's purpose is to strengthen ties and promote collaboration between New Jersey and Puerto Rico in areas such as culture, economy, academics and community support. By building bridges and facilitating dialogue, the New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission aims to create opportunities for growth, empowerment, and solidarity, benefiting both regions and their people.

Notable Accomplishments 2025:

Streamline Communications

In October 2024, the New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission welcomed a new Executive Director, Awilda Pomales-Diaz, who promptly initiated regular communication in writing with the Chairwoman and 35 members. ED also started a series of bi-monthly meetings to enhance communication and collaboration among its members. These meetings are designed to accommodate varying needs and preferences, taking place both virtually and in person. The Executive Director and Chairwoman Peggy Anastos speak on a daily basis.

The introduction of these meetings in addition to regular communications marks a strategic effort to streamline the commission's activities, foster more dynamic exchanges of ideas, and address pressing issues more effectively. By maintaining consistent communication, the commission aims to strengthen its initiatives and create a more cohesive approach to achieving its mission of fostering strong ties between New Jersey and Puerto Rico. We have issued external press releases to announce new appointees and the availability of a grant opportunity.



Figure 1 NJPRC January All Commission Member Meeting

Energy Resiliency Grant – From Research to Implementation

The energy resiliency grant project was the first assignment given to Executive Director Pomales-Diaz, following requests from NJPRC commission members for a generator initiative in 2023- 2024. Recognizing the profound impact of energy insecurity on Puerto Rico's development and daily life, we began comprehensive research and engaged in dialogue with over 20 organizations operating on the ground.

This collaborative approach allowed us to gain a nuanced understanding of the local energy landscape and identify key areas where support was most needed. As a result, we successfully distributed \$200,000 in grants to initiatives that demonstrated potential for significant impact. Funds from this grant will be used to enhance independent energy sources within emergency shelters and response services, community buildings, and organizations with power life support tailored to populations of seniors and individuals with disabilities/chronic medical conditions.

Cultural Event Support

The NJPRC has provided over \$30,000 in funding to support cultural events, heritage programming, and parades throughout the state. This initiative aims to celebrate New Jersey's diverse cultural landscape by enabling festivals, exhibitions, and community parades that highlight the traditions and histories of Puerto Rican communities in NJ. Support of these community events also helps promote the Commission's presence and advocacy of public programming.

One of the significant events attended by the commission was the celebration of International Women's Day in March. This event was hosted by the Hudson County Latin American Chamber, bringing together leaders, business owners, activists, and community members to honor the contributions of Puerto Rican and Latina women. Members also attended a historical event that highlighted the history of Puerto Rican service in the military and their significant contributions.

As sponsors of the Latino Action Network's annual conference, this event was attended by several NJPRC members, promoting community empowerment within the broader Latino community. NJPRC has also contributed to higher education retention programs for Latin American students at Rutgers University campuses in New Brunswick and Camden.



Figure 2 NJPRC Member Javier Robles Presenting at LAN Conference in March 2025

Goals for 2026:

Grant Support

Over the next year, we will collaborate with each grantee of the \$200,000 Energy Resiliency program, holding quarterly meetings and maintaining monthly communication to ensure effective progress and support.

Communication and Social Media

Continuation of consistent communication with Chairwoman Anastos and all members is an overarching goal. NJPRC also aims to launch its official social media channels, with weekly updates and posts. The Commission has a strategic social media plan for introduction and ramp up of content.

Constituent Services and Gov. Partners

Efforts are being made to enhance constituent service contacts and resources by improving interdepartmental communication to address ongoing issues related to obtaining copies of Puerto Rican birth certificates.



New Jersey State Archives

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
JOSEPH R. KLETT

MISSION:

The 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 archival appraisal. The State 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 former 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 Archivist, 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 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 five part-time 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 two part-time publications assistants. 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).

2025 NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Exhibition Development and Gallery

Senior staff of NJSA, our contracted guest curators and designers, and New Jersey State Museum senior staff have invested countless hours during the last year to develop and plan major exhibitions in celebration of the U.S. 250th. See below, under **FY 2026 Goals**, for further details.



Conservation of Charter Documents

In anticipation of the U.S. 250th, and the exhibits and programs planned by NJSA, we procured professional appraisals, treatment proposals, and conservation services for many of the Colony and State of New Jersey's charters and key Revolutionary War documents. Sotheby's prepared the appraisals, and conservation services are underway at both the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, Mass., and the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia, Pa. The items being treated include:

- The Concessions and Agreements of West New Jersey, 1677;
- The state constitutions of 1776 and 1844;
- New Jersey General Assembly's minute book for 1775-76;
- The 1776 State Seal silver casting;
- The Treaty of Paris (ending the Revolutionary War), 1783;
- New Jersey's Ratification of the U.S. Constitution, 1787;
- Dunlap & Claypoole's first printing of the proposed federal constitution (one of thirteen known to exist worldwide), 1787; and
- New Jersey's original Bill of Rights, 1789.
- Letter of Jane Ewing describing President-Elect George Washington's inaugural visit to Trenton
- 1801 poll list of Montgomery Township, Somerset County, showing women and free Black citizens eligible to vote under the 1776 New Jersey Constitution

These objects will all be showcased in exhibits opening in December 2025 and April 2026. See below, under **FY 2026 Goals**, for further information.

Electronic Archives Program

During FY 2025, NJSA's Electronic Archives Program (EAP) ventured into new and exciting territory in the form of "electronic archival reviews" and digital records transfers. The unit uploaded 135,379 MB of data into NJSA's digital repository in the Preservica platform in the last year. This included the following records considered to be of permanent historical value:

- Governors' and cabinet officers' addresses/event videos and photographs, and reports, 1998-2025 [from the McGreevey, Codey, Corzine, and Christie administrations];
- New Jersey Historical Commission oral histories, videos, publications, and programs, 2006-2024;
- Records of DARM, NJSA, the State Historical Records Advisory Board, and the State Records Committee, 1991-2019; and
- Cultural resource survey reports and historic structures documentation [various sources], 1986-2024.

The EAP has also worked continuously to reformat materials from 3.5 and 5.25-inch floppy disks, cassette tapes, MiniDV, VHS, DVD, and other audio and visual formats for patrons and upcoming exhibitions. In FY 2025, the unit oversaw nine interns working with oral history collections (see below, under **Collaborations and Tours**, for further details) and the arrangement and description of electronic files.

EAP professional staff presented at several conferences and organizations in-person and virtually, including the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC), the Best Practices Exchange (BPE), and the Council of State Archivists (CoSA). They were also invited to write blog posts for the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) Electronic Records Section.

Public Reference and Outreach Services

Archives staff shared information about our services and holdings in multiple settings during the course of the last year. We gave presentations about new resources and research opportunities and/or staffed information tables at the following venues:

- International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, Philadelphia, Pa., August 2024
- Woodbridge Public Library, Woodbridge, Middlesex Co., N.J., September 2024
- New Jersey State Library, Trenton, Mercer Co., N.J., October 2024
- Monmouth County Archives and History Day, Manalapan, Monmouth Co., N.J., October 2024
- Chatham Public Library, Chatham, Morris Co., N.J., May 2025
- Department of Education "Revolutionary Schools Conference," New Jersey State Museum, Trenton,

Mercer Co., N.J., June 2025

- The Genealogical Society of New Jersey, East Brunswick, Middlesex Co., N.J., June 2025

We also supported and/or partnered in a number of in-depth historical research and publication projects during the course of the fiscal year, for example: the Canal Society of New Jersey (Morris Canal map digitization project); the Governor's Office of Equity (annual report production); and the New Jersey State Library (development of online exhibits and blogs highlighting New Jersey history and the U.S. 250th).

Collaborations and Tours

NJSA became a community partner of the *Truth and Repair: The History of Structural Racism in New Jersey* project in Summer 2024. The collaboration brings together a diverse group of scholars, students, and cultural practitioners to document the historical impacts of racism on the health and wellbeing of the state's marginalized communities. Coordinated through Princeton, Rutgers, and St. Peter's universities, Truth and Repair receives major funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support student involvement. In support of this project, NJSA hosted interns the Summer 2024 session, the January 2025 intersession, the Spring 2025 semester, and the Summer 2025 session. They have reformatted and transcribed oral histories about the Great Migration of African Americans in the 1930s created by the New Jersey Historical Commission from the 1970s to the 1990s.

NJSA also supported and/or partnered in several other in-depth historical research and publication projects, for example the Canal Society of New Jersey (Morris Canal map digitization project), the Governor's Office of Equity (annual report), and New Jersey Historical Commission (*History Happened Here* video series). The Archives also proved a popular tour destination for a wide range of groups. Among those who toured were Middlesex County College Women's History students, FamilySearch.org representatives, Princeton Social Science Librarians, and representatives of the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives in Saudi Arabia.

Noteworthy Acquisitions

NJSA accessioned (acquired) historical paper records from multiple state and local government agencies, as well as several private donors. This amounted to 625 cubic feet of paper records and microfilm during FY 2025 in 43 distinct collections. Transfers of electronic records were addressed above. Acquisitions of hardcopy records included the following materials of special note:

- Pierson family records, 1750-1950 [includes land and legal documents, accounts, and correspondence of the family of West Caldwell and East Orange, and the historic Pierson House];
- Royal commission relative to administering loyalty oaths in Cumberland County, 1762;
- County Court Records, 1837-1974 [include dockets, minutes, judgment books, and indexes from now-defunct courts of Atlantic and Hudson counties];
- State Vital Statistics, 1917-1950 [includes birth, stillbirth, marriage, and death certificates; this transfer significantly expands NJSA's holdings of vital records]; and
- Governors' Bill Files, 2010-2019 [these records, from the Christie and Murphy administrations, document the intent and executive understanding of proposed and passed legislation].

Also, working with the Attorney General's Office and the New Jersey State Police, the State Archives exerted claims to New Jersey public records that were unlawfully alienated from governmental possession. During FY 2025, the director recovered the following items or the materials were returned to the State voluntarily:

- Woodbridge Township (Middlesex County) Overseer of the Poor records, 1763-1853;
- "An Act appointing Commissioners for Supplying the Several Barracks ... for Accom[m]odating the King's Troops ..." 1769 [original enrolled law signed by Gov. William Franklin];
- Stafford Township (Ocean County) tax ledger and correspondence, 1884-1894;
- Marlboro State Hospital records of Dr. Pettis, 1933-1939 [includes photographs of the institution and staff, and the hospital newsletter]; and
- Mercer County Division of Bridges and Culverts photograph album, 1972-1973;

FY 2025 STATISTICS:

NJSA tracks two "Key Performance Indicators." Totals for FY 2025 are as follows:

- Reference Inquiries Responded To: approximately 105,768 (these range from telephone calls and emails seeking historical facts, research guidance, 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 215,806

GOALS for 2026:

U.S. Semiquincentennial and Exhibits Program

Major projects in connection with the United States 250th celebration will come to fruition in FY 2026 thanks to grants from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF). During the summer and fall of 2025, the Division of Property Management and Construction will oversee the completion of new gallery space for the State Archives on the street level of 225 West State Street, Trenton, N.J. At the same time, the State Archives will inaugurate a new exhibits program with trained staff. This is in anticipation of two monumental exhibits on revolutionary New Jersey and the history of the Colony and State, and in furtherance of the Administration's goal to increase cultural tourism in Trenton.

The first exhibit, entitled *Revolutionary New Jersey: Living the American Experiment Then and Now*, will adapt and expand the New Jersey Historical Commission and RevolutionNJ's travelling exhibit by the same name as a stationary display. Opening in the State Archives' gallery in December 2025, it will feature original materials from the State Archives' rich collections as well as special interactives. The content will focus on individual lives during the Revolutionary Period and modern parallels tied to social change.

In April 2026, the State Archives will open a much larger exhibition at the New Jersey State Museum exploring revolutionary ideals and how New Jersey and its citizens have “grasped the power to change” over the centuries. It will showcase 350+ years of key historical manuscripts, maps, photographs, printed materials, film and sound recordings, and newscasts. In addition to the items noted above under **Conservation of Charter Documents**, this includes documentary treasures ranging from the Duke of York’s 1664 grant of New Jersey and the 1762 royal appointment of Governor William Franklin, to pivotal legislation and court decisions in the modern era. The content will illustrate the evolution of civil rights in New Jersey and how colonial and revolutionary ideals set the stage for continual reassessment of American freedoms and striving for equity and representation.

These projects are all proceeding in collaboration with, and with guidance from, New Jersey State Museum, New Jersey Historical Commission, and the Secretary of State’s Office.

Digitization and Online Access to Historical Collections

We anticipate posting our new index to New Jersey birth records for the 1848-1900 period in early 2026. This database has been in production for several years and contains over a million records. It will be a vital online public resource for genealogists and historians, free at the NJSA website.

NJSA is also working with Ancestry.com and MyHeritage.com to digitize nearly 10,000 reels of microfilmed service records from the Revolutionary War, 20th-century probate records, and local newspapers. These projects will also result in major online resources anticipated to be unveiled over the next few years.



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



Tara Maharjan, Supervisor of Electronic Archives Program

Quote:

“Overseeing the creation of the State Archives’ electronic records program has been one of my proudest achievements as an archivist. This is not simply saying ‘we now take electronic records.’ It has entailed mastering best practices, integrating our unit’s work into the established operations of NJSA, and collaborating with other archivists nationwide to build a workflow and policies to ensure long-term success. Receiving the Council of State Archivists’ Advocacy for Archives Award last year, and being invited to write for the Society of American Archivists’ Electronic Records Section blog, are deeply gratifying recognitions of our efforts.”



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. We believe 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.

Commitment to Public Benefit & Equity

In New Jersey, we know that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. The 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.

Division Units

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

2025 Notable Accomplishments:

- As the largest funder of the arts in the state, public dollars invested through the Council in FY25 **made possible 980 grants** – 375 direct grants, and an additional 605 regrants through the 21 County Arts Agencies – **totaling \$31,242,272 in support for NJ families, individuals, communities, and industries.**
- The Council distributed over **\$20 million in operating grants alone**, signaling a historic mark of progress for both the Council and the sector.
- A **record-breaking investment of over \$2 million** was made in support of NJ's working artists, providing the means for basic needs while sustaining and strengthening careers.
- The **new Arts and Health Roundtables virtual series** built on the work being done in NJ and around the world to integrate the arts with strategies that promote health and wellness for people of all ages. The series strengthened connections and action across sectors to help keep NJ at the forefront of this field.
- 12,314 students from 71 schools participated in [New Jersey Poetry Out Loud](#), **placing NJ 3rd in the nation** for student participation.

- The [Families First Discovery Pass](#) arts access program was featured in a [national Strategy Sampler](#) and nominated for the National Association of Secretaries of State IDEAS (Innovation, Dedication, Excellence & Achievement in Service) Award.
- [State of the Arts](#) – a longstanding television series co-produced by the Arts Council and Stockton University, in partnership with PCK Media – **won its 35th Emmy Award.**
- More information is available in the Council's [Year in Review: Fiscal Year 2025](#).

Goals for 2026:

For FY26, the Council remains committed to being a reliable source not only of funding, but also leadership, contributing to resilience and innovation statewide. The Council will continue to work with colleagues locally and nationally to uphold the priority that arts venues, programs, and events remain welcoming, inclusive spaces for patrons, artists, and staff of all ages and from all walks of life.

The priorities the Council has established for FY26 – created within the context of the Council's current [Strategic Plan](#) – 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 [FY26 Program and Operations Plan](#).

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 for public benefit.
5. Build internal capacity, streamline operations, and capitalize on expertise.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:

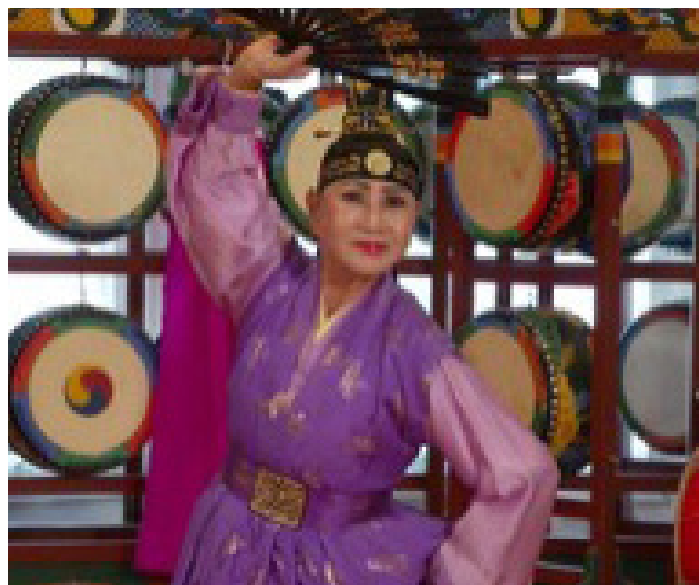


Stephanie Nerbak, Artist Services Manager

Transitioning from being a full-time artist and teaching artist to a full-time public servant was one of the most challenging but fulfilling transitions of my life. I always felt that I was serving others through my art form, and that spirit of serving followed me into this work, albeit in a whole new way. Now, as Artist Services Manager at the State Arts Council, I have the privilege of assisting New Jersey's artists with opportunities that benefit them and developing new ways to respond to the needs they experience. Through the Arts Council's growing Individual Artist Fellowship Program, our agency has focused efforts to support talented artists with the funding they need to advance their careers and broaden their artistic practices. In some cases, this investment in New Jersey's cultural producers is life-changing, helping to set them up on a pathway toward greater success. I'm proud of this work, and at the turn of each fiscal year, I look forward to making improvements on what we've accomplished and how we'll continue to serve artists in New Jersey.



The Arts Council visits Nimbus Dance in Jersey City. (L to R) Sam Pott, Nimbus Founding Artistic Director; Jessica Gaines, Council Program Officer; Hannah Weeks, Nimbus Managing Director; Jeremy Grunin, Council Member.



2024 Council Heritage Fellow Lena Mija Kim (Korean dancer and drummer) featured on State of the Arts.



Council Director of Grants & Strategies Tammy Rice Herman (third from left), was elected to the board of the Council of NJ Grantmakers. Tammy was joined by Council Program Officers (L to R) Sally Van de Water, Stella Baldwin, Diane Felcyn, Andrew Binger, Jessica Gaines, and Lindsay Dandeo.



Lt. Governor Tahesha Way and State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio attend the unveiling of “New Jersey on Parade,” a public artwork by George Greenamyre, now permanently installed at the NJ Division on Taxation. The Lt. Governor and State Treasurer were joined by Council Executive Director Allison Tratner (far left) and Division of Taxation Acting Director Marita R. Sciarrotta (far right).



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.

Continuously accredited since 1974 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.

PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS FY25

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.

- Direct Education programming to schools served 44,097 students
- In-Person School/Group Education (reserved) service for FY25 was comparable to FY24;
- In-Person School/Group Planetarium (reserved) service for FY25 increased 5% from FY24;
- In-Person Public (drop-in) program service has increased 48% over FY24.
- FY25 Public Planetarium service increased 40% over FY24.
- Served 930 low-income families with free Planetarium programming through the Families First Discovery Pass program.
- Overall, FY25 educational program service is divided nearly in half between reserved and public programs – 53.8% reserved and 46.2% public. This compares to 53.3% reserved and 46.7% 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 from the Trenton community, 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. The program served 147 families (854 individuals) in FY25.

Staff in the Museum's four collecting bureaus – Archaeology & Ethnography, Cultural History, Fine Art and Natural History:

- Answered 217 research inquiries – many requiring extensive staff research - for the public and scholars.
- Identified 186 scientific specimens and archaeological artifacts for the public.
- Facilitated 152 inquiries related to 612 Archaeological Site Files.

EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT:



"I enjoy the colleagues I work with and the uniqueness of the job at the Museum. It's fun trying to figure out how to purchase things like a dinosaur for the exhibits! I take pride in the fact that my work helps keep our facility up-to-date, and I enjoy seeing the excitement of the children and adults who visit here."

Barbara Bower, Museum Fiscal Administrator



Natural History Curator Dr. Dana Ehret and participants on a Fossil Collecting Trip in Monmouth County.

Museum carpenter Jenaro Vazquez creating a mount for a fossil to be included in an exhibition.



Guests enjoy the festivities at the Museum's 130th Anniversary Celebration hosted by the New Jersey State Museum Foundation.



New Jersey-Israel Commission

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
JOSH BERLINER

members, and LG Way attended the concerts, which reached nearly 2000 students.

MISSION:

The mission of the New Jersey-Israel Commission 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

2025 NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

NJ-Israel Trade remained high despite the war: 2-way trade in goods between NJ and Israel stood at \$1.7B.

(February) Symphony of Brotherhood Concert performed before high school students in an academic setting for the first time. The program, which is an annual activity of the NJ Israel Commission created by Commission member Miri Ben-Ari, celebrates the legacy of MLK Jr., and promotes understanding and brotherhood between NJ's black and Jewish communities. The connection with Newark Board of Education was facilitated by various Commission



Webinar Series for Commission members, that weave together the cultural, business, academic, and innovation communities.

- (January) Tourism/ Air travel briefing with the Israel Tourism Mission.
- (February) NJ-Israel Foodtech webinar, with Philadelphia-Israel Chamber.
- (April) Birthright NJ webinar and briefing.
- (April) Call with Ben Gurion University President Danny Chamovitz re. Academic BDS.

(May) BioPartnering Delegation from Israel: 6 Israeli companies (4 of whom have existing NJ roots) joined a delegation organized by the NJ Israel Commission to attend the annual BioPartnering Summit in Jersey City, and to explore opportunities for collaboration in our state. Several of the companies presented on stage at the conference, and all enjoyed one-on-one meetings with biotech execs, investors, and healthcare systems around NJ.

The delegation was a great success, as a number of companies are already in the process of applying for funding from NJEDA-CSIT, and at least one company was selected to be an innovation partner for a major New Jersey healthcare system.



(May) The Return of Edan Alexander: NJ Israel Commission members stayed in contact with legislators and organizations around our state, lobbying for the release of Edan through nearly 600 days in captivity. The Commission supported LG Way on the ground as she joined a community vigil in Tenafly that drew hundreds of local residents, and also for Edan's homecoming.



(May) Celebrate Israel Parade: 20 commission members and a NJSP contingent with our New Jersey Israel Commission parade float down Fifth Avenue in NYC.



(June) NJIC Spring Meeting in Camden County: Our first Commission-wide meeting of 2025 took place in South Jersey, at Ravitz Family Markets in Cherry Hill. Asm. Spearman (D-5 Camden) spoke about the Assembly's commitment to fostering commercial and cultural ties with Israel. Various elected officials from Camden County and Cherry Hill discussed the deep ties that the Jewish and Zionist communities have in the region. And the Jewish Trooper Association joined us to recap their inaugural year. It was an honor to host this meeting at "The Kosher Shoprite," which is a renowned cultural landmark for the South Jersey and Philadelphia area Jewish communities.



GOALS for 2026:

Activity in South Jersey: NJIC is committed to more comprehensive programming in South Jersey. In 2025, we already had a Commission meeting in South Jersey. We have focused foodtech programming on the South Jersey ecosystem. In the coming months, we are targeting South Jersey for a Healthtech delegation in December 2025 (with Penn Health, Cooper, etc.). And we look forward to supporting cultural programming in South Jersey, as well.

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. Recent Commission meetings focused on revitalizing the NJIT- Ben Gurion partnership. Additional meetings with Choose NJ touched upon encouraging partnerships between Stevens/ NJIT and Israeli tech startups.

Standardizing meetings of our committees, increasing engagement and “ownership” among members vis-à-vis the commission.

Better leveraging the website, AI, and digital media at our disposal.

Working with the new Israeli commercial attache (coming in September 2025) in our area to make sure that NJ is on the map as a priority destination for programming.

Leverage our 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:



Josh Berliner

WHAT MAKES YOU PROUDEST ABOUT YOUR TIME IN PUBLIC SERVICE?

My favorite thing about public service is being able to open doors for other residents, companies, and partners in our state and beyond. One especially proud moment from this past year was recruiting biotech companies from Israel to participate in BioNJ's BioPartnering conference. Our connections in the market meant that we could sponsor Israeli companies' participation, and secure additional meetings for them during their visit to our state. As a result of this activity, business deals are already underway that will spur innovation and create jobs- an activity that would not have been realized without our work and connections.



— NEW JERSEY —
OFFICE OF FAITH BASED INITIATIVES

Office of Faith Based Initiatives

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: EDWARD LAPORTE

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 previous funding cycle, OFBI approved a total of \$1.35 million in grants to faith and community based organizations to provide services benefiting over 67 unique organizations across 18 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 160 applications totaling over \$3.5 million this year alone. While rigorously vetting applications, OFBI could fund 32.3% of 3,515,000 of the total requested amount, 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, Services for Youth Entrepreneurship, Trade School Readiness,

S.T.E.A.M, and Civic and Community Engagement for over 795 individuals; and Special Project programs such as Food Security, Capacity and Legal Capacity Building grants and Services to Seniors over 18 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. Five live Technical Assistance webinars were conducted to assist organizations with the upcoming grant application cycle. These sessions covered registration in Blue SAGE, organization information, application access, and logic modeling, providing guidance on OFBI grant guidelines and the application process.

Freedom School Overview

The New Jersey Office of Faith-Based Initiatives Freedom School Project supports NJ Freedom Schools. NJ Freedom Schools provide educational and character-building support to K-12 students and their families by implementing an intensive academic summer program, as well as continuous follow-up, homework, and tutoring services throughout the academic school year. A total of 17 Freedom Schools were funded, and 19 sites run programs from Monday to Friday. Each school averages between 30 and 40 scholars. Most of these programs start in June and end in August. Freedom School programs operate in Essex, Passaic, Camden, Hudson, Mercer, Ocean, and Union counties.

The key components and objectives of the NJ Freedom Schools program include, but are not limited to: High-Quality Academic and Character-Building Enrichment, Parent and Family Involvement, Civic Engagement and Social Action, Intergenerational Servant Leadership Development, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Nutrition, Health, and Mental Health.



OFBI in partnership with Rutgers University and CDF started working on IRB study to evaluate literary programs and tutoring tools to identify the effectiveness and success of these programs for the students in Freedom Schools. Part of the study is the NJ ACTS Community Scientist Program, a training and education initiative designed to foster partnerships between community members and investigators, enhancing community involvement in research. It is a six-week online training program that runs from April 30 to June 4. The purpose is to enhance the evaluation data collection skills of the Site Testing Managers (STMs) as they prepare to evaluate the impact of the Freedom Schools in creating a love of reading and decreasing learning loss. STMs will also work with the Rutgers University evaluation team that will assess the impact of Freedom Schools. Participants (STMs) who complete the program receive a Certificate of Completion and a Community Scientist Digital Badge for LinkedIn. Larger banks such as Chase, PNC, and Columbia Bank have identified Freedom Schools to work with in order to provide financial literacy training to the scholars as well as their guardians. Each bank will also provide back-to-school backpacks to each scholar.

NJ OFBI accompanied with NJ Freedom School Leaders attend the Pre National Training for the 2025 Ella Baker Child Policy Institute at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary



OFBI hosted the NJ Freedom School Statewide Servant Leader Intern and Site Coordinator training sessions.

- NJ Freedom School administrators attend training in Tennessee in February
- Pastor Amir and Augtney Khan inspired Freedom School scholars at Harambee at the Camden Dream Freedom School in July.

Quarterly meetings- The quarterly meetings aim to update all Freedom Schools on the evaluation process and next steps. They also introduce resources to support summer implementation.

February 2025

June 2025



Sustainable Development Overview

The New Jersey Office of Faith-Based Initiatives Sustainable Development Task Force (SDTF) aims to be a leader in addressing economic challenges and fostering community development through sustainable practices. We seek to establish a statewide network of faith-based organizations dedicated to transformative change. Our focus includes researching pre-development funding opportunities, educating communities through workshops, and building strategic alliances with other organizations. By sharing resources locally, regionally, and nationally, we strive to amplify our impact and drive responsible development across New Jersey.

Faith-based organizations in New Jersey own thousands of acres of under-utilized land suitable for community revitalization. While many wish to repurpose these properties for sustainable housing and community services, they often lack the necessary knowledge, training, and financial resources. The NJ Office of Faith Based Initiatives (NJOFBI) addresses these barriers through the Sustainable Development Initiative, educating organizations on sustainable housing development opportunities.

In Fiscal Year 2024, we engaged faith leaders via workshops, conferences, and over 30 site visits, including a symposium at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Our objective is to position NJOFBI as the central contact for technical assistance, providing tailored plans based on our findings. We collaborate with state agencies, nonprofits, and development professionals such as DCA, NJRA, and EDA to equip organizations with essential community development skills. A key focus is pairing faith institutions with funding for sustainable housing projects, facilitated by strategic alliances that enable access to catalytic investments. Successful efforts include working with our faith based community organizations to be certified as CHDO's. The Department of Community Affairs, a participant in distributing HOME funds, offers CHDO predevelopment loans to assess project feasibility. These loans may be forgiven if the project doesn't proceed, in accordance with HOME guidelines. HOME is the largest federal grant dedicated to creating affordable housing for low-income households, allocating about \$2 billion annually to states and localities. Successful efforts include working with our state certifying organizations to create CHDO's. Some of the regional faith leaders that the OFBI has been working with includes but is not limited to: Pastors Cedric Brown and Keith Davis from Camden County; Chaplain Ahmed Shedeed from Jersey City; Pastor Eric Wallace from Union County; Rev. Angela Fields from the State of NJ; Rev. Melvin Wilson from Essex County and Pastor Antonio Gandy from Atlantic County.

OFBI was also a proud sponsor of the Monarch Housing conference held in September 2024. Conference focused on innovative housing solutions and partnerships for community development. Sessions addressed key topics such as homelessness, diversity in construction, energy efficiency, and equitable financing for BIPOC developers, generational wealth, guaranteed income, and inclusive communities.

One notable success was the OFBI event in partnership with the New Brunswick Theological Seminary held in October. The event aimed to empower religious institutions to leverage their considerable assets for community development

projects. Over 100 organizations representatives participated in the event. Sessions addressed the importance of affordable housing initiatives, guiding houses of worship to collectively decide on projects that tackle societal and financial challenges. Participants explored the challenges and support networks available for affordable housing development, drawing on shared experiences to navigate complexities. Additionally, discussions emphasized the importance of assembling effective development teams and establishing partnerships with industry professionals, local governments, nonprofits, and other stakeholders. The closing session, featuring insights from the Kean University Faith-Based Institute of Public Policy, highlighted trending issues within the New Jersey faith-based community. This collaborative event enhanced the capacity of faith-based organizations to drive transformative change, aligning with the broader mission of sustainable development.

In March and April, the OFBI actively participated in the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA) Training Institute program, extending invitations to our Sustainable Development partners. The program focused on essential topics such as project finance fundamentals and strategies for enhancing real estate market resilience.

Additionally, the OFBI will also be focused on developing statewide trainings for faith-based qualified organizations, covering essential steps such as acquisition/site control, partnerships, financing, design, development, construction, and management to enhance their community development capabilities.

Other Highlights

Furthermore, the Office of Faith Based Initiatives' team attended the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits 2024 conference as one of the sponsors of this annual event that brings non-profits from across the state under one roof. Event that was held in December 2024 underscored the importance of nonprofit organizations and the value of government sponsorship for such impactful events. Renowned fundraising consultant Rhea Wong shared strategies for cultivating major donors and building individual giving programs, directly benefiting faith-based communities seeking sustainable funding.

Sessions led by experts like Linda Czipo and Drew Beynon provided insights into public policy trends and engaging audiences through social media. Key discussions covered financial security, BIPOC recruitment, and networking strategies, with experts like Gregg Indictor and Vicki Fernandez offering actionable insights. Sponsoring this event supports innovation and resilience in nonprofits, aligning with our agency's mission to empower faith-based communities across New Jersey through equitable community development.

OFBI was invited to monitor the second cohort of the Jumpstart Program, led by the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ with support from the NJ department of Community Affairs. This extensive six month training and certification program target nonprofit community developers, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to advance affordable homeownership projects and help close NJ's racial wealth gap. Supported by the NJ Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the cohort included 47 participants from 36 organizations statewide. 28 emerging developers from a wide range of organizations and varying development experiences presented their architectural plans for the



Kean University Architectural senior class showcase designs for St. Matthew AME Hickory Street project



Pastor Hobbs OFBI's Sustainable Development
Liason attended Asw. McCoy's Faith based
breakfast meeting held in March



OFBI and AmeriCorps New Jersey attended the
Diasporican Cultural Summit, hosted by Center for
Puerto Rican Studies-Centro in June. OFBI team was
able to gain insight into the archival and organizing
process of Non-Profit work.

June, OFBI and AmeriCorps NJ interns visited the United Way of Greater Mercer County Strike Out Hunger where they helped pack food with members of other organizations



In July 2024, Lt. Governor Tahesha Way visited St. Luke Baptist Church Freedom School in Paterson, witnessing the heartwarming enthusiasm of children as they read stories that resonated with them. Connecting in person with relatable role models is invaluable for these young minds.

New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs

Ongoing Initiatives:

The New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs was created in 1995. The Commission develops programs relating to the cultural, education, and social development of New Jersey's American Indian communities; NJ's American Indian history and culture; promoting increased cooperation among these communities; serving as a statewide reference and resource to increase public knowledge; and acting as a liaison among American Indian communities to the State and Federal governments.

High Impact Projects:

Three of New Jersey's tribes were accorded State recognition by the Administration of Governor Murphy: the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape in south Jersey; the Ramapough Lenape Nation in north Jersey; and the Powhatan Renape in Burlington/Camden Counties. The Commission is working with the NJ Historical Commission and the NJ Department of Education on a 3-year plan for curriculum resources for educators related to New Jersey's indigenous peoples. The Commission has also begun a partnership with the NJ Holocaust Commission, within the NJ Department of Education, to provide curricular materials related to issues of removal, boarding schools, and resiliency of New Jersey's tribal communities, with the theme "We are Still Here!"

The Commission is also working with the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs on hosting a joint event on November 18, 2025, to celebrate Native American History Month.

Ireland Commission

Mission:

The New Jersey-Ireland Trade Commission will advance the mutual interests of New Jersey and Ireland, including bilateral trade and investment opportunities, joint policy action, business and academic exchanges, economic support, and mutual investment in the infrastructures of the two regions.

American Asian Pacific Islander Commission

Mission:

The commission is charged with developing policies to address the social and economic needs of the growing Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in New Jersey. Under this new law, the commission will be required to submit an annual to the Governor and the Legislature about the commission's activities.

Senior Leadership

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New Jersey Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State

Dr. Lauren Zyriek
Assistant Secretary of State

Corey Wolkenberg
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