STATE OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW (GEAR)

2025 GEAR BOARD ANNUAL REPORT TO GOVERNOR MEYER
REQUIRED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER

RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE GEAR BOARD

November 1, 2025

Contents

STATE OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established by executive order in February 2017, the Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) develops recommendations for increasing efficiency and effectiveness across State government, improving the strategic planning process, using metrics in resource allocation decisions, and developing continuous improvement practices. These objectives support the values of the Administration, focused on Integrity, Efficiency, and Collaboration. *Integrity*- Actions speak louder than words – actions build trust. The State will lead with transparency and accountability to ensure every decision serves the public good. *Efficiency*- Government should work smarter, not harder. The State will eliminate waste, streamline services, and prioritize execution over excuses. *Collaboration*- Lasting change requires teamwork. The State will breakdown silos, build strong partnerships, and deliver solutions that work. GEAR's mission and all its efforts seek to demonstrate and model these values as it improves the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of government services, builds a sustainable culture of continuous improvement statewide, and bends the arc of government spending growth downward.

GEAR was established as a permanent and ongoing vehicle to assist State agencies in driving continuous improvement projects through the work of the GEAR Board. GEAR Board meetings are posted to the State's online public meeting calendar. Public participation and comments are encouraged. The Board has met 48 times since its inception. It has established multiple critical focus areas, identified team leadership and members, completed written charters identifying process and program optimization opportunities, and completed numerous projects with measurable outcomes to take advantage of these opportunities.

The executive order directs the GEAR Board to issue a report to the Governor no later than December 1st annually. These GEAR Annual Reports are published to GEAR's website, contain status and accomplishments toward the objectives of the executive order, recommendations for consideration in the Governor's Recommended Budget, and policy priorities.

What follows is an Executive Summary of key accomplishments, progress on major initiatives, and recommendations requiring support from the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches.

I. GEAR Program Management Team

Strengthen Quantifiable Outcomes – GEAR's teams are leveraging industry best practices to develop the skills of its membership as the number of projects and trained GEAR Field Team participants increase. GEAR estimates that a rough order of magnitude savings to the State across 96 percent of the 160 projects in the GEAR project portfolio will be $110 million over the life of projects underway.

Scale Efficiency through the Service Efficiency Blitz (SEB) Model – GEAR's practices include both long term predictive and shorter term adaptive Agile methods that are tailored to the specific characteristics of a project. An SEB is a targeted, rapid improvement initiative designed to accelerate service delivery through leadership engagement, cross-functional collaboration, and data-driven analysis. The approach involves three weeks of planning with service leaders followed by an intensive three-day improvement event with the full service team. The goal is to deliver at least one high-impact deliverable, as well as a roadmap for sustainable long-term improvements. As requested by the Office of the Governor, GEAR has held three SEBs in 2025 that have delivered service improvements and provide an update to the "Ready in 6" Analysis of Delaware Permit Competitiveness information that was gathered in 2019. These efforts have resulted in process improvements that are estimated to deliver savings of $1.2 million through an average of seven business weeks of time reductions per project. This process is also providing metrics forming a current state picture of the coordinated land use system across Delaware. Each event includes a comprehensive report with additional strategies and objectives to further optimize the business processes reviewed and enhance customer satisfaction. Additional updates and planned SEBs for the future are still underway.

Evolve the State's Culture of Continuous Improvement – GEAR's mission is to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of government services, build a sustainable culture of continuous improvement statewide, and bend the arc of government spending growth downward. Consistent with this mission, GEAR has continued its work on implementing change management messaging aligned with the evolving culture of continuous improvement in State government. These efforts are developed through ongoing conversations with GEAR Board members, State leadership, private sector partners, and the Governor's Office. The GEAR Program Management Team works with key leaders who are members of the GEAR Board, and State employees practicing their continuous improvement skills to provide a video series (found online at gear.delaware.gov/gear-stories) highlighting the impact of GEAR's efforts.

Drive Continuous Improvement Training and Development – Based on recommendations made in the 2018 GEAR Annual Report, the First State Quality Improvement Fund (FSQIF) was reinstated in Fiscal Year 2020 as a line item in the Department of Human Resources (DHR) budget and funded at $150,000 per year. FSQIF funds have been used for two cohorts of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) training program per year since then. A total of 155 practitioners have graduated with an additional cohort of 18 presently in training. In Fiscal Year 2023, the FSQIF was amended by Senate Bill 90 to modernize the language in the Delaware Code to reflect current industry accepted terminology from the continuous improvement field and affirm the partnership between GEAR and DHR in administering the training programs developed under this law. In Fiscal Year 2024, with the support of the Governor and General Assembly, the FSQIF was appropriated an additional $200,000 (for a total of $350,000) to continue funding two annual cohorts of CIP training and implement new training programs. This additional funding has resulted in two new training programs that enhance the skills of the GEAR Field Team, 1) Process and Project Leadership (PPL) training to focus on leadership skill development, and 2) Operational Excellence (OpEx) training to focus on advanced skill development in Lean six sigma, business analysis, project management, and agile methods. DHR does most program management, administration, and improvements for the training programs.

Grow the GEAR Field Team (GFT) – Established in 2020, the GFT is a community comprised of CIP training program graduates who are applying their skills throughout State government. With approximately 140 active members representing 23 State organizations that include the Judicial Branch, the team is delivering value through the execution of approximately 80 projects that leverage the skills and tools of continuous improvement. As the GFT's efforts have evolved, an additional focus area of business process management (BPM) has emerged with a sub-team having been in place since early 2024. The business process management sub-team is focused on sharing best practices in the use of BPM tools and techniques and is currently establishing a playbook to enhance the ability of State employees to effectively implement process mapping, identify waste, and streamline business processes. In addition, the GEAR Program Management Team supports the use of the GEAR Project Management Playbook as a reference for trainees and graduates of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) training program. The Project Management Playbook is designed to provide current project management standards and tools to current and future project managers within the State.

Solidify a Strategic Path for the Enterprise Services Delivery (ESD) Team – Representing most of the State's major financial, human resource and information technology functions, ESD delivers value through the implementation of approximately 50 cross-agency enterprise-wide projects and programs. In 2022, the framework for evaluating the strategic impact of enterprise level projects was established with a focus on the impact of change saturation, return on investment, and risk management across agencies. In 2023 and 2024, the ESD team rechartered its efforts to better align agencies, projects, and service delivery toward a more unified State of Delaware enterprise perspective. This rechartering was implemented in 2025. The vision of ESD is to foster a culture of collaboration and success by ensuring inter-organization communication on enterprise-wide finance, human resource, and information technology projects and adequate resource allocation to sustain these projects over time.

Improve Career Pathways for Employee Recruitment and Retention – Consistent with the executive order, which specifies that GEAR shall "identify changes in the State personnel system that would foster a culture of continuous improvement and improve the recruitment, development and retention of State employees", GEAR worked with DHR to identify job classifications that would increase the ability of State agencies to drive and sustain continuous improvement over time. The GEAR Program Management Team implemented four proposed classification series, each with a career ladder, for project managers (five roles), business process analysts (five roles), change management specialists (three roles), and Lean continuous improvement specialists (five roles). In total, these 18 new roles became available to State agencies in August 2024, are being utilized by various agencies such as the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Finance, and Administrative Office of the Courts.

These positions will continue to be available for fulfilling future needs in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget cycle and beyond.

Support the Delaware Artificial Intelligence (AI) Commission - In 2024, House Bill 333 was passed establishing the Delaware Artificial Intelligence (AI) Commission, which includes the Executive Director of GEAR as a member. This Commission was created to do the following: (a) make recommendations to the General Assembly and to the Chief Information Officer of the Department on legislative and executive actions regarding AI in Delaware; (b) develop and recommend statewide processes, principles, and guidelines for executive, legislative, and judicial agencies to follow regarding use of AI; (c) encourage agencies to utilize AI to improve service delivery, where appropriate; (d) examine, develop, and recommend legislative, executive, and judicial actions that ensure the use of AI in Delaware keeps citizens safe and does not violate any individual's rights; (e) conduct an inventory of all Generative AI usage in Delaware executive, legislative, and judicial agencies and identify high risk areas to be avoided for the implementation of Generative AI. The GEAR Executive Director's involvement provides direct input on the use of this technology for business process optimization, automation, and other efficiencies over time. AI is a strategic part of GEAR's Lean transformation and innovation work efforts.

Enable Enterprise Solutions for Project and Process Management – In 2022, there were two recommendations put forth by the GEAR Program Management Team to expand enterprise software solutions for project management and business process analysis. First, in consultation with DTI, Planview Projectplace software was selected as the software solution to transition over 130 GEAR projects into an online, cloud-based portfolio. Second, an industry leading business process management software tool called ARIS was introduced as a GEAR standard in July 2019. To date, ARIS is being used to accomplish objectives by multiple organizations as GEAR Field Team (GFT) members better define current state processes, measure performance, identify and eliminate waste, and implement optimized future state solutions. In FY 2026, the Department of Finance was appropriated $52,000 for ARIS and Planview Projectplace licenses which continues to be maintained at the current funding level.

Benchmark Continuous Improvement Activities Against Other States - Several of GEAR's continuous improvement activities for the State of Delaware were included in Results for America's Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence for 2023, 2024 and 2025, a nationally recognized state benchmarking program. The Results for America's Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence demonstrates that states are increasingly using data and evidence to produce better, more equitable results for their residents. In 2023 and 2024, Delaware was noted as having six "promising examples" of state standards of excellence under the focus areas of evaluation leadership, evaluation policy and learning, data policy and practices, and performance management. GEAR has submitted the State's progress for inclusion in the 2025 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence and is awaiting results from Results for America. GEAR leadership will continue to collaborate with other government partners through Results for America who are pursuing data driven and evidence based best practices.

II. GEAR Public Private Partnership (P3)

Finalize the First Phase of the Ready in Six Initiative – In 2020, the GEAR Public/Private Partnership (P3) Taskforce expanded its focus to include recommendations made by the Delaware Business Roundtable to accelerate business-related permitting processes at the State, county, and local government levels. In coordination with GEAR P3 Taskforce leadership and the Office of the Governor, a survey was developed by the GEAR Program Management Team in 2022 and disseminated to over 1,500 industry focused partners to target specific areas for improvement in permitting processes. A project charter was developed to address specific process bottlenecks identified by the survey. The projects were then implemented starting with the first of two phases - focusing on conducting Lean business analysis and process improvement surrounding one key process each within the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). Currently, the DNREC Subaqueous Permitting Prototype project for boat docking facilities is underway with active GEAR Program Management Team support, while DelDOT's prototype focused on regulatory review to achieve efficiencies. The DNREC prototype has delivered process efficiencies to date and is slated to deliver substantial improvements based on prototype project efforts early in calendar year 2026. DelDOT's prototype was followed by two SEBs that continue to implement the identified efficiencies for the Traffic Impact Study and Record/Entrance Plan processes, all of which are detailed in this report.

Incentivize Continuous Improvement Outcomes with GEAR P3 Awards – The GEAR P3 Taskforce was created in 2018 to promote private sector engagement in State government activities. The founder and CEO of The

Precisionists, Inc. is a member of the GEAR Board and chairperson of the Taskforce. The Taskforce leveraged the GEAR/DHR partnership to establish the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency and Trailblazer Awards as apex awards within the Governor's Team Excellence Award program. These awards recognize and directly incentivize State employees who successfully implement high-impact initiatives that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of State processes, programs, and services. The annual financial commitment to the awards is funded by $25,000 from the private sector, with a matching $25,000 from the State. In award year 2024, two GEAR P3 Trailblazer and two GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award winners were recognized through this program. The Trailblazer awards were provided to the Department of Transportation's Trap Pond Dam Spillway Repair and DELLA AI-Powered Chatbot Customer Service projects. The Innovation and Efficiency awards were provided to the Department of Education's Combatting Delaware's Teacher Shortage, and the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families' Record Retention Schedule project teams.

III. Enterprise Services Delivery Team (ESD)

Plan for Replacement of Enterprise-Wide Computer Applications - The State's enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems – the Financial Management & Accounting; Payroll, Human Resources, Benefits & Time Administration; and Pension Administration systems - will reach end-of-life in the coming years. Significant upgrades or modifications for these systems have not occurred in several years and will not occur again in their current state. This leaves the solutions outdated, falling short of meeting the State's financial reporting requirements, and offers minimal enhancements for a mobile workforce. In addition, due to numerous customizations, support for the current systems requires a specialized workforce and additional cost to maintain. To ensure the continuity of State operations, the ERP Modernization Project, which encompasses all State ERP systems, including DHR's learning management, recruitment, onboarding/offboarding, and employee/labor relations case management components, was initiated in June 2022. To date, the State has appropriated $112.5 million toward this major initiative with $25 million in both the Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 bond bills, $12.5 million in the Fiscal Year 2025 bond bill, and $50 million in the Fiscal Year 2026 bond bill.

Implement Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS) – The Delaware Department of Finance, Division of Revenue (DOR) had been using a tax processing system that was more than 30 years old, mainframe based and consisted of over 100 client server applications. The new IRAS system implementation is fully modernizing DOR's processing systems to create a web-based, real-time, and integrated user experience that automates processing capabilities, optimizes the efficiency and effectiveness of DOR staff, and strengthens security and internal controls. IRAS improves DOR's ability to mitigate fraud and will increase revenue with new audit programs and better technology to assist with the collection of delinquent taxes. The project is being implemented in three releases, each release addressing a specific tax or set of taxes. The third and final release was implemented in October 2025. As of this time, all taxes administered by DOR are fully implemented in the IRAS system and it will retire the 30-year mainframe system. This final release will include enhanced audit workpaper tools, an audit data warehouse to automate audit programs and enhanced audit selection and will retire all applications from the traditional website and move those functions to DOR's secure tax portal.

Streamline Financial Services Workloads, Payment Flows, and Training – State organizations are responsible for preparing financial transactions and their associated documents in a timely manner, in proper sequence, and in accordance with established procedures in the State's Budget and Accounting Policy Manual (BAM). The after-the-fact waiver request application process was streamlined to reduce the numbers of these requests that needed the approval of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Secretary of Finance. Their workload has been reduced as much as 76 percent, however, in recent years the numbers of requests for cabinet secretary approval have been creeping upwards. Though increasing, the numbers of requests are still well below those prior to streamlining the approval process. The combined total annual spending for the State's credit card program (PCard) and the Single-Use Account program for vendor payments for Calendar Year 2024: PCard spending was $186.2 million with a rebate of $3.5 million. The current PCard contract was extended through December 2026. An RFP is currently in process to review PCard partnership options and contract with a vendor beyond 2026. A subcommittee to develop an Accounting 201 course has been launched. This will be an extension of an introductory Accounting 101 course that is currently offered. Another subcommittee was launched to review and discuss potential enhancements for the Budget and Accounting course that is currently offered.

Lower Lease Costs and Restructure Lease Program - The Office of Management and Budget/Division of Facilities Management (OMB/DFM) Real Property Management Program covers 123 leases and approximately 1.8 million square feet of rented space occupied by various State of Delaware agencies, costing $34.5 million annually. To date, OMB/DFM lease restructurings have resulted in more than $35.9 million in hard dollar rent savings and more than $10 million in soft dollar rent savings (paint, carpeting, etc.) over the life of the renegotiated and extended leases. On average, reconstructed leases have been extended 10 years with approximate hard dollar rent savings of $3.1 million and soft dollar savings of $1.3 million annually. The program will continue to expand to encompass all real property utilized by the State.

Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) Service Efficiency Blitz. The PLUS process provides preliminary information for coordinated land use development of a certain size and scale across Delaware that ideally positions the customer for a streamlined experience to obtain their necessary permits from State and local government. In June 2025, a Service Efficiency Blitz (SEB) led by the GEAR program management team, the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC), and other State agency partners reexamined the customer journey, focusing on developer and local government needs. The effort and resulting actions align with the Governor's priorities on streamlined permitting and affordable housing resulting in an overall process reduction of at least five business days and a 20 percent reduction in the overall application time for customers.

Inventory State Land – In July of 2025 the State Land Inventory Management System (SLIM) was launched. This transformative initiative—born out of the GEAR program—represents a major step forward in promoting transparency, operational excellence, and a culture of continuous improvement across Delaware's state government. SLIM is a first-of-its-kind, centralized solution for how state government inventories and manages state-owned land assets across multiple agencies.

Improve Data Integration and Mapping – FirstMap is the State's enterprise Geographic Information System (GIS), but it is not used uniformly by State agencies. The Department of Technology and Information's (DTI) FirstMap team has worked diligently to restructure this repository and has completed the "FirstMap 2" delivery, which includes improved tools and features. The goal of this repository is to provide the mechanism for all State agencies to use a single, authoritative source of geospatial data. This will be economically advantageous for the State to provide one uniform data set for all agencies to use, while ensuring access to necessary information. Leveraging this data will provide essential information for long-range planning for various applications. In the FY 2025 State operating budget, OMB received funding to begin a regular update cycle for all base GIS data, including aerial imagery, land use/land cover, and LiDAR (elevation data). In 2025 the State utilized these funds to conduct an RFP and select a vendor to collect the next round of aerial imagery and land use/land cover data in early 2026. The contract allows for some enhanced imagery collection to serve the needs of a wider variety of users in the future. This will ensure that the State's agencies, local governments, and the entire GIS user community is using up to date and accurate data.

Centralize and Modernize the Delivery of Human Resources Services – DHR remains committed to promoting integrity, efficiency, transparency, and collaboration in addressing critical issues affecting the State's workforce. Enhancing efficiency, consistency, and overall effectiveness in delivering services to the State's most valuable resource—its employees—is essential. In 2025, DHR continued to centralize expertise, leveraging successes from previously decentralized functions to strategically enhance workforce development, service efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality.

Drive Leadership Training Opportunities – In Fiscal Year 2024, the First State Quality Improvement Fund (FSQIF), managed by DHR in partnership with GEAR, supported the implementation of 1) Project and Process Leadership training, focusing on the people side of leadership skills crucial for fostering collaboration, driving innovation, and achieving goals, 2) Operational Excellence (OpEx) Program, designed to provide specialized skills to existing practitioners through certificate programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials in agile, applied project management, business analysis, or Lean Six Sigma, and 3) continuation of the two annual cohorts of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) Program training. In Fiscal Year 2025, 28 participants enrolled in Project and Process Leadership, 10 in the OpEx program, and 38 in the CIP program, bringing the total number of CIP graduates to 155 since the program's inception.

Expand Employee Recognition – DHR manages the Statewide Recognition Awards Program, which honors exceptional state employees through several awards. These include the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service, recognizing individual employees or small groups for exemplary service; the Delaware Award for Heroism, which honors acts of bravery; and the Governor's Team Excellence Award Program.

The latter includes the GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award for teams of six or more, the Champion Award, and the GEAR-P3 Trailblazer Award for individuals or small teams of two to five members leading continuous improvement efforts. The GEAR P3 Awards were created in partnership with the GEAR P3 Taskforce, with public and private sector representatives involved in the selection process. These awards include monetary incentives jointly funded by the State and private sector partners. In 2025, two teams received the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award, each receiving a $15,000 prize shared among team members, while six individuals were recognized with the Trailblazer Award, with each individual receiving $1,500. In addition, ten State employees were selected as recipients of the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service, seven employees for the Delaware Award for Heroism, and three teams were selected for the Governor's Team Excellence Champions award.

Promote Respectful Workplaces – As Delaware's largest employer, the State of Delaware remains steadfast in its dedication to advancing a workplace environment characterized by collaboration, trust, integrity, fairness, diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility. In support of these initiatives, the Talent Management section began updating statewide policies and procedures to facilitate broader accessibility. The Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy surveyed HR Business Partners on existing lactation spaces and redistributed guidance related to lactation in the workplace, hosted a seven-part webinar series focused on women's health. It continued to support a programming workgroup of women employees. DHR worked to bridge gaps in support of applicants with disabilities by developing improved processes for requesting reasonable accommodations as part of the recruitment and hiring process. The Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) / People and Culture (P&C) continues to engage proactively with state agencies through their employee-led committees to advance diversity and inclusivity initiatives. In 2025, DHR hosted a Leadership Development Institute focused on cultivating inclusive leadership among managers and supervisors across Executive Branch agencies. The institute attracted 412 online participants and 200 in-person attendees; during the final week of registration, an additional 70 individuals enrolled. Additionally, DHR provided ten internal training sessions, and two external partnership programs aimed at increasing awareness, fostering understanding, and promoting an inclusive workplace environment statewide. DHR Training and HR Solutions drafted the State's first ethics training policy in coordination with the Public Integrity Commission (PIC) and continues to coordinate delivery of the Statewide Workplace Wellness training program with monthly topics for employees focused on living and working well. The program is a centralized approach to training delivery for the benefit of state employees.

Contain Health Care Cost Growth – As health care costs continue to increase, DHR's Statewide Benefits Office (SBO), under the guidance of the State Employee Benefits Committee (SEBC), continues to develop strategies to engage Group Health Insurance Plan (GHIP) members to contain the State's health care costs for employees, retirees, pensioners, and their dependents. To ensure the financial stability of the Group Health Fund and prevent future double digit rate increases, the SEBC approved a 4.2 percent increase in State health plan premiums (rates) which were effective July 1, 2025, for active employees and non-Medicare retirees and are effective January 1, 2026, for Medicare retirees. The State is projecting to close Fiscal Year 2025 with an ending cash balance of $70.8 million to the Group Health Fund and a surplus of $38.9 million after reserves. The SEBC is exploring the implementation of a smoothing approach to stabilize health plan premium increases over a three-to-four-year period as opposed to reviewing and approving premium rates on an annual basis. The State continues to review and adopt strategies to offer programs that manage and prevent the development and worsening of chronic conditions while also focusing on engaging GHIP members through education and training to encourage them to become more responsible health care consumers.

Centralize Information Technology - In 2021, DTI refocused its strategy from an agency-by-agency information technology centralization (ITC) effort to concentrate on how best to deliver a highly secure, equitably provisioned computing environment. Development and implementation of the shared services cost model, in collaboration with OMB, reflecting the total cost of ownership of IT service towers (groupings of services used by agencies, such as email, Internet, telephone, and data security), is crucial to moving ITC forward. Secure End User Services (SEUS) is part of a new shared services cost model which supports ITC. Under the SEUS subscription model, costs are based on a per-user annual consumption rate, tied to a service agreement. At the time of this report, Fiscal Year 2026 SEUS Terms of Service for partner agencies have been put in place and monthly billing per the shared services cost model for Fiscal Year 2026 is underway.

Deliver Digital Government (*Go DE*) – Delaware is rapidly moving toward a user-centric digital government strategy that delivers a consistent and intuitive user experience. Many government services are accessible online – and many others should be – allowing resident and visitor access anytime, from anywhere, and on any device.

Delaware has implemented a single sign-on solution with identity proofing to facilitate a single point of entry for digital State services. A State standard payment engine, Pay with *Go DE*, now facilitates transactions and provides consumers with transaction history and payment preference options. Delaware has also embarked on a larger initiative to create a resident and visitor portal, branded under the broader *Go DE* umbrella, for the public to use the State's various digital government services under authenticated identities.

Streamline Through CASCADE – The CASCADE (Centralized, Accessible, Secure, Configurable, Agile, Digital, Evolutionary) Initiative is the Judicial Branches' large scale modernization effort, spanning civil and criminal IT solutions across all courts statewide. The initiative has been underway for several years, following an extensive RFP and discovery process. Civil efforts kicked off in July of 2024, with Phase 1 scheduled for completion in October of 2026 and Phase 2 completing in fourth quarter of 2028. Criminal efforts also kicked off in parallel in July of 2024, but long-term solutions remain tied to the Criminal Justice Systems Evaluation Committee and a Delaware-wide plan for Criminal Modernization which is under development.

Evaluate Criminal Justice Data Systems - The Criminal Justice Systems Evaluation Committee was established in September 2023 to review existing data and communication systems throughout the State of Delaware criminal justice information systems, including a "review of the possibilities of interconnection between systems, a review of policies that affect sharing of information between affected entities, and to make recommendations regarding the feasibility to improve systems capabilities, interconnection, communication, and continuous improvements." The committee has completed an internal review and developed a proposal for the modernization of Delaware's criminal justice data systems. Since the proposal was submitted, questions and concerns have arisen from Committee members regarding the scope of the project, and conversations are taking place with both Executive Branch and Legislative Branch leaders to determine appropriate next steps.

Reduce Debt Burden for Ex-Offenders – The Judicial Branch has worked with the other branches of government and the community on reform efforts to ensure a fair system for those who are unable to pay their debts, with the goal of helping people exit the criminal justice system and lead the most productive lives possible. A large amount of criminal justice debt only causes additional hardship. The Judicial Branch has reported fee reform successes over the past several years, including the elimination of numerous fees and the updated policies to write-off aged debt.

Comply with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) - By analyzing agencies' current business processes for handling credit and debit payments, the Office of State Treasurer (OST) Merchant Services team is actively mitigating and reducing information technology (IT) and operational payment system vulnerabilities across agencies. OST's primary strategy for ensuring PCI DSS compliance among all agency merchants is to minimize the scope of their payment environments. This is achieved by providing Point-to-Point Encrypted (P2PE) payment devices for in-person transactions and vendor-hosted online payment pages with secure checkout environments. Key outcomes include the establishment of an annual training program, ongoing workshops to guide agencies on proper compliance attestation, quarterly internal and external IT system scans, and the formalization of a State PCI DSS policy. The deadline for all State agency merchants to attest PCI DSS compliance was December 31, 2024, and the State successfully met this goal.

Implementation of a Treasury Management System - The Office of the State Treasurer is undertaking a project to implement a cloud-based treasury management system that will modernize and streamline the agency's cash position, cash flow forecasting, and other treasury related operations. This comprehensive solution will replace many manual processes by providing a simplified, automated online platform for managing cash positions, electronic funds transfers, liquidity and cash flow forecasting, bank connectivity, debt, investments, and collateral. By automating these activities, the project will significantly improve accuracy and reduce human error.

IV. GEAR Field Team (GFT)

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES (DHSS)

Redesign Service Delivery and Improve Client Experiences at State Service Centers – DHSS operates 15 state service centers in Delaware. At a state service center, residents can apply for many benefits, such as food assistance, cash benefits, health care, and housing. The structure and operation of the centers has not been reviewed recently, and there are opportunities to improve the service delivery model. All work processes were documented between 2022 and 2024. Efforts are currently underway to ensure that all processes are performed uniformly at each service center. Additional enhancements to improve service delivery across state service centers include the installation of a new automated client queuing system, improvements to the automated telephone voice system, improvements to the front desk experience, and an enhanced website for clients. This project will continue to implement improvements across state service centers consistent with project management methodology.

Employ Data-Driven Decision Making by Using a Department-Wide Dashboard – Comprised of ten divisions, DHSS is the largest department in the State with a wide range of services delivered, from psychiatric care to distributing food benefits to providing animal control. Historically, there has not been a single data source that leadership could leverage for data driven decision making. This project established a centralized dashboard showing a range of key performance indicators (KPIs)—meaningful and measurable data points—from every division. The DHSS dashboard tracks every division's monthly KPIs, aggregates the data and extracts the information into easy-to-understand charts and graphs to guide senior leadership's decision making.

Save Over $5 Million Dollars by Identifying and Eliminating Underutilized Blocked Vehicles – The DHSS Planning Unit reviews the number of blocked (reserved for department use) State Fleet vehicles to determine if there is an optimal and more cost-effective number of vehicles to be held for the department's use. Based on utilization data, a DHSS project manager conducts a monthly analysis of the blocked Fleet vehicles assigned to the department. This analysis includes the identification of all blocked vehicles, and a review of those vehicles considered underused. A calculation is performed to quantify the cost of those underused blocked vehicles. Every month, the results of the analysis are distributed to Department leaders to be used as the foundation for conversations with division directors surrounding the potential to reduce their complement of assigned vehicles. Since the project inception in January 2021, DHSS has reduced the number of blocked vehicles by 111. That translates to an estimated seven-year savings (the average life of a Fleet vehicle) of $5,268,837.

Employ Hybrid Project Management Approach to replace the FACMAINT Application - The Division of Health Care Quality (DHCQ) is currently using an in-house developed facility licensing system called FACMAINT for managing and renewing licenses for long term care facilities. FACMAINT uses Windows 10 to operate and is incompatible with Windows 11. Attempts to upgrade FACMAINT have been unachievable, thus triggering the need to find a replacement. The project to sunset FACMAINT and install its successor application is underway. The project will use a hybrid approach, as the key project components will be delivered incrementally, and not solely at the project's conclusion.

Improve Access to Long-Term Services & Supports Through Strategic Resource Usage – The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) is carrying out strategic efforts to ensure timely access to community-based long-term care services and supports by improving efficiency and reducing the cost-of-service provision. Through consultation with national experts in the field of aging and disabilities, DSAAPD has developed a multi-tiered action plan to infuse person-centered practices in its work, ensuring services meet the goals and needs of older adults and persons with physical disabilities while being provided from the most appropriate funding source. Estimated savings to the State are over $5 million. The anticipated quantifiable outcomes of this plan include reduced cost, enhanced value, and improved customer outcomes.

Implement Inter Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) Home & Community Based Assessment - The Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) is actively working to modernize services to improve efficiency of operations while establishing a strong infrastructure to support the individuals served in the community. The result will improve the division's ability to address waiting lists for services and ensure the appropriate funding source for home and community-based services. Implementation of the InterRAI Check-Up Assessment will provide a person-centered, data-driven process that will determine eligibility and establish service packages by offering input on care planning, case mix classification, outcome measurement for quality management, and participant safety. The Check-Up Assessment provides algorithms that will help DSAAPD Case Managers by flagging care needs. DSAAPD's partners will also provide train-the-trainer services, ensuring the long-term success of this initiative.

Partner for Healthy Aging through Senior Centers – The Delaware Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities has partnered with 22 senior centers across Delaware to support healthy aging programs. This partnership has allowed senior centers to identify what healthy aging looks like in their communities, and to implement programming to best support older Delawareans. This program has allowed centers to provide transportation, health and wellness, nutrition, and other community services that promote healthy lifestyle choices to further healthy aging and serve active older adults. For this effort, the Division has engaged with the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) in the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy and Administration (Biden School) and the Department of Health Behavior and Nutrition Sciences (HBNS) in the College of Health Sciences at the University of Delaware (UD). In early 2025, the Division posted a Request for Proposals for another grant opportunity based on the success of the partnerships that took place with Delaware senior centers. As a result of the RFP, the Division has granted 13 Senior Centers funding to implement or continue programming that best supports older Delawareans.

Review Longitudinal National Core Indicators for Aging and Disability - The Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) and the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) collaborate biennially on the National Core Indicators Aging & Disabilities project. This consumer survey provides both divisions with valuable data regarding the impact of their programming on participants' quality of life. Beginning this year, DSAAPD's data team will consolidate the survey's findings over the years for both divisions to identify potential opportunities for development and increased collaboration. DSAAPD received this year's survey responses, and its data team is currently coding and processing the results. Once the data team has completed its analysis, any longitudinal insights learned will be shared with DSAAPD leadership as well as our partners at DMMA.

Centralize Statewide Physical Supports for Aging in Place - The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities is disbursing $3.5 million of awarded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to address the current needs for home, vehicular, and assistive technology supports. With these ARPA funds, DSAAPD has procured seven service providers to participate in this initiative.

Launch Sussex Blue Zones Ignite Phase I - The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities is working with the organization Blue Zones to complete an assessment to determine how to make select communities within Sussex County a healthier place to live, work, grow up, and grow old. The first phase of a Blue Zones community transformation is an assessment and feasibility analysis where experts collaborate with community leaders to assess readiness and build a plan for change. During this period, Blue Zones evaluates the communities' current state of well-being, identifies the highest priority strengths, challenges and opportunities, educates and mobilizes local leaders and residents, and produces a plan for transformation.

Utilize Certified Peer Recovery Specialists in Long Term Care – To meet the specialized psychiatric needs of residents at Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI), DSAAPD partnered with the Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health (DSAMH) to develop the Peer Services Liaison Program starting in 2023. In 2024, the first Certified Peer Recovery Specialist began working on-site full-time. The team continues to collaborate to ensure that a structure exists to maximize efficiency and utilize resources appropriately while establishing this new program.

Ensure Therapeutic Programming in Secure Dementia Care – Individuals with dementia often reach a point where continuous supervision is necessary for safety and well-being. Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI) is one of many facilities in the state with a secured dementia unit. DHCI is undertaking an initiative to ensure that appropriate therapeutic programming is in place to meet the psychosocial needs of residents with dementia.

Expand the Connect Community at DHCI – Loneliness has long been recognized as a crucial social determinant of health and is an area of specific concern for residents of long-term care (LTC) facilities, due to the high risk of loneliness combined with complex chronic health issues. DHCI is taking steps to deliberately foster relationships and prevent loneliness in residents by establishing the Connect Community, which is built on the creative use of existing resources. To date, over 120 volunteers have recorded more than 860 visits with DHCI residents. These social connections have the potential to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs, while also increasing staff satisfaction and retention - a true win-win.

Partner with Vendor to Develop a New Learning Management System- The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) uses a centralized case management system for its community programs. Currently, all new DSAAPD community staff members are trained by a single DSAAPD trainer on the use of this complex system. Follow-up training is completed by coworkers when needed. This results in inconsistencies in training, and limits retraining opportunities. DSAAPD's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) unit has partnered with the vendor to overhaul this training process. Once this project is complete, most training will be completed online with interactive video lessons. In addition to reducing the workload burden of training new hires, this will enable on-demand retraining on specific workflows whenever needed and standardize training of all new hires.

Implement the Substance Use Disorder Transitional Case Management (SUD-TCM) - The goal of the new SUD-TCM program is to support clients during the transition from one care setting to another. The program aims to prevent readmissions to detox, medical hospitals, and/or psychiatric hospitals; improve client outcomes; reduce healthcare costs; enhance continuity of care; promote client self-management; and support the client and family needs. The SUD care navigators serve individuals 18 years and older who are uninsured and underinsured, diagnosed with a primary substance use disorder, and are transitioning from detox and residential treatment levels of care. Our navigators use a one-to-one, person-centered approach with clients to ensure they can navigate from one level of care to the next.

Grow the Recovery Friendly Workplace-Restaurant/Construction Accolades Program - DSAMH supports several overdose response strategies tailored to specific workforce industries to include the Restaurant Accolades program and the Construction Accolades program. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified restaurants and the hospitality industry as one of the industries whose workforce has a high incidence of overdose. The Restaurant Accolade Program assists the restaurant industry with addressing the drug overdose crisis. This initiative equips restaurant employees with knowledge, skills, and resources (such as Narcan® kits) to reduce deaths. State-level studies have found that construction workers are six to seven times more likely to die from an opioid overdose than workers in other professions. The Construction Accolade Program was developed to address the high incidence of overdose deaths in the construction industry.

Foster Low Barrier Wound Care and Nurse Care Management - The DSAMH Bridge Clinics and Encampment Teams low barrier wound care program provides wound care, education and wound care kits to the community. The DSAMH RN wound care outreach nurses treat wounds in a variety of settings including clinics, RVs, or encampments. The encampment and post-overdose response teams provide education and self-care supplies to unhoused individuals to help prevent return to the hospital by preventing infections and promoting healing. At this time 80 percent consented wound care clients have not returned to the Emergency Department, Hospital or Urgent Care.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DDA)

Optimize a Delaware Farm Lending Program – The Department of Agriculture and Department of State's Division of Small Business, are working together to repurpose an existing, underutilized irrigation finance program to create the Delaware Agricultural Finance Program which will more broadly serve the needs of farmers. Existing revolving loan funds were reauthorized to fund the new program. The new program takes advantage of existing finance knowledge and authority housed at the Division of Small Business and the Delaware Economic Development Authority, requiring far less administrative overhead than creating a new agricultural finance authority. The new program provides loans for agricultural equipment, up to 50 percent of costs, at a fixed low interest rate with favorable repayment terms. In addition, it offers lower interest rates to beginning farmers and the aquaculture industry to support priority areas of State focus. Applications to the new program started on September 3, 2024.

Strengthen Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program with Digital Payments - DDA was awarded a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant in 2018 to aid income-eligible seniors (age 60+) to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey directly from Delaware farmers at farmers markets and farm stands. Initially, the program utilized a paper voucher system which required a great deal of manual work with a contracted bank to sort payments from DDA and the farmers. In 2022, the USDA made American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding available to transition from the paper vouchers to digital payments. DDA, in tandem with the Department of Health and Social Services which operates a parallel initiative through the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, researched available options and chose a contractor to operate a QR-code based electronic payment system beginning with the 2023 program. After implementation, the program achieved a 10 percent increase in usage in the first year along with other benefits. In 2024, program usage increased again.

Align Employee Recognition with Agency Goals and Continuous Improvement - The DDA is rebooting its employee recognition program with a new award structure intended to celebrate contributions employees make toward the success of DDA and Delaware Agriculture. We want to increase our recognition for work that makes a lasting difference through dedication to constituents, continuous improvement, and collaboration. We also made changes to the awards and annual timeline to improve the pathway for DDA staff to be nominated for statewide recognition programs. Response to the new program has been positive.

Streamline the Aglands Application Process – The Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) is modernizing the Aglands Preservation Program's application process to reduce redundancies and improve efficiency. Historically, applications were submitted as paper forms via mail, reflecting the needs of a demographic less familiar with digital tools. In recent years, a growing number of applicants have opted to scan, and email completed forms, signaling greater digital literacy. In response, DDA launched an initiative in January 2024 to transition to an online fillable form, significantly reducing the time required to digitize handwritten applications and streamlining internal processing.

Improve Efficiency for Staff – DDA is overhauling outdated staff workflows to align with modern office practices. The program previously relied heavily on paper files, informal communication, and dispersed digital tools. To improve accountability and reduce duplication, paper files for completed easement projects are being archived and removed, a Kanban board has been installed to support task tracking, and shared web applications have been consolidated into a centralized platform. Staff training is under development, and early results suggest these changes are improving operational efficiency and positioning the program for more data-informed decision-making.

Develop Employee Satisfaction Metrics – Since its founding in 1992, the Aglands Preservation Program has operated with a small team—currently six staff members, plus a liaison from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Historically, limited attention was given to employee engagement, and no formal metrics existed to gauge satisfaction. In 2024, the program implemented a six-question engagement survey based on widely accepted indicators to establish a baseline and guide future improvements in workplace culture and staff retention.

Provide Transparency and Efficiency for the Public through an Online Portal – Public-facing web applications that share Aglands data were historically fragmented and underutilized, partly due to the absence of user guidance. To address these challenges, DDA consolidated all relevant tools into a single online portal and developed a user guide to support navigation and interpretation. Application usage will be tracked and compared to baseline data to evaluate the impact of these improvements on public engagement. DDA assessed available options and chose a contractor to operate a QR-code based electronic payment system beginning with the 2023 program. After implementation, the program achieved a 10 percent increase in usage along with other benefits.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL (DNREC)

Modernize Online Services – DNREC continues to transform legacy applications, manual permit, license, and registration processes to better serve customers and improve efficiency. The Digital DNREC ePermitting portal continues to expand as DNREC adds more online permits, licenses, registrations, and provides continuing education. In addition, the Digital DNREC team is working closely with the Delaware Digital Government project team as an early adopter for the new *Go DE* portal.

Implement the Ready in 6 (Ri6) DNREC Subaqueous Permitting Improvement Prototype - The DNREC Division of Water is developing a prototype to improve the processes associated with boat docking facilities on private and public subaqueous lands. This initiative is based on insights from a consulting report sponsored by the Delaware Business Roundtable known as Ri6. The Ri6 report along with supplemental survey data from GEAR, assessed the time taken by government agencies to issue various business permits. The project employs a 3-phased approach to analyze current processes, define future states, and recommend and pilot solutions to boost efficiency, reduce backlogs, improve response times, enhance process visibility and consistency, improve predictability, and enhance engagement with stakeholders and customers of the process. Ultimately, this prototype aims to offer valuable insights for further permitting process improvements within DNREC including the ongoing e-permitting initiative. Overall, the project team has made considerable progress over the prior year having completed current state mapping, implementing a variety of standardized work templates, engaged in data cleanup, and is aimed to deliver significant process efficiencies by the end of the calendar year.

Improve Chemical Inventory Reporting in Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) Program – The Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances (Waste) Emergency Response and Strategic Services Section EPCRA Program is carrying out strategic efforts to improve the timely submission of accurate chemical inventory reports by facilities through training workshops and concurrent report review process. In 2024, the program received roughly 98 percent of EPCRA reports by the due date of March 1st compared to ~95 percent in 2023 and ~90 percent in past years. Continuous follow up with delinquent facilities increased submission of EPCRA reports to ~99 percent by May 2024.

Streamline the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program Through Third Party Administration - The Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy (CCE) Climate and Sustainability section manages the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program which provides incentives for Delawareans and Delaware businesses to buy or lease new battery electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. CCE partnered with a third-party to support administration of the program thereby redirecting approximately 30 percent of staff efforts toward other initiatives. Since the program has been administered by the third-party, the anticipated rebate applications have increased from approximately 900 to 1800 over the past year. Recently, the program was updated to include a used EV rebate and higher rebate amounts for lower-priced vehicles. These changes aim to distribute the funds more equitably and expand the program's reach.

Improve Stakeholder Communication in Remediation – The Remediation Section of the Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances is streamlining the current internal response to external inquiries related to the Remediation Section's program process. The remediation section experiences inconsistent response times to external stakeholders' inquiries as well as duplication of staff efforts. The anticipated quantifiable process improvement and customer outcomes of this project include a 50 percent decrease in response time to external stakeholder inquiries and 50 percent reduction in staff time dedicated to these efforts. The section estimates a savings of $250,000 annually once efficiencies are generated. Over the past year, this section experienced considerable turnover and focused on subprocess improvements with the implementation phase of the pilot project now underway.

Track Online Permitting through an External Dashboard - The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), through its Division of Water, has launched a new online permit tracking dashboard aimed at improving transparency, efficiency, and public access to environmental permitting information. This initiative aligns with DNREC's broader modernization strategy and reflects a commitment to responsive, data-driven service delivery. At launch, the dashboard includes tracking for Class H wastewater and disposal system inspections, septic system site evaluations, septic permits, well permits, and Wetlands and Waterways Section permits. Plans are underway to expand the dashboard to include additional permit types such as Letters of Authorization, Statewide Activity Approvals, Water Quality Certifications, and Subaqueous Permits. In conjunction with the dashboard rollout, the Division of Water has also created a centralized Digital Resources webpage, designed to house all publicly available digital tools in one location. This hub simplifies access to permitting systems, data platforms, and other online services.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE (DOS)

Grow Delaware Communities of Excellence: Year 5 – Governor Meyer has declared a Literacy Emergency in Delaware as a top priority for his administration. Forty-one percent of Delaware students were proficient in English Language Arts in the 2023-2024 school year, and 20 percent of Delaware adults read below a third grade reading level. Delaware Communities of Excellence's goal is e*quity through literacy,* and established the Delaware Literacy Alliance, a collaborative of all State agencies and non-profit organizations that support literacy to produce a statewide literacy ecosystem across the lifespan. During Fiscal Year 2025, the Delaware Literacy Alliance continued increasing public awareness of the issue by launching its website, delawareliteracyalliance.org and building out its internal infrastructure, while its subcommittees coordinated early learning, adult literacy, and health literacy activities.

Install Radio Frequency Identification Infrastructure in Delaware Libraries – Book circulation (check-in and check-out) and inventories are time and resource intensive activities at Delaware's libraries. Starting in 2022, public libraries' collections and Delaware Library Catalog participating school libraries' collections have been tagged with radio frequency identification (RFID) tags and scanning/self-check equipment to reduce the time needed to check items in and out, as well as perform inventories. The project's goal is to improve the technology infrastructure. Where libraries' collection items are tagged, staff are trained to effectively use the scanning equipment, with self-checkout available to patrons. Participating public libraries are fully functional with new materials tagged as acquired. School libraries' collections are tagged, and equipment installed as they join the Delaware Library Catalog. Staff, patrons, and students are adopting the new circulation and inventory processes, leading to improved productivity.

Integrate School Libraries into the Delaware Library Catalog and Consortium – School age children need access to an abundance of current books to support literacy and learning. School libraries struggle to keep their collections up to date and relevant. In 2016 the Division of Libraries began a successful pilot project with Colonial School District libraries to join the Delaware Library Catalog and expand their students' access to current materials. After seeing proof of concept, other school libraries began to join. Starting in Fiscal Year 2023 the Division received

State funding for school library integration into the catalog and to update school library book collections. This work is augmented by a funding incentive for school libraries to join the Delaware Library Catalog using $1.9 million in congressionally appropriated federal funds available between 2025 and 2027 to upgrade school library collections. This overall effort provides equity and bridges the “last mile” to books for children who do not typically access their local public libraries, as well as creates efficiencies by enabling improved circulation of new books.

Innovate Social Services in Delaware Libraries - Delaware Libraries have a long history of leveraging the statewide library technology and facilities infrastructure, supported by a robust partnership network, to meet the evolving needs of the community. Delaware Libraries support individuals and communities in achieving their full potential. The Delaware Libraries Social Innovation Team meets Delawareans in times of need, is well positioned to help bridge gaps in state-provided services as well as to recognize where systems may be broken. Specialists in Delaware libraries had 3,647 interactions on employment, social service assistance, and entrepreneurship topics in Fiscal Year 2025.

DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES (DSCYF)

Align PCard Guidelines & Repayment – DSCYF has many PCard (the State’s purchasing credit card) users across its four divisions. The Fiscal Accounting Services (FAS) unit had struggled to reconcile an acceptable percentage of PCard transactions, due to employee cardholders failing to document or substantiate their charges. FAS identified a need for a uniform set of instructions to be written, shared, and enforced across divisions. This project blossomed from a short document of simple instructions into an exhaustive set of PCard Guidelines which have now been converted into a required Delaware Learning Center (DLC) training, as well as a new PCard Repayment Form which has been successfully utilized to provide repayment to the State of Delaware by payroll deduction when and if all other avenues to reconciliation have been exhausted. DSCYF is pleased with progress as the second quarter of 2025 reconciliation rate is roughly 97 percent.

Evolve From One-Dimensional Reports to Interactive Data Dashboards - In summer 2024, DSCYF began transforming static front-end reports into interactive, program-specific dashboards to enhance data-driven decision making. By leveraging existing policies and procedures, the department systematically connected related reports and used a blueprint model to map data flow clearly and accurately. This transparent framework supports both developers and users in understanding where the data is coming from. To date, the department has successfully launched 11 dashboards, providing internal teams with dynamic tools to monitor performance, improve services, and make informed decisions.

Update the Continuity of Operation Planning (COOP) Process Life Cycle - The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families’ Division of Management Support Services (DMSS) sought to pilot the development of a long-term strategy to collect data related to the essential functions of each of its operating units, give staff the knowledge and tools to effectively respond in the event of an emergency, ensure updates are made so the DMSS Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) becomes a living document, and develop a project plan that can be leveraged to support the efforts of the other three divisions and the department. Using the ADKAR (Awareness-Desire-Knowledge-Ability-Reinforcement®) model for change management, the COOP Team crafted communications, designed templates and workshops, planned a future division-wide mock emergency exercise, and identified reinforcement strategies and tools that will be used to promote a culture of emergency preparedness. The team diligently collaborated with key internal stakeholders and focused on the development of a plan to ensure the agency can continue to fulfill its mission to engage families and communities to promote the safety and well-being of children through prevention, intervention, treatment, and rehabilitative services following an emergency.

Improve Investigation Timeliness Through Dedicated Initial Response Staffing - DSCYF identified that staffing vacancies in DFS were contributing to delayed initial response times, driven by increased backlogs and competing casework demands. To address this, a pilot was launched in Sussex County assigning dedicated staff to complete the initial response—focused solely on assessing child safety—before transferring the case to separate investigation staff. Early data indicates improved timeliness, and the model is now being expanded to Kent and New Castle Counties. This approach aims to support timely safety assessments, reduce investigation backlogs, and mitigate burnout by allowing staff to focus on one stage of the process at a time.

Develop the Pathway 1 Prevention Case Management Program - Following a department-wide Root Cause Analysis, the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) utilized a Plan-Do-Study-Act model to identify opportunities to strengthen coordination and proactively meet families’ needs before deeper system involvement is necessary. One key initiative launched in 2024 is Pathway 1, a prevention-focused program designed to connect families to appropriate resources following reports to the DFS Child Abuse Report Line. DFS receives approximately 25,000 reports annually, with 70 percent screened out due to not meeting criteria for a formal investigation—however, in these instances, many calls involve families experiencing significant stressors that could lead to future maltreatment. Recognizing this gap and in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Delaware, DFS secured funding through the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act to support community-based prevention efforts. DFS modeled Pathway 1 after Minnesota's Parent Support Outreach Program which uses clear diversion criteria and data-driven decision-making to provide voluntary, short-term case management to families with two or more stressors and no prior DFS involvement. Pathway 1 aims to serve up to 250 families annually, reduce future system involvement, and identify service gaps while strengthening family well-being upstream.

Improve the Timeliness of Provider Incident Reporting - The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF), as part of the effort to promote the safety and well-being of youth, requires contracted providers to submit an incident report whenever there is an adverse event affecting youth served by the Department. The Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS) reviews and monitors incident reporting for the youth it serves to ensure appropriate follow up, provider compliance with reporting requirements, and the provision of additional training or corrective action when needed. While reviewing the timeliness of incident reports, DPBHS observed that there were significant lags between initial notification of adverse events and the submission of the required written report. In response to stakeholder feedback about factors impacting timely reporting, DPBHS will, in FY26, analyze first-hand versus third-party reports to develop a more accurate timeliness metric—June 2025 data showed 90 percent compliance with the Department's 72-hour standard for providers to submit first-hand reports of incidents/adverse advents impacting clients —and will implement a leadership-approved performance improvement plan to identify barriers, support provider compliance, and improve overall timeliness of all reportable events.

Expand the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services' Quality Improvement Framework - In the 2020 five-year strategic plan for the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS), the division identified a primary goal for improving data-driven decision making. The division focused on creating additional mechanisms to allow the DPBHS leadership team to make decisions based on important data gathered across the division. Over the last few years and continuing into FY26, the agency has implemented or expanded various performance improvement processes, such as the establishment of key performance indicators across all operating units, development of a universal satisfaction survey for all client-serving units, and creation of a public-facing data dashboard and annual report. A range of targeted initiatives—such as the expansion of evidence-based practices—are now embedded within this larger performance improvement framework.

Obtain Customer Perspectives through Community Services Program Participant Interviews - In January 2025, the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services launched a revamped approach to obtaining feedback from community services program recipients. Previously, the division utilized an electronic survey that was sent via a text-based platform to families of youth receiving community services programming. Electronic surveys often resulted in low participation rates and little actionable feedback despite numerous outreach efforts and revisions to ensure validity. After discussion, research, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the division developed a new pathway to engage with families utilizing a structured case review and family interview process following community case closures. The primary goals of this approach are to increase participation of families and youth in the feedback process, and to obtain actionable feedback to inform service provision. The systematic approach implemented has resulted in a significant increase in family engagement and notable service delivery improvements.

Modernize Facility Safety with Real-Time Monitoring and Reporting - The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services is currently in the process of implementing a modern, technology supported solution across detention, level 4 residential facilities, and level 5 residential facilities to enhance the safety, security, and accountability of facility operations. This system, supported by the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) and used across multiple State agencies, replaces outdated manual tracking methods with real-time electronic documentation of staff safety checks and facility rounds. The enhanced system ensures consistent and verifiable staff presence, contributing to increased accountability and improved child safety.

Update the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services' (PBH) Records Retention Schedule - The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families approved a crucial update to the Delaware Public Archive's retention schedule for the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health. This initiative identified 900 boxes of business records eligible for destruction, resulting in a projected annual cost savings of $540,000 for the State of Delaware. The team collaborated with the Delaware Public Archives and the DSCYF Deputy Attorney General to implement these changes. Their work reflects lean thinking principles, optimizing state resources while maintaining compliance with best practices. The framework used by this team is now being applied to other DSCYF divisions, and its success has other State agencies looking to collaborate on similar projects. This team was nominated for and received the 2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to their achievements in implementing this efficiency project that resulted in tangible savings to their department.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION (DOC)

Enhance Employee Wellbeing, Recruitment and Retention through DOCares – In alignment with its ongoing commitment to employee well-being, the Department of Correction (DOC) prioritized wellness initiatives by implementing programs informed by agencywide surveys conducted in 2023 and 2024. Input was solicited from stakeholders across all levels of the organization to ensure that the strategies developed were responsive and effective in addressing the diverse needs of staff. This collaborative, team-driven approach led to measurable outcomes, including increased recruitment, a reduction in staff "freezing" - where correctional staff are required to stay beyond their normally scheduled shifts, and the expansion of wellness resources. These efforts reflect the Department's dedication to enhancing employee satisfaction and promoting a healthier work-life balance.

Assess Financial Liability Reform - In September of 2024, DOC established a project that focused on reforming financial obligations imposed on its Level 4 offenders that require them to pay room and board fees at its work release facilities. The project continues to work towards determining if these collections add value to the overall mission of the DOC to promote successful reentry for offenders.

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DelDOT)

Improve Land Use Permitting Processes – In 2025, the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), in partnership with GEAR team members, executed two Service Efficiency Blitzes (SEBs) targeting key permitting processes: the Traffic Impact Study (TIS)/Traffic Operational Analysis (TOA) and the Record and Entrance Plan reviews. The TIS SEB streamlined workflows and introduced new templates, with savings to yield an estimated $112,500 annually. The Record and Entrance Plan SEB introduced a "recheck lane" and streamlined peer review pathway, that is estimated to generate approximately $992,250 in annual savings by eliminating over 13,000 hours of non-value added rework. Both projects directly support the Ready in Six initiative and Delaware's broader goal of fostering affordable housing and economic growth through more predictable and efficient permitting processes.

Engineer and Repair the Trap Pond Dam Spillway – This project focused on the efficient mobilization of resources and emergency repair of the Trap Pond Dam Spillway following a critical failure and sinkhole formation. Through rapid mobilization, Lean principles, and cross-agency coordination, this project was completed the project in record time, saving the State hundreds of thousands of dollars. A structured approach was utilized, including innovative design solutions, rigorous cost analysis, and transparent communication, ensuring efficiency without compromising quality. The project not only restored the dam's functionality but also established a best-practice model for future infrastructure emergencies. The lead engineer who implemented the initiative, was nominated for and received a 2024 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to demonstrated excellence in emergency response, fiscal responsibility, and engineering innovation.

Enhance Customer Support through Artificial Intelligence - The Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) launched DELLA, an AI-powered chatbot, in June 2024 to enhance customer service by providing 24/7 access to essential information. Designed to streamline user interactions, DELLA reduces the need for multiple visits, phone calls, and emails by quickly answering questions through the DMV website. The chatbot's implementation led to a 50 percent usage rate, with over 258,000 engagements by the end of the prior year, improving efficiency and customer satisfaction. DMV staff continuously train DELLA to recognize new search phrases, ensuring ongoing improvements and accurate responses. This innovative project has not only reduced costs by eliminating a third-party service but also set a precedent for other State agencies to implement similar AI solutions. This project team was nominated for and received a 2024 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to their leadership and demonstrated excellence in establishing this innovative solution that is improving customer service and efficient operations within Delaware's DMVs.

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY (DSHS)

Reconstruct Carry Concealed Deadly Weapons (CCDW) Licensing - The current CCDW approval process is slow, cumbersome, and barely able to keep up with the number of requests that have vastly increased since the beginning of the pandemic and politicization of gun rights groups. Further, the lack of digital inputs makes tracking and data analysis needlessly difficult. DSHS is currently working on creating process efficiencies in the CCDW approval procedure to improve responsiveness and customer/stakeholder satisfaction.

Improve the Criminal History Background Review Process - The prior background review process took up to 3-6 weeks to obtain a criminal history and has been reduced to several hours for nearly all State agencies. Historically, this process caused strains on several industries that are legislatively, both state and federally, required to obtain prior to hiring job applicants. This was highly problematic as the needs for both health care workers and educators, are in high demand and extremely time sensitive. The old process resulted in backlogs and complaints, which have now been nearly eliminated with the implementation of the new system and vendor.

Administer Permit to Purchase - Delaware Senate Bill 2 was signed into law in May 2024. The enactment of the law places the development and administration of an application process to obtain a handgun qualified purchaser permit with the DSHS through its Division of State Police (DSP), specifically the State Bureau of Identification (SBI). The SBI has an average workload of 55,000 applicants annually. In 2020, there were 42,941 handgun purchases. Upon enactment, the SBI projects that the average workload will increase to 113,000 applications (including fingerprinting and criminal histories) annually. There is also the potential that since the card is valid for 180 days, some individuals may want to purchase handguns throughout the year, which would require two criminal histories to be conducted annually. Additionally, it expands upon the duties and responsibilities of the SBI. It estimates that it would require an expansion of 29.0 FTE civilian, and 10.0 FTE sworn personnel positions to implement and enforce this Act. Last, this Act would require the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (DELJIS) to make significant programming and system modifications to the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) to ensure compliance.

Upgrade to Project 25 (P25) Interoperable Land Mobile Radio Compliance - Project 25 (P25) develops standards for interoperable land mobile radio (LMR) systems, which allows emergency responders to exchange critical communications across agencies and jurisdictions. P25 standardizes interfaces between the various components of the land mobile radio (LMR) systems emergency responders use. This is a large-scale project that involves modernizing all State, county, and local radio systems to meet modern encryption standards, eliminate congestion over communication channels, and ensure first responders can communicate efficiently across public safety organizations.

Access Control to State Video Systems and Buildings - Overall, State Agencies have a significant problem with multiple access controls within State facilities that do not interface. This includes both building entries and video surveillance systems. This creates limitations in responding to the needs of the public in our State facilities and our employees. Given the current limitations, DSHS has launched a project to migrate to one common structure for these various security systems.

Recruit and Retain Law Enforcement - The DSHS continues to assist the Delaware Association of Chiefs of Police (DACP) and multiple municipal agencies in the acquisition of a recruiting and retention platform and professional service for the acquisition of law enforcement personnel. The recruitment numbers for future police candidates are declining to critical levels due to various social, political, and economic forces. This project between DSHS and DACP is ongoing to ensure Delaware can attract and retain law enforcement personnel in the future.

Align the Delaware Integrated Data System (DIDS) - The Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) seeks to prevent, deter, and respond to increased violence and crime by establishing a data integration platform for safety and law enforcement. In addition to strategic planning and tactical resource deployment, the data will be used for budget planning, identifying crime trends, proactive policing, supporting the violence reduction strategy, criminal analysis, and performance measurement. At this time, detailed business requirements for the operational dashboard have been completed along with the identification of the initial data that will be pulled into the Delaware Integrated Data System

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)

Combatting Delaware's Teacher Shortage through Recruitment and Retention Strategies - The Department of Education successfully implemented a statewide initiative to reduce the teacher shortage by increasing staffing, improving salaries, and strengthening career pathways. Through multiple work groups, DOE partnered with educators, advocacy groups, state agencies, and legislators to create a sustainable framework for continuous improvement. As a result of these efforts, new teacher recruitment and retention efforts have expanded, leading to increased participation in programs like Teacher Residencies, Registered Teacher Apprenticeships, and "Grow Your Own" initiatives. Additional work on competitive salary initiatives and improved working conditions have led to a more attractive profession for Delaware's educators, which contributed to a reduction in vacancy rates. Annual reporting and stakeholder engagement ensure that progress is tracked, and adjustments are made to maximize impact of their work. Overall, these efforts have strengthened Delaware's education workforce, improving stability and long-term student success. This team was nominated for and received the 2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to their achievements in implementing this project that resulted in improved human resource strategies and outcomes for educators.

STATE OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW

[ESTABLISHED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER]

REPORT TO GOVERNOR MEYER

FROM THE GEAR BOARD
NOVEMBER 1, 2025

The Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Board was established by executive order in February 2017. At the time, the State faced a projected Fiscal Year 2018 budget deficit of $385 million that was addressed that year through a combination of spending cuts and tax increases. It was understood in 2017 that similar deficits would be likely to recur in the foreseeable future if long-term actions, including structural spending and revenue reforms were not undertaken. As part of this effort, GEAR was created to develop recommendations for increasing efficiency and effectiveness across State government, improving the strategic planning process, improving the use of metrics in resource allocation decisions, and developing continuous improvement practices.

It is important to note that GEAR is just one component of ongoing fiscal reform efforts that build upon the State's existing strong fiscal governance practices. In June 2018, the General Assembly approved a budget that appropriated 97 percent of available General Fund revenues, holding back $47 million of projected revenues above the constitutional mandated 98 percent rule. That same month, an executive order required the Delaware Economic & Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC) to calculate an advisory benchmark appropriation based upon sustainable measures of economic growth to guide the development of the Governor's Recommended Budget. In June 2019, the General Assembly adopted a budget largely adhering to the advisory benchmark appropriation, using extraordinary revenues for one-time operating and capital expenditures, and establishing a $126.3 million Budget Stabilization Fund to be available for appropriation in exactly the types of scenarios faced by the State in 2017 and 2020. In 2024, the Legislature codified the Budget Stabilization Fund, which has grown to roughly $469 million, through passage of Senate Bill 270. By codifying this process in statute, rules are established for deposits to and withdrawals from the Budget Stabilization Fund and an objective and stable measure of sustainable budget growth is defined as a benchmark.

The executive order directs the GEAR Board to issue a report to the Governor no later than December 1 annually. These GEAR Annual Reports contain status and accomplishments toward the objectives of the executive order, recommendations for consideration in the Governor's Recommended Budget, and policy priorities for each fiscal year.

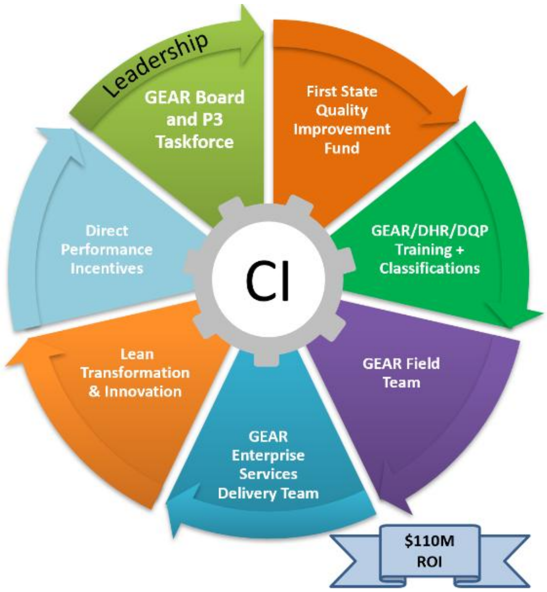
What follows is a detailed review of key accomplishments, progress on major initiatives, and recommendations requiring support from the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches. This report is available online on GEAR's website.

The Board supports the recommendations of the following organizations within GEAR:

- GEAR Program Management Team
- GEAR Public/Private Partnership (P3) Task Force
- Enterprise Services Delivery Team
- GEAR Field Team

GEAR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Continuous Improvement (CI) Cycle



The graphic above depicts the on-going cycle of primary GEAR activity areas that occur during the course of the year. Status on each area is reported at each GEAR Board meeting. The cycle starts with sponsorship and leadership of CI from the GEAR Board and P3 Taskforce. These leadership groups bring forward different perspectives based on the stakeholders they represent and are accountable for the GEAR Annual Report to the Governor. The First State Quality Improvement Fund is the source of funding for the implementation of CI training and is managed through a GEAR/DHR partnership. The GEAR, DHR, and Delaware Quality Partnership (DQP) Training and Classification area includes the coordination of the training and personnel development efforts of GEAR and DHR's partnership. The GEAR Field Team puts CI training into practice and sustains the gains by growing a community of practitioners. The Enterprise Services Delivery Team provides a collaborative forum for State organizations to succeed by ensuring inter-organization communication on enterprise-wide finance, human resource, and information technology projects and adequate resource allocation to sustain these projects over time. The $110 million represented in the blue ribbon is the estimated return on investment resulting from both the GFT and ESD projects underway. Lean Transformation & Innovation include both targeted Service Efficiency Blitz engagements coordinated between the GEAR program management team and State leadership, as well as participation in the State's Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy, primarily focused through involvement in the Delaware AI Commission. The Direct Performance Incentives area focuses on reinforcing the outcomes of CI efforts across the State enterprise, including the GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency and Trailblazer Awards. These activity areas are covered in greater detail in the contents of this report.

Scale Efficiency through the Service Efficiency Blitz (SEB) Model

GEAR's practices include both long term predictive and shorter term adaptive Agile methods that are tailored to the specific characteristics of a project. An SEB is a targeted, rapid improvement initiative designed to accelerate service delivery through leadership engagement, cross-functional collaboration, and data-driven analysis. The approach involves three weeks of planning with service leaders followed by an intensive three-day improvement event with the full service team. The goal is to deliver at least one high-impact deliverable, as well as a roadmap for sustainable long-term improvements. As requested by the Office of the Governor, GEAR has held three SEBs in 2025 that have delivered service improvements and provide an update to the "Ready in 6" Analysis of Delaware Permit Competitiveness information that was gathered in 2019. These efforts have resulted in process improvements that are estimated to deliver rough order of magnitude savings of $1.2 million and have provided process metrics forming a current state picture of the coordinated land use system across Delaware to guide future efforts. This current analysis is slated to achieve a total of at least seven business weeks of time reduction from the average time across the permitting programs evaluated. Additional updates and planned SEBs for the future are still underway and noted in the table below.

Ready in Six - Permitting Efficiency Value Stream Transformation

2024/2025	June 2025	August 2025	September 2025	November 2025	January 2026
• **DelDOT Regulatory Pilot** • **DNREC Subaqueous Pilot with GEAR**	• **OMB Preliminary Land Use Service SEB**	• **DelDOT Traffic Impact Study SEB**	• **DelDOT Record and Entrance Plan SEB**	• **Housing Taskforce RPE-Workshop 11/13-11/14 (4 hrs. each)**	• **County/Local Land Use SEB1** **OR** • **Construction Plans and Other Permits**
Outcomes: DelDOT regulatory alignment DNREC subaqueous targeted process reduction -70%	**Outcomes:** Process time reduction for applications of -20% Overall process time reduction of 5 business days saving $162,500 annually	**Outcomes:** Consolidated two internal process steps into one step that is projected to reduce rework by -33% saving $112,500 annually Overall process time reduction of 3 business days	**Outcomes:** **SEB Complete, savings documentation underway**		• DNREC • DelDOT • County/Local • State Fire Marshal • DHSS

SEB = Service Efficiency Blitz
RPE = Rapid Planning Event

Evolve the State's Culture of Continuous Improvement

GEAR's mission is to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of government services, build a sustainable culture of continuous improvement statewide, and bend the arc of government spending growth downward. Consistent with this mission, GEAR works with the Governor's Office, State leadership, private sector partners, and GEAR Field Team members to develop change management messaging and assess priorities for the future aligned with the States's continuous improvement culture. An outcome of the GEAR Program Management Team's efforts is a video series (found online at gear.delaware.gov/gear-stories/) highlighting the impact of GEAR's efforts.

In addition, the chart that follows captures the primary change management messages that the GEAR community across the State has united behind. It identifies the focus areas of change and represents where we are coming "from" currently in many areas across the State and where we are going "to" based on the skills we are developing and our joint desire to fulfill the mission above.

Culture change is a long term strategic endeavor, but supported by GEAR, the culmination of the efforts of all of the State agencies who practice the skills and tools of continuous improvement, success is evident. Over time, incremental investments will yield larger dividends in the form of better quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the government services the State delivers.

State of Delaware Vision for Continuous Improvement

Focus Area of Change	Where are we coming FROM?	Where are we going TO?
Decision Making	Subjective	**Data driven**
Documentation	Undocumented "team knowledge" with unknown process measures	**Visible, repeatable and optimized processes with measurable outcomes**
Problem Solving	Moving directly to action (reactive "fire-fighting")	**Defining a problem statement and measuring the current state before proposing a solution (proactive "fire prevention")**
Customer Service	A limited understanding of our stakeholders' requirements	**All services being developed and delivered based on our stakeholders' requirements**
Sponsorship and the Sustainability of CI	Sponsors not familiar with continuous improvement methods nor their role as sponsors	**Sponsors value and require use of continuous improvement methods and actively/visibly support change initiatives**

As part of this process, the GEAR Program Management Team meets with GEAR Board members and other State leadership to reflect on the State's accomplishments and consider what improvements can be made. In general, the primary themes and recommendations stress the importance of continuing with a continuous improvement body like GEAR for the following reasons:

A. Sharing knowledge and coordinating projects across State agencies – there has not historically been a forum such as GEAR to communicate consistently on an inter-agency basis about policy priorities, projects, and best practices.

B. Training more State employees in skilled project management, Lean, business analysis, and change management methods – the resulting return on investment in business practices and processes has been promising. It is recommended that training be expanded to State managers to support practices through their staff at the ground level, for new employees during orientation to illustrate how continuous improvement is a core value of the State, and with executive leadership to increase sponsorship and alignment of outcomes.

C. Furthering policy alignment to support continuous improvement practices – several State leaders have historically noted the need for clarified policies surrounding budgeting practices that reinforce generating cost savings, criteria for assessing and prioritizing projects, and guidelines for making the most of best practices.

D. Continuing the journey to build core competencies and practices in data driven decision making and process visibility – these are two of GEAR's core values, which both support greater transparency to become a less reactive, and more proactively informed operating environment.

Given the feedback of GEAR's leadership and stakeholders, GEAR continues to prioritize the following key goals:

1. Achieve $300M in cost savings through business process optimization over the next four years to be reinvested in value added activities.

2. Expand training opportunities in Lean, project management, strategic leadership, and change management to existing CIP graduates, State personnel during onboarding, and State leaders.

3. Implement the full-scale Ready in Six initiative based on the existing prototype projects.

4. Establish pilot projects in Lean management with a focus on aligning State budgeting and operational practices through business process optimization, data driven decision making, user experience design (UX), and the application of artificial intelligence.

These goals can leverage and be applied to various strategic projects to maximize the value of State service delivery and align with building a Lean government culture.

Strengthen Quantifiable Outcomes

GEAR supports efforts over the long term by developing operational excellence initiatives that reduce or temper State government spending growth, thus freeing up resources for other needs. Overall, the GEAR teams are leveraging industry best practices to develop the skills of its membership base as the number of projects and GEAR Field Team membership increase. GEAR estimates that a rough order of magnitude savings to the State across 96 percent of the 160 projects (detailed by organization in the table below) currently reporting estimated return on investment in the portfolio will be $110 million over the life of projects underway. GEAR will also continue to consider qualitative measures that are as important as, and should be balanced with, quantitative measures of success.

Department	Number of Projects
Health and Social Services (DHSS)	30
State (DOS)	9
Department of Transportation (DelDOT)	1
Judicial	7
Education (DOE)	8
Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)	16
Services for Children Youth and their Families (DSCYF)	12
Labor (DOL)	2
Correction (DOC)	1
Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS)	8
*Enterprise Services Delivery (ESD)	55
GEAR P3 (Public-Private Partnership)	2

***Enterprise Services Delivery Team includes:**

- State Treasurer (OST)
- Finance (DOF)
- Technology and Information (DTI)
- Human Resources (DHR)
- Management and Budget (OMB)
- Auditor of Accounts (AOA)

GEAR	7
State Housing Authority (DSHA)	2
Total	**160**

Drive Continuous Improvement Training and Development

Based on recommendations made in the 2018 GEAR Annual Report, the First State Quality Improvement Fund (FSQIF) was reinstated in Fiscal Year 2020 as a line item in the Department of Human Resources (DHR) budget and funded at $150,000 per year. In 2020, DHR Training and HR Solutions and GEAR partnered on a project to develop the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) program as a joint venture to build project management, Lean process improvement, and change management skills of State employees. GEAR and DHR solicit nominations for participation in the program from State leadership biannually with the first 21 certified practitioners of the CIP training program having graduated in the second quarter of 2021.

CIP continues to evolve, and the training program has graduated 155 practitioners to date with an additional cohort of 18 presently in training. Graduates receive 135 hours of training. All CIP graduates subsequently become contributing members of the GEAR Field Team as specified in the terms of application to the program. In Fiscal Year 2023, the FSQIF was amended by Senate Bill 90 to modernize the language in the Delaware Code to reflect current industry accepted terminology from the continuous improvement field and affirm the partnership between GEAR and DHR in administering the training programs developed under the law. In Fiscal Year 2024, with the support of the General Assembly, the FSQIF was provided an additional $200,000 (for a total appropriation of $350,000) to fully fund two annual cohorts of CIP training and implement additional continuous improvement training programs. In 2024, two additional training programs were funded through the FSQIF, developed, and launched to enhance the skills of the GEAR Field Team: 1) Process and Project Leadership (PPL) training to focus on leadership skill development, and 2) Operational Excellence (OpEx) training to focus on advanced skill development in Lean six sigma, business analysis, project management, and agile methods. Both of these new programs continue to be offered on an annual basis with DHR providing the program management and administration for these initiatives.

Grow the GEAR Field Team (GFT)

Established in 2020, the GFT is a community comprised of CIP training program graduates who are applying their skills throughout State government. With approximately 140 members representing 23 State organizations including the Judicial Branch, the team is delivering value through the execution of approximately 80 projects that leverage the skills and tools of continuous improvement. As the GFT's efforts have evolved, an additional focus area of business process management (BPM) emerged in early 2024 and remains in place. The BPM sub-team is focused on sharing best practices, tools, and techniques when it comes to value stream mapping and analysis. The BPM team continues to meet every other week and uses the ARIS BPM software tool in mapping and evaluating State operations for areas of waste and inefficiency. In addition, this team is currently drafting a BPM Playbook to enhance the ability of State employees to effectively implement process mapping and streamline business processes.

Last, the GEAR Program Management Team continues to support the use of the GEAR Project Management Playbook as a reference for trainees and graduates of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) training program. It is designed to provide current project management standards and tools to current and future project managers within the State. Over time, it is anticipated that a Project Management sub-team would benefit the State similar to the learning community that has developed within the BPM team to better advance additional practices of operational excellence.

Solidify a Strategic Path for the Enterprise Services Delivery Team

The GEAR Board's initial seven focus area teams were organized by agency affiliation until 2020 when consolidated focuses on financial services delivery, human resources, and information technology emerged. Beginning in 2021, these three focus area teams with statewide responsibilities were reorganized into the single Enterprise Services Delivery (ESD) Team. Representing most of the State's major financial, human resources and information technology agencies and functions, ESD has been delivering value through the oversight of over 50 cross-agency enterprise-wide projects and programs. In 2022, the framework for evaluating the impact of enterprise level projects used the Strategic Project Roadmap, that addressed the impact of change saturation, return on investment, and risk management across agencies. Though ESD was dealing with state-wide projects, there was a silo mentality dominating the presentation of these projects. In 2023 and 2024, the ESD team worked on rechartering its efforts to better align the agencies, projects, and service delivery toward a more unified State of Delaware perspective. These efforts were led by an 11-member Enterprise Services Delivery Team Charter Drafting

Sub-team to prepare the revised mission, vision, role, guiding principles, stakeholder and preliminary goal statements for the ESD Team. A new spreadsheet aligned with ProjectPlace portfolio data elements replaced an Excel-based Strategic Project Roadmap. The final versions of these statements and the spreadsheet were approved by the members of the Enterprise Services Delivery Team in April of 2024. In 2025, ESD began using the new spreadsheet and a new standing agenda that focuses discussion on statewide projects.

ESD's purpose and function has crystalized to be a clearinghouse where business and technical experts talk together to understand the business processes, technical solutions, and resource requirements (personnel and funding) for statewide finance, human resource and information technology projects and communicate these requirements externally so that the resources, time, and capacity necessary to sustain and complete these projects can be prioritized. The key concept is that these projects are enterprise-wide in scope, not just agency-specific, and will impact all of State government.

The ESD mission is to "support, promote, monitor and strategically guide statewide, multi-organization, financial services, human resources and information technology projects to facilitate inter-organizational collaboration on these projects and elevate communication of project details and outcomes to stakeholders." The vision of ESD is "to foster a culture of collaboration and success by ensuring inter-organization collaboration on enterprise-wide finance, human resource, and information technology projects and adequate resource allocation to sustain these projects over time." The role of ESD is fivefold: 1) emphasize inter-organizational collaboration over competition; 2) enhance efficiency of State operations and identify opportunities for economies of scale; 3) identify enterprise needs, devise solutions and advocate for resources; 4) serve as a forum for collaboration of experts and communication to stakeholders and 5) formulate enterprise strategies, provide reporting on change capacity, risk management, integration, resources, and assess the return on investment and quantitative and qualitative outcomes. ESD meeting agendas ensure that the significant statewide projects are addressed at every meeting, essentially functioning in a manner to the now sun-setted Technology Investment Council.

Foster Career Pathways for Employee Recruitment and Retention

With few exceptions, State agencies did not possess job classifications to employ highly qualified and credentialed project managers, business process analysts, Lean continuous improvement analysts, and change management specialists relying instead on primarily outsourced resources. The demand for these functions continues to grow in government as evidenced by the increase in large scale enterprise projects being developed on a regular basis, as well as ongoing demand for Continuous Improvement Practitioner training in these skills that facilitate improved operational and project outcomes.

Consistent with the program's executive order, GEAR was tasked to "identify changes in the State personnel system that would foster a culture of continuous improvement and improve the recruitment, development and retention of State employees". In this capacity, GEAR worked with DHR to identify job classifications that would increase the ability of State agencies to drive and sustain continuous improvement over time. The GEAR Program Management Team drafted and implemented four new classification series (each with a career ladder) for project managers (five roles), business process analysts (five roles), change management specialists (three roles), and Lean continuous improvement specialists (five roles). In total, these 18 new job descriptions became available to State agencies in August 2024 and are now being utilized by various agencies such as the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Finance, and Administrative Office of the Courts. Thes positions will continue to be available for fulfilling future needs in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget cycle and beyond.

Support the Delaware Artificial Intelligence Commission

In 2024, House Bill 333 was passed establishing the Delaware Artificial Intelligence (AI) Commission, which includes the Executive Director of GEAR as a member. This Commission was created to do the following:

(a) Make recommendations to the General Assembly and to the Chief Information Officer of the Department on legislative and executive actions regarding AI in Delaware.

(b) Develop and recommend statewide processes, principles, and guidelines for executive, legislative, and judicial agencies to follow regarding use of AI.

(c) Encourage agencies to utilize AI to improve service delivery, where appropriate.

(d) Examine, develop, and recommend legislative, executive, and judicial actions that ensure the use of AI in Delaware keeps citizens safe and does not violate any individual's rights.

(e) Conduct an inventory of all Generative AI usage in Delaware executive, legislative, and judicial agencies and identify high risk areas to be avoided for the implementation of Generative AI.

The GEAR Executive Director's involvement provides direct input on the use of this technology for business process optimization, automation, and other efficiencies over time. AI is a strategic part of GEAR's Lean Transformation and Innovation work efforts. The Delaware AI Commission has established a Training subcommittee and Models subcommittee to provide thought leadership in these two areas. In addition, House Joint Resolution 7 as amended by House Amendment 1 directs the Artificial Intelligence Commission to work in collaboration with the Secretary of State to create a regulatory sandbox framework for the testing of innovative and novel technologies that utilize agentic artificial intelligence.

Enable Enterprise Solutions for Project and Process Management (Planview Projectplace and ARIS)

In 2022, there were two recommendations put forth by the GEAR Program Management Team to expand enterprise software solutions for project management and business process analysis for GEAR Field Team (GFT) members. First, in consultation with DTI, Planview Projectplace software was selected as the software solution to transition over 130 GEAR Program Portfolio projects into an online, cloud-based portfolio. The transition of the portfolio from an Excel-based system to ProjectPlace was completed in July 2023, and over 30 licenses have been provisioned to GFT members to maintain their projects in the new system. Ongoing investments in this system will continue to equip all GFT members with licenses to support the application of industry best practices in project management, gather measurable outcomes from the GEAR portfolio, and work toward improved enterprise integration across agencies.

Second, an industry leading business process management (BPM) software tool called ARIS was introduced as a GEAR standard in July 2019. To date, ARIS is being used to accomplish objectives by multiple organizations as GFT members better define current state processes, measure performance, identify and eliminate waste, and implement optimized future state solutions. In July 2023, a business process analysis workgroup was formed under the GFT and continues to meet biweekly. In Fiscal Year 2025 a combination of 23 ARIS designer and 40 ARIS viewer licenses were recommended to equip and train any GFT members committed to advancing their skills in BPM. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Department of Finance was appropriated $52,000 for ARIS and Planview Projectplace licenses, which is still maintained on an annual basis.

Benchmark Continuous Improvement Activities Against Other States

Several of GEAR's continuous improvement activities for the State of Delaware are included in Results for America's Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence, a national state benchmarking program. Results For America is a non-profit organization with ten years of experience promoting data-driven, outcome-oriented leadership at every level of government, from every region, who are committed to delivering better results. The information gathered by the Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence demonstrates that states are increasingly using data and evidence to produce better, more equitable results for their residents. The GEAR Program Management Team completed surveys provided by Results for America in 2023 and 2024 and Delaware was noted as having six "promising examples" of state standards of excellence. For the 2025 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence Submission, the GEAR Program Management Team listed activities, practices, policies, and organizations under the following topic areas:

1. Evaluation Leadership – establishing the Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Board per Executive Order.
2. Data Leadership – having a Director of Enterprise Data in DTI and a Delaware Open Data Council to promote data sharing.
3. Evaluation Policy and Learning – having a statewide partnership between State officials and external researchers and connections between State agencies and these external researchers per operating budget epilogue language and appropriations to institutions of higher education.
4. Data Policy and Practices – coordinating and collaborating through the Family Services Cabinet Council (FSCC) to develop the Delaware Integrated Data System (DIDS) and supporting the Open Data Portal with over 400 datasets available.
5. Performance Management – pursuing amendment of the Delaware Governmental Accountability Act that would mandate agencies, the Governor, and the legislative budget writing committees to include performance measures in budget process decision-making.

6. Results-Driven Contracting – encouraging results-focused contracts and active contract management with pay for success contracts authorized by the Delaware Code.

Results for America has offered, and OMB has accepted, technical support to work towards improving Delaware's use of evidence in its budget process, starting with best practice enhancements to the budget request forms utilized each budget cycle. Detailed information for the participating states can be found on Results for America’s website.

GEAR PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (P3)

Strengthen and Grow the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency and P3 Trailblazer Awards

The GEAR P3 Taskforce was created in 2018 to promote private sector engagement in State government activities. The founder and CEO of The Precisionists, Inc. is a member of the GEAR Board and chairperson of the Taskforce. The Taskforce leveraged the GEAR/DHR partnership to establish the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency and Trailblazer Awards as apex awards within the Governor's Team Excellence Award program. These awards recognize and directly incentivize State employees who successfully implement high-impact initiatives that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of State processes, programs, and services.

The annual financial commitment to the awards is funded by $25,000 from the private sector, with a matching $25,000 from the State. The GEAR P3 Taskforce remains essential to ensuring the participation of the private sector in this important award. The Taskforce coordinates with the Delaware Business Roundtable and the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, as well as other partner organizations that contribute to this program. The logos of the ten contributing companies to the 2024 GEAR P3 Awards are shown below, along with pictures of the 2024 GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency and Trailblazer award winners.

2024 GEAR P3 Awards – Contributing Companies

2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award – Combating Delaware's Teacher Shortage Team, DOE

2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award – Updated Retention Schedules Team, DSCYF

2024 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award Recipients – Nicole Brown, Jacob Carey, Tina LaFace, Mallory Taylor, and Jillian Troumouhis, DelDOT

2024 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award Recipient - Paul Huhn, DelDOT

GEAR P3 Taskforce - Contributing Organizations

GEAR Public/Private Partnership (P3) Support for Ready in Six (Ri6) Initiative

Launched by the Delaware Business Roundtable and its partners, the Ri6 initiative supports efforts to reduce business permit approval timelines with a target of six months for the entire process, thereby making the State a more competitive option when businesses consider relocating to, or expanding in, Delaware. In 2019, the Roundtable retained a consulting firm to make recommendations on how the State of Delaware could strengthen its permitting processes by streamlining communication between State and local government agencies, providing greater transparency and cost predictability, and implementing fast-track approvals for high priority projects.

The Taskforce has sought private-sector support to help providers of these public services to identify which overall permitting processes are insufficiently responsive, indicate which State permitting processes should be prioritized for improvement to better serve the business community, and to prepare for any potential legislative changes needed to help ensure success of the program. The Taskforce also expanded its membership to include new representation from government organizations, legal and other private-sector industries impacted by permitting processes managed at the State, county, and municipal government levels. In coordination with GEAR P3 leadership and the Office of the Governor, a survey was developed by the GEAR Program Management Team in 2022 and disseminated to over 1,500 industry focused partners to target specific areas for improvement in permitting processes. The results of the survey led to key findings within the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) as well as other State, municipal, and county organizations. In early 2023, the results were released to the participating organizations, key stakeholders, DelDOT and DNREC leadership, and the Governor's Office.

Based on the outcomes of the survey and State agencies' knowledge of related challenges within their organizations, DelDOT and DNREC each selected a core permitting process area that needed improvement. DelDOT selected a focus on utility permitting regulations and DNREC chose to focus on subaqueous permits within the Wetlands and Waterways section. A project charter was developed to address the targeted bottlenecks identified by the survey. The project was then implemented starting with the first of two phases - focusing on conducting Lean business analysis and process improvement surrounding one key process each within DNREC and DelDOT. Currently, the DNREC Subaqueous Permitting Prototype project for boat docking facilities continues with active GEAR Program Management Team support and is scheduled to be finalized and completed in early 2026. DelDOT's initial prototype focused on regulatory review associated with utility relocation work to achieve efficiencies in the short term. Since the completion of DelDOT's prototype, the Department has further sponsored two Service Efficiency Blitz events resulting in additional time and cost savings. Further detail about the first phase pilot projects and SEB events are available in the DelDOT and DNREC sections of this report. The P3 Taskforce continues to serve as a body for customer engagement, input, and guidance on ongoing Ri6 efforts that the State continues to implement.

Identify New Public-Private Partnership Opportunities

Work continues to increase the momentum of the GEAR P3 Taskforce and the impact of the GEAR program. The Taskforce is working with State agencies, the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, and other entities to determine how the public and private sectors may work together to create the most efficient and effective solutions that enable the State to better serve businesses, residents, and visitors.

ENTERPRISE SERVICES DELIVERY TEAM (ESD)

Financial Services Delivery

Advanced Planning for Replacement of Enterprise-Wide Computer Applications

Many of the financial, human resources, and information technology projects that are coming to GEAR's attention are enterprise-wide in scope and affect multiple agencies and branches of State government. Two such financial management projects are ERP Modernization and the Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS). The implementation of enterprise-wide solutions often requires long implementation timelines, changes to these systems often require long-term projects on the scale of five to ten years. ESD's purpose and function is to be a clearinghouse where business and technical experts talk together regarding understanding business processes, technical solutions, and resource requirements (personnel and funding) for statewide finance, human resource and information technology projects and communicating these requirements externally so that the resources, time, and capacity necessary to sustain and complete these projects can be prioritized. The key characteristic is that these projects are enterprise-wide in scope, not just agency-specific, and will impact all of State government. ESD is delivering value through the monitoring of nearly 50 cross-agency enterprise-wide projects and programs.

Modernizing the State's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems

Utilizing funding obtained in the Fiscal Year 2023 Capital Budget, a consulting firm was contracted to provide resources and assist in the modernization of the State's ERP systems (Financial Management and Accounting; Payroll, Human Resources; Benefits and Time Administration; Pension Administration, Learning Management, Recruitment, Onboarding/Offboarding, and Employee/Labor Relations Case Management Components,). Resources from the consulting firm, together with State subject matter experts, documented system and business processes, key performance indicators, and user stories. In addition, State experts and ERP system administrators established the overall project goals. The consulting firm analyzed all areas within each module of the ERP systems. Recommendations from the analysis have been provided using the following criteria:

- Eliminate the process if it is deemed unnecessary.
- Adapt the process to fit the current available technology, as delivered.
- Identify a technological configuration option to accommodate the process.
- Customize the technology to accommodate the required process, but only as a last resort.

The project team conducted feedback sessions with central and end user agencies, school districts, charter schools, and higher education institutions to ensure all business processes have been documented and consideration was provided for inclusion in the Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new software solution.

As the ERP project team has completed feedback sessions and associated documentation, the consulting firm, in accordance with the statement of work, has quantified the level of customizations and potential approaches for ERP modernization. The firm recommended a proposed scope of work for a technology solution based on business requirements and the State's objectives to modernize operations, standardize business processes, reduce costs, improve security, and enhance service outcomes.

Incorporating the requirements, the State, in coordination with the contracted firm, developed an RFP for ERP Modernization which was published in the fourth quarter of Calendar Year 2024. Vendor evaluations are now completed with a vendor selection anticipated to be completed within the third quarter of Calendar Year 2025. A second RFP to select the solution integration partner is expected to be posted before the end of Calendar Year 2025. The full migration to a new system is expected to take a minimum of three to five years after the award of both contracts. It will require considerable State resources, both internal and contractual staff, along with support from all levels of government to adopt business process changes that will eliminate expensive system customizations, result in streamlined processes, and generate a more efficient workforce.

Progress for Replacement of State's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems

Plan for Replacement of Enterprise-Wide Computer Applications:

The State's enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems – the Financial Management and Accounting; Payroll, Human Resources, Benefits and Time Administration; and Pension Administration systems are more than 20 years-old, based on outdated web-based technologies, and will not be supported by the original software manufacturer as they reach end-of-life in the coming years. Significant upgrades to these systems have not occurred in more than six years and will not occur again in their current state. This leaves the current solutions outdated, falling short of meeting the State's financial reporting requirements, and offering minimal enhancements for a mobile workforce. In addition, due to numerous customizations, support for the current systems requires a specialized workforce. To ensure the continuity of State operations, the ERP Modernization Project, which encompasses all State ERP systems, was initiated in June 2022.

Since that time, the following high-level tasks have been completed and planned for each of the ERP systems within this major State of Delaware business transformation project:

Financial Management and Accounting, Payroll, Human Resources, Benefits and Time Administration:

- RFP published in 2024 - received multiple responses from various vendors.
- Three vendors completed their first and follow-up software demonstrations, including virtual and on-site sessions.
- Selection of the solution software vendor is pending.
- A System Integrator RFP will be issued after the solution software contract is finalized.
- The ERP project expanded to provide for upgrades to the Delaware Learning Center, Delaware Employment Link, New Hire Onboarding/Offboarding, and other human resources systems.

Pension Administration:

- RFP was published in 2024 - received multiple responses from various vendors.
- Three vendors completed software demonstrations, including virtual and on-site sessions.
- The Office of Pensions selected a Software as a Solution (SaaS) vendor that stands out due to its efficient system and automated, customer-focused processes available through Member, Employer, and Administrator Portals.
- Contract negotiations are nearing completion, with implementation to follow.

State Funding:

- The State appropriated a total of $112.5 million toward this major initiative with $25 million in each of the Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 bond bills, $12.5 million in the Fiscal Year 2025 bond bill, and $50 million in Fiscal Year 2026 bond bill. It is anticipated that the total cost of this project may exceed $150 million dollars.

Implement an Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS)

The Delaware Department of Finance, Division of Revenue (DOR) is responsible for collecting more than $3.6 billion in annual State taxes, processing more than $350 million in tax refunds, ensuring compliance with the State's tax laws, and providing taxpayer services. As a result of modernization efforts, DOR has largely moved away from mainframe technology that is over 30 years old and consisting of more than 100 client server applications. The IRAS system has modernized DOR's processing for all, but the most complicated business returns by creating a web-based, real-time, integrated user experience, automating processing capabilities, optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of DOR staff, and strengthening security and internal controls. IRAS has improved DOR's ability to mitigate fraud and increase revenue with new automated audit programs and better technology to assist with the collection of delinquent taxes as further tools are implemented. The project will also create numerous opportunities for improved efficiencies and enhanced taxpayer service through collaboration with other State and local agencies. For example, in August 2021, DOR began a pilot project to collect the public accommodations tax for one county and one municipality, allowing the hotels and motels to utilize a single filing system to pay tax to multiple entities. DOR and the Department of Labor will discuss how IRAS could be leveraged to help modernize the State's Unemployment Insurance tax collection system. IRAS also provides an improved level of system recovery by leveraging a cloud-based service provider.

In addition to modernizing DOR's processing systems, IRAS is dramatically improving the user experience for taxpayers through the development of a modern public facing portal that provides taxpayers access to online filings, account information, service requests, and the ability to delegate access to tax preparers. The public-facing portal (tax.delaware.gov) went live for taxpayer registration in December 2020 and has been available for tax filings since January 2021. To date, more than 1.1 million returns have been filed through the portal and more than $3.0 billion in payments have been received and applied to taxpayer accounts. The portal also created online filing opportunities for industry sectors that were previously only available on paper. DOR achieved a significant reduction in paper filings (roughly a 33 percent decline overall), which reduces manual processing efforts and streamlines return processing, allowing for the reallocation of personnel to higher-value, revenue-generating activities.

The IRAS project is being implemented in 3 releases:

- Release 1 (went live in fall 2020) – Business related taxes.
- Release 2 (went live in late 2022) – Personal income and estate taxes.
- Release 2.1 (went live in late 2023) – Enhancements to business and personal taxes and the Delaware tax portal.
- Release 3.1 (went live in July 2024) – Retail Marijuana Tax and IRS CP2000 audit program plus an upgrade with the latest changes to the base processing package.
- Release 3.2 (went live in October 2025):
    - Corporate income taxes as well as partnership, S corporation, fiduciary, headquarter management income tax returns.
    - Data warehouse and tax master audit program.

Prior to the start of the project in the summer of 2019, the IRAS initiative yielded several benefits that can be leveraged across other Delaware agencies. A procurement and project readiness methodology, focusing on large State government IT project implementations was created in collaboration with the DTI and OMB's Government Support Services. As part of this methodology, a consistent and repeatable process was documented and used. The process included an initial discovery step reaching out to more than 30 states to better understand their experiences and lessons learned on similar projects working with vendors that provide revenue administration products and services. Leveraging input from states that had successful implementations, an RFP with more than 1,500 requirements was created. During onsite sessions, bidders were required to demonstrate more than 70 real-life scenarios.

Funding for the project was approved in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget and a contract was awarded in July 2019. To gain fast traction at project initiation, almost a dozen project readiness activities were undertaken to develop a thorough binder of information on DOR systems, processes, and tax laws that were provided to the selected vendor prior to arrival on site. On-site activities began in July 2019 and included development of a project management office and a project structure.

Procurement Card (Pcard) Program

The combined total spend for the State's credit card program (PCard) and the Single-Use Account program for vendor payments in Calendar Year 2020 was $162.9 million. This produced a rebate of $3.1 million to the State to help fund the State's financial management systems. Calendar Year 2021 PCard spending increased to $177.0 million with a rebate of $3.4 million. Calendar Year 2023 provided a record level of total PCard spending of $189.2 million with a rebate of $3.6 million. Calendar Year 2024 PCard spending was $186.2 million with a rebate of $3.5 million. The current PCard contract expires December 2026. An RFP is currently underway for the State's general banking services and PCard services. Vendor evaluation and selection is expected to be completed before the end of Calendar Year 2025. Calendar Year 2025 rebate is on track to be aligned with the Calendar Year 2024 rebate amount.

Financial Services Delivery Onerous Processes–- After the Fact Purchase Order Approval Process

Per the Budget and Accounting Policy Manual, when a purchase order is established or approved after the delivery of goods or services, an after-the-fact situation is said to exist. State organizations finding themselves in this situation must apply, and receive approval for, an after-the-fact waiver to get the purchase order approved and the vendor paid. To process and approve after-the-fact waiver request applications, it previously took a minimum of seven persons. Three of the seven persons (42 percent) reviewing and approving these waiver request applications were Cabinet Secretary level leaders. Further, all after-the-fact waiver requests were historically reviewed and approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Secretary of the Department of Finance (DOF). Overall, it was projected that this workload could be reduced by 76 percent (based on the Fiscal Year 2020 after-the-fact waiver request workload for OMB and DOF cabinet secretaries and their staffs).

On March 1, 2021, the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) subcommittee for onerous paper processing requirements implemented changes to streamline the after-the-fact waiver request application approval process. These changes: 1) increased the purchase order threshold from $5,000 to $10,000, 2) permitted cabinet-level leaders of State organizations to internally approve after-the-fact waiver requests between $10,000 and $50,000, and 3) required Director of Management and Budget and Secretary of Finance approval only for those waiver requests over $50,000. The changes have been successful in reducing the approval workload for the cabinet secretaries and their staffs with the targeted reduction being met. While the number of after-the-fact waiver requests reviewed by the Director of Management and Budget and the Secretary of Finance is well still below that of Fiscal Year 2020, the recent trend is that the number of approvals has been increasing. Some of this increase is attributable to turnover in agency fiscal staffs, and an associated lack of knowledge of financial processes, and understaffed fiscal offices.

July 1st to June 30th	**Fiscal Year 2020**	**Fiscal Year 2021**	**Fiscal Year 2022**	**Fiscal Year 2023**	**Fiscal Year 2024**	**Fiscal Year 2025**
OMB/DOF Approval Totals	105	76	18	41	65	55
Percent Workload Change		(28 percent)	(76 percent)	128 percent	59 percent	(15 percent)

Financial Advisory Committee (FAC)

The FAC continued its quarterly meetings with the creation of the First State Financials (FSF) training subcommittee and accomplished several of its goals in streamlining FSF training for new hires. A subcommittee to develop an Accounting 201 course was also launched. This new accounting course will be an extension of the introductory Accounting 101 course that is currently offered. Another subcommittee was launched and has reviewed and approved enhancements for the on-line Budget and Accounting course that is currently offered.

Drive Effective Internal Control System(s) in State Government

Continuing to Drive Effective Internal Control Systems in State Government

Internal controls are a critical part of effective risk management. Designing, implementing, and managing an effective system of internal control can be challenging, and adapting to rapidly changing business models, new technologies, or globalization requires that system to be highly adaptable. An internal control system requires the use of judgment to monitor and assess its effectiveness, and it must provide insight on the application of controls. Different entities in the State each have different objectives and goals, different levels of resources (i.e., people, funding), and different processes or programs, which make each environment unique.

The Auditor of Accounts (AOA) has instituted a range of initiatives with the goal of increasing operational efficiency by sharpening State managers' abilities to assess risks and implement effective internal controls. One area of focus is to mitigate the degradation of the internal control system through the implementation of an ongoing Internal Controls Training Program and to provide related tools and resources. In 2025, AOA continued to offer Internal Control trainings to enhance internal control design, implementation, monitoring for operational effectiveness, and periodic updating based on a changing environment. These trainings included a training specifically on compliance with the Federal Uniform Guidance, where internal controls are paramount. AOA also continued to follow uniquely strict internal controls for department spending, helping AOA continue to demonstrate best practices for fiscal management.

Ensuring Greater Audit Engagement Compliance and Efficiency

In 2025, AOA's audit team became fully staffed for the first time in years. This staffing advantage allowed the team to begin working through ambitious plan to complete every audit engagement mandated in Delaware Code by Fiscal Year 2027, in addition to many other special projects and engagements. This plan commenced as Delaware's executive branch transitioned to new elected and appointed leadership in the Governor's office and many cabinet-level agencies. With this in mind, AOA leadership focused on establishing both clear lines of communication and expectations throughout State government. These goals were put into place to achieve audit engagement compliance across AOA's hundreds of engagements, and to increase efficiency throughout the audit process.

In early 2025, in response to Governor Meyer's Executive Order 3, AOA collected audit findings from all State agencies dating back to Fiscal Year 2021. These findings were shared with agency leadership, with a particular attention paid to repeat findings, which may indicate unaddressed issues in internal control. Sharing these findings before new audit engagements have begun and give the new State leadership an opportunity to address the control environment within their respective departments as they built out their teams.

Subsequent to sharing audit findings, the State Auditor also met personally with the leaders of every cabinet-level agency. In these meetings, the State Auditor addressed any repeat findings with the departments. The meetings also covered prior, current, and new audit engagements with department leadership, and established expectations for the audit process. With interdepartmental communication and expectations set, AOA has re-integrated itself into the general operations of State government. AOA is now fully on track to complete its audit plan on time.

Increasing Public Engagement with Audit Reports

Public sector audits are crucial tools for government to assess the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of their programs and departments. However, they are also tools for public transparency and accountability. The work of the State Auditor is meant to be read by the public to inform them about how their government is operating. Over the past year, AOA has focused on increasing opportunities for public engagement with its audit reports. As a result, the reports, which can often be dense technical documents, have become sources of information for legislators, media, and concerned citizens alike to a greater extent than before.

Efforts to increase public engagement with audits began at the report level. AOA has developed an efficient internal process for including a clear and concise summary at the beginning of every audit report. These summaries highlight the most important information included in the report. They also often contain visual data that may not be included in the report itself when appropriate, including graphs, charts, tables, and infographics. In some cases, summaries also include extensive background information that may not be appropriate to place inside the report itself. Summaries have allowed readers to gain an understanding of report contents without having to digest many pages of technical information.

AOA has also rebuilt its digital infrastructure to allow members of the public to more easily find and read audit reports. Reports had formerly been issued to a limited distribution list through simple email distribution. AOA now issues reports using email marketing software that allows for larger distribution lists and faster sending. Members of the public can also now sign up to receive reports directly to their email inbox.

Additionally, with the assistance of the Government Information Center, AOA changed the way reports are archived on its website. Every audit report is now displayed on its own webpage on the AOA website. These webpages include the audit report summary and a link to the full report PDF. The webpages are tagged, categorized, searchable through AOA's search bar, and linked to by State Agency, year under audit, and report type.

Beyond giving the public greater opportunity to access audit information, AOA has also taken proactive steps to increase engagement with its reports. AOA leadership regularly engages with lawmakers, members of the media, and Delaware residents to explain report contents and update the public on its work. These efforts have resulted in greater attention paid to issues including repeat findings and internal control deficiencies at State agencies.

Lower Lease Costs and Restructure Lease Program

The Office of Management and Budget/Division of Facilities Management (OMB/DFM) Real Property Management Program consists of 123 leases, covering approximately 1.8 million square feet of rented space occupied by various State of Delaware agencies, at a current year annualized cost of $34.5 million. Based on the magnitude of this cost component in the State's collective operating budget across agencies, this GEAR project began as an initiative to minimize lease costs. Historically, real estate-related tasks were decentralized across numerous state agencies. This led to duplication of effort and expenditure, failure to leverage collective locations, common property ownership and arms-length knowledge of the state of the local real estate market and its related peripheral indications such as borrowing rates, economic development interest and general business conditions.

After the execution of a professional services procurement process, a contractual partnership was formed with a real estate firm. Efforts began in the Fall of 2018 with the largest leasing agencies being the first impetus to begin a strategic approach. The target was further defined as the 78 leases that would expire in the ongoing five-year period. Over time, the confines of this target group of leases have been broadened due to market awareness and simple economic opportunity. Since the program began in 2018, all 78 leases have been renewed, relocated, terminated or transferred. Sixty-five of the 78 leases have been renewed or relocated. In addition, 13 of the 78 leases have been terminated or transferred. As a result of the progress made during the initial four years, the contract was renewed for an additional three years with opportunities to extend the contract.

This GEAR project continues to achieve the targeted goal while at the same time evolves further towards updating the lease document framework. This includes concessions such as environmental hygiene provisions that protect the state employee workforce, electric vehicle (EV) charging station installations on the leased premises, and owner– implemented cosmetic updates such as signage, paint, carpet, and restroom upgrades. These updates occur at the time of lease renewal and again every five to ten years. The State has also explored new lease locations and build-to-suit opportunities where savings, as well as preferable and stable lease conditions, can be secured. Lastly, as the opportunity arises, the State is acquiring properties that it currently leases as well as properties where it has a need for additional space. Since October 2022, nine properties have been acquired. These acquisitions reduce the lease inventory in addition to providing cost savings of $27.5 million, to be realized over time.

To date, 75 leases have been affected either by renegotiation/extension of the lease term or relocation of the State's workforce to a facility with better, more economical lease conditions and/or a newly constructed facility completed as a build-to-suit arrangement. Under build-to-suit terms, one new building was constructed where financially, the transition to the new building with replicated conditions is expected to pay for itself out of lease savings. Thus far, the project has resulted in more than $35.9 million in hard dollar rent savings and more than $10 million in soft dollar rent savings over the life of the renegotiated and extended leases. Soft dollar savings include paint, carpet, parking lot restriping, bathroom/kitchen updates and other leasehold improvements.

As departments continue to implement hybrid work schedules, OMB/DFM is actively capitalizing on opportunities to repurpose or downsize spaces that are no longer fully utilized due to telecommuting. To date, three agencies have successfully reduced their real estate footprint as a result of hybrid work arrangements. This resulted in a savings of $211,419 annually.

In June 2024, a contractual partnership was formed with a real estate strategy firm that specializes in space planning. This firm will analyze the functional efficiency and relative quality of space utilization in state facilities and provide recommendations for improvement. These recommendations will include reconfiguring of spaces that incorporate the use of hybrid and fully remote work environments. The final results are expected by end of 2025.

Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) Service Efficiency Blitz

The Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) process plays an advisory role in coordinating land use development across Delaware by organizing guidance from State agencies and providing this preliminary information to developers. This guidance provided by the PLUS process is associated with land use proposals above a certain size and scale defined by State statute and local ordinances. Projects reviewed through PLUS typically include comprehensive development plans, residential subdivisions with more than 50 units, non-residential plans with more than 50,000 square feet of floor area, and annexations and rezoning proposals that are not in compliance with a certified comprehensive plan Recognizing opportunities for greater efficiency and value delivery, the State of Delaware's Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Program Management Team and the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) launched a three-day

Service Efficiency Blitz (SEB) to analyze the end-to-end customer experience, evaluate system performance, and initiate immediate efficiencies. Using Lean and Agile practices, the team examined the process from a customer perspective through key PLUS personas. The PLUS value stream was mapped to identify pain points, implement immediate solutions, and establish a framework for further efficiency efforts. This rapid improvement event was timely given the focus by the Office of the Governor on overall business permitting process efficiency and the need for these efficiencies to positively impact affordable housing development and economic development in the State of Delaware.

The details on the near and mid-term improvements that were identified and launched through the event, include:

I. Just Do Its (To Be Achieved Within Several Days of Completing the Event)
   - Eliminating the ESRI geographic information system (GIS) pre-check requirement for applicants, saving 30+ minutes per submission. Annual estimated cost savings $2,438.
   - Sharing all applications (without supporting documents, unless already received) as they are received by OSPC staff with State agencies via Teams to enhance feedback and preparation time.
   - Establishing the comment letter in Teams to allow concurrent input from State agencies.
   - Adding timestamps to PLUS meeting recordings to improve usability to viewers.

II. Quick Wins (To Be Achieved Within Two Weeks of Completing the Event)
   - Developing and launching a customer feedback survey tool in Survey123 for developers and local governments to start measuring the value they derive from the process.
   - Shifting the PLUS meeting schedule from the 4th to 5th Wednesday following receipt of applications with tightened agency comment deadlines (required within 15 business days instead of 20 business days following the PLUS meeting), thus reducing the overall process timeline by one week and increasing State agency time to prepare for meetings and sufficiently detailed comments. Five business days eliminated for an annual estimated cost savings $162,500.
   - Enhancing communication of the State's role via the PLUS website to enhance clarity and access to information for customers, including the publication of the MOU table on the website.

III. Strategic Bets (To Be Achieved Within One to Six Months of the Event)
   - Additional PLUS evaluation with a focus on value to customer segments (the goal will be to increase customer satisfaction and experience provided through the feedback that is generated internally through the surveys and any additional external review of the program)
   - Reformat recommendations to leverage a new PLUS "best practices" manual with prioritized health and safety considerations for development. This should right size the level of detail in the PLUS letter, prioritizing requirements (laws and regulations) over recommendations which may be cited through a brief reference to appendices in the manual (the goal is to reduce the PLUS letter from ~9 to ~2 pages minimizing the volume of work on participating organizations and highlighting to the customer the information that is most valuable).
   - Evaluate Opt-In or Opt-Out Format for meetings as well as potential for Question and Answer structure of meetings (the goal is to reduce the number of PLUS applications, provide meetings only for those developers and local governments who derive the most value, and review time put forth by State agencies, which may allow for further timeline reductions)
   - Implement Customized PLUS pathways as follows:
     - School site feasibility (would not change – maintain status quo)
     - Certified comprehensive development plans for local governments (would incorporate additional quality/standard MOU terms – *may be deemed outside scope for SEB objectives*)
     - Small business applicant waiver path (new waiver to provide concierge service to small business owners)
     - Pilot fast track/concierge service for affordable housing projects (new path for Governor's priority focus area)
     - Land use development (new opt out process based on pilot – prioritize development reviews under PLUS if they are misaligned with Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending, "State Strategies," and for developers/local governments requesting the input of PLUS)

Data Integration and Mapping

Leverage FirstMap for Data Sharing

The FirstMap environment is managed by DTI's Location Intelligence team and is a web hosted environment providing a wide range of geographic information systems to anyone who is seeking non-secure data. Since the FirstMap 2 upgrade, Office of Management and Budget/Office of State Planning Coordination (OMB/OSPC) and DTI have made strides in not only making this data more available but are working to evaluate the consistency and accuracy of this data. These quality assurance processes are important to the ever-evolving state of Geographic Information System (GIS) data and the technology that helps State entities consume and disseminate it for broader statewide use. Additionally, as OMB/OSPC and DTI work through some of these processes they are helping to spread awareness to the user base and strengthen their individual and collaborative efforts as they leverage datasets to provide quality products to suit the needs of their respective agencies.

Additionally, the Location Intelligence team and OMB/OSPC were able to engage the United States Geological Survey and Delaware Geological Survey for contracting and acquisition of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data. This data was last collected nearly eight years ago, therefore, acquiring updated elevation data holds many benefits and uses for the ever-growing environmental analysis that the State is monitoring more closely. Once collected and completed this dataset will be made available via the State's FirstMap environment. In the Fiscal Year 2025 State operating budget, OMB received funding to begin a regular update cycle for all base GIS data, including aerial imagery, land use/land cover and LiDAR (elevation data). This will ensure that the State's agencies, local governments, and the entire GIS user community is using up to date and accurate data.

In April 2025, OMB/OSPC issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for six-inch aerial imagery and land use/land cover (LULC) data covering the entire State of Delaware. After reviewing submitted proposals and completing contract negotiations, the contract was officially awarded. This marks the third consecutive two-year aerial imagery collection for the state and will provide an updated round of land use land cover data. These datasets are essential for supporting a wide range of mapping projects, spatial analyses, and day-to-day operations across various agencies. Additionally, the contract includes buy-up options for higher-resolution data products, which can be acquired on an as-needed basis. This allows agencies to utilize the contract for more targeted data collection to meet specific project needs and areas of interest.

Establish a State Land Inventory

In July of 2025 the State Land Inventory Management System (SLIM) was launched. This transformative initiative—born out of the Governor's Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) program—represents a major step forward in promoting transparency, operational excellence, and a culture of continuous improvement across Delaware's state government. SLIM is a first-of-its-kind, centralized solution for how state government inventories and manages state-owned land assets across multiple agencies. Designed with sustainability and interagency collaboration in mind, the SLIM system will:

- Serve as the authoritative, centralized database for all state-owned land assets.
- Enable secure access through the "Authentication protocols approved by the Department of Technology and Information".
- Integrate with First State Financials (FSF) to ensure property data remains consistent and up to date.
- Offer a user-friendly interface for viewing and managing land asset data.
- Reduce duplication and manual data entry while enhancing data quality and reporting.
- Empower agencies with improved insight into land utilization, property status, and shared opportunities.

A diverse project team created the SLIM application. Sponsored by OMB/OSPC, working in partnership with DTI for project management support and other key sections, were instrumental in the design and development of the application. The project vendor created a custom user interface that stands on existing technology infrastructure. It was truly a team effort in collaboration with agency partners. SLIM is now in active use by 14 State agencies that manage the ownership of real property, easements and leases.

GEAR State Inventory Data for UD Capstone Project

In July 2024, at the request of State Treasurer Davis, GEAR participated in a meeting to develop the concept of using State-owned land to fill in gaps where community development could take place, generally within municipalities, to provide housing, economic development and other amenities to otherwise underserved populations and get the land back on the tax rolls to produce tax revenue for the municipalities and perhaps the State. The key to this endeavor was to identify potential surplus properties and why it did not make sense for the State to retain these properties and then identify what development opportunities would be appropriate for a given property in each location. Open space and protected Agland parcels would not be included as candidates for development. The surplus State-owned parcels would be made available to private developers (bid process, lease, or other means) to build State-specified housing or other development elements. To analyze this concept required access to land use data from the GEAR State Land Use Inventory Project overseen by OMB/OSPC

A proposal involving OMB/OSPC, GEAR and OST to look at sustainable land use in Delaware using the State Land Inventory Management (SLIM) project database was drafted and submitted to the University of Delaware's (UD) Biden School. This proposal was accepted and a Master's level team was assigned to work on it. OMB/OSPC agreed to provide sample data for three to five parcels to be used as case studies testing whatever methodology the team developed to analyze state properties that might have a higher and better use than what they are currently being used for.

The Capstone students and the State's project team agreed that the project sought to assist the state in defining "surplus" property and estimating potential revenue streams that might be available coming from the reuse of these "surplus" properties. These potential reuses of the "surplus" property would be tied to 2020 State Strategies (particularly in Levels 1 and 2--where transportation, utilities, jobs, social activities are available). Recommendations would be made regarding best practices for the administration of state property assets, their declaration as being "surplus," and the disposition of these "surplus" properties to create revenue streams for the State and local jurisdictions (to reduce burden on taxpayers). The proposed deliverables were a methodology to define and identify when a property could be considered "surplus," a methodology to determine the potential value of the "surplus" property (valuations for commercial, natural resources, ecological and social uses) and a methodology to use the potential value and traits of the "surplus" property to generate revenues whether through disposition, development or other means.

The UD Capstone Team presented their final product to the State client team on May 20, 2025. The UD Capstone Team selected a Logic Scoring of Preference Model and the leveraged the available data regarding the State's properties. The model is designed to overcome the challenges facing Delaware's surplus identification process (namely, agency centered, no uniform definitions or methodologies of how to determine what is "surplus"). Students found a way to address the different data aspects of state properties by dividing the data into Policy Priority (using publicly available GIS data) and Asset Performance (basically State agency data on conditions and uses of the property) after addressing capability (the legal constraints preventing properties from being used for other purposes). They demonstrated that the methodology does work by testing it with four parcels (two schools and two parcels managed by OMB). Their report's final recommendations were thoughtful and clear and readily implementable by the State. The result is that the State now has a tool it can use to make determining "surplus" property a more robust process and can make the determination in nearly real time and puts Delaware on the leading edge of state property management.

Treasury Management

Comply with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS)

By analyzing agencies' current business processes involving how payments are handled, the Office of State Treasurer's (OST) Merchant Services team is making recommendations for improvements that can reduce an agency's information technology (IT) and business vulnerabilities when handling credit and debit card payments. OST's primary strategy for ensuring all agency merchants are PCI DSS compliant is to reduce the scope of potential vulnerabilities within agencies' payment environments by providing Point-to-Point Encrypted (P2PE) payment devices for in-person payments, and vendor-hosted online payment pages with secure checkout environments. In addition, OST assists State agencies with updating policies and procedures for securely handling payment transactions and aids with remediating payment security vulnerabilities. These efforts ensure that payment best practices are being implemented, the PCI DSS burden is minimized, and that the State's data systems are secure. The consequences of failing PCI DSS compliance include the State's loss of credibility, fines, and no longer being able to accept credit card payments. OST continues to work with agencies to ensure that other current payment types are being handled in a manner that is compliant with PCI DSS.

Delaware has positioned itself as an "early adopter" State when it comes to PCI DSS compliance, embracing Version 4.0 of the Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs) that State agencies use to evaluate and remediate their payment environment(s). The scheduling of SAQ workshops with agencies started in November 2023 and remain on-going. It is important to note that PCI DSS is a recurring yearly mandate. Among the achievements are the establishment of SAQ workshops that assist agencies in completing their SAQs in real-time and the drafting of a State of Delaware PCI DSS policy. Additionally, OST has met all PCI DSS stipulated remediation timelines, having promptly and effectively addressed internal and external quarterly IT environment scans.

In a collaborative effort with DTI and a contracted Qualified Security Assessor, OST will continue to work with State agencies to ensure that payments are being handled in a manner that is compliant with PCI DSS as well as similarly defined security procedures from NACHA (National Automated Clearing House Association) for ACH transactions. The current deadline for OST to attest PCI DSS compliance on behalf of all State agency merchants remains on December 31st of every year.

Implementation of the Kyriba Treasury Management System

The Office of the State Treasurer is implementing Kyriba, a cloud-based treasury management system, to replace manual workflows and consolidate bank connectivity, cash data, and treasury functions into a single platform. Kyriba provides real-time visibility, automated reconciliation, and configurable dashboards, significantly reducing time spent on spreadsheets and improving forecasting accuracy. Kyriba automates tracking and integrates with payments, accounting, and forecasting—reducing errors from manual entry and improving treasury management oversight.

The system strengthens compliance and security with standardized approvals, signatory controls, and centralized bank account management. As a SOC 1/SOC 2 Type II certified SaaS platform, Kyriba offers enhanced fraud prevention and mitigates cyber and compliance risks. Ultimately, Kyriba shifts focus from manual tasks to strategic analysis, enabling faster, more accurate decisions. It supports scalable reporting and collaboration, leading to improved liquidity management and a more resilient, audit-ready treasury function.

Human Resources Modernization

Centralize and Modernize Human Resources Delivery

By investing in technology and centralizing core human resources functions, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) is transforming the management and delivery of human resources services for the State. Modernization accomplishments in 2025 include:

- Digitizing personnel records and scanning into an electronic enterprise document management system to strengthen security and risk management of human resources records.
- Sustaining a centralized employee onboarding system, Delaware Launchpad, across Executive Branch agencies to assure consistent and streamlined preboarding, onboarding, and offboarding processes.
- Streamlining the employee complaint process and enhancing the coordination of employee and labor relations.
- Partnering with the Delaware Department of Labor, Division of Paid Leave, and OMB PHRST to implement the State's paid family medical insurance leave program.
- Providing a comprehensive analysis of state agencies' workforce in the annual Workforce Report and assessing state and national employment trends. Updated and improved the Exit Survey, Onboarding Survey, and reporting of retirement data to better forecast future state agencies' needs for retention purposes.
- Serving as a key Enterprise Resource Planning Project Team partner, providing critical insight into human resource and payroll system requirements. Act as a liaison to ensure that business needs are clearly communicated and integrated into the system selection process.

In 2025, the team responsible for implementing the Delaware LaunchPad was named DHR employees of the year for their exemplary work in modernizing the delivery of employee onboarding and offboarding.

Effective Use of Technology

DHR made a significant advancement in 2023 by implementing an enterprise document management system. This transition from physical filing cabinets to an electronic system has modernized human resource records management. In 2025, over 5.8 million documents were digitized and scanned into the DHR electronic enterprise document management system, eliminating paper documents and enabling over 2,000 square feet of filing room space to be converted to office or meeting space. This transition enables automated processes, enhances user access, minimizes risk, improves record management and retention, and bolsters security and confidentiality. Integration of the onboarding solution in 2025 enables secure and automated transfer of new hire documents into DHR's electronic document management system, providing accurate filing, safe storage, and easy retrieval

DHR is pivotal in the State's effort to select a solution to replace its legacy human resource and payroll system through a statewide contract. This includes participation in requirements gathering, drafting vendor demonstration scripts, scoring proposals and vendor demonstrations, and coordinating input from human resources subject matter experts.

In 2025, DHR entered the sustainment phase of a centralized employee onboarding system, Delaware Launchpad, across Executive Branch agencies, introducing consistent and streamlined statewide preboarding, onboarding, and offboarding processes. Agency onboarding checklists and tasks were developed in 2025, with the expectation that this phase would be completed by the end of the year.

The Delaware Learning Center (DLC) Support Portal was introduced in early 2022 to support the management of user requests for the learning management system. This portal revolutionized the DLC helpdesk by automating case creation from emails, providing email notifications, enhancing data analytics, facilitating case tracking, and establishing a knowledge bank. This effort transitioned the help desk from manual ticket management, which relied on emails and phone calls, to a fully automated system. The system was expanded in 2024 to include automating the tracking of agency service requests and was renamed the Division of Training and HR Solutions Support Portal. In 2025, DHR began implementing the change management and communication plan for system users.

DHR is a key Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Project Team member who is pivotal in communicating the needs of the human resource and payroll business systems. Staff actively reviewed and provided feedback on vendor proposals and system demonstrations to ensure alignment with operational requirements and documented current service delivery needs provided by existing systems that are not integrated into the legacy system. The DHR project team is contributing to the evaluation of configuration options and the shaping of implementation strategies to support the smooth transition and long-term functionality of the new system. Vendor demonstrations are expected to be completed, with selection and contract negotiations anticipated in the fall of 2025, followed by implementation targeted to begin in late 2026.

Drive Leadership Training Opportunities

Since 2021, DHR and GEAR have partnered to support the State's vision to enhance internal capacity to promote, facilitate, and implement continuous improvement efforts by developing leadership and specialized operational excellence skills to lead and support those efforts. In Fiscal Year 2024, the First State Quality Improvement Fund's (FSQIF) funding expanded to support the implementation of: 1) Project and Process Leadership (PPL) training, focusing on the people side of leadership skills crucial for fostering collaboration, driving innovation, and achieving goals, 2) Operational Excellence (OpEx) Program designed to provide specialized skills to existing practitioners through certificate programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials in agile, applied project management, business analysis, or Lean Six Sigma, and 3) continuation of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) Program training.

In 2025, two cohorts of the CIP Program as managed and administered by DHR were offered, increasing the total number of graduates to 155 since its inception. This training is for employees seeking knowledge and skills necessary to lead efforts with training in project management, Lean process improvement, and change management serving as a feeder program into the GEAR Field Team.

The PPL program, managed and administered by DHR, is a comprehensive program designed to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to lead projects and teams effectively. The program focuses on the key areas of continuous improvement leadership to understanding core leadership principles such as communication, motivation, conflict resolution, and decision-making, facilitation skills to cultivate high-performing teams through effective meeting facilitation, presentation skills, managing information, and building stakeholder engagement, and strategic thinking to align project goals with organizational objectives, anticipating future challenges, and identifying opportunities for innovation and improvement. In Fiscal Year 25, 28 employees enrolled in this program.

The OpEx program, managed by GEAR and administered by DHR, enables existing GEAR Field Team members to complete one of four certificate programs in agile development, applied project management, business analysis, or Lean Six Sigma. This advanced coursework provides the opportunity to achieve industry-recognized credentials and advance the state's culture of continuous improvement. In 2025, 10 state employees completed this program.

The iLEAD Delaware Leadership Program, designed to develop future leaders, offers opportunities for employees who lead teams and those who lead projects and process improvement initiatives. To date, 724 active State employees have completed the leadership essentials training requirements, and 1,223 are currently enrolled. For employees leading teams, the State provides a frontline leadership certificate program focusing on leading teams, communication, driving performance, coaching skills, and building a productive workplace environment; 41 employees have completed the program requirements to date, and 73 current, new, and aspiring leaders have actively enrolled in the Frontline Leadership Certificate Program, which requires over 40 hours of training.

DHR's Administrative Professional Curriculum continues to be popular, covering critical areas, such as professional compliance, communication, interpersonal skills, time management, and technology proficiency, to empower participants to excel in their roles and contribute effectively to their state organizations. Over the past year, 285 employees have enrolled in the streamlined program, consisting of 64.5 hours of training and 38 training courses. This customer-focused training provides valuable knowledge to an underserved group of employees. It benefits not only administrative professionals but also State agencies and their leadership, with 94 percent of the participants indicating that the program better equipped them to handle the administrative tasks after completing the program and that they would recommend the program to others.

Strengthen and Grow the GEAR P3 Awards

DHR manages statewide award programs to celebrate the accomplishments of State employees. Among these awards are the GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award and the Trailblazer Award to honor exceptional State employees and teams who employ continuous improvement methodologies and effective project management techniques. Annually, these awards celebrate employees' use of continuous improvement tools to excel in leadership, team dynamics, and communication, ultimately enhancing customer service and achieving tangible results. These awards are the pinnacle of the Governor's Team Excellence Award Program. Award-winning projects showcase innovative, sustainable, and efficient business processes and services.

The GEAR P3 awards monetary incentives made possible through a partnership between the State and the private sector through the GEAR P3 Taskforce. In 2025, the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award recipients were awarded $15,000, shared among team members, while those employees receiving the GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award each received $1,500. The annual financial support for these awards includes a $25,000 matched funding from the State and the private sector.

This year's GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award winners included two teams: 1) Department of Education's Combating Delaware's Teacher Shortage Team who created new teacher recruitment and retention strategies leading to increased participation in teacher programs, improved working conditions, competitive salaries, contributing to reduction in vacancy rates, and 2) the Updated Retention Schedules Team from the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families who have prepared 400 boxes for destruction saving the state $20,000 per month in storage/archiving fees.

The GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award recipients in 2025 included 1) a Department of Transportation Engineer who demonstrated extraordinary leadership in emergency repairs for the Trap Pond Dam Spillway following a critical failure and sinkhole. As a result of this individual's effort, the dam's functionality was restored, and a best practices model was developed for future infrastructure emergencies, and 2) a team of five employees from the Department of Transportation/DMV was recognized for launching DELLA. This AI-powered chatbot enhances customer service by providing 24/7 access to essential information, thereby streamlining interactions with DMV users.

The Champion's Award is provided to teams that demonstrate superior use of continuous quality improvement tools to achieve exceptional results in process efficiency, customer service, or cost savings. These teams' nominations were not at the level of the apex award but have notable team processes or results. Three teams were selected for the Champions Award, including 1) the Bridge Design Competition Team, which addressed challenges in hiring entry-level engineers by launching an annual bridge design competition in 2018. The program has since grown significantly, fostering long-term student engagement, supporting workforce development, attracting students to engineering, and inspiring similar initiatives in other states. 2) The Election Security Team significantly strengthened Delaware's election integrity by rapidly reducing cybersecurity vulnerabilities and improving threat response time from days to minutes. Their innovative and collaborative approach set a national standard for securing elections and inspired similar efforts in other states, and 3) The Department of Safety and Homeland Security's Division of Communications Team successfully relocated and upgraded the state's 800 MHz communication system with less than 1 percent downtime, ensuring uninterrupted service for first responders. Through proactive planning, cross-training, and cost-saving measures, they built a sustainable workforce and set a model for future system relocations.

Incentivize the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service Award

Since its inception in 1990, the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service, commonly referred to as the "Employee of the Year" Award, has recognized outstanding employees. Before the 2009 recession, recipients of this statewide award received a $3,000 monetary incentive. Nominees compete against Employees of the Quarter within their agencies. Up to five individuals or small teams of fewer than six are selected annually for this statewide award.

DHR has continued to streamline the Statewide Recognition Award Program, which includes the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service, the Delaware Heroism Award, the Governor's Team Excellence awards, which encompass the GEAR-P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award, the Champions Award, and the GEAR-P3 Trailblazer Award. With tight timelines for execution, DHR continues to streamline the application and selection processes. In addition, DHR is requesting spending authority for Statewide Employee Recognition in Fiscal Year 2026 to restore the $1,200 monetary incentive for each recipient of the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service, provide courage coins for Delaware Award for Heroism recipients, and provide financial support for the statewide recognition programs.

Promoting a Respectful and Inclusive Workplace

DHR is committed to advancing a workplace environment characterized by collaboration, trust, integrity, and respect across all levels. In 2025, DHR implemented initiatives and delivered programs supporting an accessible, respectful, and ethical workplace for 14,000 Executive Branch employees, including drafting the first ethics training policy in collaboration with the State's Public Integrity Commission.

DHR is dedicated to developing impactful and equitable statewide policies and procedures supporting enacted legislation and the Governor's initiatives. During Fiscal Year 2025, the Division of Talent Management created and updated 21 policies and operating procedures, two templates, and 19 forms. Key developments included: updates to the state's Paid Parental Leave Policy to align with the Healthy Delaware Families Act, expanding eligibility to allow employees to use the leave for children up to the age of 18, and it now also applies to eligible part-time employees, as well as full-time employees; updates to the Employee Personnel Records Policy and working with the state's Public Archives to align the policy with the State's General Retention Records Schedule; streamlined the state's previous merit hiring documents and created the Merit System Hiring Policy, in collaboration with DHR's Talent Acquisition team; updates to the Employee Onboarding and Offboarding Policy to standardize agency's ability to allow flexibility for employees who are processing paperwork for retirement and created a new Retirement Offboarding Checklist for agency personnel to complete when an employee is separating from employment due to retirement.

The statewide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) section of DHR actively collaborated with Talent Acquisition to bridge gaps and assist applicants with disabilities by creating improved access to requesting reasonable accommodations. The ADA section partnered with several agencies to ensure the State of Delaware was well-represented at the Mid-Atlantic ADA Conference, held in Wilmington, DE, at the Hotel DuPont, last October. Several agencies served in a variety of capacities: presenters, sponsors/exhibitors, and as attendees. The newly created ADA Coordinator Network Group was developed to bring together both Title I and Title II Agency ADA Coordinators to collaborate, support and share resources. Along with DHR's People and Inclusion and Communications divisions, Statewide ADA collaborated on a public proclamation signing to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The DHR team worked closely with the Governor's Office on this historic event. ADA reasonable accommodation training is conducted quarterly. This training is mandatory for all new DHR employees; however, supervisors and those in higher positions are also encouraged to take the training.

The annual DHR Workforce Report was enhanced to include up-to-date statistical data and a comparative analysis of trends from previous years. The report includes a section outlining recommendations and action plans for continued improvement. This comprehensive approach ensures a thorough understanding of workforce dynamics and provides actionable insights for future enhancements. These same policies were also translated into Haitian Creole and Spanish, the two common languages spoken in Delaware, in addition to English. These documents are available on DHR's website to promote more inclusivity for these populations by making them more accessible and readable.

The Employee and Labor Relations (ELR) team upgraded the Respectful Workforce and Anti-Discrimination (RWAD) policy to provide the State workforce with an improved complaint form to address discrimination issues of protected classes in the workforce. In accordance with statutory amendments, ELR revised the RWAD to include housing status as a protected class. Additionally, ELR added a compliant form to the Standards of Conduct (SOC) policy to reduce improper use of the RWAD by providing a mechanism for addressing workplace issues not based upon protected class. These tools continue to help address discriminatory and nondiscriminatory issues in the workplace.

Based on the evaluations of a prior webinar series and feedback from the women employee programming workgroup, the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy (OWAA) created a Women's Wellness Wednesday webinar series in collaboration with physicians from Christiana Care in the fall of 2024. The series covered topics that included menopause, breast density, bone health, nutrition and more. Over 1,000 employees participated in the webinar series and the event evaluations illustrated the success of the series. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, employees overwhelmingly expressed their appreciation for both the information shared and the opportunity to discuss topics that are often not openly addressed. In addition to webinars on topics identified by employees, OWAA also surveyed HR business partners on existing lactation spaces in state buildings, to both assure that spaces are being maintained as well as identify any needs for more spaces. OWAA also provided guidance related to lactation in the workplace to both state employees as needed and HR business partners. OWAA will continue to utilize the women employee workgroup to identify future programming for state employees.

The Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) / People and Culture (P&C) continues to serve as a collaborative partner with State agencies, providing coaching to committee leaders and offering logistical and event support to internal employee-led committees within the Executive Branch. These committees are dedicated to advising the agency on matters related to fostering an inclusive workforce. They offer valuable insights, feedback, and actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing access and opportunities for all employees, while working to cultivate an inclusive and fair environment.

Contain Health Care Costs

As health care costs continue to climb, the DHR Statewide Benefits Office (SBO), under the guidance of the State Employee Benefits Committee (SEBC), continues to develop strategies to engage Group Health Insurance Plan (GHIP) members to contain health care costs for State employees, retirees, pensioners, and their dependents. To ensure the financial stability of the Group Health Fund and prevent future double-digit rate increases, the SEBC approved a 4.2 percent increase in State health plan premiums (rates), which were effective July 1, 2025, for active employees and non-Medicare retirees and are effective January 1, 2026, for Medicare retirees.

The State projects that healthcare costs will increase between 5.5 percent and 9.5 percent in Fiscal Year 2026. Pharmaceutical costs are expected to increase between 9.5 percent and 14.5 percent in Fiscal Year 2026, primarily due to the coverage and continual expansion of weight loss medications and other GLP-1 drugs. The State first began covering weight loss medications on July 1, 2023, and since that time, has seen a significant increase in utilization of GLP-1 medications. In Fiscal Year 2024, the gross spend for GLP-1 weight loss medications reached $14.1 million, with the gross spend for GLP-1 diabetic medications reaching $24.7 million, a 149 percent increase from the $17 million in gross spend for Fiscal Year 2023. Fiscal Year 2025 showed an additional jump in utilization for this class of medications, with total gross spend for GLP-1 weight loss medications reaching $52.6 million (a 273 percent increase) and total gross spend for GLP-1 diabetic medications being $31.1 million (a 26 percent increase). These trends continue to increase with Fiscal Year 2026 projecting $76.3 million in gross spend for GLP-1 weight loss medications and $35.7 million in gross spend for GLP-1 diabetic medications, an increase of 43 percent and 15 percent, respectively, over Fiscal Year 2025.

In the fall of 2024, the SEBC approved a new incentive-based Diabetes Prevention Pilot Program called TheraPay, through Reciprocity Health and Highmark Delaware, which launched on July 1, 2025. Eligible State employees who are Highmark members and are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes can enroll and earn up to $275 for participating in the free 12-month YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program, which also includes four months of a free YMCA family membership. This pilot is limited to the first 100 enrollees. The State offers multiple free diabetes prevention and management programs and continues to monitor the diabetes trend closely.

The State implemented the Hinge Health virtual physical therapy program effective January 1, 2023, for Group Health Insurance Plan (GHIP) non-Medicare members to address the growing cost and prevalence of musculoskeletal conditions and provide an additional resource to members experiencing acute or chronic pain. Since program inception, Hinge Health has successfully engaged 3,252 members and maintains a member satisfaction rate of 90 percent. Of the engaged members, 47 percent saw positive outcomes in pain reduction with 78 percent reaching a minimal clinically significant difference in documented pain. Hinge Health projects a program net savings of $6.6 million for the GHIP and has recently expanded to include women’s pelvic health therapy.

The State must continue its strategies to offer programs to manage health and chronic conditions and engage GHIP members through education and training as health care costs cannot be addressed solely through rate increases.

The structure and authority of the SEBC has recently changed due to changes in Delaware Code. House Bill 282 with House Amendment 1, 3, and Senate Amendment 1 amended Titles 29 § 9602 – 9603 of the Delaware Code by making the following changes to the membership, processes and procedures of the SEBC effective January 1, 2025:

- The SEBC chair will be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the vice-chair will be elected annually by the members of the committee. The vice-chair must be a voting member of the committee and may not be a cabinet secretary or hold a position of equivalent rank in the executive branch.
- The position of the Delaware retiree appointed by the Governor will be removed and two members who are Delaware residents eligible to receive health care insurance under Chapter 52 of Title 29 of the Delaware Code under a pension or retirement plan will be added. The President Pro Tem of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint 1 of these members.
- The Controller General will no longer be a voting member on the SEBC and can delegate the Deputy Controller General to attend meetings of the committee or a subcommittee.
- Non-appointed SEBC members will be able to appoint a designee with voting ability by notifying the SEBC chair in writing.
- The chair of a subcommittee must be a voting member of the SEBC.
- If the SEBC or a subcommittee holds a virtual meeting, the chair or vice-chair must attend at the anchor location.
- The SEBC must approve an RFP to select a carrier or third-party administrator for the health care insurance plan for State employees or eligible pensioners during an open meeting and the draft RFP must be included with the meeting notice and agenda.
- The SEBC must provide a meaningful opportunity for public comment before voting on whether to approve an RFP to select a carrier or third-party administrator for the health care insurance plan for State employees or eligible pensioners.
- The SEBC will consist of the following voting members beginning January 2025: the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Secretary of the Department of Human Resources, the Secretary of the Department

of Health and Social Services, the Lieutenant Governor, the Insurance Commissioner, the State Treasurer, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, two union leaders or their designees and two eligible pensioners.

Due to the changes listed above, the SEBC has made significant revisions to the process of developing and approving RFPs related to benefits and the support/functions of the SEBC and SBO. The SEBC is focusing on transparency, lowering administrative fees, and reducing the overall net cost of benefits and services to the plan to contain healthcare costs and reduce benefits spending and trend.

A workplace is an important setting for supporting health and wellness. The State has prioritized increasing member communications and engagement, such as providing educational materials and resources on the management of prevalent chronic conditions and preventable diseases in a monthly newsletter sent to all benefit-eligible employees, a biannual newsletter sent to all benefit-eligible retirees, as well as working with health plan administrators to ensure members are aware of the numerous resources they have available to them through their benefits to manage conditions and provide support. Health plan administrators have also increased communication with members about appropriate care sites and prioritized educating them on their ability to lower out-of-pocket expenses, as well as expenses to the State, by visiting preferred locations for laboratory testing, imaging, and acute medical episodes. In addition to these efforts, the State experienced another successful benefit open enrollment period for 2025, with 83.3 percent of benefit-eligible State employees actively participating in the open enrollment process by changing or confirming their benefits selections.

DHR's SBO developed and implemented training and communication strategies to engage GHIP members, including educating enrolled members about benefit plans, appropriate care sites, member testimonials, high-quality/high-value providers, preventive care, and wellness/care management programs. Communication strategies included education through online and instructor-led training, monthly newsletters, targeted emails, and various webpages featuring condition prevention and management resources on topics such as diabetes, heart health, weight management, behavioral health/emotional well-being, cancer, and musculoskeletal pain. Additionally, SBO launched the "Get the Facts on What's Happening" communications campaign in December 2023 to increase transparency and awareness among employees and retirees regarding discussions related to the GHIP at the SEBC and SEBC subcommittee meetings, as well as actions taken by the SEBC. These communications are sent out every month to benefit-eligible State employees, HR/Benefits Representatives, as well as to legislators and their staff.

Technology Innovation

Information Technology Efficiency

Delaware has adopted a standardized Information Technology (IT) services delivery model with shared services either delivered or brokered by DTI to maximize the benefits of Information Technology Centralization (ITC). DTI developed a plan that defines the delivery strategy for moving State government to commoditized enterprise IT services while maintaining a system for supporting agency-specific needs. The goal is a secure State computing environment maintained by right-sized IT resources and solutions that are financially supported in an equitable way which also funds future investments in IT innovation.

The following sections highlight the move toward a shared services cost model that establishes an annual rate per user for Secure End User Services (SEUS). This model streamlines the delivery of core IT commodities, pursues increased visibility, enhanced controls for risk prevention and mitigation and provides employees with equitable access, support, equipment, software, and security to be able to do their work in an evolving IT-driven environment.

IT Centralization (ITC)

In 2021, DTI refocused its strategy from an agency-by-agency ITC effort to concentrate on how best to deliver a highly secure, equitably provisioned computing environment. The resulting comprehensive Secure End User Services (SEUS) strategy and associated cost model provide stable technology and predictable billing to State agencies based on actual usage. In April 2022, OMB and DHR served as the pilot agencies for SEUS. As part of this effort, DTI established a repeatable process and standard templates for data gathering and communication, including lessons learned. Beginning in 2023, centralization efforts for the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) were launched and completed by the end of 2024. This effort ensures the DSHA network is secure and functioning in a manner that is aligned with DTI Architecture Standards and best practices.

Development and implementation of the shared services cost model, in collaboration with OMB, reflecting the total cost of ownership of IT services is essential to moving ITC forward. It forms the basis of a strategy for continued IT service improvement and is crucial for Delaware centralized IT to be self-sustaining and right sized to support digital government. Considerations were made to the product, service, and personnel costs driving the fixed annual rate for the consumption of SEUS and the fiscal impact to agency consumers.

Secure End User Services (SEUS)

Secure End User Services (which currently includes email/collaboration, enterprise voice and security services) is the first IT package to transition to the new shared services cost model with the following benefits and features:

- Maximizes security compliance.
- Uses Microsoft Office 365, SEUS's productivity and collaboration tool, which is central to transitioning from a capital expense (device-based software) to an operating expense (per-user-per-year subscription Software-as-a-Service) model which makes IT service costs more predictable and scalable. Delaware completed Phases 1 and 2 of onboarding agencies to Microsoft Office 365's Government Cloud-based modern suite of collaboration, communication, and productivity tools this year and it is a feature of SEUS
- Includes cyber security monitoring, training, and authenticated user identity and access management.
- Provides licensing, support and access to enterprise voice devices and applications.
- Assures a predictive, consumption-based cost model for budget planning.

Under the SEUS subscription model, costs are based on a per-user annual consumption rate, tied to a service agreement that provides agencies with clear performance metrics. At the time of this report, Fiscal Year 2026 SEUS Terms of Service for partner agencies were put in place and monthly billing per the shared services cost model for Fiscal Year 2026 is underway. Over the next fiscal year, DTI will be evaluating the current suite of SEUS offerings to determine a viable approach for addressing legacy ITC and scaling services across the enterprise. forward.

Enterprise Digital Government: Single Sign-On for State Workers, Residents and Visitors

Delawareans have a view that State agencies collectively are "the government" and thus have a corresponding expectation that they will be able to access services in a seamless manner. Digital services have been deployed historically at an agency/division level in a non-integrated manner. Delaware is moving rapidly towards implementing a user-centric digital government strategy that delivers a consistent and intuitive user experience. Many government services are accessible online — and many others should be — allowing residents and visitors access anytime, from anywhere, on any device. The State has migrated services to the Internet but without an enterprise strategy. Instead, services must be sought out online from various agencies. Opening government to individuals and businesses, and breaking down the traditional barriers, encourages innovation while increasing efficiency and productivity for everyone.

Delaware implemented a single sign-on identity and access management solution with identity proofing to facilitate the launch of a single portal, called *Go DE*, for resident and visitor access to digital State services, similar to the Delaware One Stop portal for businesses. The vision is for a universal directory where anyone can register and prove their identity to conduct business with State agencies under that authenticated profile. Initially, Delaware onboarded State and school employees to *Delaware ID*, the access and identity management tenant for State workers. A larger initiative makes the resident and visitor solution *My Delaware* available for the public to create and maintain authenticated digital identities to consume State digital government services that will become available on the *Go DE* portal.

DTI and Department of State's Government Information Center (GIC) continue to work together, along with others, as collaborative partners to develop a strategy to integrate existing systems and deploy new systems into a modern enterprise platform. This includes several technology projects that support the digital government platform: an underlying customer relationship management application, single sign-on authentication, and identity proofing (State worker phase completed; resident and visitor platform operational), email marketing application, data management and analytics tool, and centralized online payment tool that can assume responsibility for the legacy Govolution payment solution being sunset in 2025. An enterprise digital government access model built on a Cloud platform that easily connects and interfaces with existing backend systems enterprise-wide is a key component to enabling increased resident and visitor self-service and overall satisfaction. With the right strategic partners, Delaware can determine a course that leads to transformation from the legacy brick-and-mortar government services model to digital government experiences that meet current and future customer expectations. DTI continues to partner with Department of State, Department of Finance, Department of Human Resources, and the Office of the State Treasurer to further the digital government strategy, with support from the Office of the Governor.

Digital Government Go DE Platform Foundation

Currently, every Delaware State agency maintains its own web presence. Residents and visitors use the Delaware.gov website to find and navigate to a variety of web pages to procure state products and services. The Governor-sponsored Digital Government Platform Foundation program, known as *Go DE*, calls for a uniform, one-stop approach to streamline access to agency offerings via a secure and personalized experience. With an opportunity for all State agencies to participate on the platform, partnership with business, technology, external vendors, and consumers is key to the program's success. Innovative solutions and best practices applied by both Delaware State agencies and various states throughout the country provide direction for the development of a new technology stack including a purchasing cart, secure single sign-on, and mobile capabilities.

Delaware wants residents and visitors to be at the center of everything it does. The design and functionality of Delaware's digital government experience must be well-crafted, intuitive, accessible, and offer fast and focused transactions that result in a satisfying experience. Delivering on this outcome requires a commitment to the on-going evolution of Delaware's digital platform, consumer interests, and needs. Agency programs highlight both the demand for an improved digital experience and an increase in customer usage and satisfaction. In addition, user experience research, application and transactional data analysis, and resident dialog will drive priorities and expectations. The culmination of this multi-layered technology and end user access platform is a transformative experience for Delaware's residents and visitors by providing digital access to an increasing number of government services.

Making the delivery of products and services easier for Delawareans and visitors, and simplifying maintenance for agency staff, improves the quality of interactions for all. The Digital Government Platform, *Go DE*, integrates a best-in-class payment engine, identity management (MyDelaware), and secure portal framework into a modular platform. Its architecture is cloud-based, scalable, and secure, supporting real-time reporting and metrics to ensure both robust performance and future adaptability. Reacting to the needs of state consumers, agencies and schools, *Go DE* provides hosted forms and integrated applications with payment integration. In addition, transaction invoicing can be generated directly to the consumer from the platform. Advanced options such as pre-authorized, recurring and scheduled payments are now available for greater flexibility, and non-payment filings offer the ability for residents and visitors to upload required documents. All input can be immediately reviewed by agency and school resources via a secure, robust administrative Account Center.

In addition to the implementation of *Pay with Go DE and the Go DE resident and visitor portal*, production results and data substantiate the opportunity and outcomes made available through digital solutions. *Data provided is as of July 2025.*

Transactions & Revenue

- Cumulative Payments Processed: Over 24,000 transactions across participating state agencies
- Cumulative Dollar Volume: Exceeds $8.8 million in total processed payments
- Contract Cost Avoidance: $2.1 million+ saved by migrating 120 agency use cases to Pay with *Go DE* avoiding individual agency application contracts (average savings of $17,000 per use case)
- Growth Rate: 10x increase in monthly transaction volume from Sept 2024 to Apr 2025; an additional 10x projected by End of Year 2025 with the onboarding of Department of Labor, Department of State, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Department of Finance and Delaware Department of Transportation

Users & Adoption

- Active Users: Over 18,000 unique users
- School Pay Reach: By Summer 2025, 25,000+ students served across 55 schools and 70+ fiscal administrators
- Digital Transformation: Thousands of paper-based payments (cash/check) now completed via secure online methods

Service Reach & Integration

- Applications Onboarded: 70+ government payment and service applications fully integrated and indexed
- Forms Pipeline: Form framework under active development, with full deployment targeted by end of 2025
- APIs Available: 15+ APIs supporting payments, payment links, authentication, financial reporting, observability, and filings
- Account Center: Fully active on My.Delaware.gov SSO allows users to manage payments, filings, and preferences across all agencies

Efficiency & Modernization

- Migration Savings: *Go DE* onboarding costs are 10x lower than direct processor led integrations
- Fiscal Reconciliation: Real-time, comprehensive reporting is available directly on the *Go DE* platform
- Accessibility: Fully WCAG 2.1-compliant with responsive mobile design (52 percent of users on mobile)
- Operational Efficiency: Agencies report significantly lower support ticket volume and reduced administrative burden

Scalability & Security

- Single Sign-On (SSO): Secure identity verification powered by OKTA, with seamless cross-agency access
- Cloud-Native Architecture: Modular and scalable infrastructure designed for future growth and agility
- DDoS Protection: All APIs and portals are protected by an industry-leading DDoS mitigation provider
- Continuous Improvement: Ongoing releases include partial/scheduled payments, mobile optimization, generalized filing engine, and personalized content tools

Continuous improvement and creative solutioning remains at the forefront of the Digital Government Platform Foundation Program and its associated deliverables. With each new agency or school engagement, DTI seeks to deliver a positive outcome that increases the confidence in state service delivery. In addition, the program team guides direction of this Governor's initiative to close the gap between customer expectations and government's ability to consistently provide customers with trusted digital experiences. This year, community engagement was largely focused on the release of the resident and visitor facing platform at go.delaware.gov. Usability studies were conducted for end users to test the system and then respond to features under the criteria of useful, usable, equitable, and enjoyable.

Closing the Digital Divide in Delaware

Digital Accessibility is an important part of the digital government strategy. The U.S. Department of Justice (the regulatory and enforcement agency of Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act) promulgated *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability; Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities*, effective June 24, 2024, which set requirements for digital accessibility compliance by April 24, 2026, for State websites and mobile application content that is not exempt from remediation. Removing barriers for persons with disabilities to ensure access to digital content is a priority and the State is moving forward with digital accessibility compliance efforts through an investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. In coordination with the Office of the Governor, Department of State Government Information Center, and the State Council for Persons with Disabilities, DTI developed a plan to improve inclusiveness and access to digital government services. DTI retained a vendor to:

- Build a statewide accessibility strategy and program;
- Automate testing across DTI's digital portfolio;
- Assess priority websites to fast-track remediation;
- Develop third party contracting policies; and
- Launch a statewide accessibility education program to raise awareness and train developers/designers on how to spot issues/maintain compliance.

To date, over 2,500 pages of digital content have been reviewed, high-priority site remediation is in progress, and accessibility training modules are in development for statewide rollout. Next steps include expanding automated testing to all agencies, finalizing the statewide accessibility policy framework, and delivering Tier 1 accessibility training ahead of the April 2026 USDOJ compliance deadline.

Agencies actively engaged in the program include the Delaware State Housing Authority, Department of Labor, Department of State, Delaware Department of Transportation, and DTI. These agencies have completed initial automated testing, begun manual evaluations and are moving into training and remediation. DTI is leading the statewide program while also conducting automated and manual evaluations for its own high-priority sites.

Expansion of Broadband Access Across Delaware

Expanding access to high-speed internet across Delaware is a priority. There are three federal funding streams at work in the State through which the Delaware Broadband Office expects to achieve universal high-speed internet access. These funding streams include:

- $33 million in ARPA funding to support wired broadband infrastructure expansion to be continued through the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. This work began in the summer of 2022 and will be completed by the end of 2025. At the conclusion of ARPA, DTI will have connected nearly 6,900 previously unserved broadband serviceable locations (BSLs) using this funding.
- $13 million awarded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to the federal Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) to connect homes to broadband in designated geographic rural areas. This funding is directly administered by the FCC without involvement by DTI or the Delaware Broadband Office. Should the program succeed, it will connect 3,100 currently unserved BSLs. The RDOF funded construction must be completed by 2028.
- $107 million from the federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to plan and implement broadband expansion between 2024 and 2028. This program can be used to connect unserved homes and to upgrade connections to homes with a lower-speed connection. BEAD will deploy internet infrastructure to thousands of homes and businesses, significantly expanding access to reliable, high-speed broadband service. On January 14, 2025, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration approved Delaware's final plan. Delaware was among the first three states in the country to be approved, but none of the approved states received the final necessary approval from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) after the change in presidential administrations. Despite a 30-day processing window for NIST to review the plans, Delaware's broadband plans remained in limbo awaiting updated guidance and unable to proceed to implementation until June 6, 2025, when the administration officially rescinded all approvals, issued revised rules, and required a new round of bidding. This has delayed implementation by at least nine months. As of July 31, 2025, DTI is evaluating proposals received during that new round of bidding. DTI will submit a revised final plan for approval by September 4, 2025, and the U.S. Department of Commerce has committed to approve all plans by December 30, 2025.

DTI also expected to receive up to $12 million in federal funding over three years to promote digital equity priorities. This funding stream was created by the Digital Equity Act, passed as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and included a statutory formula for determining each state's allocation. Delaware received its first tranche of funding of $4.8 million on December 1, 2024, to be used within five years. However, the NTIA terminated all Digital Equity Act funding on May 9, 2025, claiming it was unconstitutional and no longer fit the agency's goals. Projects that were approved but have been suspended due to the termination include:

- $1.2 million for workforce development through an MOU with the Delaware Department of Labor to offer wraparound services to existing technology training programs, support assistive technologies for computer usage, and implement a tablet translation program.

Judiciary Reform

CASCADE: Integrated Enhancement(s) to Judicial Systems Applications and Processes

Phase 1 of the CASCADE (Centralized, Accessible, Secure, Configurable, Agile, Digital, Evolutionary) Initiative remains on time and within budget. Phase 1 includes new Civil Case Management solutions and E-Filing solutions for the Justice of the Peace Court, Court of Common Pleas and Superior Court. Additionally, in July of 2025, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) entered into an additional agreement to include the Court of Chancery in Phase 1 of the implementation. Now under way for over a year, the Judicial Branch received its first release of the Case Management System which included all configuration and data addressed by the project to date. The next Case Management release is scheduled for October 2025 and will introduce migrated documents as well as several integrations.

Aside from Case Management, the Judicial Branch also started work with the E-Filing vendor to complete data mapping and configuration so that the platform works in conjunction with the new Case Management System. The Judicial Branch is also training staff on Power BI as the future State solution for reporting analytics. Integration of the reporting solution is underway, and work with local data sources that are unrelated to the new Case Management System and E-Filing system is being used to further enforce the training on Power BI.

Criminal efforts specific to the Judicial Branch include a few new solutions. First, a web application called Single View Inquiry was developed and launched earlier in 2025 for Judicial Branch use. This web GUI allows staff to search criminal information with a modern interface and point and click functionality, taking users away from the mainframe green screens. This solution is now further being developed to replace the existing public access solution for criminal data. The Judicial Branch hopes to have this developed and tested before the end of 2025. There is also a grant funded effort to develop a case management solution for the Problem-Solving Courts. This initiative is scheduled to complete on August 25th, 2025, with a production release of the solution. This will allow data specific to the Problem-Solving Courts across the branch to be captured uniquely, queried and reported on. This also replaces multiple disparate solutions where data was stored in workbooks and Access databases.

For information on the system-wide criminal modernization plan for Delaware, see the “Criminal Justice Systems Evaluation Committee” section of this document.

Criminal Justice Systems Evaluation Committee

The Criminal Justice Systems Evaluation Committee was established in September of 2023 in accordance with Section 19 of the Fiscal Year 2024 Bond Bill (SB160). The committee is co-chaired by the Deputy State Court Administrator/CIO of the Delaware Judicial Branch and the Executive Director of DELJIS. The committee was tasked to “review the possibilities of interconnection between systems, a review of policies that affect sharing of information between affected entities and to make recommendations regarding the feasibility to improve systems capabilities, interconnection, communication, and continuous improvements.”

After reviewing the current state of criminal justice systems and data within the State, the Criminal Justice Systems Evaluation Committee continues its work to map out the criminal modernization plan for Delaware. At this time, DELJIS is planning to hire contractors to focus on modernization efforts in August, and the committee plans to engage an IT consultant by the end of the year. The committee’s recommendation is to establish a data warehouse of criminal data outside of the mainframe that can be synched with CJIS. This will allow for new solutions to be developed and mapped against criminal data as the mainframe solutions remain stable in parallel. Once the data warehouse is established, the Judicial Branch can establish a plan for a new criminal Case Management System integrated with the warehouse as opposed to the mainframe, with the hope that over time, the dependency on the mainframe can be eliminated and the solution can be sunset.

The goals for a modern system include:

1. Maintain existing services and solutions throughout the modernization effort by stabilizing the current systems and building future solutions outside of the mainframe in parallel

2. Make data more accessible for reporting and analytics, and allow modern tools such as Power BI to be used in conjunction with criminal justice data under strict security requirements
3. Eliminate paper-based processes that remain throughout criminal justice by implementing digital document management across agencies and branches
4. Establish common public access solutions to make public access easier and improve data cleanup processes
5. Evaluate and update data sharing agreements, making sure all relevant data is shared securely and limiting the complexity of how criminal justice partners access data from other organizations
6. Maintain integrations with criminal justice partners but eliminate overlaps in code. Develop modern solutions that can support agencies independently while still maintaining the necessary flow of information
7. Select a programing language and platform that is marketable, sustainable and flexible for many years to come

The proposal is estimated to cost approximately $35 million over five years. First-year costs recommended in the submitted proposal include:

- Hire a dedicated team including a Project Manager, Business Analyst, Database Manager, Senior Systems Engineer. Even with a dedicated team, there will be a burden on the existing DELJIS resources and subject matter experts within the existing systems.
- Contract with a consulting firm to ensure the technical solutions prescribe to best practices for long term success and stability.
- Fund annual mainframe costs until an alternative solution is identified.

Since the proposal was submitted, questions and concerns have arisen from Committee members regarding the scope of the project, and conversations are taking place with both Executive Branch and Legislative Branch leaders to determine appropriate next steps.

Reducing the Debt Burden for Ex-Offenders

Reducing the debt burden for ex-offenders, in combination with more efficient and centralized fee collection processes, has been a major focus of the Judicial Branch since the advent of the GEAR Board. Support from the General Assembly and the Executive Branch has resulted in significant and continuing progress during the past four years.

It is not only inefficient to spend resources on the collection of fees from people who cannot afford it, but the imposed debts can add challenges to the lives of average citizens, rather than supporting those who may be trying to reform, rehabilitate or otherwise improve their lives.

Many statutory fees were added over the years to fund state and local services with the courts imposing and collecting these fees. Revenues support many critical State and local services such as volunteer ambulance services, court security, transportation, and law enforcement. These fees can quickly add up for those who find themselves in the criminal justice system. People who are indigent or of modest means often face the unrealistic requirement to pay off overwhelming fees while struggling to pay for housing, food, childcare, or other necessities of life.

While fee reform provides some cost avoidance to the State, the true efficiencies will come from more successful reentries, rehabilitation efforts, and productive lives for citizens without the burden of unreasonable and overwhelming debt to the State.

Previous Year Successes

HB 244 with House Amendment 2 of the 151st General Assembly was signed on October 3, 2022, which sought to help those struggling with the negative impacts of criminal justice fees. The bill instituted the following reforms:

- Repealed the supervision fee for probation and parole, the public defender fee, late fees, convenience fees, and criminal fines and fees for juveniles in family court.
- Eliminated the suspension of licenses for non-payment of criminal justice fines and fees.
- Created the Criminal Legal System Imposed Debt Study Group to review best practices and continue reform efforts, which submitted a report with findings and recommendations on “the appropriateness of the State’s financial structure

> to support government and non-profit functions with funds charged to court users and make recommendations on a phased plan to reduce the dependence on those funds."

In Fiscal Year 2024, the General Assembly passed SB 282, SB 283 and SB 284 of the 152nd General Assembly. These initiatives were recommended by the Criminal Legal System Imposed Debt Study Group, chaired by Representative Sean Lynn and Senator Darius Brown, and include the following reforms.

- Repealed the $100 Senior Trust Fund Fee, the $50 Interstate Compact Fee, and the 15 percent Substance Abuse, Rehabilitation, Treatment, Education and Prevention (SARTEP) Fund Surcharge imposed on criminal defendants. All outstanding balances are eliminated.
- Repealed the DELJIS Fund Fee and eliminates outstanding balances. The DELJIS fee was a $1 assessment on any criminal or traffic conviction to cover basic DELJIS operation costs.
- Authorized the Courts to discharge outstanding balances owed on the Department of Correction Supervision Fee and the Public Defender Fee, both of which were previously repealed by HB 244 of the 151st General Assembly.

Fiscal Year 2025 Successes and Related Initiatives

The Judicial Branch made additional progress with fee reform in Fiscal Year 2025. After discussion with the Department of Finance, Division of Accounting, the Judicial Branch updated its Operating Procedures (AP006 Direct Write-Off) to write-off aged debt. Effective July 1, 2025, the judicial aging limit is seven-years from the original sentence of the jurisdictional Court. No payments may be accepted, voluntarily or otherwise, once any non-restitution judicial debt portion has been written off; payments may continue to be accepted in those cases for any outstanding restitution. The policy excludes any outstanding restitution for victim of crime. The Executive Branch updated the State of Delaware's Budget and Accounting Manual (9.4.4 Write-Offs) to reference the Judicial Branch policy.

The General Assembly introduced two new legislative initiatives, though neither has yet passed. Both bills are still active for the second year of the 153rd General Assembly. The Judicial Branch has not taken an official position on either bill; the policies and related costs will be considered by the Legislative and Executive Branches.

House Bill 132, if passed, would eliminate the following fees:

1. Court Security Fee, a $10 fee that pays for court security positions and equipment.
2. CJC Videophone Fee, a $1 fee that covers the cost of videophone services
3. DOJ Victim Rights Fund Fee, a surcharge on seat belt violations that goes toward victim notifications and victim services.

The fiscal note for HB 391 exceeds $3.3 million dollars to maintain the critical services that the revenue covers.

House Bill 133, if passed, would create an ability-to-pay presumption that fines and fees will not be imposed when a defendant shows evident of certain conditions, including receiving a public assistance benefit or being represented by the Office of Defense Services. The impact on revenue, while unknown, is estimated to be a maximum of around $6.1 million.

GEAR FIELD TEAM (GFT)

Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)

Redesign Service Delivery and Improve Client Experiences at State Service Centers

There are 15 state service centers distributed across Delaware, which serve clients by providing them with a local location where they can apply for various services such as food assistance, cash benefits, health care, and housing. The genesis of this project originated in the desire to improve service delivery and the client experience within state service centers through efforts of inter-divisional staff along with professional external program managers. There are various goals of this project, including:

1. Remodel internal workspaces to make them better able to meet client needs and expectations.
2. Standardize all work processes that were documented between 2022 and 2024 to ensure that all processes are performed uniformly at each service center.
3. Install a new client queuing system at each state service center.
4. Improve the automated telephone voice prompts when clients call in to a state service center.
5. Enhance the website portal when a client engages the State over the internet.
6. Merge the Division of Social Services (DSS) and Division of State Service Centers (DSSC) within DHSS.
7. Modernize computer and telephone hardware at each service center.
8. Integrate Delaware Learning Center training materials into training of merged DSS and DSSC staff.
9. Incorporate a universal eligibility screening tool to better meet client needs and expectations.

This project is a multi-year initiative, though specific improvements to service delivery and the client experience are being realized already, which will produce measurable outcomes. There are several project deliverables that can be considered complete, which include:

- Surveying the community for its input regarding the current state of service delivery at state service centers.
- Identifying gaps in service excellence to be considered as project objectives.
- Conducting town hall meetings with the public and community leaders to ensure the project was on track to deliver the changes needed to make the client's state service center experience better.
- Engaging vendors to begin planning an automated client queuing system that will better route clients and further improve the clients' experience while at a state service center.
- Merging the Division of State Service Centers (DSSC) and the Division of Social Services (DSS), which was completed in 2024.
- Training state service center staff in a more efficient and effective client centered approach, which has begun.
- Documenting the current and future state client front desk experience in a visual process map.

Employ Data-Driven Decision Making by Using a Department-Wide Dashboard

The DHSS dashboard report collects metrics from the department's ten divisions and presents the data in easy-to-understand bar and line charts, including year-over-year data when available. Key operational measures that have been reported over the prior year include staff vacancy rates, Fleet vehicle usage, IT support provided, Medicaid reimbursements, facility maintenance requests fulfilled, the census at the State's acute and long-term care facilities, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) enrollment, and child support payments. The DHSS Secretary and other department leaders receive the monthly report.

The project originated with the desire to employ data-driven decision making using key operational metrics in the form of a departmental dashboard. The scope of the project includes:

1. Engaging every DHSS division
2. Identifying key metrics that tell the story of the work being performed
3. Building and maintaining the data repository—in the dashboard where data is captured and reported monthly using a shared Microsoft Teams workspace
4. Packaging the report and distributing it monthly to the Cabinet Secretary and other leaders

The project is ongoing and has assisted decision makers in spotting trends as to what's happening in the department, which has been a valuable resource to leadership.

Before the DHSS dashboard project was initiated, the Secretary and other leaders would need to review multiple data sources from each division to understand the department's current state conditions. The DHSS dashboard project used continuous improvement thinking by bundling key performance indicators from each data source into one report, thus creating resource efficiencies.

Save Over $5 Million Dollars by Identifying and Eliminating Underutilized Blocked Vehicles

The DHSS Fleet optimization project identifies underused blocked (assigned) vehicles, calculates their expense, and as part of a department wide push to control expenses, persuades leaders to change their cost designation from blocked to pool vehicles. A blocked vehicle is not shared among operational units and is billed for a full month's use regardless of how often it is used. A pool vehicle is shared among operational units and is billed only when it is used. If a vehicle is driven very often, the better cost designation is to designate it as a blocked vehicle. If a vehicle is not driven often, the more cost-effective choice is to designate it as a pool vehicle.

When the DHSS Fleet optimization project began, DHSS had more than 400 blocked vehicles. As a result of reviewing the vehicle needs and showing DHSS leaders the excess capacity of blocked vehicles, the number of blocked vehicles has been reduced by 111 to 295.

In 2025, DHSS has reduced its blocked Fleet vehicles by 36 vehicles. That translates to an annual savings of an estimated $244,116, or a 7-year savings of $1,708,812. Because vehicles are retained for seven years, the reduction of 111 blocked vehicles since the inception of the project translates into cost savings estimated to be $5,268,837 over a 7-year lease period. This is significant because money saved can be reinvested toward delivering services to Delawareans in need.

Employ Hybrid Project Management Approach to Replace the FACMAINT Application

DHCQ needs an updated system that can accomplish facility license management, incident reporting, and complaint management. The existing DHCQ system, known as FACMAINT, was assessed to no longer do all these necessary duties. Given that FACMAINT can no longer handle these tasks electronically, DHCQ has resorted to a manual process. Currently, an application has been identified that could replace FACMAINT and is in use by other offices at the State of Delaware.

There are several parts to the project that can be delivered separately using a hybrid project management approach. This means the replacement application deliverables will be delivered incrementally, instead of all at once at the end of the project. The deliverables for this project include:

1. The incorporation of the various data points needed to be managed from the long-term care and the acute care units
2. The ability to search for data points
3. The migration of data from FACMAINT to the new application
4. The ability to run reports of various data points
5. Training of DHCQ staff

The project will engage DHCQ, DHSS Information Resource Management, and Office of the Secretary staff to drive progress forward. All deliverables should be accomplished before the end of calendar year 2025.

Improve Access to Long-Term Services & Supports Through Strategic Resource Usage

The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) is carrying out a strategic effort to ensure timely access to community-based long-term care services and supports by improving efficiency and reducing the cost-of-service provision. Through consultation with national experts in the field of aging and disabilities, DSAAPD has developed a multi-tiered action plan to infuse person-centered practices in its work, ensuring services meet the goals and needs of older adults and persons with physical disabilities while being provided from the most appropriate funding source.

The division has partnered with the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) to utilize American Rescue Plan Act funding to hire four Enrollment Specialists to assist in processing Medicaid applications for the nearly one third of Medicaid eligible participants receiving services through DSAAPD. Through this partnership, DMMA has provided training on the Medicaid application process to DSAAPD's Community Service Program (CSP) team in addition to the newly hired Enrollment Specialists. With this effort DMMA and DSAAPD have developed a pathway in which Medicaid eligible DSAAPD participants receive assistance through the Medicaid application process which may result in speedier receipt of services if approved for Long Term Care Medicaid (LTCM). This is a major cost savings effort, as all the resources used for DSAAPD participants are funded with Older Americans Act or general funds. The savings will allow additional older adults to be served through the division. An estimated 30 percent of DSAAPD's current service and waitlist will benefit from the Diamond State Health Plan Plus (DSHP+) Home and Community Based Services waiver program. This program includes a 50 percent federal match, resulting in a lower cost to the State. Based on DSAAPD's current waiting list cost estimates, this equates to at least $5 million in savings.

Implementing this strategic plan will optimize the use of State general funds and Older Americans Act dollars and enable the division to serve more people, potentially eliminate wait lists, and respond to emergency needs promptly. The action plan is being carried out with technical assistance from multiple grants and expert advice regarding national best practices. The anticipated quantifiable outcomes of this plan include reduced costs, enhanced value, and improved customer outcomes.

Using data-driven decision making, DSAAPD targeted its limited resources to prioritize the most critical participants which will help keep them in their homes. Not only is remaining in their homes most participants' wish, but it results in exponential cost savings to the State.

Implement Inter Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) Home & Community Based Assessment

The Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) currently uses homegrown assessment tools in the community to determine the amount of personal care, attendant services, and other in-home services for adult Delawareans with a physical disability, and for those who are age 60 and older. These tools are not person-centered, yield inconsistent results, and favor subjective information that can lead to inconsistent services, service hour allotments, and increased waiting times. To strengthen and improve efficiency of operations and establish a strong infrastructure, the Division is implementing the use of a new tool, the InterRAI Check-Up assessment, which will provide a person-centered, data-driven process that will determine eligibility and establish service packages by offering input on care planning, case mix classification, outcome measurement for quality management, and participant safety.

DSAAPD initially implemented the InterRAI Home and Community Based ("HC") assessment in September of 2024. In response to feedback from stakeholders such as DSAAPD Community Case Managers, the decision was made to let that assessment "fail fast," and to pivot to a more concise, less clinical InterRAI Check-Up assessment. This tool provides all the benefits to enhance case management but can be completed in approximately half the time as the HC. DSAAPD's community services team has been closely involved in tailoring the Check-Up assessment to best meet Delawarean's needs.

DSAAPD staff and participants will benefit from the objective evidence-based tool, using existing structure and technology. The integrity of the tool will allow for consistent capturing of data across all services. The tool will also allow for the collection of data on an individual level to establish at-risk areas, as well as empowering Delaware to review data at a population level to identify gaps and trends across individuals, zip codes, and services. The division will use the data to identify gaps in service and needs for a more focused approach. The tool will be able to export reports that will feed into national and international best practices as reviewed, analyzed, and established by InterRAI Fellows.

Anticipated outcomes include:

1. Decrease in the number of individuals waiting for services in the community.
2. Increase in engagement with Delawareans to support higher utilization of community resources and reduce the need for long-term care.
3. Increase in individuals aging in the place of their choosing, an essential component of person-centered care.

4. Improved use of assessment protocols and scales to guide and inform care plans, ensuring the health and safety of the individual in a more robust manner.

Partner for Healthy Aging through Senior Centers

The mission of the Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities is to promote dignity, respect, and inclusion for older Delawareans, adults with physical disabilities, and their caregivers. Guided by the vision of equitable, inclusive communities for all, DSAAPD promotes and advocates for person-centered services that enable older adults and persons with disabilities to live where they choose, with the people they choose, and to participate fully in their communities. The division is committed to the development and delivery of consumer-driven services which maximize independence through individual choice, enable individuals to continue living active and productive lives, and offer protective services to those who may be vulnerable and at risk.

DSAAPD partnered with 22 senior centers across Delaware to support healthy aging programs. Upon implementation of the program, senior centers were provided the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) framework, which are conditions in the environments where individuals exist that affect their health, functioning, and quality of life. The SDOH includes five domains: Economic Stability, Social and Community Context, Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, and Neighborhood and Built Environments. The senior centers were provided these determinants as a resource to identify conditions that may impact proposed programming at their centers. In the development stages of the senior center mini grants, these determinants were planned to be used as a performance and evaluation measure to provide qualitative data to show how participants were supported in their centers' implemented programs, and how they are reflected in the domains of the SDOH. Programming that aligns with the Social and Community Context determinant include CHEER Community Center's Language Exchange Adult Program (LEAP) which allows individuals to improve their language and literacy skills by learning Spanish or English to communicate with other community members who may have found challenges in engaging in their community due to language barriers. Although DSAAPD went with an alternative route of performance and evaluation measures by partnering with the University of Delaware, program managers at the centers did find the determinants beneficial when identifying and promoting initiatives that best fit their community's needs.

New programs that were implemented include the *Language Exchange Adult Program (LEAP)*, *Hope and Healing for Widows*, and *New Year, New You!* These programs empowered individuals to participate and socialize with other older adults, as social isolation is associated with a higher risk of dementia and other serious health problems. Approximately one-quarter of community-dwelling Americans aged 65 and older are socially isolated, and a significant proportion of adults in the United States report feeling lonely.

The senior centers also had the opportunity through this program to improve existing wellness programs which include nutrition enhancement and education, art programs, field trips, and exercise programs. Bingocize® is an evidence-based program approved through SNAP-Ed and the National Council on Aging (NCOA) that combines exercise and health education through bingo and has been implemented in various centers throughout this program period. Bingocize® promotes social engagement of older adults, information on falls education, improved nutrition, and mobility improvement.

In the early stages of the program, DSAAPD provided interested senior centers with resources to implement sustainable programming. The University of Delaware (UD) has been tasked with evaluating and measuring the success of the newly implemented or improved programs across Delaware. The UD team has spent time with each senior center to develop evaluation surveys that were personalized to each activity or program that the center implemented or improved with DSAAPD funds. To date, at least 542 senior center members have participated in these DSAAPD funded programs. The UD team recently completed focus groups with each senior center to supplement the pre and post evaluation surveys conducted since the start of the programs in February 2024. This allowed program participants to share their experiences as well as provide qualitative feedback to DSAAPD. Following the success of these programs as established by the third-party UD study, DSAAPD intends to expand these cost-effective and beneficial programs in the coming years.

As a result of this engagement with The University of Delaware, the university developed and facilitated an evaluation process aimed at measuring the success of DSAAPD's Senior Center Healthy Aging Program. The evaluation framework was created by the UD team to include the following assessment tools:

- University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale – This three-item measurement tool assesses perceived loneliness. (Russell, 1996).

- Satisfaction with Life Scale – To assess quality of life, this five-item questionnaire measures global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (Deiner, 1984). Participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with each of the five items using a seven-point scale that ranges from seven as strongly agree to one as strongly disagree.
- SF-12® Health Survey (SF-12) – This twelve-item questionnaire assesses generic medical health outcomes from the patient's perspective (Ware, Kosinski, & Keller, 1996). SF-12 assesses general health and well-being (or health-related quality of life [HRQOL]), including the impact of all illnesses on a broad range of functional domains.
- Demographics – The evaluation asked program participant to provide the following information: date of birth, sex (male/female), ethnicity and race, living situation (alone in own home; with spouse/partner in own home; with other family member), and zip code.
- Godin Scale – Mini-grant programs that featured physical activity or movement included an assessment of physical activity. The Godin Scale is a three-item scale that assesses the frequency in a seven-day period of mild, moderate, and vigorous physical activity (Godin, 2011).
- Intention to Change – Participants also were asked five questions assessing intention to make eating and physical activity behavior change following their involvement in the healthy aging program.

Based on the evaluation that was completed, we have seen significant improvement in emotional health and quality of life among all participants. Qualitative data has emphasized the importance of social connection that was a motivating factor for over five hundred participants.

In early 2025, the Division has requested proposals for a second opportunity for senior centers and community centers to receive funding for SFY26. The Division has awarded thirteen (13) senior centers and community centers to expand their current programming for the senior population. These grants were awarded as of July 1st, 2025, and will continue until June of 2026.

Utilize Certified Peer Recovery Specialists in Long Term Care

To meet the specialized psychiatric needs of residents at Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI), DSAAPD partnered with the Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health (DSAMH) to develop the Peer Services Liaison Program starting in 2023. In 2024, the first Certified Peer Recovery Specialist began working on-site full-time. The team continues to collaborate to ensure that a structure exists to maximize efficiency and utilize resources appropriately while establishing this new program.

Specialized mental health care is key to the health of individuals with psychiatric conditions, including those with significant medical needs living in a long-term care (LTC) setting. DSAAPD has partnered with DSAMH to bring a source of specialized support through Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) services. Certified PRS staff are trained to use their own lived experience to help individuals build a sense of self-determination to take ownership of their own goals and empower them through direct support and advocacy with and for the resident. Peers achieve this through relationship-building as the primary mode of intervention, via individual and group support.

The Certified Peer Recovery Specialist is currently providing flexible, low-barrier individual support to thirty-five (35) residents at DHCI, including those with a mental health and/or substance use diagnosis. There is also a preventive aspect to the peer services, as the Peer connects with residents who may be experiencing sadness, loneliness, grief, or emotional distress related to a loss of independence, changes in medical prognosis, or adjusting to long-term care. The Peer also supports residents interested in focusing on their emotional wellness, even in the absence of a clinical diagnosis.

Peer support is also offered through one-hour bi-weekly Wellness Group sessions facilitated by Certified Peer Recovery Specialists from the Delaware Psychiatric Center (DPC). These sessions, which were established prior to the on-site Peer's arrival, continue to be an integral part of DHCI's emotional wellness programming. Between January 3 and June 20, 2025, ten (10) sessions were held in the auditorium, covering topics such as finding meaning and purpose, practicing gratitude, handling life transitions, and building healthy relationships. Up to sixteen (16) residents attended each session, with an average attendance count of eleven (11). Several topics sparked strong engagement, with residents requesting continued discussion in future sessions.

The Certified Peer Recovery Specialist also participates in a broad range of interdisciplinary team meetings within DHCI, offering a recovery-focused perspective that supports whole-person wellness. Preliminary outcomes observed include increased activation for whole health management, greater hope, decreased isolation and loneliness, and improved adjustment to life at DHCI—particularly among new residents. Staff at DHCI have also benefited from the presence of the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, who makes recovery visible and relatable in day-to-day interactions.

The DHCI team will complete formalized evaluation of program outcomes. Early indicators suggest that this innovative program is already making a meaningful impact on resident experience, emotional wellness, and interdisciplinary collaboration at DHCI.

Ensure Therapeutic Programming in Secure Dementia Care

At the Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI), 71 percent of residents have some form of dementia, with 32 percent residing on the secure Lakeview unit. Recognizing the unique needs of individuals with advanced dementia, DHCI launched a Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) Process Improvement Project (PIP) to evaluate and enhance therapeutic programming, promote person-centered care, and ensure a dementia-friendly environment.

In 2025, the original PIP achieved its intended goals and is now in the process of being formally closed. It provided critical data and helped guide foundational improvements in staffing, training, and engagement. DHCI is now transitioning to a new PIP focused on deepening the impact of dementia-specific activity programming and environmental design.

Staff Training & Development

All staff are expected to engage meaningfully with residents as part of their daily routine, helping to build connection and trust. The CARES® Dementia Training Program was introduced in phases, beginning with staff assigned to the Lakeview unit as part of a planned rollout. The next phase will extend the training to all team members across departments, ensuring everyone is equipped to provide compassionate, person-centered dementia care regardless of their role or location.

Therapeutic Programming Enhancements

- Spiritual Support: Sunday worship services are now held weekly on the unit.
- Music Engagement: Music programs are offered 3–5 times per week, creating uplifting and familiar moments of joy.
- Pet Visits: Residents enjoy visits from therapy animals 1–3 times per week.
- Meditation & Wellness: A meditation and massage specialist visits twice a month, incorporating aromatherapy and guided relaxation practices.
- Creative Expression: A new art program has been launched to support emotional expression and cognitive stimulation.
- Multisensory Stimulation: Residents continue to enjoy calming, sensory-friendly experiences tailored to individual needs in the Snoezelen room.
- Interactive Technology: The Obie Beam Mobile interactive projector offers engaging, motion-based games that can be brought directly to residents anywhere on the unit.

Environmental & Social Enhancements

- A Lakeview Oasis Room was created exclusively for residents of the secure unit to provide a calming space for therapeutic programming.
- Weekly bread baking and a Bayview unit dining experience offer familiar sensory stimulation and opportunities for peer socialization in a different setting.
- The Lakeview unit has dedicated activity staff trained in dementia care, ensuring residents receive consistent and specialized engagement throughout the day.

Looking ahead, the new PIP will focus on several key enhancements that continue to build a supportive, engaging, and home-like environment for residents with dementia. Priorities include:

- Developing and implementing a structured daily schedule to offer consistent, predictable routines tailored to individual needs.

- Adding soothing lighting, natural elements, and personalized spaces where residents can display cherished items that reflect their identity.
- Expanding opportunities for socialization during meals and activities, while continuing to honor and support each resident's unique preferences and routines.
- Reinforcing staff training with a stronger focus on recognizing and responding to individual emotional and cognitive needs.
- Continuing to build community partnerships and volunteer engagement to enhance the diversity of programming.

With a strong foundation in place, DHCI remains committed to advancing best practices in dementia care—supporting not just safety and supervision, but true connection, dignity, and joy for all residents living with dementia.

Expand the Connect Community at DHCI

The serious adverse effects of loneliness on physical health can be surprising, especially for those over 65, who are more likely to develop a weakened immune system, cardiac conditions such as heart disease, cognitive decline, and other physical health issues. Loneliness is considered a risk factor for poor aging outcomes. It increases the risk of death just as much as smoking and obesity. As a long-term care (LTC) facility, the Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI) invests heavily into maximizing the quality of life for every resident. This includes taking psychosocial factors, such as social relationships, as seriously as physical health. Through the creative use of existing resources, DHCI created a structured program called the Connect Community. This program invites staff from nonclinical DHCI departments such as housekeeping and quality assurance, as well as DSAAPD's community workforce, to spend an hour or two with residents each week during their regular work hours.

Staff voluntarily chose to join the program and be paired up with a resident in the facility, and/or to assist various residents in different activities and around the grounds. To support non-clinical staff in a new environment and role, DHCI created the Connect Community Ambassador program. Ambassadors are individuals who work with the residents daily and can help Connect partners build relationships and navigate the complexities of the clinical environment. Building on this success, DHCI is reclassifying a full-time position to not only support the Connect Community program at DCHI, but to expand it into other long-term care facilities throughout Delaware.

The core leadership team continues to gather data to measure outcomes. Connect partners are asked to capture their visits on "story sheets", which helps DHCI staff track utilization and fulfill care plans. To date, more than 120 Connect Community members have documented over 860 visits with the residents, which is a vast underestimate of total encounters. Data gathered to assess the impact on employee satisfaction found that that 80 percent of employees report feeling more connected to the bigger purpose of their work, 80 percent report that being part of the program brightens their day, and 100 percent report that the program helps them feel like they are giving back. Connect members also state that it has been good for morale, they look forward to their time with the residents, and it is a way to de-stress on work time. Residents report that they enjoy seeing new faces and spending time with new people. Social relationships promote improved health outcomes, and it is anticipated that these improvements will translate to healthcare cost savings. Potential quantifiable outcomes in the form of reduced costs, improved customer outcomes, process improvement, and enhanced value for DHCI residents and staff are anticipated through this project.

Review Longitudinal National Core Indicators for Aging and Disability

The Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities and the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance collaborate biennially on the National Core Indicators - Aging & Disabilities (NCI-AD) project. This consumer survey provides both divisions with valuable data regarding the impact of their programming on participants' quality of life. Beginning this year, DSAAPD's data team will consolidate the survey's findings over the years for both divisions to identify potential opportunities for development and increased collaboration. By consolidating the validated National Core Indicators - Aging & Disabilities data from across surveys, the DSAAPD Continuous Quality Improvement Unit (CQI) intends to identify trends for improvement as well as highlighting portions of the Division's programming that are working well. The review will also include survey results for DMMA's care recipients across several Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).

The NCI-AD uses sound data principles to aggregate data across recipients which has been helpful in identifying areas for development, such as emergency planning. Additional questions have been added over the years to capture the impact of COVID-19 on the participants. By exploring trends in the data, DSAAPD intends to find even more insights to help direct future projects and enable data-driven decision making. The CQI team will share its findings with DSAAPD's partners in DMMA for DMMA-specific surveys and will stratify these findings across MCOs to assist them in identifying which MCOs may need additional support, and the type of support needed.

These efforts are expected to result in a return on investment, as it will allow both divisions the opportunity to target their limited resources in ways most impactful to their participants. The divisions will also be able to review the efficiency and impact of prior interventions that were created in response to previous NCI-AD findings. DSAAPD's Data Team is currently aggregating the results of this year's survey. They will analyze the results for longitudinal trends and share insights with both DSAAPD Leadership and our partners at DMMA.

Centralize Statewide Physical Supports for Aging in Place

The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities recognizes the importance of aging in place, which means maintaining independence for as long as possible by staying in the individual's own home. To age in place, it is important to maintain safety and accessibility. DSAAPD is redesigning the Home Modification Program in partnership with DHSS partner agencies (Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division for the Visually Impaired, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health), University of Delaware, community partners, and policy makers to address service gaps that exist for older Delawareans and adults with physical disabilities who are in need of services to assist with independence in activities of daily living (ADL). This initiative is a redesigned pilot approach that will run from September 2024 through June 2026 and is expected to disburse $3,500,000 of awarded American Rescue Plan Act funds to address the need for home and vehicle modifications and assistive technology across the state. DSAAPD's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) will serve as the centralized front door for this program, connecting DSAAPD specialists with eligible participants and referring them to appropriate sister agencies as warranted. As a part of this initiative, DSAAPD has also added other home modification programs for older Delawareans and adults with physical disabilities.

For this program, partners have been identified through a competitive Request for Proposals process. The Division has chosen seven providers to perform home and vehicle modifications, assistive technology, assessments, and inspections for this program. The Division also has dedicated specialized staff to this program, including a Social Service Chief Administrator and Modification Specialists that serve as case managers for the duration of this pilot program. In conclusion of the CAPABLE pilot program last winter, DSAAPD has reduced their Modification waitlist significantly. With this new initiative for home and vehicle modifications and assistive technology, we have found that there is a high demand for these services resulting in rapid referrals to the program from the Aging and Disability Resource Center. The funding allows DSAAPD to fund modifications and assistive technology to at least 140 participants with a $40,000 cap per individual.

Launch Sussex Blue Zones Ignite Phase 1

Blue Zones is an organization with deep expertise in community well-being transformation, with over 15 years partnering with leading researchers and evidence-based science at its foundation. Inspired by the world's longest-lived cultures, Blue Zones Ignite initiatives help communities live better and longer by improving their environment. It all starts with key changes which progress to massive transformation at the people, places, and policy levels of a community.

Towns and cities in the United States that have engaged with Blue Zones have seen incredible returns on their investments in health infrastructure. Fort Worth, Texas saw $20 billion in lifetime reduced smoking savings from adopted city-wide policies. Within one year of participating in the Blue Zones Project, Alberta Lea, Minnesota saw a 49 percent decrease in medical claims costs for city workers, and its residents' life spans increased 2.9 years.

The initial phase of this transformation project is a readiness and feasibility assessment to understand the well-being activities currently underway in the community and the communities' interest and readiness to support a Blue Zones initiative. Blue Zones experts will perform a structured exploration across five towns and cities in Sussex County: Milford, Seaford, Millsboro, Lewes, and Georgetown, and collaborate to build a plan for change.

This initial stage will focus on engagement, education and mobilization of community leaders and residents, an evaluation of the communities' current state of well-being and readiness, identification of the highest priority challenges and gaps and the production of a Blue Zones Transformation plan. The assessment will include a review of all relevant state and local plans that could influence next steps, engagement with the communities through community wide events, expert summits, and the findings and recommendations will include an expert assessment, population well-being analysis and impact forecast and a blueprint plan and proposal for moving forward.

Currently, community leaders and residents have been identified and continue to focus on engagement and education to seek funding support. Beebe Healthcare and other location organizations presented earlier this spring at Philanthropy Delaware's Funder Sessions in which resulted in robust discussion. Based on the feedback received, the project may be rescoped to include Sussex County schools as community hubs across the lifespan. This approach has been successful in other Blue Zone communities. The Blue Zone team also continues to explore innovative approaches for lifestyle medicine in lower Delaware while keeping the original purpose of the initiative.

Partner with Vendor to Develop a New Learning Management System

The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) uses a centralized case management system for its community programs. Currently, all new DSAAPD community staff members are trained by a single DSAAPD trainer on the use of this complex system. Follow-up training is completed by coworkers when needed. This results in inconsistencies in training, and limits retraining opportunities. DSAAPD's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) unit has partnered with the vendor to overhaul this training process. Once this project is complete, most system training will be completed online with interactive video lessons. In addition to reducing the workload burden of training new hires, this will enable on-demand retraining on specific workflows whenever needed and standardize the training of all new hires.

This project is just beginning and will take an estimated 14 weeks to complete based on the project design. As the vendor completes one training module, CQI and DSAAPD training will review for accuracy as the vendor works on the next module. Study guides including workflow diagrams and screen shots will support the interactive online lessons. Both CQI and the training unit are supporting this project by meeting routinely with the vendor and providing current workflows and job aids. As processes evolve, the modules will be updated annually and remain current.

Implement the Substance Use Disorder Transitional Case Management (SUD-TCM)

In 2024, data continually indicated that overdose deaths were higher in Delaware for residents who did not have insurance. DSAMH reviewed national and local standards of care and evidence-based strategies to improve treatment outcomes and recovery success rates. Case management is emerging as a crucial practice, especially in healthcare and social services, due to its collaborative and client-centered approach to addressing complex needs. It involves assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and advocating for individuals to help them achieve their health and well-being goals. This practice is becoming increasingly important as it helps to integrate care, improve patient outcomes, and manage costs effectively. We wanted to ensure a case management workflow that had a structured sequence of tasks and steps used to manage cases, from intake to closure, ensuring efficient and effective client support. We included core principles of case management that revolved around ethical conduct, client empowerment and effective service coordination.

The program began in June 2024 and aims to prevent readmissions, improve client outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, enhance continuity of care, promote client self-management, and support the client and family needs. The SUD-TCM program is statewide and serves individuals 18 years and older who are uninsured and underinsured, diagnosed with a primary substance use disorder, and are transitioning from detox and residential treatment levels of care. Our navigators use a one-to-one, person-centered approach with clients to ensure they can navigate from one level of care to the next. Using our guiding principles, our care navigators have responsibilities based on:

- Client-Centered Approach: Focusing on the client's needs, preferences, and goals.
- Collaboration and Teamwork: Working with other professionals and disciplines to provide comprehensive care.
- Communication: Maintaining clear and effective communication with clients, families, and other professionals.
- Advocacy: Championing the client's rights and ensuring they have access to necessary services and resources.
- Evidence-Based Practice: Utilizing research and data to inform decision-making and improve client outcomes.
- Assessing and Planning: Conducting comprehensive assessments and developing individualized care plans.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Tracking client progress and adjusting the care plan as needed.
- Ethical Decision-Making: Applying ethical frameworks and professional standards to navigate complex situations.
- Resource Management: Efficiently utilizing available resources and advocating for appropriate services.

While quality assurance is on-going, the following are some of our lessons learned with the division's approach:

- Integration of Care – There is a growing recognition of the need for integration of care across medical, mental health, and addiction treatment providers to effectively address the complex needs of individuals with substance use disorders.
- Cultural Competency – The importance of cultural competency is a new area of focus in substance use disorder case management. It is important to provide care that is sensitive to the unique needs and circumstances of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Lived experience has been critical with our team's success.
- Ongoing Support – Substance use disorder concerns don't go away after treatment ends. Aftercare services and support groups are more important than ever before, with case managers playing a key role in ensuring that individuals receive the ongoing support they need to maintain their recovery to include to social determinants of health needs.
- Focus on Prevention/Harm Reduction – Prevention and Harm Reduction of substance use disorders is more important than ever. Case managers play a key role in identifying at-risk individuals, providing education and support, and connecting them with resources to prevent the onset of substance use disorders.
- Technology – Technology is increasingly being used to support case management in substance use disorder recovery. DSAMH's upcoming full launch of our Delaware Treatment and Referral Network (DTRN) 360 Care Coordination platform is an example of that.

Anticipated client outcomes include:

1. Decrease in the number of individuals readmitting into detox and residential treatment levels of care.
2. Increase client access to mainstream health resources (to include Medicare/Medicaid).
3. Increase positive client outcomes related to recovery wellness.

Initial Outcomes:

- Total Intakes October 2024-June 2025 = 215
- Medicaid Connections: 115 individuals were connected to Medicaid
- Medicare: 50 individuals had Medicare when referred to us
- Still Connecting: 51 individuals are still connecting, or were not eligible for benefits
- Nine Long Term Care Connections to date (June-March)

Grow the Recovery Friendly Workplace-Restaurant/Construction Accolades Program

The Restaurant Accolade Program gives restaurants the tools to address the high incidence of overdose deaths in the food service industry. This is a multi-level program (Bronze, Silver, Gold). The Bronze level trains staff to recognize and respond to an overdose and provides the staff and restaurant Narcan kits. The Silver level educates a manager on local substance use disorder and behavioral health resources and how to access them in order to be a resource for staff. The Gold level provides restaurants with technical assistance in developing or refining human resources policies and procedures to be more recovery friendly. Since the program started, 273 food service establishments have been trained at the Bronze level; 97 at the Silver level; and 23 restaurants have achieved Gold level status. This includes 1,288 staff trained to recognize and respond to an overdose, and 1,937 Narcan kits distributed.

Through a series of roundtable discussions, the Construction Accolades Program was developed to educate employees to recognize and respond to an overdose, address stigma, and to gain a better understanding of substance use disorder as a disease. By working with industry associations such as Associated Builders and Contactors, Delaware Contractors Association and Home Builders of Delaware, we developed materials targeted to the construction industry. The program provides companies with substance use disorder and behavioral health education and training. This has been done in collaboration with our industry partners at safety meetings and other in-person events. In addition to staff training on recognizing and responding to an overdose, companies can elect to be part of the Train the Trainer program where a supervisor is educated on how to train others to recognize and respond to an overdose. Addiction 101 training and stigma reduction training have also been provided to companies. There are currently 15 companies who have elected to participate in the Train the Trainer program.

As the need evolves to increase involvement with other workforce industries, DSAMH intends to realign this initiative under the paradigm of the evidenced-based practice, Recovery Friendly Workplace. A Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) is an environment where employers, in collaboration with employees, actively create and maintain policies, practices, and a culture that supports individuals in or seeking recovery from substance use disorders. These workplaces strive to reduce stigma, offer support, and facilitate access to resources for those affected by substance use, ultimately promoting a healthy and inclusive work environment.

Foster Low Barrier Wound Care and Nurse Care Management

The DSAMH Bridge Clinics and Encampment Teams support many persons that are impacted by the addiction to opiates and other substances. Xylazine is found in the drug supply and has resulted in many persons developing severe and chronic wounds. Open wounds and other medical co-morbidities can be a significant barrier to acceptance into inpatient addiction treatment and recovery housing. Persons with wounds often avoid medical care due to stigma and excruciating and complicated withdrawal from substances, which can lead to amputation, sepsis and sometimes death. Those who do receive inpatient medical care are often discharged without the means to follow discharge instructions due to socio-economic factors including lack of access to shelter and hygiene. Many are denied services that are covered by Medicaid due to lack of housing.

For several years, DSAMH has been offering support by providing education, self-care supplies, transportation to care, and peer support. The DSAMH Overdose response team also hosts a monthly meeting with wound care clinics and outreach providers. By formalizing policies for low barrier wound care within the NCC Bridge Clinic, including mobile wound care for the unhoused, we have been able to expand our services to more persons throughout Delaware. Through collaboration with internal teams, Division of Public Health, other community agencies, hospitals and Medicaid case managers, we can reduce medical hospitalizations and emergency department utilization while supporting persons to access treatment for substance use disorders and life-saving medical care.

DSAMH is still early in gathering client outcome data. With continued client consent, DSAMH will attempt to follow each client until their wounds are healed. At this time 80 percent consented wound care clients have not returned to the Emergency Department, Hospital or Urgent Care. The clients that have returned to acute medical care did so with encouragement from Bridge Staff due to wound acuity and concurrent medical needs beyond our scope of care.

Department of Agriculture (DDA)

Create a Delaware Farm Lending Program

Farming is a vital activity in Delaware that supports food production and approximately $9 billion in economic activity. Yet agriculture is a challenging industry requiring expertise, equipment, access to land, cash flow due to crop cycle volatility, as well as risks including commodity prices, pests, and weather. The Department of Agriculture seeks to increase support for farming by creating an agricultural lending program. Lending programs tailored to the needs of agriculture have been used in other states to support farmers, especially new farmers, and to build markets for local agricultural products. Commercial loans are difficult to obtain for farmers with less experience and collateral, while state agricultural finance programs report low default rates on loans.

The Department of Agriculture worked with the Department of State's Division of Small Business to reauthorize an existing farm lending program, the Delaware Rural Irrigation Program (DRIP). DRIP provided partial loans to install irrigation systems using a dedicated revolving loan fund but had not funded new loans recently. The new program expands this to include equipment loans for any agricultural purpose, including aquaculture. The aquaculture industry has had trouble getting past the initial stages of the overall program's development and equipment loans were listed as a barrier given that existing banks often have trouble underwriting specialty equipment. All program loans are at a fixed rate of 4.25 percent, which is lower than prevailing rates through traditional commercial and farm lenders. In addition, loans for beginning farmers and the aquaculture industry are at 3.25 percent, recognizing the department's interest in supporting those constituents. Loans are provided for up to 50 percent of equipment costs.

Expanding this existing program to include more farming activities will support agriculture without creating a new finance authority, while also leveraging existing resources for loan administration at the Division of Small Business. The existing revolving loan fund was reauthorized by the Council on Development Finance to provide funds to launch this program.

The Department of Agriculture and Division of Small Business have drafted program guidelines, finalized the loan review process and began accepting loan applications for the program beginning on September 3, 2024. To date the Department has received several inquiries but have not closed any loans. The Division of Small Business and DDA partnered to promote the program during the summer of 2025.

Modernize Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program with Digital Payments

Delaware distributes $45,000 each year in Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefits for low-income seniors in Delaware. Each senior receives $50 to purchase fresh local fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey directly from farmers at farmers markets and farm stands. As previously reported in 2024, DDA initially issued $10 paper vouchers (five per senior), but tracking paper vouchers was complicated and slow. This led to delays in reimbursing farmers, theft and loss were possible, and DDA had limited insight into usage.

American Rescue Plan Act funding allowed DDA and the Department of Health and Social Services – Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) program, which operates a parallel program for its recipients, to transition to an electronic payment system. The program was implemented in June 2023.

First year response was very positive. In 2022, seniors spent $33,270 of the $45,000 distributed. Reimbursements improved 10 percent to $36,496 in 2023 with the electronic payment system. In 2024, usage of Federal funds increased again to $39,759. $7,500 in non-Federal funds was also provided to seniors bringing total 2024 program usage to $47,259. This benefited 1,400 seniors as well as 44 Delaware farmers enrolled as market vendors.

Other improvements to the program with electronic payments include:

- Farmers are paid weekly, with no waiting period.
- DDA monitors reimbursements in real time.
- Sales can be in any amount.
- The ability to send email and text reminders to participants.
- Farmers are not required to handle large stacks of checks.
- Security features allow DDA to deactivate and replace lost or stolen cards.

Align Employee Recognition with Agency Goals and Continuous Improvement

The Department of Agriculture has used a standard recognition program for decades, consisting of Employee of the Quarter and Employee of the Year awards. While these awards could recognize lasting contributions to DDA programs, they felt dated and nominations tended to be for one-time special acts rather than process improvement, customer service, collaboration, efficiency, or other work that makes a lasting impact. In contrast, DDA found many examples of program improvement at DDA which were not nominated because the work was "part of the employee's job". DDA also lacked aligned pathways for nominations to statewide awards. The Department's criteria didn't match some statewide awards, and the annual timeline was poorly aligned to meet statewide recognition deadlines. Lastly, DDA sought to recognize new staff that show high potential.

DDA completely re-wrote its recognition program with the following goals:

- To recognize activities that provide lasting improvements in DDA's programs, increase efficiency, reduce costs, or improve the quality of services.
- To recognize employees who make a difference for DDA constituents.
- To celebrate collaboration between DDA and other organizations which improves government services.
- To align DDA recognition with statewide programs to provide a pathway for DDA employees to win statewide recognition.
- To encourage continuous improvement and innovation in DDA programs.
- To recognize new talent.

Through a series of internal meetings, with input from managers and DHR, DDA's new recognition plan includes quarterly awards in three categories:

- Innovation and Collaboration – recognizing continuous improvement and efficiency, team collaboration, problem solving or best practices.
- Service to Agriculture – dedication to constituents through customer service, transparency, or advocating for agriculture and DDA programs.
- Employee Excellence – dedication to State service and excellence.

An additional, non-competitive "Rising Star" award was created for staff who are new, or in a new role, that demonstrate potential for future growth and leadership.

DDA will use change management principles to encourage managers and staff to embrace the new recognition plan and increase nominations. DDA aims for managers to see recognition as a normal part of motivating their staff and change what they think is worthy of recognition. DDA's additional goal is for staff to see recognition as a way to celebrate peers. DDA will measure success in the number of nominations received, awards, and nominations for statewide recognition. The Department also hopes to see improvements in turnover and satisfaction, though those may be more difficult to measure and determine root causes.

At the time of this report, DDA has launched the new program and had received multiple nominations with one day left before the first nomination deadline. Three nominations were for Rising Star, five were nominations by co-workers, and three were for teams. Previously, team nominations were extremely rare.

Streamline the Aglands Application Process

Historically, the Aglands Preservation Program required applicants to submit handwritten forms. This approach aligned with the technological comfort level of most landowners at the time, many of whom were less familiar with digital tools. Additionally, several questions included in the original forms have since been identified as unnecessary. With the emergence of a more digitally literate farming demographic and improved staff understanding of essential application information, a modernization of the application process has become necessary.

The original application process consisted of multiple forms corresponding to different application types, including Agricultural Land Preservation and Forestland Preservation. Contingent sale options were available for both, intended for landowners purchasing land to be immediately enrolled in preservation upon settlement to take advantage of tax incentives. Each form featured variations in questions and requirements. For example, Forestland Preservation applications included a question regarding the existence of a forest management plan, while all contingent sale forms required additional information from the buyer, seller, and legal representatives. The existence of multiple forms created confusion among applicants and added inefficiencies for staff responsible for digitizing and processing submissions.

To address these challenges, a streamlined application process is being introduced using either ArcGIS Survey123 or Microsoft Forms. Each platform presents distinct advantages. ArcGIS Survey123 includes a mapping component and offers long-term flexibility, though it requires additional licensing and involves more complex development. Microsoft Forms is easier to implement in the short term but lacks geospatial functionality.

A basic version of the application has been developed in Survey123, incorporating essential features from both platforms. Instead of requiring separate forms for each application type, the new digital form dynamically updates questions based on the applicant's initial selection. Upon completion, the form triggers an automated workflow using Microsoft PowerAutomate, which populates a Word document with the submitted information and sends an automated email notification to Aglands staff. As a result, manual digitization is no longer necessary, leading to a significant reduction in application processing time.

Future iterations of the application may include mapping elements designed to further enhance data accuracy and user engagement. These elements could support the identification of residential areas and serve as a verification tool by prompting applicants to confirm that the selected parcel is accurate.

Improve Efficiency for Staff

The modernization of staff workflows within the Aglands Preservation Program includes several interrelated components aimed at improving organization, efficiency, and internal communication. A significant portion of physical storage within the program office is currently occupied by filing cabinets containing district agreements and related documentation dating back to the program's inception. These cabinets include records for both active and legacy districts, including those that have since transitioned into agricultural or forestland easements. As most of these documents are already stored in a digital imaging system, the paper versions now serve primarily as backups. Additionally, duplicate paper records are maintained for easements. To reduce redundancy, the program plans to remove all paper files related to easements from hallway storage, significantly decreasing reliance on physical documentation.

To further improve internal accountability and workflow visibility, a visual workflow and Lean management tool, known as a Kanban board, has been introduced. Located in a central hallway, the board is used to track:

- Application deadlines
- Key program statistics
- Step-by-step progress on active initiatives, including:
    - Updates to Aglands and Forestlands regulations
    - Pursuit of federal and county funding for Aglands projects
    - Status tracking for each easement round
    - Contingent sales
    - Project requests such as Letters of No Objection or Utility Easements

The Kanban board is intended to reduce turnaround times on requests and enhance coordination among staff and contractors. Weekly meetings will be held with the board serving as a focal point for progress reviews and planning discussions.

In parallel, internal digital tools used by staff have been consolidated into a single web-based platform to improve access and usability. Two primary applications support daily operations:

1. An Editable Staff Web Map – This tool allows team members to update project attributes without the need for ArcGIS Pro access, enabling broader participation in data maintenance.
2. A Renewals Dashboard – This dashboard supports the tracking of easement renewals and terminations. Districts and expansions are initially renewed after ten years, and every five years thereafter. Landowners must provide written notice at least six months prior to the renewal date to opt out. In the absence of such notice, renewals are automatic. The dashboard helps staff identify which projects require renewal or termination letters, which are issued at least nine months in advance.

Centralizing these applications in one location allows staff to access and use them more efficiently. Training for staff is currently provided on a one-on-one basis due to the small team size and limited user group. New training materials are in development and will focus on demonstrating the core functionality of each application and providing real-world use case scenarios relevant to daily program operations.

Additional improvements to digital tools are planned. Staff are required to submit data annually for both the Bond Bill hearing and the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) program. These reporting requirements involve repeated manual data generation. Dashboards are being developed to streamline these reporting processes and may also serve as a supplement—or potential replacement—for the program's monthly report. Even if not adopted in full, dashboards containing key elements of the monthly report will aid in data cross-checking and verification, improving overall reporting accuracy.

Develop Employee Satisfaction Metrics

Employee engagement is a critical component of any organizational improvement effort, particularly when implementing new practices and technologies. Engagement tends to increase when employees understand the reasons for operational changes and find value in their daily responsibilities. Within the Aglands Preservation Program, the historically small staff size, low turnover, and infrequent updates to workflows and technology have contributed to limited emphasis on engagement and satisfaction. However, the introduction of new systems has underscored the need to better understand employee perspectives to support successful adoption.

Currently, no formal metrics exist to evaluate employee engagement or satisfaction. To establish a baseline, a six-question open-ended survey was deployed, using widely recognized indicators to assess workplace experience. The questions are as follows:

- How do you feel about your day-to-day work?

- Do you feel your workload is manageable?
- Do you feel your contributions are recognized and appreciated?
- Are there things that frustrate you about your job?
- Are there things you would like to change about your job?
- How can your manager better facilitate your job?

Responses will provide qualitative insights into current levels of engagement and help identify opportunities to improve workflows, job design, and management practices.

Provide Transparency and Efficiency for the Public

The Aglands Preservation Program maintains three public-facing web mapping applications designed to share program information with stakeholders: the Aglands Public Web Mapping Application (PWA), the Easements Dashboard (ED), and the Young Farmer Easements Dashboard (YED). While these tools offer valuable insights, their fragmented structure and interface complexity have contributed to underutilization among the general public. Since their launch in 2020 (2021 for the YED), usage data indicates that the PWA has received 17,001 visits, the ED 10,854 visits, and the YED only 102 visits. Both the PWA and ED are available on the Aglands Preservation Program website—the PWA through a clickable link and the ED embedded directly on the site—while the YED is not currently linked, contributing to its comparatively low engagement.

To improve accessibility and increase public utilization, two changes have been implemented. First, the three applications were consolidated into a single web mapping platform with multiple tabs, allowing users to access all content from one location. This unified application will be linked on the program's website, and the embedded ED will be replaced with a static screenshot to improve loading times and navigation. Second, user guides were developed to assist the public in understanding and interacting with the applications. While the tools are intuitive for individuals familiar with geographic information systems (GIS), they can be challenging for users without technical experience. The PWA includes more than ten interactive buttons, and both the ED and YED support advanced filtering queries, prompting the need for clear instructional support.

The PWA user guide is divided into two sections: a text-based overview and a visual button guide. The text section provides background information on the content displayed in the application, offers example queries that can be answered using the map's features, and includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section that addresses both map functionality and general program details. The button section mirrors the interface of the application, displaying icons corresponding to each in-app tool. Clicking these icons reveals a pop-up box with descriptive text and an image showing the tool's location within the application. Tools embedded in map pop-ups are also included in this section.

The user guides for the ED and YED follow an identical structure, as both applications function similarly apart from the datasets they display. The ED provides access to all Aglands easements, while the YED displays easements associated with the Young Farmer Loan Program. These guides focus on explaining the dashboard layout and outlining the available filter options.

Future updates to the unified web application will include an additional tab for Century Farm Award recipients, further expanding the program's online presence and outreach capabilities.

Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)

Modernize Online Services

The DNREC Modernization of Online Services project has continued to expand providing a single portal into DNREC services. Through 2023, permits and licenses previously added to the portal include water licensing, non-hazardous transporters, and open burn submissions. Recent additions include asbestos, gasoline tank truck air pollution, outdoor water tank paint removal, and watershed coastal construction permits.

As these processes are digitized, they're optimized for efficiency and integration with the Department's enterprise content management solution. These changes allow the Department to better track and archive records without additional manual steps. Further, modernizing applications like asbestos registrations, supports mobile submissions and requires mandatory data fields improving the accuracy of information. The antiquated asbestos application, created in 2017, is now being retired.

The project team also added business permits. These new profiles allow businesses operating in Delaware to have a single window into their permits and licenses, status, renewals, and compliance information.

The next phase of digitization in 2024 includes septic, and well and water allocation permits. As with other permits, these updates will simplify the customer experience and will contribute important information to data management and data sharing systems like EQuIS, DNREC's environmental data management solution, and the State's Open Data Portal.

Since Digital DNREC was first introduced over a million online applications have been processed. The ability for customers to access a digital permit or license for storage on their phone or local reprinting has reduced calls for assistance by 75 percent. Further, DNREC's process review and optimization that precedes digitizing the functionality has reduced duplication off staff efforts by 60 percent improving the overall efficiency and predictability of services.

The Division of Water Resource Protection Section recently launched an online licensing exam service within the ePermitting platform (Expertly), which provided a strategic opportunity to modernize and streamline testing processes. This service enhances both user experience and operational efficiency. It reduces administrative overhead, increases scalability, and ensures exam security through robust digital safeguards. Additionally, the platform enables data-driven insights that can be used to refine training and certification programs. These benefits collectively support a more accessible, reliable, and future-ready licensing framework

The DNREC Modernization of Online Services project has continued to expand providing a single portal into DNREC services.

While additional permits are reviewed for online services, the focus in late 2024 and 2025 has been the establishment of enterprise accounts for businesses. Enterprise accounts allow businesses operating in Delaware to have a single window into their permits and licenses, status, renewals, and compliance information. Since the implementation of enterprise services, over 700 businesses have created their accounts in Digital DNREC. An average of 5 new accounts are added per week. The following business permits are currently available:

Air Quality Programs:

- Air Quality Open Burning Approvals
- Asbestos, Notification of Demolition and/or Renovation
- Auto Body Source Category Permit
- Gasoline Tank Truck Air Pollution Control Operating Permit
- Removal of Exterior Coatings from Outdoor Water Tanks
- DAQ Natural Minor Permits

Water Programs:

- Non-Hazardous Liquid Waste transporter permits
- Water Contractor licenses
- Water Permits for Wells/Allocations

Watershed Stewardship Programs:

- Watershed Coastal Construction Permits

Further, over the past year the Digital DNREC project team has worked closely with the Digital Government GoDE team. This initiative moves the dashboard payment engine from Velocity Payments to Fiserv in alignment with the Office of the State Treasurer contract for merchant processing. In addition to updating application code, much effort has been required to change DNREC's use of merchant IDs (MIDs). Moving from over 60 MIDs to roughly 20, will allow a more efficient market-basket approach so customers can pay for multiple DNREC services with a single payment authorization. This significant groundwork will improve the customer experience and simplify payment validation both within DNREC and with First State Financials. Upcoming phases of Digital DNREC include enhanced Well and Septic permits, integration with the Digital Government Dashboard, internal and external single sign on options.

Advance Ready in 6 (Ri6) DNREC Subaqueous Permitting Improvement Prototype

The DNREC Division of Water is currently developing a prototype aimed at improving the processes associated with boat docking facilities on both private and public subaqueous lands. The division is responsible for issuing roughly 600 subaqueous permits and leases annually for various projects, with approximately 300 permits/leases dedicated to boat docking facilities. This permitting process is crucial for managing Delaware's water resources and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations. However, the division faces significant challenges in efficiently processing these applications, resulting in delays and unpredictability in permit issuance.

The concept for this project is informed by the Ready in Six (Ri6) initiative, which included a consulting report sponsored by the Delaware Business Roundtable that evaluated the time taken to issue business permits across Delaware's government agencies. The report recommended a reduction in total permit processing time to 6 months, compared to the estimated baseline of 24 months. Following this, GEAR conducted a survey within the business community to identify specific processes affecting permitting delays. This survey highlighted numerous inefficiencies in government processes, including those within DNREC's subaqueous permitting processes, leading DNREC to target this area as a scalable prototype for future process improvements.

The process for issuing certain wetlands and subaqueous permits is often lengthy and unpredictable, due to a combination of procedural complexity, a recent backlog of applications, and multiple required steps—including pre-application requirements, administrative intake, scientific review, and public notice periods. For lease applications, the process also includes a final review and approval by the DNREC Secretary, adding an additional layer to an already intricate system. Acknowledging the potential for improvement, the Division and Department is dedicated to streamlining the process to enhance efficiency, transparency, and predictability.

This project employs a 3-phased approach to analyze current processes, define future states, recommend, and pilot solutions aimed at enhancing efficiency, reducing backlogs, and improving engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. Additional expected benefits include enhanced process visibility and consistency of processes and improved predictability. The prototype is scheduled to be completed by the end of the 2025 calendar year and a preliminary report was issued to the Department in June 2025. The project team has made considerable progress over the prior year having completed current state mapping, implementing a variety of standardized work templates, engaged in data cleanup, and is aimed to deliver significant process efficiencies for this program beginning in 2026. Ultimately, this prototype will guide further permitting process improvement initiatives within DNREC (including the ongoing e-permitting initiative).

Improve Chemical Inventory Reporting in Emergency Planning and the Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA)

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances (WHS) Emergency Response and Strategic Services Section EPCRA Program is carrying out strategic initiatives to improve the timely submission of accurate chemical inventory reports by facilities and enhancing community outreach through the development of an online public information portal and participation in community events. In 2024 & 2025, the program received ~ 98 percent of EPCRA reports by the due date of March 1st compared to ~95 percent in 2023 and ~90 percent in past years. Ongoing follow up with delinquent facilities further increased submissions to nearly 99 percent by May 2025. Historically, public access to information has relied primarily on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, which may take a few days to process. The new online portal complements the FOIA process by making key information readily available to the public in real time. Since its launch in June 2024, more than 250 users have registered for and accessed the portal, demonstrating increased public engagement and transparency.

The EPCRA Program implemented several strategic initiatives such as modified training workshops, feedback surveys, a concurrent report review process, and the launch of an online public portal to improve the timely submission of chemical inventory reports by facilities and to enhance the community outreach efforts. Training workshops were split into four shorter but focused sessions for improved engagement. In December 2024, the EPCRA team conducted the first workshop focusing on regulatory overview of the program to educate facilities on reporting requirements. In January & February 2025, the team provided two training workshops to facility personnel on reporting procedures. The fourth workshop was dedicated to a live question and answer session with a demonstration of the reporting process. Roughly 200 facility representatives attended the workshops. Workshop surveys were conducted to gain insight into Tier II reporting, which is required from organizations who store hazardous chemicals or substances over a certain threshold, from users throughout the state, and to improve the workshop in the future. Notably, over two-thirds of participants reported feeling more prepared for EPCRA reporting after attending the workshops.

The program also worked closely with the Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) to review the status of unreported facilities, which led to the resolution of approximately 25 percent of the 22 delinquent cases. The program initiated a simultaneous report review process to identify any errors in submitted reports and correct them in a timely manner. This approach reduced reporting errors and enhanced the credibility of program administration. Additionally, the program works closely with the provider of the Tier II database, to improve features in the database to manage the chemical data efficiently.

Overall, the program achieved roughly 98 percent of EPCRA reports by the due date of March 1st compared to ~95 percent in 2023 and ~90 percent in past years. Continuous follow up with delinquent facilities further increased submission of EPCRA reports to ~99 percent by May 2025. Although there are currently~ 2,700 facilities, each year the number of facilities may vary due to change in their reporting status and addition of new facilities. Reporting may also be impacted by factors such as facility staff turnover rate, internal training program, and LEPC interaction with such facilities.

The objective of the Community Right-to-Know provisions of the Act is to increase the public's knowledge and access to information on chemicals at individual facilities, their uses, and releases into the environment. This information enables local governments, emergency responders, and community members to better understand the presence of hazardous substances and prepare for potential risks.

To strengthen these provisions, the program conceptualized and developed the EPCRA Public Portal, with the approval from the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC). This online portal was designed to provide the public with convenient access to relevant EPCRA information, including facility name and location, chemical name, physical and health hazards. Sensitive information is not available through the public portal and must still be requested via the FOIA process. The new online portal complements the FOIA process by making key information readily available to the public in real time.

Several efforts were undertaken to promote awareness about the portal and to encourage public engagement with the information it provides. EPCRA flyers were developed in multiple languages (English, Spanish and Haitian Creole) and distributed at public events throughout the year. Approximately 3,000 flyers were provided to all 33 state libraries for their public display. Additional promotional materials such as EPCRA posters, tabletop display, and giveaways were also prepared to support outreach activities.

The program actively participated in the Delaware State Fair and numerous community events across the state, including University of Delaware Ag Day, Family Emergency Preparedness Day, the Hispanic Heritage Community Health Fair, the Community Preparedness & Resiliency Event, and many others. These outreach efforts fostered direct community engagement and heightened public awareness of the information available through the portal. These events also offered valuable opportunities to connect with the public and raise awareness about resources for learning about chemicals present in their neighborhoods.

A newsletter article titled “Meet Your Chemical Neighbors: DNREC’s New Portal Reveals Local Chemical Hazards” was published in the February 2025 issue of Outdoor Delaware and received over 1,200 pageviews within five months. The program also utilized social media in March 2025 to expand public access to the portal, with social media efforts generating the most engagement and resulting in more than 100 public users registering on the portal within just a few weeks.

Presentations were delivered at various community meetings, including the Croda Community Advisory Council (CAC), the Route 9 Monitoring Committee, and the Neighborhood Planning Councils in Wilmington. These presentations were led by interactive sessions, encouraging participants to ask questions and engage in discussions about chemical information and the resources available through the EPCRA Public Portal. Through these presentations, the program was able to share valuable information, gather community feedback, and build stronger connections with local stakeholders. The program plans to continue similar outreach efforts.

Since its launch in June 2024, more than 250 users have registered for and accessed the portal, demonstrating growing public engagement and enhanced transparency. Community events offered opportunities to interact directly with the public and raise awareness, while social media efforts effectively encouraged users to register and explore the chemical information available on the portal. Moving forward, the program will continue expanding outreach efforts, further enhance the portal’s features, and incorporate user feedback to improve usability and accessibility. These ongoing efforts will help ensure that communities remain informed with the information about chemicals present in their neighborhoods, supporting public safety and environmental protection.

Streamline the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program through Third Party Administration

The Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy (CCE) Climate and Sustainability section manages the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program which provides incentives for Delawareans and Delaware businesses to buy or lease new battery electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. CCE partnered with a third-party to support administration of the program thereby redirecting approximately 30 percent of staff efforts toward other initiatives. Since the program has been administered by the third-party, the anticipated rebate applications have increased from approximately 900 to 1800 over the past year. Recently, the program was updated to include a used EV rebate and higher rebate amounts for lower-priced vehicles. These changes aim to distribute the funds more equitably and expand the program's reach.

The Delaware EV Rebate Program continues to demonstrate strong performance under the administration of the Center for Sustainable Energy. Over the past year, more than 2,000 rebates have been issued — an increase from 1,800 the year prior — reflecting sustained public interest in clean vehicle adoption. Notably, used EVs now account for approximately 20 percent of all rebates issued, indicating that recent program updates aimed at improving equity and expanding access are having a measurable impact.

Improve Stakeholder Communication in Remediation

The Remediation Section's process improvement project will provide an internal communication plan that will provide staff the resources and guidance needed to respond to stakeholder inquiries and reduce the response time by 50 percent. The project is being conducted in four phases: Needs Assessment, Draft Implementation Plan, Implementation Pilot and Implementation and Maintenance.

As part of the first phase of the project, a needs assessment survey of remediation staff was conducted. Survey results indicated that there are inconsistencies in communication and documentation, but response times were better than suspected. Currently, simple inquiries are typically answered in less than a day but sometimes can take upwards of two weeks depending on levels of management involvement required. Sometimes simple inquires can turn complex. Complex inquires typically take less than seven days but sometimes can take up to 30 days.

Due to bandwidth, limited staff, new staff onboarding, and ongoing department level process improvements this project is beginning phase 3 of the implementation pilot. However, work within the prior phase has been ongoing and has established subprocess improvements that directly impact the overall success of this project. With new staff on board and an ombudsman now a part of the project team, DNREC moved into the implementation phase in mid-summer 2025.

By phase four, the section anticipates having a consistent turnaround time for responding to external stakeholder inquires, within 24 hours when feasible, but not longer than 7 days and the elimination of duplicative work resulting in a 50 percent reduction of staff time. The section is on track to accomplish final project closeout during the fourth quarter of 2025.

Tracking Online Permitting through an External Dashboard

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), through its Division of Water, has launched a new online permit tracking dashboard aimed at improving transparency, efficiency, and public access to environmental permitting information. This initiative aligns with DNREC's broader modernization strategy and reflects a commitment to responsive, data-driven service delivery.

Developed using Power BI, the dashboard integrates directly with the Division Environmental Navigator (DEN) database. To ensure accessibility for a general audience, DNREC's data scientist simplified complex relational data structures into flattened tables, enabling a clear and intuitive user experience. The dashboard updates daily before the start of the workday, allowing users to view the status of their permit applications, check their position in the review queue, and access related documents without needing to contact staff directly.

At launch, the dashboard includes tracking for Class H wastewater and disposal system inspections, septic system site evaluations, septic permits, well permits, and Wetlands and Waterways Section permits. Plans are underway to expand the dashboard to include additional permit types such as Letters of Authorization, Statewide Activity Approvals, Water Quality Certifications, and Subaqueous Permits.

In conjunction with the dashboard rollout, the Division of Water has also created a centralized Digital Resources webpage, designed to house all publicly available digital tools in one location. This hub simplifies access to permitting systems, data platforms, and other online services. The Division will continue to enhance the site as new tools are developed, ensuring that the public has streamlined access to the most current resources. The dashboard and Digital Resources webpage are publicly accessible at dnrec.delaware.gov/water/digital-resources.

Department of State (DOS)

Delaware Communities of Excellence (DECOE) – Year 5

Governor Meyer has declared a Literacy Emergency in Delaware, as a top priority for his administration. Delaware ranks 48th in the nation for reading scores. Forty-one percent of Delaware students were proficient in English Language Arts in the 2023-2024 school year, and twenty percent of Delaware adults read below a third grade reading level. Children with lower literacy skills struggle in school and to graduate. Adults with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, lack resources for housing, transportation, and other essentials, and disproportionately rely on social safety nets including government subsidies.

The national Communities of Excellence employs a collective impact approach within the Baldrige Framework, because large-scale social change requires broad, cross-sector coordination. Delaware Communities of Excellence's goal is e*quity through literacy,* and established the Delaware Literacy Alliance, a collaborative of all State agencies and non-profit organizations that support literacy to produce a statewide literacy ecosystem across the lifespan. This ecosystem will coordinate literacy services that are easier to access, equitable, cost effective, and create measurable, impactful results to improve literacy. The Delaware Literacy Alliance is committed to improving literacy levels for all through a 2-pronged approach:

1. Bringing literacy organizations together to collaboratively build systems and capacity.
2. Aligning, linking, and expanding programs and services to replicate successes in communities throughout the state.

The Delaware Literacy Alliance collaboratively builds systems and capacity by:

- Creating equitable literacy systems, replicating successful systems in other communities throughout the state.
- Identifying literacy services across geographic areas, as well as gaps and duplications.
- Aligning, integrating, and expanding these services into scalable systems.
- Creating a literacy dashboard of services across the lifespan of Delawareans among all partners and identifying appropriate performance measures and indicators.

The Delaware Literacy Alliance Advisory Council was formed in the spring of 2023, with the Delaware Division of Libraries/Delaware Libraries as the backbone. Members involved in this initiative to date include:

ChristianaCare	Laffey-McHugh Foundation
Delaware Association of Nonprofit Agencies	Literacy Delaware
Delaware Community Foundation	Philanthropy Delaware
Delaware Department of Education	Read Aloud Delaware
Delaware State University	Reading Assist
Energize Delaware	Rodel/Delaware Readiness Teams
First State Educate	Sussex County Health Coalition
Highmark Delaware	United Way of Delaware
International Literacy Association	University of Delaware

In Fiscal Year 2024 the Delaware Literacy Alliance released its report, *The State of Literacy in Delaware,* and accompanying strategic plan. Fiscal Year 2025 saw the launch of the Delaware Literacy Alliance's websiteDelawareliteracyalliance.org and other activities. Examples of literacy solutions supported by Delaware Libraries with statewide impact include:

- For preschoolers birth to 5 years old:
    - Delaware Libraries provide free English language or bilingual books monthly to every Delaware child under five registered through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. More than 34,500 children were enrolled

in June 2025, and more than 23,000 have graduated since 2020 (more than 5,000 in Fiscal Year 2025). Delaware Division of Libraries staff presented Delaware's successful strategies at the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Homecoming 2025 international conference in June 2025.

- For kindergarten through grade 12:
  - Free year-round access to eBooks for children is available through Delaware Libraries' OverDrive and Delaware Department of Education Sora student mobile device app.
  - School libraries are now joining the Delaware Library Catalog/Consortium with Division of Libraries' technology and infrastructure support to complete the "last mile" to ensure every child has access even if they are not taken to their public library.
- For adults:
  - The Northstar Digital Literacy online program provides free digital literacy training to all Delawareans

The Delaware Literacy Alliance continues to grow in members and impact with all participants recognizing that this is a multi-year effort to improve literacy and the lives of Delawareans.

Build Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Infrastructure in Delaware Libraries

Checking books in and out and performing inventories at Delaware's libraries are time and resource intensive activities. Starting in 2022 with public libraries, and continuing with school libraries, a library vendor placed radio frequency identification (RFID) tags in most public library and participating school library collections and installed scanning and self-check-out equipment. The project's goal was to create a system where libraries' collections items are RFID-tagged, staff are trained to effectively use the scanning equipment, and self-checkout is available to the public and students. These efforts are expected to reduce the time staff use to check items in and perform inventories, as well as for staff, the public and students to check items out. Reducing the time required by these activities should free up library staff to work on other priorities, such as assisting the public and students with inquiries, instructing the public through programs and community outreach, and increase overall productivity.

Recent results for public libraries show patrons and staff adopting the new circulation and inventory processes. For example, Milford Public Library patrons used self-checkout about 15 percent of the time in Fiscal Year 2025, similar to the use rate in Fiscal Year 2024 and up from single digit use in Fiscal Year 2023. Dover Public Library has a similar, slightly higher, adoption trend. One benchmark for fully adopted self-checkout use comes from Seaford Public Library which purchased its own self-checkout units many years ago. Its Fiscal Year 2025 circulation statistics indicate that about 63 percent of their patrons use self-checkout regularly. Self-checkout means that staff can focus on other priority activities, along with their regular circulation duties. Anecdotally, many patrons seem impressed by the speed of the new service.

School libraries that are members of the Delaware Library Consortium and Catalog continue to see much heavier use of self-checkout units than public libraries do. In School Year 2024-2025, monthly self-checkout use at many of those school libraries was frequently 50 percent or higher, with Hartley Elementary School in the Capital School District at 97 percent. Self-checkout enables busy school librarians to focus on instructing students rather than handling materials and gives students a sense of empowerment. It is important to emphasize however, that self-checkout units do not replace the need for professionally trained school librarians as part of school instruction teams.

School Libraries Join the Delaware Library Catalog and Consortium

School age children need access to an abundance of current books to support literacy and learning. School libraries struggle to keep their collections up to date and relevant. A successful pilot project started in 2016 between Colonial School District and the Delaware Division of Libraries to integrate the school libraries in the Delaware Library Catalog, to analyze their school libraries' collection and processes, as well as install new radio frequency identification (RFID) and self-check technologies. As a result, the average publication year of books in Colonial School District's library collections has improved from 1994 to 2018, and the circulation of books by students has increased accordingly and significantly. This project addresses one of the recommendations from 2016 Delaware School Libraries Master Plan.

In Fiscal Years 2023-2025, school library funding was established for the Delaware Division of Libraries to enable school libraries to join the Delaware Library Catalog/Consortium with no upfront costs, along with a significant support and training to adapt their processes. Participating and planned schools as of August 1, 2025, include:

Cohort	Participating Schools
Pilot/Previously Enrolled	Sussex Technical High School, Sussex Academy, Salesianum High School, Thomas Edison Charter School, and Las Americas ASPIRA Academy
Cohort 1 (9/2022-1/2023)	Sussex Central High School, Woodbridge High School, and St. Georges Technical High School.
Cohort 2 (2/2023-6/2023)	Delcastle Technical High School, Hodgson Vocational Technical High School, Howard High School of Technology, POLYTECH High School, Great Oaks Charter School, Kuumba Academy Charter School, and High Road School of Delaware through the Community Education Building library.
Cohort 3 (6/2023-1/2024)	Academia Antonia Alonso, Dover Middle School Campus, and Dover High School.
Cohort 4 (2/2024-6/2024)	All Capital School District elementary schools.
Cohort 5 (8/2024-1/2025)	Christina School District (Gallaher Elementary School, Keene Elementary School, Leasure Elementary School, Marshall Elementary School and Oberle Elementary School) and Woodbridge Middle School.
Cohort 6 (5/2025-10/2025)	Christina School District (Jones Elementary School, Maclary Elementary School, McVey Elementary School, Smith Elementary School, Wilson Elementary School, Christiana High School, Newark High School), Colonial School District Central Elementary School, First State Montessori Academy, Positive Outcomes Charter School, and Holy Cross Catholic School.
Future Plans	Additional cohorts will be determined as discussions continue with interested schools and districts.

The Delaware Division of Libraries has focused on the following activities as part of this project: coordination with school administrators and librarians to understand their needs, planning the transition, analyzing and organizing the collection, assisting with weeding the collection, integrating the collection into the statewide catalog in a way that accommodates the school's individual policies in accordance with existing consortium policies, re-barcoding and RFID tagging all library materials, training staff on new circulation and cataloging systems, and providing ongoing support to school librarians.

After a 6-month settling-in period, school libraries may begin to circulate their materials and receive materials from other consortium libraries through the statewide library transit system if the school desires to participate. In Fiscal Year 2025, Woodbridge High School lent 1,202 items to other libraries statewide and borrowed 302 items for their students from other libraries.

Sharing resources with other consortium libraries provides both students and staff with a much larger set of learning resources than any individual library can support. The Delaware Division of Libraries will continue to collaborate with school librarians to help them maximize the opportunity in support of improved literacy and learning for students in the coming years.

Innovate Social Services in Delaware Libraries

The Delaware Division of Libraries and Delaware Libraries have a long history of leveraging technology and innovative services to meet the evolving needs of the community. Supported by Delaware officials and a robust partnership network, the Delaware Libraries Social Innovation Team was formed to maximize the use of library spaces with partnerships for workforce, health, and legal services, demonstrating a responsive and progressive approach to community service. Recognizing the barriers faced by Delawareans, especially in rural areas with limited broadband, libraries are critical access points for health consultations, employment help, and legal advice.

Workforce development and employment assistance are currently provided in 18 public libraries by trained specialists and partners on the Social Innovation Team. Delawareans can find help with job and benefits applications, basic needs referrals as well as entrepreneurship assistance for those wishing to start their own businesses. Help is available in-person, as well as by phone, email, and text. The specialists had 3,647 interactions on these topics in Fiscal Year 2025.

The Delaware Libraries Social Innovation Team Teleservices project began as a pilot in 2020 with the installation of soundproof booths equipped with UV sanitation and HEPA filtration, and iPads preloaded with healthcare apps at the Seaford, Laurel, and Milford public libraries. Currently, soundproof rooms or booths in a total of 13 public libraries across the state enable Delawareans to conduct private meetings with doctors, immigration lawyers, therapists, and other professionals. Trained Specialists are available to assist users with technology and follow-up items. These Specialists assisted users 2,134 times during Fiscal Year 2025.

The Delaware Libraries Social Innovation Team approach not only addresses immediate employment, health and legal needs but also fosters long-term community resilience and ensures that all Delawareans have access to crucial resources. The Social Innovation Team meets Delawareans in times of need and is well positioned to help bridge gaps in state-provided services as well as to recognize where systems may be broken.

Department of Services for Children Youth and Their Families (DSCYF)

Strengthen PCard Uniform Guidelines & Repayment

In Calendar Years 2023 and 2024, DSCYF consistently processed over 11,000 PCard (the State's purchasing credit card) transactions each year. The Fiscal Accounting Services (FAS) unit must reconcile each of these transactions within 30 days of the Department of Finance, Division of Accounting (DOA) reconciliation date. There are three ways a transaction is reconciled – either with an itemized receipt, an approved Affidavit for Missing and Non-Itemized Receipts, or with repayment to the State of Delaware by check, money order, or payroll deduction.

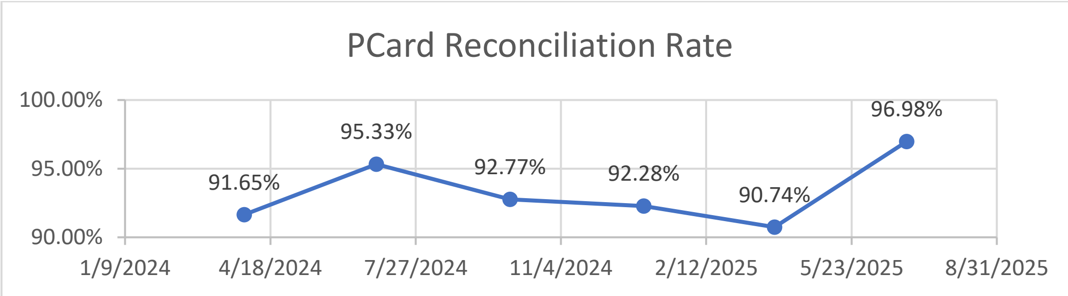
In 2023, DSCYF's reconciliation rate ranged quarterly from 90.05 percent to 98.63 percent, with an average rate of 94.81 percent. This means DSCYF had almost 600 PCard transactions that were not reconciled timely. In the first quarter of 2024, the reconciliation rate dipped to 91.65 percent. It became clear that DSCYF needed to change the trajectory of PCard reconciliations. As DSCYF began formulating a plan to improve in 2024, the reconciliation rate remained low, ending the year with an average of 93 percent.

The fiscal team identified a need for a uniform set of instructions to be written, shared, and enforced across divisions. In addition to the need for standardized instructions, it was also apparent that some divisions within DSCYF were more strictly enforcing the repayment of undocumented or unsubstantiated charges. Uniformity was required to be fair to all divisions and all PCard holders.

This project blossomed from establishing a short document of simple instructions into an exhaustive set of PCard Guidelines which were successfully converted into a mandatory Delaware Learning Center (DLC) training and policy acknowledgement. The two DLC components are now required for any cardholder to keep an existing PCard or obtain a new one. Additionally, and arguably the greatest new tool for reconciliation, is the PCard Repayment form, which was envisioned by the Fiscal team, drafted by one of DSCYF's deputy attorney generals, and approved by the Payroll Compliance Group. The new form, which is also required to keep an existing PCard or obtain a new one, will help guarantee repayment to the State. It is best described as a pre-emptive, blanket payroll deduction authorization which can be deployed when and if all other avenues to reconciliation have been exhausted. This repayment mechanism is necessary, considering that both the State's Budget and Accounting Manual (BAM) and the DSCYF PCard policy require repayment of unauthorized transactions.

All aspects of this project were finalized with an official rollout in September 2024. Now that all requirements are in place, the measurable outcome should be an improved PCard reconciliation rate beginning in Calendar Year 2025, as well as reduced employee costs related to reconciliation efforts, and process improvement. Additionally, the foreknowledge of a payroll deduction may deter an employee from improper use or faulty documentation.

DSCYF is employing a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model to continually evaluate progress and nimbly adjust to improve reconciliations. With the PDCA cycle in mind, DSCYF checked the reconciliation rate after Q1 2025 and saw that it was still in decline. While this could be partly attributed to the recent rollout, it still required evaluation. The Fiscal team identified several specific internal process issues which were negatively affecting reconciliations and made quick corrections. DSCYF is pleased to report the Q2 2025 reconciliation rate is now 96.98 percent. Moving forward, DSCYF will continue to iterate through the PDCA cycle, concentrating on the Check and Act steps.



Evolve From One-Dimensional Reports to Interactive Data Dashboards

For years, internal business users at DSCYF relied on front-end reports that were often fragmented, required manual manipulation, and lacked alignment with key performance indicators particularly around timeliness. The reports were one-dimensional, rarely told the whole story, and often required multiple reports to piece together a basic understanding of program performance. As a result, staff spent significant time interpreting data rather than acting on it, reducing overall effectiveness.

To address this, the department implemented a structured, policy-informed approach to redesign how data is communicated. DSCYF began by gathering the policies and procedures that guide business operations establishing the "why" behind the data. This foundation formed the basis for a blueprint, a document that outlines the dashboard's purpose, the location and logic of each data column, filters, and the metrics being tracked.

Once the blueprint was vetted with the business subject matter experts, the blueprint guided the development of an interactive dashboard tailored to business needs. After validation, the department supported the users of the dashboard through bite-sized learning sessions to ensure they understand how to navigate, interpret, and act on the data. This process has already resulted in the successful launch of 11 dashboards. Each dashboard saves time, increases transparency, and helps supervisors and managers make informed decisions.

Update the Continuity of Operation Planning (COOP) Process Life Cycle

In 2017, Executive Order 15 was signed, instructing each executive branch department or agency to develop plans to ensure continuity of operations during times of emergency and ensure its ability to carry out essential government functions in the aftermath of natural, man-made, or technological disasters. The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families (DSCYF) Division of Management Support Services (DMSS) sought to pilot the development of a long-term strategy to collect data related to the essential functions of each of its operating units, give staff the knowledge and tools to effectively respond in the event of an emergency, ensure updates are made to the DMSS Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) as a living document, and build a process that can be leveraged to support the planning efforts of the other three divisions and the department.

Using the ADKAR(Awareness-Desire-Knowledge-Ability-Reinforcement®) model for change management, the COOP Team crafted communications to build awareness, share the team's approach to data collection, and highlight the importance of each person's role in restoration of essential functions following an emergency. Strong sponsorship from division leadership and the creation of user-friendly data collection templates increased the desire of the participants to engage in the effort. Two workshops were built to increase knowledge, facilitate completion of the data collection templates, and provide training and education to division managers and supervisors. While this is an on-going project, the COOP plan was recently tested in October 2025, when each DMSS unit had the opportunity to test their part of the plan during a division-wide mock emergency exercise. This mock emergency exercise served as an opportunity to assess whether the data collected effectively supports the division following an emergency, determine what additional information may be beneficial to restoration effort, evaluate the criticality ranking of each essential function, and challenge participants to reflect on data provided by their unit. It also allows the COOP Team to look for areas to improve upon as the plan is implemented with the other three divisions. Additionally, the team identified reinforcement strategies aimed at building a culture of preparedness, established goals and methods to ensure real-time plan updates, and identified resources needed to distribute "COOP Go-Bags" to each unit during the October 2025 mock emergency exercise.

Throughout this on-going project, the team has received support from leadership, diligently collaborated with key internal stakeholders, and focused on the development of a plan to ensure the agency can continue to fulfill its mission to engage families and communities to promote the safety and well-being of children through prevention, intervention, treatment, and rehabilitative services following an emergency. To date, all DMSS units have actively participated, leading to a significant increase in the overall quality and amount of data available to the division. Feedback has been positive, with some participants volunteering to play a more active role in future planning efforts. The project schedule, communication and worksheet templates, workshops, and training materials are tracking to be very effective in supporting future efforts to build a comprehensive DSCYF COOP plan. By piloting this program with one division, a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle has been implemented. The lessons learned during each workshop and at the upcoming mock emergency exercise will allow the team to effectively evaluate the overall success of the project, the health of the plan, and look for opportunities for improvement.

Improve Investigation Timeliness Through Dedicated Initial Response Staffing

Ongoing staffing vacancies within the Division of Family Services (DFS) at DSCYF have contributed to rising caseloads and delays in investigative casework, particularly in traditional investigation units. Staff are burdened with balancing time-sensitive initial responses and complex ongoing investigations, which compromises the timeliness of assessments and increases the likelihood of re-traumatization for families. Caseloads regularly exceed the maximum standard of 11, contributing to worker fatigue and stagnant cases.

The proposed solution was to pilot a new staffing model where designated day shift workers focus exclusively on conducting initial responses, while a separate group handles the full investigations once child safety is confirmed. This division of labor mirrors an existing after-hours model and aims to streamline workflows, improve child safety assessments, and reduce case backlogs. The pilot launched in Sussex County in July 2024 and is now expanding into Kent and New Castle Counties.

While formal data tracking processes are still being refined, early figures suggest the pilot is having a positive impact. These early results indicate improved efficiency and suggest potential long-term benefits, including reduced staff burnout, fewer backlogged cases, and quicker pathways to ensuring child safety. As the model expands, ongoing data collection will be critical to evaluating and further refining the approach.

Develop the Pathway 1 Prevention Case Management Program

In October 2023, DSCYF conducted a Root Cause Analysis centered on the question: *What department-wide processes must be created or modified to increase coordination and collaboration to ensure families' holistic needs are met?* This data-informed inquiry surfaced key themes, ultimately leading to five system-level recommendations. One of the emerging priorities from this analysis was to proactively support families whose reports to the DFS Child Abuse Report Line were screened out, meaning that they did not meet criteria for formal investigation, but who still face significant stressors such as housing instability, mental health concerns, or domestic violence. To address this gap in providing support to families in need, DSCYF launched Pathway 1 in August 2024—a voluntary, short-term prevention initiative that offers support to eligible families with children ages 0–17, who have no prior DFS involvement and face at least two stress factors.

To address this gap, DSCYF launched a prevention workgroup tasked with supporting the design and implementation of a new pathway—known as the Pathway 1 Program (P1P)—for families identified through screened-out child abuse hotline reports. Pathway 1 maintains existing intake protocols for screened-in reports but creates a parallel process for early outreach and connection to community-based services for screened-out cases. The initiative is grounded in continuous quality improvement practices, including the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model, and is evaluated quarterly using a mixed-methods approach. Key performance indicators and data tracking tools are being used to measure success and guide ongoing improvement. Metrics include the number of screened-out reports identified as eligible for diversion, referral acceptance rates, subsequent involvement (or lack thereof) with DFS or DSCYF, and types of stress factors present. The team is also monitoring capacity of service providers, including referral volumes and waitlist trends, and tracking engagement. This real-time data allows for ongoing refinement of the process, identification of service gaps, and an adaptive approach to scaling.

From August 2024 through January 2025, 901 reports were eligible for P1P program screening. Of those, 24 percent (220 reports) had a screening score of 4 or higher, qualifying them for a referral to P1P. Among the 220 eligible families, 31 percent initially accepted services. However, only 18 percent engaged in the program, while 14 percent accepted but did not complete an initial meeting. The majority—65 percent—either declined services or could not be reached. Of those who engaged, 31 percent successfully completed the program, and 16 percent remain ongoing. Over the first six months, the most frequently reported risks among participating families were domestic violence, mental health issues, and substance misuse. Data revealed significant challenges among participating families: 25 percent lacked stable housing or were at risk of losing it, 27 percent experienced food insecurity, and 42 percent reported unreliable transportation as a barrier to accessing healthcare, employment, and daily essentials.

To strengthen the program, several opportunities for improvement have been identified. These include enhancing outreach and engagement strategies, improving the design of outreach letters, prioritizing referrals with active contact information, and considering more flexible meeting timelines. One early opportunity that has already been implemented with positive impact is the integration of the Prevention Services Screening Tool into DFS's database management system, FOCUS. This enhancement has improved the efficiency and completeness of data entry and now allows for automatic scoring across four prevention programs, including P1P – improving data-driven decision-making and laying the groundwork for broader system transformation. Additional enhancements focus on streamlining communication through shared data tools, automating stressor screening, developing stronger partnerships with local nonprofits, and expanding investment in rural resources. Ongoing efforts also include mid-program satisfaction surveys and improvements to data systems to better support adaptive decision-making. Through these strategies, Pathway 1 is building a more responsive, preventive system that reaches families earlier—before challenges escalate into deeper system involvement.

Improve the Timeliness of Provider Incident Reporting

In FY23, the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' (DSCYF) Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS) enhanced its tracking of provider timeliness, reviewing data on a weekly and monthly basis. The Continuous Quality Improvement and Consultation Unit (CQICU) reported this information to division leadership, identifying any notable trends for specific providers or across the entire group. In response to any deficiency areas, the team developed different measures to assist providers in meeting the division expectations, such as offering additional training on reportable events and incident reporting to our provider network in the division's quarterly provider forums, including reportable event training in provider onboarding, and requiring additional training when a specific provider was not meeting the timeliness standard or was not completing reports thoroughly and accurately. Some provider agencies did not know if, over time, their reports were being submitted timely, thus the CQICU and Program Administration (PA) teams began providing this feedback directly to providers during routine periodic check in meetings and provider monitoring visits, and through additional calls when a problem was identified. This feedback loop was designed to assist providers in meeting the DSCYF reportable event policy and contract requirements as laid out in the DSCYF operating guidelines. When DPBHS started this quality improvement project, only 56 percent of all submitted reports had met a 72-hour requirement to report incidents or adverse events from the date of incident. At present, approximately 80 percent of all submitted reports have met the 72-hour requirement. The division continues to refine its review of timeliness data and intervene with providers who are not in compliance to bring the goal closer to 100 percent.

As DPBHS has worked with our provider network on timeliness of reporting, some stakeholders offered feedback that their metric of timeliness was influenced by events outside their control, such as a family reporting an event well after the event happened. In this scenario, the notification and report cannot be submitted within the standards which are based on time after the event itself. Based on this feedback, in FY26 the division will be further analyzing first-hand versus third party reporting and identifying a more accurate calculation to assess timeliness of third-party reports. June 2025 data showed that for first-hand reports, providers submitted reports within the 72-hour standard 90 percent of the time.

In FY 26 DBPHS will pilot a new process with providers who are not in compliance that will include reaching out as soon as compliance drops below 75 percent to better support the provider in ensuring all staff is adequately trained and provide consultation on process improvement. If performance does not improve in the subsequent month, a corrective action plan will be implemented, and if compliance continues to be inadequate, referrals will be paused until the provider can demonstrate sufficient corrective action. In addition, the CQICU and PA teams will follow up with providers who submit zero reportable events in any given month to ensure that this, too, is correct and not a failure to comply with the DSCYF reportable event notification and reporting policy. To acknowledge the efforts of providers who are following the DSCYF reportable event policy, notifying and reporting adverse incidents in a timely fashion month over month, the CQICU and PA teams will recognize these providers in the quarterly provider forums.

Expand the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services' Quality Improvement Framework

To promote accountability and informed leadership decision-making, the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS) identified a primary goal of data-driven decision making and has built a strong foundation for performance monitoring and continuous improvement. Each operating unit maintains key performance indicators that are reviewed annually and used to track progress, identify trends, and shape strategic planning. In FY25, the division released its first annual report summarizing accomplishments from FY24 and featuring division-wide data on service reach, client demographics, and performance outcomes. A public-facing dashboard was also launched to increase transparency and make critical information accessible to external stakeholders.

A significant step forward was the re-establishment of a quality management committee in FY25. This group is responsible for reviewing division-wide data—including service utilization, satisfaction trends, and outcome measures—and presenting recommendations to the leadership team. This committee ensures that feedback and findings lead to actionable improvements. Internally, DPBHS created a standardized satisfaction survey now used by all programs directly serving youth and families, including care coordination, consultation teams, school-based supports, and residential programs. Data from these surveys are reviewed annually to inform service delivery improvements and policy decisions.

To ensure alignment between quality improvement and service delivery, DPBHS also incorporated provider accountability measures into its contracts, requiring the biannual submission of client satisfaction and treatment outcome data. These reports feed into division-wide analysis and support a consistent, high-quality standard of care across contracted services. One key component of this work is the strategic expansion of evidence-based practices (EBPs) across prevention, early intervention, and treatment services. The division's investment in implementing and training providers in EBPs ensures that youth and families receive effective, research-supported interventions while also providing measurable outcomes that strengthen the division's overall performance framework.

Together, these initiatives reflect DPBHS's commitment to building a responsive, data-informed system that supports better outcomes for Delaware's youth and families. The division will continue expanding its performance improvement efforts in FY26 by deepening the use of satisfaction data, refining public-facing reporting, and using insights from the quality management committee to guide future initiatives.

Obtain Customer Perspectives through Community Services Program Participant Interviews

In January 2025, the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services implemented a new systematic approach to gathering feedback directly from families to support continuous quality improvement efforts. Prior methods were not meeting the division's objective of meaningfully engaging families in the continuous improvement process. This project included the creation of a framework for engaging families and collecting specific key insights into their journey through the department's system, the development of a manual and training for interviewers, and the establishment of a reliable data report to identify interviewees. By conducting interviews, the division gives families a platform to share their personal experience and gains a better understanding of the true impact of services on the youth and their family. Additionally, personal interviews improve the quality and effectiveness of services by identifying strengths and weakness of the department's processes, practices, and programs. Interviews also improve communication and trust with families by demonstrating DSCYF's commitment to involving them as active partners in the process of improving services.

In addition to the expected benefits and outcomes, the division experienced unanticipated benefits, namely staff recognition and morale boosting opportunities. Although not asked, families interviewed are quick to identify staff who have made a positive impact on them and their child. In response, the division has leveraged this feedback by creating initiatives to recognize and celebrate probation officers who have left a lasting positive impression on the families and youth they serve.

Modernize Facility Safety with Real-Time Monitoring and Reporting

In 2024, The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families' Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS) began researching more effective strategies to ensure regular and timely checks on youth in its care – especially during overnight hours -aiming to promote a safer living environment and strengthen staff accountability. The initiative focused on three core goals: enhance staff accountability by verifying that required safety checks and rounds are completed on schedule; streamlining documentation through automated reporting; and improving overall youth safety by introducing a consistent, technology-driven process across all secure and residential facilities.

After evaluating multiple options, the division selected a technology platform that is already in use across Delaware State agencies and approved by the Department of Technology and Information (DTI), enabling a more efficient procurement and deployment process. A key advantage of this solution is the opportunity for interagency collaboration, allowing DYRS to draw on the expertise and lessons learned from other agencies using the same system. This collaboration supports smoother implementation and long-term success. As of July 2025, project planning is well underway. Hardware has been delivered, the department's Management Information System team is configuring the server to host the system, and facility-level implementation plans are being developed. Training, coordination, and rollout schedules are being aligned to ensure a smooth transition across all DYRS facilities.

Once fully implemented, this system will deliver a range of benefits: increased operational efficiency by reducing reliance on manual tracking, more consistent and timely safety checks, improved accountability through verifiable staff activity, and stronger data capabilities to support trend analysis and continuous improvement. Most importantly, the technology will enhance youth safety by reinforcing adherence to safety protocols and creating a culture of accountability and professionalism across facilities—supporting both the wellbeing of youth and the integrity of staff practices.

Update the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services' (PBH) Records Retention Schedule

The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families Division of Management Support Services (DMSS) Records unit discovered that DSCYF's retention schedules included excessively long retention periods for agency records. Representatives from the unit built a business case focusing on the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health's (PBH) records as those within the scope of the first phase of a long-term project. Throughout the project life cycle, the unit diligently collaborated with key internal stakeholders, DSCYF's Deputy Attorney General, and Delaware Public Archives to create a more appropriate retention schedule.

These efforts culminated in a crucial update to the PBH retention schedule, to align with the needs of the department and division and significantly reduced required record storage time. Thanks to their hard work, 900 boxes of records were identified for removal from storage, as they have met the new retention criteria. This project is creating significant return on investment as each box costs approximately $50.00 per month to store. This amounts to $45,000 per month and totals $540,000 a year.

By taking the initiative to review and execute this division's update, the Departmental Records Unit achieved the targeted benefit, exemplified the principles of Lean thinking, and demonstrated exceptional stewardship of State resources. During this phase of the project, the team developed a project framework which has also been applied to the review of the retention schedules for the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services and will be applied to a future review of the retention schedules for the Division of Family Services and Division of Management Support Services. This project reflects Lean thinking principles, optimizing state resources while maintaining compliance with best practices. This project, nominated by Donna Thompson, was selected as a recipient of the 2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award, due to their achievement in demonstrating a model for achieving and scaling cost savings. The recipients of this 2024 Award were Jill Hamilton, Alexandria Blake, Lindsey Joslin, Varina Marshall, Benedictine Ramos, and Allia Smith.

Department of Correction (DOC)

Enhance Employee Wellbeing, Recruitment and Retention through DOCares

In March 2024, the Department of Correction (DOC) conducted its second agencywide employee engagement survey as part of a continuous improvement effort to assess workforce morale and work/life balance. Survey data revealed key opportunities for improvement, including interest in alternate work schedules, expanded wellness resources, and stronger, more consistent engagement from leadership. These findings were used to inform targeted change strategies.

DOC leadership launched several initiatives aimed at addressing recruitment and retention challenges. This included hiring incentives and allowing new hires to select their preferred work locations, thereby minimizing commute times and improving employee satisfaction. These targeted interventions have led to measurable outcomes including increased staffing levels, reduced vacancy rates, and a significant decrease in "freezing" - where correctional staff are required to stay beyond their normally scheduled shifts, improving day-to-day operational stability and employee experience.

To promote work-life balance, this project aimed to raise awareness about schedule flexibility to empower staff with greater control over their work schedules, including a pilot for alternative shift structures with longer workdays in exchange for additional time off in Level IV work release facilities. This initiative supports the Lean management philosophy and practices of respect for people by recognizing and responding to employees' expressed needs for more balanced schedules.

As part of the broader DOCares initiative and in response to communication gaps identified in the employee engagement survey, the Department is also exploring leadership development programming for mid- and senior-level staff. While the specific status of this training is currently under review, the proposed program aligns with change management best practices by prioritizing leadership alignment, effective communication, and improved frontline staff engagement. The goal is to equip leaders with the tools to strengthen staff morale, build more transparent communication channels, evaluate shift assignment practices, and address staff shift "freezing".

In response to the workforce's desire for expanded wellness support, the Department launched the Cordico Wellness App in December 2024. Offered at no cost to employees, retirees, and their families, the App provides 24/7 confidential access to licensed therapists, peer support, and crisis resources. It also includes features such as guided meditation, nutritional advice, and fitness education—supporting holistic well-being. Complementing this effort, the Department is exploring the creation of on-site fitness rooms to further reduce barriers to wellness access.

To strengthen workplace culture and reinforce local ownership of morale-building efforts, employee recognition committees have been established in most DOC facilities. These committees focus on employee-driven activities (e.g., potlucks, food trucks, wellness events) that foster engagement and community. Committee efforts are tailored to the unique culture of each facility, ensuring that solutions remain relevant, inclusive, and value-added.

These efforts demonstrate the Department's commitment to cultivating a high-functioning, adaptive, and people-centered organization by integrating Lean management tools and change management practices into its workforce engagement strategy.

Assess Financial Liability Reform

In September of 2024, the Financial Liability Reform project focused its efforts at collecting data on the total revenue collected at Level 4 facilities in the form of room & board payments. The data showed that over the last three years, there has been a continuous decline in the amount of revenue collected.

The Plummer Community Correction Center (PCCC) facility was selected as a case study to determine possible root causes. Based on the feedback of staff and offenders, the decrease in revenue collections was attributed to the fact that the majority of offenders employed are making minimum wage or slightly above the minimum wage. In addition, most offenders have financial obligations in the community which they consider to be a higher priority than paying room and board fees. Lack of payments lead to higher balances that could lead to disciplinary sanctions imposed. A result of not paying room & board fees leads to non-compliance with court ordered fees and legal obligations such as child support payments and restitution payments as well.

Review of the collection process, which included the disciplinary process at PCCC, determined that up to ten staff members are involved in the processes associated with room and board fees. In FY24, PCCC collected just over $20,000 in room & board fees and spent just under $9,000 processing the collection of this revenue. While we recognize that these revenues were a net positive, it is recognized that the collection of this revenue does not provide value or alignment with our current DOC mission statement to promote successful reentry for offenders going back into their communities.

Consistent with our analysis and mission of this project, other recent Delaware reform has reduced the impact of criminal imposed financial obligation on defendants, including:

- HB 244 Passed 5/3/22: Eliminated the Probation Supervision fee and the Public Defender Fee.
- SB 282 Passed 5/21/24: Repeals the Senior Trust Fund Fee, the Interstate Compact Fee, and the Substance Abuse, Rehabilitation, Treatment, Education and Prevention Fund Fee.
- SB 283 Passed 5/21/24: Repeals the Deljis Fee Fund and outstanding balances.
- SB 284 Passed 5/21/24: Discharges balances owed (arrears) for these fees.

The Financial Liability Reform project will continue to explore the removal of the room and board fee and redirect our efforts towards the collection of court ordered fees and restitution. The project was presented to our project champions and executive stakeholders on June 13th, 2025. Positive feedback was received during our meetings, and we continue to have ongoing discussions on next steps and other possible remedies.

Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT)

Improve Land Use Permitting Processes through the Service Efficiency Blitz (SEB) Model

In alignment with Governor Meyer's Ready in Six initiative that support the State's focus on accelerating affordable housing and economic development, the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), in partnership with the GEAR program management team, conducted two Service Efficiency Blitzes (SEBs) in 2025. These SEBs focused on improving the efficiency and predictability of the Traffic Impact Study (TIS)/Traffic Operational Analysis (TOA) and the Record and Entrance Plan processes—critical review activities for land use development projects statewide.

The TIS SEB, held in September 2025, brought together DelDOT's TIS Section and GEAR team members to examine current workflows and identify rework, handoffs, and pain points in this section's processes. Immediate outcomes included the consolidation of two internal steps—traffic counts and preliminary TIS reporting—into one streamlined step, resulting in a potential 33 percent reduction in rework and an estimated annual savings of over $40,000. Additionally, TOA process time is being reduced by three business days, and two standardized templates are being developed to improve stakeholder alignment and reduce inquiries from developers. These enhancements contribute to a more transparent and collaborative environment for both DelDOT staff and external applicants.

In October 2025, a subsequent SEB targeted the Record and Entrance Plan process. Led by DelDOT's Development Coordination, Traffic Signal and Lighting, and Central District Maintenance and Operations teams, the project developed a "recheck lane" process and peer review pathway for plans that meet minimum submission criteria. This approach is projected to save approximately 1,764 days—or 13,230 work hours—annually by reducing the average rework cycle from 26 to 17 days. A simplified Traffic Signal Concurrence Letter was also developed, replacing the time-intensive Traffic Signal Agreement, with the potential to serve as a template for other cumbersome DelDOT agreements. These changes directly support Governor Meyer's goals of streamlining permitting and making the development process more predictable and efficient for private sector partners.

Together, these SEBs showcase the power of targeted, cross-functional, and data-informed process improvement initiatives. They not only address pressing operational inefficiencies but also build DelDOT's capacity to manage increasing development pressures with agility and transparency. These efforts reflect Delaware's continued investment in Lean government principles and strengthen the foundation for future enhancements in land use permitting and transportation planning processes.

Engineer and Repair the Trap Pond Dam Spillway

This project focused on the efficient mobilization of resources and emergency repair of the Trap Pond Dam Spillway following a critical failure and sinkhole formation. Through rapid mobilization, Lean principles, and cross-agency coordination, this project was completed the project in record time, saving the State hundreds of thousands of dollars. A structured approach was utilized, including innovative design solutions, rigorous cost analysis, and transparent communication, ensuring efficiency without compromising quality.

Several instances of best practices were used under this project. First, CAD software was utilized and process mapping for this project to rapidly produce multiple design prototypes for the new spillway and dam relief valve structure. Each prototype was evaluated against feasibility, cost, and durability criteria, ensuring the final design balanced all three. Collaborative design reviews with internal peers and external agencies occurred, draft construction documents were shared, and feedback was solicited throughout the project lifecycle. This open forum process minimized potential redesigns and accelerated approvals. Faced with severe infrastructure damage, thorough construction documents were crafted that detailed an emergency repair strategy, including removal and replacement of the existing damaged spillway with a new 12-inch deep reinforced concrete slab. A plan was devised to extend the new slab to the end of the west side wing wall and replace the existing concrete weir with a durable, driven sheet metal wall offset by two feet. This approach not only restored functionality but also ensured long-term resilience for the dam.

Overall, the project not only restored the dam's functionality but also established a best-practice model for future infrastructure emergencies. Paul Huhn, an Engineer in the Division of Transportation Solutions, was nominated for and received a 2024 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to his leadership and demonstrated excellence in emergency response, fiscal responsibility, and engineering innovation in leading this project to fruition.

Enhancing Customer Support through Artificial Intelligence

The Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) launched DELLA, an AI-powered chatbot, in June 2024 to enhance customer service by providing 24/7 access to essential information. Designed to streamline user interactions, DELLA reduces the need for multiple visits, phone calls, and emails by quickly answering questions through the DMV website. The chatbot's implementation led to a 50 percent usage rate, with over 258,000 engagements by the end of the prior year, improving efficiency and customer satisfaction. DMV staff continuously train DELLA to recognize new search phrases, ensuring ongoing improvements and accurate responses.

There are a few indirect benefits from this project such as improving wait times in DMV lobbies and over the phone, as well as a reduction in email inquiries. The chatbot is constantly updating so it can continue to help customers with quick and easy questions. This results in improved customer satisfaction as they do not have to call, email, or wait to speak to a DMV associate. This innovative project has not only reduced costs by eliminating a third-party service but also set a precedent for other State agencies to implement similar AI solutions. The project team of Nicole Brown, Jacob Carey, Tina LaFace, Mallory Taylor, and Jillian Troumouhis, were nominated for and received a 2024 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to their leadership and demonstrated excellence in establishing this innovative solution that is improving customer service and efficient operations within Delaware's DMVs.

Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS)

Reconstruct Carry Concealed Deadly Weapons (CCDW) Licensing

The elimination of several steps in the CCDW process will increase customer satisfaction and reduce workload (time and money) for the State. Digitizing the process will increase efficiency and ensure uninterrupted operations in emergency situations. In turn this will eliminate the number of required personnel and complaints from stakeholders and applicants. Quicker response times to applicants, reduced backlogs for Department of Justice (DOJ) and DSHS, process reduction/elimination for Courts. The goal is to provide a thorough review of current CCDW licensing processes and identify the feasibility of creating a new workflow and digital system that will best serve the needs of the DOJ, Delaware State Police (DSP), DSHS, and the citizens collectively served. In addition, this project seeks to resolve timeliness issues while utilizing existing software wherever possible.

Overall, this has been an on-going joint initiative with the DOJ to improve the process. However, it has stalled numerous times due to the focus on Permit to Purchase legislation.

Improve the Criminal History Background Review Process

The Improve the Criminal History Background project has been completed with the successful implementation with the selected vendor. Historically, persons needing a Criminal History background check for employment, or other regulatory requirements had become time consuming necessitating appointments and long waits for fingerprinting at the State Bureau of Identification (SBI). This was highly problematic as the needs for both health care workers and educators, remain in high demand and are extremely time sensitive to provide onboarding. This had resulted in backlogs and complaints. Additionally, background checks could be transferred between agencies. The goal of this project has been to improve efficiency in the application and delivery of criminal history information. The project impacted all state government that statutorily require criminal history checks. The project has reduced the three to six week timeframe down to mere hours. The only agency still being implemented is DHSS due to significant technological work on their end.

Administer Permit to Purchase

In May 2024, Delaware Senate Bill 2 created an application process to obtain a handgun qualified purchaser card to authorize the purchase of a handgun. While an applicant will incur costs related to fingerprinting and required training, a fee will not be charged to obtain the permit. A holder of a valid concealed carry permit is not required to obtain or present a handgun qualified purchaser card. It requires licensed importers, manufacturers, or dealers, as well as unlicensed persons, to require an individual to present the individual's handgun qualified purchaser card before selling or transferring a firearm to an individual and requires that an applicant complete a firearms training course within 5 years before the date of application, similar to what is required by Delaware's concealed carry permit law. An individual licensed to carry a concealed deadly weapon is exempt from this requirement as they must already complete a firearms training course to be licensed. It also, sends to law-enforcement information that is collected at the time of sale and required under federal law to be made available to law-enforcement. This change assists law-enforcement in the criminal investigations they already conduct.

The Act requires the State Bureau of Identification (SBI) to retain data about handgun purchases collected under the Act for no more than 6 months. It makes clear that § 904A of Title 24 is not intended to prohibit law-enforcement officials from keeping records of sales and transfers of firearms for longer than 6 months when relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution. And it requires the Department of Safety and Homeland Security to develop and administer a free firearms safety course for low-income residents and makes technical corrections to conform existing law to the standards of the Delaware Legislative Drafting Manual.

Currently, the project is in a 90-day holding period at the request of DELJIS. DSP was working with DELJIS on testing the State statute prohibitors within the system. Unfortunately, the testing phase did not meet the necessary standards for an efficient and effective system. Numerous issues were found and provided to DELJIS during this initial testing phase. For example, the system was declining individuals with juvenile records that would have otherwise been approved. Once DELJIS advises they have corrected the discussed issues DSP can return to the testing phase. This should include both the testing of state and federal statutes. DELJIS advised they believe this should occur sometime in November for testing and a soft launch in December. The FTAP (Firearm Transaction Approval Program) has prepared all the necessary training classes for the Federal Firearms Licenses (FFLs) and has everything prepared to begin the soft launch with already selected FFLs. All the websites, documents, and policies have been developed for Permit to Purchase as well. Permit to Purchase will work from the program DELJIS is developing, thus the delay affects this program from launching as well. DSP has also developed the policies and procedures for the Do Not Sell Registry which also will be impacted by DELJIS and this program. FTAP continues to meet with DELJIS weekly to discuss programming issues and progress.

Upgrade to Project 25 (P25) Interoperable Land Mobile Radio Compliance

As a joint effort of the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials (APCO) and the National Association of State Technology Directors, Project 25 is a longstanding partnership between the public safety communications community, standard development organizations, and industry manufacturers. Each group's goal is to satisfy the complex and evolving mission-critical communication needs of users of interoperable LMR equipment and systems. After September 11th and Hurricane Katrina, first responders needed to come from surrounding municipalities, counties, and states to assist. Obviously, agencies responded with their own equipment, including LMR systems. They quickly found that the systems were incompatible and could not be programmed. This became a communications and control issue, requiring self-dispatching, redeploying resources to the same area, and, in some cases, rescuing the rescuers. This not only slowed response times but may have also cost lives.

The status of Project 25 in Delaware is as follows in each county:

New Castle County
All police agencies in New Castle County have been moved to the P25 radio system. New Castle County fire companies and departments are working on a hybrid system with most on the P25 system and a handful on their legacy system. Communications between the two systems are handled by a transcoder that enables cross-communications, with 95 percent of the traffic on the P25 system. DivComm is working on programming the Delaware National Guard.

Kent County
All police agencies in Kent County have been moved to the P25 radio system and all Kent County fire agencies are operating on the P25 system.

Sussex County
All police agencies in Sussex County have been moved to the P25 radio system and all fire agencies in Sussex County are prepared to transition to the P25 system. However, they have elected to delay their move to allow the Maryland fire agencies more time for interoperability reasons. Sussex County hospitals failed to upgrade their radios, however DivComm is lending them radios, for the project to not stall.

Work continues to install the final batch of radios for DelDOT with one million dollars' worth of replacement radios ordered last year being installed as vehicles are available. The Delaware Transit (DART). originally programmed their radios; however, due to a software issue with their vendor, all their radios needed to be reprogrammed. They are working overtime to correct this issue and will move to the P25 system soon. Wilmington is in the process of programming its radios. Their cutover to the new system occurred in August 2025. DEMA and DHSS have about 100 radios to be programmed. There are pockets of four and five radios at some Public Works locations that require programming.

Overall, this is an eight-year project underway that typically takes two years to complete. Time was provided for end users to acquire funding and equipment. Even with nearly $7 million dedicated to state radios and another $12 million for non-state radios, DivComm is still addressing end-user radio concerns. The Division of Communications has upgraded the system from its original contractual agreement to Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA). TDMA doubles the capacity in all three counties. (New Castle County from 14 to 24 talk paths, Kent from 10 to 20, and Sussex from 10 to 20). This was to accommodate the ever-growing need to add additional users.

There are 18,000 end users on the 800 MHz radio system. Each radio must be programmed to work with the new system. Any radio not reprogrammed will not work on the new system. The Division of Communications has completed all Public Safety end users in Delaware and is working to finalize the remaining radios.

Centralize Access Control to State Buildings and Video Systems

The State has multiple departments and divisions occupying many locations and buildings. It also employs several different security systems with various vendors. These security systems include both video surveillance and building access. The programming and maintenance of these systems is problematic with changing personnel and varying threat assessments.

Therefore, this has become a problem for DSHS, most prominently, the Capitol Police Department (CPD). The CPD are responsible for security for State departments and do not always have access to the buildings, offices, and/or video surveillance. This impedes rapid response and with conducting investigations. In addition, Facilities Management, Delaware State Police, Office of the State Fire Marshal, and other departments and divisions are required to respond to emergencies or complete investigations.

Access control programming (doors, credentialling holders, time-zones, holiday schedules, databases/servers, and IT infrastructure), can be complicated and time consuming using multiple systems. Causing frustration and interruption of services. This is not efficient nor effective. Given the limitations and lack of existing systems integration, DSHS is starting a project to improve on the present system in place. Currently, funding is an issue as well as coordination across Executive Branch agencies and Cabinet Secretaries due to recent changes. This project has reverted to a pending position though it will be revisited soon.

Recruit and Retain Law Enforcement

The Delaware Association of Chiefs of Police (DACP) acquired professional services through All-Star Talent, Inc. and Guardian Alliance Technologies, Inc. to address recruitment and retention of law enforcement personnel. The DSHS obtained funding of $1.2 million for the project. It was in operation in July 2024. Several marketing videos have been created that bring attention to the State, highlighting each county's attributes. The video also focuses on the positive impact of policing and the collaborative relationships between law enforcement agencies. A mobile software application, unique to Delaware, was created for agencies to communicate with potential candidates interested in policing. Marketing campaigns have been designed to connect candidates to a state-wide landing site where more videos and marketing tools are located. Each participating agency is identified on that site, and, with the click of a link, the candidate can get specific information about any department. The candidate can apply to as many agencies as they want. Once they apply, they will receive an invitation to take a basic pre-screening questionnaire. Recruiters from the participating agencies can see the candidates who have passed the pre-screen and move them into Guardian, using the application. Guardian also created an innovative platform for background investigations. Candidates are sent a link to Guardian where they are invited to complete a comprehensive Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ). A fully completed PHQ initiates the agency's vetting and hiring process. Candidates who have applied to multiple departments only need to complete the PHQ once.

DSHS will continue to work with the DACP to sustain the platform to recruit and retain future law enforcement personnel for the State of Delaware.

Align the Delaware Integrated Data System (DIDS)

The Delaware Integrated Data System (DIDS) platform will integrate data from multiple DSHS law enforcement sources and provide a complete, accurate, and up-to-date dataset for business intelligence and data analysis. In addition to strategic planning and tactical resource deployment, the data will be used for budget planning, identifying crime trends, proactive policing, supporting the violence reduction strategy, criminal analysis, and performance measurement.

The initial use case for the DSHS Integrated Data System (IDS) is budget planning and operations analytics. Detailed business requirements for the operational dashboard have been completed along with the identification of the initial data that will be pulled into the IDS. The vendor will integrate only the data from the DSHS divisions in support of an operational dashboard. The data will be first loaded into a data lake where it will be prepped. The data will then be loaded into an analytical schema specific for the operational dashboard. Automated jobs will refresh the data in the IDS based upon the production data availability (i.e., – daily, quarterly, annually).

The operational dashboard will be made available to approved DSHS users. All users will be able to view the entire dashboard. There is no requirement to secure portions of the dashboard to selected users. No personally identifiable information (PII) is used for the dashboard.

The Department of Technology and Information (DTI) has met with DSHS and provided options, though funding and agency leadership of the project remain issues to be resolved. With recent Executive Branch personnel and Cabinet Secretary changes, the project has reverted to a pending position but will be revisited soon.

Draft and Review Regulations Efficiently

Title 29 State Government, Chapter 101 Administrative Procedures, provides the present guidelines for the drafting, approving, adopting, amending, and repealing of agency regulations. Although, the process is not as extensive as a legislative proposal or amendment, it has been cumbersome, challenging, and lacking uniformity for DSHS. The State of Delaware built a new web-based system for state agencies to create, edit, submit, and maintain regulations securely and efficiently. Historically, the practices and processes surrounding the management of regulations and administrative code have been carried out inconsistently and inefficiently. DSHS provided a liaison to the Registrar of Regulations to assist in streamlining the process. The new web-based regulations management system (RMS) went live May 19, 2025

Department of Education (DOE)

Combatting Delaware's Teacher Shortage through Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Research shows that teachers are the most important in-school factor for student success, especially for underserved schools and districts. Teacher staffing challenges disproportionately impact Black and Latino students and schools with large populations of these students, students with disabilities, and English learners. Four factors underpin the shortage of teachers:

> (1) Agency: teachers must have agency and empowerment to make decisions that are right for their students, working in partnership with families.
>
> (2) Working conditions: we must improve the working conditions in our schools and classrooms. This not only means stronger school infrastructure, but also sufficient planning time to learn collaboratively with their peers, strong induction, career ladders, and great professional learning.
>
> (3) Pay: competitive salaries are also essential to retaining great teachers. On average, teachers earn 24 percent less than other college graduates. As of 2021-2022, 35 states start their teachers with a salary less than $45,000. Sixteen states had starting salaries below $40,000.
>
> (4) Pipeline: states must invest in early career incentives to encourage the teaching profession. Access to affordable and high-quality educator preparation programs is essential. Leaving college without significant student debt is needed. Delaware used these four factors to address the State's teacher shortage.

The US Department of Education, who regularly tracks teacher recruitment and retention, reported that Delaware as the only US state to grow their educator workforce post-pandemic in 2023/2024, and Delaware earned the highest growth rate among 10 states in 2024. To achieve this, the Department of Education successfully implemented a statewide initiative to reduce the teacher shortage by increasing staffing, improving salaries, and strengthening career pathways. Through multiple work groups, DOE partnered with educators, advocacy groups, state agencies, and legislators to create a sustainable framework for continuous improvement.

As a result of these efforts, new teacher recruitment and retention efforts have expanded, leading to increased participation in programs like Teacher Residencies, Registered Teacher Apprenticeships, and "Grow Your Own"" initiatives. Additional work on competitive salary initiatives and improved working conditions have led to a more attractive profession for Delaware's educators, which contributed to a reduction in vacancy rates. Specific measurable outcomes include:

> 1. Delaware grew the total number of public educators by 6.3 percent adjusted for child population change from pre-pandemic (March 2019-February 2020) relative to current day (March 2023-February 2024).
>
> 2. Delaware was recognized for raising teacher salaries. Delaware was one of 31 states and DC to increase compensation since academic year 2021-2022. Delaware reports a $45,188 average starting salary, above the US average of $44,530. DE's average salary is $68,787 and top salary is $90,870.
>
> 3. Delaware was recognized as the first mid-Atlantic state to have a registered teaching apprenticeship. Registered Apprenticeship via the Department of Labor is an effective "earn and learn" model with a long history of establishing

career pathways in growing industries. Apprenticeships unlock federal funds that can help with tuition costs as well as allow college students to get paid for student teaching work as part of their teaching degree.

4. Delaware reported growth in college enrollment for the teaching professions (Educator Preparation Programs) from academic year 2018-2019 to academic year 2020-2021. Nationally, enrollment in teaching college majors has grown by seven percent from academic year 2018- 2019 to academic year 2020-2021; Delaware has grown by 51 percent, from 1,980 students in academic year 2018-2019 to 2,964 in academic year 2020-2021. Note: data was total student enrollment and not graduation.

Beyond the US Department of Education report, the Delaware Department of Education noted the following results:

l. Delaware grew the Teacher Academy pipeline to encourage future educators. This pathway is offered in 32 public education high schools and recruits future teachers committed to shaping the next generation. This program engages over 3,700 students in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that provide a realistic understanding of the teaching profession, emphasizing the importance and impact of education professionals in early childhood and K-12 settings, and the option of earning up to 12 credits of college credit while in high school.

2. Delaware offered four state-sponsored scholarships to target future and current educators relieving future college student debt issues. Scholarships are awarded on annual basis to current college student pursuing a career in education and current educators gaining additional educational credentials (retention). In 2023-2024, scholarships were award to 1,154 Delaware residents totaling over $2,360,000 to pursue teaching as a career.

3. Delaware improved the process to become licensed and certified to teach. System improvements were made to DOE's internal platform (DEEDS) that houses licensure and certification processes. Other examples of improvement is joining the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification "NASDTEC" Compact - which allows out-of-state teachers to transfer to Delaware for work without significant paperwork. Finally, regulations were added to allow Multiple Measures for licensure passing and 91-Days of long term substituting in lieu of student teaching requirements-all with the aim of improving the process to becoming a licensed and certified teacher in Delaware.

4. The Public Education Compensation Committee (PECC) recommended increasing the base salary for teachers in Delaware to $60,000 by fiscal year 2028. The PECC's recommendations also included pay increases for other school staff. To date, these recommendations have been funded by the state legislature and Governor's office.

Annual reporting and stakeholder engagement ensure that progress is tracked, and adjustments are made to maximize impact of their work. Overall, these efforts have strengthened Delaware's education workforce, improving stability and long-term student success. This team was nominated for and received the 2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to their achievements in implementing this project that resulted in improved human resource strategies and outcomes for educators. This project, nominated by Rick Konysz, was selected as a recipient of the 2024 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award, due to their achievement in demonstrating a model for innovative and effective human resource strategies. The recipients of this 2024 Award were Linnea Bradshaw, Katherine Burns, Lisa Condon, Brandie Foxx, Tiffany Green, Michael Hill-Shaner, Ann Hlabangana-Clay, Wendy Modzelewski, Juliet Murawski, Karin Pleasanton, Keeley Powell, Denise Purnell-Cuff, Michael Saylor, Angela Socorso, Leigh Weldin, Rhonda West, Jonathan Wickert, and aQuena Williams.