

Since 1927, the Division of the Budget (DOB) has been charged with assisting the Governor in the development of the Executive Budget and implementation of the Enacted Budget. DOB manages the expenditures and other fiscal operations of the departments responsible for providing services to all New Yorkers and ensures the provision of those services are grounded in efficiency, accountability and performance management.

The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the Federal government's abject failure to provide states with the information, resources, equipment, and guidance needed to fight the virus, demanded that New York simultaneously address multiple critical needs of its citizens. Across the spectrum of governmental services, Governor Cuomo and State leaders developed scientifically based, data driven approaches that balanced meeting the basic needs of New Yorkers and our economy while saving lives and minimizing the spread of the virus to the extent possible. These efforts, based on quantitative analysis, were supported by local input and unprecedented coordination among healthcare institutions, and delivered with continual public reporting and transparency, to achieve cooperation from nearly 20 million New Yorkers.

COVID-19 Response – Data Driven and Performance Focused

On March 1, 2020, New York State's first case of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was confirmed. At that time, there were only 85 confirmed cases across the United States (US). Between April 10 and July 22, 2020, New York had more confirmed cases than any other state in the nation as a result of the Federal failure to act.

Realizing that providing wide access to testing was critical to containing the spread of the virus, but with dangerously insufficient testing resources from the Federal government, Governor Cuomo secured Federal approval to conduct testing developed through the Department of Health's (DOH) Wadsworth Center, enabling New Yorkers to have immediate access to COVID-19 testing. From an initial goal of performing 1,000 tests per day, Wadsworth quickly ramped up, partnering with laboratories across the State, and within a month had expanded testing to more than 20,000 people per day. Today, New York conducts more than 200,000 tests per day, among the highest in the nation.

With the availability of a vaccine, State leaders developed the New York COVID-19 Vaccination Plan based on advice and recommendation of clinical and public health experts. New York State has established Vaccine Administration Sites (VAS) through a network of health care providers, including hospitals, long term care facilities, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Community Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, private provider offices, local health departments, and other entities. Other VASs include schools, colleges and universities, homeless shelters, correction facilities, and sites where target populations gather with a focus on ensuring those in low-income and minority communities hit hardest by the virus have full access to the vaccine that will stop it. Commercial and independent pharmacies, businesses, and other organizations to enable on-site vaccination will also be enrolled in the program.

New York Forward

The reopening of the economy, like the pausing of the economy, was based on regionally developed data regarding infection rates, hospital capacity and other factors. Under New York Forward, reopening occurred on a regional basis as each region met criteria to protect public health. This approach enabled businesses to re-open while the State maintained one of the lowest infection rates in the nation. Each region appointed a Control Room consisting of a team of local electives and hospital and state representatives who monitor metrics for each of the criteria, as well as other key indicators to inform the phased reopening. The metrics allow officials to measure the infection rate and readiness of local hospitals and contact tracers to handle the cases. The State also developed several public-facing dashboards available on the New York Forward website to enable the public to track regional and statewide metrics to help inform their decisions and gain their cooperation.

Building Back Better

Consistent with New York’s commitment to performance improvement, operations will not resume as they were before the pandemic, but will build back smarter, and with greater equity and resiliency. New York has the responsibility to execute a path forward resulting in improved service delivery in education, healthcare and other government services.

Governor Cuomo has stressed that we must learn from our experiences how to best serve New Yorkers. Changes made to service delivery are continually being implemented based on the experiences of the State’s management of the coronavirus epidemic in 2021. Some of these are outlined below.

Education

Access to Education

As schools across the state shifted to remote learning, districts took various approaches to meeting their students’ needs. To improve remote learning, New York is examining ways technology can be used to provide more opportunities to more students, reduce educational inequality, and better meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. In partnership with public and private stakeholders across the State, New York is developing a blueprint to adapt New York’s educational systems in response to COVID-19. In early May, the State launched a “Reimagine Education Advisory Council” made up of educators, students, parents, and education leaders to help districts reimagine schools. The Council collaborates with independent organizations to answer key questions about what education should look like in the future using new technologies and is working to develop a blueprint to reimagine education in the new normal.

Healthcare

Healthcare Delivery

Facing projections of patients and COVID-19 cases that far exceeded the existing hospital capacity, the State developed a variety of approaches to ensure access to needed health care for all New Yorkers. These included expanding the hospital capacity through the Surge and Flex initiative, which required hospitals to increase their capacity and be able to accept patients. To increase the number of healthcare providers, New York established a nation-leading web-portal to connect healthcare professionals nationwide with overwhelmed hospitals.

Building upon the State’s nation-leading testing capacity and implementing a statewide vaccine program to ensure New York is the first COVID-safe state in the country, New York is taking steps to strategically balance the medical resource stockpile across the state and expand frontline healthcare worker employment opportunities. Additionally, New York is expanding tele-medicine and remote care healthcare options that expanded considerably during the pandemic.

To increase the number of health care providers able to serve New York’s citizens and to deliver the coronavirus vaccine, Governor Cuomo is proposing to create the nation’s first Public Health Corps, made up of 1,000 fellows from various health care backgrounds, including undergraduate and graduate public health programs, nursing schools, medical schools, retired medical professionals, and others. Fellows would complete an intensive public health training curriculum created by Cornell University. The Department of Health, along with public and private partners, would manage the Corps.

Government Services

Strengthening Transit Operations

Recognizing the critical role transit systems play in supporting essential workers, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) implemented an ambitious effort of daily disinfecting train cars and employing new technologies to provide cleaner air and safer environments to protect riders and employees.

Fighting Hunger While Supporting Farmers

During the pandemic, New Yorkers lost their jobs and struggled to keep food on the table. Between April and June of 2020, 1 out of 10 households reported not having enough food the prior week. Households with children experienced even greater scarcity. For African Americans and Hispanic households, those percentages were

3 to 4 times higher than white households. This occurred while farmers lost markets through restaurant closures, food banks, and experienced sudden and intense increases in demand for food.

Nourish New York, launched in April 2020, is helping New Yorkers access nourishment, while providing farmers with an additional outlet to sell their goods. To date, more than 16 million pounds of dairy, produce, meats and more have been purchased from New York farmers and provided to 823,883 households across the state. Funding for the Nourish NY program will be continued to meet the surging demand of New York families and farmers.

Strengthening Equity

As data showed Blacks and Hispanics faced disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 infection and that residents of low-income and non-white communities entered hospitals at a higher rate, the Governor created the New York Vaccine Equity Task Force to ensure the vaccine is distributed both equitably and according to need. The Task Force will assist in eliminating some of the current barriers to vaccinations and expand access to Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American communities. The Task Force will also focus on areas of outreach to rural, poor, and public housing communities, as well as other health deserts.

Enabling Remote Services

To minimize contact while enabling New Yorkers to receive needed services, New York State is investing over \$70 million in critical technology needed to enhance remote access capabilities, increase virtual service offerings and allow New Yorkers to access state and local services safely and conveniently. Projects include working to ensure all 58 social services offices have the capability to deliver services remotely, enhancing e-signature capabilities, and building virtual civil service exams to make them accessible to more New Yorkers. Upgrades in online scheduling and virtual hearing procedures will be made accessible across over a dozen State agencies, providing safe, remote access to key government services.

Expanding Broadband

As more New Yorkers suddenly depended on access to the internet for both work and for schooling, Governor Cuomo created a Blue-Ribbon Commission to leverage advanced technology and improve access to high-speed internet. These efforts will enable all New Yorkers to better access healthcare and educational opportunities, and to create more and better employment options in an increasingly digital economy.