



**STATE OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW (GEAR)**

**2023 GEAR BOARD ANNUAL REPORT TO GOVERNOR CARNEY
REQUIRED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER FOUR**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNOR
FROM THE GEAR BOARD**

DECEMBER 1, 2023



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STATE OF DELAWARE GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Order #4, signed by Governor John Carney on February 16, 2017, established the Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) to develop recommendations for increasing efficiency and effectiveness across State government, improve the strategic planning process, improve the use of metrics in resource allocation decisions, and develop continuous improvement practices.

GEAR is a long-term initiative. GEAR Board meetings are posted to the State's online public meeting calendar. Public participation and comments are encouraged. The Board has met thirty-eight times since its formation. The Board has established multiple critical focus areas, identified team leadership and members, completed written charters identifying process and program optimization opportunities, and initiated 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 1 of each year. The 2023 GEAR Annual Report contains recommendations for consideration in the Governor's Recommended Budget and policy priorities for Fiscal Year 2025. 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

Evolve our 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 is working on developing change management messaging aligned with our evolving culture of continuous improvement. These efforts are being developed through ongoing conversations with GEAR Board members, State leadership and the Governor's Office. The objective is to have recommendations to better inform a revised GEAR Executive Order or bill for the forthcoming administration in 2025 that builds upon the successes of GEAR to date.

Strengthen Quantifiable Outcomes – Overall, the GEAR teams are leveraging industry best practices to develop the skills of its membership base as the number of projects and Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) graduates increase. GEAR estimates that a rough order of magnitude savings to the State across approximately 70 percent of the ~140 projects currently reporting return on investment in the portfolio will be \$76 million - \$80 million in the current and future years.

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 2 cohorts of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) training program per year since then. A total of 83 practitioners have graduated to date 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 the law. In Fiscal Year 2024, with the support of the Governor and General Assembly, the FSQIF was provided an additional \$200,000 (a total of \$350,000) to fully fund 2 annual cohorts of CIP training and implement project and process leadership training.

Grow the GEAR Field Team (GFT) with Learning Communities – Established in 2020, the GFT is a community comprised of continuous improvement practitioners and GEAR CIP graduates. With approximately 83 members

representing 14 State organizations and the Judicial Branch, the team is delivering value through the execution of more than 80 projects that leverage the skills and tools of continuous improvement. As the GFT's efforts have evolved, additional focus areas have emerged with a business process management (BPM) sub-team being formed, as well as interest in a project management sub-team to be launched in Fiscal Year 2024. The business process management sub-team is focused on sharing best practices in the use of BPM tools, techniques, and establishing a playbook to enhance the ability of State employees to effectively implement process mapping, identify waste, and streamline business processes. The project management sub-team will be established to share best practices in the domain of predictive, adaptive, and hybrid project management techniques, tools, as well as to serve as the core subject matter experts to consult with on future revisions of the GEAR Project Management Playbook.

Solidify a Strategic Path for the Enterprise Services Delivery (ESD) Team – Representing most of the State's major financial, information technology, and human resources functions, ESD is delivering value through the implementation of nearly 55 cross-agency enterprise-wide projects and programs. In 2022, the framework for evaluating the strategic impact of enterprise level projects was revamped with a focus on the impact of change saturation, return on investment, and risk management across agencies. In 2023, the ESD team is focused on rechartering its efforts to better align agencies, projects, and service delivery toward a more unified State of Delaware focus.

Improve Career Pathways for Employee Recruitment and Retention – Consistent with Executive Order #4, 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 is working with DHR to identify job classifications that will increase the ability of State agencies to drive and sustain continuous improvement over time. The GEAR Program Management Team drafted 4 proposed classifications for project managers, business process analysts, change management specialists, and continuous improvement specialists. Classifications will be recommended by DHR prior to the start of the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget cycle.

Implement 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 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 is currently being developed to address specific process bottlenecks identified by the survey. The project is currently proposed to be completed in 2 phases – with phase 1 focusing on conducting Lean business analysis and process improvement surrounding 1 key process each within the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). Once the first phase pilot initiatives have been completed, State leadership will determine if a larger phase 2 initiative will be launched spanning state, county, and municipal government.

Amend the Delaware Governmental Accountability Act (GAA) – As outlined in Executive Order #4, which established GEAR, the scope of work includes revisions to the GAA, noted as follows, “changes to the Delaware Governmental Accountability Act will better drive strategic planning, help develop meaningful performance metrics, foster more effective monitoring of performance and allocation of scarce resources as part of the budget process, and promote continuous improvement programs throughout State government.” While previous bills amending the GAA have not succeeded in passing through the legislature, the Office of Management and Budget, Chairs of the Joint Finance Committee and the Controller General's Office may work together to implement improved budgeting practices guided by the elements in the legislation seeking to amend the GAA.

Enable Enterprise Solutions for Project and Process Management (Planview Projectplace and ARIS) – In 2022, there were 2 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 Program Portfolio 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. Ongoing investments in these systems will continue to equip all GFT members with licenses to support the application of industry best

practices in project management and business process management, while working toward improved enterprise integration across State agencies.

Update the Project Management Playbook for Continuous Improvement Practitioners – The GEAR Program Management Team coordinates the availability and use of a 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. With the evolution of industry standards in project management, the GEAR Program Management Team updated the Project Management Playbook.

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 2023 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence, a nationally recognized state benchmarking program. The 2023 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 State of Delaware was noted this year with 5 “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 leadership will continue to collaborate with other government partners through Results for America who are pursuing data driven best practices.

II. 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 more than 5 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 offers minimal enhancements for a mobile workforce. In addition, the current systems are highly complex due to customizations, requiring a specialized workforce to support these systems. To ensure the continuity of State operations, the ERP Modernization Project, which encompasses all State ERP systems, was initiated in June 2022. The State appropriated \$25 million toward this major initiative in both the Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 bond bills for a total of \$50 million to date.

Implement Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS) – The Delaware Department of Finance, Division of Revenue (DOR) has been using a tax processing system that is more than 25 years old, mainframe based, and consists of over 100 client server applications. The IRAS 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 will improve 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 3 releases addressing the following taxes:

- 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 (late 2023) - Enhancements to business and personal taxes and the Delaware tax portal.
- Release 3 (mid 2024 through late 2025):
 - Marijuana retail tax and IRS CP2000 audit program (mid 2024).
 - Corporate income taxes as well as partnership, S corporation, fiduciary, headquarter management income tax returns (late 2025).
 - Data warehouse and tax master audit program (late 2025).

Establish the Delaware Relief Rebate Program – In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, House Bill 360 was passed creating the 2022 Relief Rebate Program. The objective of the program was to issue over 750,000 emergency relief payments to all qualifying adult residents of Delaware. With only 6 months to determine eligible individuals, this unprecedented project required development of an entirely new, home-grown financial system to identify, authorize, distribute, and manage over \$236 million in emergency rebate payments. At the conclusion of the program, the number of rebates issued approximated the number of estimated adult Delawareans. In addition, over

94 percent of rebate checks were cashed, indicating an extremely high payment accuracy rate. This project team was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to its efficacy in implementing the program.

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 Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) makes recommendations on revisions to such procedures. On March 1, 2021, the FAC implemented changes to streamline the after-the-fact waiver request application approval process: increasing the purchase order threshold from \$5,000 to \$10,000, allowing cabinet-level leaders of State organizations to internally approve after-the-fact waiver requests between \$10,000 and \$50,000 and requiring that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and Secretary of the Department of Finance approve only those waiver requests over \$50,000. These changes have been successful in providing an appropriate level of oversight and control while reducing the waiver approval workload by nearly 75 percent.

To further streamline vendor payment flows and internal control procedures, 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 Years 2021 and 2022 provided record levels of total Pcard spend of ~\$177.0 million per year with rebates of \$3.4 million. Calendar Year 2023 to date is projecting annual spend over \$180.0 million with a slightly higher rebate. In addition, an agreement has been finalized with a travel management company to streamline and reduce costs for the booking of transportation and lodging associated with State personnel travel. Currently, the implementation timeline of this agreement is under discussion.

Most of the State’s training for financial services employees is focused on the proper use of the State’s principal ERP systems – FSF and PHRST. To improve foundational knowledge and support career growth for financial services staff throughout State government, DOF’s Division of Accounting is developing a course on the fundamentals of basic accounting and payroll that will supplement existing training courses.

Lower Lease Costs and Restructure Lease Program – The Office of Management and Budget/Division of Facilities Management (OMB/DFM) Real Property Management Program covers 126 leases and approximately 1.8 million square feet of rented space occupied by various State of Delaware agencies, costing \$34 million annually. To date, OMB/DFM lease restructurings have resulted in more than \$35.3 million in hard dollar rent savings and more than \$9.5 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 million and soft dollar savings of \$1.9 million annually. The program will continue to expand to encompass all real property utilized by the State.

State Land Inventory – It is critical for Delaware State government to have a full and complete understanding of the real property it owns. Fully evaluating the State’s realty assets and generating a centralized, spatial, land inventory database will afford stakeholders the ability to identify assets, evaluate use, maintenance, funding and ultimately manage these assets in a more streamlined and efficient manner. In response to past discovery workshops and recommendations, the Office of Management and Budget/Office of State Planning Coordination (OMB/OSPC) has initiated a business case with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI), sponsored a request for proposals (RFP), reviewed proposals received, worked with DTI on the architecture and design of the highest-ranking proposal and is currently working with the selected vendor on the scope of work so that the State can execute the final contract and begin implementing their solution.

School District Enrollment Projections – School district enrollment has a significant impact on the State operating and capital budgets. Centrally updated enrollment projections done on a regular basis can be used to improve long-range planning and better allocate resources in both operating and capital budgets within individual school districts and across multiple districts. This project is in the process of preparing regular updates to statewide school district enrollment projections to use these updates to improve long-range planning and resource allocation (e.g., determine needs for new schools and evaluate school district capital master plans). Additionally, the updates will be beneficial for other entities that interact with the student population in the allocation of their resources.

Improve Data Integration and Mapping – FirstMap is the State’s enterprise Geographic Information System (GIS), but it is not used uniformly by State agencies. Over the past year the Department of Technology and Information’s (DTI) FirstMap team has worked diligently to restructure this repository and has completed the

“FirstMap 2” delivery. 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.

Centralize and Modernize the Delivery of Human Resources Services – By investing in technology and centralizing core human resources functions such as recruitment, onboarding, employee benefits, labor relations, and training, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) is transforming the management and delivery of human resources services. Modernization accomplishments include:

- Expanding learning opportunities available through the State’s enterprise learning management system.
- Implementing the Delaware Learning Center (DLC) Support Portal.
- Providing staff with Always-On-VPN laptops to support adaptability and hybrid work.
- Enhancing the coordination of employee and labor relations matters and data.
- Adopting SharePoint and Microsoft Teams to improve access and foster collaboration.
- Implementing an electronic enterprise document management system to strengthen the security and risk management of human resources records.
- Introducing a new desk reservation system to conveniently book desk space, conference rooms, and huddle spaces for HR staff in DHR’s new offices in Dover and New Castle.

DHR took steps to centralize staff and the delivery of services in the areas of employee and labor relations, classification, compensation, and talent acquisition as shared services. DHR also made significant advances in centralizing and standardizing the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes, initiated the implementation of a new employee onboarding solution, and completed a review to streamline 23 classification and compensation processes, including drafting system requirements for a future system to manage classification and compensation requests. The DLC Support Portal team was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award thanks to its leadership and the outcomes achieved in implementing the DLC Support Portal project.

Drive Leadership Training Opportunities – In 2022, DHR, in partnership with GEAR, offered 2 cohorts of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) Program, increasing the total number of graduates to 83 since its inception. Moving into Fiscal Year 2024, additional funding for training through the First State Quality Improvement Fund (FSQIF) was secured in the State budget. This expanded funding supports creating and implementing Project and Process Leadership training in partnership with GEAR. In addition, the DHR training designer and subsequent training administrator was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to the success of the CIP Program.

Expand Employee Recognition – DHR manages statewide award programs that recognize the work of State Employees. Each year, as part of the Governor’s Annual Recognition Awards, employees are honored for their work through one of several awards. The Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service recognizes individual employees or small groups who go above and beyond and provide exemplary services; the Delaware Award for Heroism recognizes employees for demonstrative bravery or acts of courage; the Governor’s Team Excellence Award Program, which consists of the GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award, the Champion Award, and the Commitment Award recognize teams of employees demonstrating innovation and efficiencies. In 2022, the GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award was established as a stand-alone award with a distinct nomination process to better allow small teams and individuals to be nominated for continuous improvement projects. The GEAR awards, including award criteria, and funds for these awards are administered by DHR in partnership with the GEAR Program Management Team. The GEAR P3 awards include a monetary incentive of \$10,000 shared among team members for the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award and \$1,500 for individual GEAR-P3 Trailblazer recipients. In 2023, the Governor recognized 2 teams as recipients of the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award, as well as 2 teams and 3 individuals for the Trailblazer Award. The GEAR P3 awards were established as a public private partnership (P3) with half of the funding coming from the private sector and half from State government. Representatives from both the public and private sectors participate on the judging panel. In 2023, the Governor presented recognition awards to the 9 Delaware businesses that contributed to the 2022 awards to mark the 5th anniversary of the GEAR P3 awards.

Promote Respectful Workplaces – As Delaware’s largest employer, the State of Delaware remains steadfast in its dedication to advancing a workplace environment characterized by fairness, diversity, equity, and inclusivity within State government. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) continues to implement policies and practices

aimed at nurturing an atmosphere of respect in the workplace. In 2023, DHR developed a Trauma-Informed Care Toolkit designed for HR staff, revised the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Procedures, actively collaborated with State agencies to establish local diversity committees, hosted a diversity, equity, and inclusion summit, and offered 8 webinars to boost awareness and foster inclusive workplaces.

Reduce Health Care Costs – 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 reduce the State’s health care costs for employees, retirees, pensioners, and their dependents. To address a projected Fiscal Year 2024 deficit of \$140.5 million, the SEBC approved a 9.4 percent increase in State non-Medicare health plan premiums (rates) effective July 1, 2023, to smooth the rate action over the next 3 fiscal years, with the intention to revisit the need for a similar rate increase next year. In addition, the SEBC approved a 5 percent increase in State Medicare health plan premiums (rates) effective January 1, 2024. The State is projecting a \$250.4 million deficit in the Group Health Fund (GHF) for Fiscal Year 2025 based on the most recent health care trends and expenditures. The State must continue 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 additional funding. To help solve the longer-term projected deficit, the SEBC is reviewing single and multi-year rate increase scenarios for health plan premiums, ranging from 11.9 to 27.1 percent.

Review Document Management (Electronic Signature) – To make document signing processes more efficient, the Enterprise Architecture and Solutions Integration (EASI) team reviewed various electronic signature solutions. Transitioning current processes to electronic form is necessary given the high costs of paper, ink, and employees’ time invested in scanning and sending documents. Furthermore, electronic signatures can integrate with other document management solutions and enterprise software which will promote efficiency and increase productivity. DTI, with the support of GEAR, and EASI, is currently implementing electronic signature systems. To date, DTI’s Innovation Team has onboarded more than 240 users from 22 agencies. Collectively across State agencies, there are more than 4,000 individual electronic document transactions, with a 200 percent annual increase in usage for 3 years in a row. Agencies are working with their customer relations managers to pilot repetitive signature use cases, especially those that require signatory components in HR and enterprise systems.

Drive Information Technology Centralization (ITC) – With many employees now connecting remotely to the State network, DTI pivoted from an agency-by-agency centralization effort to focus on how best to deliver a highly secure, equitably provisioned computing environment. Development and implementation of the shared services cost model, in collaboration with Office of Management and Budget (OMB), reflecting the total cost of ownership of IT service towers, is crucial to moving ITC forward. Secure End User Services (SEUS) is the first IT service tower transitioning to a new shared services cost model which underpins ITC. 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. DTI anticipates a 2-year transition to SEUS and its associated cost model for centralized agencies.

Develop Digital Government Solutions – 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. DTI has onboarded nearly 60 applications and more than 87,600 unique users as adoption continues to grow. The State has also embarked on a larger initiative creating a resident and visitor solution branded as Go DE, for the public to use the State’s various digital government services under authenticated identities.

Streamline Through CASCADE – The Centralized, Accessible, Secure, Configurable, Agile, Digital, Evolutionary (CASCADE) initiative to modernize and streamline e-filing, case management and document management solutions across all courts for the Delaware Judicial Branch, has formally completed the Discovery Phase for civil courts. The Discovery Phase, which included detailed analysis of data, technical environments, interfaces, integrations, and business processes, revealed complexities that are currently being addressed during contract negotiations, which are scheduled to be completed by the end of the 2023 calendar year. Implementation of e-filing and case management initiatives for civil courts are to begin in January 2024.

Reduce Debt Burden for Ex-Offenders – The Judicial Branch wants 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. However, a large amount of criminal justice debt only causes additional hardship. Last year the Judicial Branch reported fee reform successes which included the passage of House Bill 244 with House Amendment 2 of the 151st General Assembly, along with the Judicial Branch review and discharge of aged accounts over 10 years old. HB 244 created the Criminal Legal System Imposed Debt Study Group, which convened throughout 2023 to review the State's financial structure as it related to fees, and to make recommendations consistent with best practices. Several staff and judicial officers participated in the Study Group. A report, including recommendations for further fee reform, is planned for release by November 2023.

Implement the Digital Government Payment System – The Office of the State Treasurer (OST) recently shifted its focus to digital government services in partnership with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) and the Department of State's (DOS) Government Information Center (GIC). Over the last several years, OST has worked with these partners to integrate with the overall Go DE initiative, an integrated web portal for resident and visitor digital government services. A primary feature of the new system will be a single touchpoint for payments - the Go DE Payment Engine being part of the first release. Through the Go DE portal, users will be able to make trusted web payments in a manner that is secure, responsive, and accessible. This aligns with the State of Delaware's shift from agency-centered managed services to an enterprise-wide, customer-centered platform that will evolve over the next few years.

Comply with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) - By analyzing agencies' current business processes involving how credit, debit, and ACH payments are handled, the Office of the State Treasurer's (OST) merchant services team is mitigating and reducing agencies' IT and operational vulnerabilities. OST's primary strategy for ensuring all agency merchants are PCI DSS compliant is to reduce the scope of 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. Among the outcomes achieved to date are the establishment of an annual training program, ongoing workshops to guide agencies on how to properly attest compliance, the completion of quarterly internal and external IT system scans, and the formalization of a State PCI DSS policy. The current deadline for OST to attest PCI DSS compliance on behalf of all State agency merchants is December 31, 2024.

III. 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 and visitors can apply for 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 in 2022 and 2023, and 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 client queuing system, improvements to the automated telephone voice system, and an enhanced website portal 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 10 divisions, the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is the largest department in the State with a wide range of services delivered, from psychiatric care to 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 with a range of key performance indicators for various divisions to focus on meaningful and measurable metrics. The dashboard tracks every DHSS division monthly, pulls together the key data, and extracts it into easy-to-understand charts and graphs to guide decision making for senior leadership.

Save Over \$1,000,000 by Identifying and Eliminating Underutilized Blocked Vehicles – The DHSS Planning Unit reviews the number of blocked State fleet vehicles to determine if there is an optimal and more cost-effective number 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 underutilized. A calculation is performed to quantify the cost of those underutilized blocked vehicles. Every month, the results of the analysis are distributed to

department and division leaders to determine if their complement of assigned vehicles may be reduced. Since January 2021, DHSS has reduced the number of blocked vehicles by 62 cars. That translates to a savings of \$192,474 annually, or a 7-year savings (the average life of a fleet vehicle) of \$1,347,318. In addition, this project was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to the outcomes achieved under this project.

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 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 also being provided from the most appropriate funding source. It is estimated that these changes could result in at least \$5 million in savings for the State. The anticipated quantifiable outcomes of this plan include reduced costs, enhanced value, and improved customer outcomes.

Partner for Healthy Aging through Senior Centers – The Delaware Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) is partnering with and supporting healthy aging programs in senior centers across the State of Delaware. This mini grant program supports local senior centers serving individuals with the greatest economic and social need to complement other funding, including Delaware Grant-in-Aid funds. Through this, a senior center may identify what healthy aging looks like in their communities. The program aims to provide transportation, health and wellness, nutrition, and other local community services that promote lifestyle choices to further healthy aging and serve active older adults.

Revamp DSAAPD Training with Project Reform Alignment & Intrinsic Staff Engagement – DSAAPD administration continues to be committed to changing the culture across the agency in numerous ways. One avenue of change was through the DSAAPD Training Unit, which operates strategically to provide specialized professional education intended to produce measurable results. Using process improvement tools, the Training Team in partnership with the Quality Assurance and Improvement Unit supported change which has resulted in increased communication and planning which actively integrated the system and key performance indicators. The result of these efforts streamlined monitoring via the Delaware Learning Center (DLC) which reflected an increase in training as well as confirmation of the establishment of a governance model.

Utilize Certified Peer Recovery Specialists in Long Term Care – Residents in long term care have physical and medical needs, but many also have psychiatric conditions that need specialized care. DSAAPD has partnered with the Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health (DSAMH) to bring Certified Peer Recovery Specialists (PRS) to support residents of Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI) with significant mental health conditions. This has led to a formal process of developing and implementing the Peer Services Liaison Program to ensure that a structure exists to maximize efficiency and utilize resources appropriately.

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 has undertaken an initiative to ensure that appropriate therapeutic programming is in place to meet the psychosocial needs of individuals at this stage of dementia.

Establish the Connect Community at DHCI – Loneliness has long been recognized as a very important social determinant of health, but it became a significant area of interest during the height of COVID-19. Specifically, the impact of loneliness on residents of long-term care (LTC) facilities became an issue of urgency when its major impact on physical health became apparent. DHCI has taken steps to deliberately foster relationships and prevent loneliness in residents through the creative use of existing resources.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (DDA)

Develop the 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 an agricultural lending program to broadly serve the needs of farmers. Existing revolving loan funds will be used to initially fund the new program. The new program is taking 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.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL (DNREC)

Modernize Online Services – DNREC continues to transform legacy applications and 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 continuing education opportunities.

Improve Chemical Inventory Reporting in Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) Program – The Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances, 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 processes. In 2023, the program received about 95 percent of EPCRA reports by the due date of March 1st compared to ~90 percent in previous years. Continuous follow up with delinquent facilities increased submission of EPCRA reports to 99 percent by May 2023. For the first time in recent years, all submitted reports were reviewed within 1-2 weeks after their submission improving the accuracy of chemical reporting.

Improve Stakeholder Communication in Remediation – To protect human health and the environment, the Remediation Section of the Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances leads the investigation and clean-up of properties contaminated with hazardous substances and facilitates redevelopment of these sites. This section is currently working to streamline the internal response to external inquiries related to the Remediation Section's process. The remediation section is experiencing 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 resulting in savings of \$250,000 annually.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE (DOS)

Build Delaware Communities of Excellence: Year 3 – The Division of Libraries' work with the Delaware Communities of Excellence (DECOE) continues to build a collaborative of State agencies and non-profits to produce a statewide literacy ecosystem. This ecosystem will provide literacy services that are easier to access, equitable, cost effective, with measurable, impactful results in improving literacy for Delawareans across their lifespans. Forty-two percent of Delaware children read below grade level, and 20 percent of Delaware adults read below a third grade reading level. Low literacy skills reduce the opportunity to build successful lives. DECOE is committed to improving literacy levels for all Delawareans. During Fiscal Year 2023, the Delaware Communities of Excellence formally launched the Delaware Literacy Alliance as the next step in the systematic development of the literacy ecosystem.

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. During 2022 and 2023, a library vendor placed radio frequency identification (RFID) tags in library collections and installed scanning/self-check equipment to reduce the time needed to check items in and out as well as perform inventories. The project goal was to create a system where libraries' collection items are tagged, staff are trained, and effectively using the scanning equipment, with self-checkout available to the public. Staff and patrons are adopting the new circulation and inventory processes leading to improved productivity. As school libraries join the Delaware Library Consortium and catalog these libraries' collections are automatically RFID tagged and future ready.

School Libraries Join the Delaware Library Catalog and Consortium – School age children need access to current books and other materials to support literacy and learning. School libraries have been in crisis and struggle to keep their collections up to date and relevant. Starting in 2016, Colonial School District participated in a successful pilot project with the Division of Libraries to join the Delaware Library Catalog to expand their students' access to current materials. Having proved the concept and with the Division of Libraries receiving funding in Fiscal Year 2023 to fund school library integration, individual school districts are starting to opt-in to the Delaware Library Catalog and Consortium. This project provides equity and bridges the "last mile" to books and other learning

materials for children who do not typically access their local public libraries, as well as creates efficiencies by enabling improved circulation of purchased books and materials.

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

Compensate People with Lived Experience – The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families developed a process for compensating people with lived experience who share their perspective to inform system improvement efforts. In general, people with lived experience are those directly affected by social, health, public health, or other issues and the strategies that aim to address those issues. This gives them insights that can inform and improve systems, research, policies, practices, and programs. DSCYF has historically struggled to engage people with lived experience in focus groups and committees. Typically, they are the only participants who are asked to volunteer their time while other participants are compensated as employees of a state agency, provider, partner, or community-based agency. This project was implemented to establish guidelines and a process to provide a stipend to people with lived experience to create parity and increase engagement of people who can provide unique perspectives informed by their experiences in child welfare, child behavioral health, and juvenile justice, which in turn, enhances service delivery. This approach is considered best practice and encouraged by federal oversight entities. In addition, it is necessary to truly realize DSCYF’s goal to be a fully trauma-informed system of care and the department’s strategic planning goals.

Centralize Contractor FOCUS Access & Criminal History Processes – FOCUS (For Our Children’s Ultimate Success) is the central information system for DSCYF, including client and contractor, case management, placement, and transactional data. DSCYF contractors may be granted targeted access to FOCUS for specific purposes. Unfortunately, the process of requesting and granting contractor FOCUS access was fragmented and decentralized. This decentralization resulted in errors, re-work (waste), and opened a door to the possibility of missed criminal history and background checks. The project successfully centralized all contractor FOCUS access requests and background checks through the DSCYF Contracts Unit, thus ensuring uniformity, efficiency, and a highly protected gateway.

Enhance Title IV-E Funding for Foster Care – The percentage of DSCYF’s clients who are eligible for federal Title IV-E funding compared to the State’s total foster care population (also known as the penetration rate) was historically low compared to other states. This resulted in reduced federal funding and administrative claims. DSCYF conducted an in-depth study of this issue to determine what steps the department could take to improve. A comprehensive report was developed, and a plan was implemented to carry out 7 of the recommendations. As a result, the department has seen a 9 percent improvement in the penetration rate for foster care funding in one year. This project was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award for the outcomes surrounding this initiative.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL)

Modernize Core Unemployment Insurance Processes – The Department of Labor’s Division of Unemployment Insurance (UI) recently launched a business process mapping project to better streamline the appeals process while also seeking to translate the revamped processes into a modernized electronic system. While this project initially focused on the appeals process for UI, it is being extended to other areas for modernization such as benefit payment control. The mapped current state models are being analyzed to generate future state enhancements and measurable outcomes, primarily a reduction in errors and additional time and money saved through process efficiency. The new processes will be built into a new electronic UI system which is being developed through 2025.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION (DOC)

Boost Employee Wellbeing, Recruitment and Retention through DOCares – The Department of Correction (DOC) recognizes that happy, healthy, and engaged employees are essential to the effective operations of the department. DOC established the DOCares project based on a Lean management focus – that by listening to employees DOC will develop programs to meet employees’ needs in a way that is more meaningful. DOCares aims to establish a work environment that focuses on work-life balance for all employees by evaluating their needs through systematic data collection and analysis. The goal of DOCares is to build an organizational environment that

promotes a positive culture, fosters communication, supports the use of creative scheduling systems to meet operational needs, and enhances staff well-being. The DOCares project is in its early stages of development, having launched in the prior 6 months. Over time, measurable outcomes will be developed and tracked surrounding employee engagement and other associated results.

Accredit the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center – With the assistance of a multi-disciplinary team, the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) completed a multi-year effort to secure its first-ever national accreditation through the American Correctional Association (ACA). This resulted in a unanimous vote in August 2022 by the ACA Commission on Accreditation to award accreditation. JTVCC was compliant with 100 percent of applicable mandatory standards and 99.5 percent of the applicable non-mandatory standards. This is the highest score ever achieved by a Delaware prison facility. This project team was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award due to its efforts in achieving accreditation.

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DeIDOT)

Restore the I-95 Corridor – The Restore the Corridor Project carried out an expansive rehabilitation project in Wilmington to repair 19 bridges, repave 5 miles of road, and make several safety upgrades along I-95, from I-495 through the Brandywine River Bridge. In carrying out this project, this team conducted extensive outreach, planning, engineering, and collaboration to ensure the project’s success and minimize the impact on the residents of Wilmington and people traveling through the I-95 corridor. As a result of the team’s efforts, the rehabilitation work that impacted travel lanes was completed in under 2 years – ahead of schedule – and ensures that I-95 through Wilmington will be in serviceable condition for many years to come. This project team was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to its efficacy in implementing the Restore the Corridor initiative.

IV. Education GEAR (EdGEAR)

Review Capital Project Processes – With public school districts expressing needs for minor and major facility investments and market pressure costs surpassing existing capital project allocations, the EdGEAR team established a plan to comprehensively review capital project processes within public education. The EdGEAR team recently refocused this initiative, given the consideration that this undertaking would likely require the engagement of a larger body. During the past year, EdGEAR shifted its focus to the minor capital improvement (MCI) funding process in late summer 2023 as an area for improvement.



STATE OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW
[ESTABLISHED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER FOUR]

REPORT TO GOVERNOR CARNEY
FROM THE GEAR BOARD
DECEMBER 1, 2023

Executive Order #4, signed by Governor John Carney on February 16th, 2017, established the Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Board. 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, Governor Carney signed Executive Order 21 requiring 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. Over the last several years the total balance of the Budget Stabilization Fund has grown to over \$400 million.

The Executive Order directs the GEAR Board to issue to the Governor an annual report, no later than December 1st of each year. This 2023 report contains recommendations that may be included in the Governor's Recommended Budget and policy priorities for Fiscal Year 2025. 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
- EdGEAR

GEAR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Evolve our 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 is working with the Governor's Office to develop change management messaging aligned with our evolving continuous improvement culture.

The proposed message for Governor Carney will be further refined with the Governor's staff surrounding the accomplishments and ongoing vision for continuous improvement in State government. As part of the message, which will be disseminated in the current fiscal year, the GEAR Program Management Team has requested that Governor Carney ask his executive team (primarily the GEAR Board members), to reflect on the accomplishments of GEAR and consider what improvements can be made in the following areas:

- Progress on the many government efficiency projects in flight throughout the State through GEAR's annual report with the final report of the Carney administration to be completed prior to November 1, 2024.
- Achievements in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of State government to date.
- Input on and self-assessments of departmental efforts toward a sustainable culture of continuous improvement.
- Barriers or obstacles toward these efforts.
- Specific recommendations for the next administration on current and new continuous improvement projects.

The GEAR Program Management Team has begun to schedule meetings with leadership that align with these subjects, beginning with conversations with the Controller General and Director of the Office of Management and Budget that occurred in late August 2023. Based on the feedback gathered during these conversations, additional data is being collected that may serve as ideas to further refine the GEAR Executive Order or a GEAR bill for development in the next administration.

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 Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) graduates increase. GEAR estimates that a rough order of magnitude savings to the State across approximately 70 percent of the ~140 projects currently reporting return on investment in the portfolio will be \$76 million - \$80 million in the current and future years. 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)	31
State (DOS)	6
Judicial	6
Education (DOE)	8
Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)	12
Services for Children Youth and their Families (DSCYF)	7
Labor (DOL)	2
Correction (DOC)	1
Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS)	2
Enterprise Services Delivery (ESD)	53
GEAR P3 (Public-Private Partnership)	2
GEAR	10
State Housing Authority (DSHA)	2
Total	142

*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)

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 solicits nominations for participation in the program from State leadership and the GEAR Program Management Team is represented on the panel to select participants. The CIP training program graduated its first 21 certified practitioners in the second quarter of 2021.

CIP continues to evolve, and the training program has graduated 83 practitioners to date with an additional cohort of 18 presently in training. Graduates receive 135 hours of training. All CIP graduates subsequently join the GEAR Field Team. 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 Governor and General Assembly, the FSQIF was provided an additional \$200,000 (for a total appropriation of \$350,000) to fully fund 2 annual cohorts of CIP training and implement project and process leadership training programs as additional partnership initiatives between GEAR and DHR. As nominated by DHR Director of Training and HR Solutions Barbara McCleary, Mr. Larry Trunfio was a recipient of the 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award for his leadership surrounding this initiative.

Grow the GEAR Field Team (GFT) with Learning Communities

Established in 2020, the GFT is a community comprised of continuous improvement practitioners and CIP graduates. With approximately 83 members representing 14 State organizations, and the Judicial Branch, the team is delivering value through the execution of more than 80 projects that leverage the skills and tools of continuous improvement. Trained practitioners are contributing significantly across the State. As the GFT's efforts have evolved, additional focus areas have emerged with a business process management sub-team being formed, as well as interest in a project management sub-team to be launched in Fiscal Year 2024. Overall, the GFT will continue to leverage industry best practices to develop the skills of its membership base as the number of projects and CIP graduates increase. The business process management (BPM) sub-team is focused on sharing best practices in the use of BPM tools, techniques, and establishing a playbook to enhance the ability of State employees to effectively implement process mapping, identify waste, and streamline business processes. The project management sub-team will be established to share best practices in the domain of predictive, adaptive, and hybrid project management techniques, tools, as well as to serve as the core subject matter experts to consult with on future revisions of the GEAR Project Management Playbook.

Solidify a Strategic Path for the Enterprise Services Delivery Team

Seven GEAR Board focus area teams were organized by agency affiliation until 2020 when consolidated focuses on IT, HR, and financial services delivery emerged. Beginning in 2021, these 3 teams with statewide responsibilities were reorganized into a single Enterprise Services Delivery (ESD) team. Representing most of the State's major financial, information technology, and human resource agencies and functions, ESD is delivering value through the implementation of nearly 55 cross-agency enterprise-wide projects and programs. In 2022, the framework for evaluating the strategic impact of enterprise level projects was revamped with a focus on the impact of change saturation, return on investment, and risk management across agencies. In 2023, the ESD team is focusing on rechartering its efforts to better align the agencies, projects, and service delivery toward a more unified State of Delaware focus.

Improve Career Pathways for Employee Recruitment and Retention

With few exceptions, State agencies do not possess job classifications to employ highly qualified and credentialed project managers, business process analysts and change management specialists as these resources are primarily outsourced. 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 Executive Order #4, 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 is working with DHR to identify job classifications that will increase the ability of State agencies to

drive and sustain continuous improvement over time. The GEAR Program Management Team drafted 4 proposed classifications (each with a career ladder) for project managers, business process analysts, change management specialists, and continuous improvement specialists. Classifications will be recommended by DHR prior to the start of the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget cycle.

Implement 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 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 this survey were tabulated, analyzed, and summarized by GEAR leadership in early 2023, with a summary being released to the participating organizations, key stakeholders, and Governor's Office. A project charter is currently being developed to address specific process bottlenecks identified by the survey. The project is proposed to be completed in 2 phases – with phase 1 focusing on conducting Lean business analysis and process improvement surrounding 1 key process each within the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). Once the first phase pilot initiatives have been completed, State leadership will determine if a larger phase 2 initiative will be launched spanning state, county, and municipal governments.

Amend the Delaware Governmental Accountability Act (GAA)

Per Executive Order #4, GEAR is tasked with recommending changes to the Delaware Governmental Accountability Act that will better drive strategic planning, help develop meaningful performance metrics, foster more effective monitoring of performance and allocation of scarce resources as part of the budget process, and promote continuous improvement programs throughout State government. Two bills have been drafted to amend the Delaware Governmental Accountability Act: SB 263 (2018) and HB 133 (2019-2020). Both bills had limited success in prior legislative sessions. The proposed amendments shift the focus from the budget books to the budget process. The new language specifies that the State's annual budget process be part of a performance management system, dedicated to incentivizing continuous process improvement and making government more efficient. This performance management system is composed of 1) strategic planning, 2) performance measurement/evaluation, and 3) performance budgeting. The Governor and the Legislature, particularly the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), would be directed to use performance metrics when evaluating programs and program enhancements during the annual budget process.

There is interest in undertaking a pilot effort to look at groups of agencies that comprise a budgetary focus area with significant budgetary impacts prior to proposing legislation again. For example, examining childcare funding would involve DSCYF, DHSS, DOE, and other agencies. A deep dive into the programs, expenditures and outcomes of these agencies could be prepared by the Executive Branch as part of the Governor's Recommended Budget and reviewed by the Joint Finance Committee. Additionally, there is a model program that Delaware could investigate as the basis for a pilot: the State of New Mexico has a process known as BudgetSTAT for executive branch budget preparation and LegisSTAT for legislative review of the budget proposals.

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

In 2022, there were 2 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 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 GEAR Field Team 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. As of July 2023, a business process analysis workgroup has been formed under the GFT and is meeting regularly, and it is recommended that in Fiscal Year 2024 a combination of 18 ARIS designer and 40 ARIS viewer licenses are needed to equip and train any GFT members committed to advancing their skills in BPM.

Update the Project Management Playbook for Continuous Improvement Practitioners

The Project Management Institute (PMI) is the internationally recognized owner of the project management body of knowledge (PMBOK) and provides industry recognized certifications such as the Project Management Professional (PMP). PMI updated its content recently through a revised body of knowledge by moving from the PMBOK 6th edition to the 7th edition. The content changes prompted the GEAR Program Management Team, in partnership with Mr. Brian Calio, a credentialed Project Management Professional in DHSS's Office of the Secretary, to update the Project Management Playbook. The Project Management Playbook is utilized by State project managers and Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) trainees and graduates as they learn and work on various projects across the State. The finished product is a comprehensive reference manual that covers both predictive and adaptive project management and aligns with current industry best practices.

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 2023 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence national state benchmarking program. Results For America is a non-profit organization with roughly 10 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 2023 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 a survey provided by Results for America in 2023 and provided highlights from the 2022 GEAR Annual Report. Delaware was noted this year with 5 "promising examples" of state standards of excellence listed under the following 4 topic areas:

1. Evaluation Leadership – establishing the Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Board per Governor Carney's Executive Order #4.
2. Evaluation Policy and Learning – reinstating the First State Quality Improvement Fund (FSQIF), building the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) program, and fostering the "continuous improvement cycle" to sustain a culture of continuous process improvement.
3. Data Policy and Practices – coordinating and collaborating through the Family Services Cabinet Council (FSCC) to develop the Delaware Integrated Data System (DIDS).
4. Performance Management –
 - a. Implementing continuous quality improvement through administrative case review – a Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) endeavor highlighted in the 2022 GEAR Annual Report.
 - b. Amending the Government Accountability Act – a proposal to enhance performance measures as part of the budget process.

GEAR leadership will continue to collaborate with other government partners through Results for America who are pursuing data driven best practices. Detailed information for the participating states can be found at results4america.org.

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 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 are \$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. This year marked the 5th year that GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency and P3 Trailblazer award winners have been recognized for their work and rewarded with financial incentives based on their application of continuous improvement skills in their projects. A celebration was held with the Governor on October 10, 2023, that recognized the 2022 award winners, as well as 9 private sector partners in continuous improvement. Our partners this year included: Highmark, WSFS, W.L. Gore, CSC, JPMorgan Chase, M & T Bank, The Precisionists Inc., Bank of America, and Delmarva Power.



GEAR P3 Awards – Contributing Company Representatives



DelDOT Restore the Corridor Team



DOF Relief Rebate Team



GEAR P3 Trailblazers

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 permit approval timelines with a target of 6 months for the entire process, thereby making the State a more competitive option when businesses consider relocating to, or expanding in, Delaware. 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 agencies, providing greater transparency and cost predictability, and implementing fast-track approvals for high priority projects.

The Taskforce is seeking private-sector support to help providers of these public services to identify which permit-to-groundbreaking 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 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.

Work to implement these recommendations was negatively impacted by the pandemic. Throughout 2022 the GEAR P3 Taskforce worked to enhance the Ready in 6 program and launch a survey that was open to approximately 1,500 private sector participants across the state. The results of the survey led to key findings within DelDOT and DNREC as well as other State, municipal, and county organizations. These findings have been communicated to DelDOT and DNREC leadership. Based on this input and their knowledge of related challenges within their organizations, they are each selecting a core permitting process that needs improvement. These 2 processes will form the scope of a prototype project that will demonstrate the value of applying GEAR continuous improvement methods and tools by the end of Calendar Year 2025. Based on the results of the prototype project, a more comprehensive program that matches the statewide scope of the KPMG report will be assessed to determine if the aspirational Ri6 goals documented in the report will be pursued. The GEAR P3 Taskforce remains a catalyst to create momentum state-wide, as the State emerged from the pandemic. The Taskforce is uniquely qualified to add value to the Ri6 initiative.

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 its citizens.

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. To lead GEAR's efforts, the GEAR focus area teams of Financial Services Delivery, Human Resources Delivery and Information Technology Centralization were consolidated into the Enterprise Services Delivery Team. The implementation of enterprise-wide solutions often requires long implementation timelines, and this team is being used to identify enterprise needs, solutions to meet those needs, and resources necessary to carry out the solutions. The Enterprise Services Delivery Team does not manage projects directly, but rather serves as a forum to develop implementable strategies for how the State can operate more efficiently, to collaborate among State entities when developing ideas, and to identify the resources required to implement projects.

Representing most of the State's major financial, information technology, and human resources functions, ESD is delivering value through the implementation of nearly 55 cross-agency enterprise-wide projects and programs. In 2022, the framework for evaluating the strategic impact of enterprise level projects was revamped with a focus on the impact of change saturation, return on investment, and risk management across agencies. In 2023, the ESD team is focused on rechartering its efforts to better align agencies, projects, and service delivery toward a more unified State of Delaware focus.

There are numerous areas for project development where finance, human resources, and information technology overlap. One such area is operating enterprise-wide computer system applications. Changes to these systems often require long-term projects on the scale of 5 to 10 years.

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 & Accounting; Payroll, Human Resources; Benefits & Time Administration; and Pension Administration). Resources from the consulting firm, together with State subject matter experts, documented system and business processes including the related current system customizations. In addition, State experts and ERP System Administrators established the overall project goals. The consulting firm will analyze all areas within each module of the ERP systems. Recommendations from the analysis will be provided using the following criteria:

- Eliminate the process if it is 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 is conducting feedback sessions with central and end user agencies, school districts, charter schools, and higher education institutions to ensure all business processes completed outside the system are documented to be considered for inclusion in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a replacement system.

As the project team nears the completion of feedback sessions and associated documentation, the consulting firm, in accordance with the statement of work, will quantify the level of customizations and potential approaches for ERP modernization. The firm will recommend 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 and recommended solution, the State will develop an RFP for ERP Modernization targeted to be published in the second quarter of Calendar Year 2024 with contract awards targeted for the end of Calendar Year 2024. The full migration to a new system is expected to take a minimum of 3 to 5 years after the award of contract(s). 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 a more efficient workforce. The State appropriated \$25 million toward this major initiative in both the Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 bond bills for a total of \$50 million to date. It is anticipated that the total cost of this project will be nearly \$100 million dollars.

Implement an Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS)

The Delaware Department of Finance, Division of Revenue (DOR) is responsible for collecting more than \$2.2 billion in annual State taxes, processing \$300 million in tax refunds, ensuring compliance with the State's tax laws, and aiding taxpayers. The Division of Revenue is moving away from mainframe technology that is over 25 years old consisting of more than 100 client server applications. Implementation of the IRAS system will fully modernize DOR 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 will improve 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 will also create numerous opportunities for improved efficiency and 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 via the Microsoft Azure Government Cloud.

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 (available at Division of Revenue) went live for taxpayer registration in December 2020 and has been available for tax filings since January 2021. To date, more than 105,000 returns have been filed through the portal and more than \$237 million 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, 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 three releases, as follows:

- 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 (late 2023) – Enhancements to business and personal taxes and the Delaware tax portal.
- Release 3 (mid 2024 through late 2025):
 - Marijuana retail tax and IRS CP2000 audit program (mid 2024).
 - Corporate income taxes as well as partnership, S corporation, fiduciary, headquarter management income tax returns (late 2025).
 - Data warehouse and tax master audit program (late 2025).

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.

Governor Carney and the General Assembly approved funding for the project 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.

Establish the Delaware Relief Rebate Program

On April 1, 2022, House Bill 360, created the 2022 Delaware Relief Rebate Program. The bill required the State to issue a one-time direct payment of \$300 to adult residents of Delaware emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic who were facing higher prices at the grocery store and gas pump. Within 14 days, the bill passed both houses of the General Assembly and was signed by the Governor.

The project had various complexities, including that there was no comprehensive database of resident adult Delawareans or their current addresses. The project sponsors quickly assigned a diverse team of key subject matter experts within the Department of Finance (DOF), identified potential hurdles and complexities, and sought additional team members and contacts from other State agencies with complementary skills able to help accurately identify resident Delaware adults that do not file tax returns and are not in DOF databases. The team worked with other State offices that held substantial databases including the Division of Motor Vehicles, the Departments of Health and Social Services, Elections, Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Correction as well as Technology Information and the Office of the State Treasurer.

Criteria were developed to properly identify more than 8 rounds of payments for over 750,000 adults valued at over \$236 million. Data was mined and validated through multiple technical and manual methodologies to reduce errors while also maintaining stringent anti-fraud and financial controls. New or improved internal and public facing tools were released throughout the project to better serve residents and staff. The project involved multiple implementation phases and mid-stream enhancements - as the program timelines did not permit for one, all-inclusive launch.

DOR public service staff answered approximately 49,000 additional calls and responded to over 24,000 emails related to the 2022 relief rebate, doubling average annual public service work volumes.

The project responded to risks and issues with innovative design and processes that not only helped them meet the 6-month deadline but also produced clear and verifiable results with a high degree of satisfaction from rebate recipients and the legislators that represent them. At the conclusion of the program, the number of rebates issued approximates the number of estimated adult Delawareans. In addition, approximately 94 percent of rebate checks have been cashed within the last 9 months, indicating an extremely high payment accuracy rate. As nominated by Secretary of Finance Rick Geisenberger, this project team was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to its efficacy in implementing the Relief Rebate Program. The recipients of the 2022 award were Rebecca Goldsmith, Warren Wood, Holly Reynolds, Donna Owens, Candice McMillan, April Benton, Iris Carter, Mark Cavanaugh, Marvin Lightcap, David G. Smith, Sonya Barkley, Jayanna Hudson, Monique Carter, Ciera Gardner, Shea Smith, Joseph Frank, Dominique Wilson, and David Roose.

Procurement Card (Pcard) Program and Travel Policy

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 provided a record level of total Pcard spend of \$177.0 million with a rebate of \$3.4 million. Calendar Year 2022 spend was consistent with 2021 at \$177.0 million and a rebate of \$3.4 million. Calendar Year 2023 to date is projecting annual spending over \$180.0 million with a slightly higher rebate. The first extension of the existing Pcard contract expires December 2023 with planned signing of the second extension prior to expiration. In addition, the State's travel policy has been updated and an agreement is being finalized with a travel management company to streamline processes and reduce costs for the booking of transportation and lodging associated with State personnel travel.

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 are 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).

On March 1, 2021, the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) subcommittee implemented changes to streamline the after-the-fact waiver request application approval process. These changes included: 1) increasing the purchase order threshold from \$5,000 to \$10,000, 2) permitting cabinet-level leaders of State organizations to internally approve after-the-fact waiver requests between \$10,000 and \$50,000, and 3) requiring Director of the Office 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 staff. To date, for Fiscal Year 2024, twenty-one waiver applications have been submitted for OMB and DOF approval.

July 1 st to June 30 th					
	Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022	Fiscal Year 2023	Fiscal Year 2024
OMB/DOF Approval Totals	105	76	18	41	21
% Workload Change		(28%)	(76%)	(56%)	(48%)

Financial Advisory Committee (FAC)

The FAC continued quarterly meetings and the Grants and Training subcommittees were active throughout the period accomplishing several of their goals. The Travel subcommittee completed travel policy changes, some of which will be modified based on an agreement that has been finalized with a travel management company to streamline and reduce costs for the booking of transportation and lodging associated with State personnel travel. Currently, the implementation timeline of this agreement is under discussion.

The FAC Training subcommittee launched the basic payroll training course for payroll staff offering a pilot training that was well received. Additional trainings were scheduled during Fiscal Year 2023. Currently, there are two payroll courses that are offered on a bi-monthly basis (one course is taught every other month). The basic accounting training has been completed and is held on a quarterly basis. These trainings provide fundamentals of payroll and accounting not currently included in the courses for users of the State's Payroll and Human Resources Statewide Technology (PHRST) and the State's financial management accounting system - First State Financials (FSF). The courses are available for registration through the Delaware Learning Center.

The Grants subcommittee continued meeting with the Office of Management and Budget Delaware State Clearinghouse Committee team and Division of Accounting FSF Grants team, coordinating with agency participants to align policies and support best practices. To support this effort, the Delaware State Clearinghouse Committee team conducted training to assist agencies through the grant application process using updated job aids. The FSF team responded to requests for assistance with budgeting processes and developed a mass budget update template to create efficiencies for agencies by reducing manual entry.

Drive Effective Internal Control System(s) 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 Office of 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 2024, AOA will begin offering vendor provided Internal Control training(s) to enhance internal control design, implementation, monitoring for operational effectiveness, and periodic updating based on a changing environment. AOA's overall goal is to enhance the internal control skillset of all State employees.

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 126 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 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 local real estate market, including its related peripheral indicators 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 area of focus to begin a strategic approach. The target was further defined with 78 leases that would expire within a 5-year period. Over time, the confines of this target group of leases have been broadened due to market awareness and economic opportunity. Since the program began in 2018, all 78 leases have been renewed, relocated, terminated, or transferred. Of the 78 leases, 65 have been renewed or relocated while 13 of the 78 leases have been terminated or transferred. As a result of the progress made during the initial 4 years of the project, the contract was renewed for an additional 3 years with opportunities to extend the contract.

This GEAR project continues to achieve the targeted goal while evolving toward updating the lease document framework. This includes concessions such as environmental hygiene provisions that protect the State employee workforce, electric vehicle charging station installation 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 5 to 10 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 for additional space. Since October 2022, 5 properties have been acquired. These acquisitions reduce the lease inventory in addition to providing cost savings of \$2.88 million, to be realized over time.

To date, most of the 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 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 \$35.3 million in hard dollar rent savings and more than \$9.5 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 decide how to move forward with hybrid work schedules, OMB/DFM will continue to take advantage of spaces that have been vacated or downsized because of state employees telecommuting to work. To date, 2 agencies reduced their real estate footprint due to employees utilizing a hybrid schedule. This resulted in a savings of \$178,479 annually.

Data Integration and Mapping

Leverage FirstMap for Data Sharing

The FirstMap environment is managed by the Department of Technology and Information's (DTI) 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, the Office of Management and Budget Office of State Planning and Coordination (OMB/OSPC) and DTI have made strides in not only making this data more available but 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, Location Intelligence and Office of State Planning Coordination were able to engage the United States Geologic Survey and Delaware Geologic Survey for contracting and acquisition of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data. This data was last collected nearly 8 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.

Establish a State Land Inventory

It is critical for Delaware State government to have a full and complete understanding of the real property it owns. Fully evaluating the State's realty assets and generating a centralized, spatial, land inventory database will afford stakeholders the ability to identify assets, evaluate use, maintenance, funding, and ultimately manage assets in a more streamlined and efficient manner.

The proposed solution involves obtaining consultation to develop a centralized database that is accessible to all State agencies that own and manage real property assets, including easements (13 agencies or divisions, plus higher education and school districts). The technical solution will leverage Esri's Geographic Information System (GIS) software as well as the State's FirstMap and the Delaware Integrated Data System (DIDS) architecture so that the database is accessible and secure across all agencies. Once operational, the individual agencies and divisions will retire their existing databases and spreadsheets and begin using the new database as a part of revised workflows. Ultimately, all data will be updated in real time and accessible to all who have permission to access it.

In response to past discovery workshops and recommendations OMB/OSPC has initiated a business case with DTI, sponsored a request for proposals (RFP), reviewed proposals received, worked with DTI on the architecture and design of the highest-ranking offer, and currently the State is working with the selected vendor to complete the scope of work so the final contract can be executed and implementation of the solution can begin in 2024. The measurable outcomes associated with this project include process improvement, enhanced value, and possibly reduced costs through more efficient use of the State's real property assets.

School District Enrollment Projections

School district enrollment has a significant impact on State operating and capital budgets. Centrally updated enrollment projections done on a regular basis can be used to improve long-range planning and better allocate resources in both operating and capital budgets within and across school districts. Statewide enrollment projections have been produced twice in the recent past, once in 2007 and again in 2014. These efforts were useful at those points in time, but they have not been updated to reflect changing demographic conditions. This project is focused on the process of preparing regular updates to statewide school district enrollment projections and using these updates to improve long-range planning and resource allocation (e.g., determine needs for new schools and evaluate school district capital master plans). Additionally, the updates will be beneficial for other entities that interact with the student population in the allocation of their resources.

In the 2021-2022 legislative session, the Legislature passed SB 327. The Bill obligates the Department of Education (DOE), OMB/OSPC, the school districts, and county governments to work together to integrate an educational element into the county comprehensive plans. To support this effort, the school district enrollment projection data is necessary. This year OMB has contracted with University of Delaware's Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research to update the enrollment projections. The project will be managed by OMB/OSPC and DOE, and for future years, a sustainable funding strategy has been developed to ensure that enrollment projections are kept up to date.

Human Resources Modernization

Centralize and Modernize Human Resources Delivery

On February 16, 2017, Governor Carney issued Executive Order #4, with one of its key objectives being "identifying changes in the State personnel system that would foster a culture of continuous improvement and improve the recruitment, development, and retention of State employees." Since the establishment of the Department of Human Resources (DHR) in 2017, significant progress has been made in modernizing service delivery through streamlined workflows, centralization of services, and the effective utilization of technology.

In 2020, the Delaware Learning Center (DLC) saw significant improvements, including integrating expanded online content (Cornerstone/CyberU) directly into the DLC, the State's enterprise learning management system. This integration enabled employees across all three branches of State government to access career development training 24/7 from any device, accommodating a hybrid work environment. Moreover, the DLC Support Portal (ServiceNow) was introduced in early

2022. This portal revolutionized the DLC helpdesk by automating case creation from emails, providing email notifications, enhanced data analytics, case tracking, and a knowledge bank. This effort transitioned the help desk from manual ticket management using emails and phone calls to a fully automated system and marked a significant advancement. As nominated by DHR Director of Training and HR Solutions Barbara McCleary, the team implementing this solution, which consisted of Jim Robinson, Ashley Kavanagh, and Darlene Hicken-Gott, was recognized for their work as one of the 2022 GEAR Trailblazer Award recipients. Now that the system's been in place for a year, DHR is recommending an additional investment of \$50,000 for system enhancements and expanded access.

Amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, DHR astutely recognized and adapted to the imperative for staff to operate remotely while maintaining access to the State's network. The introduction of Always-On-VPN (AoVPN) laptops was pivotal in facilitating a smooth transition for staff during this critical period in 2021. This decision to modernize technology proved vital as DHR centralizes the delivery of services and enables staff to work in various locations across the State. This ensures uninterrupted connectivity and productivity, underscoring DHR's commitment to adaptability and effective remote work solutions.

Significant enhancements were made to the State's customer resource management platform (Salesforce) for managing information related to employees and labor relations processes. This involved adding 2 new case types: one for tracking Respectful Workplace and Anti-Discrimination (RWAD) Policy complaints and another for Merit Rule Section 12.9 appeals. The system underwent a thorough review by staff, leading to the inclusion of new fields to better align with current needs. Additionally, the team recognized the necessity for further system improvements, which encompass developing a web form to automate the creation of case types and implementation of enhanced reporting. These innovations, once implemented, will replace the current manual approach to case creation, streamline the processes, and contribute to greater efficiencies.

Transitioning from using network drives to adopting SharePoint and Microsoft Teams, DHR improved internal access to operational documents, enhanced team synergy, and fostered organization-wide cooperation. This shift also facilitates access to files for HR personnel not at DHR's physical sites and is imperative to delivering centralized human resources services.

DHR took a major step forward in early 2023 by implementing an enterprise document management system. The move transitioned HR personnel records from physical filing cabinets to an electronic system, modernizing employee record management. In addition to personnel files, system configuration included file management capabilities for classification, compensation, employee relations, labor relations, and recruitment. Over 1.9 million documents have been digitized and uploaded into the new system as of mid-November 2023, with ongoing efforts to become entirely paperless. This transition enables automated processes, enhancing user access, minimizing risk, improving record management and retention, and bolstering security and confidentiality. Building on this success, DHR seeks to enhance the system's capabilities by incorporating record retention settings, along with scanning and configuration to include benefits and insurance coverage documents, supported by 2 high-speed scanners. Additionally, DHR aims to add configurations to streamline pension office access to facilitate the seamless transfer of employee records upon retirement. DHR is requesting funding totaling \$366,000 to support the system expansion.

An automated reservation system application was introduced in 2023 with the transition to 2 new centralized office spaces. This application empowers staff to conveniently reserve desk spaces within either of the 2 new centralized DHR work locations, improves collaboration opportunities, and enables centralized management of conference rooms and huddle spaces. This implementation is a testament to DHR's commitment to facilitating a hybrid work environment, accommodating our workforce's evolving needs and preferences.

As DHR adapts to changing business dynamics, it believes that centralizing HR functions is essential to enhance efficiency, consistency, and overall effectiveness in managing its most valuable asset – State employees. In Fiscal Year 2023, DHR began centralizing resources and expertise to optimize HR practices and drive organizational success in the areas of employee and labor relations, classification, compensation, and talent acquisition. As DHR continues to learn, it has become evident that the current approach to training and employee services is fragmented, resulting in inefficiencies and inconsistent experiences across various departments and teams. Plans are underway to centralize these services strategically to enhance workforce development and service efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality as DHR approaches 2024.

DHR significantly advanced, centralized and standardized the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes. In early 2023, DHR overhauled New Employee Orientation into a comprehensive onboarding process, refining policies and establishing a uniform approach.

DHR continues to centralize recruitment processes to improve efficiency and consistency, leading to a 15 percent decrease in the time it takes to post a position until it is filled. DHR successfully negotiated a new recruitment system contract in July 2023. Recruitment improvements include:

- Implementing a recruitment system training program for hiring managers allowing managers to submit requests to fill positions directly and providing a mechanism for applicants to self-schedule interviews.
- Enhancing the candidates' experience by offering a more user-friendly and robust system with new features, including resume parsing and prefilling supplemental questions for candidates who have previously applied to a position in the same class.
- Collaborating with the Department of Technology and Information, DHR is integrating with the State of Delaware's identity verification system to facilitate IT onboarding.
- Automating new employee computer and badge accesses before the employee begins employment.

In preparation for a new onboarding and offboarding system, DHR updated the new hire orientation and onboarding procedures by streamlining the hiring process and standardizing content in offer letters to new hires. DHR unveiled five distinct curricula to educate and provide employees and managers with notices, mandatory policies, and training. Launched in September 2023, the DLC manages the administration and compliance for the 14,000 employees impacted by these new curricula.

To support the State of Delaware's efforts to improve the onboarding experience, in September 2023, DHR issued the first statewide Onboarding Policy and Procedure. The policy provides requirements for hiring new employees in the Executive Branch and sets the standards for implementation of the State's first automated HR onboarding solution. In October 2023, DHR initiated the implementation of a new onboarding and offboarding solution with a planned 6 month implementation.

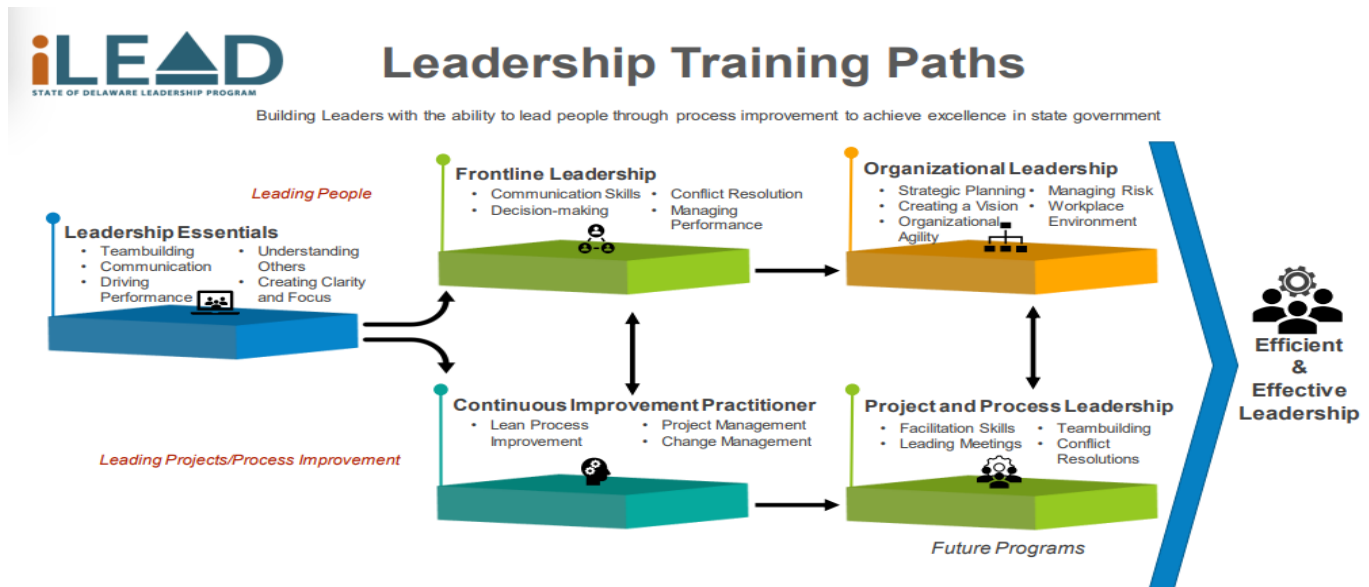
In 2021, DHR conducted a comprehensive review and simplification of 23 classification and compensation work procedures (e.g., critical reclassification, advanced starting salary, dual incumbency, casual seasonal extension, position establishment, maintenance review, promotional standards, and pay equity). This involved defining system requirements, drafting process workflows, and redesigning request forms to automate the classification and compensation request processes. In 2023, DHR and DTI viewed several vendor demonstrations for proposed solutions to replace the existing manual classification and compensation tracking system, allowing users to access the status of their requests, review previous submissions, submit web request submission forms, track approvals, view supporting documents, email notifications, monitor case management, and request escalation. In 2023, DHR submitted a joint budget request with the Office of Management and Budget, the Controller General's Office, and the Department of Technology and Information for an investment of \$1.2 million for a new classification and compensation system. DTI is currently working with DHR to identify a solution and is actively building a proof of concept to automate 1 of the 23 classification and compensation processes.

Drive Leadership Training Opportunities

In 2022, DHR, in partnership with GEAR, offered 2 cohorts of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) Program, raising the total number of graduates to 83 since its inception by using training funds carried over from previous years. In Fiscal Year 2024, DHR and GEAR secured additional funding through the First State Quality Improvement Fund with the support of the Governor and General Assembly. This expanded funding now supports 2 cohorts of the CIP program annually and fosters the creation and implementation of project and process leadership training, in partnership with GEAR. A stakeholder focus group of CIP graduates was convened to assist in formulating the objectives of project and process leadership training. This meeting aimed to pinpoint areas of skill gaps and identify key factors contributing to future success. The insights gathered from this discussion were instrumental in shaping program objectives and emphasized the adoption of industry best practices. There was an emphasis on the need to further develop the foundational skills learned in the continuous improvement practitioner program at an intermediate or advanced level in continuous improvement leadership skills, business analysis, Lean six sigma, and project management. As development of the training is completed, the program is targeted to launch in 2024.

The training programs align with a key objective of GEAR's Executive Order #4 in "exploring and expanding partnerships with the Delaware Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the Delaware Quality Partnership, and the State's higher education network." DHR and the GEAR Program Management Team continue to build leadership opportunities for State employees by utilizing the expertise offered by the Delaware Manufacturing Extension Partnership and the University of Delaware.

iLEAD Delaware Leadership Program, created to build future leaders, provides opportunities for employees who lead people and those who lead projects and process improvement initiatives. To date, 530 State employees have completed Leadership Essentials, and 14 individuals have completed the requirements of the Frontline Leadership certificate program requiring over 40 hours of training. This program has 131 actively enrolled current, new, and aspiring leaders.



Strengthen and Grow the GEAR P3 Awards

Created in 2018, the GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award recognizes and incentivizes outstanding teams of State employees that use continuous improvement methodologies and disciplined project management techniques. The award, presented annually to teams of six to twenty employees, encourage teamwork by recognizing State employee' efforts to use continuous improvement tools to excel in leadership, team dynamics, and communications to produce superior customer service and tangible results. The award is intended as the apex award within the Governor's Team Excellence Award Program. The projects that receive awards demonstrate innovative, sustainable, and efficient business processes and services.

Through a partnership between GEAR, DHR, and the Delaware business community, the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award provides recipients with a financial incentive of up to \$10,000 shared among a team of award recipients. The annual financial commitment to support the awards includes \$25,000 contributed by the private sector and a matching State contribution of \$25,000 annually. GEAR P3 remains essential to ensuring the participation of the private sector in this important award.

This year two teams were selected as recipients of the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award: the Department of Finance's "Relief Rebate Team" for issuing over 750,000 emergency relief payments to qualifying tax filers and adult residents in Delaware and the Department of Transportation's "Restore the Corridor Team" for successfully carrying out an expansive rehabilitation project to repair 19 bridges, repave 5 miles of road, and make safety upgrades along I-95.

As the State's capacity to manage process improvement expands, nominations for the GEAR P3 Innovation & Efficiency Award are expected to increase. In Fiscal Year 2023, with the support of GEAR and the Office of Management and Budget, State funds were reinstated in DHR's budget to ensure matching funds are available for the monetary incentives received by award recipients.

Expand the Trailblazer Award

In 2022, the State created the GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award nomination process to enable agencies to recognize additional employees who deliver innovative, impactful, sustainable, and efficient business processes and services. In May 2023, 11 individuals were recognized for their work in using continuous improvement methodologies. Recipients of the GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award received a financial incentive of \$1,500 each. The 2022 recipients of the award were: Brian Calio, DHSS,

who created a fleet optimization project to bring efficiency gains to the acquisition and retention of DHSS blocked vehicles; the Delaware Learning Center (DLC) Support Portal Team of Jim Robinson, Ashley Kavanagh, and Darlene Hicken-Gott who implemented the DLC Support Portal within 5 months to enable automated tracking and processing of Delaware Learning Center helpdesk tickets; Tonia Muncey, DSCYF, conducted a study of federal Title IV-E funding compared to the state's total foster care population and implemented several recommendations to achieve a 9 percent improvement rate; Larry Trunfio, DHR, the primary training administrator who led the implementation of the Continuous Improvement Practitioner (CIP) Program, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government processes and programs in Delaware, and; the James T. Vaughn Accreditation Team, DOC, of Renee Gutowski, Kara Austin, Damaris Slawik, Chelsey Pernic, and Michael Trader who completed a multi-year effort to secure its first-ever national accreditation for James T. Vaughn through the American Correctional Association (ACA).

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

The Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service Award, better known as the “Employee of the Year” Award, has been in place since 1990. Recipients of the award received a monetary incentive of \$3,000 until the recession of 2009. Individuals nominated for this award compete against other award nominations as Employees of the Quarter in their respective agencies. Up to 5 individuals or small teams of less than 6 are selected annually as award recipients.

Last year's recipients included Angela Foraker, DHSS, who worked to provide outstanding customer service for a resident of the Hospital for the Chronically Ill, improving their social skills, overall health, and quality of life; Nadeim Ghoryani, DTI, championed technology improvements including changes to employee self-service and the ability to view Okta self-service accounts, limiting user confusion and simplifying troubleshooting efforts; Robin Jenkins, AOC, started a summer youth volunteer program, putting kids who were aging out of the foster care system to work in the courts; Lisa Tingle, DSCYF, took the initiative to assist teams across the state in making referrals for psychiatric residential treatment facilities for up to 40 youth, making sure the youth were comfortable going to a new program; Linda Velott, DOF, created a statistical report which resulted in the elimination of a question on their application that was creating a bottleneck, resulting in shorter processing times. All these recipients demonstrated innovative problem-solving, leadership, outstanding customer service, and the ability to communicate to achieve tangible results.

As the State seeks ways to retain its top performers, DHR will be seeking support for an investment of \$45,000 to restore the monetary incentive for the Delaware Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service of \$1,000 for each award recipient.

Promoting a Respectful and Inclusive Workplace

As Delaware's largest employer, the State of Delaware remains steadfast in its dedication to advancing a workplace environment characterized by fairness, diversity, equity, and inclusivity within State government. The Department of Human Resources continues implementing policies and practices to nurture a trauma-responsive atmosphere of respect and inclusivity. In 2023, DHR created, revised, and required employee acknowledgment of 7 policies, procedures, and request forms, including the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Procedures provided to over 14,000 Executive Branch employees.

DHR's Division of Diversity and Inclusion is actively collaborating with State agencies to establish local diversity committees and hosted a Diversity Summit in October 2023. As part of an effort to boost awareness and foster inclusive workplaces, 8 webinars were offered to State employees. These webinars covered a wide range of topics, including women's history, transgender day, disability inclusion, digital accessibility, LGBTQ+ common mistakes and bloopers, pronouns matter, Hispanic heritage, and bridging the disability employment gap, and supporting coworkers with disabilities during emergencies. A testament to their success, these webinars have garnered significant interest, with each session attracting over 200 registrations.

In 2023, DHR's Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) workgroup developed a Trauma-Informed Care Toolkit designed for HR staff to address secondary and vicarious trauma. Your Mask First training emphasizes the importance for HR professionals to serve as role models, acquainting themselves with the signs and symptoms of vicarious and secondary trauma given the nature of our work providing HR services to State employees. This training initiative aligns with DHR's Trauma-Informed Care strategic plan and showcases DHR's commitment to fulfilling Governor Carney's Executive Order 24, which aims to make Delaware a Trauma-Informed State. This interactive toolkit provides employees with videos, assessments, action

plans, information, and resources for secondary and vicarious trauma, self-care, and building resilience. To date, 88 percent of employees viewed the toolkit.

Reduce 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 reduce health care costs for State employees, retirees, pensioners, and their dependents. To address a projected Fiscal Year 2024 deficit, the SEBC approved a 9.4 percent increase in State non-Medicare health plan premiums (rates) effective July 1, 2023, and a 5 percent increase in State Medicare health plan premiums (rates) effective January 1, 2024. In addition, in Fiscal Year 2023, Senate Bill 175 was signed into law requiring that every year, at least 1 percent of the grand total of all General Fund operating budget appropriations for the prior fiscal year is appropriated to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Fund. Investment earnings on the OPEB Fund partly offset rising retiree health care costs.

Due to health care trends, the State is projecting a \$250.4 million deficit in the Group Health Fund for Fiscal Year 2025. To help solve the longer-term projected deficit, the SEBC is reviewing rate increase scenarios for health plan premiums, which include a 25.8 percent rate increase effective July 1, 2024 (absent any additional program changes) or smoothing the rate increase over Fiscal Years 2025, 2026, and 2027 with an annual rate increase of approximately 12.3 percent. 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.

A workplace is an important setting for supporting health and wellness. In May 2023, DHR/SBO and the Department of Health and Social Services' Division of Public Health received an honorable mention recognition plaque for the "2023 Health Benefits Innovation Award" from the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health for their partnership and work in developing the DHR Workplace Wellness Policy & Procedures and Toolkit. The State also experienced another successful benefits open enrollment period, with 81.5 percent of benefit-eligible State employees actively participating in the open enrollment process.

The SEBC voted to implement the PrudentRx Solution effective July 1, 2023, for non-Medicare prescription plan participants. PrudentRx is an independent third-party organization that CVS Caremark® has partnered with to offer cost savings for specialty medications. The program leverages drug manufacturer copay assistance programs, and participating members get specialty medications at no cost. PrudentRx can help reduce specialty plan spending by up to 25 percent and applies to all specialty medications on the CVS Caremark® specialty drug list, regardless of whether a copay card is available. Members not participating in the program, as required, are charged a 30 percent coinsurance for specialty medications. Members can choose to opt in or out of the program anytime. This service provides cost savings to GHIP members and the State.

For several years now, the SEBC has worked alongside the General Assembly and other committees to identify options that assure that retired State employees retain access to high-quality and affordable health care while also making progress toward reducing the State's \$10 billion unfunded liability for retiree health care that threatens the long-term sustainability of these important benefits. On December 31, 2022, the previous 5-year Medicare Special Medicfill Supplement contract expired. In early 2021, the SEBC competitively bid the administration of the State Group Health Insurance Plans offered to State employees non-Medicare and Medicare retirees. In early 2022, the SEBC awarded Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware a contract to provide Medicare retiree health care under a full replacement Medicare Advantage plan, beginning January 1, 2023.

Following a legal challenge, on October 19, 2022, Superior Court Justice Calvin Scott issued an interim ruling and order to halt the implementation of the Medicare Advantage Plan. After the October 19, 2022, opinion and order from the Superior Court, the State negotiated with Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware to extend the previous Medicare Special Medicfill Supplement plan until January 1, 2024. SB 29, signed by the Governor, created the Retiree Healthcare Benefits Advisory Subcommittee (RHBAS), a subcommittee of the SEBC, to conduct public meetings and engage in public comment about current and future State retiree health care benefits while taking into consideration the previous work of the SEBC and the Retiree Benefits Study Committee. On April 24, 2023, the SEBC voted to extend the expired Medicare Special Medicfill Supplement plan for 6 additional months through June 30, 2024. On May 1, 2023, the RHBAS issued an initial report to the Governor and the General Assembly, stating that due to the SEBC Medicfill extension through June 30, 2024, there would not be an impact on the Fiscal Year 2024 State operating budget. On September 18, 2023, the SEBC voted to extend the Special Medicfill Medicare Supplement plan further through December 31, 2024. The SEBC is moving ahead

with a Request for Proposals (RFP) for continued administration of a Medicare Supplement plan that replicates the plan design and administrative set-up of the Medicfill plan. Advertisement of the RFP is targeted for late October 2023, and a contract award is expected in early 2024 for a contract effective January 1, 2025. The RHBAS is expected to issue its final findings and recommendations before the end of 2023.

DHR/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 using online and instructor-led training, monthly benefits bulletins, targeted emails, and a new webpage with resources on weight management.

Technology Innovation

Document Management

After 3 years of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funded transactions, DelSign electronic document signature services powered by Adobe Sign has been promoted across 20 state agencies. DTI has trailblazed many innovative techniques, enabling agencies to leverage electronic alternatives for their documentation workflows. To further adoption, the Enterprise Architecture and Solutions Integration (EASI) team promoted the first phase of integration of DelSign in productivity software such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Microsoft Teams.

DTI is simplifying access to DelSign by implementing Single Sign On and making it easier for users to access the web portal instance of DelSign. DTI also promoted self-service as a solution by implementing a ServiceNow Catalog page. This allows users to request access, revoke access or request other services, further eliminating the need to manually send out email requests, and facilitate ticket management for the administrators by leveraging an automated mechanism to direct requests to the appropriate team. The EASI team has promoted integration of DelSign with enterprise solutions such as Salesforce and the Microsoft Power Platform. DTI is currently working with the ServiceNow team to implement a new workflow catalog module called DelApprove, with the goal of combining the power of ServiceNow's ticketing capacity with DelSign's electronic solution. Finally, given that the CARES funding phase has reached its termination, the EASI team will transition DelSign to a cost recovery model to continue distributing the service across the State while providing governance and consistency to all State agencies.

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.

DTI is working with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to define the implementation strategy around a cost recovery methodology for the State agencies being supported with IT services. Simultaneously, DTI is reviewing and updating the Service Catalog to define core IT services, in addition to leveraging automation through request and fulfillment workflows in a ServiceNow platform. This will streamline support, improve inventory management, and position the State to project future needs in these key areas.

IT Centralization (ITC)

In 2021, DTI pivoted from an agency-by-agency ITC effort to focus on how best to deliver a highly secure, equitably provisioned computing environment. The comprehensive SEUS centralization strategy and associated cost model provides stable technology and predictable billing to State agencies based on actual usage. In April 2022, the IT Centralization

program moved Secure End User Services (SEUS) forward with the centralization of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of Human Resources. With its pilot agencies, DTI established a repeatable process, standard templates for data gathering and communication, including lessons learned, and applied for the continuance of the program. Centralization planning is now underway for the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) with their completion of centralization targeted for the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2024.

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. At the time of this report, analysis and planning for an enterprise implementation of a shared service cost model in Fiscal Year 2025 remains in-progress.

Secure End User Services (SEUS)

Secure End User Services is the first IT service offering to transition to the new shared services cost model with the following benefits and features:

- Maximizes security compliance.
- Stabilizes procurement of equipment, assuring support needs uniformly, including timely equipment life cycling and refreshment.
- Packages the costs of imaging, end user support, maintenance, repair/replacement services for workers' essential desktop equipment, but excludes peripherals such as mice, keyboards, and monitors which have highly variable life cycles.
- 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 communications network access and support for voice and internet.
- 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. DTI anticipates a 2-year transition to SEUS and its associated cost model for centralized agencies.

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 historically deployed at an agency 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 and increases efficiency and productivity for everyone.

Digital accessibility is an important part of the digital government strategy. Removing barriers for persons with disabilities to ensure access to digital content is imperative and the State is moving forward with digital accessibility efforts through an investment of American Rescue Plan Act funding. In coordination with the Office of the Governor and Department of State, Government Information Center (GIC), DTI has developed a multi-year plan to improve inclusiveness and access to digital government services. DTI has identified a Digital Accessibility Coordinator who will lead Delaware's efforts to assess

digital content (websites, forms, etc.) and recommend steps for remediation. During the first phase of these efforts, Delaware will be partnering with a vendor to:

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

Delaware also implemented a single sign-on solution with identity proofing to facilitate a single point of entry for digital State services, similar to the Delaware One Stop Business portal. 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 solution for State workers. Now, DTI is embarking on the larger initiative, building the resident and visitor solution My Delaware available for the public to consume State digital government services under authenticated identities. DTI has onboarded nearly 60 applications and more than 87,600 unique users to date, and adoption continues to grow.

DTI, the Department of Human Resources, Department of Finance, Office of the State Treasurer, and Department of State, with support from the Office of the Governor, 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 with the resident and visitor platform in the implementation phase), email marketing application, data management and analytics tool, and centralized online payment tool. An enterprise digital government access model built on a Cloud platform that easily connects and interfaces with existing backend systems across departments 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.

Digital Government Platform Foundation

Currently, every Delaware State agency maintains its own web presence. Residents and visitors navigate a variety of web pages to procure State products and services. The Governor-sponsored Digital Government Platform Foundation program, branded as Go DE, calls for a uniform, one-stop approach that will 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 customers is key to the program's success. Innovative solutions and best practice applied by both Delaware State agencies and various states throughout the country provide direction for the development of a new interface including a purchasing cart, 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 within Go DE must be well-crafted, intuitive, accessible, and offer fast and focused transactions that result in a satisfying experience. 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/visitor dialog will drive priorities and expectations. The culmination of this multi-layered technology and end user platform will result in a transformative experience for Delaware's residents and visitors by providing digital access to an increasing number of government services.

Making these transactions easier for Delawareans and visitors, and simplifying maintenance for agency staff, will improve the quality of interactions with those the State serves. The Digital Government Platform Foundation program is currently in the build phase. Product branding associated communication templates and program web content have been published. The implementation vendor has completed the 1st release with a payment checkout prototype and portal design wireframe. Pilot agencies have been identified and integration requirements are in-progress. Incremental releases will begin in March 2024 with full Go DE portal functionality available in the third quarter of 2024.

Expansion of Broadband Access Across Delaware

Expanding access to high-speed internet across Delaware is a priority. The State's Broadband Strategic Plan and Geographic Information System (GIS) Hub have identified more than 12,000 homes and businesses lacking access to broadband services. Given the additional funding made available through several federal programs specifically targeting broadband efforts, Delaware has revised its original investment of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to maximize the potential of all available resources as follows:

- \$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 2023.
- \$100+ million in BEAD funding to plan and implement broadband expansion in 2024-2028. This program can be used to connect unserved homes and to upgrade connections to homes with a lower-speed connection.
- \$12 million in federal digital equity funds to support activities that promote digital inclusion and advance equity for all. \$516,000 has been awarded through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to plan for implementation.

Last, \$13 million was 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. RDOF funds were awarded directly to Talkie, Inc. and cannot be combined with BEAD. Talkie, Inc. was chosen by the FCC to deliver broadband to certain areas in Delaware and has until 2028 to establish the connections.

Judiciary Reform

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

Implementation of Civil e-filing and case management solutions are to begin in January of 2024. Criminal systems functionality is not included in the vendor's scope of work for this initiative currently, but the Judicial Information Center (JIC) is documenting and enhancing criminal business solutions in parallel. The scope of this project was impacted by Section 19 of the Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Budget (SB 160) which directed the Judicial Branch CIO to engage all criminal justice partners in the evaluation of every criminal justice system in the State. As this evaluation can largely affect the solutions that are in use for the Judicial Branch and the State, it would be premature to act on migrating the criminal systems until the outcome of the evaluation is clear. The efforts that are underway leverage the existing data, while attempting to reduce dependencies on the mainframe and make data more accessible through modern interfaces.

As a part of the Centralized, Accessible, Secure, Configurable, Agile, Digital, Evolutionary (CASCADE) initiative, the JIC is also exploring complementary technologies and services to include electronic Self Represented Litigant (SRL) services to the public, exhibit and evidence solutions, enhanced reporting services via Microsoft's Power BI, and the development and enhancement to mainframe environment user interfaces.

The CASCADE branding has remained consistent. The governance structure is utilized and strengthened via monthly Core Judicial Systems Steering Committee (CJSSC) meetings and enterprise-level decision making when needed. One by-product of the CJSSC has been the development of specialized workgroups which have assisted and supported specific process areas.

Integrated planning and implementation efforts for civil, supporting technologies, sunseting of replaced systems, and criminal process reviews are expected to yield outcomes which will be measured and communicated to both internal and external stakeholders through the life cycle of the CASCADE initiative.

e-Courtrooms

The Delaware Judicial Information Center embarked on a project to enhance courtroom technology, particularly focusing on hi-tech courtrooms capable of facilitating remote and hybrid hearings. The project commenced in May 2022 and aimed to complete 30 hi-tech courtrooms across the state by the end of November 2023.

Between May 2022 and September 2023, a total of 19 courtrooms were successfully upgraded to meet the specifications of hi-tech courtrooms bringing the total upgraded courtrooms to 27 to date. These upgraded courtrooms now feature:

- Improved audio quality with new microphones, speakers, amplifiers, and signal processing.
- Integrated video systems with monitors strategically placed at counsel tables, witness stands, podiums, judges' benches, and jury boxes.
- Low-profile monitors that do not obstruct the line of sight for courtroom participants.
- Enhanced connectivity for counsel to use laptops and other devices for visual presentations.
- Annotation functionality to mark up and capture images as part of the official record.
- Multi-angle video feeds, allowing clear views of the judge, witness, podium, and counsel tables.
- Integrated Zoom functionality, enabling the hosting and control of virtual meetings directly from the courtroom system.

The Delaware Courts continued their long-standing partnership with a company specializing in court recording. This vendor played a crucial role in evaluating the project's needs and proposing solutions that seamlessly integrated with the existing software used in over 100 courtrooms statewide. Preliminary discussions with the vendor began in September 2021, and their expertise proved invaluable in the project's success.

The project encountered several challenges along the way, leading to adjustments in the implementation process:

- Initial delays were attributed to supply chain issues, as courtrooms couldn't be upgraded until all components were available. Fortunately, most supply chain issues have now been resolved, ensuring a steady supply of equipment for future installations.
- Poorly executed sub-contracted work caused delays in the cabling of courtrooms. This issue was promptly identified and addressed by replacing the sub-contractor. The new sub-contractor improved efficiency, completing installations within 10 business days and allowing work to proceed in multiple courtrooms simultaneously.

With the improved efficiency in place, the project team expects to complete the final courtroom upgrades ahead of schedule. By embracing innovative solutions, the project is on track to meet its goal of enhancing courtroom technology and accommodating remote and hybrid hearings, contributing to a more resilient and technologically advanced judicial system in Delaware.

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 for several years. Support from the General Assembly and the Governor has resulted in significant and continuing progress during the past 2 years.

Criminal justice fee reform has made great strides in the past couple of years, but the work continues. As reported in previous 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 have been 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.

HB 244 with House Amendment 2 of the 151st General Assembly was signed by the Governor on October 3, 2022, which sought to help those struggling with the negative impacts of criminal justice fees. The bill eliminated 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. It also eliminated the suspension of licenses for non-payment of criminal justice fines and fees. Additionally, HB 244 created a study group to review best practices and continue reform efforts.

The Criminal Legal System Imposed Debt Study Group ("Study Group") was established by House Bill 244. The Study Group is charged with submitting a report to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of

Representatives, the Director and Librarian of the Division of the Research of Legislative Council, and the Delaware Public Archives on September 1, 2023. The report shall provide 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.” The Study Group is also tasked with reviewing criminal justice reporting data, estimating fiscal impact of proposals, reviewing alternative sanctions when a defendant is unable to pay, and exploring ways to improve and expand opportunities for community service or self-improvement programs to count toward the payment of criminal justice obligations. The date of the report submission is slightly delayed, but forthcoming.

The Study Group created 9 work groups to research various fee reform issues to recommend potential solutions. The work groups were organized as follows:

- The Fee Elimination Work Group researched the fiscal impact on agencies if fees are removed, and the priority schedule for elimination.
- The Ability to Pay Work Group reviewed ability to pay models from other jurisdictions and made recommendations on an ability to pay framework.
- The Public Information and Communication Work Group researched the current systems for informing criminal legal system users of their court debt and recommended solutions to any problems with communications.
- The Old Debt Discharge Work Group researched the status of old debt within the criminal legal system and proposed solutions to observed problems.
- The Costs of Incarceration Work Group reported on the various costs imposed on people incarcerated and how it may hinder reentry, and proposed solutions.
- The Alternative Sanctions Work Group analyzed existing sanctions and explored additional alternatives.
- The Restitution Work Group was charged with reviewing ways to better collect restitution.
- The Data and Statistics Work Group was created to serve the data needs of the other Work Groups.

Finally, a Report Drafting Work Group was responsible for consolidating the work groups’ drafts into a final report. Each of these work groups developed reports that identified issues and made recommendations to improve the situation of those in the criminal justice system so that they are not burdened with criminal justice debt while trying to gain stable employment, housing, and other critical needs.

The report will likely be available by November 2023; there will many recommendations coming out of the report, including the elimination of additional fees, implementing ability to pay, writing off aged debt, as well as other process improvements.

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.

Treasury Management

Implement the Digital Government Payment System

With the modernization of general and local banking services, the Office of the State Treasurer (OST) has shifted its focus to digital government services in partnership with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) and the Department of State’s (DOS) Government Information Center (GIC). While online payment (merchant) services were historically decentralized, OST launched a strategic endeavor to consolidate the payment infrastructure of more than 160 State merchants, including their security components for credit, debit, and Automated Clearing House (ACH) transactions occurring between the State of Delaware’s residents, visitors, and State agencies.

In October 2020, the Office of the State Treasurer launched a Request for Proposals (RFP) for comprehensive digital government services in partnership with DTI and DOS. The components put out to bid for digital government services included payment gateway products, payment processing services, reconciliation software, and a single sign-on interface in which residents and visitors will transact and interact with the State online. The State recommended that the payment and reconciliation components be awarded to a new vendor, while the provider for a single sign-on portal was awarded to a second vendor. This combined set of services will yield efficiencies in identity management, customer service, transaction processing, data security, and overall user experience for Delaware’s residents and visitors. Branded as Go DE, these

integrated systems will serve as a single touchpoint with a Go DE Payment Engine as part of the first release of this new system. Through the Go DE portal, users will be able to make trusted web payments in a manner that is secure, responsive, and accessible. This aligns with the State of Delaware's shift from agency-centered managed services to an enterprise-wide, people-centered Digital Government services platform that will evolve over the next few years. The Go DE roadmap includes support for both the State's legacy payment engine (i.e., Govolution) and an authenticated, customer experience by allowing residents and visitors to register by creating a secure MyDelaware identity. When utilizing their trusted identities, users will be able to monitor and view all their transactions enabled by Go DE.

Given the nature of conducting successive resource-intensive, statewide projects, OST continues to adapt its internal resources to meet outcomes. OST shall ensure all State agencies, customers and members of the public receive the appropriate level of operational support, while seamlessly transitioning banking and digital government services to new providers with the engagement of its agency partners.

Consolidate Local Banking

The local banking Request for Proposals was issued in March of 2019, and in August 2019, the State's Cash Management Policy Board approved a primary award for over-the-counter collections to M&T Bank, along with complementary awards to Citizens and TD Banks. In 2020, contracts were awarded to all three banks and the impacted agencies were surveyed by the Office of the State Treasurer (OST) to develop an account migration plan. Overall, this project streamlines brick and mortar banking services from 14 banks to 3 banks, simplifying reconciliation and account management processes.

In conjunction with the local banking project, the OST team has actively been working to transition all State agencies and local school districts into a contracted bank for their over-the-counter local banking needs. To ensure successful transition, the OST team randomly selected State agencies and local school districts from each county as a pilot group to test the banking transition. Although there were a few challenges discovered, the OST team worked with the local banking partners to successfully transition the pilot group.

Currently, OST is working with the remaining State agencies and local school districts to create a consolidated effort between their local and general banking and over-the-counter transactions. Agencies have expressed a business need to keep old accounts open longer than expected for payments to clear, accounts to be reconciled, or time to improve technology within their new accounts. The project is currently extended to be completed by December 31, 2024, to allow all new accounts to be successfully established and legacy accounts to be closed.

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

By analyzing agencies' current business processes involving how payments are handled, OST's merchant services team is making recommendations for improvements that can reduce an agency's IT and business vulnerabilities when handling credit card payments. OST's primary strategy for ensuring all agency merchants are PCI DSS compliant is to reduce the scope of 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.

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), which State agencies utilize to evaluate and remediate their payment environment(s). The scheduling of SAQ workshops with agencies will commence in November 2023. It is important to note that PCI DSS is recurring yearly mandate. Among the achievements noted to date, are the establishment of SAQ workshops which 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 is December 31, 2024.

Modernize Check-Printing Services

OST currently prints approximately 11,000 checks per month for vendors, payroll systems, and the Department of Services for Children Youth and their Families (DSCYF) using a 20 year-old on-premises application. The primary goals of modernizing OST's check printing solution are to: improve workflow and increase efficiency by reducing the number of checks printed in-house, increase customer support by providing alternate check-printing services, and establish a disaster recovery backup system. OST is migrating check-printing services with a SaaS solution, with implementation to occur in February 2024.

Upgrade Bank Account Reconciliation and Account Fee Analysis Software

OST is modernizing its processes through updated bank account reconciliation software. OST currently uses an on-premises hosted application that has reached end of life and is no longer receiving updates from the vendor. As part of the Digital Government RFP, a vendor was awarded the contract for a SaaS reconciliation solution. In addition to the opportunity for modernization of the technology, there are business processes that are currently handled manually, outside of the existing system, that will be improved and streamlined by automation through this more robust platform. Implementation began in spring of 2023. The new solution is expected to be fully implemented by December 2024.

In addition, OST is updating its processes through modernized bank fee analysis software as the current on-premises hosted application has reached end of life. As part of the Digital Government RFP, the same vendor was awarded the contract for a SaaS bank account fee analysis solution. OST is replacing its legacy solution to reduce manual effort and time, streamline workflows, and promote faster and more frequent analysis and recovery of banking fees. Implementation of the new software is expected to be completed in December 2023.

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 allowing them to 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 entire client experience within state service centers through concerted 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 in 2022 and 2023 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 Division of Social Services (DSS) and Division of State Service Centers (DSSC) training units.
7. Modernize computer and telephone hardware at each service center.
8. Integrate Delaware Learning Center training materials into training of 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 will be realized in the near future.

Optimize Facility Operations through Business Process Modeling

There are staff members in DHSS Facility Operations that work on various maintenance and construction processes. It was believed that the distribution of assignments were sub-optimal. It was recommended that an analysis of the work assignments would reveal opportunities for increased optimization of staff by the reassignment of tasks.

Business process management methods were applied across the responsibilities of 5 staff members in Facility Operations that were assessed to have an imbalance in their work assignments.

The scope of this project included:

1. Mapping current state assignments to each staff member.
2. Documenting some of the key work processes using ARIS software.
3. Identifying how the current state work assignments might be improved.
4. Implementing changes to the work assignments.

As a result of the project, processes were mapped, and the work was optimally reassigned resulting in greater efficiency and effectiveness of the Facility Operations unit.

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

The DHSS dashboard report collects metrics from all the department's 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, and facility maintenance requests fulfilled. In addition, key program measures that are reported over the prior year include 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, to name just a few. The DHSS Secretary and every division director receives the monthly report.

The project originated with the desire to employ data-driven decision making using key operational metrics. The scope of the project included:

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 division directors.

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.

Save Over \$1,000,000 by Identifying and Eliminating Underutilized Blocked Vehicles

The DHSS fleet optimization project identifies underutilized blocked vehicles, calculates their expense, and persuades leaders to change their cost designation from blocked to pooled 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 pooled 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 pooled 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 to 338. This translates into cost savings exceeding \$1,000,000 to the State over the 7 year lease period for a fleet vehicle. This is significant because money saved can be reinvested in delivering more services to Delawareans in need. In addition, as nominated by DHSS Secretary Molly Magarik, Mr. Brian Calio was a recipient of the 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award for his leadership surrounding this initiative.

Vaccinate Vulnerable Citizens

Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) efforts, the Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) established a Homebound Vaccine Access Hotline and Vaccine Booster for Homebound Adults program. The DHSS Homebound Vaccination Program provided Delawareans access to COVID-19 vaccines in their home. Homebound individuals are in general among the state's most vulnerable populations and often medically fragile. DSAAPD's contracted 24-hour service, provided the hotline, operators, and scheduling for Delawareans who were unable to leave their homes to access a COVID-19 vaccine. Partnerships with independent pharmacies, pharmacist contractors, and nursing students, and their supervisors provided the vaccines in-home. The program served 1,050 households, primarily by DSAAPD's contracted pharmacists. Of the 1,401 individuals who called the Vaccine Hotline, 347 individuals received general assistance or were referred to DSAAPD for additional supports. In addition to the COVID-19 vaccine, many individuals, including caregivers in the home, also received the flu vaccine. The program ended in June 2023.

The Homebound Vaccine Access program allowed for vulnerable adults and their caregivers the ability to receive preventative care for a global virus with ease, making the program a success. Delaware, through DSAAPD, was able to support the public health response initiative in an impactful way for medically vulnerable adults.

One of the projects associated with this funding was a commissioned research study through the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies about COVID-19 vaccine access and hesitancy among people with disabilities, those who are aging, and their caregivers. DSAAPD was interested in understanding facilitators and barriers to accessing the COVID-19 vaccine and reasons for hesitancy to inform future vaccine policies and initiatives. The research study gleaned quality information about vaccine hesitancy that can be applied to any vaccination beyond the COVID-19 boosters. One finding is that the most relevant way for someone to be convinced to receive a vaccine is through their trusted primary care physician.

Study recommendations include:

- Create more drive-through vaccination sites.
- Increase vaccination services that come to a person's home to give them the shots.
- Provide affordable and accessible transportation to vaccination sites.
- Encourage households and relatives to get vaccinated together.

- Use a variety of media, such as social media, television commercials, texts, and phone calls to dispel vaccine myths and to inform users about locations for shots.
- Make the vaccines readily available at primary care physicians' offices and other doctors' offices.
- Develop additional ways for appointments to be made via phone calls.

A website was developed to help increase health care access for people with disabilities and was informed by the study.

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 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 also being provided from the most appropriate funding source.

The division launched implementation of cost rebalancing efforts in Fiscal Year 2024 and is implementing an evidence-based assessment tool to better allocate limited resources to those that need it most. This tool will greatly improve inter-rater reliability and is internationally known as the gold standard for person centered care planning. Additionally, the division has partnered with the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) to request support in Home and Community Based Funding (HCBS) to provide temporary assistance in Medicaid application for the nearly 1/3 of Medicaid eligible participants receiving services through DSAAPD. This is a major cost savings effort, because all the funds used for DSAAPD participants are funded with federal Older Americans Act or State General Funds. The savings will allow for additional older adults to be served through the division. Thirty percent of DSAAPD's current recipients of services and potential waitlist participants 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 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 federal Older Americans Act dollars, enable the division to serve more people, potentially eliminate wait lists, and respond to emergency needs promptly. The plan is being carried out with technical assistance from multiple grants and expert advice regarding national best practices.

Person-Centered Strategic Action Plan for DSAAPD's Long-Term Services & Supports

The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) has taken deliberate steps to prioritize the department's recognition and response to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the provision of long-term services and supports. These efforts are a progression of a multi-year, strategic effort to strengthen and implement person-centered approaches as the foundation of all services provided to older adults and adults with physical disabilities in the State of Delaware.

A top priority for DSAAPD has been to shift away from a medical model that authorizes what is deemed necessary for the person toward a person-centered model that ensures people choose what is most important to them to live their best lives. This person-centered model focuses on asking participants what they want, who they want to provide their care, and how they want their care delivered. Through this initiative, the division has begun to streamline and modernize its assessment process to one that is more person-centered, equitable, and cost-efficient.

Additionally, through a technical assistance grant from the National Center for Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS), DSAAPD has begun to achieve these goals. These efforts have yielded a community engagement plan, informed by trusted community partners and a facilitated asset map. From these new relationships, DSAAPD has been able to open new doors to a larger aging services network and begun to build programming for underserved populations in Delaware. In September 2023, DSAAPD launched a mini-grant pilot program for senior centers to pilot healthy aging programming that will most benefit and appeal to their communities. The effort is intended to empower local communities, and to solicit conversation and feedback about how DSAAPD can better support those communities to age with health and vitality in the communities of their choice.

Implement Home & Community Based Assessment

The Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) is currently using homegrown assessment tools in the community to determine the amount of personal care, attendant services, other in-home services for adult Delawareans with a physical disability, and/or those who are age 60 and older. The current tools are not person-centered, yield inconsistent results, and favor subjective information that can lead to inconsistent services, hour allotment, and increased waiting lists. These tools were developed when DSAAPD operated a Medicaid waiver and do not reflect current operations, where a waiver is no longer utilized. Thus, these tools focus on medical diagnoses versus a strengths-based, participant-directed assessment process.

DSAAPD staff and participants will benefit from the objective evidence-based tool, using DSAAPD's existing structure and technology. Anticipated results include consistent service hours, individuals being served with the appropriate funding source, improved efficiency within the division for all services, and a shorter waitlist for services with appropriate prioritization of needs.

The outcomes include:

1. Decrease in number of individuals waiting for services in the community, including those on waiting lists, those who enter a facility or expire prior to service approval.
2. Increase in number of people referred to and approved for Long Term Care Medicaid.
3. Increase in engagement with Delawareans for "options counseling" that lead to higher utilization of community resources and support.
4. Increase in individuals aging in the place of their choosing.

Partner for Healthy Aging through Senior Centers

The mission of the Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) 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.

Delaware is outpacing the nation in its growing aging population. In addition to financial and legal barriers that often accompany aging, many older Delawareans also struggle to combat isolation and obtain access to support services. DSAAPD hopes that community partnerships will promote the mission and services, while also highlighting local senior centers that provide aging Delawareans in high-needs areas with the tools and options they need to successfully age in place.

According to Delaware's Aging in Place Working Group, aging in place has been linked to better health outcomes for older adults and has the potential to reduce the cost of care because of a lower demand for state sponsored institutional care like nursing homes and assisted-living facilities. DSAAPD hopes to work together with local senior centers to serve succeeding generations of diverse populations whose needs may require unique strategies and resources. This partnership will focus on innovative approaches to advocacy, education, partnering, service delivery, and technology.

Together with these community partners, DSAAPD will promote, support, and engage with existing programming to promote services that allow Delawareans to successfully age in place. From recreational activities like brunch bingo and country line dancing, to fitness programs like chair yoga, low impact cardio, Zumba, and nutrition offerings like congregate and home delivered meals, DSAAPD seeks an array of program options that could be utilized to serve its population and can benefit from its support.

Revamp DSAAPD Training with Project Reform Alignment & Intrinsic Staff Engagement

As of January of 2022, DSAAPD Executive Leadership encouraged the full implementation and use of the Delaware Learning Center (DLC) as the primary platform for all division trainings statewide, with the primary focus being the development and implementation of online and instructor led trainings, as identified, and requested by operational staff.

With the needs of the facility and community teams directing the creation of trainings, the documentation and training results shifted dramatically.

There was a new Electronic Medical Record (EMR) implemented at Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI) and every employee at the facility had to go through additional trainings this year to provide access to the system. The new system also necessitated supplementary training to ensure employees had the knowledge, skills, and ability to update, change, and enter data for each resident they encounter. This training was needed for reporting, fiscal, and quality assurance as well as for all staff including, but not limited to, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), nursing, food service, training, systems and neurobehavioral supports for the development, care, and monitoring of the residents' wellbeing.

The data from the DLC in calendar year (CY) 2022 reflected that there were 1,612 trainings for which staff registered for and of these trainings, 1,491 were completed by staff. This equates to a 92 percent completion rate of trainings offered by DSAAPD in CY 2022. Additionally, for the specific instructor led training enrollment, there were 218 classes scheduled and 1,823 individuals trained across those sessions.

The data for the last 9 months of CY 2023 is already four times greater than CY 2022. The data from DLC in CY 2023 reflects that there have been 6,216 trainings taken by staff to date this year, and of these trainings, 6,094 were completed by staff. This equates to a 98 percent completion rate of trainings offered so far this year. This tremendous increase in trainings was due in part to the creation and implementation of online trainings for staff to complete in their available time in the community and in DSAAPD's Skilled Nursing Facility. Additionally, DSAAPD required mandatory trainings for all facility staff, as well as initiating short burst trainings while staff were on their units at DHCI. This data was captured in the DLC, contributing to the increased number of trainings, as well as ensuring complete and accurate tracking of trainings for licensure, state, and federal regulations to meet facility and staff certification requirements. Additionally, for the specific instructor led training enrollment, there were 202 classes scheduled (16 less than CY 2022) and 2,222 individuals (399 more people) were trained across those sessions as compared to the prior CY 2022.

This data shows that when collaboration occurs across the division to focus the trainings in areas with the greatest need and desire, participation increases. DSAAPD enhanced interdepartmental partnerships and commitment to utilize training events, focused on quality assurance, improvement, and operational needs, and integrated with the system of record which is Point Click Care for the facility and WellSky for the community. The key performance indicator for this initiative was to increase the percentage of individuals trained in the community and facility to meet professional, state, and federal compliance. Documenting and tracking of the trainings for all staff statewide is another key performance indicator. This was historically completed on paper, and now is automated. This resulted in DSAAPD having an established monitoring system to accurately capture, track, and assess the effectiveness of the training. Additionally, with the changes and updates made to the style of training, DHCI continued to rate as a 5-Star facility, adopting a more efficient process to provide documentation to auditors confirming training and certification of staff as needed. Additionally, there was a decrease in referrals for placement at DHCI from the community from ~6-8 per month to ~1-2 per month when comparing average intakes from Fiscal Year 2022 to Fiscal Year 2023. These outcomes support the division's effort to encourage healthy aging in the community, as well as safety in a facility when community living is no longer possible.

DSAAPD intends to build on this foundation to ensure robust training remains available to meet the needs of the division.

Utilize Certified Peer Recovery Specialists in Long Term Care

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. At Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI), the state-run LTC facility, 70 percent of residents have a mental health condition secondary to their physical health conditions, and 35 percent have a history of substance use. DSAAPD has partnered with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) to bring a source of specialized support through Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (PRS) services. Certified PRSs are trained to use their own lived experience to help individuals build a sense of self-determination to take ownership of their goals and empower them through direct support and advocacy. Peers achieve this through relationship-building as the primary mode of intervention, via individual and group support. DHCI estimates that approximately 35 percent of residents with a serious mental health condition and 58 percent with a substance use history will benefit at a clinically significant level from having a peer match.

The Peer Services Liaison Program is actively being developed. This involves heavy reliance on a strong, cross-division project management approach. PRSs have been embedded in other (non-LTC) settings and the outcomes show that active

change management efforts are key to the acceptance and appropriate utilization of PRS specialized skills. This is a leading-edge program, with Delaware being one of the first states to formally utilize PRS services in LTC. Financially, the program development will be funded through grants, which involve comprehensive data collection efforts.

Several outcome measures will be monitored both by the project team and the interdisciplinary treatment team, as DSAAPD anticipates improved clinical outcomes through specialized treatment. DSAAPD also expects quantifiable outcomes including reduced costs and enhanced customer outcomes.

Ensure Therapeutic Programming in Secure Dementia Care

Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill (DHCI), the State-run long-term care (LTC) facility, has a secure dementia unit where individuals with advanced dementia can safely live as independently as possible. Individuals with dementia who need 24/7 oversight and support are more likely to end up in a secure dementia unit, where exit doors are locked, and individuals must have a staff member accompany them off the unit. This is due to safety risks of the individual getting confused, lost, or harmed by trying to navigate an environment that is not designed around their unique needs. At DHCI, 54 percent of residents have some form of dementia. Of those individuals with dementia, 40 percent live on the secure dementia unit. To ensure that these individuals have their psychosocial needs met, DHCI formed a Quality Assurance Performance Improvement Process Improvement Project (PIP) team.

The PIP team is comprised of individuals from 4 clinical departments who are collaborating to achieve three objectives: first, to implement a comprehensive therapeutic activity plan which fulfills regulatory requirements and best practices; second, to propose a learning plan which emphasizes experiential learning, delivered in a feasible, meaningful way; and third, to propose a staffing approach designed around the sensitive needs of the secure unit.

The project is well under-way. A set of training tools have been chosen and the proposed learning plan has been approved by nursing administration. Staffing approach changes are being reviewed to ensure consistency with State and union guidelines. A dementia-specific addition to performance plans has also been developed and accepted. Participants, volunteers, and specialized community programs are being recruited to design the activity program. A therapeutic space has been created with features which are sensitive to the needs of those with advanced dementia.

This project will be completed within the next 3-6 months; however, the resulting changes will take 1-2 years to fully implement. During that time, there are plans to gather performance data using a standardized measurement tool designed to assess interpersonal skills associated with dementia care as well as practical skills. The performance measurement tool is designed to accompany the chosen learning plan. Outcomes will be measured based on this performance data, as well as measures of quality of life of the residents.

Establish the Connect Community at DHCI

The effects of loneliness on physical health can be serious. Individuals who are lonely, especially those over age 65, 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, 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.

Approximately 25 departments are housed or embedded within the DHCI structure. Of these, 7 have a dedicated responsibility to direct patient care. Other departments, such as Finance or Medical Records, may encounter residents but do not have primary direct care responsibilities. Hospital administration recognized the potential to tap into resources in various departments to prevent potential loneliness. All departments were invited and supported in offering the opportunity for staff to spend one-on-one time with residents for 1-2 hours per week. A project team was convened to develop and initiate the program, which is called the Connect Community. Using a “scrum-style” project management approach, the team was able to launch the initiative with less than 4 weeks lead time to create a structure and present a pilot. Upon initiating the pilot, representatives from 10 departments (over 50 percent of non-clinical departments) voluntarily chose to participate. Participation was capped at 10 staff for the pilot. Currently this phase of the project is in the first week of a 4-week sprint to trial the process which was developed. At the completion of the pilot, feedback will be solicited, and outcomes will be analyzed to refine the program before inviting more participants.

The project team has set a strong foundation to establish this new approach, addressing this component of resident well-being. Social relationships promote improved health outcomes, which potentially translates to health care cost savings. DHCI plans to gather administrative and clinical data to measure outcomes; and to include both subjective report and physiological measures to strengthen the ability to accurately assess the effectiveness of the program.

Align DSAAPD Continuous Quality Improvement Initiatives

The Division of Services for Aging & Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) recognizes the importance of meaningful data collection and usage. Numerous internal and external processes and stakeholders need to be kept informed on many division activities. These include federal reporting requirements, grant reporting, performance measurement, utilization metrics, caseload distribution, budgeting, root cause analyses, and other data-related obligations.

In 2020, the division recognized the need for an organized approach to the use of data and systems. The division strives to carry out its values of using measurable outcomes and data-driven decision making to maximize performance and compliance in all domains. In response to these needs and values, a data team was established. This team has consistently expanded over the years and recently adopted a new organizational structure that allows for improved functionality by creating the Continuous Quality Improvement Section, comprised of the Data Team and the Information Systems Unit.

This expansion and restructuring in 2023 has allowed the team to ensure that the division is able to serve as many customers as possible while maximizing resource usage and minimizing loss and error.

Department of Agriculture (DDA)

Develop the 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, and 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 is working with the Department of State, Division of Small Business to expand an existing farm lending program, the Delaware Rural Irrigation Program (DRIP). DRIP provides partial loans to install irrigation systems using a dedicated revolving fund but has not funded new loans recently. 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 will also provide funds to launch this program.

Next steps for this initiative include drafting program guidelines, creating a review process for loan applications, and mapping out how the 2 departments will interact to execute the program.

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. The Digital DNREC team is working closely with the Digital Government project team as an early adopter for the new *Go DE* portal. Additionally, the Digital DNREC team is investigating the ability to incorporate county filing fees within ePermitting to reduce the steps customers are required to take to complete transactions with a county reporting requirement. The department is evaluating the most effective way to collect these payments while minimizing costs to customers.

Up to this point in 2023, permits and licenses added include: Water Licensing, Non-Hazardous Transporters, and Open Burn Submissions. The addition of more permits is anticipated for the final months of 2023 including Shoreline and Waterways

construction permits, and Air Quality permits such as Gasoline Delivery Vehicle, Auto Body, Asbestos, and Dry Cleaner permits. The Digital DNREC project began in 2018 and the primary phase is expected to be completed by the end of calendar year 2024. However, some divisions are planning a second phase to add options that were not part of the initial project's scope of work.

Since Digital DNREC was first introduced over 1 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 this assistance by 75 percent. Further, DNREC's process review and optimization that proceeds digitizing the functionality has reduced duplication of staff's efforts by 60 percent and improved the efficiency and predictability of services.

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

The Division of Waste and Hazardous Substances, Emergency Response and Strategic Services Section, State EPCRA program regulations require hazardous chemical inventories be sent to the Delaware State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) and the local fire departments. This reporting is done through an online system, the Tier II Manager (Tier II database) managed by DNREC. The EPCRA program has ~2,650 small to large scale facilities handling about 14,000 chemical entries in the Tier II database. Each facility is required to update and report hazardous chemicals annually by March 1st. There were several facilities with delayed reports or missing status' which prompted the section to work on this project. The project goal is to improve the quality of the EPCRA program by providing planners and responders with hazardous chemical reports in the Tier II database with 99 percent compliance in reporting and accuracy by March 1st each year.

The EPCRA program exercised strategic efforts to improve the timely submission of hazardous chemical inventory reports by facilities. Training workshops with surveys and concurrent report review processes were 2 of the efforts deployed. In January 2023, the EPCRA team provided 4 training workshops to facility personnel on reporting procedures. Over 200 facility representatives attended the workshops. Workshop surveys were conducted to gain insight into Tier II reporting from users throughout the state, and to improve the workshop in the future. More than 80 percent of participants felt more prepared for EPCRA reporting after the workshops. The program plans to restructure 2024 training workshops based on the survey results received.

The program is also working closely with the LEPCs to review the status of unreported facilities. The program initiated a simultaneous report review process to identify any errors in submitted reports and correct them in a timely manner. In previous years, reports were reviewed after the due date without any timeframe, taking weeks to months to review. This year, reports were reviewed immediately, within 1-2 weeks after their submission. This has improved the accuracy of hazardous chemical reporting. Additionally, the program is working closely with Hazconnect, the provider of the Tier II database, to improve features to manage the data efficiently.

In 2023, the program received roughly a 5 percent increase in EPCRA reports received by the due date of March 1st and a 9 percent increase by May. Although there are currently 2,650 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, lack of an internal training program, and LEPC interaction with such facilities. This continuous process improvement initiative is expected to continue through 2024.

Enhance the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program through Third Party Administration

The Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy (CCE) Climate and Sustainability section has been managing the Clean Vehicle Rebate Program since 2015, issuing over 5,000 rebates for electric vehicles and charging stations to date. The program's popularity has steadily grown each year as more people buy/lease electric vehicles resulting in a 65 percent increase in the number of rebate applications from 2022 to 2023.

To efficiently handle the growing demand, the division has enlisted the services of a trusted third-party vendor, the Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE), to administer the program. This strategic partnership with CSE enables the redirection of approximately 30 percent of staff time allowing them to focus efforts on larger planning initiatives while opening opportunities to expand the program's offerings to a wider audience.

In addition to developing an online application portal and processing rebate applications, CSE plays a pivotal role in shaping the division's rebate program. Its responsibilities include offering design recommendations for future funding rounds, conducting outreach to dealerships, and providing top-notch customer service to rebate applicants. CSE has mechanisms in

place to expand the program's reach by incorporating used vehicle incentives in future funding rounds and income verification capabilities for potential income-based incentives programs.

CSE was selected through a competitive request for proposals process due to their extensive experience in managing state-run rebate programs. Before CSE, the application process was cumbersome, requiring applicants to fill out forms, attach documentation, and email them—a process prone to errors and delays. The introduction of an online portal has transformed the experience for applicants, allowing them to submit their information effortlessly and ensuring accurate submission. Moreover, applicants now receive their rebate payments much faster, thanks to streamlined processes. Applicant rebates are now being processed within 2-4 weeks versus the prior turnaround time of 8-10 weeks. Dedicated CSE program staff remain on hand to promptly address any inquiries or concerns.

Improve Stakeholder Communication in Remediation

To protect human health and the environment, the Remediation Section of Waste leads the investigation and clean-up of properties contaminated with hazardous substances and facilitates redevelopment of these sites. The section is currently working on streamlining the internal process to respond to external inquiries from stakeholders related to their programs. The section received complaints from staff regarding lack of consistency, duplication of effort and the lack of a well-defined process, as well as complaints from external stakeholders on the timing of the responses.

The project is intended to implement an internal communication plan for the remediation section 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 4 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 2 weeks depending on the degree of management involvement required. Complex inquiries typically take less than 7 days but sometimes can take up to 30 days.

The project is currently in phase 2. By phase 4, the section anticipates having a consistent turnaround time for responding to external stakeholder inquiries, within 24 hours when feasible, but not longer than 7 days, which includes the elimination of non-value added duplicative work resulting in a 50 percent reduction of staff time. The section is estimating to complete the project by the first quarter of 2024.

Manage Air Quality Source Testing Reports with DNREctory

The Division of Air Quality (DAQ) oversees emission source testing at facilities throughout the state. This testing confirms that permitted facilities are operating in compliance with their permits and the applicable regulations. The tests consist of confirmation that emission control equipment is functioning properly by confirming parameters like flow rate or direct measurements and include sampling of applicable pollutants as well. Staff from DAQ approve of testing protocol prior to the test, attend the testing event, review all data to ensure the validity of the test, and ultimately determine compliance status.

The recordkeeping for these activities is voluminous. Utilizing the DNREC's digital recordkeeping system (DNREctory) presented unique challenges for this program. Initially, DAQ staff made plans to deconstruct the large source test reports and scan them so they could be entered into the DNREctory system. At present, DNREC is required by EPA to maintain paper records of these test reports, however our internal requirement is that the report be available on DNREctory. The reports range in size from ~50 to ~250 pages with an average report consisting of ~200 pages. Many reports are submitted with comb binding, which makes scanning difficult because the document must be disassembled, and the documents can be easily jammed in a scanner. Larger documents can be in a 3-ring binder. Many documents also have section dividers which must be removed for scanning.

Given the complexity and labor involved with these documents, along with the likelihood that the facilities have the report digitally in their records, DAQ pursued a path to receive the reports in hard copy for review and digitally for DNREctory storage. DAQ established an email address for these files and found out that many were too large to be submitted. DAQ then worked with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) to allow large files to be received in this inbox. The files are now received digitally and indexed in DNREctory so that they can be found in the system. This is

accomplished without added staff effort from DNREC or the facilities. With approximately 80 reports submitted per year and their range in size and complexity, we estimate that this saves an estimated 30 hours of staff time per year.

Department of State (DOS)

Delaware Communities of Excellence (DECOE) – Year 3

Literacy is the ability to functionally read, write, and speak in English, as well as compute and solve problems, on the job, interpersonally, and in society. Forty two percent of Delaware children read below grade level, and 20 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 and government subsidies.

Delaware Communities of Excellence's (DECOE) goal is *equity through literacy*. DECOE is building a collaborative of State agencies and non-profits to produce a statewide literacy ecosystem. This ecosystem will provide literacy services that are easier to access, equitable, cost effective, and create measurable, impactful results to improve literacy in Delaware across the lifespan of citizens. The DECOE employs a collective impact approach within the Baldrige Framework, because large-scale social change requires broad, cross-sector coordination. DECOE is committed to improving literacy levels for all through a 2-pronged approach:

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

DECOE collaboratively builds systems and capacity by:

- Creating equitable literacy systems with the goal of 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 DECOE Advisory Council is chaired by the Division of Libraries and Literacy Delaware and was rebranded the Delaware Literacy Alliance in the spring of 2023. Members involved in this initiative to date include:

- ChristianaCare
- Delaware Association of Nonprofit Agencies
- Delaware Community Foundation
- Delaware Department of Education
- Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control
- Delaware Readiness Teams
- Delaware State University
- Energize Delaware
- First State Educate
- Highmark
- International Literacy Association

- Laffey McHugh Foundation
- Philanthropy Delaware
- Read Aloud Delaware
- Reading Assist
- United Way of Delaware
- University of Delaware

Examples of recent solutions with statewide impact include:

- A program for birth to 5 years old:
 - Delaware Libraries provide free books to every Delaware child under 5 through Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. As of September 2023, almost 30,000 children are enrolled and more than 12,000 have graduated.
- Programs for kindergarten through grade 12:
 - Free year-round access to eBooks for children is available jointly through Delaware Libraries’ Overdrive and DE DOE Sora student mobile device app.
 - School libraries are now joining the Delaware Library Catalog and consortium with Division of Libraries’ technology and infrastructure support to complete the “last mile” to ensure every child has equitable access even if they are not taken to their public library.
- A program for adults:
 - The Northstar Digital Literacy program provides free digital literacy training to all Delaware residents with assistance from Literacy Delaware.

The 2023 launch of the Delaware Literacy Alliance was an important milestone in the systematic development of the literacy ecosystem. Its report, *The State of Literacy in Delaware*, and accompanying strategic plan were released in late September 2023. The Alliance continues to grow in members and impact; however, all participants recognize that this is a multi-year effort to improve the lives of Delawareans.

Building Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Infrastructure in Delaware Public Libraries

Checking books in and out and performing inventories at Delaware’s libraries are time and resource intensive activities. In 2022 and 2023, a library vendor placed radio frequency identification (RFID) tags in library collections and installed scanning and self-check-out equipment. The project’s goal was to create a system where public library’ collections items are RFID-tagged, staff are trained and effectively using the scanning equipment, and self-checkout is available to the public. These efforts are expected to reduce the time staff use to check items in and perform inventories, as well as for staff and the public 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 with inquiries, instructing the public through programs and community outreach, and will increase overall productivity.

Recent results include staff and patrons adopting the new circulation and inventory processes. For example, in Fiscal Year 2023 at the Dover Public Library, patrons used the new self-checkout option 13 percent of the time. This meant that staff were able to focus on other priority activities, along with their regular circulation duties. Anecdotally, many patrons seem impressed by the speed of the new service. As school libraries join the Delaware Library Consortium and catalog these libraries will also adopt the new technologies.

School Libraries Join the Delaware Library Catalog and Consortium

School age children need access to current books and other materials to support literacy and learning. School Libraries struggle to keep their collections up to date and relevant. Starting in 2016, Colonial School District participated in a successful pilot project with the Division of Libraries to analyze their school libraries’ collection and processes and install new radio frequency identification (RFID) and self-check technologies. As a result, the average publication year of materials in their collections has improved from being predominantly based in 1994 to 2018 through the district’s significant

investments, making their libraries important learning hubs where students want to be. This project addresses one of the recommendations from 2016 Delaware School Libraries Master Plan.

Fiscal Year 2023 funding received by the Division of Libraries enables school districts to join the catalog and Consortium with no upfront costs and a great deal of support and training to adapt their processes. Participating and planned schools as of October 1, 2023, include:

- Pilot and previously enrolled schools: Sussex Technical High School, Sussex Academy, Salesianum High School, Thomas Edison Charter School, and Las Americas ASPIRA Academy.
- Cohort 1 (September 2022 – January 2023): Sussex Central High School, Woodbridge High School, and St. Georges Technical High School.
- Cohort 2 (February 2023 – June 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 (June 2023 – January 2024): Academia Antonia Alonso, Dover Middle School Campus, and Dover High School.
- Cohort 4 (February 2024 – June 2024): All Capital School District elementary schools.
- Additional cohorts will be determined as discussions continue with interested schools and districts.

The Division of Libraries has been 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, 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 courier system if the school desires to participate.

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

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

Implement Continuous Quality Improvement through Administrative Case Review

The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families implemented a new department-wide administrative case review process to support continuous quality improvement efforts. The goal of this project was to develop a process to assess the extent to which case management practices are consistent with the values and principles of a trauma-informed system of care approach to service delivery and family engagement. The comprehensive review process includes quantitative and qualitative data collection to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. Review results are shared with division and department leadership. The DSCYF Continuous Quality Improvement Collaborative is a partner in reviewing results and the information gleaned through this process and will guide improvement efforts.

Accomplishments to date:

- Developed protocol for review sampling, timeframes, and expectations, including how cases for repeat review will be identified.
- Developed a review tool that assesses case management practices and service delivery quality using indicators consistent with best practices within child and family service systems.
- Developed a reference guidebook that includes review methodology, instructions, and important considerations to ensure inter-rater reliability.

- Trained administrative case review staff in the use of the tool and completed inter-rater reliability activities.
- Conducted a pilot review to establish baseline data and use lessons learned to modify the tool or process as needed.
- Completed 2 quarters of ongoing reviews with an updated version of the tool based on pilot results and provided results to leadership in a summary report.

The pilot review was conducted from July through December 2022. The pilot review provided baseline data and served as an opportunity to assess the process and tool. The pilot informed process improvements and changes were made to the tool based on reviewer input and lessons learned. Aggregate results identified agency strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Review results will be shared with case managers and their teams to reinforce strengths and provide helpful information on individual worker and team needs related to coaching and training.

Compensate People with Lived Experience

The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families Continuous Quality Improvement Collaborative developed a structure and guidelines for compensating people with lived experience who inform system improvement efforts by sharing their perspective. In general, people with lived experience are those directly affected by social, health, public health, or other issues and the strategies that aim to address those issues. This gives them insights that can inform and improve systems, research, policies, practices, and programs. It has been difficult to engage people with lived experience in DSCYF's system assessment and improvement efforts. They are asked to volunteer their time while our team and partners are compensated for providing their professional perspective.

The hypothesis being tested is that if we compensate people with lived experience for their time spent informing system assessments and improvement efforts, it will result in increased engagement, more comprehensive understanding of the service participant experience, better solutions, and more consistent inclusion of youth and family voices.

Project accomplishments include:

- Determined mechanisms for compensation within the State requirements in consultation with fiscal services.
- Created guidelines for providing a stipend to people with lived experience, including establishment of compensation rates based on research of best practices. The guidelines were drafted using a policy template for easy transfer to policy after initial testing and finalization of the process.
- Developed instructional and informational documents to support the process.
 - Standard work instructions for event manager activities and to guide a person with lived experience through the process of registering in the eSupplier Portal (the State's vendor registration system) to receive compensation.
 - Informational materials for people with lived experience and employees.
- Added a SharePoint (intranet) page where employees can find the information they need to compensate a person with lived experience.
- Identified individuals to participate in a pilot of the process to determine if changes are needed.

Including the voice of people with lived experience provides valuable information and unique solutions. It is considered best practice and encouraged by federal oversight entities. In addition, it is necessary to truly realize our goal to be a fully trauma-informed system of care in support of Executive Order #24 and the department's strategic planning goals.

Centralize Contractor FOCUS Access & Criminal History Processes

For Our Children's Ultimate Success (FOCUS) is the central information system for DSCYF, including client and contractor, case management, placement, and transactional data. The objectives of this project included improving efficiencies of provider management oversight, implementing enhancements to support DSCYF with FOCUS security, ensuring the safety of children and families, and requiring provider compliance to contractual obligations. The scope of the project grew from centralizing contractor FOCUS access requests to include significant enhancements to tracking and enforcing the requirements for criminal history and background checks of applicable DSCYF contractors and their staff.

The DSCYF Contracts Unit acted as the linchpin for the centralization effort. The project resulted in the following achievements:

- Designed and implemented the new Provider Information & FOCUS Access form.
- Updated DSCYF Policy 123 (User Access) with the new form.
- Updated DSCYF Operating Guidelines, ensuring data quality language was also included.
- Updated DSCYF contracts by reference to updated operating guidelines.
- Ensured criminal history process is completed for all new applicable contractors and contractor staff.
- Ensured immediate notification by contractors when staff is hired or leave employment; in turn, contracts unit maintains FOCUS provider access.
- Contracts unit conducts quarterly audits of FOCUS provider access.
- Contracts unit manages and tracks all contractor FOCUS user access request forms and related paperwork.

The greatest challenge during implementation is that contractors have multiple contacts within DSCYF, such as program managers, fiscal representatives, provider liaisons, and contract administrators. DSCYF technical staff are also accustomed to accepting FOCUS access requests from a myriad of employee roles. All parties must be consistently redirected to the Contracts Unit for oversight of criminal history and background checks, FOCUS access requests, and associated paperwork.

DSCYF implemented this project quickly, which was necessary due to the potential security concern of any contractor background checks falling through the cracks. Although this new process was implemented on November 1, 2022, significant refinements to the access form and the process continued throughout the first half of 2023. The system is now working effectively.

The desired outcome of centralization has been achieved. The realized goal is 100 percent of contractor FOCUS access requests are now filtered through the DSCYF contracts unit. One measurable outcome will be minimal rejections or re-work upon submission to the FOCUS technical team. Another measurable outcome will be no missed criminal background checks for applicable contractors. This project is an example of the need to sometimes put a plan in place quickly to ensure safety and then taking the necessary time to refine and strengthen the process.

Enhance Title IV-E Funding for Foster Care

DSCYF had a low Title IV-E penetration rate for Foster Care when compared to other states (the penetration rate is a calculation of the percentage of clients who are eligible for federal IV-E funding compared to the state's total foster care population). This low rate resulted in reduced IV-E federal funding for clients, and it also reduced the IV-E administrative claim. In 2021, Ms. Tonia Muncey, a project manager within DSCYF set a professional goal to take a deep dive into Delaware's IV-E penetration rate to determine if there were any steps the department could take internally to improve and produced a comprehensive report of her findings and recommendations for DSCYF. The selection criteria were based on the projected ability to implement, as well as the anticipated return on investment of each recommendation. In 2022, a plan was implemented surrounding seven of the recommendations from the report. As a result, the IV-E Penetration Rate for Foster Care improved from 20.71 percent to 29.51 percent by the end of 2022.

As a part of this project, a significant amount of research was gathered from federal and state/agency specific data— first leveraging the Federal Technical Assistance Review submitted to DSCYF by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) due to their concerns regarding the low penetration rate. The project manager also interviewed co-workers who had a significant role in this arena, including the Social Services Senior Administrator for the Client Eligibility Unit and the Controller for DSCYF. Finally, the project manager completed online research to understand the issue on a national level, including articles and statistics from reputable organizations such as the Congressional Research Service and the Pew Charitable Trust. The project manager used a modified version of the DMAIC model for this project (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control).

The benefits are recurring, and the department monitors the penetration rate quarterly. While it's possible that it has reached the highest level of improvement and will begin to level out, the financial implications will be ongoing, with the rate tracked and kept in the improved target zone. Additionally, the penetration rate has been added to the Division of Management Support Services Director's Quarterly Performance Measures that are shared with department leadership. As nominated by DSCYF Deputy Secretary Alison McGonigal, Ms. Tonia Muncey was a recipient of the 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award for her leadership surrounding this initiative.

Department of Labor (DOL)

Modernize Core Unemployment Insurance Processes

The Department of Labor's Division of Unemployment Insurance (UI) recently launched a business process mapping project to better streamline appeals and other processes, such as benefit payment control, while developing a modernized electronic system. Once the current state map was built for the appeals process it estimated that the process entailed 6 hours of work over 21 days across 26 steps.

There were multiple benefits in engaging UI staff in business process management, with additional visibility into the process allowing the team to take ownership of areas needing improvement. This approach also allowed the team members to ask questions about policies, procedures, inputs, and outputs of the process driving the timelines. The current state models are currently being revamped for the future state to generate measurable outcomes through the reduction of errors and the additional time and money saved through process efficiency, which will be built into the new electronic system. The modernization of the UI system is a long-term large-scale project that will continue through 2025.

Department of Correction (DOC)

Boost Employee Wellbeing, Recruitment and Retention through DOCares

Recruitment and retention are a challenge within the Department of Correction (DOC). The nature of the correctional work environment makes it less attractive to potential hires than other work environments in the State. Recent stressors (i.e., COVID, widespread staffing shortages across industries, and anti-law enforcement sentiment) worsens the situation, creating a vicious cycle with multiple vacancies and the need for staffing freezes, in which staff are mandated to stay beyond their regularly scheduled work shift to cover operational needs of the correctional facilities.

To better understand the needs and challenges that DOC employees face around workplace stress, scheduling, and childcare, the DOCares project was launched, initially focused on data collection through a department-wide survey to assess employee needs. The survey received 575 responses, which represents a quarter of DOC employees. Three major themes were identified that require further exploration and root cause analysis:

- Schedules
- Freezes
- Culture

The DOCares project team, in conjunction with human resources, will continue to seek employee input in developing programs to address our employees' greatest needs. The DOCares project is in its early stages of development, having launched in the prior 6 months. Over time, measurable outcomes will be developed and tracked surrounding employee engagement and other associated goals and results. Information will be shared with DOC leadership to implement tangible solutions that support our employees and improve work-life balance.

Accredit the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center

Ten years ago, the Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) set an ambitious goal to achieve national accreditation by the American Correctional Association (ACA), the leading international trade association and accrediting body for the corrections industry. ACA accredits prisons, community residential centers, and probation departments using its independently published best-practices. Earning accreditation represents the gold standard of correctional practice. To secure ACA accreditation a correctional facility designates a multi-disciplinary team that spends one to two years completing a review of every single facility policy, comparing that policy against national best practices, revising policies as needed, and conducting internal audits to verify that policies and practices are followed as intended.

With the assistance of a multi-disciplinary team, the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) completed a multi-year effort to secure its first-ever national accreditation through the ACA. To prepare for this accreditation, the ACA Accreditation Team took on the added responsibilities of conducting best practice analysis, developing, and reviewing internal policies, and implementing a comprehensive work plan to ensure that the facility met and exceeded all the standards evaluated by the ACA.

To secure initial ACA accreditation, JTVCC completed many months of best practice analysis, internal policy development, policy review, and implementation led by facility leadership and its designated multi-disciplinary ACA Accreditation Team. To achieve ACA accreditation adult correctional facilities are required to be found compliant with 100 percent of the applicable 64 mandatory standards and 90 percent of more of the applicable 509 non-mandatory standards established by the ACA. These standards represent fundamental correctional practices that ensure staff and inmate safety and security, enhance staff morale, improve record maintenance and data management capabilities, assist in protecting the agency against litigation, and improve the function of the facility at all levels. The independent ACA audit team found that JTVCC was compliant with 100 percent of applicable mandatory standards and 99.5 percent of applicable non-mandatory standards. This is the highest score ever achieved by a Delaware prison facility.

The independent ACA audit team recommended JTVCC accreditation to the ACA Commission on Accreditation for Corrections which is solely responsible for rendering accreditation decisions, and in August 2022 the Commission voted unanimously to grant ACA accreditation to James T. Vaughn Correctional Center. With JTVCC's initial accreditation, for the first time in its history all Delaware Department of Correction Level 5 prison facilities have secured national accreditation. In recognition of this team's accomplishments, Commissioner Monroe B. Hudson Jr. nominated this project for a 2022 GEAR P3 Trailblazer Award, which they later received, recognizing the leadership of Renee Gutowski, Kara Austin, Damaris Slawik, Chelsey Pernic, and Michael Trader.

Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT)

Restore the I-95 Corridor

The rehabilitation of I-95 from I-495 to north of the Brandywine River project was initiated to repair 19 bridges and 5 miles of pavement. Understanding that construction would cause significant delays to traffic and disrupt the residents in the City of Wilmington, extensive outreach, planning, engineering, and collaboration was essential to ensure project success and minimize impacts to the public.

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) utilized an alternate project delivery platform, Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC), to allow the department to collaborate with a contractor while completing final design. The team included the engineer-of-record, senior contractor representatives, and DelDOT's own senior staff. This team identified potential risks and developed solutions to ensure the work could be completed within 2 years as mandated by the Secretary of Transportation.

Prior to the start of construction on I-95, many early projects were completed to minimize and mitigate the expected traffic impact from the Restore the Corridor project. Some of these projects were already in progress but were expedited to be completed before work on I-95 began. Others were completely new efforts stemming from the Restore the Corridor project, including:

- The resurfacing of many miles of streets in Wilmington that were expected to see an increase in traffic.
- The integration of over 200 traffic signals within the City of Wilmington into the DelDOT traffic management system, which would allow the department to manage increases to traffic throughout the city during construction.
- The completion of the Christina River Bridge project.
- The completion of the I-95/Carr/Marsh Road Interchange project.
- The early start and completion of the Jackson Street On-Ramp improvements.
- The completion of the Walnut Street Sweep Removal project.
- The installation of several traffic management devices including Intelligent Transportation System infrastructure (e.g., fiber optics communications, variable messages boards, and CCTV cameras), and alternate route signing.

An extensive public outreach program was established through working groups, a project website, and a smartphone app to keep the public updated with real-time information on traffic delays, construction activities, and traffic pattern shifts. A public liaison group was established to address community concerns from residents, working groups within the City of Wilmington, and the traveling public. Finally, an incident management plan was established with first responders to provide access routes to crashes within the work zone. A continuous open line of communication was maintained with first

responders throughout the life of the project. Last, the project included the first use of automated speed enforcement in the State of Delaware, which resulted in a significant reduction in vehicular speeds and more importantly, a reduction in crashes.

The result of the department's efforts, use of the CM/GC contracting method and assembling a dedicated senior team ensured project success. Work that impacted I-95 travel lanes was completed in under 2 years. Construction began on March 1, 2021. Northbound I-95 reconstruction was completed in December 2021. Completing this first phase of work allowed the southbound I-95 reconstruction work to be completed by mid-November 2022 which enable the reopening of all travel lanes and access routes to and from the City of Wilmington. The success of this project is a result of a team effort incorporating the talent of many individuals and has provided a template for future complex highway construction projects. This project team was nominated for and received a 2022 GEAR P3 Innovation and Efficiency Award due to their efficacy in implementing the Restore the Corridor initiative. As nominated by DelDOT Deputy Director Mark Luszcz, the recipients of the 2022 award were Jason Hastings, Jeff Van Horn, Mark Buckalew, Herb Monsalud, Kevin Lindell, Craig Stevens, Percival McNeil, Robin Bryson, Anna Smith, Gerald Nagyiski, Deborah Kukulich, Chris Marsh, Cory Parson, Jack Hardy, Tom Vandermark, Crystal Smith, Renae Bailey, Margaret Franklin, Brian Johnson, Alison Pedigo, Mark Schafer, Scot Smith, Rich Taylor, Cody Waters, and Aaron Wiczorek.

EDUCATION GEAR (EdGEAR)

EdGEAR was established in 2019 as a GEAR-equivalent program for the primary- and secondary-education (K-12) systems. The EdGEAR Board consists of 2 school district superintendents, 1 charter head of school, 4 school district Chief Financial Officers, GEAR representatives, and Department of Education (DOE) staff. EdGEAR created a target list of initiatives including: (1) eliminating duplicative information systems, (2) optimizing procurement, (3) efficient distribution of surplus and the disposition of assets, and (4) capital project improvements. Due to the pandemic, work on these issues began in 2021. During its meetings in 2021, EdGEAR focused on several services provided through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Government Support Services (GSS) to develop efficiencies. In 2022 and into 2023, EdGEAR began focusing on efficiencies in the capital project processes across school districts.

Improve Support Services Within Public Education

In 2021, the EdGEAR team put forth several recommendations for improvements in OMB/GSS services provided to the public education system, including actions that would lead to efficiencies and cost savings in procurement activities, surplus property, and fleet purchases. To date these recommendations have been reviewed directly with OMB/GSS, and GEAR leadership has prioritized several key areas that could be developed in partnership with EdGEAR to ensure future progress, which include:

- Developing training for school districts on how to appropriately leverage existing contractual opportunities (“piggyback”).
- Developing enhancements to statewide surplus property use and disposal between GSS and the school districts.
- Working collaboratively to enhance technology acquisition, use and disposal through the Partners in Technology process as specified in 29 Del. C. § 7002.

Comprehensive Review of Capital Project Processes

With public school districts expressing needs for minor and major facility investments and existing market pressures surpassing capital project allocations, the EdGEAR team began a comprehensive review of the capital projects processes within public education. The EdGEAR team quickly realized that this undertaking would likely require the engagement of a larger body, and during the past year shifted focus to the minor capital funding process in late summer 2023. Of concern is the sufficiency of the minor capital improvement and equipment (MCI) appropriation and the efficiency of how these funds are allocated across the school districts and charter schools. There is awareness that the major capital requests for new schools and renovations of existing schools is squeezing out the MCI funding. The enhanced MCI appropriation was an effective idea to provide additional MCI funds, but the requirement that all prior year MCI funds be expended/encumbered before requesting enhanced MCI funding ties the hands of the districts, particularly those needing to save up MCI allocations over multiple years to have enough funds to cover costly MCI projects.

How MCI funding is allocated among the school districts and charter schools needs to be examined (currently, the funding formula is based on student enrollment, not on characteristics of the school facilities, such as age of the facility or construction quality). Exploration of potential additional sources of MCI funds and an alternative allocation model based on facility characteristics are being explored. This effort is expected to lead to recommendations that will result in (1) recommendations to ensure appropriate funding of minor capital projects needs statewide and (2) improvements to the allocation methodology and process.

The EdGEAR team is holding bi-monthly meetings and anticipates completing this review by August 2024.