

**Nomination for 2021 NASCIO State IT Recognition
Award**

**New York State
Office of Information Technology Services
Enterprise IT Management Initiatives
Mobilizing the Workforce to Enable Government
March 2020
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What problem or opportunity does the project address?

When COVID-19 struck New York in March 2020, the dynamic of where, when, and how the work of government is done was instantly transformed with the percent of remote workforce spiking to 80% from 20%. Simultaneously, there was unprecedented demand for the services offered by NYS Department of Labor (DOL), NYS Department of Health (DOH) and the NYS Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES). This demand resulted in a dramatic increase in the need for remote access solutions for essential health, social services, and labor related programs.

The New York State Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) met the challenge head on and established a coordinated response to triage demand and deliver the appropriate Virtual Desktop, Remote Desktop Access or VPN connectivity solution to best feed agency and citizen need. Success required an all-hands approach with a real-time, collaborative effort involving technical and security teams, business leadership, procurement teams and others.

Solution workstreams focused on immediate triage and 90-day needs, in three key areas:

- Virtual Desktop – VDI proved to be a critical platform for quickly and securely scaling service delivery for essential services, such as the Department of Labor’s Unemployment Insurance program.
 - Triage workflow was centered on supporting essential demand and implementing infrastructure changes to sustain the surge in Unemployment and Department of Health demand. This supported an 800% increase in utilization for call center users. VDI operated at 115% of capacity during this period. A peak of 22,500 concurrent users were supported during this period.
 - 90-day workflow was focused on delivery of additional capacity to sustain Virtual Desktop operations and support additional demand. A 30% increase in capacity was delivered over the July 4th holiday weekend, despite industry-wide breakdowns in supply chains and constrained availability.
- Remote Desktop Access – New York leveraged and scaled remote desktop access to leverage the desktop fleet to deliver access to the workforce.
 - Triage workflow focused on process and security improvements, MFA token distribution, implementing desktop support processes to address desktop power events, and scale.
 - 90-day workflow was focused on capacity expansion, implementing critical upgrades, and improving login processes to reduce calls.
- Laptop and Tablet Deployment – Due to the unprecedented surge of demand for mobile computing devices, laptop procurement and deployment was initially limited to essential emergency management activities, such as COVID-19 Field Hospitals, Testing, and Mass Vaccination sites.
 - Triage workflow focused on securing and distributing inventory in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Service’s Office of Emergency Management.
 - 90-day workflow was focused on procurement and critical deployments. Procurement teams worked night and day on device acquisition. Engineering and Field Services teams

developed solutions to address the operational needs of COVID-19 testing sites and other critical workflows.

- Thousands of laptops and tablets were deployed to support the operations of essential field operations.

Delivering technology is just one part of the equation. Throughout the response, supporting functions were the other important aspect to transforming delivery of IT services. This included:

- Over 40,000 MFA tokens were issued through the pandemic to support secure access to resources.
- ITS Support teams delivering end user training, documentation, and support to facilitate the often-disorienting transition from office work to working from home.
- Procurement, legal, and finance teams worked tirelessly to source essential technology, identify solutions to supply chain constraints, and otherwise support the dynamic environment.

Why does it matter?

Information Technology is the connection point between the public and the State of New York. Families across the state faced a situation never faced before, and millions of New Yorkers turned to essential government services to sustain themselves through the fear and chaos of the pandemic. New York State's investments in resilient technology solutions enabled the State to sustain that response.

What makes it different?

At the start of the pandemic, NY immediately faced significantly higher COVID-19 related cases than other states, while simultaneously experiencing the sudden and previously unfathomable demand for services. The emergent, unknown nature of the crisis required resilience, operational discipline and creativity to meet challenges as they developed.

What Makes it Universal?

Every state faced the pandemic and provided remote work solutions for the workforce during periods of lockdown. The New York experience underscores the criticality of executing on a strategic view of services to support the workforce. Investments made in people, virtual desktop infrastructure, and remote access infrastructure provided a framework that enabled the state to quickly adapt to rapidly changing events. This adaptation and resilience enabled policymakers to focus on meeting the needs of the public.