



Adirondack Park Agency

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NYS Adirondack Park Agency Government Transparency Initiative Plan

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The Adirondack Park Agency has a long history of conducting its work to ensure the greatest transparency and accountability to the public. The Agency applauds Governor Hochul's directive for increased government transparency. The Adirondack Park Agency reviewed existing policies and procedures, as well as its current website, and provides the following overview of existing practices and planned activities to improve Agency transparency. While some of the below activities are ongoing or can be implemented immediately, some will require additional time and resources to be fully integrated. The Agency will strive to implement the tasks within the upcoming year, where possible. The Agency will use existing staff, technology, and equipment to accomplish the transparency goals identified in the plan with accompanying measures of success.

Digital Access (Website, Social Media, Electronic Submissions)

The Adirondack Park Agency has built a robust [website](#) that provides access to all permit application forms, FOIL application, open public comment periods, monthly Agency meetings, and information flyers.

Current Practices:

- Routinely posts all programmatic and meeting materials one week ahead of the monthly Agency Board meeting - [Adirondack Park Agency Monthly Mailing Index \(ny.gov\)](#). This gives the public additional time to review permit and project materials related to upcoming Board actions.
- Webcasts and/or WebEx all monthly Agency meetings live and maintains an online archive of past meetings, so the public can watch all Agency deliberations – [webcast link](#).
- Provides public hearing notices and proposed project application materials online as well as ability for the public to comment via the [APA Public Comment Public Hearings \(ny.gov\)](#) page.
- Most recently the Agency added [Large Scale Residential Subdivision Projects](#) currently under review to its website so the public has direct access to project application files. This provides time for stakeholders to review project files and formulate public comments while the Agency works through its review process.

- Hosts approved FOIL request documents on website for projects of increased public interest to facilitate efficient response to public for Agency records - ex., [FOIL Documents P2021-0075 \(ny.gov\)](#).
- Posts mapping information for approved telecom along with detailed project database to ensure public is fully aware of ongoing efforts to improve [telecommunication service](#).
- Allows applicants to electronically submit project application files – implemented initially during the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing permanently.
- Allows public to electronically submit Jurisdictional Inquiry Forms.

Tasks:

- Increase the use of Social Media to direct the public to the Agency's website to access timely information and increase awareness of ongoing Agency deliberations.
- Continue to increase use of website to upload project application file materials for projects that have a higher level of public interest.
- Consider including links to additional project application materials for complete applications.
- Establish section on website to upload approved permits organized by municipality, year, and use.
- Post all final permits acted on at Agency Meetings to website location for Agency Monthly Meeting Materials.
- Post all final State Land Classifications actions and Unit Management Plan Actions to the Agency's State Land Page on website.
- Coordinate with the NYS DEC to ensure links to most current Unit Management Plans are in place on each Agency's website.
- Continue use of WebEx or equivalent technology in parallel with in-person hearings to increase public participation for all required administrative hearings. Post these remote hearings on website and extend public comment period to ensure public who cannot attend in person or live hearings have the ability to view public hearings and related application materials and submit an informed public comment.
- Post mapping information for solar projects to fully inform public of locations of new solar projects.
- Continue to post FOIL documents that have a higher level of public interest to website to facilitate efficient public access.
- Develop a web-fillable form for application submissions, starting with the minor permit application.
- Establish a web submission for the public to submit email addresses for inclusion in the Agency press release/public awareness distribution list.

Ensuring Timely Preparation of Legally Mandated Reporting and Identify Ways to Make Useful Information Available to the Public

The Agency maintains useful data on its website where the public can easily download applications, informational flyers, guidelines for applicants, Agency administrative policies, mapping data, jurisdictional overview, land use statistics, and annual reports.

Current Practices:

- Provides all permit applications and guidelines for [download](#).
- Provides extensive reference materials pertaining to laws, regulations, and standards as well as guidelines and reports for use and [download](#).
- Publishes an array of detailed GIS datasets and land use statistics for public use and [download](#).
- Provides [links](#) to valuable regional mapping applications including links to County Real Property public use data – critical to determining APA jurisdiction.
- Provides a Citizen's Guide to Adirondack Park Agency Land Use Regulations for use and [download](#).
- Important resources for Local Governments are maintained on the [Local Government](#) page.
- Important valuable natural resource information and [links](#) are maintained on the Science and Research page.

Tasks:

- Consider redesign of APA Annual Report to include statistical breakdown by municipality for number and type of permits issued.
- Review data availability and reliability of previous trends analysis and consider establishing indicators to track and analyze development patterns inside the Park.
- Assess the types of information provided to the public on an annual basis.
- Review, revise, and modernize APA Citizen Guide to include most current information regarding jurisdictional and regulatory revisions.
- Consider designing APA 101 jurisdictional PowerPoints and post to APA website to better facilitate access for stakeholders to important information related to APA jurisdiction and permit processes.
- Increase the use of social media to inform the public of available digital resources on APA website.
- Increase use of social media to inform public of APA public hearings and comment periods.
- Consider developing social media plan to highlight best management practices implemented through permit conditions and their positive impacts to landowners and the natural resources on their properties.
- Continually evaluate what additional materials and reports should be posted to the website.

Ensure Use of the Project Sunlight Database in Accordance with the Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011

Current Practices:

- Policy - <https://projectsunlight.ny.gov/Policy.pdf>.
- Regulatory Program and enforcement appearances are exempted as are routine and in-person meetings involve information-gathering, investigation of a regulated entity, or settlement negotiations.

Tasks:

- Conduct periodic reviews by Executive Staff of staff compliance with requirements of Project Sunlight.

Improving Response Time for all Freedom of information Law Requests

Current Practices:

- Consistently has one of the best average FOIL response times in New York State.
- Does not carry a backlog of FOIL requests.
- Posts frequently requested FOIL documents on its [homepage](#) to facilitate efficient public access to FOIL documents.

Tasks:

- Continue posting FOIL materials for high profile projects to APA website.
- Increase use of social media to inform public of availability of FOIL documents.
- Exempt all known publicly available documents from FOIL process – e.g., APA permits.
- Consider expediting media/stakeholder FOIL requests for basic factual data and established public documents.

Comply Fully with Executive Order 8.95 "Using Technology to Promote Transparency, Improve Government Performance and Enhance Citizen Engagement" regarding Open Data NY

Current Practices:

- Posts relevant documents for meetings and hearings open to the public at the same time an Agency Board meeting agenda or hearing notice is posted.

Tasks:

- Increase use of technology for accessibility of the public to all APA public meetings and hearings.
- Host public hearings and meeting online using WebEx technology.
- Increase use of social media to inform public of APA public hearings and comment periods.

Reducing or Eliminating Costs Associated with Providing Data or Records

Current Practices:

- Eliminated costs associated with producing records by providing the option for electronic transfer of data.
- Increased electronic communications.

Tasks:

- Continue to provide record request data electronically.
- Identify other digital transfer opportunities to further facilitate ease of access and cost elimination.

Updating Records Retention Policies, Including the Timely Transfer of Pertinent Records to the State Archives

Current Practices:

- Follows the Agency's records retention procedures.

Tasks:

- Review what records and record formats, particularly electronic files, are important to maintain and send to State Archives.
- Reestablish "Green Thumb" contract to help facilitate organization and transfer of archivable records.
- Coordinate with State Archives to streamline types and quantity of records the Agency must archive and update APA agreement with State Archives.
- Ensure Agency internal digital record management is consistent with State Archive requirements.

Increasing Participation of Agency Personnel in Community Events and Town Meetings and Providing New Avenues for Public Participation in Government Decision-Making

Current Practices:

- Assists the [Hamlet Economic Planning and Assistance Initiative](#) (HEPA), a community-driven process, created by APA and led by local stakeholders, to develop and implement a plan for economic improvement of the community's commercial center.
- Provides information relevant to [business interests](#) and [local governments](#) on the Business and Local Government pages of APA's website provide.
- Regularly attends local government town board and planning board meetings to provide requested presentations on relevant topics of interest.
- Provides training to local planning and town boards and attends an annual conference for Code Enforcement Officers.
- Provides topic-driven presentations to stakeholder organizations, local governments, educational entities, civic organizations, and international groups.
- Participates in several regional boards, organizations, and committees pertinent to the Agency's mission.

Tasks:

- Customize APA outreach presentations and post to website to increase reach of educational information about the APA.
- Increase use of social media to highlight scheduled public outreach opportunities.
- Encourage staff to participate in and support civic organizations and community volunteer work.

Measures of Success:

- Use Agency website usage data to monitor and assess increases in the numbers of:
 - Jurisdictional inquiry forms and permit/variance applications that are downloaded;
 - Times the resources pages are accessed;
 - Downloads of posted FOILable documents.
- Monitor for decreases in time to respond to jurisdictional inquiries and to process permit and variance applications.
- Monitor for decreases in FOIL requests received.
- Monitor for decreases in general phone inquiries.
- Track the number of users following Agency social media.
- Track the number of electronic submissions compared to paper based jurisdictional and application submissions.
- Monitor for increases in the number of online viewers of Agency board meetings and hearings.
- Monitor for increases in the Agency press release/public awareness distribution list.
- Monitor for increases in public comments and participation in public hearings.