



2025 IMPACT REPORT



OFFICE OF INNOVATION
State of New Jersey

Message from the CIO

Over the past year, the New Jersey Office of Innovation has partnered across government to make a real difference in people's lives. We're focused on using technology thoughtfully and strategically to help New Jerseyans get the support they need, exactly when they need it.

That includes families getting help to buy healthy groceries for their kids over the summer through improved Summer EBT access, entrepreneurs navigating business permits and licenses without getting tied up in red tape, community members accessing transit data to advocate for better local services, callers reaching the right person at state agencies faster than ever, and more stories profiled in this report.

The progress shown in this and last year's report is made possible by sustained investment in building capacity. Governor Murphy and the New Jersey Legislature have committed to growing a talented innovation team that stays laser-focused on actually improving people's lives. We share this commitment with our agency partners, and it drives everything we do.



“ **Innovation is more than just trying new things — it's about finding the most effective and efficient ways to solve real challenges. That's how we are working every day to uplift all New Jerseyans, through better government services that deliver measurable results.**

It's why we've tackled major challenges over the years — from responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and overhauling the unemployment insurance application to piloting the state's first free income-tax filing tool through Direct File.

New Jersey is leading the nation in service delivery, and our work is getting noticed beyond our borders. For example, nonprofit leader Code for America recently named New Jersey as one of the top states for AI readiness — recognition that reflects our commitment to leading AI policy and deploying responsible AI tools that serve all 9.5 million New Jerseyans. Over 15,000 state workers now use the NJ AI Assistant (a Generative AI tool) we developed, at a fraction of the cost of commercial alternatives. Similarly, our data-driven campaigns to raise awareness of public programs have received recognition from local and national organizations alike.

We appreciate the recognition as a national model, and we strive to share our work broadly, including by releasing tools (like the NJ AI Assistant) as open-source projects and writing freely-available playbooks, like how to run performance-driven marketing campaigns in the public sector.

As we look ahead, we're focused on even more impactful work. But as always, we believe the best solutions come from building alongside our partners and the public. As you explore this year's report, maybe something sparks an idea for how we can do better together. If so, drop us a line at team@innovation.nj.gov. We genuinely want to hear from you.

Yours in service,

Dave

Dave Cole
Chief Innovation Officer
State of New Jersey

Our Team & Core Initiatives

Our mission is to improve the lives of New Jerseyans by solving public problems differently. In partnership with State departments and agencies, we help deliver better government products and services, ensuring they are as effective, efficient, and responsive as possible.

We do this by working alongside those agency partners while fostering knowledge, skills, and technical abilities that reflect best practices in research, design, technology, policy, and more. We use modern, data-driven, human-centered, and agile processes to clearly understand problems. And, we work directly with New Jerseyans along the way, iteratively creating better and better solutions while reducing barriers and friction at every turn.



Left to right: OOI team members Maitri Bhateja and Emily Terwelp met with Passaic County Area Agency on Aging staff (Shirley Force, Nicole Lightner-Moore, Denise Martinez, Julio Carino, and Jeritza Villanueva) to explore how to better serve older New Jerseyans.



OOI team member Walker Gosrich speaks at the New Jersey Digital Government Summit about how the State is responsibly using AI to help deliver better for residents.

We have attracted world-class talent to our team, which consists of dedicated professionals with diverse public and private sector backgrounds, including Fortune 50 companies, leading consulting firms, startups, civil society organizations, federal agencies, the White House, community-based organizations, and more. These dynamic individuals bring deep expertise in technology, design, and data, as well as government, policy, public engagement, and more. We all wear many hats as a team of doers - no task is too small and no problem is too big.

We are passionate about transforming the way government operates and improving the lives of all New Jerseyans. We will continue to design and deploy world-class, innovative, and inclusive services and policies that solve pressing challenges.

The Office of Innovation's work is organized around four core initiatives:

THE RESIDENT EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE

Streamlining, simplifying, and improving how New Jersey delivers benefits and services to residents

THE BUSINESS EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE

Making it easier to start, operate, and grow a business in New Jersey

THE COMMUNICATION + ENGAGEMENT LAB

Leveraging modern consumer marketing and communication approaches to better connect New Jersey's residents and institutions to state programs, resources, and services

DATA + POLICY

Advancing the use of data, evidence-based research, and performance evaluation to solve complex public challenges in New Jersey State government

How We Measure our Impact

The Office of Innovation's work is guided by a central goal: to meaningfully impact how State government delivers services to improve the lives of New Jerseyans. As we evaluate the outcomes of our work, we look to an array of impact metrics and data - both qualitative and quantitative - to guide our organizational growth, evolution, and decision-making. These include:

Enhancing and streamlining how people interact with government – time savings, satisfaction of people using the service, number of people served, and more

Government efficiency – case resolution rates, agency staff time saved, number of New Jerseyans served, and more

Cost-savings – actual and projected decreases in taxpayer dollars spent by agencies to deliver services

Our Values

Problems that matter to real people. We focus on concrete problems that affect New Jerseyans with a focus on individuals who have historically not had access to services.

Innovate with – not for – New Jerseyans. We work directly with the people of New Jersey to understand their needs and then create solutions together.

Iterate and collaborate. We work with our partners as early as possible to design and release solutions iteratively, get feedback, measure results, learn fast, and deliver impact in a continuous cycle.

Simplicity and ease. We prioritize plain language, easy to use interfaces, and seamless access to services, so New Jerseyans can get the help they need as efficiently and conveniently as possible.

Accessible for all. We ensure that regardless of language, access to computers, economic status, ability, location, age, or digital literacy, New Jerseyans will be able to use government services.



2025 Impact Report Projects

We helped feed over 100,000 New Jersey kids.

Our data scientists harnessed AI to identify about 100,000 additional kids - in both 2024 and 2025 - across various state databases who were eligible for \$120 in grocery benefits through the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program. This represents about 14% of the total enrollees and over \$24 million in help.

“The work being done creates the equity in access we in the social service sector have long advocated for. It could be impactful in critical ways for communities and eventually our society.”



Sarah Geiger,
Senior Director, Programs & Services,
Food Bank of South Jersey

IN THE NEWS

HOW N.J. IS USING AI TO ENSURE THOUSANDS OF KIDS DON'T GO HUNGRY THIS SUMMER

By Amira Sweilem | NJ.com

PARTNERS



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

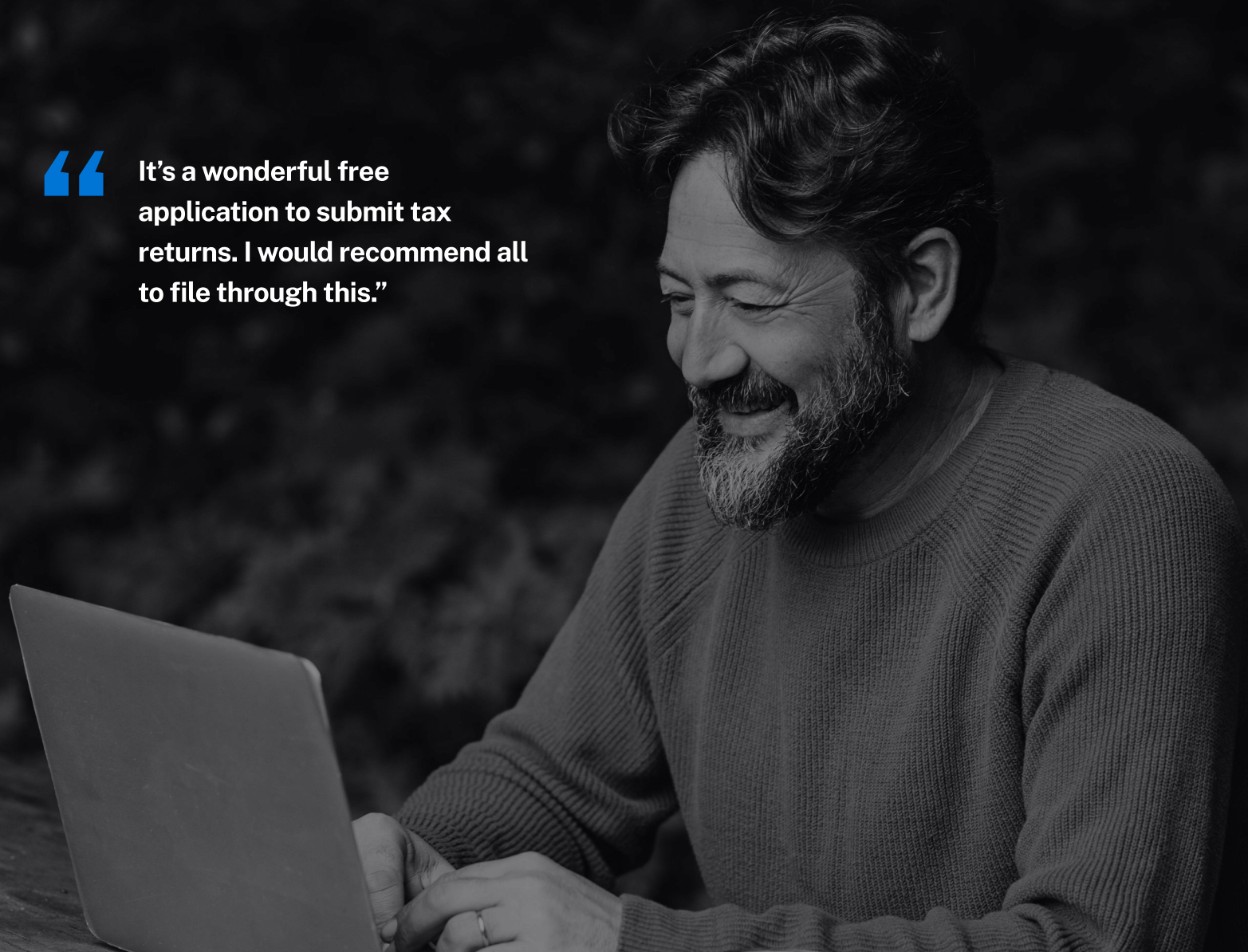


“It’s perfect. I couldn’t believe how easy it was. You saved me over \$200 in fees.”

“Thank you for this wonderful tool. It’s a very simple and easy-to-use tool for someone who doesn’t know much about these processes.”

“I’ve used tax software for over 20 years now. This was easy and didn’t cost me anything.”

“It’s a wonderful free application to submit tax returns. I would recommend all to file through this.”



We helped New Jerseyans save on fees and receive millions in refunds while filing taxes.

We designed a seamless, secure, and quick tool for thousands of New Jerseyans to file their federal and state tax returns for free, saving them \$1.4 million in estimated fees and disbursing \$3.8 million in refunds. The state filing process only took about 10 minutes because the tool broke down New Jersey’s tax code to a few simple questions. It also helped people automatically claim popular tax credits, and it enabled filers to immediately port their household and income information to their state return.

IN THE NEWS

IRS DIRECT FILE SEES HIGHER SCORES AMONG USERS

By Jory Heckman | Federal News Network

400K N.J. RETIREES CAN NOW USE THIS FREE TAX RETURN SERVICE

By Karin Price Mueller | NJ.com

OFFICE OF INNOVATION BLOG

TAXPAYERS SAVE TIME, MONEY IN FIRST YEAR OF DIRECT FILE IN NEW JERSEY

Dave Cole, Chief Innovation Officer

“My favorite thing about this site is that I don’t have to fill in so much info because a large majority of it was filled in automatically from my federal return. It does all of the work.”

PARTNERS



CODE for
AMERICA

We upgraded call centers to handle 10 million calls better and faster.

With four being added over the past year, we’ve now upgraded 13 state agency call centers which have seen a 6 to 15 percent jump in callers who connect with an agent. Caller queues for many centers have dropped from over 30 minutes to about two minutes in wait time. We’re cutting costs roughly in half for many centers, while handling about 10 million calls over the past year. We also started using AI to analyze call transcripts so that the caller menus reflect options people need, and we launched a pilot of live chat to provide quicker and more convenient help.

IN THE NEWS

MODERNIZED STATE CALL CENTERS OFFER MORE EFFECTIVE SERVICE

By Rae D. DeShong | Government Technology

INSIDE NEW JERSEY’S AI-POWERED ‘WARM CALLBACK’ SYSTEM

Priorities Podcast | Statescoop

OFFICE OF INNOVATION BLOG

MAKING GOVERNMENT CALL CENTERS MORE HUMAN-CENTERED AND MORE EFFICIENT

Joe DeLaTorre, Product Manager, and Jessica Lax, Senior Advisor for Responsible AI

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By modernizing our call centers, we've significantly enhanced our ability to assist New Jersey workers. In unemployment insurance, we were able to connect 15% more callers to agents during peak times. We reduced caller abandonment in temporary disability and family leave insurance from 34% to under 2%. These efforts demonstrate our steadfast commitment to continuing to improve how we serve New Jersey workers in need."



Robert Asaro-Angelo,
Commissioner of Labor, New Jersey



This tool came at the perfect time, as we're studying transit expansion options and trying to predict demand. It's fantastic to see someone at the State level providing the data we need to do our best possible work."



Joseph Hendershot,
Principal Analyst, Middlesex County Department
of Economic Development

We put a powerful transit tool in the hands of thousands of people.

Over 2,000 have accessed the interactive map we built to help communities see where high transit needs intersect with low transit access. This is crucial to making smart transportation investments, including eMobility options such as careshares, shuttles, microtransit, bikeshares, and more.



IN THE NEWS

THIS DATA TOOL IS CHANGING HOW NEW JERSEY PLANS
PUBLIC TRANSIT

By Edward Paulino | Technical.ly

PARTNER



We helped 65,000 businesses launch through Business.NJ.gov.

Total users rose 10% in 2025, with usage of the site from underserved communities up 23%. Also, we evaluated the impact of Business.NJ.gov at 5 years, finding that those who used the site started businesses nearly a month sooner than those who didn't. That translated to about \$168 million more in payroll earnings in 2024. As of September, 65,000 businesses (and 204,000 accounts) have formed through Business.NJ.gov, which now features over 60 starter kits and plain-language instructions for over 300 permits and licenses. About 15% of New Jersey businesses now form through this platform.

IN THE NEWS

NJ BUSINESS PORTAL SAVES TIME FOR NEW ENTREPRENEURS

By Matthew Fazelpoor | NJBiz

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Business.NJ.gov has become an essential resource for the people who power our economy – business owners and entrepreneurs. By cutting red tape and reducing bureaucracy, the site gives them more time to run their businesses, serve their customers, and create jobs. That kind of efficiency is exactly what our member companies value and what New Jersey needs to stay competitive.”



Tom Bracken,
President & CEO, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

New Jerseyans who used business.nj.gov to set up their business said:

“ This is by far the easiest and best experience I’ve had working with a state government. This is not only a huge relief for me as an entrepreneur starting a new business but reflects extremely well on New Jersey making an effort to be more business-friendly.”

“ This road map helped me and saved me hundreds. I was going to pay another company to set up my business for me. This was easy to use and follow. Thanks to whoever came up with it and made it happen.”

“ I am truly thankful as a small business owner of how manageable you have made this for me. I truly believed that it was going to be so hard to register my small home business.”

We helped thousands of workers better understand their leave rights.

We turned legal language for federal and state leave laws into a simple form that over 5,000 New Jerseyans have used to understand their job protection eligibility when they need to take leave. A Spanish-language version of the tool was also released.

IN THE NEWS

NJ DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ANNOUNCES NEW
JOB PROTECTION CHECKER TO GUIDE WORKERS
ON FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE LAWS

By Jay Edwards | WRNJ Radio

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I'm proud that New Jersey provides robust job protections for workers who take health-related time off, whether it is to care for themselves or a family member, this tool helps to make sure everyone understands their rights under the law"



Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin

We built a cost-effective GenAI tool that's helping New Jersey's public sector deliver better.

We built a secure Generative AI tool (NJ AI Assistant) within the New Jersey government that 15,000 public service professionals in New Jersey have used over half-a-million times to work more efficiently and effectively. The tool –expanded in April to include more and larger file types –has saved the state millions of dollars at a cost of just \$1 per user per month. The tool is coupled with New Jersey's leading AI usage policies and trainings that have been made available to and used by more than 25 states and localities.

In addition, the Office of Innovation piloted new AI tools that have great potential. For example, one tool provides immediate, automatic notification to users to make corrections when submitting files (which helps reduce “cure cycles” from 10-40 days to minutes). Another helps automatically populate information from PDFs and text files, essentially eliminating staff time for some repetitive tasks while maintaining 95% accuracy.



As states race to lead the way on adopting artificial intelligence, one state has stood out for its efforts to train its employees, roll out tools and empower executive leaders.”



Chris Teale,
Managing Editor, Route Fifty



IN THE NEWS

HOW NEW JERSEY'S AI ASSISTANT SAVES THE STATE TIME AND MONEY

By Chris Teale | Route Fifty

THE CITIES AND STATES THAT ARE GETTING IT RIGHT

By Robert Gordon | New York Times

NEW JERSEY NAMED NATIONAL LEADER IN AI READINESS BY CODE FOR AMERICA

By Matthew Fazelpoor | NJBIZ



OFFICE OF INNOVATION BLOG

ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY, GENAI TOOL IS HELPING THOUSANDS OF PUBLIC SECTOR PROFESSIONALS

Ruthie Nachmany, Product Lead, Platform Team

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Graphic generated with AI

We connected thousands of residents to resources when they needed them most.

Through compelling, user-tested campaign messages, we motivated New Jerseyans to tap into state benefits designed to help them in key moments. This included:

- an insight-driven effort that drove 83% of the traffic to a new free-tax-filing site (DirectFile.NJ.gov)
- a wide-reaching campaign that activated residents to visit CollegeForYou.NJ.gov, apply for financial aid in record numbers, and enroll in colleges throughout New Jersey
- a campaign that has driven 1.5 million site visits (surging 1,400% in 2025) and 5,000 sign-ups to the state's hub for job training and resources (MyCareer.NJ.gov)

MULTIPLE PARTNERS INCLUDING

Agriculture, Human Services, Labor, State, Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, Library, Food Security Advocate, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, Cannabis Regulatory Commission, Children and Families, Treasury



With the C+E Lab, we continue to move work forward we otherwise couldn't have. The team works to understand our programs, challenges assumptions, solves problems alongside us, and ultimately helps us motivate residents to discover tools and apply for aid to get their degrees."



Stefani Thachik,
Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary for Higher Education



OFFICE OF INNOVATION BLOG

WHY EMOTIONAL CONNECTION IS KEY TO PROGRAM UPTAKE

Katie Fiore, Director, Communication + Engagement Lab

A NEW MARKETING TOOLKIT TO HELP THE PUBLIC SECTOR CONNECT WITH THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE

Katie Fiore, Director, Communication + Engagement Lab





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State of New Jersey

Photo by Hannah Chatham, OOI Product Designer

Sagg Portal by Hans Van de Bovenkamp, Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey