



Office of Victim Services

New York State
Office of Victim Services

**Agency Strategic Goals
and
Workforce Diversity and Inclusion
Strategic Plan
2022-2027**

Table of Contents

1. About the New York State Office of Victim Services	3
a. Mission Statement.....	3
b. Vision Statement	3
c. History	3
d. Commitment.....	3
2. Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan	4
a. Values	4
b. Background	4
c. Introduction.....	4
d. Elements	4
e. Diversity and Inclusion – Defined.....	5
Agency Strategic Planning.....	6
f. Environmental Factors	6
g. Statewide Objectives	7
h. Critical Success Factors	8

1. About the New York State Office of Victim Services

a. Mission Statement

OVS has a three-tiered mission to: provide compensation to victims of crime, their family members, and other eligible individuals in a timely, efficient and compassionate manner; fund direct services to victims of crime and their families through a network of programs across New York State; and advocate for the rights and benefits of all victims of crime.

b. Vision Statement

All eligible victims of crime in New York State shall receive assistance as needed by the Office of Victim Services and/or its funded Victim Assistance Programs.

c. History

The State of New York's commitment to victims of violent crime began with the creation of the Crime Victims Compensation Board in 1966, now named the Office of Victim Services (OVS). The enabling legislation to establish this Board was in response to public outcry over a particularly horrendous crime in which a young man was murdered in a subway, leaving behind a widow and a fifteen-month-old child. In fact, the New York State Crime Victims Board was one of the first independent state agencies established for crime victim compensation. As of June 22, 2010, the Crime Victims Board became OVS, and the agency has been providing compensation and other services to one of the most vulnerable populations in the State – victims of crime – for more than 50 years.

d. Commitment

Individuals suffer from mental, physical, and financial hardship after being injured during violent crimes that occur in the State. OVS aims to assist all those affected by any violent crime throughout the State with compensation and direct services in an expeditious and compassionate manner.

The Office of Victim Services strives to meet its three-tiered mission by processing compensation claims, funding a network of local service providers and pursuing both legislation and outreach efforts that serve the interests of the victim community. OVS processes claims from victims and their families daily. These claims sometimes require ongoing processing of payments for various benefits, such as loss of support and ongoing medical claims. The State's commitment to serving victims of crime is further demonstrated by its funding of community-based victim and witness assistance programs, which provide enhanced direct services to victims of crime in all counties of the State, through the Office of Victim Services grant program. Finally, OVS further advocates on behalf of victims of crime through various victim-centered initiatives, such as playing an integral role in the development and implementation of the statewide victim assistance provider training

academy among other trainings.

2. Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

a. Values

OVS values and remains committed to encouraging a diverse and inclusive workplace.

b. Background

Executive Order 187, which took effect August 23, 2018, established a coordinated, government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the State workforce and created the Office of Diversity and Management (now the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management) within New York State's Department of Civil Service.

On January 4, 2019, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Management published the *Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* and the *Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan*. Taken together, these two plans outlined Statewide objectives for diversity and inclusion and provided State agencies with tactical guidance for establishing and maintaining standards to integrate diversity and inclusion practices into existing organizational and business activities.

c. Introduction

The New York State Office of Victim Services has developed its Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2027, which outlines priorities and goals as the agency continues to cultivate and promote a diverse and inclusive culture where employees feel welcomed and motivated to do their best.

These goals and priorities reflect a commitment to support OVS diversity programs; promote continuous learning and discussion of diversity and inclusion topics; recruit qualified candidates of different backgrounds, experiences, and talents; provide internal developmental opportunities; and assess what more the agency can do to nurture a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Commitment to equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion adds value to the OVS mission by creating a culture where employees come together to innovate and resolve critical issues affecting victims of crime and their loved ones across the State.

Having an employee base whose demographic makeup reflects the many unique faces, voices, and backgrounds of those OVS serves also is a crucial element in the pursuit of societal justice and the empowerment of individuals to participate in environmental decisions that affect their lives.

d. Elements

- The *Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* identified four

comprehensive Statewide objectives:

1. Develop Strategic Leaders
 2. Recruit and Retain Talent
 3. Foster Inclusive Culture
 4. Deliver Effective Programs and Services
- The ***Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Implementation Plan*** identified eight areas critical to success at the enterprise and agency levels:
 1. Informed and Committed Leadership
 2. Clearly Articulated Roles and Responsibilities
 3. Continuous Policy Review and Development
 4. Dedicated Resources
 5. Collective Accountability
 6. Education and Training
 7. Program Plan Integration
 8. Performance Measures

e. Diversity and Inclusion – Defined

- **Definitions of Diversity and Inclusion**

- Diversity and inclusion are defined as two distinct principles, both of which are tantamount to achieving the vision laid out in this plan.

- **New York State’s Definition of Diversity**

- Diversity refers to a group of individuals with unique characteristics whose combined contributions support agencies in meeting and exceeding their organizational goals.

- **New York State’s Definition of Inclusion**

- Inclusion is a process that cultivates an environment that values collaboration, flexibility, and equity. Inclusive behaviors leverage diversity throughout the organization to encourage all individuals to contribute to their full potential.

Agency Strategic Planning

f. Environmental Factors

OVS Environmental Factors	
Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVS' important mission aims to serve all individuals affected by victimization. This mission is appealing in attracting candidates who seek a fulfilling and rewarding career. • Dedicated senior staff devoted to identifying gaps in services and developing policies to ensure services and the workplace are diverse and inclusive. • Strong advocate community dedicated to informed practices that ensure funding, services, and policy decisions to underserved populations are advocated for statewide. • Infusion of new ideas with incoming staff, including new and dedicated senior staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with ITS to develop and enhance technological solutions and to improve accessibility features for both OVS staff and external stakeholders. • Apply for new federal funding opportunities that will increase OVS' ability to implement innovative programs and to hire leading diverse experts that will encourage and spearhead diverse and inclusive programs to serve underserved victims of crime.
Improvement Areas	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITS collaboration to develop and enhance technological solutions and to enhance accessibility features for both OVS staff and external stakeholders. • Strengthen connections with VAPs in order to keep up with best practices throughout the state to encourage diversity and inclusion. • Improve connections between victims of crime and resources in order to ensure underserved, diverse, and vulnerable populations are receiving services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID 19 Pandemic has affected fiscal trends as well as the level of individuals seeking services, thereby furthering systemic underserving of minority populations. • Mass casualty events. • Although OVS' mission is important and rewarding for staff, the content is a tough subject matter, which oftentimes causes burnout. Retaining staff is difficult causing rates of high turnover. • Backfilling vacancies due to higher turnover proves to be difficult due to burdensome bureaucratic hiring hurdles. • Unpredictable and varying levels of Federal funding from year to year make it difficult to advance and maintain innovative programs to serve underserved and diverse populations. • Loss of institutional knowledge as senior staff retire, resulting in diversity and inclusion programs and practices taking longer to launch.

g. Statewide Objectives

OVS will strive to meet New York State’s four primary objectives for promoting and maximizing the diversity of its workforce. OVS will identify activities across all organizational levels including leadership, Human Resources (HR), employees, and programs and services.

<p>Objective # 1 – Develop Strategic Leaders</p>	<p>Develop and equip OVS leaders with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to increase organizational awareness of diversity and inclusion objectives, administer and sustain best practices, and measure performance.</p> <p>OVS leaders will continually engage with OVS Advisory Council members and programs to discuss biases and actively tackle them. This is not a process that is ever envisioned to end.</p>
<p>Objective # 2 – Recruit and Retain a Talented Workforce</p>	<p>Attract and retain a talented workforce capable of using their varied backgrounds and experiences to drive productivity and innovation.</p> <p>DCJS HR conducts all recruitment efforts on behalf of OVS. OVS is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion.</p>
<p>Objective # 3 – Foster an Inclusive Workplace Culture</p>	<p>Create an environment that encourages flexibility, fairness, and individuality by establishing processes, policies, and practices that reflect the diverse needs of the workforce and those the agency serves.</p>
<p>Objective # 4 – Deliver Effective Programs and Services</p>	<p>Deliver excellent public service by integrating diversity and inclusion principles with program planning practices and engaging in process improvement efforts to produce measurable results. To this end, OVS will work with its Advisory Council to create a more diverse council that can inform the programs and services that OVS provides or funds.</p>

h. Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factor # 1 – Informed Leadership	
<p>Priority: Demonstrate commitment to diversity and inclusion values in the workplace by leading through example.</p>	
Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Leadership and agency management regularly discuss, and engage in strategies to continue, commitment to diversity and inclusion values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add diversity and inclusion values as a recurring agenda item for Executive and Management monthly meetings. Because OVS is a small agency, executive level staff would normally be the individuals selected to serve on a diversity committee. As this group meets on a recurring basis to discuss workplace policies and procedures, it would be a best practice to include a recurring agenda item that would aim to make OVS a more diverse and inclusive workplace. Model diversity and inclusion behaviors when making workforce policy decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide initiatives by allocating time and resources to relevant activities including open communication and feedback outlets from agency staff and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elicit and identify employee perceptions, including any identified issues or concerns by implementing an anonymous feedback tool for use by staff and then develop recommendations for future diversity and inclusion actions. This will facilitate the providing to management of ideas on an agency wide basis. Develop and administer a periodic climate survey to collect staff input and adjust this plan accordingly.

Critical Success Factor # 2 – Clearly Articulated Roles	
<p>Priority: Support organizational leadership by clearly conveying strategic guidance and support for diversity and inclusion considerations that encompass equal opportunity, growth, and professional development.</p>	
Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include commitment to diversity and inclusion objectives in performance plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all supervisor performance programs include a diversity and inclusion element. Management and supervisory staff are encouraged to consider diversity and inclusion when making any agency decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and resolve issues and behaviors that hinder workplace diversity, respect, and inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze attrition data to determine if disparities exist by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, veteran, or other protected status and take immediate corrective action to address any biases that may exist.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examine reward/recognition opportunities. OVS is currently collaborating with ITS to build interactive forms to allow for employee recognition, workplace feedback, suggestions, and ideas. These forms have to ability for staff to submit anonymously, thereby encouraging staff to propose ideas and feedback to make the workplace work for everyone. These would be available on the agency's new intranet.
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Critical Success Factor # 3 – Dedicated Resources	
Priority: Commit and allocate resources to sustain short and long-term organizational change aligned with diversity and inclusion values.	
Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage in regular needs assessment and program review to focus resources appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strive to provide implicit bias trainings and require all agency staff involved in the recruitment and hiring process to attend these trainings when offered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaborate with other agencies and partners to increase resource capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with the ODIM on opportunities to share resources. ○ Work with DCJS HR, other agencies, and ODIM on shared recruitment opportunities. OVS is hosted by DCJS for this function. OVS' point of contact is an Equal Opportunity Specialist at DCJS. ○ Engage in ongoing continuous improvement of diversity and inclusion initiatives through the exchange of information with partner agencies and through sharing of best practices. ○ Work with internal and external partners to promote the awareness of/encourage attendance at the monthly diversity celebrations coordinated by ODIM.

Critical Success Factor # 4 – Policy Review and Development	
Priority: Review policies and guidelines to ensure compliance with Executive directives and state law, and ensure the agency strives to act towards achievement of objectives while promoting a consistent statewide approach to decision-making ensuring diversity and inclusion values are included.	
Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and identify those needing revision or those needing removal of unintentional barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update agency handbook and create a roadmap with a targeted completion date of any policies that need to be updated or revised that may impede diversity and inclusion values. ○ OVS employees submit reasonable accommodation requests to the DCJS Equal Opportunity Specialist for

	<p>review. OVS makes every effort to accommodate employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify the parties who will be responsible for updating the policies in need of revision and determine a process by which revised policies will be given final approval.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider flexible work scheduling options and work-life balance policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue compressed pay period and expanded office hours pilot programs to ensure agency staff can choose a more flexible work-life balance that works for each individual. ○ Maintain an ongoing pilot program for telecommuting to ensure all staff have an option to work more effectively from home where needed, and desirable.

Critical Success Factor # 5 – Collective Accountability	
<p>Priority: Identify opportunities for improvement and transform into solutions through use of multidisciplinary approaches, engage in a broad range of perspectives and ideas.</p>	
Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review inclusive demographic data and share results internally and regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report on changes and advancement towards progress internally to ensure accountability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use short and long-term approaches to meet diversity and inclusion objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop short-term solutions to assess and modify agency policies and solicit feedback from staff to ensure the agency is maximizing its ability to foster inclusivity. ○ Develop long-term organizational solutions to enhance, increase, and maintain diversity in OVS' workforce.

Critical Success Factor # 6 – Education and Training	
<p>Priority: Provide training and development opportunities that build awareness, identify areas of diversity and inclusion, and that foster employee's abilities to consider and collaborate with diverse perspectives.</p>	
Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote training and educational programs and encourage employee participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify additional potential training topics on diversity and inclusion such as diversity, implicit bias, and cultural competency. ○ Provide time for employees to attend trainings that support the integration of diversity and inclusion principles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide employees with tools for recognizing and managing workplace diversity issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Require supervisors to attend training and education programs to manage with diversity and inclusion principles.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide up to date information with employees on resources available such as EAP Coordinator information. ○ Empower staff to propose solutions to any identified workplace diversity issues. OVS has previously utilized opportunities made available by its federal funder to provide cultural humility training. OVS will continue to pursue such opportunities.
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Critical Success Factor # 7 – Program Plan Integration

Priority: Integrate diversity and inclusion principles with program planning and objectives to identify barriers experienced by those impacted by the development of programs and services to ensure the objectives meets diversity and inclusion accessibility standards.

Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage with community and service recipients to collect feedback on program and service delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a standard practice to collect participation feedback for all new programs and business objectives to militate against real or implied biases disadvantaging underrepresented groups and/or non-users from accessing services; revise as appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop marketing and web materials to be accessible and supportive of diversity and inclusion principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review internal and external website to ensure and maximize accessibility by staff and the public. ○ Develop and use an online list of community resources to expand outreach to target audiences. ○ Expand relationships with community-based resources, including those serving individuals with disabilities and underserved populations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use inclusive terminology in program and service delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct a review of internal administrative policies to ensure language is inclusive of all diverse perspectives. ○ Ensure use of inclusive language both informally and formally when interacting with other agencies, external programs and organizations, and the public by using gender-neutral pronouns, trauma-informed language, person-first language, and other inclusive language practices.

Critical Success Factor # 8 – Performance Measures

Priority: Consistently evaluate outcomes via data collection, reporting, and employee and customer feedback in order to encourage progress, support change, and enhance the commitment to future planning and improvement.

Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish baseline data for diversity and inclusion activities or elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a baseline report to analyze historical employee demographic data and monitor trends in the composition of the employee base over time. OVS will utilize workforce analytics. ○ Create a baseline diversity and inclusion survey to obtain feedback from employees on their own experiences and

	<p>perspectives on the agency’s strengths and areas needing improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OVS will work with the Equal Opportunity Specialist to receive reporting on Reasonable Accommodations so as to ensure the appropriate response and processing of such requests.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report to leadership on progress and assessment results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formally report to agency leadership progress towards annual performance goals on an annual basis. ○ Regularly advise leadership of agency-wide successes and/or challenges; address specific complaints or grievances received; identify corrective actions taken; and provide names of individual employees or programs deserving special recognition. ○ Create a recurring agenda item and spreadsheet for review at OVS Management Meetings that tracks special assignments and projects so as to ensure they are being provided to staff in an inclusive and fair manner. ○ Management will be tasked with determining whether or not projects are being assigned fairly and whether or not additional action is required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tracking of employee disciplinary actions from a diversity and inclusion lens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DCJS’ now actively tracks observable ethnicity as it relates to disciplinary cases and utilizes employee’s self-identified ethnicity in Workforce Analytics. DCJS will report to OVS annually on available data so OVS can monitor and understand any trends that might exist.