

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

**New York State
Office of Information Technology Services
Cross-Boundary Collaboration & Partnerships
IT Support of Pandemic Field Operations
March 2020 – Current
Angelo “Tony” Riddick, CIO**

What problem or opportunity does the project address?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ITS has been committed and continuously providing technology support for all NYS Disaster Preparedness Commission responding partner agencies. Through ITS Site Consultation and Workplace Services onsite support, ITS has provided network infrastructures and internet access to 16 mass COVID-19 testing sites, 26 mass vaccination sites and several staging warehouses throughout New York State. ITS has also increased Department of Labor's (DOL) resource capability by standing up call centers in various regions around Albany which included VoIP and cellular phones and workstation setups.

The ITS effort has been nothing short of an "all-in" effort involving hundreds of staff across New York, working around the clock (24x7) to get the job done.

Utilizing cellular services leveraging new and existing circuits, Mobile Command Centers (MCC) with connected access points have been the backbone in providing WIFI coverage at each site to several different devices such as tablets, laptops, phones and printers. ITS Workplace provides on-site staff 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, per site to provide technology support.

New York Responds (NYR)

New York Responds is a Universal Emergency Management system, implemented statewide to strengthen emergency preparedness and response. NYR is monitored during operational hours to quickly respond to all IT requests for every Emergency Operations Center Emergency Support Functions (ESF) and every testing site and vaccination site within NY State. The flow of information through use of email distribution lists and mobile technology supported a very efficient means of deploying IT assets throughout the state. NYR was also used to deploy PPE to the various regions in the state. PPE items included: gloves, masks, sanitizer and cleaning products.

Several ITS roles are in place to manage the buildout, commissioning and sustained operations of emergency operations.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Coordinator and Liaisons

The coordinator maintains supervision and manages approximately 15 operations staff for the Emergency Operations Center network. In addition, the EOC organizes and supervises approximately 30 volunteer ITS staff attached to the EOC throughout the activation period. The coordinator maintains liaison with the senior Federal, State and local staff as to the location and operability of local disaster recovery sites.

The ITS EOC manages the ITS staff and equipment resources related to the agency's role in disaster recovery.

The EOC support functions include: the preparation of correspondence, reports, presentations, and other materials related to emergency management programs; the maintenance of essential records, maps, and charts; as well as assistance in the preparation of emergency public information packages.

COVID-19 Team EOC

The ITS Emergency Operations Center Team was created to provide around the clock (24x7) IT support during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Each team member is tasked with monitoring the NYR system to

provide and support any IT related request from COVID-19 testing, vaccination or warehouse sites including IT support staff, end user equipment, software, wireless network, etc. The Team is required to interact with site operations Incident Commanders, Logistics staff, host facility staff (e.g., college campus IT) and Internet Service Providers to obtain strategic knowledge of each testing and vaccination site. Each site poses unique challenges due to the facility environment and conditions; sites include parking lots, aircraft hangars, gymnasiums, and arenas. Team EOC has intimate knowledge of the ITS agency and relies heavily on the Site Coordination support staff to perform site surveys, equipment deployment and wireless network equipment installation and maintenance. Team EOC is a dedicated group of professionals who work selflessly to do whatever is required in support of any activation.

This team has tirelessly and professionally deployed IT assets and setup networks to each site through all hours of the day and night. Each site has been unique and has provided obstacles to overcome and provided a seamless setup. The EOC provides reliable wireless network connectivity in the most extreme of circumstances. Network services were supplied in parking lots, airplane hangars, colleges, malls, arenas, fairgrounds and on top of mountains. The locations often did not have any network connectivity and needed to run without disruption in high winds, rain, snow and on generators.

Workplace Services and Endpoint Management

ITS Workplace Services staff have been providing endless daily support for 14+ hours coverage per day to all 42 statewide COVID-19 vaccination sites and the Emergency Operations Center. Each site is utilizing 1 to 2 staff daily for end user support services; the Javits Center Mass Vaccination Center has 6 ITS staff. Workplace Services ensures that DPC responders are equipped with the technology solutions and support needed to execute mission tasks during the ongoing State of Emergency. Leveraging collaboration tools, Workplace Services created a unified command structure for field support personnel, improving availability and response time for agency needs. In addition to COVID support the following was accomplished:

- Development of processes to ensure safe, timely provisioning of IT assets in high risk environments.
- In cooperation with DPC partners, developed, procured, and delivered pre-staged “go kits” to deliver technology assets on demand to incident commanders.
- Delivered virtual desktop and remote access solutions to securely deliver technology resources to power call centers, aid in disaster response and facilitate remote work.

The End Point Management team has maintained a flawless record of procuring and preparing laptops tablets, printers, mobile phones, and peripheral devices to fulfill each NYR request at Mass Vaccination, Testing and Pop-up locations statewide. Throughout the activation this team has provided extended hours 7 days a week to meet stringent deadlines.

Why does it matter?

Families across the state faced a situation never faced before, and millions of New Yorkers turned to essential government services to be sustained through the pandemic. Whether it was a field hospital, a COVID-19 testing site, or a Mass Vaccination site, technology enabled New York to safely and effectively deliver these critical services statewide.

What makes it different?

At the start of the pandemic, NY immediately faced significantly higher COVID-19 cases than other states while simultaneously experiencing the sudden and previously unfathomable demand for services.

New York State's investments in resilient technology, people and processes allowed for these 42 essential Mass Vaccination Sites to be built at a rapid pace and operate successfully, all the while coordinating between multiple state, local, and federal stakeholders.

What Makes it Universal?

The New York State experience underscores the criticality and benefit of incorporating Information Technology stakeholders within the Emergency Operations process. Investments in New York Responds, the establishment of the Emergency Operations Coordinator role within the Office of Information Technology services, and the strong liaison relationships between key stakeholders together ensured strong and effective tactical leadership and alignment with the broader Emergency Operations mission.