

# The ABO Monitor

A Biannual Publication of the New York Authorities Budget Office



## News and Updates From Around the ABO

### *Local Authorities Economic Database*

Last spring, the Authorities Budget Office released a [groundbreaking tool](#) allowing the public to visualize the economic incentives utilized by local authorities. Following the passage of the FY 2024-25 budget, which directed the creation of a searchable database of local subsidy and economic benefits, the ABO worked closely with the Empire State Development Corporation to develop the site. Users can search by project type, location, or even industry sector to explore the activity in their area or statewide with the Local Authorities Economic Development Database.

### *A Long-Awaited Website Upgrade*

In other technology news, the ABO unveiled its new website this past fall to ease navigation while making the agency's online presence even more accessible and transparent. In addition to retrieving reports and reviews, the website provides easily navigable access to relevant regulations/laws/rulings, policy guidance and best practices, training information, and other relevant information. The website can be accessed via [abo.ny.gov](http://abo.ny.gov).

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## Director's Note

-From Josh Norkin



I want to personally welcome everyone to the ABO's inaugural biannual newsletter. This year, the ABO is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. In the spirit of accountability, transparency and integrity, the launch of the newsletter marks a moment where we seek to make the ABO more public facing.

The ABO is finally stepping into the social media space, releasing regular content on X, YouTube and LinkedIn. For the first time, the ABO is excited to release a series of training videos for those trying to navigate our antiquated PARIS system.

The ABO is also enhancing efforts to provide additional guidance to public authorities on how to meet their legal obligations. The ABO recently released a quick reference guide for authorities on how to meet the Open Meetings Law's executive session requirements, as well as guidance that identifies common problems and assists authorities in staying compliant with website transparency requirements.

The ABO is tasked with ensuring accountability for public authorities, and is working hard to ensure that the agency meets those same high standards. By finding more open and creative ways to engage with stakeholders and the public, we are hoping to set the table for another 20 years of success.

# Guest Authority Spotlight

## The New York Power Authority

### **About the New York Power Authority**

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) is the nation’s largest state-owned public power organization, operating more than 1,550 circuit miles of transmission and generating a quarter of New York’s electricity—more than 80 percent of which is sourced from hydropower. NYPA is at the forefront of New York’s transition to a clean energy economy, leveraging its expertise and resources to provide reliable, low-cost electricity to its customers, develop and implement turnkey energy solutions for government entities, and support economic development efforts statewide. Through the New York State Canal Corporation, NYPA also oversees management of the Erie Canal system.

### **Recent Advancements**

NYPA is leading generational investments to strengthen the reliability and resiliency of New York’s power grid. Projects in each category – nuclear, renewables and transmission – involve partnerships with private companies that enable NYPA to leverage additional private investment to support New York’s clean energy objectives.

In June 2025, Governor Hochul called on NYPA to develop at least 1 gigawatt of advanced nuclear energy in Upstate New York to address growing reliability, affordability and clean energy capacity concerns. The Power Authority is now reviewing responses to solicitations it issued seeking potential development partners and host communities. NYPA will collaborate with

Canada’s Ontario Power Generation on the development of advanced nuclear technologies and associated workforce training initiatives.

NYPA is also accelerating efforts to deploy renewable energy projects throughout New York and has already secured exclusive agreements for renewables projects totaling roughly 350 megawatts.

Statewide efforts to add generation capacity necessitate investment in transmission infrastructure. The Power Authority is leading major system upgrades through the Smart Path Connect and Propel NY Energy projects. Smart Path Connect, a partnership with National Grid, will alleviate congestion in a key transmission corridor between the North Country and Mohawk Valley and will be energized in 2026. The Propel NY Energy project, a collaboration with New York Transco, will expand Southeastern New York’s transmission network by 100 miles, bolstering grid reliability and resiliency.

*Justin E. Driscoll*

*President & CEO*

*New York Power Authority*



## ***New and Updates – continued from page 1***

### *New Executive Session Guidance*

Turning to more issue-specific work, this January the ABO published a [comprehensive survey](#) of the utilization of executive session among authorities around the state. The analysis revealed several common misunderstandings regarding the appropriateness of invoking executive session, typically related to the degree of specificity utilized when convening an executive session. In response, the ABO has [updated its guidelines](#) and published a [quick reference guide](#) to better assist authorities in navigating Open Meetings Law requirements.

### *Website Transparency Reviews*

In October the ABO released a [special report](#) detailing the findings of 51 public authorities' websites reviewed by the ABO between May 2021 and June 2024. The project disclosed overall compliance with the law and identified common mistakes and best practices that can serve as a guide for other authorities. The ABO regularly conducts reviews of public authority websites to assess compliance with the laws requiring the public disclosure of information mandated to be posted on authority websites.

The ABO has also updated its [website transparency guidance](#) which includes a checklist for authorities to track that they've posted all their statutorily required information.

### *Annual Report*

The ABO released its [annual report](#) in September. It provides a wealth of information related to authority debt issuances, tax exemptions, and other activities undertaken by state and local authorities. It provides this analysis on both an individual and sector-wide basis, utilizing the data reported by authorities into the Public Authorities Reporting Information System, or PARIS.

## **Compliance Corner**

The ABO regularly fields questions from state and local authorities seeking to ensure they fulfill their mission while abiding by the state's laws, rules, and regulations. One of the common questions we get is, "when is it appropriate for a board to discuss a matter in executive session?"

All state and local public authorities, and their subsidiaries, are subject to the requirements of Open Meetings Law (OML) through Section 2829 of Public Authorities Law, as well as Article 7 of Public Officers Law. Generally, OML requires all board and committee meetings be open to the public in order to promote openness and transparency. However, in certain limited circumstances, a board may convene an executive session out of view of the public to discuss matters that fall under eight enumerated purposes under Section 105 of OML. Examples include matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed; proposed, pending or current litigation; collective (bargaining) negotiations; the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation; and the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property but only when publicity would substantially affect its value.

To properly enter into executive session, a majority of the total board members must approve a motion to do so, made in an open meeting and identifying the general area(s) of the subject(s) to be considered. The motion should be specific and provide as much detail as possible; a motion "to discuss legal matters" or "potential litigation" would be insufficient but a motion "to discuss litigation strategy in XYZ v. Board" would be proper. When discussion of the subject(s) identified in the motion to enter into executive session has ended, the board should return to the open portion of the meeting to continue carrying out its business.

For a complete guide to when and how to invoke executive session, please see our recently [updated guidance](#). And for a simple reference, please consult the ABO's [Quick Reference Guide](#).

## **Guest Editorial: New York's Independent Authorities Budget Office: An Experiment in Good Governance**

New York's development of the modern public authority model - and more recent addition of a state oversight entity, the independent Authorities Budget Office, whose anniversary we celebrated last month - reflects New York's history of crafting innovative economic development policy.

The concept of public authorities - quasi-governmental entities chartered to perform governmental services - is more than 400 years old. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a booming population and surging urbanization dramatically increased the need for public services, including police, transportation, clean water, health care, public education, and housing. Their costs often exceeded available tax revenue and the state's borrowing ability. The solution lay in the creation of public authorities, and for over a century, New York and other states have turned to them to borrow capital from the private sector to finance public projects.

Perhaps the earliest best-known example is the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, established in 1921 so that New York and New Jersey could coordinate the development of regional transportation infrastructure. Ten years later, the New York Power Authority was established to harness our hydroelectric resources. In 1933, Robert Moses used tolls paid to the newly established Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority to fund infrastructure improvements throughout the state.

The next evolution in public authorities occurred in 1958 under Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who dramatically altered the fundamental structure of public authorities in New York. Recognizing that the state lacked affordable housing, the transportation system was in decline, and the state university system ranked among the fiscally weakest in the nation, Rockefeller needed to raise revenues but wanted to avoid raising taxes. And so, he turned to the state's public authorities to borrow large amounts of money - debt that the state would ultimately not be responsible for but rather financed by the activities of the authorities. This success, dubbed the Rockefeller Miracle, soon led to the rapid growth of authorities across the state at the local level. Authorities now issue billions of dollars in debt annually which is

serviced through various mechanisms largely outside the state's official balance books.

As the number of authorities grew and became responsible for much of the state's infrastructure and economic development, it became obvious that government officials had little oversight over their activities. In the early 2000s, Governor George Pataki formed a taskforce to make recommendations on how to create a more regulated and transparent public authority system. Governor Pataki's findings led to him signing the Public Authorities Accountability Act of 2005, followed by Governor Paterson signing the companion Public Authorities Reform Act of 2009. The laws set good governance and ethical conduct standards for board members, required public transparency and established an independent oversight entity - the Authorities Budget Office (ABO).

The ABO's accomplishments over the past two decades are significant. For the first time New York has a full accounting of how many public authorities were operating in the state - currently 608 and continuing to grow. Thousands of state and local board members have been trained on good governance and ethical conduct. The ABO has published countless guidance documents and best practice recommendations to guide authorities as they navigate a complex thicket of laws. Authorities have been audited to ensure compliance, and the ABO continues to serve as a sounding board for public authorities seeking guidance when confronting procedural problems. Perhaps the least heralded function of the ABO, but arguably the most important, was the establishment of the Public Authorities Reporting Information System (PARIS). A shared venture with the State Comptroller's Office, PARIS serves as a clearinghouse for annual budgets, project data and financial incentives. The information is made publicly available in the ABO's annual report and on OpenNY.

On its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the ABO can be celebrated as a unique New York creation; a milestone in a long list of achievements in public authority innovation.

*Scott Fein served on the original Task Force for the Implementation of the Public Authority Act*



## PARIS Tips and Tricks

One of the most common reporting errors in PARIS relates to authorities reporting that they have no staff. Public authorities must report *all* individuals that do work for the authority, and there is no threshold for salary. This includes individuals that do not receive compensation. Employees which serve under staffing contracts with local municipalities or related authorities must also be reported.

The only time that an authority should indicate “No Staff” when completing their PARIS filing is when no work is being performed at the authority, or the work is being performed by board members. To better assist authorities and eliminate confusion, the ABO has been reaching out to all authorities that reported no staff to clarify their staffing situation to ensure accurate reporting.

The [PARIS Handbook](#) contains guidelines for reporting individuals that are not on the authority payroll and fall within the following situations:

- Individuals that do work for the public authority and are employees of a government entity
- Individuals that are paid by a government entity because the government entity performs payroll services for the public authority
- Individuals that work for an outside entity or work as a private contractor and have a contract to serve in an administrative role for the authority, whether it be a personal services contract or an administrative services contract

Please review the Handbook for specific details regarding how to report employees, and remember to enter any contract or reimbursement amount greater than \$5,000 in the PARIS Procurement Report.

### Get to Know an ABO Employee: Elizabeth Haugh

- Where did you graduate high school?
  - *Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake*
- What was your first job?
  - *I spent my school summers working in the file room at a medical office – pulling/filing/scanning medical charts. One year they upgraded the shelving to sit on a rolling track (with no way to stop the shelves from moving except with your body or another shelf). It really livened things up.*
- When did you come to the ABO?
  - *Spring of 2016*
- What is a skill or experience you had prior to this job that has allowed you to excel in your role?
  - *I had a job that forced me to become more proficient in pivot tables and writing Excel formulas. I can't imagine doing my current job without that knowledge. I also think working in various industries showed me what sort of employee and colleague I want to be and taught me to work well with a lot of different personalities.*
- What's the most interesting thing you've learned in your role?
  - *It's hard to pick just one thing, but what I enjoy most about this job is that there is always something new happening, whether it's a newly established authority, changes/new laws to learn about, or a new project we are working on. The weeks are never the same, which I like.*
- Where would you travel this summer if you could pick anywhere?
  - *I'd take the whole summer, pack a few necessities, and hit the road, location unknown – just freedom and limited cell usage.*
- What skill do you wish you could learn?
  - *I'd like to be someone who can pick up any instrument and know how to play it well!*
- What is the ultimate movie snack?
  - *POPCORN!!!!*