

Local Law 12 of 2023

NYCBERS 5-Year Accessibility Plan

Local Law 12 of 2023 (“Local Law 12”), codified as section 23-1004 of the NYC Administrative Code, requires agencies to prepare and publish 5-year accessibility plans using a template provided by the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD).

General

Disability Service Facilitator (DSF):

Sanford Rich
Executive Director, NYCBERS
55 Water Street 50th floor
New York, NY 10041
Srich4@bers.nyc.gov
929-305-3939

NYCBERS Executive Office is responsible for the internal coordination, preparation, and updating of the NYCBERS 5-Year Accessibility Plan.

Public Disclosure of Non-discrimination Policy [here](#)

Website Accessibility Statement: [here](#)

Website and Member Self-Service Statement: [here](#)

Social Media Policy: [here](#)

We welcome your Feedback on the accessibility of our digital content. Please let us know if you encounter accessibility issues by using the [Contact Form](#).

Mission and Background

The New York City Board of Education Retirement System (BERS) was founded on August 31, 1921, to provide retirement benefits for civil service employees permanently employed by the City and School District of New York other than those who may retire under the provisions of other retirement laws. BERS has since expanded to include other employees, such as provisional and part-time employees of the Department of Education (DOE) and other covered employees.

BERS is one of the largest multi-employer, multi-tiered retirement systems in the United States. Our members are employed in such agencies as the Department of Education, the School Construction Authority, the Police Department, and the Transit Authority. BERS currently

provides retirement benefits to members in five (5) tiers. The Retirement System benefits exist to provide financial security for our members and their beneficiaries both during and after employment ends.

Beyond retirement benefits, BERS also offers a tax-deferred annuity program established under the guideline of section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code. This program allows members to invest additional savings on a pre-tax basis.

Mission

Securing your financial future today.

Vision

To foster an environment of trust and security for our stakeholders through education, continuous improvement, and best practices.

Goals

People and Culture

Develop and support a culture of workforce excellence and effective leadership practices. Promote a positive work environment that encourages open communication, collaboration, and transparency among leaders and staff.

Execution Excellence

Deliver benefits processing and member services equitably, correctly, timely, and efficiently.

Develop a fully functional, modern, and cost-effective investment office with the ability to source, allocate, and monitor investments independently. To achieve a return greater than or equal to our actuarial assumption to enable BERS to pay all current and future earned benefits.

Member Experience

Establish an effective communication program that informs, educates, and builds trust among members and BERS.

System & Data Integrity

Contributions and data received from employers and members will be processed and managed efficiently and effectively.

Inclusivity and Equal Opportunity

The Board of Education Retirement System of the City of New York (BERS) is an inclusive, equal-opportunity employer committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce and providing a work environment that is free from discrimination and harassment based upon any legally protected status or protected characteristic, including but not limited to an individual's sex, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity, or pregnancy.

Departments and Staffing

Team	Total Headcount
Internal Audit	4
Legal	2
Executive Office	3
Contracts & Procurement (new)	3
Data Analytics	2
Investment Strategy	5
Records Management	2
Human Resources	4
Fiscal Operations	11
Information Technology***	9
Member Services	22
Quality Assurance	20
Member Communications	31
Operations	48
Total Permanent Staff	166

Executive Summary

NYCBERS has completed its evaluation of its accessibility to individuals with disabilities as required by Local Law 12, to develop this Proposed Five-Year Plan. The Proposed Plan outlines

the results of this assessment and includes measures that have been implemented or will be implemented to address any barriers to accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

NYCBERS interacts with Members and the public through our Member Communications and Member Services departments. Our Member Communications department consists of a call center and a response team that responds to phone and email Communications. The Member Communications department also conducts outreach through in-person and virtual events, connects with Members and the public through its Social Media platforms, and creates educational documents and resources for the public-facing website. The Member Communications department is conducting a full review of all documents and digital communications to ensure its digital content is accessible and usable by everyone. The targeted date for completion is 2028.

The Member Services department interacts with Members, Retirees, and prospective members through a Member Counseling office operating on the first floor, Room 101, of 65 Court Street, Brooklyn, NY. This facility is fully accessible, multilingual, and can manage both in-person and virtual counseling.

NYCBERS provides digital access to Member account information via a Member Self Service (MSS) portal. MSS is managed by BERS CPMS/V3locity Project Team. In collaboration with the BERS Information Technology Department, they are responsible for reviewing and updating the self-service platform to ensure it is accessible for all members including those with a disability. This is an ongoing effort.

Accessibility Statement

NYCBERS is committed to accessibility and ensuring all functionality and content are accessible to all, including those with a disability. NYCBERS membership is representative of the diverse socioeconomic community of NYC. NYCBERS is committed to informing, educating, and empowering its membership with the tools necessary to secure its financial future. As a result, NYCBERS is committed to its effort to provide a public-facing website that is accessible to people with disabilities. NYCBERS will continuously comply with best practices and standards while advancing this priority. NYCBERS will ensure documents and resources meet the requirements of Plain Language Guidelines and digital accessibility standards. Additionally, the NYCBERS 5-year plan will ensure that its physical office locations and hiring/retention policies strive to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities. NYC BERS will continually improve the user experience for everyone and will apply the relevant accessibility standards.

Agency Plan

Physical Access

NYCBERS Services Center operates out of a NYC Department of Education building located at 65 Court Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201. The Agency occupies space on the 1st floor in Room 101 and a small portion of the 16th floor. There are no barriers to physical access. The entrance to the building is at street level. There is a set of automatic doors operated by a push button. Room 101 has an entrance at the ground floor level and an automatic lift if needed.

The NYC Board of Education Retirement System also has an office on the 50th floor at 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041. The building is owned by the Retirement Systems of Alabama. New Water Street Corporation is responsible for common areas in the building. There are no barriers to physical access. The building is accessible via a ramp from the street level. There is a set of automatic doors operated by a push button.

Both locations are accessible to individuals who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices. All bathrooms have at least one accessible stall. Should any accessibility concerns arise BERS will due its diligence to address those concerns.

Digital Access

The Board of Education Retirement System is committed to ensuring its digital content is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. We are continually improving the user experience for everyone and applying the relevant accessibility standards. Conformance Status The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) define requirements for designers and developers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. It defines three levels of conformance: Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA. Our digital content is partially conformant with WCAG 2.1 level AA. Partially conformant means that some parts of the content do not fully conform to this accessibility standard. Feedback We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of our digital content. Please let us know if you encounter accessibility issues by using the Website Accessibility Feedback Form. If you need assistance accessing a particular program or service, please reach out to the Board of Education Retirement System's Disability Services Facilitator at brespon@bers.nyc.gov Assessment Approach The Board of Education Retirement System assesses the accessibility of its digital content through self-evaluation.

Programmatic Access

As required by law, NYCBERS aims to provide equal access to its services and programs accessible for all constituents, including those with disabilities.

NYCBERS' Facilities team assessed the two office locations we operate from Room 101 at 65 Court Street and 55 Water Street 50th floor.

Physical accessibility at both locations is compliant with relevant laws and regulations and NYCBERS will continue to monitor access issues to maintain the best possible accessibility.

NYCBERS departments responsible for interaction with members, retirees, and other constituents are reviewing all documents and communication mediums for compliance and will be implementing changes as required by law and regulations over the next 4 years. This work will be ongoing.

Effective Communications

It is NYCBERS policy to ensure that communication with disabled individuals is appropriate to their needs and preferences. NYCBERS EEO officer is responsible for coordinating NYCBERS efforts to comply and carry out its responsibilities under federal, state, and local law concerning effective communications for disabled persons.

NYCBERS has in place the following policies and procedures, among others, to ensure effective communication with disabled individuals:

- As required by law, the EEO Officer encourages cooperative dialogue with individuals who require a reasonable accommodation, assesses their needs, and provides reasonable accommodations, where appropriate that allow disabled employees to perform the duties of their role.
- Employees are informed of the Agency's obligation to provide auxiliary aids and services and how to request them.
- Public-facing documents comply with plain language guidelines to ensure the information is accessible to all, including disabled persons.
- Primary consideration is given to the choice of aid or service requested by the disabled person.

NYCBERS will make communications with disabled persons more effective by:

- Creating and conducting routine training on the policy and procedures for accommodation requests.
- Exploring alternative methods of communication, such as documents that utilize braille, augmentative and alternative communication devices, and sign language interpreters.
- Develop visual aids to assist in-person interactions for disabled people with speech and language impairments.
- Utilize alternative text options through social media platforms.

Methodology

NYCBERS has reviewed and will continue to assess the accessibility issues in our infrastructure, systems, and documents by putting this responsibility as close as possible to the staff and Members. NYCBERS has organized an oversight group that, coordinating with the DSF, will manage the current efforts towards accessibility improvement and drive forward continued improvement. Over the next few years, NYCBERS expects to do a complete review of all accessibility issues with an external consultant to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations related there too.

Glossary

A glossary of pension and NYCBERS key terms and conditions is available on the NYCBERS website [here](#).

Training

NYCBERS staff members responsible for producing digital content will receive accessible content creation training provided by the Office of Technology and Innovation. They will also review and follow the guides provided on the MOPD website: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/mopd/resources/digital-accessibility-guides.page>.