



City Policy Priorities 2011-2012

The Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce (CTW) is a coalition of over 40 New York based organizations dedicated to reconnecting young adults ages 16 to 24 to education and career opportunities. New York City is home to large numbers of young people who are disconnected from school and work – even before the recent recession there were over 175,000 youth in this category. This leaves a young generation largely disenfranchised from mainstream paths to economic independence and civic engagement and forecasts a City with a weaker workforce and citizenry. Current levels of public investment fall far short of providing enough opportunities for this population. At the same time, the urgency to develop and apply the talents of these young adults is growing.

The City has taken some important recent steps to improve and expand opportunities for young adults, including a full review of its workforce development system and a new initiative focused on improving outcomes for black and Latino young men. These represent opportunities for examining and improving the structures of support for young adults. A bold approach is needed to not only prepare young people with education and skills but also connect them to jobs that lead to careers. It is time for New York City to consider investing public dollars to create jobs linked to training pathways. This document outlines CTW's priorities for emerging City initiatives and proposes the creation of a NYC Youth Service Corps for low-income young adults. First, we review the **overarching recommendations** that guide our priorities:

- **Recognize and invest in the work of youth-oriented community-based organizations (CBOs)** to support education and workforce development programs for young people in transition. CBOs have unique strengths and connections to their communities that allow them to provide services that help young people, particularly those who have not experienced success in formal environments, to perform well. Public funding should be designed to engage CBOs of all sizes and geographies, including small neighborhood-based organizations and those located in areas with severely depressed economic conditions within larger, more stable communities.
- **Emphasize education and basic skills development** as part of training and employment program models for young adults. While employment outcomes are critical, they should not come at the cost of educational gains. Youth program models should emphasize building core skills that will support long-term success.
- **Design and apply program models that work for young adults.** Young people require different program models than those geared for a general adult population. Research and practice show that young people are more likely to thrive in an environment where they can meet their multiple needs and goals in one place and have a primary person supporting their success. Successful models are comprehensive, flexible programs that combine engaging education, career training and paid work experience within a youth development framework and supportive community.
- **Better connect disparate services to develop pathways for young adults along the skills and goals continuum.** An improved system would be oriented to successfully transition young people to the next level, no matter where they start. For example, basic education and pre-GED programs should lead low-skilled youth into GED programs, and GED and Multiple Pathways programs

should connect to college and employment. More programs are needed that bridge literacy, work experience, and personal development. Focused attention should be given to connect young people engaged in foster care and juvenile justice systems, and those with disabilities.

- **Better align funding levels and service needs.** Of young people who have left school without a diploma, the vast majority are low-skilled and read below an eighth grade level. Yet most public funding is for the GED preparation level or higher, leaving a glaring opportunity gap for young people with the highest need. Program models that are making gains with low-skilled youth should be expanded.
- **Develop a common outcome framework that values interim benchmarks.** Funding structures should allow programs to serve young people with a range of skill levels for the period of time necessary to build their skills and achieve outcomes. Interim measures, such as literacy gains, should be used to demonstrate progress toward milestone outcomes like a GED or employment. Recognizing interim gains would remove the disincentive for providers to serve young people needing the most support. It would also allow young people starting at lower skill levels the time they need to transition to higher level programs, while assuring their advancement.

Recommendations for New York City’s Workforce Development System

CTW is participating in ongoing efforts to transform New York City’s workforce development services into a cohesive system that is responsive to diverse sets of needs. We believe that this work has the potential to significantly improve outcomes for young adults in the City’s workforce system.

New York City is home to several successful youth-oriented workforce development programs, including the Learning to Work (LTW) initiative in the New York City Department of Education, and the Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Program and Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) within the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). These initiatives are unique in that CBOs play a strong role in helping youth participants to achieve the educational and workforce outcomes of each program, through a best practices approach to youth development. Recent evaluations have documented these successes.¹ With these successes in mind, we offer the following proposals:

Better target funds currently used for youth in HRA’s Back to Work program.

The best attempts to better coordinate workforce services in New York City will consider how to utilize existing resources to maximize their benefit in proven program models. The NYC Human Resources Administration’s Back to Work (BTW) program represents \$54 million in underutilized workforce development funding, particularly as it relates to services for young people. Youth without high school diplomas, as well as young people with diplomas but with no previous workforce experience, need interventions that go beyond job placement. As has been documented in a recent report by the Community Service Society and in a 2011 hearing by the General Welfare Committee of the City Council, HRA, by procedure, places all individuals who are not already enrolled in another program into its Back to Work program. BTW’s effectiveness for adults has been debated², but its bare-bones job search assistance activities are certainly not the most effective approach to reconnecting young adults with low skills and limited or no work experience.

Finding a way to ensure that HRA resources are used to provide better workforce development services for disconnected youth would represent not only a visible step toward improved coordination and service

¹ Manuel Gutierrez, et al, “Evaluation of New York City’s Learning to Work Initiative for Over-Age and Under-Credited High School Youth: Student Outcomes (2005–2008).” Metis Associates, 2010, and “Evaluation of the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP): Analysis of Existing Participant Data.” WESTAT and Metis Associates, 2009.

² Missing the Mark: An Examination of NYC’s Back to Work Program and Its Effectiveness in Meeting Employment Goals for Welfare Recipients. Alexa Kasdan with Sondra Youdelman. A Research Project by Community Voices Heard. November 2008.

delivery in New York City, but a smart investment in tomorrow's workforce. New York City has already recognized that disconnected youth need a specialized approach, as successful LTW, OSY and YAIP programs have demonstrated. We recommend that HRA move to a program model with two separate service options for youth and adults.

- 1) ***Service Option #1: Back to Work for Adult Dislocated Workers.*** Individuals 25 and over should receive the services that HRA has already outlined in its BTW RFP.
- 2) ***Service Option #2: Learn to Work for Youth and Young Adults.*** Individuals ages 17-24 should be placed in youth-oriented programs that are specific to their age and stage of educational and vocational development. Contractors under this service option would provide programming that combines career development and educational services to young people who do not have high school diplomas. These programs would contain services similar to those offered in the DYCD Out-of-School Youth programs. For those young people with high school diplomas, services would be similar to those in DYCD's Young Adult Internship programs. In both these cases, this model would ensure young people receive skill development services that will allow them to be successful in the workforce.

While HRA has already issued its July 2011 Back to Work RFP, the agency could move toward differentiated service options for the next round, while integrating youth-specific components as soon as possible.

In addition, CTW supports three City Council bills recently introduced by Speaker Quinn and Councilmembers Palma and Fidler aimed at requiring improved HRA services for youth:

- Int. No. 648 – In relation to requiring HRA to prominently display all information relating to youths and young adults who apply for public assistance on the agency's website.
- Int. No. 649 – In relation to requiring HRA to create a youth and young adult applicant plan.
- Int. No. 657 - In relation to collecting and reporting data related to youth and young adult access to public assistance.

Expand Existing Successful Program Models Across Public Agencies: Implement the Learning to Work Initiative in Adult Literacy/GED Programs that Serve Youth.

As noted above, the Learning to Work (LTW) initiative has been extremely successful in improving the outcomes of off-track youth in DOE's Multiple Pathways high schools and GED programs by adding career development training, structured internships, and academic and social supports within a youth development framework. Nearly 13,000 young people participate in LTW annually. Yet a similar or greater number of young adults are enrolled in the literacy and GED programs of the city's adult education system, which operate with much lower per participant funding levels insufficient to provide needed student supports. New York City should build off the success of LTW to expand the initiative into these program settings. Current adult literacy programs funded by DYCD that serve young adults should be enhanced with a LTW program model.

Allow for more flexibility in the credentials counted by DYCD WIA-Out-of-School Youth contracts.

Industry-recognized credentials can be important stepping stones for young people preparing for employment, but their use in City-funded programs should not end up limiting participants' career pathways. In DYCD's performance-based contracts, providers only get outcome credit when youth participants earn a credential that was in the original proposal. This forces provider organizations to either limit young people's career development options, or forgo reimbursement when supporting a young person to pursue his or her own career interests.

Young Men's Initiative

The Young Men's Initiative (YMI) is a mayoral initiative announced in August 2011 focused on improving outcomes for black and Latino young men. It reflects a \$127 million investment of public and private dollars over three years in four domains: education, health, justice, and employment. CTW welcomes the high profile attention focused on the harsh realities faced by young men of color who make up the majority of NYC's disconnected youth population. It is important to shine a spotlight on these issues and take action to improve the opportunities and supports available to young men. CTW will analyze YMI's programmatic and policy components and monitor its implementation. As the initiative rolls out, CTW will engage in advocacy to maximize the initiative's benefits for young people and the community-based organizations that engage them.

New City Jobs Program for Young Adults

With high unemployment and economic indicators pointing to a continuing recession, it is time for bold action to create employment and training opportunities for New Yorkers, especially the younger generation of workers. Because of the tight labor market, young people face the risk of years without work and long term damage to their ability to participate in the workforce. Now is the time for a vigorous jobs program for New York City. This means creating actual jobs, as well as more opportunities for training and education to prepare for when the job market improves.

President Obama's proposal for job creation includes \$5 billion nationally for training and work opportunities for low-income youth and adults. CTW is ready to work with the City and State to support the American Jobs Act, which could result in jobs for over 30,000 youth in New York State. New York City can also add its own local investment for a more robust effort to get young adults to work and college. This is a moment of opportunity with the Young Men's Initiative, the Workforce Development Cabinet, and the potential infusion of federal funds to improve outcomes for young people in this City. CTW proposes a new effort that maximizes these current opportunities and expands what we know works. Some key features would be:

- **NYC Youth Service Corps:** Build on the success of models like the Civic Justice Corps and YouthBuild to launch a NYC Youth Service Corps to engage disconnected young adults in skill building, work experience (while jobs are scarce), and civic engagement, while providing valuable service to the community. This could be paired with other resources, such as federal funding for the Youth Service Corps renovate affordable housing, improve the City's infrastructure, and support human services.
- **Expansion of re-engagement models that work:** Young Adult Internship Program, Young Adult Literacy Program, Learning to Work, YouthBuild, literacy and career pathways, and college bridge programs like CUNY Start.
- **Expansion of summer jobs and year-round subsidized employment** with structured supports for young adults.

CTW is coordinated by the Community Services Society (CSS), Neighborhood Family Services Coalition (NFSC), and United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). For more information, contact Lazar Treschan: 212-614-5396, ltreschan@cssny.org; Sierra Stoneman-Bell: 212-619-1666, sierra@nfsc-nyc.org; or Kevin Douglas: 212-967-0322 x345, kdouglas@unhny.org.
www.campaignfortomorrowworkforce.org