

Dear Community Members:

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) is committed to reforming its policies and procedures to more effectively fight poverty and income inequality. HRA is implementing a thorough and comprehensive approach to employment services that more fully recognizes the needs of individual clients in order to more effectively help each of them enter or return to the workforce and build sustainable careers.

HRA is moving away from reliance on a one-size-fits-all employment approach to a more diverse, individualized approach that focuses on improving employment and training outcomes so that more clients have an opportunity to achieve increased economic security by obtaining employment, moving off the caseload and out of poverty. HRA's efforts will be implemented in close alignment with recommendations from the Mayor's "Jobs for New Yorkers" taskforce and the transformation of the entire NYC workforce development system into a career pathways approach, the first such effort by a large U.S. city. The reforms to HRA's employment services are based on these principles:

- Improving assessments to address each client's actual strengths and needs will improve outcomes compared to the current one-size-fits-all approach that has led to one out of every four clients who are reported to have received employment assistance returning to the caseload within 12 months.
- Maximizing education, training and employment-related services will open job opportunities and create the basis for building career pathways out of poverty.
- Eliminating unnecessary punitive and duplicative actions that lead to preventable negative actions and fair hearings will allow staff to focus on more effective problem solving and allow clients to avoid delays in accessing services, finding jobs and moving into sustainable employment.

I strongly encourage you to review our re-envisioning of HRA policies and services at http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/news/internet_articles/2014/oct_2014/EmployPlan2014ExecSummaryAppendixfinal.pdf.

Accordingly, HRA plans to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new set of assessment and coordination services for clients through a new program called CareerCompass. The RFP will seek up to nine (9) qualified service contractors to operate CareerCompass programs throughout the City. By providing comprehensive assessment and career pathways service coordination, HRA will be able to provide individualized service plans, consistent assistance, and meaningful career advancement that utilizes multiple pathways.

Please see the accompanying diagram for an overview of all new HRA employment and education services, including CareerCompass. In advance of the release of the CareerCompass RFP, HRA has developed this concept paper, which outlines our vision. As we develop and finalize the RFP, we welcome constructive feedback from all stakeholders as an essential part of our planning process. Please submit all comments to this concept paper to accoprocurements@hra.nyc.gov.

If you chose to comment via email, please use "CareerCompass comments" in the subject line of the email. Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received by September 18, 2015. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your careful consideration of this concept paper relating to this important and exciting initiative.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Steven Banks

CareerCompass Concept Paper

The City of New York Human Resources Administration Concept Paper

CareerCompass Concept Paper

I. Purpose of RFP

New York City is re-orienting its entire set of workforce services citywide toward career pathways, a workforce development approach that connects successive levels of education, training, and employment with support services. The approach works with individuals of varying skill levels by having multiple entry and exit points where participants can access education and training or leave for unsubsidized employment. The potential exit points are aligned with successive entry points for participants who will continue with education and/or training. Career pathways are sector-focused and engage with employers to ensure the relevancy of trainings and employment opportunities.

Many Cash Assistance recipients served by the Human Resources Administration (“HRA” or “Agency”) lack the basic education needed to realize these positive economic returns. Among HRA clients who are determined to be employable, 60% lack a high school diploma or equivalent and 30% of those without a diploma or equivalent are below 9th grade proficiency for Math and Reading.¹ Among the 40% with a high school diploma or equivalent, only 4% have an Associate’s Degree or higher. Without the education and job skills needed in today’s labor market, Cash Assistance recipients will continue to face substantial barriers to obtaining sufficient wages and quality jobs that would allow them to move out of poverty and sustain financial independence.

HRA seeks to update its entire set of workforce services to orient them toward increased opportunities for education and toward long-term self-sufficiency outcomes. With the new CareerCompass program, targeted toward clients ages 25 and older², HRA intends to build on past innovations to use comprehensive systems for assessment and career pathways service coordination within a sector-based, employer-approved model to focus attention on the career-readiness, educational access, workplace retention, advancement, and long-term self-sufficiency of clients.

HRA seeks to improve assessments to identify and address each client’s actual strengths and needs in order to improve outcomes compared to the current one-size-fits-all approach that has led to one out of every four clients who are reported to have received employment assistance returning to the caseload within 12 months. HRA is committed to matching clients, especially those who may be vulnerable or have special needs, to appropriate and individualized services. The goal is to provide a comprehensive assessment that identifies strengths and challenges, and develops an individualized comprehensive service plan.

HRA’s foremost goal in its new set of services is to provide a flexible array of services that are holistic and client-focused, with strong continuity and focus on supports to provide opportunities for clients to achieve independence and self-sufficiency. While clients with barriers to employment will continue to receive an array of services offered through HRA such as domestic violence services, HIV/AIDS services, and Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) (which addresses medical, physical and/or mental health limitations to employment), a new approach is being implemented to address education and employment pathways for clients not requiring such services.

¹ Source: HRA administrative data from October 2013. 46,769 clients were employable, of which 27,948 lacked a HS diploma or equivalent and 8,223 scored below 9th grade on Math or Reading TABE.

² Youth ages 18-24 will receive assessment, service coordination, and other services through HRA’s new YouthPathways program (see separate concept paper for more information).

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In order to match the interests and goals of the client population with employment and training, CareerCompass will provide comprehensive assessment with referral to a variety of programs, where clients can access a combination of employment, education, apprenticeship/internship, training opportunities, and retention/advancement support, replacing previously separated programs. In alignment with the new, Citywide approach of career pathways³, target sector clusters include healthcare and social assistance; technology; industrial/manufacturing; construction; retail/customer service and food service/accommodation; maintenance and security; and transportation/warehousing⁴.

Clients who participate in CareerCompass will create a career path that details a timeline for each step's completion. Each step on the career pathway should lead to a credential, certificate, or degree that is recognized by the industry. Job placement strategies within the career pathways framework should focus on developing opportunities within the sector that have room for advancement. CareerCompass provides assessment, service planning, client goal-setting, ongoing financial counseling, and ongoing supportive service coordination (particularly for client transitions to career milestones and navigation of systems to achieve career advancement) within this model, and it is anticipated that HRA will select up to nine (9) providers under the forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP).

HRA seeks proposals for comprehensive, strengths-based assessments and ongoing service coordination for client career paths, informed by labor market demand. Service coordination services are tailored to the needs of individuals and provide ongoing support for progress toward client's overall goals.

II. Target Populations

CareerCompass targets:

- Employable Cash Assistance applicants
- Employable Cash Assistance recipients
- Non-Cash Assistance Non-Custodial Parents (referred by HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement), which may include some individuals participating on a voluntary basis

HRA anticipates that some clients will require targeted strategies and enhanced support, including (but not limited to):

- Clients presenting with immediate stabilization needs
- Ex-offenders
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients and immigrants
- Non-custodial parents
- Older adults, including dislocated workers and those needing additional working quarters to qualify for Social Security benefits
- Individuals residing in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters and those receiving housing subsidies through the Living in Communities (LINC) program
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and gender non-conforming clients

The Agency reserves the right to expand the target populations to include other low-income individuals in need of employment services. For all services, contractors must be able to provide linguistically appropriate (as required by Local Law 73) and culturally competent assistance. Contractors will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards of accessibility and, when needed, provide clients with reasonable accommodations, such as travel accommodations, workplace accommodations, and/or program participation accommodations. Contractors will also be compliant with New York City Human Rights Law and HRA policies regarding these special populations.

³ For more information, see <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/careerpathways/downloads/pdf/career-pathways-full-report.pdf>

⁴ These sectors were selected based on consideration of such factors as recent and forecasted job growth, total employment, and wages. Additional sectors will be permitted within the program if they are identified as high-growth sectors with clear demonstration of connection to employers and other industry partnerships.

III. Program Model

HRA envisions a three-tier assessment process as a result of the re-engineering of systems and operations workflow. The first tier would consist of clients having the option to respond to questions at computer banks located within HRA Job Centers. The second tier, conducted by an HRA worker at Job Centers, would seek additional information to determine whether the client needs referral to other HRA programs, for example, domestic violence or medical and/or mental health, or substance use treatment services.

Clients who are deemed fully employable by HRA will be referred to off-site CareerCompass (for adults) and YouthPathways (for youth) contractor locations, where contractors will provide tier three, in-depth assessments and direct clients to the proper set of services that are tailored to individualized strengths, interests, and needs. Individuals may then be referred by CareerCompass to a combination of services including (but not limited to):

- CareerAdvance: new set of HRA contracted services that are sector- or population-focused, with particular attention to the career-readiness, job placement, workplace retention, advancement, and long-term self-sufficiency of HRA clients (see separate CareerAdvance concept paper for more details)
- CareerBridge: new set of HRA contracted services for contextualized education services, including adult basic education, high school equivalency preparation, bridge training, English as a Second Language, and vocational training (see separate CareerBridge concept paper for more details)
- Supportive services (provided by organizational partners)
- Other HRA-provided services and programs
- Programs provided by HRA partnering organizations (providers and other City agencies)
- HRA- and vendor-managed apprenticeships/internships

CareerCompass may continue to engage clients (e.g., for reassessment) once they have been referred to other services.

Clients who are cash assistance recipients or are otherwise mandated (e.g., non-cash assistance noncustodial parents) must participate in acceptable activities for specified hours per week.⁵ Each contractor will be responsible for managing client timekeeping and engagement for clients. Clients are required to attend any combination of activities: education/training, job search and pre-employment services, and/or apprenticeship/internship placements as laid out in their assessment. Contractors will provide outreach services to maximize compliance for clients who are required to attend and to encourage cooperation with scheduled appointments and activities in order to avoid any adverse actions. Please note that clients participating on a voluntary basis are not subject to negative consequences for not attending.

Key CareerCompass program components are listed below. HRA encourages proposals of innovative approaches, especially those that include evidence-based strategies such as motivational interviewing.

a. Orientation and Assessment

When clients present with acute stabilization needs, CareerCompass contractor staff will conduct a quick triage and refer clients directly to services to assist. Service coordinators will connect clients to resources to address needs such as food pantries, shelters, and any other social supports needed. Contractors will have established relationships with other organizations that can provide specific support for such needs. Contractors will provide specific ongoing support for individuals until they resolve their immediate stabilization or acute need through offering follow-up appointments to check on progress.

⁵ HRA customizes the number of hours of required engagement to provide more flexibility and eliminate the one-size-fits-all approach. Further detail will be provided in the RFP related to differing engagement requirements for clients.

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All CareerCompass clients (except those with immediate stabilization needs) must attend a motivational orientation provided by contractors. This orientation should introduce the program requirements, opportunities, and services offered in an engaging and inviting manner.

To assess clients and create education, training and, career plans, CareerCompass contractors will implement a rigorous one-on-one intake and assessment. Contractor staff must have expertise implementing educational and career assessments, particularly in the HRA-identified target sector clusters, and creating service plans and client goals from the results. The assessment process must include, at minimum, the completion of HRA's required Employment Plan (EP) and the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) academic assessment test and/or an HRA-identified or HRA-approved education assessment. HRA is revamping its current Employment Plan tool based on best practices and moving toward a more holistic approach to clients that ensures the best match of client strengths and needs to an appropriate set of services. HRA encourages contractors to provide additional questions, interest and aptitude tests, and other components that help present a holistic picture of each client and capture HRA-identified target sector cluster information in ways that are informed by employer and industry partnerships. All additional assessment elements/inventories beyond HRA-required employment plan must be approved by HRA. If during this assessment prior unidentified barriers to employment are identified, the vendor will refer the client to the appropriate HRA program to assist the client in addressing those barriers including the need for reasonable accommodations.

Assessments should generate a plan for each individual client that determines how they will spend their time engaged in HRA services. Within the assessment, contractors will work with clients to build a "service plan," including setting short-term goals and exploring long-term education and career milestones/goals and relevant program engagement activities that will help them achieve those goals. These goals should closely align with HRA-identified target sector clusters identified as targets in partnership with the client.

Assessments will typically assign individuals with high skills/education levels, individuals who are immediately job-ready, and other individuals whose personal goals are immediate employment to CareerAdvance contractors.

Bridge, education, and training programs should be targeted to clients based on their assessment outcomes, and clients will be referred to appropriate CareerBridge contractors. The rigorous assessment will ensure that clients' literacy levels are accurately captured. Education programs should also connect to clients' broader career goals. The contractor will provide guidance to ensure that educational choices do not enter clients into severe debt and encourage clients into quality programs. Plans for education must be tied to career goals and plans for future advancement. Additionally, as it pertains to their career plan and employment goals, taking steps toward further education, including college, can be discussed with those who are interested in and realistically able to pursue the commitment.

Alternatives to typical HRA engagement through other organizations not within HRA's group of contractors and other referrals will be targeted, as appropriate, to clients with specific needs, including clients presenting with immediate stabilization needs; ex-offenders; LEP clients and immigrants; non-custodial parents; older adults; individuals living in homeless shelters or receiving LINC housing subsidies; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and gender non-conforming clients. It is anticipated that such referrals and enhanced follow-up by CareerCompass contractors will be more frequent and more intense for such clients.

Service plans will be used over the course of program engagement to track clients' progress at working toward and accomplishing goals. Ongoing service coordination services will assist in this progress as well as assess progress towards defined goals as delineated in the service plan. The service coordinator and client will periodically review the plan and revise if new needs are identified or modification of the plan is necessary. Clients will be reassessed to measure related

skill and literacy gains periodically, and, if necessary, the service plan will be modified to reflect the outcome of these assessments.

b. Career Pathways Service Coordination and Support Services

Clients will be assigned to a single service coordinator at CareerCompass, who will be their primary point of contact throughout program engagement, including after referral to services outside of CareerCompass. Service coordinators will maintain a strengths-based approach, which empowers clients by focusing on their individualized capabilities and builds upon their overall competencies. Service coordinators will provide specific transitional support for clients moving between HRA- or contractor-provided programs and during times of life transition. More intensive service coordination is anticipated for clients with specific needs.

For all CareerCompass clients, contractors are expected to provide services that support sustained self-sufficiency. On an ongoing basis, service coordinators will connect clients with supportive resources that address personal needs and barriers. Resource referrals may include (but are not limited to) food pantries, shelters, parent support services, domestic violence counseling, legal information, child support programs, and any other social supports. Contractors should have established relationships with other organizations that can provide specific support for such needs. At any point that previously unidentified barriers to employment are presented, CareerCompass vendors will refer the client to the appropriate HRA program to assist the client in addressing those barriers including the need for reasonable accommodations.

HRA expects that contractors will provide one-year membership for all CareerCompass clients, meaning that contractors should continue to provide comprehensive services after initial job placement. Contractor support should be consistent with CareerCompass program's goal of successive movement up a career ladder, with increasing wages, leading to long-term self-sufficiency. HRA expects that CareerCompass contractors will help successfully transition eligible clients to the next step on a career path by working with other City agencies, such as the Department of Small Business Services' Workforce1 Career Centers, as well as other organizations.

c. Financial Counseling

Through financial counseling, either directly or through a qualified partner or subcontractor, CareerCompass contractors will work with clients to plan and achieve financial goals that will set them on a path to make informed decisions. These services are based on the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment (DCA/OFE) model for financial counseling. Contractors will provide services that connect CareerCompass clients to mainstream financial institutions, help reduce their consumer and/or child support debt, provide information and guidance regarding consistently meeting financial obligations, establishing or modifying child support, utilizing financial opportunities like student financial aid, how to file taxes and take advantage of tax-based programs (particularly Earned Income Tax Credit), responsibly obtain credit and build financial assets. Contractors should work with clients individually to connect financial planning to their overarching education and career goals. Contractors should provide financial literacy courses and asset-building services specifically geared towards various Cash Assistance populations.

Contractors will specifically provide supports and guidance to maximize the number of clients who receive transitional benefits when their cash assistance case closes for employment. Proposers may also propose to make additional financial supports available to clients, such as funds for uniform purchases or other work-related equipment or services.

d. Coordination

Contractors need to be flexible in order to change services and regularly keep up with the changing labor market. CareerCompass contractors will work with industry partnerships, such as NYC

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Alliance for Careers in Healthcare and Tech Talent Pipeline, to ensure assessment and service coordination strategies are demand-driven and include employer input. New York City's industry partnerships are comprised of teams of industry experts focused on addressing mismatches between labor market supply and demand. To define and fulfill labor demand in each sector, industry partnerships establish feedback loops that formalize regular interaction with employers. Industry partnerships work to determine the skills and qualifications that employers need and continuously upgrade curricula, training, and credential attainment programs to reflect local market conditions. Industry partnerships collaborate with organized labor, educational institutions, service providers, philanthropy, and City agencies to develop workforce strategies and mobilize resources in their respective sectors.

CareerCompass contractors will need to develop and maintain relationships with a number of other City agencies and organizations in order to effectively provide services to clients. CareerCompass contractors will need to remain up-to-date on changing program offerings and requirements for the services to which they may refer clients and ensure full compliance with the ADA and the provision of reasonable accommodations. These include: CareerAdvance contractors, CareerBridge contractors, HRA- and vendor-managed apprenticeship/internship providers, partnership referral organizations, social support providers, and a number of New York City government agencies. These agencies include: the Department of Small Business Services (SBS), the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), the Department of Education (DOE), the City University of New York (CUNY), and others. HRA will facilitate such partnerships with City agencies as well as industry partnerships, as appropriate.

CareerCompass contractors will provide outreach services for clients who have fallen out of compliance with their services in other assigned programs (such as CareerBridge and CareerAdvance). Such coordination will require strong communication with other HRA providers and with HRA.

IV. Service Areas/Level of Services

Services provided under the upcoming RFP will be delivered in five Service Areas, as follows:

- I: Manhattan
- II: Bronx
- III: Brooklyn
- IV: Queens
- V: Staten Island

HRA anticipates selecting up to two (2) contractors per service areas I-IV and one (1) contractor for Service Area V. Services in each service area would be provided to all Cash Assistance applicants and recipients as well as non-Cash Assistance non-custodial parents residing in the specified borough. In addition, these Service Areas include Job Centers that serve specific populations of Cash Assistance clients throughout the City. These populations may include, but are not limited to: veterans, refugees, and participants in substance use treatment.

HRA will require multiple service locations in each Service Area, to be specified in the forthcoming RFP.

V. Planned Method of Evaluating Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP.

HRA is seeking contractors who successfully demonstrate the following criteria, pursuant to the requirements of the RFP:

- Successful experience providing service coordination and supportive services to low-income clients with multiple barriers.

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- Successful experience assessing individuals for career planning in HRA-identified target sector clusters and maintaining relationships with employers or industry partnerships to alter assessment based on fluctuating labor market/employer demand in those sectors.
- Successful experience collaborating with other service providers to coordinate a multi-faceted program model including apprenticeship/internship, education, and job placement/advancement services in HRA-identified target sector clusters
- Successful relationships with providers of social supports (e.g., legal services, mental health services, counseling, domestic violence prevention, child care, parenting programs, child support).
- Organizational capacity to operate the program model
- Successfully describe the management information services and ability to deliver services effectively to clients and employers
- Successful experience providing service coordination and supportive services to individuals who have immediate stabilization needs; ex-offenders; Limited English Proficient clients and immigrants; non-custodial parents; older adults; individuals residing in homeless shelters and those receiving housing subsidies; and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and gender non-conforming clients

HRA welcomes proposals from single organizations with strong partnerships as well as joint proposals from consortia and coalitions of providers.

VI. Proposed Term of the Contracts

It is anticipated that the term of the contracts awarded from the RFP will be for three (3) years, from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019. The contract may include one (1) option to renew for three (3) years, contingent on additional funding. The Agency reserves the right, prior to contract award, to determine the length of the initial contract term and each option to renew, if any.

VII. Funding Information

It is anticipated that the total available annual funding for all contracts awarded from this RFP will be \$24,040,000. HRA anticipates that approximately 67,000 unique clients would be served annually by CareerCompass.

The Agency reserves the right to modify the allocation in the best interests of the City. The final total allocation amount depends on the availability of funds and is subject to change. The Agency reserves the right to award more or less than the full amount of funding requested by the proposers. Proposers should not exceed the anticipated maximum budget in their responses.

VIII. Anticipated Payment Structure

The RFP will contain detailed information regarding the anticipated structure. The Agency anticipates that the RFP will contain a strong emphasis on the effectiveness of assessment and service coordination.

The Agency anticipates that the contracts awarded under this RFP will be a combination of outcome-based and cost-based, taking into consideration program start-up costs. HRA welcomes payment structure recommendations from providers in their responses to the concept papers. Startup advances will be provided to address cash flow for the beginning of this program.

IX. Monitoring and Reporting

The contractors selected under this RFP will be required to complete evaluation forms, attendance sheets, annual reports, and related performance reports. Contractors will submit an annual operating plan describing management and strategic functions for each year of the contract. Contractors will be required to submit verification of milestones achieved for any potential performance-based portion of the contract.

Contractors will also be required to maintain electronic files of client information, service utilization, and outcomes for each client served. Contractors will be required to track clients' participation in program

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services, and contractors will be responsible for accurate and timely reporting of outcomes to HRA. Contractors will be required to participate in any program evaluation efforts, as directed by HRA.

X. Use of HHS Accelerator

To respond to HRA's CareerCompass Requests for Proposals (RFP), vendors must first complete and submit an electronic prequalification application using the City's Health and Human Services (HHS) Accelerator System. The HHS Accelerator System is a web-based system maintained by the City of New York for use by its human services Agencies to manage procurement.

The CareerCompass RFP will be released exclusively through the HHS Accelerator system. Only organizations with approved HHS Accelerator Business Application and Services Applications for one or more of the following will be able to propose:

- Case Management
- Job Placement Services
- Job-Vocational Training
- Work Readiness

To submit a prequalification application to become eligible to apply for this and other RFPs, please visit <http://www.nyc.gov/hhsaccelerator>.

XI. Procurement Timelines

Expected RFP release date: October 26, 2015
Expected proposal submission date: December 18, 2015
Expected award announcement date: April 8, 2016
Expected start date for the contract: July 1, 2016

XII. Information Session

An information session will be held at the date and time indicated below. If you wish to provide comments at this information session, it is strongly recommended that you submit your comments in writing prior to the session.

HRA cannot guarantee that you will be able to provide oral comments at the information session due to time constraints.

Friday, August 14, 2015
2:00pm – 4:00pm
150 Greenwich Street, 43rd Floor Dumpson Center
New York, New York 10007

XIII. Questions/Comments

Please submit all comments to this concept paper no later than September 18, 2015 to accoprocurements@hra.nyc.gov. If you chose to comment via email, please use "CareerCompass comments" in the subject line of the email.

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