



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 youth services, which aim to foster a more successful transition to adulthood for youth in NYC, strongly emphasizing completion of education, through a new program called YouthPathways. The RFP will seek up to nine (9) qualified service contractors to operate YouthPathways sites throughout the City. By combining labor market demand-driven services with youth development principles, HRA will be able to impact the trajectory of their careers at the beginning of their connection to the labor market.

Please see the accompanying diagram for an overview of all new HRA employment and education services, including YouthPathways. In advance of the release of the YouthPathways 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 "YouthPathways 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Banks', written over a white background.

Commissioner Steven Banks

YouthPathways Concept Paper

The City of New York Human Resources Administration Concept Paper

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I. Purpose of Request for Proposal

One of the most critical periods of development occurs in young adulthood during the 18-24 age range. This period is when many people finish their education, start their careers, and transition into adulthood. Yet, many young New Yorkers are not making important meaningful connections to education, training, and employment. Across New York City, approximately 20% (172,000) of young people aged 18-24 are not in school and out of work. This disconnection has both negative short-term consequences, such as decreased earnings and a harmful interruption in skill development, and long-term consequences, such as lower wages and further unemployment in the future¹.

It is forecasted that in 2018, 63% of jobs will require post-secondary education. NYC's high school graduation rate is up to 68%, but there is more work to be done as less than half of NYC high school students graduate college-ready. Moreover, graduation rates among those who enroll in the City's community college system are low. The education gap presents a complex challenge to both employers and workforce providers but one with a shared solution.

New York City is re-orienting its entire set of workforce services Citywide toward career pathways², a workforce development approach that connects successive levels of education, training, and employment with support services. The integrated 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.

At any point in time, approximately 24,000 young adults are receiving Cash Assistance from the New York City Human Resources Administration ("HRA" or "Agency"). An analysis of administrative data for these young adults shows that the 18-20 year old group is very different from the 21-24 year old group (as well as adults aged 25 and older) in terms of their case composition, history of Cash Assistance receipt, and the program activities in which they engage. This suggests that a customized approach for young adults is needed. While youth 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.

Within the career pathways paradigm, HRA aims to foster a more successful transition to adulthood for youth in NYC through a new program called YouthPathways. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will seek up to nine (9) qualified service contractors to operate YouthPathways programs throughout the City in five service areas. By targeting proposed services toward youth, HRA will be able to impact the trajectory of their careers at the beginning of their connection to the labor market. For young adults, this is particularly critical because young adults establish important precedents for educational attainment, family life, and labor force participation at this point in their lives. In fact, young adults who obtain more work experience

¹ Parrott, James and Lazar Treschan. Barriers to Entry: The Increasing Challenges Faced by Young Adults in the New York City Labor Market. New York: Community Service Society, Fiscal Policy Institute and JobsFirstNYC. 2013.

² For more information, see <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/careerpathways/downloads/pdf/career-pathways-full-report.pdf>

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during these years have smoother transitions to the labor market and higher beginning wages as well as higher earnings 10 to 15 years after leaving high school.³

YouthPathways will increase educational attainment (focusing on high school completion and attainment of high school equivalency degrees) and work-readiness as well as connection to employment opportunities in growing industries enhanced by an array of wraparound supports. The goal of YouthPathways is to help each member increase their potential for success and long-term attachment in the labor market.

HRA seeks proposals that include concrete strategies to encourage completion of high school education, to integrate sector-specific bridge and vocational training with programs that lead to credentials, and to place members in apprenticeships/internships and jobs in growing industries. HRA intends to situate YouthPathways within the target sector clusters of healthcare and social assistance; technology; industrial/manufacturing; construction; retail/customer service and food service/accommodation; maintenance and security; and transportation/warehousing.⁴ Though each YouthPathways contractor must be able to connect members to services in these target sectors, each contractor will directly provide services that specialize in at least two of the HRA-identified target sector clusters. Specialization requirements include specific experience in providing sector-based education, employment, and retention/advancement services in specified sector/s.

II. Target Populations

YouthPathways targets youth, including:

- 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
- Non-Cash Assistance Foster Care Youth (referred by the NYC Administration for Children's Services)

Contractors will be expected to serve all youth but will be encouraged to describe specific strategies and their experience serving vulnerable and hard-to-reach youth, which could include (but may not be limited to): those with criminal justice involvement; those in foster care and those aging or aged out; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and gender non-conforming youth; individuals residing in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters and those receiving housing subsidies through the Living in Communities (LINC) program; and Limited English Proficient (LEP) youth. Greater consideration may be provided to proposers with specific experience serving these populations.

The Agency reserves the right to expand the target populations to include other low-income youth and young adults 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.

III. Program Model

The YouthPathways model integrates education programs and employment services with social supports through a strengths-based perspective to foster a successful transition to adulthood. Comprehensive career pathways service coordination is provided for members using a primary-person approach throughout the

³ Sum, A., Fogg, N., and Mangum, G. (2000) "Confronting the Youth Demographic Challenge: The Labor Market Prospects of Out of School Young Adults." Johns Hopkins University, Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies.
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/0d/9b/96.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.

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entire engagement. HRA encourages innovative and evidence-based approaches that are tailored to youth and aligned with youth development principles.

YouthPathways will serve youth who are work-required and those who are not. Members⁵ who are work-required must participate in acceptable activities for specified hours per week or per month⁶, and contractors will need to provide detailed attendance records for them. Work-required members are required to participate in any combination of contractor-provided activities: education/training, job search and pre-employment services, and/or apprenticeship/internship. Please note that all youth through age 24 are permitted to be engaged in training and education services full-time. Contractors will provide outreach services to maximize compliance for members who are required to attend and to encourage cooperation with scheduled appointments and activities in order to avoid any adverse actions. Voluntary members may participate in any of these activities, but there are no negative consequences for not attending.

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

A. Marketing and Referrals

HRA envisions a three-tier assessment process as a result of the re-engineering of systems and operations workflow. The first tier would be self-administered by clients 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 clients need referral to other HRA programs, for example, domestic violence or medical and/or mental health, or substance use treatment services.

Youth deemed fully employable by HRA will be referred to off-site YouthPathways 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.

Other target groups participating on a voluntary basis are not required to attend the program but will require specific outreach. Contractors will develop carefully crafted marketing (including use of social media) and outreach messages to attract potential members to the program. Program messages will speak to youth seeking employment, education, and training services while also appealing to different sub-sets of the youth audience.

Contractors will need to tap into and partner or link with, as appropriate, the range of formal and informal networks and organizations in communities (e.g., local faith-based community institutions, local businesses, parent associations, other community-based organizations, etc.) in order to provide targeted outreach. Contractors should understand the various ways in which youth interact with their communities and with any other individuals who may be able to help convey the program's message.

YouthPathways contractors may engage appropriate youth members to act as YouthPathways Ambassadors, who will provide advisement and assist with facilitating peer-based networks. Members selected for this position are to be supported through a program-paid stipend. Ambassadors may perform a variety of activities that convey the YouthPathways messages at every opportunity, including (but not limited to): marketing services to youth; getting information about job and education opportunities into the informal flow of information among members; helping shape program offerings and outreach efforts; and coordinating community events.

B. Orientation, Strengths-Based Assessment and Other Related Activities

When members present with an acute need for stabilization services, YouthPathways contractor staff will conduct a quick triage and refer members directly to services to assist. Service coordinators will connect members to resources to address needs such as food pantries; counseling; and any other social

⁵ Once individuals are referred to YouthPathways services, they are called YouthPathways "members."

⁶ 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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supports needed. Contractors will have established relationships with other organizations that can provide specific support for such stabilization needs. Contractors will provide specific ongoing support for individuals until they resolve their stabilization need through offering follow-up appointments to check on progress. Once stabilization needs are resolved, the contractor will conduct a full assessment and refer to appropriate services.

Upon initial YouthPathways engagement, members (except those with immediate stabilization needs) must attend a motivational orientation run by contractors. This orientation should introduce the program requirements, opportunities, services offered, and team-building activities. HRA encourages contractors to propose and implement innovative and flexible orientation strategies specifically designed to engage young members.

Following orientation, YouthPathways contractors will conduct one-on-one comprehensive intake and assessments with members. Contractor staff must have expertise implementing educational and career assessments, particularly for youth, in the identified workforce sectors and creating service plans and member goals from the results. Assessments must include, at minimum, the completion of HRA's Employment Plan and the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) academic assessment test or other 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 member 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.

The assessment lends itself to referral for specific support services based on identification of strengths and needs. Contractors will be required to establish referral partnerships with other organizations which provide supportive services, when the contractor does not have the capacity to provide them, and will refer to these organizations upon career plan completion or at any other points in engagement when members have social support needs. Additionally, if during assessment or any other time in program engagement, prior unidentified barriers to employment are identified, the vendor will refer the member to the appropriate HRA program to assist the member in addressing those barriers, including the need for reasonable accommodations.

Within the assessment, contractors will work with members to co-create 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 aligned closely with HRA-identified target sector clusters identified as targets in partnership with the member. Plans will use a strengths-based approach, which empowers members by focusing on their individualized capabilities and builds upon their overall competencies. Once assessed, members may be referred to a number of services in line with service plans, some of which may be outside of YouthPathways. YouthPathways contractors may continue to engage members (e.g., for reassessment) after they have been referred to other services. Service plans will be used over the course of program membership to track members' progress at working toward and accomplishing goals, including revision of plans as necessary and periodic retesting to measure related skill and literacy gains.

HRA encourages innovative approaches to services, for example, offering two-week upfront workshops for members to allow for in-depth assessment, exploration of goals and life choices, promote peer engagement, building motivation, and reinforcing program commitment.

C. Ongoing Career Pathways Service Coordination and Wraparound Support Services

Once enrolled, YouthPathways members will be assigned to a single service coordinator, who will be their primary point of contact throughout program engagement, including after referral to services

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outside of YouthPathways. Upon initial assessment and on an ongoing basis, service coordinators will connect members to resources to address needs and provide robust follow-up on referral outcomes.

Service coordinators will act as navigators to members, particularly during times of transition, and contractors will employ staff with experience and expertise in youth development. Career development and career planning will be provided on an ongoing basis.

Contractors are expected to provide services that support a healthy and successful transition to adulthood. Contractors may provide these services themselves, subcontract for services, or provide through a partnering organization.

a. Financial Counseling and Work Supports

Through financial counseling, either directly or through a qualified partner or subcontractor, YouthPathways contractors will work with members 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 YouthPathways members 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 members 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 youth.

Contractors will specifically provide supports and guidance to maximize the number of members who receive transitional benefits when they are no longer eligible for cash assistance due to employment. Contractors may also propose to make additional financial supports that are relevant and meaningful to the youth population available to members such as funds for uniform purchases and/or other work-related equipment or services. HRA welcomes innovative approaches to connecting financial counseling with training/education and job retention outcomes.

b. Mentoring and Peer Support

Contractors may offer a structured mentorship program for YouthPathways members to whom it would be most beneficial. Members would have the opportunity to form a relationship with a mentor, who ideally is working in their career of interest. These relationships are a way for youth to build confidence and other cognitive and social skills that they can apply to their educational and career path. Additionally, contractors will provide ample opportunities for peer support and cohort-based services throughout the services offered.

c. Social Support Services

Contractors will establish organizational linkages that allow staff to easily refer YouthPathways members to off-site social services, particularly for vulnerable youth, including (but not limited to): legal services; mental health services; services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and gender non-conforming community members; and services for formerly incarcerated members. Contractors will also be expected to leverage and develop partnerships with City-sponsored or co-sponsored programs, such as Community Schools and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) programs for immigrants and other youth.

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Contractors will provide specific services to support parents and parents-to-be, including (but not limited to) connections to parenting classes, referrals for Women, Infant, and Children benefits, Nurse Family Partnership referrals, and healthcare enrollment.

d. Parental/Caretaker and Social Network Involvement

Contractors will make reasonable attempts to establish connections with parents and caretakers of all members. Such services may include (but are not limited to): parent/caretaker involvement with development of member's service plan, referrals of parents/caretakers to supportive services, and parenting classes. Contractors may also need to coordinate services with those being provided by contractors serving other family members. Contractors will attempt to engage the member's larger social network, as peers are often a powerful influence in a young person's life.

e. Coordination

YouthPathways contractors will need to develop and maintain relationships with a number of other City agencies and organizations in order to effectively provide services to members. YouthPathways contractors will need to remain up-to-date on changing program offerings and requirements for the services to which they may refer members. These include: CareerBridge contractors (HRA's new set of training and education providers), CareerAdvance (HRA's new set of employment, retention, and advancement providers), HRA-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), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and others. Additionally, YouthPathways providers will use NYC industry partnerships, such as the NYC Alliance for Careers in Healthcare, to comprehensively inform sector-based components of programs including assessment, training, education, job development, job placement and retention, and advancement. HRA will facilitate partnerships with City agencies and industry partnerships, as appropriate.

D. Education, Training, and Work-Readiness

YouthPathways members will present with varying levels of interest in education and of job-readiness, and contractors need to be able to successfully utilize varying strategies that are tailored to each member. Career exploration will be a key component of YouthPathways programs.

YouthPathways contractors must offer (directly or through an appropriately qualified subcontractor), at minimum, bridge trainings in at least two (2) separate HRA-identified target sector clusters. Bridge programs utilize new or modified curricula, different pedagogical structures and strategies—such as dual enrollment or team-taught instruction in linked basic skills and technical courses and enrolling students in cohorts to create mutually supportive communities of learners.⁷ By contextualizing basic education within a career framework oriented toward quality jobs, youth can more clearly see the connection of education to labor market success and continue on the pathway to further education and employment. Vocational training may be the next step after bridge training and will focus on a select set of credentials that connect with clearly-defined career pathways and that are currently in demand in the labor market. Services will emphasize soft skills in bridge trainings and build in opportunities for interpersonal development.

⁷ Julie Strawn, *Farther, Faster: Six Promising Programs Show How Career Pathway Bridges Help Basic Skills Students Earn Credentials That Matter*," Center for Law and Social Policy, 2011. Online at <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/Farther-Faster.pdf>

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YouthPathways contractors will ensure a diversity of training and education schedules, to accommodate members with varying schedules, and with a variety of full- and part-time options. As appropriate, contractors will ensure targeted tracks are tailored within education and trainings for those at different levels of education/literacy (e.g., separate tracks for those with less than ninth grade TABE level and those with ninth grade or above TABE level).

Contractors will be encouraged to provide instruction with co-teaching. Co-teaching requires both a basic skills instructor and an occupational/technical instructor together in the classroom for a substantial portion of instruction time. Instruction by teachers in separate classes using a contextualized curriculum will also be considered but subject to approval by HRA.

YouthPathways contractors will need to develop and maintain relationships with those to whom their programs are bridging. A key part of bridge programming is proactively building strong relationships with the bridge destination and consciously connecting participants to the next step in their ladder. Such organizations may include but are not limited to City University of New York (CUNY), NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS), and other training and education providers.

For remaining education and training services (counseling and guidance to reconnect members with high school, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, HSE preparation courses, other basic literacy, and vocational training), contractors will have specific connections and will refer members to external educational, training, apprenticeship/internship, and career opportunities and programs that fit into their short-term and long-term goal plans. Contractors will utilize a pool of high-quality education and training providers through HRA as well, including abundant use of referrals to providers in HRA's new CareerBridge contracts (see separate concept paper for more information). Contractors should create formal partnerships with schools and community-based organizations in order to successfully execute all components of the YouthPathways model. The integration of career-focused training with academic coursework has been noted as a best practice in the youth development field.⁸ Contractors should have strategies to integrate sector-specific career planning and readiness as well as soft-skills trainings into (or concurrent with) education and training offerings.

For members who are in school, contractors will provide supportive education services, including connections to after-school programs, advisement and monitoring of education attendance and progress, coordinating with educators/teachers to mitigate issues, and connection to tutoring services. Such services will require working closely with DOE and DYCD to foster completion of high school, facilitate enrollment in specialized schools, and provide special services for those who are close to dropping out or have dropped out.⁹

Additionally, as it connects to their service plan and employment goals, taking steps toward further education, including college, can be discussed with members interested in and realistically able to pursue the commitment. These members should receive specific guidance on how to navigate college admissions and financial aid. Specific information should be provided to help members make school choices (college, vocational training, or other) that minimize potential future debt and counsel members against selecting education and/or training programs that have been unsuccessful in connecting their students to employment after graduation.

YouthPathways contractors should provide comprehensive follow-up to members, to ensure follow through on short-term goals, look ahead to long-term goals, and provide positive reinforcement and assessment of next steps along the way. Follow-up should not only occur at the end of a course or training, but throughout each step, to provide consistent support and address any barriers to completion. At the end of a course or training, staff should work with members to reassess goals and develop a new short-term goal and new action steps.

⁸ Connections: Best Practices in Serving Young Adults. New York: NYC Center for Economic Opportunity. 2013.

⁹ For example, leveraging enrollment in Career and Technical Education high schools, DOE/City University of New York (CUNY) college preparation for high school students, and DYCD programs assisting in drop-out prevention

E. Apprenticeships/Internships

YouthPathways contractors may be required to develop and manage apprenticeships/internships for members that will lead to continuing employment. Apprenticeships/internships should be specifically geared towards career interests and be geographically appropriate for the member. Contractors will need to develop and maintain relationships with apprenticeship/internship providers, which may include public, private, and non-profit organizations. The contractor would ensure that apprenticeships/internships provide a well-structured, well-supervised environment in HRA-identified target sector clusters. Contractors must be sure to provide supportive services and guidance to apprenticeship/internship providers regarding methods of effectively working with youth. Apprenticeships/internships should offer work schedule flexibility and attendance tracking, and progress reporting should be maintained for all members.

F. Job Development, Placement and Retention/Advancement

YouthPathways contractors will successfully utilize a range of employment strategies tailored to each individual member. Job-readiness services include: assistance with development of job search materials (including resume, cover letter, and references), facilitated connections to secure needed resources, interview preparation and role-playing, overviews of expected behaviors and norms in the sector/occupation, and services that address motivational barriers to employment.

Contractors will work with industry partnerships, such as NYC Alliance for Careers in Healthcare and Tech Talent Pipeline, to ensure strategies are demand-driven and include employer input (for job development and filling positions but also assessment criteria and training curricula). 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.

YouthPathways contractors need frequent contact with employers and need to be nimble to change programs and regularly keep up with changing labor market. Though each YouthPathways contractor must be able to connect members to employment services in all target sectors, each contractor will directly provide services that specialize in at least two of the HRA-identified target sector clusters. Selected contractors will have experience and expertise in their HRA-identified target sector clusters and will have a robust set of existing employer relationships. Additionally, YouthPathways providers may utilize referrals to HRA's new CareerAdvance program (see separate concept paper for more information) for job placement, retention, and advancement services.

Through industry partnerships (and independently), contractors are expected to develop and maintain relationships with specific employers. Job development strategies should be specific and prioritize strong and lasting relationships with employers. HRA may require that contractors work with employers to fulfill their city contractor hiring requirement or commitments in exchange for their receipt of subsidies.

Contractors will maximize job opportunities through use of the City's "First Look" hiring process, which is designed to connect a range of economic development and procurement activities to the workforce system. First Look requires qualifying businesses to share open positions with the City and consider the City's referred, qualified candidates. While the First Look system does not require businesses to hire the referred candidates, they must make good-faith efforts to do so and face penalties for noncompliance or withholding jobs from the City.

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YouthPathways contractors will be strongly encouraged to assist members to obtain employment with the highest wages, with benefits, and with potential for growth/advancement. Contractors should provide strong sector-based retention and advancement services. Retention services should address members' success on the job and should also help members achieve financial stability. Contractors should use their relationships with both members and employers to get feedback on the job and address any issues that could lead to termination. Job retention services should be tailored to the long-term goals of each member within their targeted career path. Contractors will help members who lose their jobs find new employment as rapidly as possible. Advancement services could include but are not limited to sector-specific coaching and connections to advanced training/certifications. YouthPathways contractors will also be able to utilize a pool of high-quality sector-based placement, retention, and advancement services through HRA as well. HRA encourages innovative approaches to providing sector-based retention and advancement services.

HRA expects that contractors will provide one-year membership for all YouthPathways members, meaning that contractors should continue to provide comprehensive services after initial job placement. Contractor support should be consistent with the program's goal of successive movement up a career ladder in a specific sector with increasing wages, leading to long-term self-sufficiency. HRA expects that YouthPathways contractors will help transition eligible members work with other city agencies, such as the Department of Small Business Services' Workforce1 Career Centers, as well as other organizations.

IV. Service Areas/Level of Services

Services will be delivered in five Services Areas, as follows:

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

The Agency anticipates selecting up to two (2) contractors for each service area in I-IV and one (1) in Service Area V. Services would be provided to all Cash Assistance applicants and recipients as well as other non-Cash Assistance youth 18-24 residing in the specified boroughs. These service areas include community-based Job Centers as well as special Job Centers that serve specific populations of Cash Assistance clients who reside throughout the City. These specific 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.

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

- Successful experience marketing education and employment programs to youth and using innovative ways to consistently engage youth in such services.
- Successful experience providing contextualized education services (including those with integrated career planning and job-readiness) to youth or connecting youth to other organizations that provide such education in at least two of the HRA-identified target sector clusters.
- Successful experience connecting youth participants to jobs and apprenticeships/internships and providing sector-based retention services in at least two of the HRA-identified target sector clusters.
- Successful experience developing and maintaining relationships with industries/employers in at least two of the HRA-identified target sector clusters

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- Successful experience fostering youth development, connecting youth to social support services, and tracking outcomes.
- Organizational capacity to operate the program model.
- Successfully describe the management information services and the ability to deliver services effectively to members and employers.

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

Proposers achieving a minimum score (to be determined by HRA) who are not selected by HRA through the RFP may be eligible to become “Preferred Referral Providers.” Such providers will not receive funding through HRA contracts but will have direct referrals from HRA and/or its contractors and will enter into formalized agreements with HRA. Preferred Referral Providers may offer alternative engagement to YouthPathways, may provide supplemental services to YouthPathways, or may partner with YouthPathways contractors themselves.

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 \$11,021,000. HRA anticipates that approximately 18,000 unique clients would be served annually by YouthPathways.

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 education, training, and employment.

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 Requirements

The contractors selected under this RFP will be required to submit 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 member information, service utilization, and outcomes for each member served. Contractors will be required to track member’s participation in program 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

YouthPathways Concept Paper

To respond to HRA's YouthPathways 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 YouthPathways 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:

- Academic Supports
- Diploma/HSE Training
- Life Skills
- Literacy
- 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.

Wednesday, August 19, 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 "YouthPathways comments" in the subject line of the email.

HRA Employment Services Concept Papers

