



# RESIDENT ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT & SUSTAINABILITY (REES) FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions should help you better understand NYCHA's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability and the new Economic Opportunity Platform. If you have further questions please [visit us](#) online or email [REESPartner@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:REESPartner@nycha.nyc.gov).

### About the Zone Model

#### 1. What is the “Zone Model”?

NYCHA’s new outcome-driven Resident Economic Opportunity platform is focused on service coordination, strategic partnerships, leveraging localized external resources and services, and NYCHA resources to support resident advancement. To accomplish our goal, NYCHA is taking a multi-pronged approach that includes:

- Collaborating with economic opportunity service providers around outcome-focused projects;
- Providing additional capacity and technical assistance to economic opportunity service providers to better support NYCHA residents in reaching their goals;
- Driving additional public and private investment into public housing neighborhoods to support outcomes for NYCHA residents including supporting the replication of proven



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economic opportunity models where resources don't currently exist as well as testing new approaches; and

- Building a learning community across New York City that develops expertise around supporting public housing residents to reach their economic goals. The learning community within and across NYCHA Zones will test, implement, iterate and replicate best practices in collaboration with residents and other stakeholders.

## **2. How is this approach different from what NYCHA has done in the past?**

The greatest difference is that NYCHA is transitioning away from serving as a direct employment service provider to a service coordinator. NYCHA also is broadening the economic opportunity services available to residents – expanding to include financial literacy and asset building, resident business development, in addition to employment and advancement and adult education and training.

## **3. How will residents' experience be different in this new model?**

NYCHA recognizes that every public housing community is unique. By transitioning from a direct service model to a place-based service coordination model, NYCHA anticipates this new approach will: (1) serve a higher volume of residents, in-place, reducing wait and travel times; (2) provide residents with a



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more comprehensive suite of services with additional capacities; (3) better position NYCHA residents to seize local opportunities; (4) attract proven economic opportunity models to under-resourced communities; and (5) better position NYCHA and local providers to respond to resident's needs through thoughtfully crafted strategic projects.

This place-based strategy also recognizes the critical role NYCHA frontline staff, residents, Resident Leaders, and other neighborhood navigators play in identifying, informing, and connecting residents to local services and opportunities. Our goal is to create a local economic opportunity network that prioritizes public housing residents and uses neighbor-to-neighbor connections, local partnerships, and NYCHA's resources to support resident outcomes.

## **4. What is the role of a Zone Coordinator?**

Zone Coordinators are neighborhood-based NYCHA staff that use local knowledge to create economic opportunity service-delivery networks that serve public housing residents. Each Zone Coordinator oversees a geographic "Zone" that is comprised of 11,000 public housing households on average. Zone Coordinators manage key relationships with local and central NYCHA staff, local stakeholders (e.g. Resident Association Leadership), and Economic Opportunity Service Providers. Zone Coordinators are charged with bundling NYCHA's resources to support strategic projects that bring



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these three sets of stakeholders together to increase residents' income and assets. Zone Coordinators will serve as your chief point of contact and are responsible for ensuring that the partnership is successful.

## **5. What are NYCHA “Zones” and how are they divided?**

NYCHA “Zones” are geographic areas composed of one or more community districts. Each Zone is comprised of an average of 11,000 units and serves multiple public housing neighborhoods.

## **6. How will NYCHA define success of this new model?**

Our goal is to support residents to increase their income and assets. NYCHA will evaluate success by measuring the increase in NYCHA resident's participation with existing economic opportunity organizations and the program-specific outcomes that they achieve. To accomplish that, each Zone Partner project will be tied to the outcome measures mentioned in the REES overview. In year one of the Zone Model NYCHA saw a 22% increase (13,000) in residents served by inaugural zone partners.



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## About Zone Partnership

### 7. What is an economic opportunity service provider?

NYCHA defines “Economic Opportunity Service Provider” as an organization that fits into one of the following categories:

- Adult Basic Education Providers (e.g. ABE, Pre-GED, GED, ESOL)
- Workforce Development Providers
- Financial Counseling Providers (e.g. Financial Empowerment Centers)
- Credit Unions
- Income Support Access Screening Partners (e.g. SNAP, Health Insurance, EITC)
- Community Colleges
- Business Development Assistance Providers

### 8. How can NYCHA help my organization meet our goals and better serve our customers?

As one of the largest landlords in New York and the largest purveyor of public housing in the country, NYCHA is an economic engine and is uniquely positioned to support Resident Economic Opportunity outcomes. NYCHA’s Zone



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Partners will be able to access our resources to implement a series of strategic projects that support resident outcomes\*. When we refer to “resources,” we are referring to non-financial strengths and assets that NYCHA can bring to the broader community economic development ecosystem. These resources include: NYCHA having access to jobs with its vendors and other partners (supported through HUD’s Section 3 regulation); direct access to NYCHA residents and communications means for reaching them; availability of physical space for high-quality programming; resident data to inform quality service provision and evaluation; and NYCHA’s policymaking capabilities.

Through the new approach, NYCHA will bring these resources to Zone partnerships through a menu of strategic projects that are designed to help partners make the most of our resources effectively.

## **9. What are the responsibilities of Zone Partners?**

NYCHA expects Zone Partners to work closely with REES to identify collaborative goals for the term of the partnership.

### **Basic expectations include:**

- A minimum of quarterly meetings (Depending on agreed upon projects, meetings may be more frequent)



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- Designation of a senior staff member to serve as a point person to manage the partnership
- Data sharing and progress reports documenting activities and outcomes
- Sharing of success stories and challenges to inform ongoing development of new model
- Active participation in growing and improving the partnership and service-delivery and outcomes
- A 1-year commitment with the opportunity for auto-renew for 3 years

## **10. How can my organization become a Zone Partner?**

The Zone Partner application process is currently closed. We expect to open up the application process on an annual basis for new partnerships. For more information, email [REESPartners@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:REESPartners@nycha.nyc.gov).

## **11. What is the selection process for becoming a Zone Partner?**

NYCHA's REES staff will evaluate partnership applications and will look at a set of criteria that include: mission alignment, outcomes-orientation, and performance, organizational capacity, quality of services, and demonstrated commitment to this partnership. For groups that advance



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beyond the initial application stage, REES will conduct a site visit. **Selected Zone partners will be required to enter into an agreement with NYCHA that shall set forth the obligations of the parties.**

## **12. My organization operates throughout New York City. Which Zone should I apply to partner with?**

As a citywide organization, you should apply through your central office and designate a local point person who will be responsible for working with the Zone Coordinator. Please contact Shanna Castillo, Senior Advisor, via email at [REESPartner@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:REESPartner@nycha.nyc.gov) or by phone at **(718) 218-1502** if you have any questions.

## **13. Is NYCHA looking for a set number of Partners per Zone?**

Every public housing neighborhood is unique. The number of slots will vary by neighborhood and will be balanced according to service capacity of partners and resident needs and interest.

## **14. Will NYCHA provide financial support to Zone Partners?**

NYCHA is not able to provide financial support to Zone Partners at this time. However, NYCHA is committed to bringing resources to the partnership. Depending on the projects agreed upon, NYCHA will leverage its resources (see Question 2) as the core component of this new strategy. We



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understand that these resources are valuable to our Zone Partners and anticipate that our collaboration will better support resident outcomes.

**15. What are the ways in which NYCHA might seek to build capacity in organizations that are already serving NYCHA residents?**

NYCHA values partners that have a commitment to serving public housing residents. We believe that residents will benefit from services that take into account NYCHA policies that may affect Resident Economic Opportunity. Zone Partners will gain in-depth knowledge of NYCHA policies and receive guidance for how to integrate our policies into service-delivery and programming. NYCHA can also bring certain resources to the collaboration that could support service providers to build efficiencies and capacity through tracking, evaluating and aggregating changes in service-delivery that may improve resident services and outcomes. For example, the knowledge and understanding that a NYCHA resident can pay rent in two installments over a month might assist a financial counseling partner in better supporting NYCHA residents in developing long-term money management strategies.



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## **16. What is an example of the way in which a Zone Partner and REES might work together on a particular project from the partnership menu?**

In 2011, NYCHA partnered for the first time with [Green City Force \(GCF\)](#) to recruit corp members into their employment-linked vocational training program. Through this partnership, NYCHA performed onsite recruitment events and filled their entire training class with NYCHA residents.

### **NYCHA agreed to:**

- Provide space to support recruitment efforts and some service delivery.
- Conduct targeted outreach through emails, flyers, newsletters, and social media.
- Email households with residents between the ages of 18-24.
- Print, distribute, and post flyers across 37 developments.
- Host eight (8) information sessions and publicize the program through the in NYCHA Journal, a NYCHA publication targeted towards residents and employees.
- Use social media to publicize the opportunity, organization, and resident outcomes.



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## **GCF agreed to:**

- Provide six months of free training for 30 students linked to entry-level employment in the energy efficiency field, including certification.
- Accept ONLY NYCHA residents into their cohort.
- Provide job placement support and assistance to residents for three years, post-program graduation.
- Provide a quarterly report, sharing the outcomes of NYCHA participants, including: program retention, job placement and job retention for up to two years post-program graduation.
- From 2011 to present, 200 NYCHA residents have graduated from GCF's training track.

## **17. What types of outcomes can a Zone Partner expect to achieve?**

NYCHA seeks to partner with high performing service providers in the areas of workforce development, adult education, financial counseling, asset building, and business development. We are committed to working with outcome-oriented partners that have track records of success.

**Through partnership, our aim is to achieve the following resident outcomes:**



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- **Employment & Advancement:** Increase the number of NYCHA residents that enroll in participating organizations; increase the number of NYCHA residents who get a job and retain a job; increase the number of NYCHA residents who gain additional skills through vocational training and get a new job or advance in an existing or a related field.
- **Adult Education & Training:** Increase the number of NYCHA residents that enroll in participating organizations, increase the number of NYCHA residents who increase one or more NRS level (National Reporting System) through Adult Basic Education/Pre-HSE, HSE or ESOL classes; increase the number of NYCHA residents who attain a HSE.
- **Financial Literacy & Asset Building:** Increase the number of NYCHA residents who enroll in participating organizations; increase the number of NYCHA residents with emergency savings and viable credit scores; help residents reduce debt and access affordable mainstream financial products; connect NYCHA residents with the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), food stamps (SNAP) and low cost or no cost medical benefits that will support them in job retention and maintaining general financial stability.



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- **Business Development:** Increase the number of the NYCHA residents accessing high-quality business development services; Increase the number of NYCHA resident-owned businesses accessing capital and mainstream financial products and services; Increase the longevity and profitability of NYCHA resident-owned businesses; and Increase the number of NYCHA resident-owned businesses successfully competing for NYCHA and other competitive contracts.

## **18. My organization does not fit the economic opportunity service provider description. Can I still partner with NYCHA?**

You can make your initial inquiries by contacting [REESPartner@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:REESPartner@nycha.nyc.gov).

## **About REES**

### **19. How is REES structured to support NYCHA's new Resident Economic Opportunity platform?**

REES manages a hotline at its Brooklyn headquarters at 787 Atlantic Ave. where residents can sign up to learn more about current initiatives and partnerships, including the NYCHA Resident Training Academy. REES also maintains an online platform, [www.opportunitynycha.org](http://www.opportunitynycha.org), which provides timely



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information to residents and is accompanied by a bi-weekly e-newsletter which has more than 35,000 subscribers.

REES staff, based out of the Brooklyn headquarters, support the pre-screening process for the Training Academy and other special initiatives. REES also oversees NYCHA's compliance with HUD's Section 3 regulation.

The backbone of our new approach are Zone Coordinators, each responsible for overseeing a geographic area with an average of 11,000 units of public housing. Zone Coordinators are supported by a team of functional experts in the areas of Adult Education & Training, Job Generation, Asset Building & Financial Literacy, and Resident Business Development. These functional experts will support the development of high-impact outcome-oriented initiatives as well as ensure that learnings are shared across the network.

## **20. How does the NYCHA Resident Training Academy (NRTA) fit into NYCHA's new Resident Economic Opportunity platform?**

The [NYCHA Resident Training Academy \(NRTA\)](#) is a prime example of the ways in which NYCHA can leverage its resources and the power of public-private partnerships to support residents to increase their income and assets. The Training Academy offers a variety of employment-linked training opportunities to assist residents in building technical



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and professional skills that position them for future careers. The Training Academy is a partnership between NYCHA, [Robin Hood](#), and some of the best not-for-profit employment-training providers in New York City. Every member of the collaboration has something to offer: NYCHA supports the recruitment of potential participants and provides access to available job opportunities at NYCHA, with NYCHA vendors and other partners. Our training providers conduct customized training in a growing number of training tracks. Robin Hood supports the Training Academy financially and ensures on-going support from the training provider to the graduate.

This collaborative approach has borne fruit; in its first year, 89% of the Academy's graduates went on to secure employment with NYCHA, NYCHA vendors, and other partners. In the wake of the success of the program's first year, Robin Hood has increased its investment in the Academy by more than 60% – as a result, the Academy expanded to include a pest control training track for one year in addition to its ongoing construction and janitorial tracks. In the Academy's second year, NYCHA expects to triple the number of residents trained for and placed in good jobs with career ladders. Since program inception in 2010 to date, there have been over 1039 NRTA graduates, 89% of whom have been placed into jobs.



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## **21. How does the Jobs-Plus expansion fit into NYCHA's new Resident Economic Opportunity platform?**

The expansion of Jobs-Plus sites throughout New York City marks a key milestone in the new approach to better supporting residents to increase their income and assets. In addition to leveraging our resources to connect NYCHA residents to high quality existing local resources, NYCHA is working with public and private partners to attract high-quality, relevant resources and proven economic opportunity models such as Jobs-Plus, into public housing neighborhoods. NYCHA has worked with the Human Resources Administration, Center for Economic Opportunity, and the Department of Small Business Services to launch up to seven additional Jobs-Plus sites throughout New York City. [Learn more about the Jobs-Plus expansion.](#)

## **22. How does HUD's Section 3 regulation fit into NYCHA's new Model?**

HUD's Section 3 regulation, a provision of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, encourages housing authorities to connect public housing residents and low-income persons to employment opportunities through the housing authority and its contractors. As stated in the Act, the purpose of Section 3 "is to ensure that employment and other economic opportunities generated by certain HUD financial assistance shall, to the greatest extent feasible, and



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consistent with existing Federal, State and local laws and regulations, be directed to low- and very-low income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing, and to business concerns which provide economic opportunities to low- and very-low income persons.” Section 3 mandates that 30% of all new hires with a NYCHA contractor, to the greatest extent feasible, should be positions filled by public housing residents (or other low-income persons when no public housing residents are available or qualified for the position). In 2001, NYCHA furthered its commitment to resident advancement by instituting the Resident Employment Program (REP). Through REP, contractors must spend 15% of their labor costs on hiring NYCHA Residents when their contract award is greater than \$500,000.

Section 3 and REP are two important resources within NYCHA’s toolbox to support residents in achieving economic opportunity goals. NYCHA is currently reviewing Section 3 and REP internal policies and procedures to ensure that residents are connected to meaningful jobs with NYCHA contractors. Jobs generated through Section 3 and REP are examples of a resource that NYCHA brings to residents and our Zone Partners (See Question 7). Working with our Zone Partners, it is our hope that NYCHA residents will further develop their skills and gain necessary certifications, when needed, to meet the needs of NYCHA contractors and secure



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placements in meaningful job opportunities through the Section 3 and REP programs. [Learn more about Section 3.](#)