

## New York City Department of Youth and Community Development

### SONYC Programs: Youth in Homeless Family Shelters and District 79 Schools Concept Paper January 30, 2015

#### I. PURPOSE

This concept paper is a precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) which will be part of Mayor de Blasio's initiative to expand access to SONYC<sup>1</sup> afterschool programs for New York City's middle school students. Solicitations issued by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) earlier this year and in 2014 have increased these services in public schools, private schools, community centers and cultural institutions.

In the new RFP, DYCD will seek qualified not-for-profit organizations to pilot SONYC programs in settings where comprehensive afterschool services have not, typically, been available. Targeted students fall into two main categories: (1) those living in selected Department of Homeless Services (DHS) family shelters; and (2) justice-involved youth<sup>2</sup> and at-risk youth receiving alternative education services under the auspices of the Department of Education's District 79 (D79). (Note: the pilot will only target students served by a limited number of D79 programs, not the whole range of such programs.) It is anticipated that total annual funding for the pilot programs will be two million dollars: one million for programs in DHS family shelters and one million for D79 students.

Youth in all of the above DHS and D79 categories are vulnerable young people who, despite differing histories and circumstances, can benefit in substantive ways from participation in quality afterschool programming. Nurturing relationships, good role models, and the chance to participate in stimulating activities in a wide variety of areas such as music, drama, dance, poetry writing, arts, physical fitness, leadership development, and career and college exploration help all adolescents stay on track. Such activities feed imaginations and broaden horizons; support educational efforts and foster social and emotional well-being; develop resilience and encourage responsible behaviors. Studies suggest that the benefits may be greatest for students at risk for educational failure or experiencing disruption in their lives due to circumstances such as homelessness or involvement in the juvenile justice system. The aim of programs funded through the RFP will be to inspire youth to develop their strengths, explore their interests and discover their talents in preparation for brighter futures.

#### II. FUNDING, SERVICE OPTIONS, COMPETITIONS

Anticipated total annual funding for the pilot will be \$2,000,000. There will be four service options: one for programs located in DHS family shelters and three for select D79 programs serving students at risk for school failure and justice-involved youth. Each service option will have multiple, site-based competitions, as indicated on the chart below. The justice-involved youth fall into three sub-categories: Secure Detention (SD), Non-Secure Detention (NSD) and Non-Secure Placement (NSP). Students in all three settings receive education services from D79's *Passages Academy*.

Service Options	Competitions/Sites*	Price Per Slot	Number of slots	Anticipated Total Annual Funding
Service Option 1 DHS Family Shelter Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junius Family Residence</li> <li>• Liberty Family Residence</li> <li>• Jennie A. Clarke Residence</li> <li>• Seneca House</li> <li>• Regent Family Residence</li> </ul>	\$3,000	333	\$1,000,000
Service Option 2 D79 SD Youth**	Crossroads	\$6,000	30	\$180,000
	Horizon	\$6,000	30	\$180,000
Service Option 3*** D79 NSD and NSP Youth	Bronx Hope	\$6,000	30	\$180,000
	Belmont	\$6,000	30	\$180,000
Service Option 4 D79 ReStart Academy	TBD	\$5,000	28	\$140,000
	TBD	\$5,000	28	\$140,000
Total All Service Options				<b>\$2,000,000</b>

\*The DHS family shelters listed above have been selected as potential sites for pilot programs based on the approximate number of residents ages 10-14 years.

\*\* Crossroads Juvenile Detention Center (Crossroads) and Horizon Juvenile Detention Center (Horizon) are facilities where youth who have been remanded to secure detention pending adjudication of their cases are housed and educated.

\*\*\* Bronx Hope School (Bronx Hope) and Belmont School (Belmont) are District 79 that provide education services for youth remanded into non-secure detention before their cases have been adjudicated or before they have been sentenced to a non-secure placement.

### III. SUBCONTRACTING

Contractors will be allowed to subcontract specific program services up to 50 percent of the total value of the contract, subject to specific conditions and DYCD approval. The primary purpose of allowing a significant proportion of services to be subcontracted is to encourage program designs that include specialized activities which appeal to youth but are beyond the capacity of the proposer to offer.

### IV. PROGRAM APPROACH

#### *SONYC Program Goals*

The new programs will share the same broad goals as all other SONYC programs:

Goal 1: Foster academic, social and emotional competencies and physical well-being in a safe and nurturing environment

Goal 2: Provide opportunities for youth to explore their interests and creativity

- Goal 3: Build skills that support academic achievement and raise participant expectations and confidence
- Goal 4: Cultivate youth leadership and community engagement
- Goal 5: Engage parents and other caretakers to support the above goals

### *Key Components*

- Program Activities. Most program activities will be structured, i.e., they will be guided by a curriculum and have clearly identified learning goals or skill gains as outcomes. They will provide participants with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that increase positive feelings (e.g., self-worth, self-confidence, optimism), help them look beyond their present situation, and foster resilience. Programs will also offer unstructured activities, for example, drop-in sports, counseling, and tutoring; games and computer time; and, for participants in non-secure detention or non-secure placement settings, outings to museums and performances.
- Youth voice and choice. Programs will offer a menu of activities that purposefully reflects youth voice and choice and successfully engages students with differing interests and talents. Providers must be flexible regarding the selection, structure and organization of activities, bearing in mind, for example, that middle school girls may have very different program preferences to those of middle school boys.
- Expert staff. Providers will engage activity specialists, teaching artists, or specialist subcontractors to ensure that the program offers and effectively delivers a variety of exciting, high quality activity options.
- Complementary activity designs. Programs will complement any ongoing afterschool activities at the site.<sup>3</sup>
- Collaboration. Providers will work collaboratively with all staff at the facilities where the programs operate, including District 79 educators and any other service providers at the program site.
- Partnership Agreements. Organizations submitting proposals for the SONYC programs funded through the RFP will be required to submit partnership agreements demonstrating that (a) the D79 host school and/or (b) the DHS family shelter or juvenile justice secure detention center where the students are living, supports the proposed program design. Accordingly, proposers would explain their designs to the principal of the school and/or the director of the facility and be open to their suggestions regarding specific activity components and specialist subcontractors with expertise that would enhance program quality and appeal. If applicable, proposers would tailor their designs to complement any ongoing afterschool activities at the site. It will be open to principals and/or facility directors to sign partnership agreements with a single proposer or with multiple proposers.
- Parent engagement. Providers will make efforts to engage participants' parents whether they are living together with their children or separately.
- Transition services. Providers will help youth with the transition back to the community and the mainstream education system. Thus, program staff would help students identify and enroll in appropriate afterschool programs. In addition, for a period of 60 days after a youth has left the facility, the SONYC program staff will remain available to give advice and assistance about local community resources and, if necessary, help identify alternative afterschool activities, if the program originally selected was not a good fit.

### *Program Activity Areas*

DYCD will expect all providers to tailor their designs to the interests of the students and the specific requirements or limitations (if applicable) of the facilities where the program is to be located. In all cases, however, proposed designs should reflect the goals, objectives and key program components described above, build youth skills and confidence, and offer a range of fun activities in the following three broad areas:

Enrichment: These activities will be designed to build basic literacy and math skills as well as “21st Century skills” such as teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking. All programs would offer students multiple opportunities to engage in creative activities: examples include drama, music, musical theater, dance, story or poetry writing/telling, arts and crafts (e.g., sewing), comic book creation, stop-motion animation, and videography. Enrichment programming could also embrace activities related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) such as gardening and robotics, depending on available space and resources at the program site. For students in non-secure settings, program designs would incorporate outings of interest to the participants such as trips to museums, ball games, and theatrical or dance performances.

Leadership Development: This will encompass activities designed to foster engagement in school and community, encourage socially responsible behavior, and develop competencies linked to critical thinking and informed decision-making. Activities might include service learning projects, exploration of key elements for a successful transition to high school (including understanding the DOE high school selection process), post-secondary education options, career exploration (including qualifications needed to enter specific professions and alternative career pathways), the basics of financial literacy, and key qualities and characteristics that employers look for in an employee.

Physical Activity and Healthy Living: The purpose of these activities will be to provide youth with physical exercise and highlight the importance of healthy life-styles, including good nutrition and regular physical exercise. Examples of physical activity options include sports, martial arts, yoga and dance.

## **V. SERVICE OPTIONS AND COMPETITIONS**

### **Service Option 1: DHS Family Shelters**

#### *Target Population*

The target participants will be middle school students living with their families in a DHS family shelter that has been selected for the pilot program. Normally, these youth are enrolled in a local school in the community.

#### *Program Sites*

DHS family shelters vary greatly in terms of their geographical location, size, available space for afterschool activities, existing afterschool programming, and number of middle school-age residents. Those listed in the chart on page 2 above represent likely family shelters for inclusion in this pilot. The RFP will provide a final list of sites based on criteria that take account of factors such as a current lack of afterschool activities at the facility, the estimated number of middle school students to be served, and suitability of the available space for the kinds of program activities outlined above.

### *Hours of Operation*

It is anticipated that SONYC programs located in DHS family shelters would operate for a minimum of 12 hours per week, during the 36-week school year, for a total of **432** program hours annually.

### *Program Considerations*

Homelessness and lack of stable housing often disrupts a student's education due to frequent changes of school or long journeys to and from a school in the student's former neighborhood. In addition, homelessness can isolate students from former friends and weaken social connections and support networks, and cause embarrassment and stigma, especially among adolescents. The multiple challenges faced by children whose families become homeless and the effects on their education were recently highlighted in a report from the Institute for Children Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH).<sup>4</sup>

To provide effective SONYC programs for these students, providers must offer a range of compelling activity options that build confidence, broaden horizons, capture imaginations and alleviate the stresses of life in a homeless shelter. To encourage participation, providers would offer outings that are fun and enjoyable that complement the enrichment activities offered at the facility.

In considering their program designs, proposers would seek input from shelter directors and staff and take account of other afterschool opportunities available to their middle school residents at the shelter, at school or elsewhere. Site visits and conversations with shelter directors (e.g., about preferred afterschool activities) will be an integral part of the process that results in the partnership agreement submitted with the proposal (see "Key Components" of SONYC programs above).

Finally, programs would offer services that help middle school students and their families as they transition into more stable housing. Once it is known a family will be leaving the shelter, the provider will inform students about afterschool opportunities in their new neighborhood and connect them to a suitable program there. Program staff will remain available to offer additional information and advice on afterschool activities and other community resources for at least 60 days from the time the family moves out of the shelter.

## **Service Option 2: D79 Youth in Secure Detention (SD)**

### Target Population

Under this service option, programs will serve *alleged juvenile offenders* i.e., *youth who have been remanded by the courts to a secure detention facility pending disposition of their cases*. If the program has available slots, the target population may, include some over-age and under-credited 9<sup>th</sup> graders, in addition to the middle school students.

### Proposed Program Sites

1. Crossroads Juvenile Detention Center (Crossroads), Brownsville, Brooklyn
2. Horizon Juvenile Detention center (Horizon), Mott Haven, Bronx

Note: SD youth both live in and receive their education in the secure detention facilities for the duration of their time in detention.

### Hours of Operation

It is anticipated that the SONYC programs in SD facilities would operate for **15** hours per week, for 36 weeks, for a total of **540** hours annually. Providers will be encouraged to schedule some activities on weekends. With the agreement of the principal and/or facility director, the provider may offer the same programming on different days of the week in order to give more students the opportunity to participate in popular activities.

### Program Considerations

SONYC programs infused with the principles and practices of positive youth development can support the efforts of justice-involved youth to succeed academically and help them through a challenging time in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

Organizations seeking to provide comprehensive afterschool activities to students in secure detention face special challenges. First and foremost is the fact that most youth do not remain very long in detention: generally, stays range from a few days to a few weeks, rather than months. As a result, programs must capture the interest of individual students quickly and effectively and engage a continually changing cohort of participants. In spite of their limited participation in the program, these youth still need activities that are stimulating and fun, foster social and emotional learning, and give them a sense of achievement that helps build confidence and optimism.

The fact that all activities must take place at the facility may compound the difficulty of creating compelling program designs that draw in youth. In addition, staff may find it harder to forge meaningful bonds with SD youth compared to other groups: they have very limited time in which to build trust and psychological factors may affect their interactions. They have been taken away from their families, their friends, their schools and their neighborhoods, and many have histories of trauma and/or other mental health issues. They are in trouble and do not know what will happen to them when their cases are adjudicated. To form relationships with these students, staff must be able to counter their negative emotions, divert them, and give them some hope for the future.

If programs serve 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, in addition to catering to the needs of middle school youth, they would have to include activity options appropriate for and of interest to older youth.

Before SD youth leave the facility, program staff would try to connect them to afterschool and other resources in the community. Accordingly, they will work as closely as possible with D79 Passages Academy staff to identify programs that are likely to be a good fit for individual youth. This will involve consideration of the academic and career goals incorporated into the student's individualized education plan developed during the period in detention as well as any other preferences that youth express.

### **Service Option 3: D79 Non-Secure Detention (NSD) Youth and Non-Secure Placement (NSP) Youth**

#### Target Population

Under this service option, the target population will comprise two groups of middle school youth, and if slots are available, some high school youth:

- *Alleged juvenile delinquents remanded to NSD pending disposition of their cases.*
- *Juvenile delinquents ordered to NSP following adjudication of their case by the court.*

### Proposed Program Sites

1. Belmont School (Brooklyn)
2. Bronx Hope School (Bronx)

It is anticipated that there would be one SONYC program contractor operating at each facility, serving NSD youth two days a week and NSP youth on the other two days.

### Hours of Operation

It is anticipated that SONYC programs for both groups of youth (NSD and NSP) would operate for 3 hours per day, 4-days per week (Monday-Thursday) for the 36 weeks of the school year for a total of **432** program hours annually.

### Program Considerations

Both NSD and NSP youth live in group homes but receive their education at the Bronx Hope or Belmont schools. However, they are distinct groups of justice-involved youth: NSD youth are receiving education in Bronx Hope or Belmont pending adjudication of their cases; NSP youth, in contrast, are receiving education services through these facilities following the disposition of their cases. The two are kept separate, receiving education and other services on different floors of the facility.

SONYC program designs for both NSD and NSP youth would include outings to museums, ball games, Broadway shows, and other places that enhance enrichment activities taking place at the facility. The trips would be selected to reflect the interests of participants and boost morale. Above all, the trips would be diverting and fun. In addition, SONYC programs for both NSD and NSP youth would ease the transition of the participants to the next phase of their lives.

#### *NSD Youth*

Like SD youth, NSD students are only likely to be in detention for a short time. Hence, they may only attend Belmont or Bronx Hope for a brief period. Staff must, therefore, engage them quickly by providing activities that have immediate appeal and “pay-off” from the perspective of the participant.

#### *NSP youth*

In contrast to their peers in detention, NSP students generally remain in their court-mandated placements for four to six months. This means program designs can incorporate sequenced, project-based activities that research suggests are especially helpful in building social and emotional skills and supporting educational progress. While programs must still offer activity options that are genuinely engaging, it should be easier for staff to forge relationships with NSP students. First, they are not facing the same kind of uncertainty that NSD youth experience. Second, although they are still in the juvenile justice system, the prospect of return to family and community is within sight. A key aspect of program services will be helping NSP students settle back into life in the community when they resume their education in a traditional school in the community. To this end, SONYC program staff will work with DOE counselors and NSP facility staff to identify suitable afterschool programs before students exit from Bronx Hope or Belmont. They would participate in educational transition planning meetings and remain available to offer advice and guidance on afterschool options and other community resources for a period of at least 60 days from the time the youth exits the facility.

## **Service Option 4: District 79 ReStart Academy**

### Target population

The target population in this service option will be youth enrolled in a D79 ReStart Academy school. ReStart Academy is designed for students who have failed in mainstream schools or been identified as being at risk for school failure. Although they generally live at home with their families, to enroll in a ReStart Academy school the students must first be accepted by an approved behavioral/mental health provider for treatment and intervention services that will address their behavioral, mental health, substance abuse or other issues that have contributed to their difficulties in school.

### Program Sites

The ReStart sites will be identified in the RFP. They will be selected on the basis of criteria such as the number of middle school students enrolled in a particular Re-Start Academy school, the estimated number of youth who would participate in a SONYC program, and other afterschool activities offered at the school.

### Hours of Operation

It is anticipated that SONYC programs for middle school youth enrolled in one of the ReStart Academy schools would operate for 12 hours per week (Monday-Thursday) during the 36 weeks of the school year, for a total of **432** program hours annually.

### Program Considerations

Proposers will need to bear in mind that the students at ReStart Academy schools face multiple challenges including school failure, risky behavior, and mental health issues. They will have been referred to the ReStart Academy from a variety of sources including school officials, juvenile justice prevention services, Family Court, and social services agencies. Some will already have been suspended from school; many will have histories of trauma.

Once accepted, these students are likely to remain in the ReStart Academy schools for approximately a year, or as long as they continue to receive treatment services. ReStart schools offer smaller classes and more individualized instruction compared to traditional schools, giving their students an opportunity to catch up academically and recover the credits needed to transfer back to a neighborhood school. Thus, what they need, primarily, is not academic support, but opportunities to participate in the kinds of enrichment activities that characterize quality afterschool programs.

One of the main challenges for providers will be to create and deliver program options that draw in and retain students who have already become disengaged from academic and pro-social endeavors or shown signs of disengagement. Accordingly, proposers would work closely with the school principal and other the ReStart Academy staff to identify activities that genuinely reflect student interests. As incentives to consistent participation, programs would also offer outings that complement enrichment activities that take place at the school and, above all, are fun.

## **VI. OUTCOMES TRACKING AND EVALUATION**

It is anticipated that DYCD, in collaboration with DHS, ACS and D79, will collect enrollment and attendance data and develop specific outcome measures for the pilot programs within each service option, such as participant satisfaction/perceptions, skill gains, improved social and emotional competencies, and reduced disciplinary incidents/lower recidivism.

## **VII. ANTICIPATED CONTRACT PERIOD**

It is anticipated that the term of all the contracts awarded from the RFP under all Service Options will be for a period of three years starting July 1, 2015 with an option for DYCD to renew the contracts for up to three additional years. Program services would be expected to start on September 1, 2015.

## **VIII. ANTICIPATED PAYMENT STRUCTURE**

Contracts will comprise line-item reimbursement in accordance with the budget approved by DYCD.

## **IX. ELIGIBILITY AND BASIS FOR AWARD**

Eligible organizations will be incorporated as not-for-profit organizations at the time of contract award.

Proposals will be evaluated according to criteria that will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capability, and proposed approach and design of the program or services. Organizations selected for award will be those which demonstrate successful experience providing similar services to similar populations of middle school youth. Successful relevant experience will take into account, if applicable, past performance on DYCD, ACS and DHS contracts.

## **X. PROCUREMENT TIMELINE**

It is anticipated that DYCD will release the RFP approximately seven weeks after the release of this concept paper. The deadline for submitting proposals in response to the RFP will be approximately five weeks after the RFP release date.

### *Use of HHS Accelerator*

To respond to the forthcoming RFP and all other client and community services (CCS) Requests for Proposals (RFPs), 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. Only organizations with approved HHS Accelerator Business Application and Service Applications for one or more of the following will be eligible to propose.

- Academic Supports
- Community Engagement
- Life Skills
- Health Education and Supports
- Literacy
- Recreational Services
- Child Care
- Case Management
- Preventive Services
- Mental Health Services

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

### Comments

Please email comments on the concept paper to DYCD at [CP@dycd.nyc.gov](mailto:CP@dycd.nyc.gov) no later than February 27, 2015. Please enter “SONYC Programs: Youth in Homeless Family Shelters and District 79 Schools” in the subject line.

Written comments also may be submitted to:

Cressida Wasserman  
 Department of Youth and Community Development  
 2 Lafayette Street, 20th Floor  
 New York, New York 10007

### ENDNOTES

---

<sup>1</sup> DYCD afterschool programs for middle school students are now referred to as School’s Out New York City (SONYC) programs, and part of the Comprehensive Afterschool System (COMPASS).

<sup>2</sup> Note: since the City created the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) following the incorporation of the Department of Juvenile Justice into ACS at the end of 2010, ACS has overseen both secure and non-secure juvenile detention facilities in addition to child welfare agencies. New York State, building on the City’s juvenile justice reforms, subsequently launched an initiative known as *Close to Home*. Under this program, adjudicated juvenile delinquents are placed in DYFJ-contracted group homes located near their families and home community instead of being sent to far away locations in upstate New York. A major purpose of *Close to Home* is to make it easier for families to stay involved with their children and the services they receive in the juvenile justice system. The program also aims to keep youth engaged in their education to facilitate a smoother transition when they return to their families and communities and re-enroll in a regular district school. For more information, see e.g. The Close to Home Initiative and Related Reforms in Juvenile Justice. Vera Institute of Justice, January 2014. <http://www.vera.org/pubs/close-to-home-nyc-health-human-services-policy>.

<sup>3</sup> In recent years, organizations that have provided programming for youth secure detention include Row New York, Bike New York, Voices Unbroken, Hocus Pocus, The Girl Scouts of America, Doing Art Together, Sprout by Design, the Lineage Project and Carnegie Hall Musical Connections.

<sup>4</sup> *A Tale of Two Students: Homelessness in New York City Public Schools*. ICPH, July 2014. See, <http://www.icphusa.org/index.asp?page=16&report=122&pg=133>

---

<sup>5</sup> Many justice-involved youth are now able to earn credits like all other students in the City’s public school system. At D79 Passages Academy schools, credits are awarded in 35-day units, and, to be eligible to earn credits in a unit, students must be enrolled at the school for least 23 days. DOE data from the 2012/2013 school year suggest that the vast majority of NSP youth who were entitled to earn credits did so, and a significant minority (21 percent) earned 10 or more credits. Vera Institute of Justice, January 2014, Op. Cit.