



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 new services that aim to use a sector-based, employer-focused model emphasizing workplace retention and advancement of clients through a new program called CareerAdvance. The RFP will seek up to seventeen (17) qualified service contractors to operate CareerAdvance programs throughout the City. In alignment with the new, citywide career pathways approach, HRA will situate CareerAdvance 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.

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

CareerAdvance Concept Paper

The City of New York
Human Resources Administration
Concept Paper

CareerAdvance Concept Paper

I. Purpose of RFP

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

Sector-based approaches to workforce development have been found to be more successful than general approaches. A recent study of jobseekers at two NYC sector-specific Department of Small Business Services (SBS) one-stops found that jobseekers achieved higher average annual earnings and rates of employment in all four quarters after exiting the program, particularly for those who received skills training, than individuals who received general services and no training from non-sector one-stops. Additionally, workforce industry partnerships (or intermediaries) have been identified as a best practice by many leading experts.¹ To define and fulfill labor demand in each sector, industry partnerships establish feedback loops that formalize regular interaction with employers.

The Human Resources Administration (“HRA” or “Agency”) seeks to update its entire set of workforce services to orient them toward increased opportunities for education and toward long-term self-sufficiency outcomes. With the new CareerAdvance program, HRA intends to use a sector-based model to focus attention on the career-readiness, workplace retention, advancement, and long-term self-sufficiency of clients. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will seek up to seventeen (17) qualified service contractors to operate CareerAdvance programs throughout the City.

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

In alignment with the new, Citywide approach of career pathways², HRA intends to situate CareerAdvance 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/warehousing³. HRA reserves the right to add additional sectors.⁴ Contractors should implement CareerAdvance programs within these sectors and using industry partnerships as well as strong connections to employers. Clients who participate in career pathways will create a career path that details a timeline for each step’s completion. Job placement strategies should focus on developing opportunities within the sector that have room for advancement. Contractors will offer follow-up retention and advancement services along the

¹ Fischer, David. (2005). Workforce Intermediaries: Powering Regional Economies in the New Century. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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

³ These sectors were selected based on consideration of such factors as recent and forecasted job growth, total employment, and wages.

⁴ 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

chosen sector career pathway for one (1) year for clients who receive initial placement. Such services must include hand-off to other City agencies and other providers for skill upgrades, education, and employment advancement.

Three separate competitions will occur under the forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP):

Competition I: Target Cluster Sector-Specific Services (up to 7 qualified service contractors total)

Contractors will provide comprehensive employment, retention, and advancement services for clients who are job-ready, have high levels of skills/education, and/or others whose personal goals are immediate employment within one of the HRA-identified target sector clusters. This will be accomplished through one or more different competitions.

Competition II: General and Alternative Sector-Specific Services (up to 3 qualified service contractors total)

Contractors will provide comprehensive employment, retention, and advancement services for clients who are job-ready, have high levels of skills/education, and/or others whose personal goals are immediate employment but who are not certain of their primary sector of interest or who are interested in sectors other than those in the HRA-identified target sector clusters.

Competition III: Targeted Services (up to 7 qualified service contractors total)

Contractors will provide targeted employment, retention, and advancement services for Cash Assistance clients who decide they may benefit from specific and directed strategies through contractors that have specialized experience. This will be accomplished through one or more different competitions. Each contractor under this competition must specialize in at least one of the HRA-identified target sector clusters. While HRA reserves the right to add or change the types of clients who would be eligible for Targeted Services, HRA anticipates that these clients will include:

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

Innovative ideas for working with these clients are encouraged. Strategies for working with Targeted Services clients may include (but are not limited to): lower client-to-staff ratios, more frequent one-on-one counseling, and cohort-based engagement.

II. Target Populations

CareerAdvance targets:

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

The Agency reserves the right to expand the target populations to include other low-income individuals in need of employment services. For all services, contractors must be able to provide linguistically appropriate (as required by Local Law 73) and culturally competent assistance. Additionally, all contractors must have specific strategies for working with youth (those ages 18-24). 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

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accommodations. Contractors will also be compliant with New York City Human Rights Law and HRA policies regarding these special populations.

III. Program Model

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

Clients deemed fully employable by HRA will be referred to off-site CareerCompass (for adults) and YouthPathways (for youth) contractor locations, where contractors will provide tier three, in-depth assessments and direct clients to the proper set of services that are tailored to individualized strengths, interests, and needs.

Individuals may then be referred to a combination of services, including (but not limited to):

- CareerBridge: new set of HRA contracted services for contextualized adult basic education, high school equivalency preparation, bridge training, English as a Second Language, and vocational training (see separate CareerBridge concept paper for more details)
- CareerAdvance: for clients who are job-ready, have high levels of skills/education, and/or others whose personal goals are immediate employment will be referred to CareerAdvance contractors to receive services
- Supportive services (provided by organizational partners)
- Other HRA-provided services and programs
- Programs provided by HRA partnering organizations (providers and other City agencies)
- HRA- and vendor-managed apprenticeships/internships

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

CareerAdvance contractors are required to provide comprehensive job placement and retention services to clients, offering multiple opportunities to advance along a career ladder. Contractors will be responsible for helping job-ready clients obtain and maintain employment at various points along their chosen career. HRA encourages proposal of innovative approaches, especially those that include evidence-based strategies such as motivational interviewing. Program components are listed below and apply to all competitions. For Competition III, contractors will utilize strategies under each component that are tailored to and specific to their Targeted Services group.

a. Pre-Employment and Job Placement Services

CareerAdvance contractors should minimize the amount of initial testing and assessment of clients that is duplicative to what has already been provided through the CareerCompass contractors (e.g., minimize additional assessment questions). HRA encourages and will facilitate CareerAdvance contractors working closely with CareerCompass contractors to ensure that necessary elements are included in CareerCompass-provided assessments that will lead to the proper screening of clients for work-readiness and sector-based experience and preference.

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

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Pre-employment services provided by CareerAdvance contractors should include effective job search strategies and services and workshops that help clients prepare for their job search such as resume preparation and interviewing skills. HRA encourages innovative approaches to pre-employment services, such as peer-based feedback groups, mock interviews, and role-playing activities. CareerAdvance contractors will also provide computer skills training for clients, as such skills are necessary not just for the workplace but also for things like high school equivalency testing.

Employers generally have difficulty finding jobseekers who have the right set of job skills, and they have even more difficulty finding those who have sufficient “soft skills.” CareerAdvance will emphasize soft skills and incorporate multiple opportunities for soft skill growth. CareerAdvance contractors will specifically connect the experiences clients are having in their concurrent apprenticeship/internship or subsidized job, as relevant, and incorporate such work functions and skills into client resumes and ongoing feedback to clients.

CareerAdvance 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. 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 will collaborate with organized labor, educational institutions, service providers, philanthropy, and City agencies to develop workforce strategies and mobilize resources in their respective sectors.

CareerAdvance contractors need frequent contact with employers and need to be nimble to change programs and regularly keep up with changing labor market. Selected contractors will have experience and expertise in their target sector cluster/s and will have a robust set of existing employer relationships as well as the ability to develop more relationships. Industry partnerships will connect contractors to industry associations and employers for the purpose of filling open positions. Through industry partnerships (and independently), contractors are expected to develop and maintain relationships with specific employers. Job development strategies should be specific to HRA-identified target sector clusters 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.

CareerAdvance 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.

b. Retention and Advancement Services

Once clients are placed in jobs, CareerAdvance contractors should provide strong sector-based retention and advancement services. Retention services should address clients’ success on the job and should also help clients achieve financial stability. Contractors should use their relationships with both clients 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 client within their targeted career path. For those who lose their jobs, CareerAdvance contractors will assist in rapid replacement. Advancement services could include but are not limited to sector-specific coaching and connections to advanced training/certifications. HRA encourages innovative approaches to providing sector-based retention and advancement services.

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HRA expects that contractors will provide one-year membership for all CareerAdvance clients, meaning that contractors should continue to provide comprehensive services after initial job placement. Contractor support should be consistent with CareerAdvance 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 CareerAdvance contractors will help transition eligible clients work with other city agencies, such as the Department of Small Business Services' Workforce1 Career Centers, as well as other organizations.

c. Apprenticeships/Internships

CareerAdvance contractors may be required to develop and manage apprenticeships/internships for clients that will lead to continuing employment. Contractor-managed apprenticeships/internships should be specifically geared towards career interests and be geographically appropriate for the client. Contractors choosing to provide apprenticeships/internships will need to develop and maintain relationships with apprenticeship/internship providers, which may include public/non-profit community organizations and private entities. The contractor would ensure that apprenticeships/internships provide a well-structured, well-supervised environment in HRA-identified target sector clusters. Apprenticeships/internships should offer work schedule flexibility, and attendance tracking and progress reporting should be maintained for all clients.

d. Financial Counseling

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

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

IV. Service Areas/Level of Services

In Competition I, HRA anticipates selecting one contractor for each service area. Services provided under the forthcoming RFP will be delivered citywide within 7 service areas, as follows:

- I: Healthcare and Social Assistance
- II: Technology
- III: Industrial/Manufacturing
- IV: Construction
- V: Retail/Customer Service and Food Service/Accommodation
- VI: Maintenance and Security
- VII: Transportation/Warehousing

In Competition II, HRA anticipates selecting up to three (3) contractors. Services provided under the upcoming RFP will be delivered in three service areas, as follows:

- I: Bronx

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- II: Brooklyn and Queens
- III: Manhattan and Staten Island

For Competition II, services in these service areas would be provided to all Cash Assistance applicants and recipients as well as non-Cash Assistance non-custodial parents residing in the specified boroughs. In addition, these Service Areas include Job Centers that serve specific populations of Cash Assistance members throughout the City. These populations may include, but are not limited to: veterans, refugees, and participants in substance use treatment.

In Competition III, HRA anticipates selecting one contractor for each service area. Services provided under the upcoming RFP will be delivered citywide within seven service areas, as follows:

- I: Ex-offenders
- II: Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients and immigrants
- III: Non-custodial parents
- IV: Older adults
- V: Individuals residing in homeless shelters and those in LINC
- VI: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning clients
- VII: Transgender and gender non-conforming clients

For Competition III, the contractor for Service Area V serving individuals residing in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters and those receiving housing subsidies through the Living in Communities (LINC) program may be required to station staff on-site at select homeless shelters to provide services.

HRA will require multiple service locations in each service area under each competition, 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.

For all competitions, HRA seeks providers who successfully demonstrate the following criteria, pursuant to the requirements of the RFP:

- Successful experience placing low-income individuals into employment, including youth (those ages 18-24)
- Successful experience providing employment services to individuals with multiple barriers
- Successful experience providing employment sector-based retention and advancement services in at least one of the HRA-identified target sector clusters
- Successful experience developing and maintaining relationships with industries/employers in at least one of the HRA-identified target sector clusters
- Successful experience collaborating with other service providers and creating partnerships to coordinate a multi-faceted program model including apprenticeship/internship, education, and job placement/advancement services
- Organizational capacity to operate the program model
- Successfully describe the management information services and the ability to deliver services effectively to clients and employers

Specific additional criteria for Competition II only include:

- Successful experience providing employment sector-based retention and advancement services in proposer-identified sectors not among HRA-identified target sector clusters
- Successful experience developing and maintaining relationships with industries/employers in proposer-identified sectors not among HRA-identified target sector clusters

Specific additional criterion for Competition III only includes:

- Successful experience providing employment, retention, and advancement services to individuals who are ex-offenders; Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients and immigrants; non-custodial parents; older

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adults; individuals residing in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters and those receiving housing subsidies through the Living in Communities (LINC) program; lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, gender non-conforming clients and/or transgender clients.

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 CareerAdvance, may provide supplemental services to CareerAdvance, or may partner with CareerAdvance 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 \$22,617,000. HRA anticipates that approximately 31,678 unique clients would be served annually by CareerAdvance.

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 long-term employment retention and advancement.

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

IX. Monitoring and Reporting

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

Contractors will also be required to maintain electronic files of client information, service utilization, and outcomes for each client served. Contractors will be required to track clients' participation in program services, and contractors will be responsible for accurate and timely reporting of outcomes to HRA. Contractors will be required to participate in any program evaluation efforts, as directed by HRA.

X. Use of HHS Accelerator

To respond to HRA's CareerAdvance 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.

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The CareerAdvance 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:

- 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.
Thursday, September 10, 2015
2:00pm – 4:00pm
150 Greenwich Street, 37th floor Bid Room
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 “CareerAdvance comments” in the subject line of the email.

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