

## **Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach** **A Program of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS)**

### **PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY**

This overview of the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach program is based on a program review conducted by Westat/Metis staff for the evaluation of Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) initiatives. The data were collected between March and May 2008 through interviews with staff at the CEO, SBS, the operators of four Workforce1 Career Centers (Wildcat, Goodwill Industries, DB Grant Associates, and LaGuardia Community College), one CBO representative, and a review of program documents and monthly data and management reports from SBS through June 2008.

**Sponsoring Agency:** New York City Department of Small Business Services

**Provider Agency:** The operators of Workforce1 Career Centers (WF1CCs) in three boroughs: Wildcat (Bronx), Goodwill Industries (Brooklyn), DB Grant Associates (Queens), and LaGuardia Community College (also in Queens, referred to as LaGuardia).

**Start Date:** The CEO-funded program began July 2007 at three WF1CCs (all except LaGuardia), initially involving a three-person team at each. The LaGuardia program started in April 2008. A more limited version of CBO Outreach had started at all New York City WF1CCs in July 2006 under SBS direction. Plans are underway to launch a fifth program in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx in late summer/fall 2008.

**CEO Budget:** \$1,299,800 for July 2007 through June 2008

**Target Population:** There are two target populations: the CBOs (Outreach partners) who refer job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs, and the unemployed or low-wage job candidates, age 18 and older. Seventy percent of job placements should involve residents from high-poverty areas (i.e., Bedford-Stuyvesant, Melrose, and Jamaica) specified by zip code.

**Statement of Need:** CBOs have access to a large cohort of job seekers, but lack strong employer connections and a clear linkage to the public workforce system.<sup>1</sup>

**Goals and Services:** The goal of the SBS CBO Outreach program is to expand the pipeline of job-ready candidates from high-poverty areas for placement by the WF1CCs, by reaching out to CBOs (particularly those who provide job readiness training and skills training) and encouraging them to send their job-ready clients to the WF1CC for job placement. Clients are referred in response to specific job orders sent to the CBOs by the Outreach team.

**Eligibility Criteria:** To be an Outreach partner, CBOs must be capable of sending job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs for job placement. Job candidates must be unemployed or low-wage New Yorkers age 18 and older who are assessed as job ready.

**Targets/Outcomes:** The target and actual numbers for the categories presented below in Table 1—as well as the percentage of each target obtained—are presented for the first year of the program, as of the end of June 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Economic Opportunity, (December 2007), *Strategy and Implementation Report*. New York: Center for Economic Opportunity, p. 86.

**Table 1. Target and Actual Placement Numbers and Percentages of Targets Placed**

Category	Target Numbers	Actual Numbers	Percent of Target Met
Number of clients placed in jobs	1,800	2,090	116%
Referral-to-placement ratio	3:1 or better	2.3:1	100%
Percent (number) of placements from target neighborhoods	70% (1,463)	56% (1,170)	80%
Percent (number) of placements from all high-poverty neighborhoods	70% (1,463)	68% (1,415)	97%

### Selected Key Findings

Key findings of this program review include:

**Fidelity to the Program Model.** The program maintains fidelity to the program model developed by SBS based on the agency’s previous programmatic experience and its identification of best practices in reaching out to the community. The outreach teams have evolved from three-person teams to larger teams that involve a greater number of WF1CC staff so the program is better integrated within the WF1CC system. The biggest departure from the model is at the Queens Center, which is supplementing outreach to CBOs with direct outreach to clients through distribution of fliers and other means of advertising to better reach clients living in the target neighborhoods.

**Characteristics of the Clients Served in Comparison to the Target Population.** The program is serving an economically disadvantaged population. The majority of clients (92%) who were placed were unemployed at the time of referral. The average pre-wage was \$9.45/hour. The majority (68%) of clients placed in jobs resided in high-poverty areas with 56 percent living in one of the CEO-target neighborhoods. The CBO partners range from small organizations to large city-wide organizations that work with several WF1CCs. Some of the partners are Workforce Investment Act (WIA)-mandated organizations; others are faith-based, educational, or housing organizations.

**Service Delivery.** The program provides fast-track placement services to clients referred from CBOs, including a short orientation session and immediate job placement services. Announcements of job orders are sent weekly to CBOs through general “job blasts” or through a segmented strategy targeted to CBOs with clients most likely to meet specific job requirements. The outreach teams are forming partnerships with CBOs through visiting CBOs to describe the program and conducting on-site assessments and intakes; providing monthly meetings for CBOs to learn about the program and network; and providing ongoing education to CBOs about the qualities of a job-ready candidate. These activities, which clarify program goals and strategies, have resulted in increased numbers of job-ready candidates referred over the course of the program year.

**Provider Capacity.** Two of the three providers that CEO initially funded have demonstrated the capacity to manage and implement a strong CBO Outreach program that is well-integrated into Center operations, and the third appears to be moving in that direction after a very weak start. The program has been replicated at a fourth Center, and another is planned.

**Agency Management.** SBS provides strong, hands-on management of the program through regular communication with the program sites and close monitoring of program accomplishments. The agency provides extensive technical assistance to the WF1CCs, including the development of a *Partner Team Manual and Resource Guide*, a customer flow chart, an Excel-based tracking system for referrals and placements, informational materials for use by the WF1CCs in their outreach to CBOs, as well as monthly meetings and regular telephone consultations with Center staff. SBS closely monitors progress toward targets, helps WF1CCs develop a corrective action plan when necessary, and ultimately enforces sanctions (reduced or eliminated funding) when key targets are not met. SBS has effective monitoring and program improvement processes in place and is continually looking at ways to strengthen the program and increase the number of clients placed in jobs.

**Early Outcomes.** The program has been successful at recruiting CBOs, having CBOs send job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs, and making job placements. As shown above, by the end of the first program year, the program exceeded both its job placement target and its referral-to-placement rate and came very close to meeting its target for placing residents from high-poverty areas.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The SBS CBO Outreach program proposes a plausible approach to lifting New Yorkers out of poverty through job-readiness and skills training at CBOs and job placement by the WF1CCs.

- The program is serving an economically disadvantaged population of unemployed adults, 68 percent of whom live in high-poverty areas.
- The program is resulting in stronger partnerships between government WF1CCs and community organizations to train and place low-income workers in jobs.
- SBS is providing strong oversight and technical assistance to the program.
- The program is meeting its job placement and referral to placement goals.
- The program should continue to strengthen its approach to serving residents of the high-poverty areas.

# Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach A Program of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS)

## PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

### 1. Introduction

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has funded approximately 40 initiatives across some 20 sponsoring agencies aimed at reducing the number of working poor, young adults, and children living in poverty in New York City. CEO is committed to evaluating its programs and policies and is developing a specific evaluation plan for each of its initiatives. For example, several major new initiatives will implement random assignment evaluations or other rigorous designs. Some programs are slated to receive implementation and outcome evaluations, while others may be evaluated using readily available administrative data. This differentiated approach reflects the varied scale of the CEO interventions, data and evaluation opportunities, and finite program and evaluation resources. Westat and Metis Associates are evaluating many of these programs on behalf of CEO. The purposes of the evaluations are to collect and report data on the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the programs in the CEO initiative to inform policy and program decision-making within CEO and the agencies that sponsor the programs.

The first phase of the Westat/Metis evaluation is to conduct a systematic review of selected CEO programs. The program reviews involve Westat/Metis staff reviewing program documents, obtaining available implementation and outcome data, interviewing program administrators, and, where appropriate, going on-site to observe program activities and interview direct service staff and participants. The results are used to assess the program design and implementation, develop a logic model to represent the underlying theory of each program, determine the extent to which the program meets key CEO criteria, examine the measurement and information systems for the program, and provide options for next steps.

Information and data for this Program Review Report are based on interviews conducted by Westat/Metis between March and May 2008 with staff of the CEO; SBS; the operators of four Workforce1 Career Centers (WF1CCs): Wildcat (Bronx), Goodwill Industries (Brooklyn), DB Grant Associate (Queens), and LaGuardia Community College (LaGuardia); and a representative from one CBO partner,<sup>1</sup> as well as a review of program documents and monthly data and management reports from SBS through June 2008.

This Program Review Report provides an overview and assessment of the program on several dimensions, including its goals, fidelity to the program model, target population and clients served thus far, program services, and agency management. CEO and the relevant sponsoring agency were invited to identify specific questions of interest to be included as part of these standardized program reviews.

A key analytic tool in the program review is the development of a logic model that serves as a visual representation of the underlying logic or theory of a program. The program logic model details the

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<sup>1</sup> Given the large number and diversity of CBO partners, interviewing a representative sample was beyond the scope of this program review.

program's context, assumptions, and resources and their relationships to one another. By examining the program's internal logic and external context, the evaluation team and reader are able to determine if the program design is consistent with overall goals and capable of achieving its intended outcomes. Toward this end, this brief focuses on early outcomes and the challenges faced in achieving them.

## **2. Overview and Assessment of the Program**

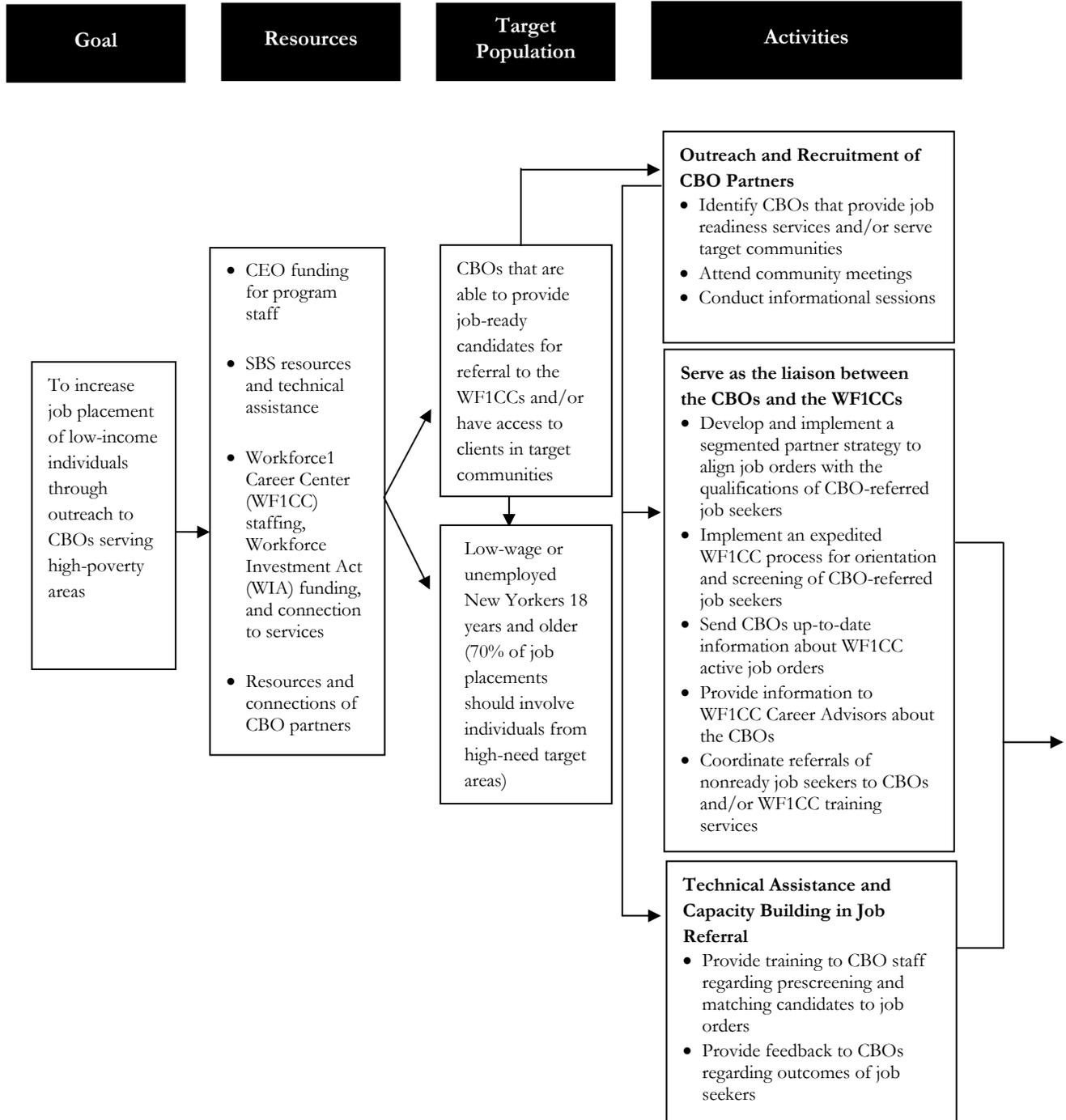
**Program Goals.** As shown in the logic model on the next two pages, the overall goal of CBO Outreach is to expand the pipeline of low-income job-ready candidates into the WF1CCs. The WF1CCs are a critical part of the City's workforce development system that connects employers to skilled workers and provides training and placement services to the City's adult workforce. The program's goal is to be achieved by reaching out to CBOs (particularly those that provide job readiness training and skills training) and encouraging them to send their clients to the WF1CCs for job placement when the clients are deemed job-ready. The guiding assumption is that unemployed, low-income City residents will be placed in jobs more quickly when they do not need to seek out the WF1CCs on their own but when there is facilitated access to the WF1CC's extensive job placement services by CBOs. The partnership between the CBOs and the WF1CCs is designed to allow the WF1CCs to leverage CBO job-readiness and skills training and increase the reach of the WF1CCs into poor communities where the need for job placement is highest.

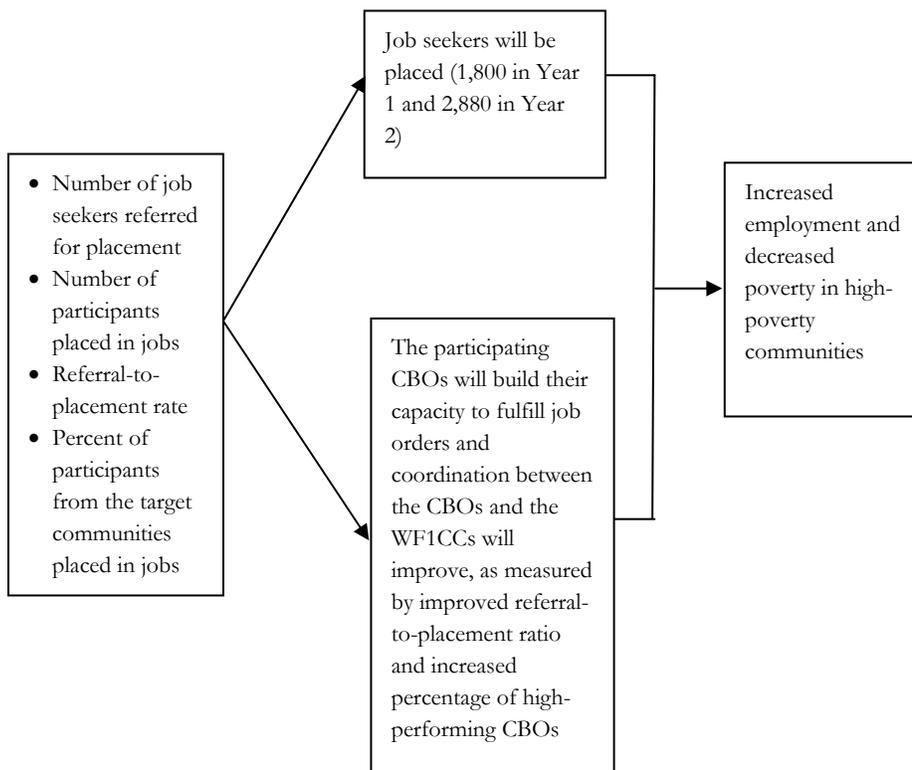
To guide the program's focus on serving low-income city residents, three impoverished neighborhoods were selected by CEO as the target areas for the intervention (Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, Jamaica in Queens and Melrose, Mott Haven and Morrisania in the Bronx). To ensure that residents of these high-need areas are served by the program, SBS set a target of 70 percent of job placements going to residents of these neighborhoods. However, all job-seekers referred by the CBOs are served by the program, regardless of their address.

The WF1CCs have always done some work with CBOs, but in the past it was unsystematic and sporadic. In July 2006, SBS started to build the CBO Outreach program and required each WF1CC to have one person as a point of contact for CBO Outreach. CEO funding allowed the program to go to scale. The program is currently being implemented with CEO funding at four of the City's WF1CCs, with a fifth program under consideration.

The SBS CBO Outreach program model is displayed in a logic model—or theory of action—format on the following two pages. The logic model includes the program's context, assumptions, and resources. Each activity is linked to the number of individuals targeted to participate in the different activities (outputs), as well as short- and long-term participant outcomes.

**NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS)  
Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach Initiative**





**Context/Assumptions**

- More than 350,000 working New Yorkers live in poverty.
- Not all job seekers who are ready to be placed access the WF1CC for job placement services.
- CBOs have access to a large number of job-ready individuals seeking employment, although the WF1CCs have stronger employer connections. By coordinating the CBO and government services, the initiative expects to create a pipeline of job-ready seekers who can be better matched to existing job orders.

**Fidelity to the Program Model.** As implemented, the program maintains fidelity to its theoretical model, which SBS developed based on its previous programmatic experience and its identification of best practices in reaching out to the community. The staffing model evolved over time as the sites deviated from the original three-person teams<sup>2</sup> to a model that is much more integrated within the WF1CCs and adds other staff (particularly career advisors and account executives/job developers) to the program resources. One reason for this deviation was staff attrition in the WF1CCs and movement of key staff from the Outreach program into other WF1CC positions. However, SBS also realized that the program needs the resources of more than the three dedicated program positions. SBS shared the Brooklyn WF1CC's organization chart with other sites as a best practice of how to increase the amount of staff dedicated to providing services to the CBO network.<sup>3</sup> SBS also added improved integration to the WF1CCs' strategic operating plan. The biggest departure from the model is at the Queens WF1CC, which is supplementing outreach to CBOs with direct outreach to clients through distribution of fliers and other means of advertising to better reach clients living in the target neighborhoods. Because these clients enter the program without having had a job readiness assessment by a CBO, the Queens WF1CC staff provide this service as well as skills training (e.g., computer skills), as necessary, to prepare clients for job placement. The Queens site adopted this direct outreach strategy in response to a scarcity of CBOs in their target neighborhoods.

There is some literature to suggest that CBOs can help one-stop centers, such as WF1CCs, better reach and serve underserved populations. Mathematica (2007) conducted an evaluation of 12 Workforce Investment Boards that received Employment and Training Administration grants to collaborate with faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs).<sup>4</sup> The evaluation concluded that FBCOs are able to reach out to underserved populations who are unaware of available workforce services and that FBCOs can provide services (including job readiness training, mentoring, and case management) that are tailored to meet the needs of hard-to-serve job seekers. Although some barriers to partnerships were identified in this evaluation (including difficulty recruiting FBCOs, different organizational cultures between FBCOs and one-stop centers, and FBCO challenges in hiring and managing staff and providing job readiness services), these challenges were not identified by the staff who were interviewed for this program review.

**Target Population and Clients Served.** There are two target populations for this program: (1) the CBOs to whom the WF1CCs are reaching out for job-ready candidates; and (2) the job candidates themselves—unemployed or low-wage New Yorkers 18 years of age and older who have skills that match the skill sets stated in job orders and possess the soft skills that will ensure that they are a good fit with the employer. In addition, the program has set a target for serving clients who reside in the CEO-targeted high-poverty areas of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, Jamaica in Queens and Melrose, Mott Haven and Morrisania in the Bronx.

The program is serving an economically disadvantaged population. According to the SBS June 2008 Management Report, the majority of clients (92%) were unemployed at the time they were referred

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<sup>2</sup> The positions include a job placement specialist who understands job orders and employer needs and can interface with the WF1CC account executives (job developers); an outreach specialist who is familiar with the CBOs and knows how to engage them; and an outreach coordinator who monitors the program and coordinates the work of the other two staff.

<sup>3</sup> New York City Department of Small Business Services, Workforce1 Quarterly Partner Coordinator Meeting, April 25, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Mathematica (2007). *Collaborating with Faith- and Community-Based Organizations: Lessons Learned from 12 Workforce Investment Boards. Final Report to the U.S. Department of Labor.* Accessed July 28, 2008, from [http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm?fuseaction=dsp\\_resultDetails&pub\\_id=2347&mp=y](http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_resultDetails&pub_id=2347&mp=y).

to the WF1CC. Among the small proportion of clients who were employed and reported this information, the average pre-wage was \$9.45/hour. The majority of residents placed (68%) were residents of high-poverty neighborhoods, with 56 percent residing in the CEO target neighborhoods while another 12 percent lived in other high-poverty neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup>

The program has recruited 223 CBO partners. The CBO partners range from small organizations to large, City-wide organizations that work with a number of different WF1CCs. Some of the partners are Workforce Investment Act (WIA)-mandated partners; others are churches, cultural groups, housing, or educational organizations. Some CBOs provide only inbound referrals (from CBO to WF1CC), while others are used by the WF1CCs as outbound referrals (from WF1CC to CBO) to provide such services as GED classes, ESL classes, and skills training. This information is maintained in an SBS Partnership Directory.<sup>6</sup> Many of the CBOs serve specific populations such as veterans, ex-offenders, or youth, while others offer a specific type of training such as culinary arts or home health aide certification. SBS views the *quality* of the partners as more important than the *quantity* of partners. Partner quality can be determined only after the WF1CC has some experience working with the CBO and is defined by the percentage of candidates referred who are truly ready to be placed in jobs immediately (i.e., skilled, trained, with appropriate educational credentials, good attitude, interview skills, resume).

Some of the top-performing CBO partners identified by SBS in its December 2007 Workforce1 Partner Profiles are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Examples of Top Performing CBO Partners**

WF1CC	CBO	Description of CBO
Bronx	AARP	Serves people who are 50 years and older; provides services for members who are looking for part-time and full-time employment.
Bronx	Federation Employment and Guidance Service, Inc. (F.E.G.S.)	Provides Back-To-Work programming, job readiness training, services for people who are deaf, residential services for people with mental illness, and counseling services.
Brooklyn	Family Dynamics	Provides family support and youth education programs, including adult education and employment assistance.
Brooklyn	Neighborhood Housing Services of Bedford Stuyvesant	Provides employment assistance to help clients toward the goal of home ownership.
Queens	Arbor – New York Job Partners	Serves low-income and dislocated workers. Provides job placement assistance and develops internships with private employers leading to permanent employment. Also provides upgrade training for individuals in low-wage or part-time employment looking to increase their incomes.
Queens	Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corp (RDRC)	Provides job placement assistance and numerous training programs, including GED, training in culinary arts, home health care, computer training, home-based childcare, and taxi driving.

**Outreach and Recruitment.** Since implementing the CBO Outreach program, all of the WF1CCs report that they have developed and formalized many new partnerships with CBOs. The WF1CCs have relationships with organizations that administer adult education and vocational rehabilitation programs (their “WIA-Mandated Partners”), and these constitute a common core of partners at all

<sup>5</sup> Data on the demographic characteristics of the population served were not available.

<sup>6</sup> The programs maintain notes on outbound referrals but this information is not systematically tracked.

of the WF1CCs. However, the WF1CCs' relationships with local CBOs tended to be ad hoc and informal. The CBO Outreach program has resulted in the development of new and more formal relationships with the CBOs.

Developing these new partnerships has been a time-consuming process. Interviews with SBS and WF1CC staff commonly referenced the essential "relationship building" nature of the initiative. Outreach staff reported that they spend many hours of research to find CBOs in their community and identify those that provide workforce development services and/or have access to clients in the target zip codes. The absence of comprehensive community directories of CBOs and the limited visibility of local, small-scale organizations increases the challenge, but having staff who are not tied to the WF1CC premises is an important asset to the program. It allows for outreach staff to visit the CBOs to talk about the program, help the CBOs understand the WF1CC process, and conduct intake at the CBOs to help clients become comfortable with the program and the WF1CC before they are referred. The goal of recruiting job-ready residents of the target zip codes is part of this conversation with the CBOs. SBS is working with the WF1CCs to ensure that these organizations are the ones in the best position to refer customers who are job-ready and who are residents of the target areas.

Outreach strategies have included monthly breakfasts for CBOs to exchange information about their programs and what the WF1CC could do for their clients, as well as monthly CBO partner meetings. In addition, as a supplemental strategy the Queens program staff has distributed fliers to residents of the target zip codes, inviting them to the WF1CC and asking them what CBOs they belong to, and then conducted outreach to those CBOs. The Queen's strategy of direct outreach to individuals rose from their concern about serving enough residents from the target neighborhoods where there are relatively few strong CBO partners. SBS reported that the Queen's direct outreach strategy resulted in approximately the same proportion of placements of residents from the target zip codes as referrals from CBOs. While this strategy worked at the Queens site to bolster the number of residents served in the target neighborhoods, its disadvantage is that it moves the initiative away from involvement of CBO partners in providing pre-employment and skills training to low-income clients and places an additional burden on the WF1CCs to provide these services. Direct outreach to clients and the provision of job training services is much more the traditional WF1CC operational model, and not the innovative program SBS designed CBO Outreach to be.

The WF1CCs are beginning to explore targeting larger CBOs that offer particular types of skills training as part of an occupational segmentation strategy which focuses on job placement in particular job sectors. However, because job readiness is a combination of technical, personal, and interpersonal skills, some job seekers require a more intensive approach to help them become job-ready. Thus, smaller CBOs have their advocates—staff at one WF1CC noted that smaller organizations are able to offer more one-on-one assistance while services at larger CBOs may be less personalized.

**Program Services.** The Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx CBO Outreach programs were fully funded with three staff positions in July 2007, although SBS reduced funding for the Bronx site in January due to performance problems.<sup>7</sup> The LaGuardia WF1CC's program began operation on April 1, 2008, and at the time of the site visit was staffing up with two CEO-funded positions.

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<sup>7</sup> See Agency Management section.

The program activities listed in the logic model, including serving as the liaison between the CBOs and the WF1CCs and providing technical assistance and capacity building in job referrals, are aligned with the program’s objectives. The activities described below, which are generally followed at all sites,<sup>8</sup> were implemented effectively at two of the established sites, and SBS has worked to improve implementation at the Bronx site.

In its liaison role, the outreach team communicates with the WF1CC account executives to ensure that the team is informed about the work orders that come into the WF1CC for dissemination to the CBOs. The outreach team job placement specialists may send this information to all CBOs via weekly email “job blasts” or faxes, or they may use a more focused strategy of sending job orders only to specific CBOs that have particular training expertise or to those that serve clients most likely to be a good fit. The outreach team also provides information on the CBOs—including the services they offer and the types of clients they serve—to the WF1CC career advisors, which helps them make better placement decisions and helps segment job orders for CBOs that train clients in a particular field. SBS and the WF1CCs see value in moving toward a more segmented approach that provides employers with workers who are specifically trained for their industry and results in satisfied, and returning, employers.

There is a two-way flow of communication between the outreach team and CBOs. CBOs use information from the job blasts to select those job-ready clients who are qualified for the opening and then send the outreach team a list of individuals being referred for the job. Program staff follow up with the CBO if a client does not appear; however, “fall-off” between a referral and visit to the WF1CC is not reported to be an issue. Perhaps because job seekers are coming to the WF1CC in response to a specific job opportunity, there is a greater motivation to keep the appointment.

The outreach team provides substantial technical assistance and guidance to CBO staff regarding prescreening and matching candidates to job orders. Initially, the outreach team conducts on-site assessments and intake procedures in order to demonstrate for the CBOs what they are looking for in job-ready candidates. To aid in these efforts, SBS has developed training materials that illustrate what makes a good match for a job and what is a poor match for an otherwise job-ready individual. The WF1CCs provide workshops to the CBOs on topics such as how to identify the appropriate client for a job, how to identify clients appropriate for Individualized Training Grants (ITGs), and how to work collaboratively with other CBOs to leverage resources and use the WF1CC as an intermediary.

The outreach team also provides feedback to the CBOs regarding the outcomes of their clients’ job interviews. Providing feedback on why clients are or are not offered a job has been instrumental in improving the rate of referrals to placements as it allowed CBOs to gain a greater understanding of what employers want in a job candidate. In addition, the CBOs need to know which of their clients get hired so they can count these placements in their own workforce development performance-based contracts. The WF1CCs report that the referral of job candidates from the CBOs has improved over time and they attribute this improvement to the success of their efforts in educating CBOs about the importance of appropriate matches between job candidates and available job openings.

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<sup>8</sup> As noted previously, the Queens Center supplements outreach to CBOs with direct outreach to clients in the target neighborhoods.

According to SBS, it takes about 3 months to determine if a CBO is going to be a strong partner. Strong CBOs refer candidates who are job-ready and who are appropriate candidates for the jobs advertised in the job blasts. These CBOs often have a workforce development component and/or offer training services. In contrast, weak partners send unqualified and unskilled job seekers that the CBOs themselves were unable to place in jobs. Strong CBO partners are proactive, and if job blasts do not include jobs appropriate to their clients, they will call the outreach team to communicate the qualifications of the clients and inquire about other potential jobs.

The strongest CBO partners are further defined as those who have a better than 3:1 placement ratio, with at least 10 placements per quarter. To quantify *quality* and encourage the CBOs to do their best to make their clients truly job-ready, SBS is establishing a rating system (platinum, gold, and silver) for different partners, which they are calling “Circles of Engagement.”

- Platinum partners are those that have made at least 10 referrals that resulted in placements per quarter, with a referral-to-placement ratio of < 3:1.
- Gold partners are those making between 5 and 10 referrals that were placed per quarter, with a placement ratio <4:1.
- Silver partners are those with a placement ratio of 4:1 or greater with a low placement volume.

Under the “Circles of Engagement” model, the platinum partners will get first access to job orders and letters of support from the WF1CC when applying for grants. This strategy was being introduced in April 2008 with the goal of trying to motivate all CBOs to aspire to platinum status. Those CBOs that continue to perform at lower levels will receive less attention from the WF1CCs. For example, their job seekers might be served through the regular WF1CC job placement system rather than being fast-tracked. The Circles of Engagement is a new approach that had yet to be implemented at the time of the site visit, so its effect is unknown. While this approach could be an effective tool to encourage CBOs to work harder to make the most appropriate referrals, it could also have a negative effect of discouraging smaller or less experienced CBOs from sending clients to the WF1CCs for job placement if they are relegated to silver partner status. If these CBOs are the ones serving residents in the target neighborhoods, this could result in a net decrease in the number of job placements among those in the target neighborhoods. SBS will want to monitor this strategy closely as it is implemented to make sure that it does not have a negative impact on CBO participation and job-seekers from the target areas.

CBO Outreach has developed an effective process for expediting CBO-referred job-ready clients through the job placement process. A fast-track orientation developed specifically for CBO Outreach clients is offered in twice-a-week sessions which are shorter than those for other WF1CC clients. This is followed by a meeting with a WF1CC career advisor to talk about qualifications for a specific job opening. Since the WF1CCs know the number of clients expected, they can plan for the career advisement meetings, and thus, the wait time to see a career advisor is shorter than for walk-ins. A candidate who is determined to be job-ready and appropriate for the position may interview with the employer that same day, further expediting the process.

Clients who are judged not job-ready, and those who are job-ready but in need of additional training for the career they want, are referred by the outreach team to CBOs for further training or to the WF1CC training services unit. Identifying what training is available at different CBOs is essential to

knowing where to refer clients; this component of the initiative is in its formative stage and will require further relationship building. Along these lines, a pilot program has begun to integrate the CBO Outreach program with the ITG program by having CBOs pre-screen candidates for ITGs, with the goal of streamlining the application process.

**Outputs and Outcomes.** The specific target of the program is to place 1,800 CBO clients in jobs during the first year and 2,880 in the second year. SBS set these targets based on its knowledge of the WF1CCs' past record of job placements, while requiring the WF1CCs to expand their job placement capacity. An additional goal is to have a referral-to-placement ratio of 3:1 or less to focus CBOs' attention on sending job-ready candidates. SBS staff set this target higher than the referral-to-placement ratio of 4:1 that was experienced with the historically served WF1CC population, in order to reflect the higher expectations for this structured referral program. In order to ensure that the program is serving truly disadvantaged City residents, SBS designated a target of 70 percent of job placements involving residents from three specific high-poverty areas (Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, Jamaica in Queens and Melrose, Mott Haven and Morrisania in the Bronx). Each WF1CC had seven zip codes designated as the CEO target areas to track the number of placements from these neighborhoods.

SBS emphasized the number of placements as the most critical outcome of the program and held the WF1CCs accountable for meeting quarterly targets of 150 placements per quarter per WF1CC. The sanction for failing to meet the placement targets was a reduction in funding, as experienced by one WF1CC. The WF1CCs were not held accountable in the same way for reaching the target of 70 percent of placements going to residents of the CEO target areas. The WF1CCs have more control over the total number of placements than where job candidates sent by the CBOs live. CBOs located within the target neighborhoods often serve residents who live in adjacent neighborhoods. The WF1CCs could not discriminate against job candidates based on their address by giving priority for job placement to those in one zip code over those who live in another. However, the goal of 70 percent placement within target zip codes appears to help focus the attention of the WF1CCs when making strategic decisions concerning partnerships with CBOs and related outreach and recruitment activities.

The success of the CBO Outreach program in its initial year of operation may be evaluated against four measures:

- The number of job candidates placed;
- The quality of job candidates sent by the CBOs as measured by the referral-to-placement rate;
- The proportion of job candidates placed from the CEO target neighborhoods; and
- The proportion of job candidates placed from high-poverty areas both inside and outside the target neighborhoods.

The CBO Outreach program has been successful in meeting their job placement targets, getting CBOs to send qualified, job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs for available jobs, and placing residents of high-poverty neighborhoods in jobs. The program's outputs and outcomes are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. CBO Outreach Program Outputs and Outcomes as of June 2008**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Target Numbers</b>	<b>Actual Numbers</b>	<b>Percent of Target Met</b>
Number of job seekers referred for placement	NA	4,863	NA
Number of clients placed in jobs	1,800	2,090	116%
Referral-to-placement ratio	3:1 or better	2.3:1	100%
Percent (number) of placements from target neighborhoods	70% (1,463)	56% (1,170)	80%
Percent (number) of placements from all high-poverty neighborhoods	70% (1,463)	68% (1,415)	97%

The WF1CCs exceeded their target of 1,800 job placements between July 2007 and June 2008 by placing 2,090 clients in new jobs. The program also exceeded its referral-to-placement ratio of 3:1. A total of 4,863 clients were referred to the WF1CCs as part of CBO Outreach, and with 2,090 job placements, the referral-to-placement ratio was 2.3:1.

The program met 80 percent of its target of placing residents of the target neighborhoods in 70 percent of the jobs filled. A total of 1,170 job candidates were placed who lived in the CEO target neighborhoods, 56 percent of the total number of clients placed. While this falls somewhat short of the overall target of 70 percent, when clients from high-poverty zip codes outside the target areas are included, the total percentage of clients placed in jobs from high-poverty neighborhoods increases to 68 percent. In addition, it is worth noting that 92 percent of those placed were unemployed at the time they were referred to the WF1CCs for job placement.

While the program is clearly serving residents from high-poverty areas, it was a challenge for the program to achieve a placement rate of 70 percent from the CEO-designated target areas. SBS believes this difficulty stemmed in part from the newness of the program and the time it takes for program staff to build relationships with CBOs in the target neighborhoods. In addition, it is important to reiterate that during the first year of the program, SBS's major focus was on meeting the overall job placement targets. SBS has now begun to reach out to the New York City Employment and Training Coalition for assistance in identifying additional CBOs from the target zip codes as well as to work with the WF1CCs to be more strategic about the development of CBO partnerships that can provide more referrals from the target areas.

As noted previously, SBS is raising the goal of placements from 1,800 to 2,880 in the second program year. It is also giving the WF1CCs a new goal of 15 percent or more of their partners being high-performing (the "platinum partners"). To set the target, SBS looked at the percentage of high-performing partners, which is currently less than 15 percent, and set the goal to be obtainable but requiring a stretch on the part of the WF1CCs. The 60-percent increase in the placement target seems ambitious but might be achievable given that the established sites will have become more experienced and the LaGuardia WF1CC will be in full operation. In addition, SBS is considering expansion of the program. If the WF1CCs meet the goal in FY 2009, the target may be set higher for the following program year.

**Provider Capacity.** Two of the three WF1CCs that CEO initially funded have demonstrated the capacity to implement and manage a strong CBO Outreach program, and the third program appears to be moving in that direction after a very weak start. The most salient factors that the WF1CCs need to succeed with this program are:

- The ability to form good relationships with CBOs and effectively communicate to them the qualities that make a job-ready candidate;
- The ability to effectively communicate among WF1CC staff what jobs are available and to effectively track referrals and placements; and
- The ability to go out into the community and visit the CBOs to describe the program and conduct assessments and intakes. This commitment to outreach requires WF1CC-based back-up personnel to manage in-office responsibilities.

Implementing the CBO Outreach program within the WF1CCs is likely to result in a stable program and one that can be replicated. Indeed, the program already has been replicated in the LaGuardia Community College WF1CC, which had a start date of April 2008.

All of the WF1CCs have experienced problems with staff turnover and with hiring new staff. At one WF1CC, low pay was cited as the main obstacle to attracting and retaining qualified staff, although all sites report difficulty finding and recruiting qualified staff for these challenging positions. Staff turnover is common at the WF1CCs, as staff leave for other jobs. Additionally, it is a common practice to move experienced staff from established programs to new WF1CC programs on the premise that new programs need strong staff to guide the program during the critical start-up phase. As a result of these factors, as well as intentional internal staffing decisions to enhance program operation, some of the duties of the outreach team are shared with other WF1CC staff. This has resulted in a program that has become more integrated within the working of the WF1CCs. With the greater integration of CBO Outreach into the WF1CC organization and the sharing of staff responsibilities for CBO Outreach with staff who also have other roles, the leveraging of resources has increased.

The experience of the Bronx program illustrates the importance of such integration. The Bronx program had its funding cut 60 percent by SBS after falling far short of meeting program targets for job placement during the first 5 months of operation. The current Bronx WF1CC staff attribute this initial failure to the lack of integration of the program into the WF1CC and poor communication between the outreach team and the account executives who work with employers and career advisors at the WF1CC. During early implementation of the program, the outreach coordinator was physically located at a different site from the outreach staff, and the initiative was viewed by other WF1CC staff as a stand-alone program. Since the funding was cut to one position in January 2008 as a result of poor performance,<sup>9</sup> the WF1CC reorganized the program and redeployed personnel so it is now much more integrated within the working of the organization. The WF1CC now leverages the work of the deputy center manager (who reports spending about 35 percent of his time on the program), as well as the career advisors and account executives. This site has consequently exceeded its program targets in job placements under the new, integrated program model.

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<sup>9</sup> See Agency Management section for a fuller discussion of SBS's intervention.

Integration strategies used by the other sites include incorporating the career development team into the partnership team—going from three staff to seven or eight staff, with cross-training so staff can fill different roles as necessary; using senior staff to plan and start programs; and involving the WF1CC’s strategic operations coordinator.

**Agency Management.** SBS is a hands-on manager that provides both oversight and support. In this role, SBS conducts a number of routine activities, including:

- Monthly meetings that rotate across the WF1CCs and that include all WF1CCs. The WF1CCs see this as an opportunity to “check in and see how everyone is doing.” The WF1CCs share best practices at these meetings and report that the exchange of information and ideas has been very helpful in improving program operations.
- Quarterly meetings with the WF1CCs for feedback from SBS about targets. SBS has a very clear idea of what it wants the program to accomplish, and it set targets to measure WF1CCs’ progress toward meeting those goals. Several staff from the WF1CCs attend these meetings, including the WF1CC managers.
- Regular calls with the CBO Outreach coordinators, an invitation to call SBS at any time, and biweekly calls to track the progress of underperforming WF1CCs. Staff at one WF1CC said, “They have created an environment for us to succeed.” Even the WF1CC that had a funding reduction remarked that support and communication from the SBS was helpful in improving their organization and management of the program. When one WF1CC encountered an increase of non-job-ready participants, SBS shared a screening tool that was developed by another WF1CC.

To fulfill its oversight role, SBS requires monthly reports from the WF1CCs about the number of placements and the referral-to-placement ratio, something not captured in Worksource1, SBS’s reporting system. The WF1CCs had to count referrals and placements manually. So, to meet this need, SBS created a tracking tool in Excel for the WF1CCs to track how close they are to meeting their targets. The tool tracks individuals and has pivot tables linked to zip codes so the WF1CCs can see where the clients are coming from. The WF1CCs are required to enter information into Worksource1 for program monitoring.

In addition to the Excel tool, SBS has created other tools for the WF1CCs to use to help guide their work and track their progress. For example, SBS created standardized partner profiles that describe each of the WF1CCs and lists their top-performing partners; they plan to update these biannually. Used by the WF1CCs as a marketing tool, the profiles place the program within a broader context of policy and workforce development. In addition, SBS created a customer flowchart that could be used by the CBOs and WF1CCs to describe the program. It also created a *Community Partner Team Manual and Resource Guide*. This is a comprehensive guide to the program that sites say is instrumental in getting new staff on board.

All WF1CCs agree that SBS provides very hands-on management, balancing the need to perform its oversight and enforcement functions while also providing technical assistance to facilitate improvement. For example, SBS designed a plan of action for the struggling Bronx WF1CC and worked for several months to try to improve its performance. Substantial improvement was noted in the month of January, but as the program failed to meet the targets, CEO funding was cut (though not eliminated entirely). Thus, SBS is not afraid to enforce sanctions. To its credit, the Bronx

WF1CC recognized its shortcomings and created an improvement plan that resulted in stronger management of the program and improved outcomes in recent months.

SBS designed CBO Outreach to complement the job placement activities that already exist at the WF1CC. The program also provides much added value:

- The WF1CCs are reaching out and serving people who might be reluctant to come into a WF1CC on their own or who might not be aware of the WF1CCs' resources.
- They are providing job placement services to the residents of some of the poorest areas of the City.
- They are able to provide customers with more intensive career advisement and follow-up.
- They are increasing the pipeline of people who have been prepped and vetted (including having received support services or having services such as child care in place) and are ready to interview and start work. The WF1CCs can meet employers' needs by placing job-ready candidates into jobs without doing additional training at the WF1CCs.
- They are improving the capacity of the CBOs to provide job readiness training by educating them on what constitutes being job-ready—for example, how resumes should be written to more effectively communicate clients' experience and skills to employers.
- They are expanding the network of outbound training referrals by identifying CBOs that offer different training opportunities. Information on CBOs' training capabilities is being recorded in SBS's Master Partner Directory, though specific cases of outbound referrals are not being tracked.

**Conclusions.** The CBO Outreach program is well-designed and well-implemented with clear targets and sanctions for failing to meet placement targets. It is aligned with the CEO mission and is meeting key CEO criteria:

- The program logic model proposes a plausible approach to lifting New Yorkers out of poverty through job-readiness and skills training at CBOs and job placement by the WF1CCs.
- The program is serving an economically disadvantaged population: unemployed adults and those who live in high-poverty areas.
- The program is resulting in stronger partnerships between government WF1CCs and community organizations to train and place low-income workers in jobs.
- SBS is providing strong oversight and technical assistance to the program.
- The program is meeting its job placement and referral-to-placement goals.
- The program needs to continue to strengthen its approach to serving residents of high-poverty areas.

The CEO initiative also helped solidify the relationship between the WF1CCs and the CBOs by defining what was expected from the CBOs and what the WF1CCs could offer them in return.

### **3. Programmatic Recommendations**

Recommendations are offered in three areas:

- The program should continue to strengthen its approach to serving residents of high-poverty areas. We believe the WF1CCs should continue to focus on recruiting CBOs from the defined geographic area of the CEO-target neighborhoods as this approach gives some structure to the geographical reach of the program and ensures that residents of these particular high-poverty areas will be served. However, given the fact that these CBOs may also serve residents who live in high-poverty areas outside these target neighborhoods, SBS should expand their definition of the target neighborhoods to include all high-poverty zip codes served by the CBOs. Broadening the target so the 70 percent of low-income participants includes all residents of all high-poverty neighborhoods does not diminish the emphasis of the initiative on addressing poverty but does place less burden on the WF1CCs and CBOs to recruit participants from particular zip codes.
- SBS should closely monitor the new Circles of Engagement CBO ranking system to ensure that this strategy has the positive effect of encouraging CBOs to continue to improve their job referrals while not discouraging smaller or weaker CBOs from participating in the program.
- Given the wide range of job openings at diverse employers described by program staff, WF1CCs would be advised not to move too far in the occupational segmenting direction by focusing on only particular employment sectors and targeting only larger CBOs that offer the type of training required for these jobs. A strictly segmented approach would miss the opportunities to match qualified employees with small and/or unique employers and limit the number of CBOs who can participate in the program.