

Center *for an* Urban Future

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BRIDGING THE DISCONNECT

New York City is facing a youth unemployment crisis, but the city's youth workforce development programs reach only a fraction of those in need of help and are too often misaligned to the developmental needs of young New Yorkers

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BRIDGING THE DISCONNECT

New York City is facing a youth employment crisis, with unprecedented numbers of young people reaching adulthood without the skills or experiences to secure career-track jobs that pay a living wage. Since 2000, the percentage of 16 to 24 year olds across the five boroughs participating in the labor market has fallen from 45 percent to 29 percent, while the unemployment rate for this group has spiked from 13 percent to 20 percent.¹ Alarmingly, approximately one out of every five New Yorkers in this age bracket—an estimated 172,000 in all—are neither working nor in school, by far the largest number of any city in the United States.²

Despite the magnitude of the problem, New York City's youth workforce development system falls far short of what is needed. Youth-focused workforce programs reach only a tiny fraction of the young adults who could benefit from employment and training services. At the same time, too many of the city's existing youth workforce development programs are deeply flawed and do little to help young people build skills and connect with decent-paying jobs.

The five workforce programs run by the city's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the city's primary youth workforce agency, served fewer than 41,000 young people last year.³ DYCD's signature initiative, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), enrolled 35,957 young people in 2013 but had to turn away almost three times that number due to insufficient capacity. Perhaps even more alarming, DYCD's four other workforce programs served fewer than 5,000 youth combined last year.

But while the city's youth workforce system could undoubtedly benefit from more resources, it also needs a major restructuring. Indeed, as this report documents, the three city agencies that provide the bulk of youth workforce development services in the city—DYCD, the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA)—all have major shortcomings when it comes to helping young New Yorkers gain the education, skills and experiences necessary for career-track employment.

For instance, while DYCD's Summer Youth Employment Program provides structured activity for six weeks over the summer and some income for those enrolled, most youth advocates believe it is poorly designed and does not do enough to help young people prepare for the world of work. SYEP lacks strong connections to employers, as do DYCD's other programs. Virtually all of the agency's workforce programs are ill equipped to serve youth with the most serious barriers to employment and career success, including those in foster care, court-appointed and homeless youth, those with disabilities, recent immigrants and LGBT youth. As for the other primary workforce agencies, while SBS and HRA provide workforce services to tens of thousands of young adults every year, their initiatives are largely misaligned to the developmental needs of young people, many of whom require substantial assistance before they are ready to hold and keep a job.

With fresh leadership now in place at DYCD, SBS and HRA, as well as a newly created Office of Workforce Development tasked with coordinating city workforce policy, there is a unique opportunity to address the youth employment crisis and improve publicly supported services to help young people transition into the labor market. Doing so could help Mayor de Blasio fulfill his goals of attacking income inequality and putting more New Yorkers on the path to the middle class

In recent years, several studies have shed light on the troubling employment and educational outcomes for young adults and the high number of disconnected youth in New York City. This report builds upon those research efforts by evaluating how New York City has responded to the problems of youth disconnection and difficulties gaining traction in the labor market. Our report assesses the strengths and shortcomings of the city’s youth workforce development programs, identifies the challenges facing administrators and practitioners, and offers recommendations to address the system’s many flaws and deliver stronger outcomes for youth and greater return on public and philanthropic investment. Because the de Blasio administration has only begun to develop its own workforce agenda, our assessment focuses on how the city’s youth workforce development system was structured and managed over the past decade.

Based on eight months of research, the report is informed by interviews with over 60 youth workforce development practitioners, philanthropic leaders, city officials, employers and

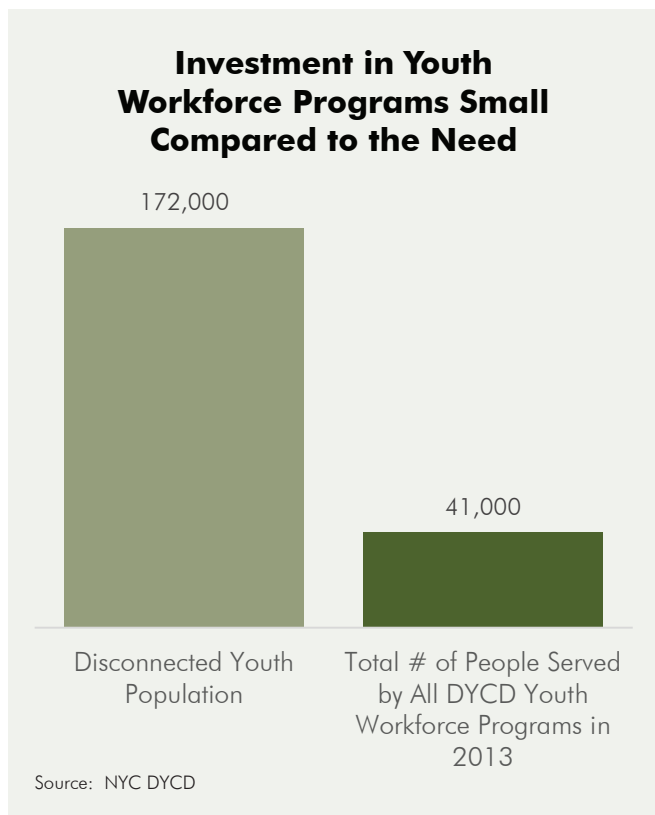
thought leaders in New York City and across the country. We also compiled and analyzed administrative data from the city agencies that manage programs serving youth, and considered best practices both locally and nationally.

Our conclusion is that a new level of focus and a new approach is desperately needed to power improvements to the city’s youth workforce development system.

There’s little doubt that New York is facing a youth employment crisis. In 2012, the unemployment rate for young adults ages 16 to 24 was 18.6 percent—more than double the citywide average, and twice as high as for any other age cohort. Last year, only 29 percent of 16 to 24 year olds were employed or seeking work. In 2012, among the nation’s 100 largest metro areas, New York City ranked 92nd in the rate of 16-19 year olds employed, and 97th for 20-24 year olds.⁴

For youth, unemployment and marginalization can have long-term consequences. Research has shown that employment is “path dependent”: individuals who work in their mid-teens are more likely to work in their late teens, and more likely to have steady employment and higher earning power into their 20s and beyond.⁵ The converse is also true: individuals who aren’t employed during their teens are less likely to work consistently as they transition into adulthood. And while the recent sluggish hiring climate is part of the problem, the reality is that too many young adults lack the educational foundation, demonstrable skills and work experience that today’s employers demand.

Sadly, the city’s response to the youth unemployment crisis over the past several years has been woefully inadequate. The Bloomberg administration deserves credit for its commitment to improving the city’s public school system, and for expanding the number of Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and launching promising new programs like the Young Men’s Initiative, a cross-agency attempt to improve outcomes for young African-American and Latino males. But its failure to make meaningful new investments in workforce development programs targeting unemployed and disconnected youth and



young adults holds potentially dire consequences for years to come.

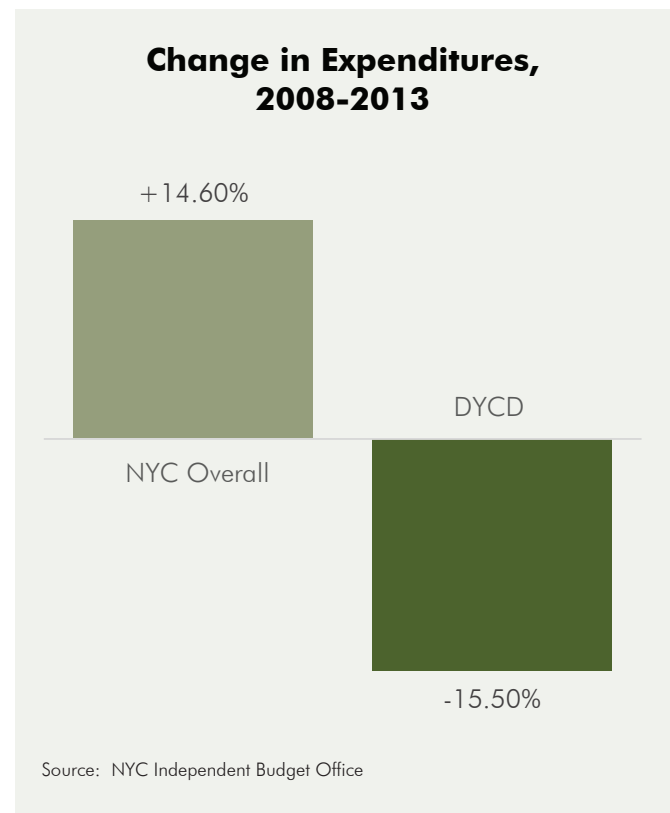
“The city’s youth workforce development infrastructure has not grown in relation with the scale of the crisis,” says Randy Peers, executive director of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT), a Brooklyn-based organization that provides workforce services to youth. “The investments that target that population are minimal. We have some good programs, but we just don’t have the resources to take them to scale.”

This is most apparent at DYCD, the city agency with primary responsibility for workforce development programs serving teens and young adults. While overall city expenditures increased by 14.6 percent between fiscal years 2008 to 2013, DYCD’s expenditures declined by 15.5 percent.⁶

In 2013, DYCD’s signature workforce initiative, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), provided summer jobs to just 35,957 individuals, 17 percent fewer than in 2008 (when its enrollment was 43,113) and 29 percent less than in 2000 (50,499). The declining enrollment numbers contrast with increasing demand. Indeed, 73 percent of the 135,388 applicants last year were turned away. Between 2010 and 2013, DYCD could not place more than 410,000 applicants to SYEP. Given the difficulties youth face in the labor market, it’s certain that the vast majority did not find work through other channels.

But the shortfall is by no means limited to SYEP. In fact, DYCD’s other four workforce programs, Out-of-School Youth (OSY), Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), In-School Youth (ISY) and Ladders for Leaders, served only 4,372 young people combined in 2013—approximately 40 percent fewer than in 2010. The two DYCD workforce programs focused on disconnected youth—the Out-of-School Youth program (OSY) and Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP)—combined to serve just 2,835 New Yorkers last year, less than two percent of the city’s estimated disconnected youth population. DYCD’s In-School Youth (ISY) program served 1,537 young people, while Ladders for Leaders, a highly regarded internship initiative, served just 262 youth last year.⁷ Although its enrollment increased from 190

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The majority of young New Yorkers who could benefit from city workforce development services simply aren't ready to succeed in a workplace, and need assistance that goes well beyond finding a job.

to 262 over the past four years, a mere 11 percent of young people who applied to Ladders for Leaders last year were placed into internships.

There are other indications that the city's youth workforce programs reach only a small percentage of those in need of services. While the bulk of New York's youth workforce services are delivered by nonprofit and for-profit service providers, even many of the largest and most highly regarded organizations have fairly limited capacity. For instance, The Door, a Manhattan-based group, serves roughly 500 and OBT serves approximately 700.

While limited resources are a significant constraint, there are also serious flaws with the way the city's youth workforce programs are structured and delivered. The core shortcoming of the city's youth workforce development system is that services are poorly aligned to the life circumstances and developmental needs of the young people who need assistance.

The majority of young New Yorkers who could benefit from city workforce development services have at most a high school degree or equivalency, have limited or no work experience and face significant barriers to employment—from chronic health issues to unstable housing arrangements. Most simply aren't ready to succeed in a workplace, and need assistance that goes well beyond

finding a job. Yet, too few of the city's workforce programs are structured with all this in mind. Most do not offer opportunities for young people to explore career options, provide youth with sufficient time to build skills and prepare for employment or furnish them with a range of services.

A related problem is that the city's youth workforce system is particularly ill suited to help the large and growing number of high-need youth. Immigrant youth, those in foster care, youth with disabilities, youth involved in the justice system, homeless and LGBT youth are all over-represented among New York's disconnected population and typically face more significant barriers to employment. Yet these groups often find little assistance from the city's publicly funded workforce programs. Indeed, their more serious barriers represent a disincentive for providers to enroll them, because they are less likely to meet the required outcomes for which the city reimburses on performance-based contracts.

The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which has guided the nation's job training and workforce preparation programs since 1998, has not been good for youth-focused workforce development. WIA prioritizes and rewards quick attachment to the labor force: in fact, job placement is the only career outcome on which the federal government evaluates each area's WIA performance.⁸ Yet, effective youth workforce services aren't intended to make a short-term job match, but rather to put in place a foundation for long-term labor market success. Organizations cannot use WIA funds to pay for services that might better support long-term outcomes, such as fellowships, subsidized internships or opportunities to learn about different possible career paths and better define their interests and goals. Worse, WIA-funded contracts create a perverse incentive for organizations that offer youth workforce services: by rewarding only job placement or quantifiable literacy gains, and limiting the time providers have to deliver these results, they encourage providers to avoid enrolling those with the deepest educational and socio-emotional deficits. Instead, many organizations reluctantly "cream," enrolling the most job-ready individuals.

The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, signed into law by President Obama in July 2014, should address a number of these issues— if city leaders are prudent in taking advantage of their new options under the law.⁹

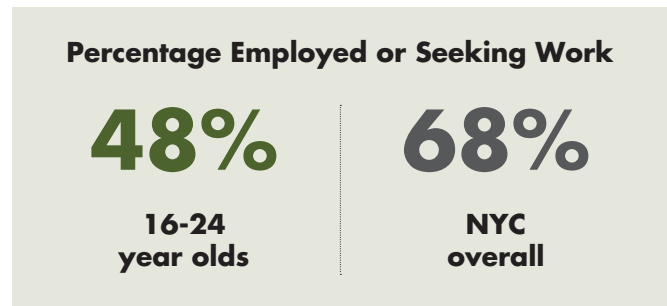
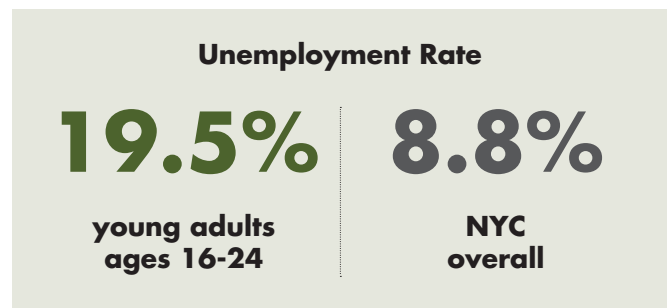
While the federal policy context has not been helpful, much of the problem lies closer to home, with the city’s youth workforce system and the three main city agencies—DYCD, SBS and HRA— that deliver workforce services to youth and young adults.

DYCD oversees an array of youth initiatives, including afterschool programs, literacy programs and school-based community centers. But it is also the only city agency specifically charged with designing and managing programs that prepare young New Yorkers for employment and career success. Unfortunately, the consensus of the youth practitioners and policy experts we interviewed is that the agency’s workforce development programs frequently fall short of helping young people build skills, determine their career goals or gain valuable workplace experiences.

“DYCD is not an employment agency,” says Lowell Herschberger, director of career and educational programs at Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. “They do fabulous work around K-12 and afterschool programs, but there’s nobody there to hold together a system for disconnected youth.”

Two of DYCD’s workforce initiatives—Ladders for Leaders, a program track within SYEP, and the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), generally draw praise from the field. Ladders for Leaders is the sole DYCD effort that boasts truly strong employer connections, and YAIP is alone among DYCD’s workforce programs in having received a rigorous quantitative evaluation that showed strong results. The agency also deserves credit for making some key changes to SYEP over the past decade, including increasing the number of job placements with private sector employers, expanding the number of slots set aside for vulnerable youth and beefing up the educational training that is provided to participants.

But the balance of DYCD’s workforce portfolio is more problematic. Most of its programs



lack strong connections with employers, a crucial flaw if the goal is to prepare young people for the world of work. Workforce observers and practitioners assert that DYCD has been less willing than SBS and HRA to adjust programs in response to labor market changes and push their vendors to change their practices and achieve stronger outcomes. The agency’s In-School-Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School-Youth (OSY) programs have not been evaluated to measure impact. And while SYEP provides youth and young adults with jobs that would not otherwise be available to them, most workforce experts criticize the program for offering low-value work experiences with no connection to participants’ school experiences or career interests. “SYEP is just warehousing kids in the summer,” says one workforce expert. “You have kids sitting in auditoriums with nothing to do. The kids get no training. They develop bad habits.”

SBS, which manages workforce programs for adults and dislocated workers, comes in contact with tens of thousands of young adults every year through its 18 Workforce1 Centers across the five boroughs. But these centers are geared to serve job-ready individuals and do not offer the specialized services or longer time frames that most young adults need.

Only programs that draw from multiple funding streams have the resources to offer a holistic set of services most likely to make the difference for high need youth.

HRA, the city's welfare agency, provides workforce services to thousands of 18-24 years olds who receive public assistance and are required to enroll in its Back to Work program. But its "work-first" orientation is not well suited for young adults on the welfare rolls, a majority of whom lack a high school diploma and would be better served with programs that help connect them with education and training.

"TANF is the biggest funding stream and HRA is the biggest service provider," says workforce consultant Celeste Frye, "but they don't focus on young adults, even if they have young adults in their portfolio. There should be more TANF-funded services that are geared for young adults."

Making matters worse, while DYCD, SBS and HRA each have their own problems in how they deliver workforce services to youth and young adults, the agencies also have failed to align their programs to offer integrated services for young New Yorkers in need. At the same time, public youth workforce contracts actually create disincentives for nonprofit providers to work collaboratively to provide the continuum of services young people need in order to become self-sufficient. As a result, most individuals receive only the services that any one provider may offer—not the services they most need. Only those programs that draw from multiple funding streams, usually including philanthropic support as well as public contracts, and have the resources to manage the

resultant administrative burdens, can offer the holistic set of services most likely to make the difference for high need youth.

For all these problems, however, a number of vital pieces are in place that could allow the city to make significant progress in addressing the youth workforce crisis. The city boasts a number of effective youth workforce providers, from community-based organizations to nationally recognized models such as FECS, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) and The Door among others that utilize blended funding from public and private sources. The city is also home to JobsFirstNYC, a youth-focused intermediary that advocates for policy change and best practices and has launched several highly promising pilot initiatives, as well as two other organizations, the Youth Development Institute and Workforce Professionals Training Institute, that deliver technical assistance to provider organizations.

New York also benefits from a particularly strong philanthropic sector that supports many of the best youth workforce providers and funds innovative approaches that restricted government dollars cannot pay for. Indeed, New York City enjoys more foundation support for employment and training programs than anywhere else in the U.S., thanks in large part to the efforts of a philanthropic collaborative known as the New York City Workforce Funders.¹⁰ Collectively, these funders invested approximately \$28 million in youth-focused workforce programs and related services in 2013—an amount larger than the city's WIA Youth allocation from the federal government.¹¹

There are also a number of encouraging signs from government. The FY 2015 city budget approved in June included a new investment of \$15.2 million from the City Council that will enable an additional 10,700 young people to participate in SYEP this summer. In his first State of the City address in February, Mayor de Blasio pledged a new focus on job training and skills building. Shortly thereafter, he convened the Jobs for New Yorkers Task Force to provide ideas for overhauling city workforce development programs, and created the Office of Workforce Development to better coordinate the many city agencies and of-

fices involved with job training and workforce preparation programs. The federal government has taken a key step as well, passing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with overwhelming bipartisan support. WIOA's changes should make it easier for the city to overhaul work-focused education, training and employment services for younger New Yorkers.

This is a good start. But so much more is needed to improve and expand the city's youth workforce development system.

More than anything, Mayor de Blasio and the City Council must make tackling the youth employment crisis a top priority. With more young people than ever unemployed, underemployed or stuck in low-wage, dead-end jobs, the de Blasio administration should take bold steps to address the problem and set ambitious goals for reducing youth unemployment across the five boroughs.

One vital step is simply to expand the capacity of programs to reach more youth and young adults—a significant challenge, given that WIA Youth funds for New York City have plummeted from \$43.3 million in 2000 to \$21.4 million in 2013.¹² But as Mayor de Blasio demonstrated with his successful effort to create universal pre-kindergarten programs, and as former Mayor Bloomberg showed with his Young Men's Initiative, focused mayoral leadership can go a long way toward identifying public and private funds for important programs.

But since the problem goes well beyond resources, administration officials also must commit to making a number of structural changes that could greatly improve how services are delivered to youth and young adults in New York.

There is no shortage of possible innovations that could improve practice and deliver greater value for youth. As this report details, New York City can learn from the examples of cities like Boston, Philadelphia and Los Angeles that have placed greater emphasis on supporting youth transitions into the workforce. Each of these examples offers lessons—around innovative governance, employer engagement and provider collaboration systems—which local policymakers would do well to consider.

City officials should also learn from what SBS did during the Bloomberg administration to improve adult workforce development outcomes. The agency brought new scale and standardization to employment services by creating a network of Workforce1 Career Centers across the five boroughs. Partnerships with private funders and the Center for Economic Opportunity helped SBS create sector-focused Workforce1 Centers that deepened engagement with employers, developed new models for training incumbent workers at small and mid-sized businesses, and leveraged resources through partnership with community-based organizations including libraries, CUNY campuses, nonprofit organizations and labor unions. The aggregate result was a vastly improved system that delivered real value to hundreds of thousands of residents and countless city businesses. The number of New Yorkers placed into jobs rose from 500 in 2004 to over 29,000 last year, showing how sufficient attention and investment can power dramatic gains.¹³

The youth side is overdue for similar progress. Under a more effective youth system, city agencies could create a more seamless experience for youth and reduce compliance burdens for providers by coordinating case management and building shared systems. A central entity—most likely the newly created Mayor's Office of Workforce Development—could serve to set strategy, analyze how practitioners can best meet labor market needs and support stronger relationships with employers.

With Mayor Bill de Blasio focused on improving the advancement prospects of all New Yorkers, and a new set of commissioners in place with no obligation to the old ways of doing business, now is the moment to commit anew to supporting New York City's youth as they transition into working adulthood. With employer expectations steadily rising, there is no time to waste: before the end of this decade, two out of every three new jobs that will be created in the United States will require training beyond high school, and work experience might be more important still.¹⁴

THE FRACTURED YOUTH WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Each New York City agency that serves young adults has its own strengths and shortcomings. But their failures to collaborate—or even communicate—too often mean that young adults do not get the help they need.

Most older youth and young adults seeking assistance from workforce programs require much more than help finding a job. Many have little or no work experience, do not have a high school diploma or equivalency and generally are far from being ready to work. High quality youth workforce services help participants toward long-term success, which might mean reaching the next level of educational attainment, building a track record of employment and a set of professional contacts and taking other steps toward responsible adulthood. Unfortunately, New York City's workforce system almost never delivers this holistic set of supports. While different city agencies hold a piece of the puzzle, and each has areas of strength, their unwillingness or inability to coordinate and offer an integrated set of services has severely limited the value of workforce programs for young New Yorkers in need.

Early in his first term, Mayor Michael Bloomberg reorganized workforce development in the city by dissolving the former Department of Employment, which had been responsible for all workforce services. Under the reorganization, City Hall split the bulk of the city's workforce development portfolio between DYCD, which assumed responsibility for workforce programs serving teens and young adults, and SBS, which took oversight of programs serving adults and dislocated workers.

DYCD, SBS and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) manage federal, state, city and private dollars to provide the vast majority of workforce services in New York City. (City agencies rarely offer services directly, mostly contracting with nonprofit and for-profit workforce providers to deliver programs.) In 2011, the most recent year for which data are available, all publicly supported workforce programs served a total of 353,985 customers, 40 percent of whom were

25 years old or younger.¹⁵ All workforce customers served by DYCD are youth under 25. In addition, 30 percent of those served by SBS and 23 percent of HRA workforce participants were between the ages of 18 and 24.¹⁶

The Department of Education (DOE) and the City University of New York (CUNY), while not generally regarded as “workforce agencies,” have an obvious and crucial role in preparing young people for work and careers. Finally, the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), created in 2006 to develop pilot programs to fight poverty, has launched and supported initiatives in virtually all the agencies named above. This chapter presents an overview of how each of these agencies serves youth and young adults through workforce programs.¹⁷

Department of Youth and Community Development

DYCD is New York City's primary youth workforce development agency, but its charge stretches well beyond helping young New Yorkers connect to employment. The agency's mission is to provide family and youth programming and to support community development. It supports a wide range of afterschool programs, literacy initiatives, immigration services for young adults, and school-based community centers among other efforts. While many observers credit DYCD for running strong afterschool and literacy programs, many of the youth workforce experts we interviewed for this report say that the agency lacks creativity and flexibility in its workforce initiatives, and question whether these programs are as effective as they could be in helping young New Yorkers to achieve their work and career goals.

DYCD contracts with providers across the five boroughs to deliver employment and related ser-

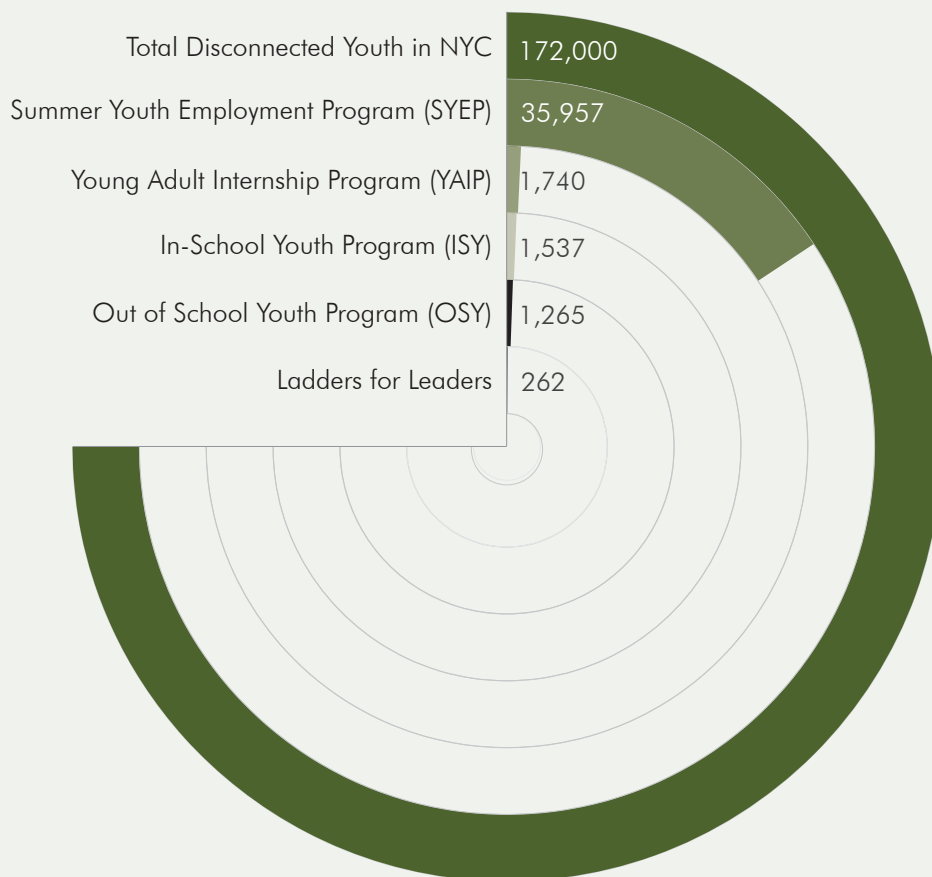
vices. Its biggest workforce program by far is the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), which runs for six weeks each summer and is paid for with a mix of state and city funds. Most SYEP participants are chosen by lottery, but a small number of high school and college students ages 16 to 24 are enrolled in a professional internship program called Ladders for Leaders via a competitive application process. In 2013, DYCD served 35,957 youth through SYEP, including the 262 who participated in Ladders for Leaders. DYCD runs two additional programs, for Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and In-School Youth (ISY), with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) dollars. Finally, DYCD offers the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) for work-ready but disconnected youth, and is funded by the city through the Cen-

ter for Economic Opportunity. ISY, OSY and YAIP combined served a total of 4,372 youth in 2013.¹⁸

Unfortunately, DYCD's workforce programs reach only a tiny fraction of the need. In recent years, SYEP has enrolled about one of every four applicants. OSY and YAIP, the only two DYCD programs that explicitly support disconnected youth, served 2,835 youth combined last year, a mere 2 percent of the estimated 172,000 disconnected youth in New York City.

Youth workforce experts say that both Ladders for Leaders and YAIP in particular seem to deliver real value for participating youth, despite serving so few youth per year. Ladders for Leaders includes pre-employment training offered over a six-month period, followed by a seven-week summer internship paid by partnering employers. Three-fourths of participants are college

Scale of Youth Workforce Programs Not Close to Meeting Demand



Source: NYC DYCD. Enrollment figures for all programs are for the 2014 fiscal year. Not all youth participating in these programs are disconnected; the comparison to the number of disconnected youth is made to show how small these DYCD programs are compared to the need.

Ladders for Leaders, 2013

2,257

applicants

262

internship openings

Enrollment in DYCD Programs, FY2010-FY2013

	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013
Out of School Youth Program (OSY)	1873	1381	1367	1265
In-School Youth Program (ISY)	4390	1664	1616	1537
Ladders for Leaders	190	216	252	262
Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP)	1359	1360	1570	1740

Source: NYC DYCD

students, who are placed in a range of private, nonprofit and government worksites. Private company participation in Ladders for Leaders has increased steadily since the program began, accounting for more than a quarter of worksites in 2013. Last year, host organizations offered ongoing employment to 29 percent of interns after the program concluded.¹⁹ The program enrolled 262 participants in 2013, up from a cohort of just 77 when it launched in 2007.

“The people who go through programs like Ladders for Leaders get meaningful work experiences that are game changers,” says Angie Kamath, a former deputy commissioner for workforce development at the Department of Small

Business Services and now executive director of the New York office of Per Scholas, a national nonprofit organization that trains young adults in skills in the technology field. Originally administered directly by DYCD and supported with private money, Ladders for Leaders was subsumed into the Summer Youth Employment Program in 2013 and contracted out to providers.

Ladders for Leaders benefits from a program design that incorporates many of the elements that youth workforce experts say would strengthen SYEP, including strong employer connections, a more robust job readiness component and a competitive application process through which the best-prepared youth are enrolled. Former DYCD deputy commissioner Suzanne Lynn asserts that the caliber of participants is a major selling point to employer partners. “Employers are happy to work with Ladders for Leaders youth, because they are more prepared,” she explains.

Despite its strong reputation, Ladders for Leaders has not grown to the extent one might expect. In Boston, a similar program has engaged 900 area employers to provide summer internships for 3,000 students every summer. (See p. 31 for more detail about youth workforce programs in Boston.)

The Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), created by the city’s Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) in 2007, benefits from the employer connections, job readiness training and application-based selection process that make Ladders for Leaders a highly regarded program. While Ladders for Leaders and YAIP are both internship programs, only YAIP is specifically focused on disconnected youth, while Ladders participants are overwhelmingly in school. Participants engage in a 14-week paid internship, followed by nine months of follow-up services and assistance with education and job placement. Participants are disconnected 16-to-24-year-old New York City residents who can read at a sixth grade level or higher. The program is run through a network of 20 community partners who recruit participants and place them at worksites.²⁰ The types of worksites into which youth are placed depend on providers’ employer relationships, and have in

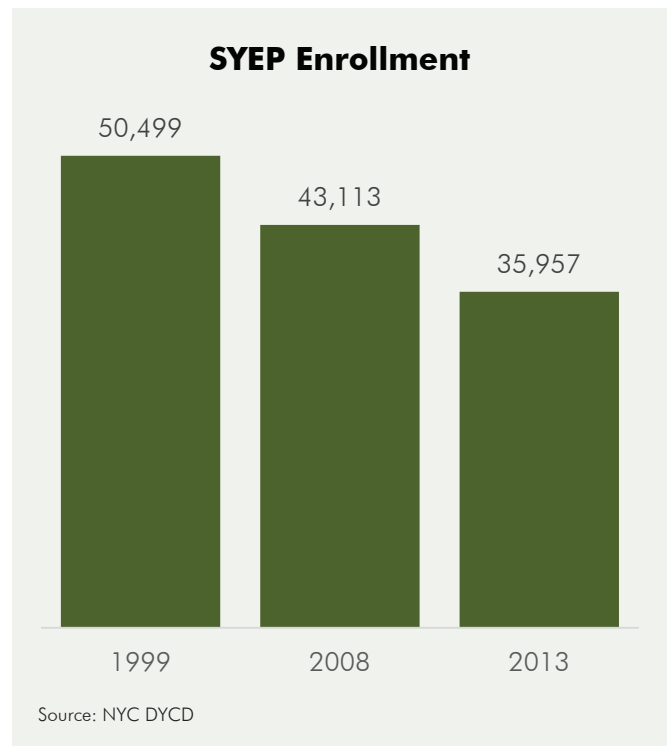
SYEP IN BRIEF

Who's eligible:	New York City residents ages 14 to 24
Program duration:	Six weeks
Number of participants (2013):	35,957
Number of applicants (2013):	135,388
Number of worksites (2013):	6,833
Wages:	\$8 per hour (New York State minimum wage)
Total earnings of participants (2013):	\$31.1 million

the past included multinational corporations like Bank of America, Nike, and Macy's as well as non-profits and city agencies.

A CEO-commissioned evaluation of YAIP shows that the program has produced strong results. Of the 1,570 young adults enrolled in YAIP in 2012, the last year for which data are available, 99 percent were placed in internships, and 84 percent of those who were placed completed their internships. A little more than half (51 percent) of enrollees were placed into jobs after their internships concluded, and 59 percent of those placements remained in those jobs for after nine months.²¹

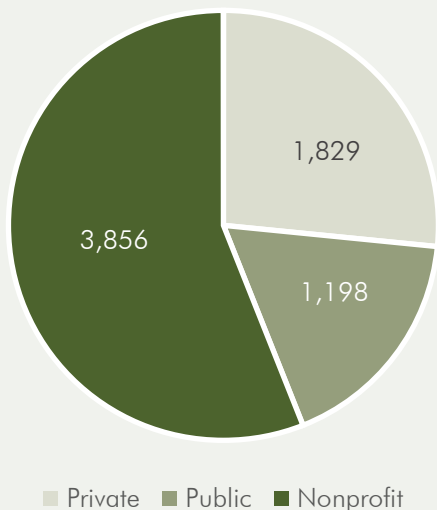
While Ladders for Leaders and YAIP are highly regarded by workforce practitioners and experts, the value of DYCD's two WIA-funded programs serving Out of School Youth (OSY) and In School Youth (ISY) is less clear. Part of the problem is that neither of these programs have been evaluated, leaving little data to understand their effectiveness. Beyond that, however, experts in the field say that OSY and ISY contracts do not provide sufficient resources that providers can use to seek employer input into occupational training programs, support supervisors of youth and create job opportunities. Moreover, both sustained deep cuts as a result of sharply decreased WIA funding. OSY is a yearlong program for WIA-eligible disconnected youth ages 16 to 21. DYCD contracts with 20 providers to recruit program participants, who receive educational assistance and skills training to help them find permanent work. Funding cuts have shrunk the program by nearly a third in recent years; 1,265 young people



received OSY services last year, down from 1,873 participants in fiscal year 2010.²²

ISY has sustained even deeper cuts, with enrollment plummeting from 4,390 in FY2010 to just 1,537 in FY2013. ISY targets WIA-eligible high school juniors and seniors at risk of dropping out with a year-long curriculum that includes college and career counseling and preparation, academic tutoring, project-based learning activities, and other enrichment activities. Providers interviewed for this report observed that these severe budget cuts represent the biggest challenge of administering OSY and ISY contracts.

SYEP Worksite by Sector, 2013



Source: NYC DYCD

Summer Youth Employment Program

With fewer and fewer New York City teens and young adults able to find jobs, the Summer Youth Employment Program has become more important than ever as a pathway to work for tens of thousands of New York City youth. SYEP participants get jobs for which they do not have to compete with adults—a vital function in a labor market where large numbers of low-skilled adults typically fill the entry-level jobs open to youth elsewhere. Research has found that early work experience can confer great benefits: holding a job helps acculturate youth to the “world of work,” informs their future educational decisions, and clarifies the connection between educational attainment and earning power.²³ A high quality summer jobs program could provide crucial value for New York City youth who might otherwise never work as teens, helping them get on a path toward educational attainment, steady employment and career success.

In practice, however, SYEP falls far short of this ideal. The program is too small compared to the overwhelming demand and has little or no connection to participants’ educational experiences or long-term career objectives. Worst of

all, SYEP largely fails to provide the high quality work experiences that can make a positive difference for youth new to the working world, raising doubts that participants are gaining much of anything beyond a few more dollars in their pocket.

Some even argue that youth placed in positions of little or no responsibility can get the wrong idea about what work is like. “Unfortunately, a lot of the placements have ended up being more like summer camp than work,” observes Lowell Herschberger of Cypress Hills LDC. “There is a real risk with SYEP that we are teaching young adults that work is just hanging out.”

Every year, the city must cobble together the budget for SYEP from multiple sources. In 2013, city tax levy dollars accounted for 46 percent of the total, with state funds covering 29 percent, federal dollars (Community Services Block Grant and WIA) totaling 20 percent and private donations the remaining 5 percent.²⁴ The annual exercise of having to assemble funding to support the program from a variety of sources has meant that the size of SYEP fluctuates from year to year, with a recent high of 52,255 participants in summer 2009—thanks to a significant one-time infusion of funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—and a low of 29,416 three years later. (SYEP’s enrollment is expected to increase by 10,700 this summer, thanks to the City Council’s commitment of millions of dollars in new funding in the FY 2015 city budget.)

As other job opportunities for youth have diminished, demand for SYEP has spiked. In 2004, the earliest year for which figures are available, SYEP accepted 33,739 youth out of 70,000 applicants, for an acceptance rate of 48 percent. By 2013, the number of applications had increased by 93 percent, to 135,388, boosted in part by the shift to an online application process. The acceptance rate in 2013 had declined to 27 percent.

SYEP includes four tracks, one for younger youth ages 14-15, one for older youth ages 16-24, one for vulnerable youth ages 14-24 and finally Ladders for Leaders as a track for professional paid internships for more skilled youth. The track for the youngest participants is focused on providing enhanced education services, while

older youth focus on work readiness and preparing for postsecondary education. All participants go through an eight-hour orientation that covers topics like job readiness, teamwork, conflict resolution, and workplace safety. The youngest participants, who comprised 28 percent of SYEP enrollees in 2013, receive an added five hours of job and life skill training every week.

DYCD contracted with 57 separate providers to offer SYEP in 2013. Each provider is responsible for building a program in miniature: finding worksites for participants and developing and delivering the “classroom component” of one day each week dedicated to work readiness and financial literacy instruction. DYCD provides a set curriculum customized for the 14-15 year-old program track, the track for 16-24 year olds, and Ladders for Leaders, offers training on that curriculum to providers through the Workforce Professionals Training Institute, and conducts site visits to observe workshops. Even so, the quality of the classroom component varies widely, and critics assert that DYCD is missing an opportunity to support participants in making the link between their summer work experiences and year-round classroom learning, and exploring possible career interests and long-term goals.

The quality of worksites, and work experiences, is similarly uneven. Most sites are nonprofits, which accounted for 56 percent of the total last year. The largest share within this group (32 percent) was day care sites or summer camps. Another 17 percent of worksites were in government, with private sector worksites comprising the remaining 27 percent. Retail firms accounted for a quarter of those private sector sites.²⁵

DYCD made progress in recruiting private employers for SYEP after taking over responsibility for youth workforce development in the early years of the Bloomberg administration. “We built this from scratch,” says former DYCD Deputy Commissioner Suzanne Lynn. “When we got the youth workforce development portfolio, there were no private employer-city partnership relationships. We have worked hard to develop them.”

Some partners are very happy with the extra hands the program provides during the summer.

SYEP Worksites by Industry, 2013

Industry/Sector	Number of worksites	Percentage of Total
Day Care/Day Camp	2,150	31.50%
Government Agency	817	12.00%
Community/Social Service	770	11.30%
Education Services	765	11.20%
Healthcare/Medical	535	7.80%
Other	477	7.00%
Retail	475	7.00%
Arts & Recreation	381	5.60%
Real Estate/Property	95	1.40%
Community Service/Service Learning Project	92	1.30%
Financial Services	91	1.30%
Legal Services	58	0.80%
Marketing/Public Relation	37	0.50%
Hospitality/Tourism	34	0.50%
Media/Entertainment	29	0.40%
Transportation	17	0.20%
Manufacturing	10	0.10%

Source: NYC DYCD

“DYCD has done a great job with preparing youth applicants through SYEP,” says Greg Hambric, a regional recruiter at Modell’s Sporting Goods who has worked with SYEP youth for many years. “Many employers like me who have hired SYEP kids have been very pleased. If there’s any drawback, it’s that there are not enough employers [who participate].”

There are a number of reasons why more businesses aren’t involved. DYCD officials say that it is a challenge to engage private sector given the short duration of SYEP. The six week program barely gives businesses a chance to realize any benefit from bringing on a summer hire, especially when it can take the firm two or three weeks just to train the young person. In addition, many of the nonprofit providers that are charged with finding worksites for participants do not have a large set of relationships with employers. They also lack incentive to aggressively pursue private sector employers for placements, since their contracts only allow up to 30 percent of worksites to be with private sector employers.

The manner through which SYEP participants are selected represents another obstacle to engaging private sector employers. With demand so far in excess of supply, DYCD enrolls applicants through a lottery system. The lottery ensures that every applicant has an equal chance to be selected, but also hurts providers’ capacity to make strong matches with employers since they don’t know which applicants they ultimately will have to place. For their part, employers aren’t enamored of a system where there is little assurance they will receive young people who are work-ready. And because the employers who do participate can’t meet their hires ahead of time, they invariably place youth in positions of lesser responsibility.

“Young people really need employers who are counting on them and holding them to the same standard as other employees,” says Lowell Herschberger of Cypress Hills LDC. “The real pride and joy in working is being able to say, ‘I helped build that house,’ or ‘I really contributed to that landscaping project.’ There’s not enough of that in SYEP.”

To its credit, DYCD has greatly improved the administration of SYEP, streamlining operations in response to declining funding. In addition, DYCD migrated SYEP to an online enrollment process and struck agreements with financial providers to open checking accounts for program participants and pay them through direct deposit. The result has been a much better user experience for young people—and an important connection to the banking system. Two other important Bloomberg-era changes to SYEP were the addition of the educational component in 2004, and setting aside specialized slots for more vulnerable youth in 2010.²⁶ DYCD has continued to tweak the educational component, developing and revising standard curricula, and has maintained or increased the number of slots reserved for the most vulnerable youth even as the program’s overall size has fluctuated: from 600 in 2010 through 2012, the number rose to 1,000 last year and to 1,160 in 2014. Most recently, DYCD has moved orientation and screening for the program to earlier in the spring, giving providers more time to assess their participants and get them ready to work.

Although the shifts to online enrollment and direct deposit saved considerable money that went back into serving youth, DYCD remains a severely under-resourced program—and this fact represents perhaps the biggest obstacle to improving its quality. Providers receive \$325 for each individual enrolled, an amount they claim is insufficient to ensure quality work experiences for all participants.

With funding for SYEP an annual concern, drawing more private support would be a huge boon. But the program’s limitations have left foundations deeply skeptical. “SYEP is a stopgap, and there is no evidence to suggest that it changes young people’s futures,” says one foundation program officer. “What does six weeks of sometimes low quality work experience actually do for you? The mission [of this foundation] is to fight poverty, and to fight poverty you have to effect long-term change. SYEP does not meet that intention.”

Despite the program’s long history and a natural control group of applicants who were not ac-

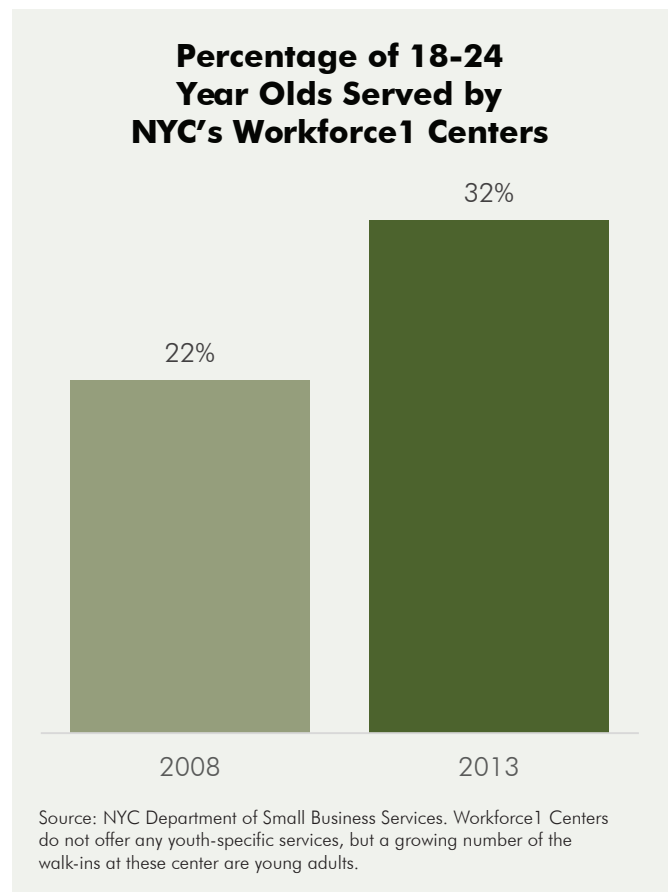
cepted into the program, until very recently the city had done little to evaluate SYEP's impact on participants. A 2012 study examining school attendance and performance for high school age SYEP participants found small but significant positive effects: overall, participants' absentee days from school fell by two days, and the most at-risk youth saw average absences decrease by four days. SYEP also increases the possibility of passing the Regents exams by between 1 and 2 percent.²⁷

A larger evaluation looking at participants' subsequent college and workforce outcomes would help inform the conversation about how SYEP can better make a positive impact on the future careers of its participants. Recent changes in New York State law to increase access to Wage Reporting System (WRS) data should render such a study much more feasible than would have been the case a few years ago.

DYCD assistant commissioner Alan Cheng, who oversees SYEP, notes that the program's purpose has changed since its earliest days. "When this program started in the 1960s, it was originally a program to keep kids off the streets. Over the last decade or two, it's evolved into a workforce development program instead of a 'keep kids out of trouble' program." SYEP could continue that evolution with greater focus on helping participants understand career possibilities and refine their long-term goals, and shoring up their readiness for work beyond the six weeks of the program.

Department of Small Business Services

The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) is the city's primary agency that provides employment and training services to New Yorkers 18 and older, receiving WIA dollars targeted for adults and dislocated workers. SBS administers the Workforce1 Career Centers, as New York City calls its WIA-mandated one-stop career centers. During the Bloomberg administration, the Workforce1 system grew from only one center to 17 across the five boroughs, including two sector-specific Workforce1 Centers focused on employment opportunities in healthcare and transpor-



tation and industrial occupations. The New York State Department of Labor directly administers three additional one-stop centers.

Of the three main workforce agencies, SBS has by far the strongest employer connections, and has enjoyed the greatest success in making placements. Although Workforce1 does not offer any youth-specific services, in 2013 32 percent of walk-ins at Career Centers were between the ages of 18 and 24, up from 22 percent in 2008. Unlike DYCD's WIA-funded programs, which require a lengthy application to ensure eligibility, Workforce1 services are accessible to any New Yorker age 18 or over, regardless of income, educational achievement, or literacy level. In general, Workforce1 Centers are successful in connecting relatively work-ready jobseekers to current employer openings. For young New Yorkers who require something beyond brushing up their resume or getting in the door for an interview, however, Workforce1 is unlikely to deliver what they need.

If SBS were to increase its focus on serving young adults, its Community Partners program would be a logical vehicle to do so. Created in 2007 by the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and managed by SBS, Community Partners represents an effort to address the needs of specific high-need jobseeker subpopulations by leveraging the resources of partner organizations. Workforce1 Centers can refer applicants with multiple barriers, such as housing or childcare issues, to a network of over 100 active partners—from community-based organizations and labor unions to library branches, churches and CUNY campuses—to help people access services to remove those barriers. The referrals run in both directions: Community Partner organizations review job postings from Workforce1, and screen candidates according to Workforce1 protocols and refer the strongest back to Workforce1, who then arrange an interview with the employer.

A 2010 evaluation commissioned by CEO found that individuals referred through Community Partners who were unemployed at enrollment were 3.4 times more likely to be placed into jobs than comparable Workforce1 participants.²⁸ Last year, Community Partner organizations referred 1,222 youth as job candidates who were placed into jobs through Workforce1. Overall, 27 percent of all referrals through the program were ages 18-24, and 18 percent of them were placed into jobs through Workforce1 compared to a placement rate of 17 percent among referrals ages 25 and above. But of the 109 active partners last year, only a few, like FEGS, OBT and the YMCA, offer youth-focused services.²⁹

SBS also has partnered with New York City College of Technology (City Tech) and technology companies located in the Brooklyn Navy Yard to create the Brooklyn Tech Triangle Internship Program. Launched in 2013 with funding from the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment and the Young Men's Initiative, the program served 25 participating City Tech students, mostly between the ages of 18 and 24, in its first year, and expanded to 50 students this summer. Interns work four days a week for eight weeks in July and August. City Tech students apply to SBS for a slot

in the program, and SBS pre-screens applicants based on criteria developed in partnership with the tech companies before presenting them to the employers for interviews. SBS covers all costs of the program, including intern pay.

The agency is looking to expand this program to other boroughs by creating additional partnerships with postsecondary institutions and local tech firm hubs. "We developed this program with the needs of employers in mind," says SBS deputy commissioner Jackie Mallon. "We have provided a good amount of support in selecting the right students and having businesses articulate their specific needs." The program will include a follow-up component to help assess its impact on participants' college completion rates and workforce outcomes.

Human Resources Administration

HRA is the city's welfare agency and controls the largest share (43 percent) of all workforce money coming into New York City, mostly through federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds as well as the Food Stamp Employment and Training program and city tax levy funding.³⁰ HRA's main workforce development program, Back to Work, follows the federal welfare reform law of 1996 in requiring cash assistance recipients to engage in "work activities," toward the goal of connecting to employment. Through the last two mayoral administrations, the agency has embraced a firm "work-first" approach—despite the clear mismatch with the tens of thousands of young adults on the rolls who would draw greater benefit from education and training. HRA has come under withering criticism for its low placement rates and rigid prioritization of any work opportunity over education. Under its new leadership, the agency has pledged a thorough review of the previous administration's policies and procedures, and is revising its biennial employment plan to eliminate what new Commissioner Steve Banks has characterized as a "one size fits all" approach to employment programs.

HRA embraced a work-first approach based on evidence from evaluations of employment and training programs conducted by MDRC and oth-

ers in the 1990s that purported to show that a strategy of rapid attachment to the workforce best serves cash assistance recipients. But a meta-study of MDRC's evaluations of welfare to work programs done more recently found that mandatory work experience and job-search-first programs like HRA's are focused more on "reducing the government's budget than on increasing the incomes of welfare recipients."³¹

Moreover, youth development experts say that a work-first model that consists mostly of resume-writing and job search activities is not appropriate for many youth who may not have even graduated high school, let alone have work experience to put on a resume. "How are you going to get young adults 'back to work' if they don't have much work experience to begin with?" asks Randy Peers of OBT. "Too many young adults are sitting in adult programs that are just not the right fit."

A WORKFORCE/EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP IN LOS ANGELES

While no city or state has come up with the perfect system of youth workforce development services, Los Angeles stands out for the sound logic of its approach: bringing together education and employment focused services to offer a unified set of services to high-need youth. The city's Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWDD) partners with the LA Unified School District (LAUSD) to help Los Angeles residents under the age of 21 who have dropped out of high school reconnect to education and employment options through a set of YouthSource Centers.

A decade ago, the system in Los Angeles looked much like the uncoordinated proliferation of programs that New York has today. "We used to run it program by program, giving each program a set number of seats and giving them money to serve those kids," says EWDD assistant general manager Robert Sainz. "There was no leveraging of partnerships, no consistency."

Looking to improve outcomes, Los Angeles commissioned a study in 2005 to uncover the needs of disconnected youth. Its findings led EWDD to create YouthSource Centers, the first of which opened in 2012. In these one-stop facilities, youth ages 16 to 21 can get information from LAUSD counselors regarding educational reconnection and completion, work readiness skills and training, career exploration, and employment services. The 13 YouthSource Centers across the city, run by community-based organizations, employ a total of 16 counselors, whose salaries are jointly paid by LAUSD and EWDD. This translates to an \$840,000 annual contribution from LAUSD to support the counselors.

While these centers will accept walk-ins, their most important outreach strategy is to target youth on lists of school dropouts provided by LAUSD. "Often we find those kids sitting at home," says Sainz. "The counselors don't try to put kids right back in the school situation where they failed or that they walked away from. We get them into a community center to help them find an educational path and a job."

The partnership between EWDD and LAUSD carries another important benefit: allowing access to school records that otherwise might not be available to EWDD because of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations. Because the counselors are employed by the school system they have access to and can draw from school records to inform their assessment of how best to serve students. Since counselors have a student's school records at hand, it significantly reduces the staff time and paperwork required to get access to this information.

YouthSource Centers served 8,534 youth during their first year of operation. Of these, 5,394 received an educational assessment, which included making an educational plan towards high school completion. Among those who received an assessment, 2,910 enrolled in WIA and received services including job readiness training, occupational training, paid work experience, and college preparation. Additional funds through federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and other sources helped place another 1,000 youth in workforce programs outside of WIA. Finally, 972 youth returned to school.³⁸

Youth Population Served by Age		
	Ages 14-17	Ages 18-24
DYCD	24,584	16,007
SBS		53,449
HRA		19,097

Source: NYC DYCD, SBS, HRA

TANF regulations for families with children require that cash assistance recipients engage in a work activity for at least 30 hours per week, or 20 hours per week for single parents with children under the age of six. In addition, New York State law requires single adults without children to engage in 35 hours of work activities per week. Aside from this requirement, states have considerable latitude as to how they can organize their programs. HRA, however, has required cash assistance recipients to engage in five more hours of work activities than mandated under TANF: 20 hours a week in a Work Experience Program (WEP), where recipients work for free at city agencies like the Parks Department and HRA itself, and an additional 15 hours a week in “educational training activities” through Back to Work.

In 2013, nearly 20,000 young adults ages 18 to 24 enrolled in the Back to Work program; of this number, 3,087, just 16 percent of the total, were placed into jobs and were still working 30 days after being placed. HRA has had roughly equal success in connecting adults to employment, with a 17 percent placement rate.³² Not surprisingly, the 18 to 24 year olds who receive cash assistance in New York City have severe educational and skill deficits: 51 percent of cash assistance recipients in that age range have less than a high school degree, compared to 33 percent of the population not on cash assistance. An additional 30 percent of recipients have only a high school degree, compared to 20 percent of non-recipients.³³

But despite the need, a look at HRA’s own data on its young adult cash assistance caseload suggests that the agency has been far more in-

clined to deny young adults cash assistance than to help connect them to education and training that could position them for longer-term success. In April 2014 only 12 percent of the young adult head of household cash assistance caseload was in any kind of training—and those young adults were covering all training costs themselves, with no funding assistance from HRA. By contrast, 16 percent of the young adult caseload in that month faced reduction or loss of their cash assistance.³⁴

Like other city agencies that administer workforce funds, HRA contracts Back to Work services to provider organizations, many of which also serve youth through DYCD contracts. In order for a program to count towards the educational training activities requirement, however, HRA must approve the program, and the provider must agree to submit detailed attendance and performance records to HRA. As one former senior HRA official explains, many organizations balk at this requirement. “A lot of the programs didn’t want to ask for this information, because they viewed their mission as being education providers, not being attendance monitors for HRA. They don’t want to get involved with something that could result in people losing their cash assistance benefits.” Programs that choose not to participate on these grounds cannot provide slots for young cash assistance applicants and recipients.

Under the last two mayors, HRA seemed more focused on compliance—fulfilling its requirements under federal legislation and funding—than on helping New Yorkers address their biggest needs. Back to Work in particular has come under harsh criticism from organizations such as the Community Service Society of New York and Community Voices Heard for its poor performance and misalignment with the real needs of young adults, including low placement rates, the high rates at which participants are sanctioned out of the program before they can make any progress, and its rigid prioritization of work—even low-quality work experiences—over education.³⁵ In particular, the two organizations have documented instances in which young adults who were enrolled in a developmentally appropriate, youth-centered educational program at the time

that they applied for cash assistance were told by HRA caseworkers that they had to drop out of that program and enroll in Back to Work instead, in an apparent violation of HRA's own policies.³⁶

WEP, which provides an unpaid work experience opportunity at city agencies like the Department of Sanitation, the Parks Department, or HRA itself, is no more flexible or supportive of the developmental needs of youth participants. Unemployed cash assistance recipients aged 19 and older must enroll in WEP to fulfill their work experience requirements. Youth who do so, however, effectively forfeit opportunities to engage in more enriching programs like Ladders for Leaders. Also, because HRA itself makes WEP assignments, rather than its vendors, there is absolutely no opportunity to connect youth enrolled in WEP with developmentally appropriate services.

Were HRA to target services toward young adults receiving assistance, the agency could draw lessons from the Wellness, Comprehensive Assessment Rehabilitation and Employment (WeCARE) program it created in 2005 to provide wraparound services to recipients and applicants with medical barriers that prevent them from securing stable employment. Case managers refer clients who present physical or mental barriers to employment to WeCARE, and the program connects the client to medical treatment, places them in jobs that can accommodate their limitations, and connects them to benefits. "It's probably one of the most creative, thoughtful program models in terms of its goals," says Workforce Investment Board member Rae Linefsky. "It was a very bold move for HRA at the time."

Unfortunately, the thoughtful approach of WeCARE is unusual within the portfolio of HRA programs. HRA measures vendors' performance solely on whether they placed a client into a job, giving no credit for any other outcomes. Offering developmentally appropriate services over a longer timeframe would require a greater expenditure of resources, but would raise the odds of young clients achieving self-sufficiency.

While HRA leadership during the last administration interpreted TANF to emphasize rapid attachment to any job regardless of quality, ad-

vancement prospects, or the interests and ambitions of the client, new HRA Commissioner Steve Banks has a long track record of opposition to these policies. Under his leadership, HRA already has signaled a new willingness to emphasize educational experiences and training opportunities, and an amendment to the state social services law now allows cash assistance recipients to pursue a four-year college degree while continuing to receive cash assistance. Greater flexibility to help young adults farther up the ladder of academic achievement would go a long way toward improving their long-term prospects.

The Department of Education and City University of New York

No discussion of the workforce prospects of youth would be complete without considering their educational outcomes. The New York City Department of Education has made considerable strides in getting more students to complete high school: graduation rates have risen from 50 percent in 2002 to 65 percent in 2013. It is far from clear, however, that this increase will mean much for students' later labor market success. A report by education reform group Achieve, Inc. states, "the [high school] diploma has lost its value because what it takes to earn one is disconnected from what it takes for graduates to compete successfully beyond high school—either in the classroom or in the workplace." The study argues that a high school diploma no longer sends a strong signal of work readiness and has become "little more than a certificate of attendance."³⁷

The Common Core Learning Standards, which enjoy strong support from employers, represent an effort to more closely align what schools teach with what employers need. Common Core emphasizes the literacy, problem solving, numerical, and social skills that employers claim are necessary for success in the workforce. Locally, however, the Common Core came under withering attack in spring 2013, when the first test scores in New York came in far lower than those from less rigorous exams in prior years. It remains to be seen whether state and city policymakers will continue to back the new standards.

Beyond the Common Core, DOE has taken some steps to more directly connect students to potential career pathways. Under Mayor Bloomberg, DOE more than doubled the number of designated Career and Technical Education (CTE) high schools, including the nationally recognized Pathways in Technology Early College High School (PTECH), a six year program developed in partnership with IBM and CUNY that opened in 2011 and will support students through completion of an associate's degree and acquisition of the skills needed for career-track work in information technology. Two additional "9 to 14" high schools opened in fall 2013, with three more to follow this year. In all, DOE offers approximately 400 CTE programs, featuring career exploration and preparation for enrolled students.

On balance, however, the public school system has placed little emphasis on preparing students for jobs and careers. Notwithstanding a rhetorical switch toward emphasizing "college and career readiness" rather than just college, DOE's course programming, counseling, and system accountability measures all remain overwhelmingly focused on traditional academics while students are in the K-12 system, and pushing students toward college enrollment after graduation. There are very few opportunities and resources to help high school students find employment, even though low-income families tend to lack the social and professional networks through which wealthier teens typically land their first jobs. While it might make sense to suggest that more attention to students' career interests could help provide context for classroom studies and engage students with more active learning styles, the system has been slow to embrace changes along these lines.

"DOE has many resources, but the workforce world does not intersect with that world very often," says Randy Peers of OBT. "Programs designed to keep young adults on track and graduating with regular high school diplomas have not been robust and are certainly not connecting to groups like us." A notable exception to this has been the DOE's Pathways to Graduation (District 79) programs, through which the department has provided organizations like OBT with HSE in-

structors, allowing young people who are receiving workforce services to also work towards their high school equivalency degree.

"The DOE needs to figure out how to start introducing the concept of careers at a young age," adds Laurie Dien of the Pinkerton Foundation. "That will help students better understand why they're going to school."

One program the DOE offers in partnership with SBS suggests what might be possible given greater commitment from the school system to support students' career success. Scholars at Work connects qualified CTE students to paid internships with manufacturing and transportation employers served by the Workforce1 Industrial and Transportation Career Center. Since its launch in 2010, Scholars at Work has placed hundreds of CTE students, a large number of whom have received offers of unsubsidized part-time or full-time work from their host employers after completing their internships. SBS and the DOE are currently planning to expand Scholars at Work into other industry sectors, including healthcare and technology, and to incorporate a work-based learning component in partnership with participating employers. A separate DOE program, Learning to Work, connects students at risk of dropping out to paid work opportunities. Learning to Work serves approximately 12,500 students per year in 45 sites across the five boroughs.³⁹

Within the CUNY system, the seven community colleges have most fully embraced their role in preparing students for employment and careers, offering a range of occupational certificates and degree programs and marketing themselves as work-focused institutions of learning. But while community colleges can do much for youth who are college-ready, they understandably struggle to serve high school graduates who are not prepared for college or work. Among the CUNY community colleges, fewer than two out of every five students graduate with any credential at all after six years.⁴⁰ Moreover, four out of every five students who matriculated in the fall of 2010 required remedial coursework before they could enroll in credit-bearing courses that count towards a degree or credential.⁴¹

CUNY also has taken steps to boost the rate at which its community college students complete associate's degrees.⁴² Guttman Community College, opened in 2011, has developed its program around raising completion rates, and the CUNY ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) initiative, piloted by CEO, has yielded impressive results since its launch in 2007: across all participating campuses, CUNY ASAP students have a three-year graduation rate of 51 percent, versus 22 percent for a comparison group of students. CUNY is expanding the initiative, with new investment from the city's Fiscal Year 2015 budget.

As the mayor declared in his 2014 State of the City speech, CUNY has a large potential role to play in helping young New Yorkers fulfill their educational and career aspirations. It has partnered with the Bronx Opportunity Network to help youth make the leap between high school and college (see p. 28), a promising arrangement with potential to scale, and in 2012 issued a report titled "Jobs for New York's Future" that examined industry and workforce trends within five sectors of strategic importance to CUNY and the city as a whole: finance, insurance, and accounting; healthcare; higher education; information technology; and media and advertising.⁴³ The report included few specific recommendations for program or policy changes at CUNY, however, and CUNY's plans to follow up through system-wide initiatives remain unclear.

Center for Economic Opportunity

Since its creation in 2006, CEO has developed and evaluated a range of initiatives to reduce poverty among three priority populations: the working poor, families with children, and young adults ages 16 to 24.⁴⁴ Recognizing that the needs of low-income young adults range from basic literacy to educational completion and employment assistance, CEO has created a varied set of programs to serve youth at different points along the spectrum of academic attainment and work readiness. Several of these initiatives, such as the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), have demonstrated strong results, and experts interviewed for this report say that CEO has been an important new piece of the youth workforce development infra-

structure—one going so far as calling CEO "the only promising area in city government."

According to the latest figures available, in 2012 CEO leveraged a total of \$24.7 million from different funding sources to launch 11 workforce programs, six of which are targeted at young adults. YAIP is the largest of these programs, funded in that year at \$10.2 million, and the only one administered by DYCD.⁴⁵ Other CEO programs administered by SBS serve young adults as well as older jobseekers, including Community Partners and the Workforce1 Sector Centers, and CEO allocated \$400,000 for the Scholars at Work collaboration between DOE and SBS.⁴⁶ CEO also has helped launch and guide the Young Men's Initiative, which provides a wide range of education, employment and social services to young African-American and Latino males.

Even as CEO has provided funds to create innovative programs, some practitioners assert that DYCD has failed to take full advantage of this opportunity. Because CEO programs are funded with city dollars, agencies are free from the often-rigid requirements that come with federal and state support. DYCD's administration of YAIP, however, is even more restrictive than for the WIA-funded OSY program: OSY allows follow-up services for 12 months after participants exit compared to nine for YAIP, and OSY allows subcontracting of up to 45 percent of a contract's value, compared to 35 percent for YAIP.

Takiyah Weekes, director of youth employment services at Henry Street Settlement House, a YAIP provider, suggests that although the program has been very successful in producing positive outcomes for the disconnected population it serves, it could be more flexible regarding the types of positive outcomes it recognizes and the timeframe in which programs can claim these outcomes. "A lot of these young people are looking to do things that are a step up from what they were doing when they first came in," she says. "I feel that we should give them credit for moving up, even if it is just incremental. It would also allow practitioners to say that we were able to have a positive impact on participants, even if they did not get a job."

POOR DESIGN AND PERVERSE INCENTIVES

High-need young adult New Yorkers require longer timelines and a broad set of services to effectively prepare for career-track work—but most city contracts still require short-term outcomes with questionable long-term benefit.

New York City's youth workforce system would make much more sense if those who seek services literally were "young adults," different from their older counterparts only in terms of age. But youth programs serve a very different set of customers—most of whom come through the door with significant developmental needs, deficits of skill and experience, and challenging life circumstances that might range from unstable housing arrangements to ongoing health concerns. All these issues must be addressed if they are ever to find steady, career-track work. Unfortunately for those customers, the way most publicly funded workforce contracts are structured prompts providers to avoid the hardest to serve, target the wrong outcomes for those enrolled, offer too-short timeframes to achieve these outcomes and discourage or even forbid collaboration between providers that could offer complementary services.

As city leaders contemplate changes to the system and rewrite youth-focused workforce contracts over the next several years, they must rethink some of these basic premises. Ensuring that programs reach the highest-need youth with the widest range of services and encouraging partnership between providers should be among the new priorities. Fortunately, new models of collaboration such as the Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN) and Y-Roads, both described below—and both currently funded with philanthropic rather than public dollars—show an alternative to the unacceptable status quo.

For now, however, public youth workforce contracts all too often push providers in unhelpful directions. Perhaps the worst problem is that the limited reimbursable outcomes and short timeframes of performance-based youth workforce contracts almost force providers to enroll youth who are closest to being job ready. "Funders will give you a year, and in a year you have to get

someone from A to Z," says Elisa Istueta, director of the Department of Children and Youth Services at BronxWorks. "You don't want someone who is at A; realistically you may have to take someone who is at L. If you want to see someone really improve in 12 months, are you going to take someone who is reading at the 3rd grade level? No. You will take someone who is reading at the 8th grade level." DYCD's practice of not allowing vendors to enroll a larger number of participants than they project to serve further intensifies the pressure to cream.

The mistaken emphasis on short-term outcomes is not limited to WIA-funded programs, but holds true across the city's publicly administered workforce system. "HRA and DYCD are less interested from an outcomes perspective in advancement and more interested in [job] placement or getting people off cash assistance," says one practitioner. "This takes the needle only so far, because they're not defining success as equipping people for middle-skill jobs."

This approach can have particularly harmful impact on high need youth. An investigation of HRA's Back to Work program by Community Voices Heard, an antipoverty advocacy group, reported on high school dropouts who took the first step towards reengagement by enrolling in a GED program, and subsequently applied to HRA for cash assistance while working toward their equivalency.⁴⁷ Young people who enrolled in GED programs that were not on the agency's list of approved contractors were required to sign up with agency-approved programs, some of which did not offer support toward GED completion. In effect, HRA policies forced these individuals to choose between the long-term benefits of completing their high school equivalency, and their immediate need for cash assistance.

LEAVING BEHIND THE HARDEST TO SERVE

It's hard enough for any young adult to gain real value from a youth workforce system that is more focused on quick attachment to the labor force than on building long-term skills. But youth facing additional challenges, like immigrants, youth who are in foster care or are homeless, court-involved, or and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)—are even less likely to get help that is tailored to their needs. This is a major challenge for New York City's youth workforce system, in part because high-need youth account for a significant share of the disconnected population.

In 2010, there were 7,000 young people in foster care between the ages of 14 and 21, the age by which youth must leave care. Foster youth face long odds against connecting to career-track work. While more than 900 youth age out of the city's foster care system every year, research suggests that as many as half are jobless, and one out of five youth who age out end up in a homeless shelter within three years of exit.⁴⁸ Despite their extremely low academic attainment—only 15 percent of foster youth in eighth grade can read, write and do math at grade level—very few of them are connected to workforce development services. For example, only 10 percent of eligible foster youth entered SYEP in 2010.

Immigrant youth also face challenges that go beyond those of the youth population at large: language barriers and lack of documentation. Officially, 51,909 foreign-born youth in the city are disconnected, although the true number is likely to be larger since Census figures surely omit many undocumented young New Yorkers.⁴⁹ This means that about one out of every three disconnected youth in New York City is an immigrant. Of course, these special needs populations often intersect, and individuals with multiple special needs are even more likely to not be adequately served by the youth workforce development system. Fully 48 percent of disconnected foreign-born youth speak English less than very well, compared to 21 percent of immigrant youth who are not disconnected.⁵⁰ Undocumented youth who can't legally work in the United States are limited to whatever unpaid internship and volunteer opportunities provider organizations can identify for them. Moreover, training programs are reluctant to enroll undocumented youth, since they cannot place these participants into employment at the end of training and thus will not be paid for a successful outcome.

The result is that undocumented youth often end up in employment situations where they are susceptible to exploitation. "Many undocumented youth work off the books in unregulated establishments," Reyes explains. "Some of these establishments are requiring youth to work overnight shifts, even if they have to get to school the next day, or else they could lose their jobs."

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) youth also face a unique set of challenges. An estimated 40 percent of the 2,570 young people who are homeless on any given night in New York City identify as LGBT. Statistically more likely than youth overall to have experienced homelessness, rejection by family and peers and discrimination, and less likely to have family supports, LGBT youth are at greater risk for dropping out of school, are often less prepared for college and careers, and are very likely to present multiple needs to social services agencies. Without focused support, LGBT youth are at statistically higher risk of landing in the juvenile justice system.⁵¹

Transgender and other gender non-conforming youth face particular difficulty in connecting to stable employment. "Even for young people in our program who achieve solid academic outcomes in high school, moving on to the world of work brings with it a host of other challenges," says Nicole Avallone, director of youth services at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. "Young people who might present to the world in a way that contradicts gender norms face discrimination on a daily basis." In addition, a person who presents a gender different from that on their official documentation, or from that which their legal name suggests, might face difficulty in accessing employment programs that require documentation of identity.

Youth who have had involvement with the court system also experience challenges. Roughly one third of the 29,000 people on probation that the New York City Department of Probation serves with workforce programs are youth and young adults. About 60 percent of youth ages 16 to 18 who are in New York City jails read below a fifth grade reading level, which means that they cannot be served by the majority of workforce-oriented programs, which often require participants to have a minimum of an eighth-grade reading level. In addition, two-thirds of young adults returning from New York State prisons never return to school.⁵²

“Funders will give you a year, and in a year you have to get someone from A to Z. If you want to see someone really improve in 12 months, are you going to take someone who is reading at the 3rd grade level? No. You will take someone who is reading at the 8th grade level.”

Lack of work experience and educational credentials and deficits of emotional and social competencies and maturity are major barriers to youth looking to get and keep a job. HRA could take steps to ensure that youth are connected to age-appropriate services that advance their overall development and reduce their risk of bouncing between low-wage employment and cash assistance. “We need to look at how we serve youth within adult systems,” says FEGS senior vice-president Courtney Hawkins. “Since Back to Work and Workforce1 programs are already serving young adults, they should consider how to implement youth development best practices in these programs.”

Ill-considered though they seem, the faulty premises of public youth workforce contracts would matter less were the system structured to facilitate partnership between providers and across funding streams. The service landscape includes providers with expertise in helping young people improve their basic skills to complete a high school diploma or equivalency; others with demonstrated success in helping youth become work-ready through emphasis on teamwork and problem solving; and still others adept at connecting youth to hard skills training for specific occupations and industries and placing them into employment. But very few organizations offer all these services, and contracts and governance overwhelmingly gauge the work of individual provider organizations, not collaborations. In fact, city contract provisions actually discourage useful collaborations.

For example, DYCD contracts for ISY, OSY, SYEP and YAIP limit the percentage of the work that a provider can subcontract, as well as the kinds of services that can be subcontracted. As such, a community-based organization (CBO) that does not offer skills training but is strong in retention services might not be able to subcontract the training aspect of its program to a community college with proven strength in training. Nor can an individual with needs that multiple providers might best address sign up for more than one program if they are on separate DYCD contracts—meaning, for instance, that someone who would benefit from general job readiness training from one organization and sector-specific training from another, could not sign up for both if DYCD funds them both. Similarly, if a youth walking through the doors of a CBO with a workforce contract with performance benchmarks for job placement might find more value with another provider that offers basic education, the first CBO would be reluctant to refer the youth to that agency because it would gain no credit for doing so.

The reason this matters so much is because most providers lack the capacity to deliver a comprehensive set of services. In many cases, youth first seek assistance by walking through familiar doors closer to home—frequently a community-based organization (CBO) or Local Development Corporation (LDC). “We are the name and face that these young people know,” says Lowell Herschberger, the director of career and educational development programs at Cypress Hills LDC in Brooklyn. “Their parents may be enrolled in one of our homebuyer programs, or their little sibling

may be in childcare with us, so young people in the community are likely to be comfortable with us.”

Though young people may be most comfortable reaching out to an organization they know for services, and those organizations are often able to leverage their credibility and neighborhood contacts to provide assistance in finding a job or accessing an education program, most smaller providers can offer only a limited set of program options based on the services they are funded to deliver. Unlike organizations like OBT that are able to offer programs ranging from job readiness training and paid internships to medical assistant certification classes, many CBOs only offer a limited set of services. For instance, few community organizations have a job developer on staff that can connect jobseekers with employers that would hire young people.

OBT executive director Randy Peers suggests that a more rational approach would be to “pay for the assist.” “It’s like basketball,” he says. “You set up the [organization] to get the points. For instance, I may find that Henry Street Settlement has a program that is a better fit for the young person sitting in my office, so I would have to call someone at that organization, get them an appointment, and transfer over the information they would need to do their assessment. That person may end up enrolling in Henry Street and do quite well. So there was definitely a score there—and OBT made the assist. But we would not be recognized for that assist.”

Of course, all organizations providing services would benefit from a more rational policy framework in which to operate. After more than a decade of stalemate, Congress finally overhauled workforce policy this summer by passing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which replaces the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA includes a handful of helpful provisions with respect to youth: it requires local areas to spend at least 75 percent of funds to serve Out of School Youth (OSY) and expanding the definition of who qualifies as OSY, and that a minimum of 20 percent of funds go toward providing paid and unpaid work experiences for low-

income youth. WIOA also sets new performance measurements for youth, including percentage of program participants enrolled in education or training activities or unsubsidized employment as well as participants achieving measureable gains toward certain education credentials. Essentially, providers now should have much more incentive to keep young people in education and training activities both while they are enrolled in a program, and after exit—a change that better aligns to the long-term outcomes youth workforce programs should target.

Unwilling to wait for federal action and mindful of the deficiencies of the current approach, a number of youth development funders and providers have attempted to develop a different model emphasizing collaboration. Three such efforts are the Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN), the Bronx Opportunity Network (BON), and Y-Roads, a collaboration between OBT and the YMCA. LESEN and BON both received initial seed funding and ongoing support from JobsFirstNYC, a youth workforce intermediary funded solely through philanthropic dollars. Both projects share clients and aim to create a seamless service experience for youth.

LESEN’s six member organizations work together to combine their skills training, job readiness, and educational enrichment services to prepare Lower East Side youth for jobs created through the large economic development projects within the community in hospitality and other sectors. The network benefits from having a central employer engagement coordinator, paid through private funding, who receives job orders from employers and works with all six member organizations to fill them. Thus, while no one organization may have had enough qualified candidates to fill a large job order, the collaborative as a whole often is able to do so. The job coordinator serves as the providers’ eyes and ears with employers, providing feedback to organizations about their performance. LESEN also works strategically with the local community board and elected officials to identify opportunities and engage new employer and provider partners. The network has provided hiring services for a number of develop-

Government and private funders alike must target their funding at a consortium level to incentivize the kind of cross-referrals and collective goal-setting essential to forge effective partnerships and bring successes to scale.

ment projects in the Lower East Side, including Basketball City on Pier 36 and several hotel and hospitality projects, and they are now looking to work to place jobseekers at the new Essex Crossing development.

“Having that extra connector really helps us when we don’t have eyes to see internally,” says Andrea Vaghy Benyola of LESEN member organization The Door. “They do a lot of checking back and just making sure that everybody’s on the same page.” Because the coordinator’s role is outside all of the member organizations, he focuses solely on building relationships with employers and paying attention to labor market trends that will affect all LESEN members, and not on the various intake, screening, placement and administrative tasks that take up much of the time and effort of program staff.

LESEN’s early results are exceptionally strong. The average starting wage for LESEN-referred employees is \$10.56 per hour, and for every three candidates recruited and prescreened through the network, one is hired.⁵³ In its two years of operation, the network has facilitated 94 hires, 43 percent of whom were young adults ages 26 and under.⁵⁴ Both figures compare favorably to the Workforce1 system, which generally serves older and more work-ready clients. The executive director of one LESEN partner estimates that member organizations’ job placement rates have risen by 10 percent.

BON, a collaborative of eight Bronx-based youth service organizations, takes a slightly different approach. BON has partnered with Bronx and Hostos Community Colleges to create a bridge from high school to higher education for youth who complete high school without the

skills to succeed in college. Recognizing that so many youth were wasting federal education grant dollars on remedial courses before dropping out with nothing to show for their efforts, BON entered into an agreement with CUNY by which the collaborative administers the COMPASS test—CUNY’s placement test for remedial courses—to its participants as a diagnostic measure. For test-takers who fall short of CUNY’s entry standards, BON then offers a six-week summer enrichment program to shore up their basic skills and pass the test. At the end of six weeks, the students take the COMPASS again, and can be placed into CUNY based on that score.

In its launch year of 2011-12, BON collectively served 105 students. Of this number, more than half were exempted from remediation in English, math, or both, and nearly three-quarters completed the spring 2012 semester.⁵⁵ Beyond the academic support participants receive, BON member organizations also provided counseling and employment supports to dozens of students, further bolstering their prospects of college retention and completion.

“BON is a brilliant collaboration with major cost-saving effects,” says Laurie Dien, a senior program officer at the Pinkerton Foundation, a major New York City-based funder of youth workforce programs. “It’s about working smarter. Instead of CUNY getting five million knocks at their door, they have one or two representatives of all these organizations saying, ‘Let’s work together.’”

Another promising example of provider collaboration is the Y-Roads Center, a partnership between Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow and the YMCA. This partnership combines OBT’s strong youth workforce development curriculum

A LESSON FROM LESEN

Henry Street Settlement executive director David Garza tells the story of a young man who sought assistance from LESEN after passing through a number of entry-level jobs in the hospitality sector. The participant first connected with LESEN member organization Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES). GOLES collaborated with Henry Street Settlement and two other LESEN members to connect him to an employer called EMM Group, which had engaged the network to find potential employment candidates, and then referred him to other LESEN partner organizations for appropriate workshops and training.

Now working as a pastry chef, this individual already has been promoted twice since his original placement, and is being considered for yet another promotion. "It took four organizations to connect one young man seamlessly to his dream career," says Garza. "It makes you think about what would happen in the absence of that collaboration; he would still be bouncing around and risking falling through the cracks."

with the social, emotional and other wraparound services that the Y offers. The first Y-Roads Center opened in Jamaica, Queens in May 2013, with strong backing from the Y's network of private donors. A second center is expected to open in the Bronx this fall.

YMCA senior executive for youth and community engagement Marty Forth explains that his organization pursued the partnership as its leaders came to appreciate the need to provide services beyond what the Y offered. "We knew we wanted to do workforce development with supportive services," he says. "So we did a self-assessment and found that workforce training was not our strength. That's how we met with Randy [Peers] at OBT, who wanted to expand his organization out of Brooklyn."

For OBT, partnership with the Y held the promise of adding a complete package of wrap-around services for its youth participants. "The Y is providing mental health services, healthy lifestyle, and other services that OBT doesn't provide," says Randy Peers. "It's a way for OBT to scale up."

Key to the partnership was the fact that OBT and the Y first co-created the model for the Y-Roads Centers, and only then sought funding for it—meaning that they could sell the project and the collaboration to funders as a single package.

Another key to their success is that both organizations are large and well respected, with a loyal donor base. "Right now we are very lucky that our funders have been friends of the Y for a long time, and are allowing us to figure this out," says Forth. "Not all funders are like that."

BON, LESEN, and Y-Roads all stand as promising examples of collaborations that are larger and more effective than the sum of their parts. If the youth workforce system is to register real gains, models such as these, now the exception, will need to become the norm. Government and private funders alike must recognize the value of these collaborations and target their funding at a consortium level to incentivize the kind of cross-referrals and collective goal-setting essential to forge effective partnerships and bring successes to scale.

"Sometimes the solution is not that complicated," says Randy Peers of OBT. "Some say there are inefficiencies in the system, and some say program quality is poor. But it can simply be that this is an under-resourced endeavor, and if we want to make a difference we need to make a major investment in what we know already works."

MISSING THE TARGET ON EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

To connect the young adults they serve to steady jobs with advancement potential, provider organizations must better understand what employers are looking for in workers.

For the most part, staff members at New York City organizations that provide workforce services for youth are highly committed and motivated by a strong desire to serve their communities and help individuals in need. Unfortunately, far too few provider organizations have developed the deep industry expertise and built the strong employer relationships necessary to make strong job placements and put young New Yorkers on a path toward long-term success in the labor market.

While many youth-focused providers across the city are adept at getting young New Yorkers job-ready and supporting their overall development, most lack the necessary understanding of employers' hiring needs, or of overall labor market needs. In fact, far too many do not even know how to start the conversation. "Our job developers are very good at placing and matching young people up to the right opportunities and tweaking

"Our job developers are very good at placing and matching young people up to the right opportunities and tweaking resumes but they don't often have the skill set for how to build a relationship with an employer."

resumes," says one director at a nonprofit youth workforce provider. "But they don't often have the skill set for how to build a relationship with an employer."

Even the most sympathetic employers, such as Modell's Sporting Goods regional recruiter Greg Hambric, take notice. "The focus among a lot of providers has been on just making the numbers, not connecting the right people with the right job," observes Hambric. "There are agencies that do nothing but email me saying, 'I got good people, I got good people,' but how are you going to tell me you have good people if you don't know anything about my organization? That's a big turnoff for employers."

This matters more than ever in light of how the labor market has changed for young adults trying to get a foothold in the labor market. "Once upon a time, a 16- or 17-year old was able to easily get a position as a cashier or a food service worker," says Laurie Dien, a program officer at the Pinkerton Foundation, one of the city's biggest supporters of youth workforce programs. "Now those positions are being filled by adults who have been displaced from other areas of the economy. Similarly, young people with a high school degree or less are getting shut out of jobs as secretaries, receptionists, or medical billing clerks by people with four-year college degrees."

Where young adults could once compete without assistance for low-skill jobs that help them build experience, or entry-level positions in industries offering greater long-term potential, they're now more likely to need the assistance of a well-regarded provider organization that can provide validation to the prospective employer.

High turnover among the best job developers at youth workforce organizations contributes to the problem. Not surprisingly, most job developers who show skill in the role soon leave for better-

paid jobs—to the detriment of any relationships he or she was able to create for the organization, and the frustration of employers. On average, job developers earn between \$25,000 and \$35,000 at a workforce development organization, compared to a median salary of \$50,000 for someone in a comparable position at a private company.⁵⁶

“With many providers, I put the name of my contact in my Outlook and a few months later they are no longer there,” says Hambric. “Without

staff retention, the organization cannot build a long-lasting relationship.”

In addition, most workforce contracts do not provide resources for front line workers to do things like on-the-job shadowing, or to support supervisors of young people. On-the-job shadowing would allow staff to experience an employer’s working environment and better understand what skills and attributes are most necessary for youth to succeed in that setting. Without that knowledge, it is difficult for providers to know how best to

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT IN BOSTON

Boston offers a powerful example of a city that has succeeded in connecting employers with the youth development system. Its success is due in large part to a workforce board that actively engages its employer members and ensures that the youth being placed receive job readiness training before stepping onto a worksite, strong partnerships with the school system, and a mayor who tirelessly championed youth employment.

The Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), a non-profit intermediary whose board of directors includes chief executives of major employers in the Boston area, as well as the superintendent of schools, college presidents and organized labor, coordinates engagement of employers with the youth workforce development system and helps broker placement relationships. The PIC employs career specialists in every public high school in the city to connect students with particular employers based on their career aspirations and interests. It also delivers job readiness services to about 3,000 lower-income students throughout the school year in preparation for placement into summer jobs with private employers. In addition, the PIC provides support for both students and their supervisors after they are placed.

Conny Doty, the former director of Boston’s Office of Jobs and Community Services (OJCS), attributes the PIC’s success in creating a robust pipeline of youth from the schools into private industry to the direct involvement of chief executives of private companies. “The Boston PIC is a CEO-level board,” she says. “Its members speak at a level where they can make decisions.”

In its role as Boston’s Workforce Investment Board, the PIC provides an opportunity for all workforce stakeholders to share information about current labor market trends, results of program evaluations and best practices, in addition to performing the federally-mandated duty of reviewing and recommending the use of WIA funds. “We spend less than five percent of the time talking about the details of WIA,” says Doty. “We make the meetings lively, [foster] policy- and research-oriented discussions, bring speakers in, and have regular reports from Boston public schools.”

As part of the city’s overall summer employment effort, Boston’s OJCS funds the wages of an additional 7,000 young people each year for summer jobs at nonprofit and public sector organizations through a combination of federal, state, local and private sources. Boston utilizes WIA money to leverage other resources toward achieving its goals to curb high school dropouts and prepare youth for the workforce. The city has split its spending roughly evenly between alternative education and sites that offer high school equivalency opportunities, and career exploration programs. All WIA-funded career exploration programs end with a guaranteed summer job, and participating students receive training to ensure that they arrive at the worksite ready to work.

A vital factor in Boston’s success was the support of former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, who left office this past January after more than 20 years as mayor. “He used his bully pulpit to help us with our work,” Doty says. “He would ask employers, ‘How many kids will you hire?’—not ‘whether,’ but ‘how many.’”

“The adult workforce system is better connected to employers and career pathway thinking than the youth system. There’s almost no funding to support career pathway work for youth or that supports more direct engagement with employers. This is a huge gap in the system.”

match the young people they have to the requirements of particular job opportunities. This focus on gaining industry expertise has been crucial to the success of SBS in creating results for adults. “The adult workforce system is better connected to employers and career pathway thinking than the youth system,” explains Julie Shapiro, the executive director of The Door. “There’s almost no funding to support career pathway work for youth or that supports more direct engagement with employers. This is a huge gap in the system.”

“We get really focused on meeting outcomes and getting people placed into jobs, but sometimes it could be months before jobs could come out of an employer relationship,” says Andrea Vaghy Benyola, managing director for career and education services at The Door. “Meanwhile, your staff has to dedicate time to invest in really learning about the company, getting to know the employer, bringing them in regularly to be guest speakers and doing things that eventually will lead to the jobs.”

The lack of capacity to support supervisors of young customers placed into jobs is another damaging factor. With the right training, a supervisor would know how to defuse most difficult situations with young employees who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as unreasonable tardiness or absences, conflicts with coworkers or supervisors, and other disciplinary issues. Such training is rarely available, however. “The reality is that the supervisors in places where young people are getting attached to the economy often

are not that far removed circumstantially from the young people themselves,” says JobsFirstNYC executive director Lou Miceli. “They lack training and skill.”

At a system level, the youth workforce field must manage the reality that employers, especially the larger ones, often work with multiple providers to meet their hiring needs. In most cases, no one organization has access to enough qualified candidates to fill an employer’s job order, which is why referral-based collaborations like the Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN) discussed on p. 27 are a promising model. The six LESEN member organizations benefit from a Network Coordinator, funded through multiple private sources, who serves as the single point of contact between the member agencies and select employers.

For their part, employers generally are not concerned about the resource constraints of providers. They want help in finding employees that can fill the jobs they have available, and commonly expect providers to help manage any problems that might arise after placement. Too often, this expectation goes unfulfilled. JobsFirstNYC executive director Lou Miceli observes, “In research we conducted with employers, we learned that the inability to deploy people to support the employer relationship post-placement is their number one grievance.”

The pressure to make placement targets pushes workforce providers to focus on large

employers, despite the fact that small businesses collectively provide more than half of the jobs in New York City.⁵⁷ The reality is that the lack of human resources capacity in most small businesses leaves them unable to effectively engage the system as currently constituted. “A lot of jobs, especially in Queens, are in small neighborhood-based businesses,” says Irma Rodríguez, executive director of the Queens Community House. “Immigrant-owned businesses in particular are not necessarily seen as the kind of businesses that workforce agencies would go after. It’s an untapped employer market.”

More support from geographically focused business improvement districts (BIDs), local development corporations (LDCs) and chambers of commerce could help close this gap and engage small businesses at something approaching scale. Although BIDs, LDCs and chambers of commerce vary widely in terms of their sophistication and impact, the best of these institutions already have credibility and relationships with local businesses and can be effective partners in coordinating the needs of small businesses with the workforce system. The WIB and workforce intermediaries should explore the potential of these entities to serve as intermediaries between the city’s workforce systems and the small businesses with which they work.

Capacity will be a key factor. “Having job developers working within the BIDs would be the way to go,” says Tondalaya London, the director of workforce development at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. “We actually did a survey of BIDs in the Sheepshead Bay-Gerritsen Beach-Coney Island area and found that a lot of them were interested [in working with a job developer]. But the common problem that came up was the lack of manpower to do something like this.”

Another challenge for both providers and youth themselves when connecting with employers are the negative stereotypes of young people, particularly “Millennials,” as unfocused, unorganized and unprofessional. By the same token, a JobsFirstNYC study exploring employer attitudes towards young people found that employers perceive many benefits to hiring young people, in-

cluding their “enthusiasm, stamina, a high degree of self-confidence, creativity, ability to learn quickly (particularly with regard to computers and technology), lower labor costs, and more flexible schedules.”⁵⁸

“Many employers care about working with young people,” says workforce consultant Celeste Frye, who was the lead researcher on the study. “Ultimately they must make a profit, so employees have to come prepared. But many said that they’re willing generally to cut young people some slack. They know it’s their first or second job, but they’re not there to be counselors.”

When youth are well prepared, and placed with employers that have capacity to provide strong supervision, their path to self-sufficiency opens up. “We have people in supervisory positions at Modell’s that were recommended to us by a workforce agency who started off part time and rose through the ranks,” says Greg Hambric. “That’s exactly how we envision that process to work. They were helped to find jobs and now they’re embarking on their careers.”

INSUFFICIENT GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

Each New York City agency that serves young adults has its own strengths and shortcomings. But their failures to collaborate—or even communicate—too often mean that young adults do not get the help they need.

New York City's youth workforce development system faces a number of daunting challenges: city agencies operating in silos, contracts that do not give providers enough time to thoroughly serve young people and that target the wrong outcomes, hard-to-serve groups going without assistance, and front-line staff that are not focused on employer needs. But two factors above all render these problems more intractable, and deepen the dilemma facing New York City youth in need of help: the near-total lack of leadership and focus, and a steadily shrinking flow of public dollars to support the system.

No New York City mayor has ever articulated a single clear vision around employment and training programs for youth, or directed the multiple agencies that deliver workforce services to youth to coordinate their efforts. As this report shows, each agency has a different set of performance outcomes and administrative requirements, yet the programs they fund are rarely evaluated for long-term impact on the youth they serve. Young people who require multiple services often must navigate a labyrinth of bureaucracy instead of an easily comprehensible menu of services that may inform their futures. Indeed, there is no infrastructure to coordinate information sharing among workforce agencies; each time a young person walks into DYCD, HRA or SBS or another agency seeking services, their experience begins anew—down to the forms they have to fill out with name, date of birth, address and so forth.

“We are talking about kids who couldn't get themselves out of bed and to school on time or get their homework done,” observes Marty Forth of the YMCA. “Are we really expecting them to go to seven different provider organizations to get the services they need? It's impossible. We are setting these kids up to fail. We need to have one hallway with everything the youth need, and we need to

walk them there and walk them back, and continue to follow up with them.”

Unfortunately, two plausible government entities that could create the structures and supports necessary to truly serve youth—the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and Youth Council—have been little more than an afterthought. The federal Workforce Investment Act required that each local workforce area convene a WIB to help guide employment and training policies for each area receiving funds, as well as a Youth Council to fulfill the same function for youth services. The mayor appoints members of both bodies, including leaders in business, education, youth workforce development and other relevant fields. The newly enacted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act retains the WIB, but makes the Youth Council optional.

The newly created Mayor's Office of Workforce Development suggests a new interest from City Hall in coordinating and rationalizing the system, and would be well positioned to assert a stronger policymaking role. A stronger central entity to set systemic goals, facilitate and coordinate information-sharing, and build stronger partnerships with the private, philanthropic and non-profit sectors could fuel significant gains.

One priority should be to improve communication and collaboration across agencies. The current system is rife with information gaps that waste money and time, and add much to the frustration of youth themselves. For example, when HRA reviews the applications of young adults requesting cash assistance, they cannot access any assessments conducted by DYCD or DOE—meaning that caseworkers start from square one in determining how best to serve the applicant. Another example is the failure of communication between ACS and DYCD regarding youth in foster care. According to Andrea Vaghy Benyola, manag-

ing director for career and education services at The Door, foster care youth can only hope to connect with “a good case worker who knows about employment and education services. There’s all this information that ACS has on these kids, but that information doesn’t easily translate to DYCD. Often those kids don’t find out about programs that can help them.”⁵⁹

Clarifying responsibility for youth workforce services also would enable the city to utilize several as-yet unused tools at its disposal to increase efficiency and improve workforce and human capital outcomes for youth. For example, the city could seek greater flexibility in WIA regulations

from the federal Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA) by requesting any of four kinds of waivers related to youth services, including one that would allow the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITA) for youth.⁶⁰ ITAs provide WIA-eligible individuals with funds they can use to purchase employment-based training services from eligible providers. For young people, access to ITAs would let them choose the services they need from providers, instead of being limited to receiving whatever services a particular provider happens to have available. As of 2010, the ETA had approved 37 states to use ITAs for youth services, including New

CITY HALL SETS THE AGENDA IN PHILADELPHIA

For a primer on the power of mayoral leadership in youth workforce policy, New York City policymakers can look to Philadelphia, where Mayor Michael Nutter has rebranded his city’s youth council as the Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success. In addition to fulfilling its federally mandated role under WIA, Mayor Nutter has charged this Council to carry out his goals around increasing high school graduation rates, increasing Philadelphia residents’ college degree attainment and coordinating youth workforce activities, as well as aligning the city’s youth-related funding streams.

“They bring together on a quarterly basis the private sector, nonprofits, school districts, and city agencies, and they have subcommittees that work on very specific things,” says Julia Hillengas from the Philadelphia Mayor’s Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service. “There are always opportunities to present or pitch ideas within those subcommittees and that really helps.”

Philadelphia offers a strong example of systemic public and private sector collaboration. The Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), an intermediary somewhat akin to JobsFirstNYC in New York, essentially serves as the nerve center of the system. The PYN administers WIA youth programming and coordinates with agencies, employers and youth-serving organizations to provide streamlined services for youth. With strong support from the mayor’s office, PYN runs five E3 (Education, Employment and Empowerment) Centers, through contracts with nonprofit providers. The Centers, which are supported by funds from the city Department of Human Services and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families dollars available through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, offer a consistent set of programs and services, which include educational enrichment, GED classes, job training, 21st Century skills training and job placement.

Whether youth connect with the system through providers or directly through PYN, the intermediary’s centralized application process for summer and year-round employment programs makes it easier for them to access all the services the city has available. “One of the biggest benefits is that we make it as easy as possible for anybody to participate,” says PYN executive vice president Stephanie Gambone. “For example, the fact that a young person doesn’t have to fill out four different applications if they want a summer job makes this a seamless process for them.”

Central to Philadelphia’s success is Mayor Nutter’s strong support for youth workforce development. The mayor appoints the members of the Council for College and Career Success, engages local employers by sponsoring an annual summer jobs challenge, and made education a central part of his policy platform. “Much if not most of [our work] begins with the fact that the mayor is committed to both dropout recovery and youth workforce development,” says PYN Executive Vice President Stephanie Gambone. “He created a chief education officer in the administration who headed up the mayor’s office of education. They have been an essential conduit for PYN’s work.”

York. Researchers have found that local workforce areas utilizing the youth ITA waiver were able to more easily connect WIA youth to occupational training programs.⁶¹

Though New York City could take advantage of the waiver granted to the state, it has not done so. Currently, youth 18 and older can obtain ITAs only through SBS, and DYCD-funded youth programs cannot count a participant's job placement towards their performance goals if they use SBS resources to do so. "Right now if you are in a DYCD workforce program, you can't refer a youth to a one-stop and have the job they get counted towards a placement," says Lazar Treschan, director of youth policy at the Community Service Society of New York. "This doesn't make sense if what you are trying to do is integrate the system."

Alongside the need to truly integrate New York City's youth workforce development infrastructure is the imperative of reversing the constant slide in funding for services. In 2000, New York City received \$43 million in federal funds for youth through WIA; in 2013, the number was \$21 million. Converting to constant dollars, the decrease is more than two-thirds of the total, despite the much more challenging labor market that older youth and young adults now face. The trend of deep federal disinvestment in job training and employment services has persisted for more than a generation now, under presidencies and congressional majorities of both parties. For New York City youth programs, the consequences of this federal disinvestment have included the failure of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to keep up with demand from young New Yorkers eager to land summer jobs, and the calamitous drops over the last decade in support for WIA-funded Youth programs.

"The system is not even close to meeting the demand," says Tara Colton, an associate vice president at FECS, one of the city's largest workforce development provider organizations. "It's a drop in the bucket compared to the need. There's room for efficiency, but you need a massive investment."

Indeed, it is nearly impossible to deliver high quality youth workforce development on the cheap. Organizations such as Opportunities for a

Better Tomorrow (OBT), The Door and Year Up, which follow best practices in youth development, are widely considered to run the most effective programs. Their programs are also among the most expensive in the field: OBT, for instance, spends about \$11,000 per participant.

By contrast, DYCD's Out of School Youth RFP funds organizations and sets service targets based on a per-participant cost closer to \$9,000.⁶² And SYEP, which lasts about an eighth as long as OSY, is funded at less than one-twentieth the per capita cost: contractors receive just \$325 per participant for all aspects of the program, including offering its education component of the program, conducting site visits and supporting youth and their supervisors.

Considering that youth workforce services serve to remediate the deficits of an education system that failed so many young people, it would make sense to allow providers some access to resources intended to fund education. As long as a student is in school, she can be served by the DOE's federal and state basic education funding, which amounts to about \$19,076 per student annually.⁶³ Once a young person drops out, however, the funds that would have gone toward paying for their schooling are simply left on the table.

In Washington State, as in New York, students who leave the K-12 system before completing high school remain eligible for services in educational completion and career preparation programs funded through basic education dollars up to age 21. Unlike in New York, where high school dropouts can reconnect only through a transfer school or a GED Plus program, Washington has created a Statewide Dropout Reengagement Program that allows school districts to create inter-local agreements with community colleges or contracts with CBOs to provide for-credit academic skills instruction and college and work readiness preparation that generates credits that can be applied toward a high school diploma.⁶⁴ The state evaluates these programs on a set of performance metrics that include "longitudinal monitoring of student progress and postsecondary education and employment."⁶⁵

As part of these contracts, the school district from which a student dropped out reimburses the service provider with 93 percent of the district's standard per-student basic education allotment, with the district retaining the balance.⁶⁶ In return, the school district gets to remove the student from the denominator used to calculate its graduation rate.⁶⁷ Tony Lee, the advocacy director at Seattle-based youth organization Solid Ground, observes, "What's really good about these programs is that they have an affiliation with the high school, but they are not in the high school setting."

Implementing a similar plan in New York State could provide sufficient resources for provider organizations with proven ability to serve high-need youth who failed to find a path through the educational system, as well as an opportunity for students whose interest in reconnecting might be encouraged by a more career-focused option. In Washington State, the biggest limiting factor to the success of this initiative has been the dearth of youth workforce organizations to do this work. Though New York City has many organizations that work with youth, their capacity to scale up their work would be strengthened through this new source of funding.

"If there was some way to allow resources to follow the young person, they would be able to carry those resources with them to a model or a program that has the experience to work with youth," observes OBT executive director Randy Peers. "This would require a huge shift in thinking about how we allocate resources. It would mean not allocating resources to a particular agency, but having the funding follow the young person so that they get the resources that they need."

Legislation such as Washington's could empower youth to choose the programs that are the best fit for them. Deborah McCoy, managing director of early childhood and youth at the Robin Hood Foundation, believes that young adults would take full advantage of a wider set of options: "If you let them go, they will do a lot of forum shopping; hearing things from their friends, and going to three or four GED programs to find one that works for them."

In New York City, most good news on workforce funding has come from private philanthro-

py. Since 2004, the earliest year for which figures are available, the foundations that comprise the New York City Workforce Funders group have collectively given \$151 million to direct service programs for youth, adjusted for inflation.

Private dollars have not simply replaced lost public investment, however: in most cases, foundations give money for quite different purposes than do city agencies and their federal funders. In fact, the gap between the funding priorities of government versus private funders represents a shift in thinking about what works in youth workforce development. While philanthropies increasingly support demand-driven, sector-based training and employer engagement, government funders continue to emphasize short-term attachment to work as a viable strategy to put young people on a path to sustainable employment.

"I would argue that the private money is smarter and more employer-driven," says Bret Halverson, a staff consultant to the Workforce Funders. Citing the greater flexibility of private funds, he adds, "If providers were given a choice, they would take the private dollar every time."

To be sure, philanthropic investment has both sustained providers through the collapse in public support, and funded many of the most innovative and effective practices in the field. At the same time, foundation dollars inadvertently have deepened the fractured nature of the system.

"Foundations and philanthropies don't necessarily coordinate," explains a senior foundation official. There have been a few high-profile exceptions to this norm, including JobsFirstNYC and the New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare—both created and sustained with collective support from the NYC Workforce Funders. All told, however, only 1.5 percent of giving by the Workforce Funders is done as a group; the participating foundations conduct the remainder of their grant-making separately.⁶⁸ To fully leverage the increased commitment of the philanthropic community to supporting youth development and employment, city leaders and other stakeholders must show their commitment to best practices—and invite foundations in as true partners rather than simply a source of funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As this report has shown, New York City's array of youth workforce development services falls far short in comparison to the needs of hundreds of thousands of young New Yorkers advancing toward adulthood without the basic education, employment experience or personal and professional networks required for career success. While there are assets to build upon—including several strong providers, programs and collaborations, a handful of promising practices and elements of a robust infrastructure outside the public sector—the system will require a massive overhaul if it is to reach its potential and deliver real value for the city.

The city can take a number of the measures below almost immediately, while others should phase in over time. One mechanism to create the necessary change should be to rewrite contracts as they expire along the lines suggested below.

A new administration with laser focus on addressing income inequality is very well positioned to make these changes, and has already taken a promising first step by creating the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development. The Jobs For New Yorkers Task Force, comprised of 30 employers, administrators, providers and funders appointed by Mayor de Blasio to focus on improvements to the workforce system, offers another encouraging sign. The Center for an Urban Future urges the Task Force to advise the de Blasio administration to take the following actions to create a unified youth workforce system for New York City.

Empower an entity to coordinate and lead

The new Mayor's Office of Workforce Development should lead this work.

The Office should begin its work in this area by articulating a clear vision for youth workforce

services, perhaps something as basic as a public commitment to assist every young New Yorker toward reaching adulthood with a solid educational foundation, some work experience and a network of supportive adults. The Office must bring together all the prominent city agencies with direct support from the Mayor—DYCD, SBS, HRA, DOE, CUNY, the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Probation and others—through well-defined vehicles of collaboration, shared reporting structures and common goals for which agency leaders will be held accountable. To ensure that the Office can carry out this role, City Hall should instruct all agencies with a workforce role to share client-level data, enabling the Office of Workforce Development to utilize newly available state Unemployment Insurance, Wage Reporting System and Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages data in evaluating long-term outcomes for workforce program participants with varying needs and circumstances. Finally, the new office is also poised to represent the city in negotiating with the U.S. Department of Labor to secure waivers such as those described on p. 35, and to define performance targets that truly reflect local labor market conditions and the specific educational and skill needs of New York City youth.

Utilize the Workforce Investment Board to facilitate closer collaboration between public agencies, private philanthropy, and employers.

An oversight entity with strong employer representation should complement the work of the Office to encourage cooperation around youth workforce needs with all city workforce agencies. City leaders should look to Boston's Private Industry Council or Philadelphia's Council for College and Career Success as templates for restructuring the WIB to better support New York City's youth

and the provider organizations that serve them. Further, in light of the fact that philanthropic actors now provide more than half of the resources for youth workforce programs, they must have seats at the table. Private sector business intermediary groups and firms known for their openness to hiring youth and providing advancement opportunities are also crucial stakeholders. Even as city leaders advocate for new investment from federal and state government, closer alliance with the philanthropic and private sectors will ensure greater leveraging of the resources now available.

Create and maintain a detailed guide to all workforce programs in New York City to help providers make effective referrals.

As JobsFirstNYC found in “Unleashing the Economic Power of the 35 Percent,” its July 2014 report on high-need young adults in New York City,⁶⁹ there is currently no comprehensive listing of all of the youth workforce development providers in the city that lists what services and programs they offer and how many slots they have available. This very basic information is essential to ensuring that both providers and young people themselves have access to the full menu of service options. The Office of Workforce Development should collect information about all providers in the city, publishing the information online and ensuring that it is updated regularly, as a first step towards becoming the central coordinating body for the city’s youth workforce development system.

Strengthen programs and partnerships that work—and fix those that don’t

Overhaul the Summer Youth Employment Program.

SYEP presents a thorny political dilemma for New York City policymakers: it might not be effective as a workforce program, but at least in relative terms, it reaches a large number of participants. At current funding levels, significant improvements to SYEP would be possible only by shrinking the program—an unlikely step, since SYEP already turns away about three applicants for every one it enrolls. The Office of Workforce Development should convene a special task force

of youth development experts, educators, business leaders and philanthropic funders for a thorough reconsideration of the program, with one goal in mind: how to restructure and resource SYEP so that by 2017—the final year of Mayor de Blasio’s current term—the program serves 50,000 New York City youth with high-quality work experiences in which participants are placed into roles appropriate for their personal development and interests while receiving career exploration and educational supports. Every aspect of the program, from the lottery selection methodology to the content of the educational component and the proper level and focus of site visits, should be up for reconsideration. Additionally, considering the very substantial new resources necessary for such a program, one guiding question for philanthropic and private sector stakeholders should be how the city could restructure SYEP to make this a program worthy of their investment.

DYCD should expand Ladders for Leaders, and provide opportunities to more high school students.

One aspect of SYEP that is already working well is Ladders for Leaders, a successful program through which a couple hundred youth have enjoyed meaningful, employer-paid work experiences each year. DYCD should partner with a strengthened WIB to recruit more employers and create more high-quality opportunities, and the city should provide more funding to administer the program. The program should also solicit applications from more high school students; currently only about a quarter of Ladders participants are in high school.

DYCD and CEO should greatly expand the Young Adult Internship Program.

With few programs across the country offering internships for disconnected youth, YAIP has drawn positive national attention. Even so, the program provided training and internship opportunities to just 1,570 young people last year, less than one percent of the city’s 172,000 disconnected young adults. Both public and private funders should build on its success by increasing its funding, and DYCD should work closely with a strengthened WIB to recruit more employers

who can create opportunities for these youth. YAIP should also expand and strengthen partnerships with DOE-based reconnection programs and CEO's education-focused programs to create a pathway for disconnected youth across the human capital spectrum. The new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act emphasizes out of school youth and work experiences, a change that should free up resources to expand YAIP.

Restructure contracts and incentives to address the real needs of youth and reflect youth development best practices

Learn from and replicate the success of LESEN, BON and Y-Roads across the city. The Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN) and the Bronx Opportunity Network (BON) show the benefits of greater scale and effective partnerships in which providers collaborate rather than compete for limited funds and contracts. LESEN has allowed its six member organizations to improve their placement outcomes and create relationships with economic development entities. BON, an unprecedented partnership between eight Bronx CBOs and CUNY, has helped over 100 students make substantial progress towards completing a postsecondary degree. The promising Y-Roads partnership between the YMCA and Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) combines OBT's strong youth workforce development curriculum with the social, emotional and other wraparound services that the Y offers. All three initiatives provide a template for how key stakeholders and policymakers can change the rules of the system to create a policy environment that will better serve the deep and varied needs of New York City youth—specifically, to create incentives for thoughtful partnerships and appropriate subcontracting.

All new RFPs for programs should incorporate intermediate milestones connected to WIOA outcomes, as well as protocols for referrals and credit sharing.

As this report has shown, current publicly supported contracts are flawed by too-short time frames and disincentives to make referrals that

would connect youth to more appropriate services. Instead of making job placement the main milestone to determine reimbursements—which pushes providers to enroll those youth closest to being job-ready—contracts should reward a wider range of intermediate milestones. For instance, a provider can receive credit for delivering career exploration services to a young person, and then refer them to another organization that can provide specialized job training based on the customer's career interests. That job training organization can then refer the young person to Workforce1 for placement. All three of these providers could then claim reimbursement for the milestone. Restructuring reimbursements based on well-defined milestones would help facilitate shared case management across programs and agencies.

Require HRA to refer all young adult cash assistance applicants and recipients with multiple needs, low literacy or educational levels, or little work experience to youth-appropriate programs.

The Back to Work program fails to provide young adults receiving cash assistance with the skills they need to become self-sufficient. Rather than forcing them into a “work-first” model that does not bolster their long-term prospects, HRA should direct young New Yorkers on cash assistance into programs more appropriate for their development and needs, and have TANF dollars follow the young people into those programs. Also, because cash assistance applicants are not required under TANF rules to be enrolled in work activities, HRA should not require young adult applicants to do so. Instead, the agency should refer them to youth-serving organizations that can help them create and navigate an educational and career plan, and support that organization with TANF funds to serve those individuals. In addition, HRA should heed the example of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services, which contributes TANF funds to that city's E3 Youth One-Stop Centers and last year contributed \$2 million in TANF funds to create summer employment opportunities for youth, recognizing that

such experiences can help young adults transition off the cash assistance rolls.

Make provision for hard-to-serve groups with reserved spots and culturally- and linguistically-appropriate services.

Culturally- and linguistically-appropriate services are especially important for immigrant and LGBT young people. While not every agency would be able to hire staff who speak multiple languages or are trained to understand and respond to the particular needs of LGBT young people, a robust referral network would ensure that these individuals can be connected to the right services no matter what door they walk into.

Create infrastructure to bring consistency and coherence to the system.

Explore a DOE-workforce partnership along the lines of the model created in Los Angeles, where counselors help coordinate reconnection services for the workforce system.

Within adult workforce services, the network of Workforce1 Career Centers has provided a framework and foundation for virtually every subsequent innovation. A similar “one-stop” resource on the youth side could serve the same purpose. Los Angeles provides one possible model for policymakers: the city’s workforce agency and school district have created a number of YouthSource Centers run by community-based organizations and staffed with school district counselors who direct youth to appropriate services. In its recent report, JobsFirstNYC urges city leaders to build upon that model and develop a network of Young Adult Opportunity Centers in communities with high concentrations of young adults who are neither in school nor working.

Charge the WIB to work with local employers, particularly those in industries that employ youth, to create more work experience and internship opportunities for young people.

Comprised of leaders in business, education and the workforce, the WIB is uniquely positioned to work with employers to create such opportuni-

ties. The mayor’s office should authorize the WIB to make these asks of local employers. Boston’s Private Industry Council has successfully recruited over 900 employers to participate in its summer jobs program, which provides paid work experiences for about 3,000 young people annually. Boston’s workforce agencies place an additional 7,000 young people in summer jobs at nonprofit and public sector organizations. As a result, Boston—a much smaller city than New York—places one young person in a job for every six that are unemployed or not in the labor force, compared to a ratio of 1:18 in New York.

Leverage BIDs and other economic development intermediaries to link small businesses with public workforce programs.

Because larger employers generally have a more consistent need for new hires than smaller employers, workforce providers have looked to them to place their youth clients. But for high-need youth in particular, smaller businesses can offer a more supported work experience—and often can utilize the linguistic or cultural backgrounds of immigrants and other groups. Because Business Improvement Districts and Local Development Corporations in commercial districts across the city have existing relationships with small businesses, they can potentially serve as an intermediary between their members and the public workforce system. Most BIDs, however, do not have the staff capacity to serve as job developers for their members. The WIB or Youth Council could seek funding to support job developers at BIDs across the city, allowing small businesses to aggregate their demand for local hires and facilitating effective service from workforce providers.

Encourage DOE to play a bigger role in youth workforce development

The Department of Education is effectively the largest human capital development agency for young people in the city, yet until recently its leaders have hardly acknowledged that the public education system should have a role to play in the workforce outcomes of young people. The DOE should work with DYCD and private funders

to create career exploration programs starting in middle school, the point at which many youth development experts suggest children can start thinking in earnest about their future paths. In partnership with the New York City Labor Market Information Service and Grant Associates, a vendor with SBS that operates a number of Workforce1 Career Centers, DOE has been developing a series of career maps that chart advancement pathways within a number of key New York City industries, including information technology, transportation, media and advertising and culinary arts among others. Embedded in a career exploration curriculum, these maps could help spark interest among students in a wide range of careers, and can illustrate the skill and educational achievements that are necessary in order to advance in those careers.

Invest in the field

Consider replicating the funding model of Washington State, where basic education dollars follow students to youth development programs. When students drop out of school, the basic education dollars that would have supported their education are simply left on the table. Meanwhile, youth development organizations are picking up where the schools left off, educating dropouts with dwindling funds. But as Los Angeles and Washington State have shown, it is possible to draw down education resources in support of better youth workforce outcomes. The Department of Education in particular has taken some steps toward acknowledgement of its workforce mission in recent years; a logical next move is to create resource-sharing agreements to give students who have struggled in public education a second chance through a more robust and relevant set of services.

Ensure that front-line workers are appropriately trained and supported.

Workers for organizations providing services to youth should receive compensation and supports commensurate with the importance of their work. Too often job developers and case managers who demonstrate ability get snapped up for simi-

lar positions in the private sector, causing significant turnover at many youth workforce providers. In addition, the workforce system should invest in creating a career map for workforce workers, thus encouraging staff to leverage the services of technical assistance providers such as Workforce Professionals Training Institute and Youth Development Institute to advance their own careers in the field.

Ensure that every youth workforce organization has access to job developers.

Building deep, productive relationships with employers that will hire youth is one of the most important services that a youth workforce development organization can offer its clients, yet experts say that only a handful of providers have the capacity to create these meaningful relationships. Because of more limited resources at many smaller providers, staff often must serve as job developers in addition to filling other roles, meaning they cannot dedicate their full attention to building these relationships. A more rational arrangement might be to replicate the LESEN model, in which one dedicated job developer can serve multiple small providers within one geography or sector.

Evaluate programs with performance measures that make sense

Incorporate an evaluation component into all major youth workforce investments.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of youth workforce policy is just how little we still know about the impact of programs. The near total absence of rigorous evaluation is a self-inflicted wound on the city's part, particularly considering the availability of ready-made control groups in the form of applicants not accepted into programs such as SYEP. Such evaluations would furnish the Office of Workforce Development and WIB with needed information on which programs are delivering strong outcomes and merit increased support, and which are doing little or nothing for participants and should be eliminated.

Use WRS data to evaluate long-term outcomes of workforce programs.

WKDEV should utilize newly available state unemployment insurance (UI), wage record system (WRS) and Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data with educational, demographic, and program data to evaluate the long-term outcomes for workforce programs on participants with different backgrounds and needs. In addition, The Office of Workforce Development should advocate at the federal level for access to Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data that would allow evaluators to match Census demographic data to program and WRS data in order to create effective counterfactual cohorts to enhance the validity of program outcomes.

Create benchmarks focused on labor market and long-term self-sufficiency outcomes.

The Office of Workforce Development should engage workforce experts, the public workforce agencies and the Center for Economic Opportunity to establish clear and sensible benchmarks for creating program RFPs, making funding allocation decisions and evaluating workforce programs, while being cognizant of the difficulties in comparing outcomes across programs and agencies. These benchmarks should take into account the importance of activities such as post-placement follow-up and provide evidence for the importance of resourcing those activities accordingly. To ensure that the benchmarks are based on labor market outcomes, the Office should partner with real-time labor market information providers such as the New York City Labor Market Information Service at the CUNY Graduate Center, as well as efforts like The Benchmarking Project, which has been developing benchmarks for workforce programs.

ENDNOTES

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