



**Department of
Youth & Community
Development**

Jeanne B. Mullgrav
Commissioner

July 18, 2008

Dear Community Members:

We are pleased to announce the release of a new Concept Paper, a copy of which is attached, relating to the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). This Concept Paper is a precursor to a forthcoming request-for-proposals (RFP) and we invite you to review it and send us your comments.

As you may know, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) acquired the SYEP in 2003 and introduced a series of innovative programmatic changes such as an educational component to complement the work experience, electronic payment through debit cards, targeting youth from areas of high unemployment, and higher expectations for quality job placements. Now, to build on these reforms, we are proposing new elements that aim to ensure that job placements and educational activities are age-appropriate, expand the number of private-sector jobs, diversify the types of jobs offered to participants, and address the employment needs of youth who face barriers to employment. The Concept Paper further details these proposed refinements and outlines other aspects of the RFP we anticipate releasing next fall.

We invite written feedback on the Concept Paper from all stakeholders. Please email your comments to: CP@dycd.nyc.gov. Please enter "SYEP" in the subject line of your email message. If you prefer, you may mail your comments to:

Robert Frenzel-Berra
Planning, Research and Program Development
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156 William Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10038

Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received, at latest, by 5:00 p.m. on August 29, 2008.

The Concept Paper will be posted on our website at www.nyc.gov/dycd. Please notify any organizations that may be interested.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav



Department of Youth & Community Development

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Commissioner

Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) Concept Paper

Introduction

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) offers a rich array of youth programming to provide youth in New York City (City) with the opportunities, skills, and knowledge they need to make a successful transition to adulthood. One important aspect of this transition entails becoming familiar with the world of work, gaining employment experience, and identifying educational pathways that support career goals. DYCD's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) provides opportunities in all of these areas for the City's youth ages 14-21.

Youth Employment

Youth who accumulate employment experience during young adulthood gain multiple benefits that serve them for the rest of their lives. Youth with employment experience are more likely to see the connection between school and career success as well as increase their employability skills.¹ Research also shows that the more teenagers work in one year, the more likely they are to work in the following year.² Among low-income teenagers, higher employment rates have been associated with higher rates of high school graduation and lower teen pregnancy rates.³

Although the benefits of employment experience are clear, it has become increasingly difficult for youth to find employment. Recent statistics on youth employment underscore the challenges faced by youth in the labor market, particularly in the City. Labor economists have expressed alarm over the pattern of youth employment in recent years. Despite periods of strong economic growth and reduced unemployment since 2000, youth employment has reached historic lows. In 2007, the employment to population ratio⁴ for teenagers ages 16-19 nationwide was 34.8%, the lowest annual average employment to population ratio for teenagers ever recorded since the end of World War II.⁵

In a study of teenage employment in the City, the employment to population ratio for youth ages 16-19 in 2005 was 15.6%, the lowest ratio among the nation's 20 largest cities.⁶ Within the City, the ratio

¹ Sum, Andrew, *et al.*, "The Collapse of the National Teen Job Market and the Case for An Immediate Summer and Year Round Youth Jobs Creation Program," prepared testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Human Services and Education, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The employment to population ratio is the share of the population, in this case youth ages 16-19, that is employed.

⁵ Sum, Andrew, *et al.*, March 2008.

⁶ Sum, Andrew, *et al.*, "Combating High Levels of Teen Joblessness in New York City: The Case for New Job Creation Strategies and Their Financing," Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts, January 2007.

was lowest for teenagers living in households with incomes below 20,000 dollars: 9.9%.⁷ If you expand the age range to include young adults, the employment to population ratio rises, but remains low compared to other age groups: 34.6% for youth ages 16-24 versus 56.4% for all persons 16 and older in 2006.⁸ As youth enter their late teens, they more actively seek employment and in many cases, need to earn income. However, unemployment statistics for the City suggest that young adults are having a harder time finding a job than in the past. In 2006, the unemployment rate for youth ages 16-19 was 32.1%, for youth ages 20-24, it was 15.6%, compared to an overall unemployment rate of 7.8%.⁹ High rates of youth unemployment contributed to the rise in SYEP applications in 2008. SYEP received over 103,000 applications in 2008, a 10 percent increase over 2007. The increase in SYEP applications also indicates that the program is highly valued.

Since its origin as a federally-funded summer employment program for youth, SYEP has provided an opportunity for youth, especially those from poor neighborhoods, to hold a job and earn income. When DYCD acquired the program in 2003, it introduced innovative programmatic changes in SYEP, all of which expanded the ways in which youth could benefit from their employment experience. First, DYCD introduced a mandatory educational component to complement the work experience and ensure that important employment-related youth development issues were addressed. Educational activities were required in the following areas: program orientation, workplace readiness (including life skills), financial literacy, health education, and higher education exploration, career exploration, and end-of-program reflection and analysis. Second, a debit card was introduced which allowed participants to be paid electronically, resulting in heightened payment security and convenience for participants. Third, DYCD encouraged providers to target neighborhoods of high poverty and unemployment to serve the youth most in need of a summer job. Fourth, DYCD increased accountability for placing youth in quality work assignments, including private sector placements, that matched their interests and in providing support for that placement.

Following a period of comment on this concept paper, DYCD will issue a request-for-proposals (RFP) and incorporate further refinements to the SYEP (described below) that will strengthen the positive accomplishments introduced in 2004. Through the RFP, DYCD will solicit proposals from appropriately qualified organizations in each of the City's five boroughs to administer the SYEP.

Building on Innovation

In the upcoming SYEP RFP, DYCD will aim to ensure that youth with special barriers to employment are served through SYEP, ensure that both job placements and educational activities are age-appropriate, expand the number of private-sector jobs, and diversify the types of jobs offered to participants. The new elements in SYEP designed to support each of these goals are described in detail below.

DYCD will include a separate competition (Vulnerable Youth) in the RFP to fund programs for court-involved youth,¹⁰ runaway and homeless youth, and youth aging out of foster care. Research has shown that such youth have higher unemployment rates and more sporadic employment experiences than youth

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Levitan, Mark, "Unemployment and Joblessness in New York City, 2006: Recovery bypasses Youth," Community Service Society, New York, February 2007.

⁹ Source: American Community Survey for NYC, 2006.

¹⁰ In this RFP, court-involved youth include youth who 1. have been arrested and have been given alternatives to detention or incarceration, including probation or 2. are returning to their community from a State placement or detention in a Department of Juvenile Justice facility.

in the general population.¹¹ Many of these youth lack strong family support systems, a stable place of residence, and community connections that could help them secure employment. Research has also shown that there is employer bias against individuals with detention records.¹² The work experience and educational activity of SYEP would provide these youth with a solid first step towards improving their future employment prospects. Setting up a separate competition in the RFP for organizations experienced in working with such youth will guarantee that they are better served through SYEP.

DYCD recognizes that the age range of youth eligible for SYEP spans a wide range of developmental stages. Just as the developmental needs of a 14 year old youth differ remarkably from those of a 21 year old, work assignments and educational curricula and activities should also vary. DYCD will ask contractors to develop job placements and provide educational workshops that are age-appropriate and tailored to the interests of participants. These requirements will help programs more effectively deliver educational activities and strengthen the engagement of youth in those activities.

With respect to job placements, DYCD will encourage programs to expand and diversify the types of employers involved with SYEP. DYCD will encourage programs to develop more private sector jobs. Programs will be required to secure 10 to 30 percent of their SYEP work sites in the private sector. A more diversified employment mix will make it easier for programs to match the interest and skills of participants.

With respect to educational activities, DYCD contracts will continue to include the same topic areas identified above, but support a common curriculum across programs. DYCD will provide contractors with this curriculum and offer a set of activity modules from which contractors would choose the one most appropriate for their participants. DYCD will also provide training to SYEP staff on how to implement the curriculum. Programs will be required to utilize the DYCD curriculum or an alternative approved by DYCD. The DYCD curriculum will be designed to offer participants age-appropriate educational activities and content as well as variation for youth who enroll in SYEP more than once.

Competition Areas

There will be 6 competitions in the RFP. Five competitions will be borough-based, one each for the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. A sixth competition, which is new, will be citywide and provide funding for programs that will serve vulnerable youth.¹³

Funding, Allocation, and Price per Participant

Maximum Available Funding: The anticipated maximum available annual funding for all contracts awarded from the upcoming RFP is an estimated \$11 million. Of this total, up to \$10.82 million will be for the borough competitions and up to \$180,000 will be for the citywide vulnerable youth competition. These funding amounts do not include youth participant salaries.

¹¹ See, for example, John Hagan and Bill McCarthy, "Homeless Youth and the Perilous Passage to Adulthood," Network on Transitions to Adulthood Policy Brief, April 2005, Issue 25 and Richard Wertheimer, "Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects," Child Trends Research Brief, December 2002.

¹² See Harry J. Holzer, et al., "Employment Barriers Facing Ex-Offenders," Paper presented at the Urban Institute Reentry Roundtable: Employment Dimensions of Reentry, New York University Law School, May, 2003.

¹³ As noted above, vulnerable youth are defined as court-involved youth, runaway and homeless youth, and youth aging out of foster care.

Borough Competitions: The funding allocation of each borough competition will be based on the relative numbers of youth and low-income youth in each borough.¹⁴ The percentage of funding allocated to each borough will be equally weighted by the number of youth ages 14 through 21 in each borough and the number of low-income youth¹⁵ ages 14 through 21 in each borough, relative to the City as a whole. The borough allocations based on the stated formula are shown in the chart below:

Borough	Total Youth in the Borough	Percentage of NYC Total (number of youth)	Total Low-income Youth in the Borough	Percentage of NYC Total (number of low-income youth)	Percentage of City-wide SYEP Funding
Bronx	164,062	19.44%	55,017	25.77%	22.60%
Brooklyn	295,275	34.99%	83,263	39.00%	36.99%
Manhattan	102,272	12.12%	35,365	16.56%	14.34%
Queens	230,905	27.36%	34,555	16.18%	21.77%
Staten Island	51,479	6.10%	5,311	2.49%	4.49%
NYC	843,993	100.00%	213,511	100.00%	100.00%

In addition to youth participant salaries,¹⁶ DYCD will pay contractors an administrative fee of up to \$300 per youth participant. DYCD will consider a higher price per participant for programs serving youth with disabilities (physical, emotional, behavioral, and/or cognitive impairments), if the proposer demonstrates that the program design justifies such a higher price per participant.

Vulnerable Youth Competition: This citywide competition will fund services for up to 600 vulnerable youth. As in the borough competitions, DYCD funding will cover participant salaries. DYCD will also pay contractors an administrative fee of up to \$300 per youth participant, but will consider a higher price per participant for programs serving youth, including but not restricted to vulnerable youth with disabilities, whose needs may require enhanced or special program services. Proposers would be required to demonstrate that the program design justifies such a higher price per participant.

Target Areas

DYCD will encourage providers to locate programs and conduct outreach to youth in areas of high unemployment within each borough. DYCD will identify these areas and provide maps in the upcoming RFP.

Target Population and Service Levels

SYEP serves youth ages 14-21 who reside in the City. Among these eligible youth and in both competitions noted below, DYCD will encourage enrollment and service to youth with disabilities.

Borough Competitions: DYCD regards the optimal SYEP program service level to be between 300 – 800 participants, inclusive. DYCD will consider program service levels outside this range with justification. Contractors will be assigned participants through the SYEP lottery.

¹⁴ The figures utilized in the chart below are from the 2006 American Community Survey.

¹⁵ In this document, the term “low-income youth” refers to youth residing in households with incomes below the federal poverty guidelines, which can be found at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/figures-fed-reg.htm>

¹⁶ Participant salaries will be based upon an hourly rate of \$7.25, the minimum wage in New York State as of July 2009.

Vulnerable Youth Competition: Given the special barriers to employment faced by vulnerable youth, DYCD anticipates reduced program service levels. Proposers may design programs to serve youth from one category of vulnerable youth, for example, “court-involved youth,” or from multiple categories. Contractors will not be assigned participants through the SYEP lottery. Instead, contractors will be responsible for outreach and recruitment of participants.

Participant Services and Work Sites

SYEP contractors would offer a total number of hours of up to 25 hours per week over 7 weeks. DYCD will reserve the right to adjust these hour requirements in light of any future changes in available funding.

Specifically, the contractor would deliver participant services as specified below:

- **Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for Youth Participants**

On an individual basis, the contractor would assess the employment-related needs and interests of each youth enrollee and develop their individual service strategy. The contractor would then place each participant in a job setting that matches these needs and interests, and monitor the participant throughout the program in accordance with the participant’s specific service strategy. DYCD will provide the contractor with an ISS form, which would be completed for each youth participant and kept at the contractor location.

- **Work Site Development, Job Placement, and Program Schedule**

The contractor would identify a range of job opportunities in which participants can be placed to meet the required hours of employment and the goals of the employment experience. At least 10 percent and no more than 30 percent of the SYEP work sites must be in the private sector. Contractors must provide employment for youth at work sites for 90 percent of program time. The remaining 10 percent would be devoted to educational services. There is no set schedule for when employment or educational services must take place during the day; rather, contractors would choose a schedule that accommodates the needs of employers and youth participants. This flexibility in meeting the SYEP hours enables contractors to enroll youth who must attend summer school.

Once youth participants are enrolled in the program and individual service strategies are developed, contractors would match each youth participant to appropriate jobs. Job placements should offer youth opportunities to explore career interests, acquire good work habits, and develop employment-related skills. Contractors would provide policy and procedures guidelines to employers, provide in-service orientation to employers, and ensure implementation of appropriate work site policies and procedures.

For each youth participant, the contractor would secure and maintain a Work Site Agreement with the participant’s employer that is signed by the employer and summarizes the terms and information pertaining to the job placement. DYCD will provide the Work Site Agreement form to contractors.

The contractor would provide job placement follow-up support to participants throughout the seven-week program period. Follow-up activities include monitoring the work site, resolving conflicts, and, where necessary, job replacement.

Out-of-City Work Sites

Contractors will be allowed to provide the City's youth with summer employment opportunities located outside the City, however, they must be located in New York State. In addition, such work sites must meet the same SYEP requirements as programs located within the City. Organizations interested in proposing a program with out-of-city work sites will be required to indicate in their proposal how many work slots are out-of-city and to specify:

- The activities participants will be involved in other than the 25 hours per week of DYCD-paid work/educational sessions;
- The rate at which participants will be paid for any additional hours worked;
- Any expenses participants might incur;
- Additional documentation that will be provided to participants, including, but not limited to, parental permission slips and volunteer work assignments;
- The means by which participants will be able to communicate with their families (*e.g.*, telephone and/or email access);
- The transportation services that will be provided, and whether/how transportation services will be provided to participants who may travel between home and the work site during the period of the program;
- The type of vehicle that will be used for such transportation;
- For summer camps and other employment sites, as applicable, medical personnel and their qualifications;
- The safety measures that will be utilized for transportation, emergency evacuation, and program participation;
- The liability insurance that will be maintained by the applicant;
- If participants will not commute daily between their homes and the work site, the accommodations, including meals and living arrangements, for all such participants.
- For summer camps, copies of any necessary state, regional, or local certifications (*e.g.*, camps in New York State should be certified by the New York State Department of Health's Bureau of Community Sanitation and Food Protection).

SYEP Educational Services

The contractor would provide educational services to all participants. Educational services would comprise 10 percent of the total program hours. Youth would be required to attend all educational/training sessions and be paid for their attendance. Guidelines for the topics to be covered and scheduling are provided below.

Educational Services: Required Topics and Subtopics

DYCD will provide contractors with a curriculum that addresses each of the required topics and subtopics. DYCD will also provide training on how to implement the curriculum. The contractor may, however, develop its own educational approaches that incorporate the topics and subtopics. However, any substitution of the DYCD curriculum or parts thereof will be subject to DYCD approval.

Program orientation. During the first week of the program, the contractor would provide each youth with program orientation. Topics should include information about the program, its timekeeping and payroll system, and preliminary issues of workplace readiness.

Workplace readiness. This topic would outline the “soft skills” or interpersonal competencies that are essential to workplace success, including the following required subtopics:

- Communication and Conflict
- Interview Skills
- Resume Writing
- Workplace Etiquette and Attire

Financial literacy. This topic would include basic personal financial management skills such as balancing a checkbook and understanding the basic principles of earning, spending, saving and credit. The required subtopics are:

- Budget Basics
- Investing
- Self-sufficiency

Health education. This topic would include information on issues such as stress management, nutrition, fitness, HIV/AIDS and STD prevention, and substance abuse education. The required subtopics are:

- Sexual Health
- Physical Health
- Mental Health

Higher education exploration. This topic would outline the public and private post-secondary education options available to participants, and include discussions of admissions requirements, study habits, and financial assistance. The required subtopics are:

- College Choice
- Application Process
- Financial Aid

Career exploration. This topic would include the career options available to young adults, as well as the preparation necessary to attain different goals, and could include presentations by successful practitioners in a variety of professions. The required subtopics are:

- Self-assessment
- My Education Plan
- Career Roadmap

Reflection and analysis. During the last week of the program, the contractor would guide participants in a discussion and reflection on their summer employment experiences, and explore employment and educational choices available to them in the future.

Educational Services: Required Schedule

The only scheduling requirements for the delivery of the SYEP educational component are the following:

- Program orientation must be delivered to youth participants in the first week; and

- The session on reflection and analysis should take place in the final week.

Access to Services for Youth with Disabilities

It is essential that SYEP services are accessible to youth with disabilities. Both job sites and educational training sites would comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. If these sites do not comply with ADA standards, DYCD-approved alternative measures and accommodations would be used to make activities accessible to persons with disabilities.

Record Keeping and Reporting

DYCD will provide the contractor with a set of forms for record-keeping and reporting. The contractor would collect the following information:

- Individual Service Strategy (ISS) information. As discussed earlier in this section, the contractor would diagnose the needs of and complete an ISS for each youth participant. DYCD will provide ISS forms to each contractor, which would be available for review by DYCD contract managers during visits to each contractor site.
- Work Site Agreements. As noted earlier, the contractor would maintain information on each job placement. DYCD will provide Work Site Agreement forms to each contractor.
- Youth Hours Worked/Attendance. Using the SYEP database, the contractor would input data on youth participant attendance at the work sites and all educational sessions.
- Work Site Supervisory Evaluations of Youth Participants. DYCD will provide contractors with evaluation forms for distribution to employers. Contractors would instruct employers to complete evaluations of youth participants in the second and seventh weeks of the program. Contractors would collect evaluation forms from employers, and make them available to DYCD Contract Managers.
- Incident Reports. DYCD will provide contractors with Incident Report Forms to document all injuries and existing or suspected incidents of child abuse and/or property loss. Contractors would notify DYCD within 24 hours and complete and send all supporting forms to DYCD within three working days of any incident.
- Close-out Report. Contractors would provide DYCD with a summative report on the SYEP program, including information on participant plans (*e.g.*, school, employment, or training) after SYEP.

The SYEP contractors receiving awards will be required to attend one of three orientation and training sessions that will be offered by DYCD.

Anticipated Payment Structure

It is anticipated that the payment structure of the contracts awarded from this RFP will be based on 100 percent line-item budget reimbursement.

Planned Method of Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth below:

- Demonstrated quantity and quality of successful relevant experience 30%
- Demonstrated level of organizational capability 30%
- Quality of proposed program approach 40%

Basis for Contract Award

DYCD will award contracts to the responsible proposers whose proposals are determined to be the most advantageous to the City, taking into consideration the price and such other factors or criteria set forth in the RFP, including geographic distribution of the programs throughout the City and in target zip codes and/or the target population(s) to be served. DYCD reserves the right to determine, based on the proposer's demonstrated organizational capability and the best interests of the City, respectively, how many participant slots the proposer will be awarded. Likewise, in the case that a proposer is eligible for award in more than one borough, DYCD reserves the right to determine, based on the proposer's demonstrated organizational capability and the best interests of the City, how many, what size, and in which borough(s) contracts will be awarded to the proposer. Contract award will be subject to timely completion of contract negotiations between DYCD and the selected proposer.

Procurement Timeline and Contract Term

It is anticipated that DYCD will release an RFP for this procurement in early fall 2008. The proposal submission deadline will be approximately six weeks from the release of the RFP. DYCD anticipates entering into three-year contracts commencing on April 1, 2009, with an option to renew for up to three additional years.

Comments

Please email comments to DYCD at CP@dycd.nyc.gov no later than August 29, 2008. Please enter "SYEP" in the subject line of the email.

Written comments may also be submitted to:

Robert Frenzel-Berra, Ph.D.
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