

10 IDEAS FOR HOW NYC CAN INVEST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STIMULUS FUNDING

Responding to the economic crisis and the structural changes that are happening to our economy will require new approaches to workforce development that not only deal with the immediate challenges of unemployment and significantly reduced employer needs, but also prepare our workforce for the new demands that will come with economic recovery.

This is a critical time for New York City's workforce development system and there will be a new focus on the services we provide and the value we create. We need to show our city's workforce development system – city agencies, community based organizations, community colleges, union affiliated programs and private providers – is capable of providing high quality services to all New Yorkers who need assistance.

We must do this all with a sense of urgency – not just for the people we serve, but because of the funding timelines and the need to show outcomes.

Reaching and serving all New Yorkers will require maximizing the existing capacity of the entire system, including the hundreds of community-based providers with strong existing connections to local businesses, many of whom will be critical to the city's economic recovery.

This crisis is being felt in every part of the city and is impacting the lives of all segments of the population. While the needs of the city's workers are great, resources should focus on the needs of New Yorkers who have nowhere else to turn.

With this in mind, here are 10 ideas for making New York City's employment recovery plan responsive, timely, and innovative:

- 1. Use Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Funding to Support High Performing Workforce Development Providers** – The workforce development needs of the city are vast and while new WIA investments are important, there are many community based workforce development programs that will not see the help they need. These are organizations that are well positioned to show immediate outcomes and have a proven track record of success in helping to train and place individuals with multiple barriers. Investing CSBG funding into education, training and employment services for youth and adults at well established organizations who have existing capacity will go a long way in helping community residents to prepare for and find employment during this challenging economic climate.
- 2. Build Collaborations to Serve An Especially At Risk Population – 18-24 Years Olds** – The city's large population of disconnected youth will only increase during this historic downturn. As more and more New Yorkers find themselves out of a job, young adults, especially those with little work history and other challenges, will be competing against more experienced workers for fewer available entry-level jobs. Building on existing programs and both public and private systems, there needs to be a young adult focused strategy that creates multiple entry points into the system and directs individuals to opportunities that best fit their needs – whether it is an adult or youth program, public or private. A collaborative approach between SBS, DYCD, other city agencies, and workforce development providers to focus attention on the 18-24 year old population, will make best use of the entire workforce development system and the new resources.
- 3. Implement a City-wide Sector Strategy** – Sector strategies have been an important focus for city policy over the past few years, but the impact of this crisis, the ongoing shifts in the economy, and

the new investments being made through the stimulus, are shifting the sector priorities. Publicly articulating a list of key sectors that will be the primary focus of workforce development efforts across city agencies during this crisis will provide important leadership for the entire public-private workforce development system. A key part of this strategy should be the human services sector – not just as a provider – but, as a key sector for the city’s economic recovery. The human services sector is well positioned to take advantage of new federal resources to create jobs quickly.

4. **Create an Adult Internship Program** - Build experience and create opportunity through a paid experience-based training program that provides supportive services and needs-related payments. Modeled after the DYCD Young Adult Internship Program (a CEO funded project), this dislocated worker program will help less skilled adults and provide work readiness training and on-the-job experience in key sectors with future opportunities.
5. **Make Targeted Investments in Training Linked to Key Sectors** - Prepare our workforce for the post-recovery economy by focusing resources on building the skills of our workforce. While maintaining customer choice, focus funding on the city-wide sectors by contracting with institutions of higher education and other eligible training providers. Tap into a growing list of “green job” training programs by supporting the development of a Green Job Training Guide that will supplement and help expand the eligible training provider list.
6. **Build Employer Support for Youth Employment** – Maintaining and expanding employer engagement in youth employment during the economic crisis will be a challenge. Convene key leaders from business and industry associations to develop a city-wide outreach effort that will raise awareness and build support for the youth employment programs.
7. **Expand the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** - Build on the city’s long-term commitment to the SYEP by expanding the number of SYEP slots, providing additional administrative funding to support staff to manage employer engagement, and creating a special program for older SYEP participants that includes higher wages and opportunities to support the overall programs and be mentors for younger participants.
8. **Expand the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP)** – Piloted through CEO, the YAIP program has shown promising results and is a “shovel ready” program model that could be expanded to create more year-round paid internships. A new expanded YAIP program that doubles the available slots and expands access beyond specific Community Districts is a timely way to expand services.
9. **Enhance the Out of School Youth (OSY) Program** – Expand OSY program slots and create strong linkages with YAIP by allowing OSY graduates to enroll in YAIP, thereby creating a continuum of services for the disconnected youth population.. Create an “open door” policy by improving the speed and efficiency of enrolling young adults in the program by make adjustments to the required documentation, especially as it relates to income eligibility and residency requirements.
10. **Think Creatively, Be Innovative, and Act Quickly** – The challenges of this economic crisis will require innovative solutions. While the funding will follow WIA requirements, the city and state must look at applying for waivers to implement programs that meet the needs of the city. The city should investigate waivers that have been approved in other states and cities in the past as a way to identify concepts that might work here. Expediting the contracting process to allow for funding to move as quickly as possible to the front line is essential. Existing timelines from concept paper to award – which can stretch 9 months – would put the city at risk of not achieving outcomes within the funding period. While the integrity of the procurement process must be maintained, it cannot become a barrier to supporting high quality programs. The city must take advantage of all procurement methods including pre-qualified bidders and negotiated acquisition to broaden the pool of eligible providers that can receive funding and will add value to this process.