



**Testimony to New York City Council  
Committees on Small Business & Economic Development**

**Tim Ford, Executive Director, NYC Employment and Training Coalition**

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Thank you Chairman Yassky and White, as well as other members of the committee for the opportunity to testify and discuss the city's workforce development programs.

My name is Tim Ford and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Employment and Training Coalition. NYCETC is an association of over 200 community based organizations, community colleges, labor unions and educational entities that provide education, training and employment services to over 700,000 individuals a year. Our membership placed 100,000 New Yorkers into jobs last year alone.

First, I would like to thank the Council for its ongoing support of critical job training and employment programs provided to your constituents through the Department of Small Business Services, community-based organizations, community colleges and unions.

Clearly, the most critical and timely issue for SBS and its workforce development programs is the funding it will receive through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act or ARRA.

Responding to the economic crisis and the structural changes that are happening to New York City's 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. It is vitally important that the city's response matches the specific intent of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to serve **priority populations**, such as those with low incomes and those with multiple barriers to employment, including older workers, those with low skill levels, and individuals with disabilities and helping individuals obtain the education, skills training and support services they need to obtain jobs in high demand occupations, specifically those in the green jobs and healthcare sectors.

We commend the Department of Small Business Services for their active leadership in responding to the unprecedented crisis. This new investment in the city's workforce development system is a tremendous opportunity, but it comes with a number of constraints, including the need to show near immediate results. We have appreciated the opportunity to share ideas with SBS and believe the overall approach to spending the ARRA funding is appropriate, realistic and balanced.

While the specific plans have not been detailed, we would like to make the following recommendations that will enhance the city's overall approach to ARRA:

- **Take Advantage of Multi-seat Training Contracts** -The proposed expansion of training voucher funds is important and we urge SBS to consider the option provided in the recovery act to contract directly with providers to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in high demand occupations. We also look forward to working with SBS staff to identify ways to help enhance the availability of high quality training services throughout the city.
- **Expanding Services Through Additional Providers** - We commend SBS on its plans to contract with organizations around the city to provide sector focused job preparation and placement services. This critical investment will build on the existing investments in the Workforce One Career Centers to build a larger system of providers that will be able to support individuals in communities around the city. Given the need to get this funding on the street as quickly as possible, we applaud the city's use of alternative procurement mechanisms.
- **Targeting Entrepreneurship Resources** - While we share the city's commitment to entrepreneurship as a key strategy for building long term economic vitality, we do think it is important that city funded programs supported by federal dollars are accessible to target populations including low income, low skills workers. We urge the city to broaden its approach to building an entrepreneurial economy by tapping into existing programs at many NYCETC member organizations that are designed to work with a range of individuals, including immigrants.
- **Leverage Additional Resources**- The \$70 million WIA formula dollars represents an important investment in the city's workforce development system, the federal recovery plan also includes a number of additional resources that can support a comprehensive approach to employment recovery. We advise that the city work collaboratively with partners throughout the system to develop innovative approaches to competitive funding opportunities when they are announced. We hope the city's efforts can be integrated with NYS Department of Labor initiatives to create a seamless system. We encourage the city to identify ways to make sure its programs link to other ARRA investments including energy efficiency and infrastructure investments. Finally, it is

important that the city continue to leverage the private funders' nearly \$45 million dollar yearly investment in workforce development by creating opportunities for collaboration with community based organizations they support.

- **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.
- **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.

The recovery act may provide two years for spending the money, but the message from Washington is clear – spend the money now and do it effectively. Congressional staff have also sent the message that this new investment in workforce development is a test – a test of the system's ability to perform and show outcomes. Failure to perform could mean substantial changes to how the system operates and significant cuts to the funding available.

We urge the New York City Council to play an active role in developing the city's response and monitoring progress. NYCETC is available as a resource for your efforts and a connection to the "front line" of the workforce development system. In addition to our weekly updates through NYC Workforce Weekly, we have setup a special website [www.nycetc.org/recovery](http://www.nycetc.org/recovery) to provide a portal for information and resources regarding New York City and State, as well as federal workforce development recovery efforts.

Thank you for the time and we look forward to working with our member organizations, city agencies, the Workforce Investment Board, and the Council in building a strong workforce development system that will serve New Yorker's and continue to change lives on a daily basis.