

ACCESS NYC Outreach and Marketing

A Program of HHS-Connect and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT)

PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY

This overview of the ACCESS NYC Outreach and Marketing initiative is based on a program review conducted by Westat/Metis staff for the evaluation of the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) initiatives. The evaluation team collected program review data between May and September 2008 through interviews with key staff from CEO, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, HHS Connect and ACCESS NYC, and a review of program documents, monthly data reports through June 2008, and newsletters.

Sponsoring Agency: HHS-Connect, through the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT)

Provider Agency: ACCESS NYC

Start Date: Fall 2006

CEO Budget: \$2,750,000 for FY 2008

Target Population: New York City (NYC) residents, primarily with low- to moderate-incomes

Statement of Need: Over 46 percent of households in NYC living in poverty have a head of household who is working. Many of these households critically need assistance from human services programs, encompassing government benefits and human development services such as employment and workforce training. However, access to these benefits can be complicated: to apply for human service programs a city resident may be required to visit many separate providers and complete multiple application forms, many of which ask for duplicative data.¹

Goal and Services: ACCESS NYC is a free Internet-based service that identifies and screens for 35 city, state, and Federal human service benefit programs. The staff are continually working to add more programs and increased functionality (e.g., online program applications) and site use. CEO has funded marketing and outreach efforts aimed at increasing the latter. The goal of ACCESS NYC Outreach and Marketing is to promote financial stability among NYC residents by providing greater access to human services programs. Steps to achieving this goal include increasing knowledge and use of ACCESS NYC among human service organizations and residents and changing the way people think about applying for benefits and programs.

The services provided by the program can be categorized broadly into four groups: outreach to organizations through trainings and presentations, outreach to clients through screening counselors, a marketing campaign, and the distribution of computer terminals in public locations throughout the city.

Eligibility Criteria: There are no eligibility criteria for this program. Any NYC resident can use the website to gather information and determine eligibility for other services.

¹ Center for Economic Opportunity (December 2007), *Strategy and Implementation Report*. New York: Center for Economic Opportunity.

Targets/Outcomes: Table 1 presents the actual numbers for key outcomes of interest from October 2007 to June 2008. As can be seen from Table 1, over 19,000 visits were made to the ACCESS NYC website in June 2008, the last month for which data are available.

Table 1. ACCESS NYC: Monthly Outcomes and Activities²

Month	Visits to Website	People Trained in Outreach to Organization	Clients Screened by Counselors	Key Outreach Activities
Oct. 2007	9,608	286	0	
Nov. 2007	8,126	345	0	
Dec. 2007	6,359	751	0	● Outreach staff begin providing hands-on training
Jan. 2008	10,935	727	37	● "CBO on-site counselors" counselors begin screening at Union Settlement and Citizens Advice Bureau
Feb. 2008	11,834	420	205 335	● Tax Prep Plus screening begins "CBO on-site counselors" counselors begin screening at Groundwork
Mar. 2008	13,510	558		● "CBO on-site counselors" counselors begin screening at Catholic Charities
Apr. 2008	13,314	516	381	● Tax Prep Plus screening ends ● 200 posters on subway platforms
May 2008	17,020	636	152	● Ads in 44 check-cashing offices and in 50% of subway cars
June 2008	19,204	248	210	

Selected Key Findings

Fidelity to the Program Model. Overall, the fidelity to the program model is excellent. Although there have been programmatic deviations from the implementation plan, these changes have been consistent with the general goals and logic of the program.

Characteristics of the Clients Served in Comparison to the Target Population. Confidentiality requirements for the ACCESS NYC screening tool make it impossible to obtain individual client data. However, because the tool is most useful to low- to moderate-income New Yorkers who may qualify for benefits, it is likely that the vast majority of website visitors fit the characteristics of the target population.

Service Delivery. Over the period of September 2007 through June 2008, ACCESS NYC staff conducted 194 training sessions and trained 4,717 individuals, primarily in CBOs and other government agencies, on how to help their clients use the screening tool on the website. In some cases, training has developed into ongoing technical assistance.

Screening for clients by counselors has been divided into three models:

1. ACCESS NYC screenings are offered to New Yorkers by mobile teams. This program, implemented by the Human Resource Administration's (HRA) Food Stamp and Nutritional Outreach Program (FSNOP), incorporated ACCESS NYC screenings for their clients beginning in August 2008.
2. ACCESS NYC screening is added to an initiative that serves the working poor who come in for some other service (Tax Prep Plus). This program accounted for more than 10 percent of all visits to the screening tool during tax season.

² June data for outreach to organizations and February-April data for clients screened by counselors are reported, but should be considered approximate because there was an inconsistency in the June training data and the data for the Tax Prep Plus initiative have not been verified.

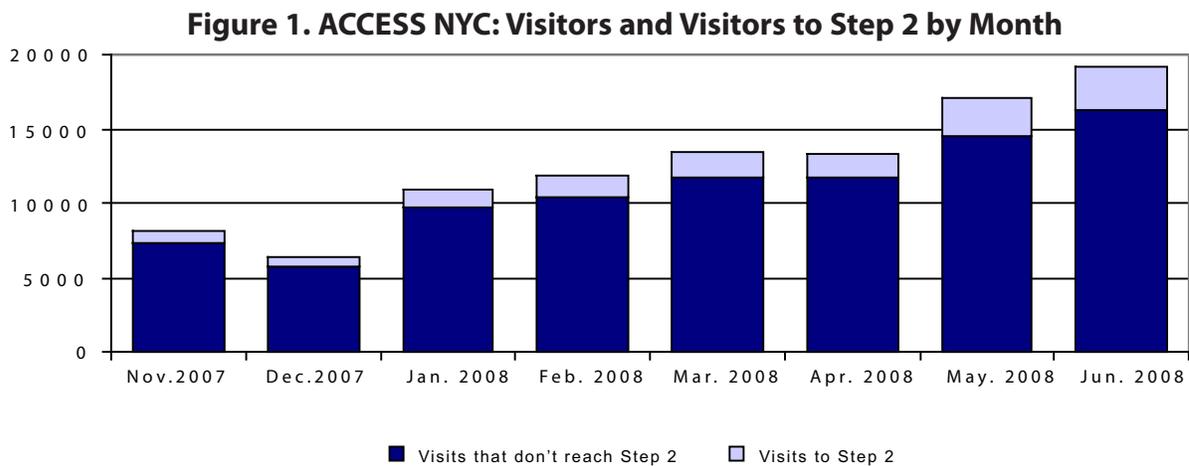
- ACCESS NYC adds a dedicated on-site benefits-screening counselor at CBOs that serve the target population. These counselors were trained and started seeing clients between January and March 2008. From March to June, they collectively screened an average of 9.7 people each day.

The marketing campaign was fully rolled out starting in April 2008 with ads in subway cars, on platforms and in check-cashing offices. Promotional materials with the look and feel of the marketing campaign were produced in May and June. The computer and printer distribution is underway with plans to distribute approximately 223 terminals to 146 qualifying non-profits and make 322 more terminals available to government agencies with public offices. These terminals are intended exclusively for clients to use the ACCESS NYC screening tool.

Provider Capacity. A five-person team handles the initiative, and there is consensus that this staffing level is sufficient to handle the outreach models. The program is capably collecting and reporting monthly performance monitoring data.

Agency Management. Although management within the ACCESS NYC Outreach and Marketing program has been consistent over the life of the project, oversight has evolved. Oversight initially came from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS) and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), with funding to provide training and outreach coming from CEO. DMHHS has had an ongoing role in establishing goals for the project, and recently ACCESS NYC has come under the jurisdiction of HHS-Connect, the technology-oriented project of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, to coordinate agency practices in order to more efficiently provide Health and Human Services to New Yorkers.

Early Outcomes. Table 1 illustrates that the number of visits to the website is quite high, but only about 14 percent of these visits progress to step 2, where the screening process is completed. Thus increasing the percentage of step 2 visits is an important goal for program staff. In fact, as shown in Figure 1, over the last 5 months there has been an increase in visitors to step 2 in every month except April. The percentage of step 2 visits is presented above each bar.



Conclusions and Recommendations.

As implemented, the ACCESS NYC Outreach and Marketing initiative is aligned with the CEO mission and is an important component of the City’s broad anti-poverty strategy. The ACCESS NYC Outreach and Marketing initiative emphasizes the power of the website as a comprehensive tool to screen for all major public benefit programs. Although a causal relationship cannot be established, outcome data for this program show promise by indicating steadily increasing use of the website. The more visits there are to the site, the more NYC residents will become aware of the multiple benefits and service programs available to them.