

Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach

A Program of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS)

PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY

This overview of the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Community-Based Organization (CBO) Outreach program is based on a program review conducted by Westat/Metis staff for the evaluation of Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) initiatives. The data were collected between March and May 2008 through interviews with staff at the CEO, SBS, the operators of four Workforce1 Career Centers (Wildcat, Goodwill Industries, DB Grant Associates, and LaGuardia Community College), one CBO representative, and a review of program documents and monthly data and management reports from SBS through June 2008.

Sponsoring Agency: New York City Department of Small Business Services

Provider Agency: The operators of Workforce1 Career Centers (WF1CCs) in three boroughs: Wildcat (Bronx), Goodwill Industries (Brooklyn), DB Grant Associates (Queens), and LaGuardia Community College (also in Queens, referred to as LaGuardia).

Start Date: The CEO-funded program began July 2007 at three WF1CCs (all except LaGuardia), initially involving a three-person team at each. The LaGuardia program started in April 2008. A more limited version of CBO Outreach had started at all New York City WF1CCs in July 2006 under SBS direction. Plans are underway to launch a fifth program in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx in late summer/fall 2008.

CEO Budget: \$1,299,800 for July 2007 through June 2008

Target Population: There are two target populations: the CBOs (Outreach partners) who refer job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs, and the unemployed or low-wage job candidates, age 18 and older. Seventy percent of job placements should involve residents from high-poverty areas (i.e., Bedford-Stuyvesant, Melrose, and Jamaica) specified by zip code.

Statement of Need: CBOs have access to a large cohort of job seekers, but lack strong employer connections and a clear linkage to the public workforce system.¹

Goals and Services: The goal of the SBS CBO Outreach program is to expand the pipeline of job-ready candidates from high-poverty areas for placement by the WF1CCs, by reaching out to CBOs (particularly those who provide job readiness training and skills training) and encouraging them to send their job-ready clients to the WF1CC for job placement. Clients are referred in response to specific job orders sent to the CBOs by the Outreach team.

Eligibility Criteria: To be an Outreach partner, CBOs must be capable of sending job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs for job placement. Job candidates must be unemployed or low-wage New Yorkers age 18 and older who are assessed as job ready.

Targets/Outcomes: The target and actual numbers for the categories presented below in Table 1—as well as the percentage of each target obtained—are presented for the first year of the program, as of the end of June 2008.

¹ Center for Economic Opportunity, (December 2007), *Strategy and Implementation Report*. New York: Center for Economic Opportunity, p. 86.

Table 1. Target and Actual Placement Numbers and Percentages of Targets Placed

Category	Target Numbers	Actual Numbers	Percent of Target Met
Number of clients placed in jobs	1,800	2,090	116%
Referral-to-placement ratio	3:1 or better	2.3:1	100%
Percent (number) of placements from target neighborhoods	70% (1,463)	56% (1,170)	80%
Percent (number) of placements from all high-poverty neighborhoods	70% (1,463)	68% (1,415)	97%

Selected Key Findings

Key findings of this program review include:

Fidelity to the Program Model. The program maintains fidelity to the program model developed by SBS based on the agency’s previous programmatic experience and its identification of best practices in reaching out to the community. The outreach teams have evolved from three-person teams to larger teams that involve a greater number of WF1CC staff so the program is better integrated within the WF1CC system. The biggest departure from the model is at the Queens Center, which is supplementing outreach to CBOs with direct outreach to clients through distribution of fliers and other means of advertising to better reach clients living in the target neighborhoods.

Characteristics of the Clients Served in Comparison to the Target Population. The program is serving an economically disadvantaged population. The majority of clients (92%) who were placed were unemployed at the time of referral. The average pre-wage was \$9.45/hour. The majority (68%) of clients placed in jobs resided in high-poverty areas with 56 percent living in one of the CEO-target neighborhoods. The CBO partners range from small organizations to large city-wide organizations that work with several WF1CCs. Some of the partners are Workforce Investment Act (WIA)-mandated organizations; others are faith-based, educational, or housing organizations.

Service Delivery. The program provides fast-track placement services to clients referred from CBOs, including a short orientation session and immediate job placement services. Announcements of job orders are sent weekly to CBOs through general “job blasts” or through a segmented strategy targeted to CBOs with clients most likely to meet specific job requirements. The outreach teams are forming partnerships with CBOs through visiting CBOs to describe the program and conducting on-site assessments and intakes; providing monthly meetings for CBOs to learn about the program and network; and providing ongoing education to CBOs about the qualities of a job-ready candidate. These activities, which clarify program goals and strategies, have resulted in increased numbers of job-ready candidates referred over the course of the program year.

Provider Capacity. Two of the three providers that CEO initially funded have demonstrated the capacity to manage and implement a strong CBO Outreach program that is well-integrated into Center operations, and the third appears to be moving in that direction after a very weak start. The program has been replicated at a fourth Center, and another is planned.

Agency Management. SBS provides strong, hands-on management of the program through regular communication with the program sites and close monitoring of program accomplishments. The agency provides extensive technical assistance to the WF1CCs, including the development of a *Partner Team Manual and Resource Guide*, a customer flow chart, an Excel-based tracking system for referrals and placements, informational materials for use by the WF1CCs in their outreach to CBOs, as well monthly meetings and regular telephone consultations with Center staff. SBS closely monitors progress toward targets, helps WF1CCs develop a corrective action plan when necessary, and ultimately enforces sanctions (reduced or eliminated funding) when key targets are not met. SBS has effective monitoring and program improvement processes in place and is continually looking at ways to strengthen the program and increase the number of clients placed in jobs.

Early Outcomes. The program has been successful at recruiting CBOs, having CBOs send job-ready candidates to the WF1CCs, and making job placements. As shown above, by the end of the first program year, the program exceeded both its job placement target and its referral-to-placement rate and came very close to meeting its target for placing residents from high-poverty areas.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The SBS CBO Outreach program proposes a plausible approach to lifting New Yorkers out of poverty through job-readiness and skills training at CBOs and job placement by the WF1CCs.

- The program is serving an economically disadvantaged population of unemployed adults, 68 percent of whom live in high-poverty areas.
- The program is resulting in stronger partnerships between government WF1CCs and community organizations to train and place low-income workers in jobs.
- SBS is providing strong oversight and technical assistance to the program.
- The program is meeting its job placement and referral to placement goals.
- The program should continue to strengthen its approach to serving residents of the high-poverty areas.