January 4, 2011

Dear Community Members:

DYCD plans to issue a Teen ACTION Request for Proposals (RFP). Continuing an initiative launched in 2007 in collaboration with the Center for Economic Opportunity, the RFP will seek qualified service providers to operate service learning programs for youth in grades 7 through 10. It also will seek a technical assistance vendor to provide training on the sexual and reproductive health component of the Teen ACTION program.

In advance of the release of the RFP, DYCD has developed this Concept Paper, which outlines our vision and rationale for the Teen ACTION programs going forward.

As we develop and finalize the RFP, we welcome constructive feedback from all stakeholders as an essential part of our planning process. Please email your comments to Conceptpaper@dycd.nyc.gov (entering "Teen ACTION" in the subject line of the email). If you prefer, you may mail written comments to:

Cressida Wasserman
Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10038

Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received by February 1, 2011.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your careful consideration of the Concept Paper relating to this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav

TEEN ACTION Initiative Concept Paper

## I.	Purpose

This concept paper is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) in which the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) will seek appropriately qualified organizations to deliver Teen ACTION programs at selected sites in New York City (City).[1] Through a separate competition in the RFP, DYCD will also seek one Technical Assistance (TA) vendor to provide training on the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) component of the Teen ACTION curriculum and related service projects (see further below).

Teen ACTION is a service learning model launched by DYCD in 2007, with sponsorship from the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) established by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.[2] It is founded on the principles and practices of youth development and incorporates a life-skills curriculum (Curriculum) created for DYCD by Global Kids, with support from The After School Corporation (TASC). [3] The primary goals of the initiative are to:

- cultivate an ethic of service,
- develop life-skills and critical-thinking skills,
- promote commitment to academic achievement,
- reduce risk behaviors that may result in teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), and
- encourage use of health and mental health services.

Adolescence is a time when young people struggle with developmental changes on many fronts and need challenging activities and supportive programming to promote their positive development and foster the life skills they need to stay on track through high school.[4] Meaningful service projects combined with curriculum-based learning and reflection provide opportunities for youth to acquire and practice life skills, engage in teamwork and contribute to the well-being of their communities. Research demonstrates that service learning programs can foster critical thinking, personal responsibility, positive attitudes toward school, and increased civic engagement.[5] There is also good evidence that they can reduce rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially when combined with effective classroom instruction on SRH.[6]

The changes embodied in the new RFP will reflect City priorities and lessons learned by DYCD during the initial years of implementation. [7] Most notably, the SRH component of the program will be strengthened, and available resources will be focused on younger teens, as detailed below. In addition, DYCD proposes to increase the price per participant and slightly reduce required hours of program participation. Programs will be located in designated high-need neighborhoods at after school program sites that agree to provide Teen ACTION programs with free space and infrastructure support (see below).

Preventing Unintended Teen Pregnancy Remains a City Priority

Pregnancy prevention and increased access to SRH services for teenagers remain critical City priorities. Substantial numbers of young New Yorkers are sexually active: in 2009, 39% of public high school students reported ever having sexual intercourse, including 28% of 9th graders and 57% of 12th graders. Over a quarter (27%) of public high school students are currently sexually active, and 15% percent report that they have had sex with four or more sexual partners.[8] The City's teen pregnancy rate has been consistently higher than the rate for the nation as a whole.[9] The vast majority of teen pregnancies (86%)

are unintended.[10] Teen pregnancy rates are highest in the poorest neighborhoods of the City such as the South Bronx, East and Central Harlem, and North and Central Brooklyn, where many non-Hispanic black and Hispanic teens live.

Teen pregnancies often have serious consequences: most are unintended and many end in abortion; teenage parents are less likely to complete high school; and children born to teens are at increased risk for a variety of negative outcomes including low birth weight and poverty.[11]

A separate issue relating to the sexual health of young New Yorkers is the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) [12] and the fact that New York remains the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. STIs increase the risk of HIV transmission, and untreated STI's can lead to adverse health outcomes such as infertility, cancer, and pregnancy complications. Teens make up more than 1 in 4 diagnosed STI cases in the City.[13] The City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has expressed particular concern about the increasing number of new HIV diagnoses among young black and Hispanic men who have sex with men, especially those ages 13 to 19.[14] A new study suggests there are more sexually active adolescents in the City with same-sex partners than was hitherto thought to be the case. [15] In addition, individuals who have sex with both male and female partners engage in behaviors that put them at higher risk for STIs, including HIV.

In light of the above facts, the new RFP will strengthen the SRH component of the Teen ACTION Curriculum, requiring contractors to deliver a minimum of 8 sessions in this topic area.

Targeting Younger Teens

The Teen ACTION programs will, in the next contract period, target youth in grades 7 through 10. There is a strong case for concentrating available resources on these students.

First, for significant numbers of younger teenagers, it is critical to address issues relating to sexual and reproductive health. Research suggests that one fifth of teens have sex before age 15,[16] and about one-third by age 16.[17] There is also evidence that youth who engage in sex early have low rates of both contraceptive use and condom use (potentially increasing their risk for STIs), are more likely to have older partners, and are at greater risk for involvement in coercive sexual relationships.[18] Thus, it is especially important to reach youth when they are at risk and vulnerable but less likely than older peers to have become sexually active.[19]

Second, while low participation in after-school activities is often the norm once students enter middle school,[20] teens will enroll in well-designed programs that offer them opportunities to become involved and explore relevant, real-life issues affecting their communities.[21] Teen ACTION programs are well-placed to engage younger teens in a range of positive youth development activities that are likely to foster responsible behaviors and attitudes.

II.   Competitions, Funding Levels, Anticipated Number of Contracts, and Contract Terms

There will be two city-wide competitions in this RFP: Teen Action Programs (Service Option I) and TA Services (Service Option II).

<u>Service Option I: Teen Action Programs</u>

Maximum annual funding for the Teen ACTION programs would be **$1,365,800**. The minimum value of individual contracts would be **$67,500.**

DYCD anticipates awarding 20 contracts to operate Teen ACTION programs in designated high-need community districts (CDs) throughout the five boroughs. (See below for a listing of the high-need CDs in each borough.)

The anticipated contract term will be for one year, from **September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012**, with an option to renew for up to two additional years.

Service Option II: Technical Assistance Services

DYCD anticipates that it will award a single contract for TA services. The maximum annual value of this contract will be **$75,000**. The anticipated contract term will be for one year, from **August 1, 2011 to July 31, 2012**, with an option to renew for up to two additional years.

Any entity, including a subcontractor of such entity, awarded a contract to provide TA services to the Teen ACTION programs will not be eligible to submit a proposal in response to the RFP, and may not participate as a subcontractor through this RFP.

III.   Service Option I

a. Program Approach

DYCD will expect the Teen ACTION programs to achieve the goals noted above, and incorporate the core concepts and key elements outlined below.

Core concepts:
- A positive youth development approach that includes ongoing support from caring adults, development and maintenance of a culture of teamwork among staff and youth, structured programming that offers challenging opportunities, and a youth-led decision-making process.
- Intentional promotion of understanding and appreciation for diversity involving deliberate strategies to foster respect for different viewpoints and cultures.
- A safe and welcoming environment that reflects the standards articulated in the DYCD Core Competencies for Supervisors of Youth Work Professionals.[22]
- Incorporation of youth perspectives into all aspects of the program, through processes that foster maximum youth participation throughout.

Key program elements:
- Effective recruitment and retention strategies to ensure that contractual service levels are met. In addition, contractors will make parents aware of the program content, including the SRH component, and procure consents for their children's participation in the program and any evaluation.
- Orientation that involves parents and includes an overview of the Teen ACTION program including key components of the Curriculum, expectations regarding attendance, and rules/codes of conduct.
- Structured learning sessions that have clearly articulated learning goals, use evidence-based materials and community expertise, incorporate "What Is Service Learning?" and other Curriculum topics including, in particular, the mandatory SRH component and other related components that are appropriate for the age and developmental level of the participants. DYCD will expect contractors to provide a minimum of 8 sequenced SRH workshops (to be specified in the RFP) [23] and supplement the SRH content with other quality materials.[24] Programs will be monitored to ensure that the SRH component is implemented with fidelity.

- Service activities that are part of fully-conceived, realistic projects, planned and implemented by groups of participants (as distinct from "individual volunteer placements").
- Reflection activities such as group discussions and journal writing that provide a bridge between the Curriculum-based learning and the service projects, and challenge participants to think deeply about complex community problems.
- Youth driven processes that offer participants a range of challenges and roles.
- Key linkages, documented through linkage agreements, will be with potential service placement hosts and adolescent healthcare providers.[25]
- School linkages, documented in school linkage agreements, will be with the schools from which program participants will be recruited.
- Multiple relationships that build on the strengths that youth, staff, parents, healthcare providers, potential service project hosts, schools and others bring to the Teen ACTION program.
- Incentives such as group outings and trips, gift vouchers, tickets for sports/entertainment events, recognition ceremonies, and stipends to cover necessary program-related expenses such as travel costs.
- Transportation and off-site monitoring arrangements that ensure participants travel safely between the program facility and service placements and complete the prescribed minimum service hours.

Contractor/staff experience:
- The contractor will be expected to have a minimum of 3 years successful experience implementing, solely or in collaboration with others, service learning programs for young teenagers
- The staff person designated to deliver the SRH curriculum component will have the necessary skills and experience to facilitate SRH workshops.
- Key program staff will be expected to have a minimum of 3 years experience delivering serving learning programs to teenagers.

TA services:
- There will be mandatory training provided by the TA vendor for designated staff on delivery of the SRH Curriculum component. In addition, DYCD will provide general TA for contractors on implementation of Teen ACTION programs.
- The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will offer an annual, one-day training on SRH topics.

Program sites:
- The target CDs in each borough are as follows:
  Bronx: 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6
  Brooklyn: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16
  Manhattan   10, 11 and 12
  Queens: 3, 4, 9, 12 and 14
  Staten Island: 1

- It is anticipated that the new Teen ACTION programs will operate from a Beacon, OST, or Cornerstone program site or from a non DYCD-funded program site in the target CDs where a program is serving students in grades 7 through 10 and agrees to provide free space and infrastructure support.

b. Hours of Operation and Minimum Service Levels

The Teen ACTION programs will operate for a minimum of 12 weeks during the school year only. The programs will comprise at least **150** program hours in total, with a minimum of **50** hours for curriculum-based structured learning/reflection activities and a minimum of **50** hours for service project activities. The remaining balance of **50** hours could be used for either structured learning/reflection or service activities.

DYCD anticipates that the maximum price per participant will be **$1,350** and that contractors will be expected to serve a minimum of **50** and a maximum of **75** participants.

c. Tracking and Reporting/External Evaluation

The contractors will be expected to track and report participant enrollment and attendance throughout the period of the contract. Using the electronic database developed by DYCD, contractors would demonstrate compliance with required minimum service levels and hours of structured learning and service. DYCD will provide training on use of the electronic database.

The Teen ACTION programs, in addition to internal monitoring and assessment by DYCD, will be subject to evaluation by a CEO-appointed independent evaluator. Short term programs outcomes might include evidence of greater connection to the community, intention to avoid risk behaviors, and improved school attendance. In the longer term, outcomes might include reduced risk behaviors, grade promotion, and lower teen pregnancy rates.

IV.   Service Option II

Service Approach/Deliverables:

- TA vendor would provide a minimum of 8 train-the-trainer sessions on delivery of the SRH Curriculum component and the design and implementation of related service projects.
- The TA services would be designed to ensure that contractors deliver the SRH curriculum component with fidelity and implement relevant service projects effectively.

Vendor/staff experience:

- The TA vendor would have at least 5 years of successful experience in the last 7 years providing TA services to not-for-profit organizations or schools relating to effective delivery of curriculum-based SRH programs for students in grades 7 through 10.
- The vendor would, in addition, have at least 3 years successful experience as a direct service provider of educational programming on SRH topics.
- The vendor's key staff under the contract would have at least 3 years successful experience in delivery of SRH curricula and TA support to not-for-profit organizations.

V.   Planned Method of Proposal Evaluation

For both service options, it is anticipated that proposals will be evaluated pursuant to evaluation criteria set out in the RFP. These will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience and demonstrated level of organizational capability. In the case of Service Option 1, the evaluation criteria will also include the quality of proposed program approach and design.

In the case of Service Option II, evaluation criteria will include quality of the design of the proposed TA services.

VI.   Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that DYCD will release an RFP for this procurement in approximately 6 weeks, following the release of this concept paper. The deadline for submitting proposals in response to the RFP will be approximately one month later.

Comments

Written comments may be emailed to conceptpaper@dycd.nyc.gov (entering "Teen ACTION" in the subject line) or submitted by mail to:

>   Cressida Wasserman
>   Department of Youth and Community Development
>   156 William Street, 2nd Floor
>   New York, NY 10038
>   Fax No: 212 676 8160

The deadline for all written comments is Tuesday, February 1, 2011

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[1] Originally known as Service Learning programs, the programs were renamed "Teen ACTION" by the participants. "ACTION" is an acronym for "**A**chieving **C**hange **T**ogether **I**n **O**ur **N**eighborhoods."

[2] The report of Mayor Bloomberg's Commission for Economic Opportunity which led to the creation of the Center for Economic Opportunity is available at: http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/ceo_report2006.pdf. The mission of CEO is to reduce the number of people living in poverty in the City through the implementation of result-driven and innovative initiatives.   For further information, see http://home2.nyc.gov/html/ceo/html/home/home.shtml

[3] The Curriculum can be accessed through the DYCD website at http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/afterschool/teen_action.shtml

[4] Robert Balfanz & Liza Herzog. *Keeping Middle Grades Students On Track to Graduation*
 Johns Hopkins University February 2006. See also: *New York City's Middle-Grade Schools – Platforms for Success or Pathways to Failure?* NYC Coalition for Educational Justice report January 2007.

[5] See, e.g., Billig, S. H. (2004). Using Evidence to Make the Case for Service-Learning as an Academic Achievement Intervention. http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/DocServer/caseforsl.doc?docID=106. See also numerous studies listed on the website of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/impacts

[6] See, Douglas Kirby. Emerging Answers 2007 Research Findings on Programs that Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy November 2007.Pages 19-20 and 160-162 http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/EA2007/EA2007_full.pdf Studies suggest that a health education curriculum combined with service activities is more effective than a health education curriculum alone. See O'Donnell, L., Stueve, A., O'Donnell, C., Duran, R., San Doval, A., Wilson, R.F., Haber, D., Perry, E., and Pleck, J.H. (2002). Long-Term Reductions in Sexual Initiation and Sexual Activity Among Urban Middle Schoolers in Reach for Health Service Learning Program. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 31*, 93-100. http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(01)00389-5/abstract. This study involved students at two large urban public middle schools; see also, L O'Donnell, A Stueve, A San Doval, R Duran et al (1999): The effectiveness of the Reach for Health Community Youth Service Learning Program in reducing early and unprotected sex among urban middle school students. American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 89, Issue 2 176-181, Copyright © 1999 by American Public Health Association http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/89/2/176

[7] These lessons emerged from observations and analysis by DYCD staff, and reviews and surveys conducted by CEO evaluators. See, e.g., http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/downloads/pdf/teen_action_pilot_report.pdf ; http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/downloads/pdf/ta_prr.pdf

[8] New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Epiquery: NYC Interactive Health Data System - [Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009]. [December 2, 2010]. http://nyc.gov/health/epiquery

[9] 21 percent above the national rate, with 94 pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 15–19 versus 71.5. Teen Pregnancy in New York City 1997-2007. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Maternal, Infant and Reproductive Health
http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/ms/ms-nyctp-97-07.pdf; NYC Vital Signs August 2007 Op.

[10] Communication with the NYC DOHMH Bureau of Maternal, Infant and Reproductive Health.

[11] Teen Sexual Activity and Birth Control Use in New York City (2007) Op. Cit

[12] For example, in 2007, more than 10,000 teen women in the City were diagnosed with Chlamydia, a 26 percent increase since 2006. http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std_stepup_facts.shtml

[13] See http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std_stepup_facts.shtml#hiv

[14] DOHMH Press Release # 079-07. http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/pr2007/pr079-07.shtml; DOHMH Teen Health. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std_stepup_facts.shtml#hiv Preeti Pathela and Julia A Schillinger (2010) Sexual Behaviors and Sexual Violence: Adolescents With Opposite-, Same-, or Both-Sex Partners. PEDIATRICS. Volume 126, Number 5, November 2010. http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/peds.2010-0396v1

[16] Jennifer Manlove, Kerry Franzetta et al. *No Time to Waste*: Programs To Reduce Teen Pregnancy Among Middle School-Aged Youth. Child Trends and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. February 2004. http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/NotimetoWaste.pdf.

[17] Communication from DOHMH regarding 2009 Youth Behavioral Risk Survey data.

[18] Ibid; Steve Meyer and Kate Sandel. Bibliography: Research On Service-Learning & Teen Pregnancy/Risk Behavior Prevention. RMC Research, 2001 http://learningindeed.org/research/slresearch/riskbib.html.

[19] It has been demonstrated that programs for middle school youth in which community service is combined with effective classroom instruction on SRH, can be effective and have a long lasting, positive impact. See O'Donnell, L., Stueve, A., O'Donnell, C., Duran, R., San Doval, A., Wilson, R.F., Haber, D., Perry, E., and Pleck, J.H. (2002). Long-Term Reductions in Sexual Initiation and Sexual Activity Among Urban Middle Schoolers in Reach for Health Service Learning Program. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 31*, 93-100. http://www.childtrends.org/lifecourse/programs/Reachforhealth.htm

[20] See, for example, Sherri Lauver, Priscilla M. D. Little, and Heather Weiss. *Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in After School Programs*. The Evaluation Exchange Volume X, No. 1, Spring 2004. http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue25/theory2.html; *Engaging Adolescents in Out-of-School Time Programs: Learning What Works*. Priscilla Little and Sherri Lauver. The Prevention Researcher, Volume 12 Number 2 , 2005 , Pages 7-10; See, for example, Georgia Hall, Laura Israel, and Joyce Shortt. *It's About Time – a look at OST for Urban Teens*. NIOST, Feb 2004. http://www.niost.org/AOLTW.pdf. Anecdotal evidence and DYCD participation data and contractor feedback also suggest that it is much harder for providers of youth services to attract and engage teenagers compared to younger children.

[21] For an indication of the popularity of service learning, see, for example, *Afterschool and Service Learning*. Monday, January 22, 2007. The Afterschool Alliance. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_service.cfm..

[22] See http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/supervisor_core_competencies-full_document102009.pdf

[23] Effective curriculum-based programs that help prevent teen pregnancy provide a minimum of eight sessions. See What Works 2010. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. http://wwwthenationalcampaign.org.

[24] For example, the Guiding Principles for Sexual Health Education for Young People published by the New York State Department of Health available online at http://www.nyhealth.gov/publications/0206/guiding_principles.htm; the "Definition of Sexual Health" poster sponsored by the ACT for Youth Center for Excellence and the New York State Department of Health Adolescent Sexual Health Work Group. http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/SHposter.pdf; and other resources on the website of ACT for Youth Center for Excellence at http://www.actforyouth.net/default.asp?ID=aSHResource.

[25] See http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std_stepup_where_to_go.shtml and http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/std/teens-nyc-clinics-6-2010.pdf for the DOHMH "Teens in NYC" list of teen-friendly sexual health clinics.