



**Department of
Youth & Community
Development**

Jeanne B. Mullgrav
Commissioner

May 6, 2009

Dear Community Members:

On January 13, 2009, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn announced a plan to ensure continuity of services at 25 New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) community centers located throughout the five boroughs. With support from NYCHA, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is administering youth programs at the centers and will shortly issue a “Cornerstone Initiative” Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking qualified providers to offer youth and community services at 25 NYCHA community centers. The purpose of the Cornerstone programs will be to provide high-quality, innovative youth development activities for children and young adults, while facilitating programming for adults of all ages and working to support vibrant community centers at each of the 25 sites.

In advance of the release of the RFP, DYCD has developed the enclosed Concept Paper to outline its vision for the Cornerstone programs. This Concept Paper has been informed by preliminary input from a wide range of stakeholders including the NYCHA Council of Presidents, NYCHA Resident Associations, NYCHA residents, youth and parent focus groups and surveys, as well as relevant research. We welcome further input from all stakeholders and invite your review and comment. The Concept Paper will be posted on the DYCD website at www.nyc.gov/dycd and we urge you to forward it to anyone who might be interested.

Please email your comments to conceptpaper@dycd.nyc.gov and enter “CORNERSTONE” in the subject line of your email message. If you prefer, you may mail your comments to:

Cressida Wasserman
Planning, Research and Program Development
Department of Youth and Community Development
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Fax: 212 676 8160

Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, 2009. I thank you for your careful consideration of the Concept Paper and look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav

Enclosure



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Development**

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**THE CORNERSTONE INITIATIVE:
DYCD Youth Services in NYCHA Community Centers
Concept Paper
May 6, 2009**

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I. Introduction

Like many other cities around the world, New York is responding to the ongoing effects of the global financial crisis: shrinking tax revenues; cuts in social programs; rising unemployment; increasing poverty; and lack of credit to help with housing, education, and medical expenses. For many people, the current downturn will compound existing problems. Youth in poor communities, particularly teenagers residing in public housing, are among the most threatened by worsening economic conditions.¹ At the same time, the federal stimulus package heralds a range of new initiatives in areas ranging from “green jobs” and sustainable energy to infrastructure renewal, educational innovation, job training, and community service.

Increased attention is focusing on the needs of urban youth. Under the leadership of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the City and its network of nonprofit organizations have pioneered many new initiatives and cross-sector partnerships in education, after-school, youth workforce development, youth leadership and service learning programming. The City knows how to help young New Yorkers gain skills and find solutions to today’s educational and labor market challenges. Young residents of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments, together with their families and communities, stand to benefit from research-based programs that can yield tangible benefits both now and in the future.

II. Purpose of the Request for Proposals

The Cornerstone Initiative outlined in this concept paper represents a new collaboration between the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and NYCHA. The DYCD Cornerstone portfolio will provide services primarily for youth ages 5 to 21 living in up to 25 NYCHA developments. Intergenerational activities and the provision of services for adults over age 21 will also be encouraged. Through a DYCD request-for-proposals (RFP) to be released in Spring 2009, this initiative inaugurates a new approach to services for youth living in NYCHA developments. The goal is to strategically invest public funds in programs that promote the healthy development of NYCHA youth. The programs selected for funding will offer innovative and engaging approaches that help participants gain the skills and attitudes they need to stay on track in school, graduate, be successful in work and life, and contribute to the well-being of their peers, families and communities.

Background

NYCHA manages the largest urban public housing system in the United States. Under the Bloomberg Administration, despite deficits caused by declining federal support, NYCHA has achieved notable successes, including an innovative construction management/building program; collaboration with the City’s housing agencies to preserve and expand affordable housing; establishment of an array of employment services; and, in partnership with City agencies, the creation of a network of community centers serving youth and families, senior centers, health care centers, day care and Head Start educational centers. Through these efforts, NYCHA developments have offered numerous working class and new New Yorkers an avenue to the middle class. Nevertheless, many NYCHA residents confront stark challenges, especially those who live in neighborhoods marked by concentrated poverty.²

Across America, there are low-income housing developments that offer a variety of on-site and off-site services for their residents. Some initiatives set broad and comprehensive goals such as improving access to critical supports

¹ New York Times, editorial *Even Worse for Teens*, December 8, 2008 (many youth are now at risk of being “permanently marginalized both socially and economically”); see also, New York Times editorial *A Job or a Gang?* December 30, 2008 and New York Times, *Public Housing and Public Schools: How Do Students Living in NYC Public Housing Fare in School?* November 24, 2008.

² See, *Public Housing and Public Schools: How Do Students Living in NYC Public Housing Fare in School?* Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy Policy Brief. New York University. 2008.

through better coordination of services and the empowerment/participation of residents.³ Others focus more narrowly on specific goals such as job training⁴ or provision of after-school activities.⁵

Planning Process

The program model outlined in this concept paper is informed by the experience of DYCD and NYCHA policy makers, including a review of prior NYCHA services for youth, relevant research literature, and an extensive community input process including contributions from a wide variety of stakeholders who participated in focus groups or meetings. DYCD contracted with two outside consultants to conduct these sessions. The process included meetings with the NYCHA Citywide Council of Presidents; Resident Association Presidents from the 25 selected sites; and members of Residents Associations from the selected NYCHA developments. In addition, 22 focus groups were conducted with NYCHA residents, including parents/caregivers and teens to assess priorities for programming in these community centers. DYCD will continue to seek input to inform the development of the RFP. DYCD will consider all written feedback submitted in response to this concept paper. (See below for further details.)

III. Site Selection

It is anticipated that a total of 25 developments will be served across the 9 NYCHA districts. (See Attachment 1 for a list of the proposed sites.) Factors that influenced the selection of sites included geographic diversity and a needs assessment that took into account indicators of poverty and youth population, availability of other youth services in the locality, and suitability of the physical facilities within each development.

Satellite locations and off-site program activities

To enhance the menu of activities that can be offered through the programs based at the NYCHA Community Centers, DYCD will encourage use of additional facilities at nearby satellite locations such as local gyms or other sports facilities, and art studios.

IV. Program Goals

The primary role of the Cornerstone programs would be the provision of engaging and productive activities for youth within vibrant community center settings. Program goals, informed by the principles and practices of youth development, would be as follows:

- Ensure a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment;
- Promote healthy physical, emotional and social development;
- Through project-based learning strategies, involve youth in engaging, structured activities that offer tangible benefits and build literacy and other core skills;
- Give youth “choice” and “voice” in program implementation;
- Broaden horizons, encourage appreciation for diversity and foster community engagement;
- Provide positive adult role models, encourage parental involvement, and promote intergenerational activities;
- Build life-skills to foster social responsibility and reduce risk behavior; and
- Facilitate access to health, mental health or other relevant services.
- Facilitate programming for adults and seniors primarily through co-locators.

³ For example, Beyond Shelter in LA that seeks to address the long-term needs of residents caught in a cycle of chronic poverty.

⁴ For example, Baltimore Housing Authority’s Apprenticeship and Customized Training Program, Gallatin Housing Authority’s Welfare to Work program in Tennessee, or Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority’s Landscape Training program in Cleveland, Ohio.

⁵ For example, Brookline Housing Authority’s Steps to Success program in Massachusetts.

Target Population/Service Levels and Site Operation Hours

The DYCD programs would target youth in two age groups: younger youth, aged 5 through 12, and older youth, aged 13-21. In addition, contractors would be expected to coordinate the use of the community center by adult residents and co-locators seeking free space to provide activities for adult residents.

Minimum numbers of younger youth, older youth and adults to be served would vary by site based on available space.⁶ (For details, see Attachment 1.)

It is anticipated that sites would operate flexible hours based on the specific programming offered. Generally, sites would be open from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays during the school year, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays in the summer, and on Saturdays year-round from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

V. Community Advisory Board

Each DYCD contractor would establish a Community Advisory Board as the mechanism for obtaining community input. Members of the Community Advisory Board would include, but not be limited to: NYCHA residents, parents and youth, representatives of the Residents Association, local schools, local law enforcement, local social services providers, and youth advocates.

VI. Theme-Based Program Approach

All programs would adopt an overarching theme. The chosen theme would serve as a framework for a variety of engaging, age-appropriate, activities while allowing scope for innovation and participant and community input. (For examples of possible themes and activities, see Attachment 2.) The rationale for the theme-based approach lies in research that identifies structured, focused activities as key features of effective youth programs.⁷ The purpose of adopting a theme is to help contractors create a rich menu of inter-related program activities that take youth beyond the confines of own environments, stimulate their imaginations, and expose them to a whole range of educational and career possibilities.

Project-Based Activities

Project-based activities involve participants in a sustained, cooperative endeavor that results in a specific end-product, event, or other tangible achievement. Such activities provide a bridge to academic learning without replicating the school day.⁸ They strengthen teamwork, problem-solving and academic skills and give students a sense of accomplishment. Instructors would help participants define the project and structure enjoyable, student-centered activities that focus on the goals to be achieved.

Community Service and Community Events

It is anticipated that Cornerstone programs would provide youth with opportunities to take part in community service and community-building activities. These activities would embrace a wide variety of individual or team

⁶ All programs serving seven or more youth ages 5-12 must comply with applicable SACC regulations, including physical plant requirements such as adequate number of bathrooms and sinks. The SACC Regulations also require minimum staff/participant ratios of one staff member for every 10 participants in the case of youth ages 5 through 9, and one staff for every 15 participants for youth ages 10 through 12. For further information, see http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/regs/414_SACC_regs.asp

⁷ See, e.g. Joseph A. Durlak & Roger P. Weissberg: The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills <http://www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Full.pdf>

⁸ There is a large literature on “project-based learning” which offers a rationale for project-based activities in out-of-school time programs. See, for example, Program in Education, Afterschool, and Resiliency (PEAR) at <http://www.pearweb.org/projects/pbl.html>; PBL-Online at <http://www.pbl-online.org/> or the Buck Institute for Education website at http://www.bie.org/index.php/site/about/overview_about_us/; and John. W. Thomas. A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning. March 2000. http://www.bie.org/files/researchreviewPBL_1.pdf

service projects and include events that encourage positive community relations and a sense of community across age groups.

The Cornerstone programs would be expected to provide at least two large-scale community events each year that are designed to engage youth, parents and other NYCHA residents. Older youth would be expected to take on leadership roles in the planning and implementation of these events which would serve both as outreach and recruitment strategies and occasions for show-casing program and participant achievements.

Facilitating access to other support services

All contractors would be expected to facilitate access by participants and their families to other support services (for example, counseling, healthcare, mental healthcare, work readiness and job placement services) through an effective system of referrals and follow-up.

Linkages

All contractors would be required to have linkages with schools, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and other organizations. Some linkages would enrich programming for youth. Other linkages, with co-locators, would facilitate the use of the community center for services, resources, and supports for adult residents.

Staff Training

Contractors would be required to send key program staff to trainings and briefings identified by DYCD as mandatory.

Program Activities for Younger Youth (ages 5-12)

All programs for younger youth would provide supervised homework help and other age-appropriate activities designed to meet DYCD's goals. Homework help would be provided by appropriately-qualified staff and comply with any guidelines from the schools that participants attend. Apart from homework help, program activities would be project-based, and, wherever possible, linked to the program's chosen theme. Regardless of their specific focus, activities would support youth development and be designed to fully engage participants while also building literacy, numeracy and other core skills.

Examples: If the adopted theme is "Green Communities," programs could choose topics of interest to participants (e.g., climate change, recycling, or endangered species) and include a wide range of activities including outings (e.g., to museums, parks, zoos), videos, discussion sessions, as well as reading and writing projects. If the theme is "Healthy Living," there could be a "cooking for health" program incorporating literacy and numeracy skill-building activities and teamwork such as quizzes/games, essay writing, and creation of a cookbook.

Staff Qualifications

The program director would be expected to have extensive experience working with younger youth and at least a bachelor's degree in a relevant field. Other key staff would have experience working with younger youth, preferably some college credits in a relevant field, and be qualified for their assigned tasks. For example, staff supervising homework help would have the requisite literacy and numeracy skills and the knowledge needed to provide participants with appropriate assistance.

Program Duration/Minimum Participation Hours/Price Per Participant

During the school year, programs for younger youth would operate Monday to Friday 3-6 pm; during summers and on select school-closing days, programs would operate 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is anticipated that the annual maximum price per participant for programs for younger youth would be \$2,800. The expected minimum annual participation hours would be 1,140 hours.

Program Activities for Older Youth (ages 13-21)

Programming for older youth would consist of engaging, structured, project-based activities that have been designed to reflect the interests and priorities of (a) participants aged 13 to 15 years, and (b) participants aged 16 to 21 years.

Youth Councils would be mandatory for all programs to ensure a strong youth voice in program design and implementation and the selection of activities. Their purpose would also be to foster a sense of independence and empowerment among participants, and offer significant opportunities for development of leadership, teamwork and communication skills.

All program activities for older youth would be sequenced and framed within defined, theme-related projects that have tangible end-products: for example, a mural, documentary video, magazine, dance performance, community survey, high school or college credits, college admission, or a job placement. The activities would be designed to provide youth with specific competencies and concrete benefits, and foster a culture of learning, good work habits, pro-social norms, and personal responsibility. They could incorporate a variety of approaches such as service learning, peer tutoring, discussion groups, workshops, trips/visits, campus outings, and special presentations.

Examples: if the theme is “healthy living,” youth could be invited to identify and research local health issues (such as diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, teen dating violence etc) and develop prevention strategies. Such a project could involve library and Internet research and fieldwork such as surveys and interviews with local service providers, doctors and nurses, local community members and advocacy groups. If the theme is “entrepreneurship,” youth could choose an idea for a business enterprise (for example, a restaurant, bakery, barber’s shop or beauty parlor) and learn the steps needed to establish its viability, finance it, and launch it. The project’s end product might be a consumer survey demonstrating the existence of a market for the proposed service or production of a business plan showing how the idea could be translated into action.

Staff Requirements/Qualifications

The program director would have extensive experience working with older youth and at least a bachelor’s degree in a relevant field. Other key staff would be professionals with experience working with middle school and high school-age youth and sufficient knowledge about the program theme and relevant expertise to plan and oversee the project-based activities and ensure successful project completion and delivery of the end product in accordance with program goals.

Program Duration/Minimum Participation Hours/ Price Per Participant

DYCD anticipates that programming for older youth would be year-round. The maximum price per participant would be \$1,300 for all youth aged 13 to 21. However, expected minimum annual participation hours would vary according to age, as follows: 200 hours of activity per year for youth aged 13-15 years; 165 hours of activity per year for youth aged 16-21.

Program Activities for Adults (ages 21+)

Activities for adults, funded primarily through non-DYCD sources, might include health/fitness programming, ESL/GED classes, computer training, and job workshops or other activities provided by the contractor, co-locators or residents themselves. Vendors will be expected to generally describe the structure and content of these activities in their proposals but they will not be subject to minimum program hours or duration.

VII. Tracking and Reporting/Performance Targets

Contractors would track and report participant enrollment and attendance in all structured programming. In addition, they would report details of their large-scale community events.

Using DYCD Online, the electronic database developed by DYCD, contractors would demonstrate compliance comply with required minimum service levels and hours of structured activities. DYCD would provide training on the electronic database system.

It is anticipated that performance targets would be defined by attendance rates and vary according to the age of participants, as follows:

Elementary age youth:	80 percent
Youth ages 13 to 15:	75 percent
Youth ages 16 to 21:	70 percent

Outcomes

It is also anticipated that contractors will be required to track and report on participant outcomes, including “project completion,” for participants ages 13-21 who are engaged in structured activities. Outcomes for youth participants of all ages may also be tracked through surveys to be administered by program staff in collaboration with DYCD administrators and evaluators.

VIII. Contract Terms, Competitions/Anticipated Number of Contracts, and Funding

Contracts would start January 1, 2010 and end on June 30, 2012, with an option to renew for up to three additional years.

Total maximum annual funding for the programs will be approximately \$10.41 million. DYCD anticipates that the upcoming RFP will comprise 25 competitions, one for each of the NYCHA sites listed in Attachment 1. Vendors will be allowed to propose to serve more than one site, provided they submit separate and complete proposals for each site. The anticipated maximum available funding for each site is based on square footage, facilities, and other specific site features. (For details, see Attachment 1.)

It is anticipated that DYCD would award a maximum of 25 contracts. Subcontracting would be allowed, up to a maximum of 30 percent of the contract value. Organizations eligible for contract awards, and their subcontractors, if any, would be not-for-profit entities.

IX. Planned Method for Proposal Evaluation

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, including a record of achieving program outcomes and working successfully with co-locators, demonstrated level of organizational capability, and quality of proposed program approach and design.

X. Anticipated Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that DYCD will issue the Cornerstone Initiative RFP by Summer 2009.

Comments

Comments are invited by no later than Wednesday, June 3, 2009. Please email to CP@dycd.nyc.gov and indicate Cornerstone Programs in the subject line of the email. Alternatively, written comments may be sent to the following address:

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

ATTACHMENT 1: NYCHA SITES* AND FUNDING LEVELS

Borough	Name	Address	Zip Code	Square Footage	Number of Participants				Annual Budget
					5-12 years	13-15 years	16-21 years	Over 21 years	
Brooklyn	Pink	2702 Linden Boulevard	11208	7,800	30	30	60	50	\$201,000
Brooklyn	Cypress Hills	475 Fountain Avenue	11208	10,564	45	45	80	75	\$288,500
Brooklyn	Marlboro	2298 West 8 th Street	11223	7,550	59	59	110	50	\$384,900
Brooklyn	Farragut	228 York Street	11201	16,637	50	50	80	75	\$309,000
Brooklyn	Bay View	5955 Shore Parkway	11236	21,000	80	80	144	100	\$515,200
Brooklyn	Bushwick/Hylan	50 Humboldt Street	11206	3,985	65	65	122	50	\$425,100
Brooklyn	Sumner	862 Park Avenue	11206	3,500	43	43	78	50	\$277,700
Brooklyn	Coney Island 1 (Sites 4 & 5) Surfside	2923 West 28 th Street	11224	12,000	60	60	108	75	\$386,400
Brooklyn	Ingersoll	177 Myrtle Avenue	11201	18,000	80	80	148	75	\$520,400
Brooklyn	Taylor Wythe	80 Clymer Street	11211	7,200	40	40	72	50	\$257,600
Bronx	Edenwald	1150 East 229 th St	10466	7,335	40	40	72	50	\$257,600
Bronx	Soundview	1680 Seward Avenue	10473	9,225	64	64	120	50	\$418,400
Bronx	Bronx River	1619 East 174 th St	10472	12,005	90	90	168	75	\$587,400
Bronx	Eastchester Gardens	3016 Yates Avenue	10469	13,549	60	60	108	75	\$386,400
Bronx	Betances VI	465 St. Anne's Avenue	10455	26,000	125	125	234	100	\$816,700
Manhattan	Polo Grounds Towers	2975 Eighth Avenue	10039	22,000	110	110	209	100	\$722,700
Manhattan	Johnson	1833 Lexington Avenue	10029	23,706	110	110	209	100	\$722,700
Manhattan	Dyckman	3782 Tenth Avenue	10034	3,703	30	30	58	50	\$198,400
Manhattan	Two Bridges	286 South Street	10002	2,600	38	38	67	50	\$240,850
Queens	Ravenswood	35-40 21 st Street	11106	5,708	40	40	72	50	\$257,600
Queens	Ocean Bay Apartments	57-10 Beach Channel Drive	11692	12,400	85	85	158	75	\$553,900
Queens	Redfern	1544 Hassock Street	11691	4,500	32	32	58	50	\$204,550
Queens	South Jamaica II	109-04 160 th Street	11433	4,110	36	36	63	50	\$227,450
Queens	Latimer Gardens	34-30 137 th Street	11354	12,670	50	50	96	75	\$329,800
Staten Island	Stapleton	210 Broad Street	10304	21,000	90	90	164	100	\$582,200

*Shading indicates a site under construction or renovation.

ATTACHMENT 2: **Examples of Possible Program Themes and Activities**

Green Communities/Green Economy

This theme would educate participants about a wide range of “green” issues: for example, local, regional, national and global environmental challenges; sustainable economic development and green jobs; carbon footprints; climate change; energy and water conservation; air quality/pollution; waste disposal and recycling; solar power; nature conservation and endangered species, etc.

Healthy Living

This theme would educate youth about good physical and mental health, embracing topics such as: nutrition/healthy diets; health and hygiene; the importance of exercise; prevention of chronic illness (*e.g.*, diabetes, HIV/AIDS); adolescent development; youth risk behaviors (*e.g.*, smoking, substance abuse, teenage sex, gang involvement); and, conflict resolution and healthy relationships.

Creative and Performance Arts

This theme would embrace a wide range of activities relating to the arts including modern dance, African dance, ballet, drama/theater, literature, poetry, fine arts and photography. Activities might be designed around a culminating event (*e.g.*, a theatrical or dance performance or screening of a video) or an end product such as a comic book, a magazine, or completion of a research project on an arts-related topic. Alternatively, activities could be designed around a cultural enrichment curriculum that involves team work, class discussion, as well as outings to museums, galleries, theater performances, concerts etc.

Business/Entrepreneurship

This theme would be designed to educate youth about the world of business and entrepreneurship. It would embrace topics such as financial literacy, basic business and economics, ingredients for successful entrepreneurship, how to create and launch a new business, and business ethics.⁹

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

This theme would embrace a wide range of topics including scientific inquiry, the natural sciences and practical applications of scientific knowledge, for example, through engineering and technology. It would embrace a many fields including medicine, earth science, geography, space exploration, forensic science, robotics, computer and digital technologies, video and animation, and technical aspects of performance arts.¹⁰

Social Justice and Social Responsibility

This theme would embrace many kinds of social issues, such as discrimination of all types, poverty, educational achievement, access to healthcare/health outcomes, race and the criminal justice system, housing inequalities, and environmental justice. Activities might include service learning, book and field research, and projects such as documentary videos, murals, comic books, and poetry.

Sports and Fitness

This theme would embrace numerous team and individual sports (*e.g.*, football, baseball, basketball, swimming, gymnastics, and boxing), as well as martial arts and other fitness activities. In addition to participation in sporting activities, programs could provide education about the health and mental health benefits of participating in sports and fitness activities, the history and role of sport in American society/culture, sports heroes and halls of fame, and the Olympic Games.

⁹ Useful information and resources can be found on the following websites: US Small Business Administration Teen Business Link at <http://www.sba.gov/teens/>; Junior Achievement at <http://www.ja.org/programs/programs.shtml>

¹⁰ For further information and ideas, see, for example, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) at http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/about_toolkits.html?tab=science