

Jobs-Plus Concept Paper



October 28, 2011

Dear Community Members:

The NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) intends to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Jobs-Plus. The expansion will be jointly administered by HRA, the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA), and the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). HRA is the lead partner in the effort because of its strong focus on self-sufficiency through employment and work supports. Expanding an evidence-based initiative begun in 1998, the RFP will seek up to eight (8) qualified service providers to operate Jobs-Plus sites for residents of NYCHA developments throughout the City. The Jobs-Plus model aims to increase earnings among public housing residents by saturating selected developments with employment services, rent-based and other financial incentives, and community-building activities that support work.

This unprecedented expansion of the proven Jobs-Plus model will bring much-needed additional services to neighborhoods, leverage existing resources, and mobilize stakeholders (residents, non-profits, community colleges, and City agencies), who each bring diverse and critical capabilities and capacities around NYCHA residents in their achievement of economic self-sufficiency and success.

In advance of the release of the RFP, HRA, NYCHA, and CEO have developed this concept paper, which outlines our vision and rationale for the Jobs-Plus expansion 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 send comments to:

Thomas Patrick Harper
Deputy Director
FIA Office of Contract Management
NYC Human Resources Administration
180 Water Street, 20th floor
New York, NY 10038
harpertha@hra.nyc.gov
Phone: 212-331-5828
Fax: 212-331-4264

It is preferred that you submit comments via email; please use "Jobs-Plus comments" in the subject line.

Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received by December 22, 2011.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your careful consideration of this Jobs-Plus concept paper relating to this important and exciting initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KATY GAUL', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Katy Gaul
Deputy Commissioner, Employment & Contracts
HRA Family Independence Administration

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CONCEPT PAPER

HRA JOBS-PLUS

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I. Purpose of RFP

Across the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) 334 public housing communities, unemployment is more than twice the City average, and 84% (147,399) of NYCHA households earn below New York City's average median income.¹ These numbers tell the story of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who, to varying degrees, have not meaningfully connected with labor markets, professional networks, and/or local and regional economic development. For those residents who are employed, many depend on low-wage employment and face challenges in acquiring skills and pursuing continued learning, areas that are components for career advancement and income growth in today's ever-changing economy.

Jobs-Plus, a full-saturation employment model that offers services to all working-age residents in one public housing development or a cluster of developments, serves as a platform to help residents build their skills and connect to the labor market so they can increase their incomes. Jobs-Plus should not be viewed as a quick fix; rather, the program seeks to help residents continue to improve their earnings over time, with residents taking the necessary and, at times, difficult steps towards self-improvement.

The Jobs-Plus Model was developed and tested over a 10-year period by MDRC, a nationally recognized provider of research and technical assistance in the area of workforce development, through a major national demonstration project supported by the U.S. departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and other philanthropic institutions. After rigorous evaluation, MDRC found that when the program was implemented well, residents of the targeted developments increased their earnings by 16%. Remarkable gains in earnings were sustained over 7 years, and these gains continued over three years post-demonstration. Moreover, positive effects were observed across diverse sub-groups (e.g., TANF recipients). Overall, Jobs-Plus helped some participants to get jobs and others to maintain and upgrade their jobs.²

Based on evidence from the MDRC demonstration described above, the City of New York (in a collaboration among various City agencies, led by the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity) established its first replication of Jobs-Plus for 2009-2012 at Jefferson Houses in East Harlem³. The provider at this site is the City University of New York (CUNY), and this site demonstrated a number of early successes in outreach, enrolling over 1600 members in both years and job placements increasing from 20% to 46% in year two. A second Jobs-Plus site, which opened in August 2011, is operated by BronxWorks in the South Bronx, serving residents of Betances, Moore, and East 152nd Street Courtlandt Houses. This site, funded by private and federal grants and administered by CEO and the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, is separate from the Jobs-Plus expansion covered in this RFP.

The Jobs-Plus expansion described in this concept paper represents a continued evolution of Jobs-Plus that builds on lessons learned about replicating the model in the New York City context.

¹ Per the American Community Survey from Census, median household income in New York City was \$50,403, or \$4,200 per month, in 2008.

² Ricco, James A., Sustained Earnings Gains for Residents in the Public Housing Jobs Program: Seven Year findings from the Jobs-Plus demonstration. Policy Brief. New York: MDRC. 2010.

Bloom, Howard S., James A. Riccio, Nandita Verma, and Johanna Walter. Promoting Work in Public Housing: The Effectiveness of Jobs-Plus Final Report. New York: MDRC, 2005.

³ Please note that proposers will be permitted to submit proposals to serve Jefferson Houses under this RFP.

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II. Program Model

The Jobs-Plus model combines three core elements: (A) Employment Services, (B) Rent-Based and Other Financial Incentives to “Make Work Pay,” and (C) Community Support for Work, activities that support neighbor-to-neighbor information exchange that is employment-focused.

A. Employment Services

Jobs-Plus programs provide employment-related services and activities to help residents secure and retain employment, including: job readiness training; job search assistance; referrals to and ongoing support for vocational training, adult education, GED, and literacy programs; job development; placement and retention services; support services (such as legal assistance, mental health counseling, and emergency food); and ongoing case management and career counseling. Work supports, a critical component of retention services, are addressed under “B. Rent-Based and Other Financial Incentives to ‘Make Work Pay’” below.

1. Job Readiness, Job Search Assistance, and Skills Training

Enrolled residents may present with varying levels of job-readiness and education needs, and contractors need to be able to successfully utilize varying strategies that are tailored to each individual client.

To assess client strengths and develop an individualized plan for success, upon initial entry into Jobs-Plus, contractors are expected to conduct one-on-one intake with individual members and work with them to fill out individualized career plans, including items such as previous job experience, career goals, short-term employment goals, past training, training interests, and education level). Each contractor may develop their own version of an individualized career plan, but it should, at minimum, include the elements listed here.

Job readiness services include: assessment of skills, education and employment goals; vendor-directed job search activities; assistance with development of job search materials (including resume, cover letter, and references); facilitated connections to needed resources; services and workshops that improve job readiness, skill building, practical budgeting and financial literacy instruction; and services that address motivational barriers to employment.

For some residents, training may be the best option to assist them in acquiring skills needed to help them reach realistic career goals. Contractors should be able to assist clients in training for Adult Basic Education, GED, English as a Second Language, and/or short-term vocational training (including the NYCHA Resident Training Academy). Contractors should also connect participants to training that leads to vocational credentials when appropriate. Some training may be provided on-site, but it is understood that education will be provided off-site such as training for security guard, nurses aid or food handler. As it connects to their career plan and employment goals, taking steps toward attending college can be discussed with clients interested in and realistically able to pursue the commitment. Contractors should provide ample follow-up for clients in training to make sure they are able to maintain attendance and successfully complete training programs.

Depending on the demographics of residents, contractors may need to make special considerations for services for certain types of clients. Ex-offenders, for instance, may need assistance with rap sheet (Record of Arrest and Prosecution) clean-up (getting errors corrected and getting cases sealed, as

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appropriate) and applying for Certificate of Relief from Disabilities or Certificate of Good Conduct. Other groups who may need specific services may include: youth, domestic violence victims, individuals with substance abuse disorders, those with limited English proficiency, and non-custodial parents. If unable to provide needed special services, contractors should maintain strong linkages with other organizations and other city agencies that can provide assistance.

2. Job Development, Placement, and Retention/Advancement

Contractors are expected to develop and maintain relationships with specific employers and also to be able to make referrals to other agencies (e.g., Small Business Services Workforce Career Centers) to assist with job placement. Ideally, job development strategies are demand-driven and targeted to high-growth sectors in the New York City area labor market.

Once residents are able to successfully obtain jobs, contractors will provide intensive retention services to make sure that jobs are kept. By this point in the process, contractors will have developed a strong, personal relationship with both clients and employers to be able to get feedback on job performance. This strategy helps contractors intervene when issues arise to prevent client job termination.

Contractors are also encouraged to reach out to NYCHA residents who are already employed to help them get job promotions, enhance their skills through training, or to get new, upgraded jobs. Contractors should also be able to help clients who lose their jobs find new employment as rapidly as possible.

3. Referrals for Social Support Services

Program staff will assess participants' needs in order to recommend referrals to off-site services related to social service needs and establish appropriate organizational partnerships to ensure that residents can take advantage of these services as part of their Jobs-Plus experience. Supports could include: legal services, mental health services, domestic violence prevention, youth programs, child care, emergency food, and services for the formerly incarcerated.

These referrals may happen at any time in Jobs-Plus participation (pre- or post-employment) and, ideally, would be connected to each client's individual plan to achieve self-sufficiency through employment. Staff will proactively follow up with their counterparts at partner organizations to confirm residents' receipt of services, particularly those related to employment.

B. Rent-Based and Other Financial Incentives to "Make Work Pay"

Among low-income people who receive public benefits, a common concern is that getting a job or increasing their earnings will result in the loss of benefits. For some public housing residents, the problem may be exacerbated by long-standing rent rules that calculate household rent as a proportion of household income. In economic terms, therefore, some residents may not believe that work pays.⁴ Through the Jobs-Plus expansion sites, we seek to ensure that residents have an ongoing understanding and belief that maintaining sustained employment does pay. This multi-pronged approach includes:

1. Increasing Awareness and Uptake of the Earned Income Disallowance (EID)

The Earned Income Disallowance (EID) came about as a result of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, and the federal policy is meant to support public housing residents in

⁴ Gardenhire-Crooks, Alissa. *Implementing Financial Work Incentives in Public Housing: Lessons from the Jobs-Plus Demonstration*. MDRC, 2004.

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achieving their economic goals. The EID does this through employing an income disallowance when a resident moves from unemployment to employment or increases his or her income based on taking part in a job training program, work placement, adult education, or other program meant to encourage financial independence. If a resident qualifies, a certain amount of the resident's verified gross income is not counted when the household's rent is calculated. This lasts for 2 twelve-month periods, and the result is that the rent does not increase in the first year and increases by less than the full amount in the second year.

Contractors will be expected to become familiar with NYCHA rent policies and work closely with local NYCHA property management offices to ensure awareness of, application for, and uptake of the EID for those residents who qualify. Contractors will be required to develop marketing and outreach strategies that deliver messages and instructions to all residents of the developments about how they can take advantage of the EID even if they do not register for Jobs-Plus.

Contractors may also be required to work with fellow Jobs-Plus sites, HRA, NYCHA, and CEO to evaluate effectiveness of the EID as a work incentive.

2. Ensuring Residents Take Advantage of Work Supports

Contractors will be expected to conduct preliminary screening for work supports including the Earned Income Tax Credit, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Family Health Plus, Child Health Plus, and Medicaid. Contractors will also establish referral networks necessary to connect residents to agencies and/or community organizations for the purpose of enrolling residents in work support programs. Contractors may also propose to make additional financial supports available to residents, such as transportation assistance (transit tickets/cards and Metrocards), funds for uniform purchases, and/or other work-related equipment or services.

3. Financial Counseling and Asset-Building Services

Through financial counseling, either directly or through a qualified partner or subcontractor, contractors will ensure that residents are able to reach their financial goals. Contractors will be responsible for providing ongoing one-on-one financial counseling to assist residents in setting and reaching financial goals, such as decreasing debt, obtaining and/or improving credit, connecting to mainstream financial institutions, and building assets. Contractors will receive training from NYCHA about NYCHA-related policies that could improve financial outcomes such as the EID (as described above), rent payment options (i.e., direct deposit), and rent delinquency policies. Contractors will be expected to work with participants on an individual basis to help them understand the ways in which work supports, rent rules, and earned income interplay. During these one-on-one interactions, Jobs-Plus staff will give residents a comprehensive understanding of the tangible short- and long-term benefits to them and their families of maintaining employment.

C. Community Support for Work

The third component of Jobs-Plus is "Community Support for Work," which means strengthening social ties among residents to help support their job preparation and work efforts (for instance, by fostering neighbor-to-neighbor exchanges of information about job opportunities and employment services).

Community Support for Work can take a variety of forms ranging from local barbershops giving discounts to Jobs-Plus participants who are preparing for job interviews to local grocery stores providing Jobs-Plus flyers about upcoming events to their customers to a neighbor sharing information about a job vacancy at his or her company with the Jobs-Plus site.

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One main strategy to implement community support for work involves engaging residents to work as Community Coaches with Jobs-Plus. NYCHA Residents selected for this position are to be supported through a program-paid stipend. Community Coaches may perform a variety of activities that convey the Jobs-Plus employment message at every opportunity, including (but not limited to): marketing Jobs-Plus services and rent/other financial incentives; getting information about job opportunities into the informal flow of information among resident social networks in the developments; helping shape program offerings and outreach efforts; and coordinating community events. Contractors will develop carefully crafted marketing and outreach messages to attract residents to the Jobs-Plus program office. Program messages should speak to residents seeking both employment and advancement services while also appealing to different audiences within the developments.

Approaches to the *Community Support for Work* component other than and/or in addition to Community Coaches are encouraged. It is anticipated, that once the contractor launches Jobs-Plus *Community Support for Work*, strategies that are informed by and in partnership with NYCHA residents will evolve naturally. Contractors will need to tap into the range of formal and informal networks and organizations in public housing neighborhoods.

III. Inter-Agency Collaboration

HRA, NYCHA and CEO are all involved in the Jobs-Plus expansion, and selected contractors should expect to have ongoing interaction with all mentioned entities below:

New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA)

Brief Description: The New York City Human Resources Administration/ Department of Social Services (HRA/DSS) provides temporary help to individuals and families with social service and economic needs to assist them in reaching self-sufficiency. HRA serves more than 3 million New Yorkers through essential and diverse programs and services that include: temporary cash assistance, public health insurance, food stamps, home care for seniors and the disabled, child care, adult protective services, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS support services and child support enforcement. Its 15,000 employees help provide unique individual services that offer sustainable employment along with work supports. HRA's focus on employment led to the achievement of 75,000 job placements in calendar year 2010.

HRA is spearheading the Jobs-Plus expansion because it is a leader in employment programs for low-income individuals: HRA's commitment to self-sufficiency through employment has resulted in a significant increase in employment for single mothers, large reductions in child poverty, and the lowest Cash Assistance caseload since the 1960s.

Roles in Jobs-Plus: primary program administration, awarding of contractors from RFP, financial administration, accountability management, data sharing, reporting requirements, strategy, technical assistance

New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

Brief Description: The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) provides decent and affordable housing in a safe and secure living environment for low- and moderate-income residents throughout the five boroughs. NYCHA also administers a citywide Section 8 Leased Housing Program in rental apartments. Simultaneously, NYCHA works to enhance the quality of life by offering residents opportunities to participate in a multitude of community, educational, and recreational programs, as well as job readiness and training initiatives. Through the Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES), NYCHA develops and implements programs, policies, and collaborations to

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measurably support residents' increased economic opportunities with a focus on asset building, employment, advancement, and business development.

This expansion of Jobs-Plus marks a key milestone in NYCHA's new approach to better supporting its residents increase their income and assets. NYCHA seeks to maximize existing resources to ensure that NYCHA residents are taking full advantage of quality local resources to reach their career and financial goals. Simultaneously, NYCHA is working with public and private partners to identify gaps in service offerings as well as to develop strategies that attract additional high-quality resources and proven economic opportunity models, such as Jobs-Plus, into public housing neighborhoods.

Roles in Jobs-Plus: housing provider, administration of rent and other housing-related incentives and resources, advisement, referral partner, outreach support, data sharing, convening of Jobs-Plus sites, connections to NYCHA-specific employer-linked training and job opportunities (i.e.. NYCHA Resident Training Academy), provision of space to host events (as available)

New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO)

Brief Description: The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) was established by Mayor Bloomberg on December 18, 2006 to implement innovative ways to reduce poverty in New York City. CEO works with City agencies to design and implement evidence-based initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, and manages an Innovation Fund through which it provides City agencies annual funding to implement such initiatives. CEO oversees a rigorous evaluation of each program to determine which are successful in demonstrating results towards reducing poverty and increasing self-sufficiency among New Yorkers.

Roles in Jobs-Plus: advisement, accountability management, reporting requirements, evaluation, technical assistance

IV. Target Populations

Jobs-Plus sites will target all working-age adults residing in specified NYCHA housing complexes. Contractors should propose to serve a NYCHA development or a cluster of developments that have high rates of unemployment and poverty. The RFP may include specific geographies and/or sites to be targeted, and specific information about each NYCHA development will be provided in the RFP. Per Jobs-Plus site, contractors can expect to serve a minimum of approximately 600 residents per year with a minimum target population of 1,000 units. Proposers will be required to submit separate proposals for each development or cluster of developments that they are proposing to serve.

Contractors will also be asked to specifically target outreach to residents who receive Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (also known as Food Stamps) and those who are Cash Assistance recipients who have been sanctioned for non-compliance with rules. Sanctions are imposed on Cash Assistance cases when a participant fails, without good cause, to comply with Federal- or State-mandated requirements. The case's monthly Cash Assistance grant is reduced by the portion of the person who has been sanctioned. Though clients can come in and out of sanction status, HRA anticipates that Jobs-Plus can be a successful service model for these clients, in addition to traditional HRA engagement.

V. Jobs-Plus Office Space

The Jobs-Plus model requires that the program office be physically located within or in close proximity to the development(s) to which program provides services. If the program office is not located on-site, the office must be within walking distance (approximately 0.25 miles) of the closest building in the developments it will serve and with no major highway or barriers between the site and the development.

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To qualify as a suitable space, the Jobs-Plus program office must be operated in a professional space that is outfitted with standard office equipment, furniture, and supplies. The program office must have adequate technology for reliable internet access and telephone service, staff work stations, and common areas where classes or group meetings can be conducted. The program office must also incorporate space that is suitable for private, confidential consultations between staff and residents.

VI. Funding and Payment Structure

It is anticipated that the total available annual funding for all contracts awarded from this RFP will be \$8.6 million annually, and the anticipated award size per Jobs-Plus site is up to approximately \$1.3 million annually.

The final total allocation amounts depend on the availability of funds and are subject to change. The Agency reserves the right to consider geographic distribution of sites throughout the city in selecting contractors. The Agency reserves the right to award more or less than the full amount of the funding requested by proposers. Proposers should not exceed the anticipated maximum budget in their responses.

The Agency expects that the contracts awarded under this RFP will be 60% cost-based and 40% performance-based. Performance measures are anticipated to include job placement, job retention, and other outcome- and process-related milestones appropriate for the Jobs-Plus model.

The RFP will contain detailed information regarding the anticipated milestone structure. The Agency anticipates that the RFP will contain a strong emphasis on employment placement and retention outcomes. The Agency also anticipates that the maximum rate (i.e., the sum of the unit values of the placement and retention milestones) for Sanctioned Cash Assistance clients will be higher than the maximum rate for other participants. Contractors may earn more or less of a particular milestone up to the total amount of their contract value allocated to employment milestones.

VII. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

The contractors selected under this RFP will be required to complete evaluation forms, attendance sheets, annual reports, and related performance reports. Contractors will submit an annual operating plan describing management and strategic functions for each year of the contract. Contractors will be required to submit verification of milestones achieved for the performance-based portion of the contract (e.g., employer pay stubs).

In addition to achievement of performance-based milestones, contractor success may also be evaluated on additional measures that demonstrate effectiveness (including, but not limited to): effectiveness of collaboration with partner agencies, effectiveness of the referral relationships with local NYCHA property management offices (including EID referrals), improvement in resident asset building and financial literacy outcomes, innovation and effective community support for work strategies and implementation, increased literacy levels for participants, and increased marketable skills among participants.

Other monitoring requirements may involve: site visits, surveys, interviews, focus groups, administrative record reviews, data collection efforts, and evaluation strategies.

Contractors will also be required to maintain electronic files of client information, service utilization, and outcomes for each client served. This information may be contained in a centralized HRA database or in a

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database developed by the contractor. Contractors will be required to track each resident's participation in program services, and contractors will be responsible for timely and accurate reporting of outcomes to HRA and its partners.

VII. Proposed Term of Contract

It is anticipated that the terms of the contract(s) awarded from this RFP will be for three years, from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2015. The contract may include an option to renew, contingent on additional funding. The Agency reserves the right, prior to contract award, to change the length of the initial contract term and each option to renew, if any.

VIII. Planned Method for RFP Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP. It is anticipated that the evaluation criteria will be:

Demonstration of Successful Relevant Experience	40% of evaluation rating
Demonstration of Organizational Capacity	20% of evaluation rating
Demonstration of Proposed Approach	40% of evaluation rating

Specifically, HRA will be seeking vendors who successfully demonstrate the following criteria, pursuant to the requirements of the RFP:

- Successful experience placing large numbers of low-income individuals into employment
- Successful experience providing employment and workforce development services to individuals with multiple barriers, preferably public housing residents
- Successful experience developing and maintaining relationships with industries/employers that have labor market growth potential
- Successful experience working with NYCHA, understanding of NYCHA policies, and successful experience working in public housing neighborhoods preferred
- Successful experience providing work support through retention services that promote long-term self-sufficiency
- Successfully describe the management information systems and the ability to deliver services effectively to participants and employers
- Organizational capacity to successfully operate all components of Jobs-Plus

The Agency reserves the right to consider geographic distribution of sites throughout the city in selecting contractors.

Subcontracting is permitted; however, there must be one lead agency. Strong partnerships with complementary community organizations, local public housing based organizations, and businesses are strongly encouraged.

IX. Procurement Timelines

Expected RFP release date	January 4, 2012
Expected proposal submission date	February 8, 2012
Expected award announcement date	March 14, 2012
Expected start date for contract	July 1, 2012

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X Community Forums

Two community forums will be held as additional opportunities to gather comments and feedback from the public. The first event will be held on Monday, November 14, 2011 from 6:30-8:00pm at Rutgers Houses Community Center, 200 Madison Street in lower Manhattan. The second forum will take place on Thursday, November 17, 2011 at the Van Dyke Houses Community Center, 392 Blake Avenue in Brownsville, Brooklyn from 6:30-8:00pm. Members of the public are encouraged to attend especially residents and stakeholders from communities that the program is targeted to serve. Notes from both meetings will be posted on HRA's website at www.nyc.gov/hra/contracts. In addition, any additional information concerning the concept paper will be posted on HRA's website at www.nyc.gov/hra/contracts.

XI. Questions/Comments

All comments regarding this concept paper must be received by December 22, 2011. Comments should be sent to:

Thomas Patrick Harper
Deputy Director
FIA Office of Contract Management
NYC Human Resources Administration
180 Water Street, 20th floor
New York, NY 10038
harpertha@hra.nyc.gov
Phone: 212-331-5828
Fax: 212-331-4264