



**Human Resources
Administration**
Department of
Social Services

TESTIMONY

Robert Doar, Commissioner
Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services

The Job Training Participant Employment Training Model

*Hearing of the New York City Council
General Welfare Committee*

February 25, 2009

Good afternoon Chairman de Blasio and members of the General Welfare Committee. I am very pleased to be here today to discuss the Job Training Participant (JTP) model and some of our more recent efforts to expand and build upon it. With me today is HRA's Employment Services Administration Assistant Deputy Commissioner Raymond Singleton. Also, as the JTP program is a true partnership, our partner agencies are here with us; Annika Holder, Chief of the Park's Opportunity Program at the Park's Department and Lorenzo Cipollina, Deputy Commissioner for Administration from the Department of Sanitation.

This hearing is well-timed with recognition at all levels of government that we must focus our attention on supporting employment. Employment focused programs are a key component of Mayor Bloomberg's economic recovery plan announced in his State of the City address. HRA has a proven track record in these programs and even in this economic downturn we have increased the number of cash assistance applicants and recipients moving into employment. In 2008, we had over 80,500 job placements, increasing our total when compared with 2007, with a three-month retention rate of 88 percent and a six-month retention rate of 80

percent. Within this figure, over 6,600 were in subsidized jobs predominately through our JTP programs.

My goal is to further improve upon these job placement figures but I know it will be difficult if unemployment levels continue to grow. However, we are hopeful that the recently passed federal economic stimulus legislation will direct needed resources to the City. Our successful JTP program is one model that, if additional resources are available, could be expanded to provide employment for low income New Yorkers and to assist City government in meeting the needs of those we serve.

The JTP is a temporary employment program where a cash assistance (CA) recipient is hired into City employment on a temporary basis. Under our current model, the weekly schedule involves four days at a work site and the remaining day dedicated to training, career or other educational advancement activities. During the time in the program, CA recipients are hired as City staff under the Job Training Participant title and are paid for five days of work at an hourly rate, after the recently approved union increases are implemented in March, of \$9.22. The goal is to provide

recipients with real work experience that will ultimately assist them to find unsubsidized jobs in the private sector.

Overview of Present NYC Job Training (JTP) Models

Presently, HRA has partnerships with Departments of Parks and Recreation (since March 2003), and Sanitation (since July 2007) to operate job training programs. In addition, we are committed to creating an additional program within our own Agency.

The Department of Parks and Recreation Parks Opportunity Program (POP)

The primary POP program is a six month program aimed at cash assistance recipients who have been on assistance over 12 months. This program serves approximately 2,500 trainees at one time who are referred through HRA's job centers. Participants perform valuable work for Parks, increasing civic pride and "greening" city neighborhoods while pursuing sustainable employment and financial self-sufficiency. They work four days each week and receive one day for paid job search, training, and education services offered through Parks Department in-house staff as well as in cooperation with outside providers such as CUNY and the City and State Departments of Education. Individual Training Account (ITA)

vouchers are also utilized for specialized training in many areas including building maintenance, security, food service, and office administration.

In addition to the main POP program, three specialized pilots were recently developed to serve more targeted populations. They are as follows:

POP Plus is a one year program created for younger adults between 18 and 25 years of age (disconnected youth). The mission for this pilot is to help trainees establish self-sufficiency through a combination of employment, education, and professional mentoring. Trainees work in small, closely supervised crews for three days of work experience and are provided two days of employment readiness workshops, counseling developed specifically for youth, and education and training experience. They also have the opportunity to earn their regular and/or commercial driver's license to increase their job marketability.

POP Education Horticulture Program (POP Ed) is a one year program that targets recipients with an expressed interest in horticulture (greening and sustainability). It involves four days at work and one day focused on counseling, education, driver training, and training with Parks, the New

York Botanical Gardens or TreesNY. In addition to the primary objective of obtaining sustainable employment in horticulture, goals also include education, certification and earning other credentials. The Parks Department uses its relationships with entities in the horticulture field to help place those who complete this program.

POP Works is a one year pilot program that began in January 2008 for non-custodial parents with an open cash assistance case. The program is geared towards helping fathers become a more active participant in their children's lives both financially and emotionally. In addition to transitional employment and job training, this program also includes intensive parenting classes and child support services through HRA's Office of Child Support Enforcement to help navigate and participate in the system. Some of the issues participants are dealing with are suspended driver's licenses, mediation, and dealing with a smaller paycheck due to child support deductions.

Overview of Job Training Participant Models

<i>PROGRAM</i>	<i>TARGETED POPULATION</i>	<i>WORK</i>	<i>TRAIN</i>	<i>TIME</i>	<i>TRAINEES</i>
Parks	Case Heads with attention to those with at least 12 months on assistance				
POP	referred through job centers	4	1	6 mos.	2500
POP Plus	18-25 yrs	3	2	12 mos.	105
POP Ed.	horticulture interest	4	1	12 mos.	25
POP Works	Non-custodial parents with an open cash assistance case	4	1	12 mos.	75
Sanitation	successfully participating in WEP	4	1	6 mos.	up to 70
HRA	WEP Participants	4	1	9mos.	75

Department of Sanitation Job Training Program

The Department of Sanitation's program is similar but not identical to the POP program. It is only a little over a year old and is much smaller in scale. Participants are recruited from those performing well in the Work Experience Program (WEP) at the Department of Sanitation. Up to 70 participants can be placed in cleaning assignments at Department of Sanitation garages and field offices. Training and employment placement services were initially provided through HRA's BEGIN program but with the recent growth in the numbers enrolled, will now be shifted to HRA's Back to Work program.

Human Resources Administration Job Training Program Pilot

As you know, I believe in this model and would like to see it expanded to other City agencies. However, this model requires both a large financial and time commitment. While the City uses grant diversion, a method to pay the employer a portion of the cash grant that went, before being hired, to the cash assistance recipient, funding is needed for the balance of the wages. In these difficult times, this type of funding is not easy to identify. I am hopeful that the JTP pilot we are now in the process of developing at HRA will show that even on a small scale a program can assist city agencies in completing their missions and they will consider developing their own similar programs.

This pilot will focus on 75 cash assistance recipients who will be identified through our WEP program. Participants will interview for positions throughout the agency. While we will use a small number of JTPs in cleaning tasks, HRA will offer a number of clerical assignments, adding some greater opportunities to a program that has until now focused mostly on cleaning, maintenance and security work. While at HRA individuals will be assigned a supervisor to also act in a mentoring capacity and the trainee, for the most part, will work as administrative support to that office.

One day a week participants will attend a specialized training program that will include a strong emphasis on preparing people to find jobs once their work at HRA is complete. This effort, which is presently being designed, will include a financial literacy component coordinated with the City's Office of Financial Empowerment and using HRA's resources to provide appropriate education, training and job search services.

We will also include an evaluation component into the pilot from the very beginning. Our Office of Evaluation and Research will conduct a process and an outcome evaluation including a preliminary process evaluation to provide timely feedback to program staff. The process evaluation will help us better understand what works and does not work in implementation of the program and will involve interviews with supervisors and participants of the program. The outcome evaluation will examine the effectiveness of the program in achieving participant outcomes, such as employment and at least six month job retention, as well as the associated program costs.

The HRA pilot will be self-funded by HRA. The annualized cost of wages for the 75 positions, at full utilization, is estimated to be \$1.258 million, which will be offset by \$249,000 in grant diversion funds for a net annual

cost to HRA of \$1.009 million. As indicated earlier, HRA will use its existing resources to develop and implement a specialized one-day-a-week specialized training program and will use its existing Back to Work vendor contracts for employment placement services. As we move forward with this initiative, we will be investigating other funding mechanisms.

Thank you and we would gladly answer any of your questions.