



Arches¹: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention Concept Paper

Purpose

The following Concept Paper is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide Arches, a transformative mentoring intervention to violent, gang-affiliated, court-involved or otherwise at-risk young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 residing in or near targeted New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments throughout New York City. Arches is a unique program that offers group and one-on-one mentoring to help participants transform attitudes and behaviors around violence, serving young people whose needs go far beyond the traditional mentoring approach of companionship, confidence-building and typical academic, social or career guidance. The Arches intervention is currently provided to Department of Probation (DOP) clients by 19 community-based organizations under contract with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City (Mayor's Fund). Through the upcoming RFP, DOP will be seeking appropriately qualified vendors to expand provision of the Arches intervention to eligible participants residing in or near targeted NYCHA housing developments. It is anticipated that approximately 5-8 contracts will be awarded. DOP is seeking comments on the Concept Paper herein presented.

Background

DOP Agency-Wide Reform

DOP is helping to build stronger and safer communities by supervising people on probation, fostering positive change in their decision-making and behavior, and expanding opportunities for them to move out of the criminal and juvenile justice systems through meaningful education, employment, health services, family engagement and civic participation.

To accomplish its mission, DOP has embarked upon an ambitious agency-wide reform agenda. The New York City Model of Probation advances public safety and improves communities by adopting a Justice Reinvestment framework. Justice Reinvestment is a two-part approach that focuses resources on individuals on probation who pose the highest risk to public safety and reinvests in the communities where people on probation live. Research shows that focusing attention on people with the highest risk of re-offending is the most positive way to positively impact public safety.

Another aspect of DOP's new probation approach is to decentralize service delivery to the neighborhood level. The vehicle for DOP's neighborhood-based strategy is the Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeON)². At the heart of the NeON is a network of partners – individuals and organizations, public and private – working together to improve public safety by linking people on

¹ Arches symbolize opportunity and represent a point of decision, a place to weigh the balance of one's life choices and identify a plan of action. From a structural perspective, arches serve as a foundation while encouraging forward motion.

² For more information on the NeON's, please visit DOP's website at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/prob/html/neon/neon.shtml>

probation to quality opportunities, resources and services and by strengthening community capacity to find solutions to complex challenges.

As part of its mission, DOP developed the original Arches program which as of 2012 has been provided by 19 community based organizations under contract with the Mayor's Fund. Preliminary evidence suggests that DOP programming, such as the Arches program, which targets high crime neighborhoods, is associated with lower short-term recidivism and decreased violations among young adults aged 16-24. Building on the preliminary success of the Arches model, DOP now intends to expand this programming to non-DOP, high risk NYCHA residents who would benefit from such an intervention in light of high rates of violence within NYCHA housing developments.

Arches Transformative Mentoring: The Model

Arches transformative mentoring is a curriculum-based group mentoring intervention that helps at-risk young adults transform the attitudes and behaviors that have led to violence and/or criminal activity. It serves young people whose needs go far beyond the traditional mentoring approach of companionship, confidence-building and minor academic, social or career guidance.

The Arches transformative mentoring model is based on mentoring programs developed by the Mentoring Center in Oakland, California. It is grounded in positive youth development³ and uses an evidence-based curriculum employing cognitive behavioral principles. At an anticipated maximum per person cost of \$7,500⁴, this intervention will target approximately 200⁵ young adults annually who are between the ages of 16 and 24; reside in or around the targeted NYCHA housing developments; and are gang-affiliated, involved in or at risk of violence in or around the targeted NYCHA developments or are otherwise at high risk.

The core components of the Arches transformative mentoring intervention include (1) a group process that encourages participants to become an important support system for each other; (2) a curriculum based on cognitive behavioral principles delivered by culturally appropriate mentors; (3) mentors who are available for intensive support, advice, and guidance; (4) incorporation of positive youth development values, principles and practices; (5) case management; and (6) participant stipends. The focus is on the achievement of pro-social developmental outcomes – such as the ability to seek help in a crisis, get along with others, show up on time, and handle a job interview – that can prepare a person for education, employment, and civic participation.

In each Arches mentoring group, a team of three paid mentors will deliver a cognitive behavioral curriculum to a group of 15-20 young adults twice a week. The anticipated length of stay for each participant is 9 months. Participants would be admitted to the program on an on-going/rolling basis. Arches utilizes “Interactive Journaling,” an evidence-based curriculum developed by The Change Companies⁶ that uses a journaling process to assess a client's readiness to change, and provides strategies that lead an individual successfully through the process of change, action, and maintenance of prosocial behavior.

³ Positive youth development is a comprehensive developmentally-appropriate framework that emphasizes the importance of building on the positive attributes that young people have to promote their success.

⁴ Competitive pricing is encouraged

⁵ It is anticipated that each program site will serve 15-20 participants annually

⁶ Proctor, S., Hoffman, N., Allison, S. (Feb 2011). The effectiveness of interactive journaling in reducing recidivism among substance-dependent jail inmates. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 1-16.

In addition to twice weekly group sessions, mentors would be available to meet one-on-one with the young adults during the week, most likely before and after the group sessions. Mentors would also be available by phone for support, advice and guidance.

Arches is designed with the assumption that some participants may continue to display negative attitudes and behaviors during the program period. There should be no expulsion or rejection of participants who might continue to engage in negative behavior during the intervention period⁷. A balance of clear expectations and support would be the strategic, non-judgmental approach to working with the most reluctant participants. This approach is grounded in restorative justice principles.

The mentoring process would be resourced to provide support to the participating young adults. It is expected that a hot, nutritious meal would be served at each group session. In addition, participating young adults would receive a cash stipend at predetermined intervals during their 9-months of participation in the group process.⁸

Key Changes

As part of the expansion of Arches to NYCHA housing developments, DOP anticipates the following key changes will be made to the existing model:

- The target population will include young adults, aged 16-24 who are violent, gang-affiliated, court-involved or otherwise high risk who reside in or around targeted NYCHA housing developments.
- Arches groups will consist of 15-20 participants at any one time and anticipated length of stay is 9 months.
- The Contractor will provide case management directly to participants.
- The Contractor will be responsible for recruiting participants who meet the eligibility criteria.

DOP expects to add the Arches NYCHA providers to the existing network of organizations delivering the Arches intervention in order for organizations to learn from one another and strengthen the capacity to deliver an effective and meaningful intervention.

Program Design

a. Target Population

The target population for the Arches transformative mentoring intervention is violent, gang-affiliated, court-involved or otherwise high risk young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 residing in or near one of approximately ten to fourteen targeted NYCHA developments.⁹ Contractors will be responsible for recruiting all participants who meet the eligibility requirements for the program.¹⁰

⁷ The only anticipated exception would be in cases that pose serious safety concerns.

⁸ Approximately \$1,200 annually per participant has been budgeted for participant stipends.

⁹ It is possible that some young adult participants may reside outside the targeted neighborhoods

¹⁰ It is anticipated that recruitment of participants will primarily be the responsibility of the Contractor. DOP may provide referrals of participants identified in collaboration with the New York City Police Department and NYCHA and the Contractor would ensure that space in the program would be available for those participants.

b. Geographic Service Areas/Targeted Areas

It is anticipated that the Arches program will be run at ten to fourteen NYCHA housing developments¹¹ across the five boroughs.

c. Program Hours/Schedule

The Arches transformative mentoring intervention requires that Contractors run a group-based mentoring program and ensure that mentors are also available to meet with participants one-on-one, most likely before and after the mentoring group sessions are held. Organizations must have the ability to deliver the Arches intervention outside of normal 9:00 am to 5:00 pm business hours in order to accommodate participants who are working or in school and require groups that are conducted in the evenings and/or on weekends. Mentors must be available by phone to provide support, advice, and guidance as needed.

d. Site Information

The Arches transformative mentoring intervention would be delivered in proximity to approximately ten to fourteen NYCHA housing developments. Delivery of the services must occur in the neighborhood where each of the NYCHA housing developments is located. It is anticipated that groups would be held in a safe, neutral space that is conveniently located and in close proximity to the targeted NYCHA housing development¹².

Proposers must be able to demonstrate experience in or a unique understanding of the targeted neighborhood in addition to the ability to deliver the Arches intervention there. It is anticipated that proposers could meet this experience requirement either directly or through a subcontractor.

e. Staffing

Contractors would be responsible for recruiting, hiring and supervising paid mentors. Mentors could be full or part-time employees or independent contractors.¹³ Mentors would be “credible messengers:” who are well respected, invested in, and trusted in the communities where participants reside. Mentors must be culturally competent with a strong understanding of the target population, as well as the targeted neighborhood/NYCHA development and be familiar with the unique challenges faced by young adults who live there. Outreach to qualified neighborhood/NYCHA residents would be part of the recruitment plan for hiring mentors.

Mentors would include a mix of people who have themselves been violent, gang-affiliated and/or justice-involved, those who work in the private and nonprofit sectors, and respected community residents. At least one mentor in each group should have experience with group facilitation. Ideal mentors would have experience using cognitive behavioral therapies, motivational interviewing

¹¹ The final selection of NYCHA developments/neighborhoods has not yet been completed and will be identified in the upcoming RFP.

¹² Depending on the specific site, this may include running the group on-site in the NYCHA development, at one of DOP’s NeON locations or at an appropriate site identified by the Contractor

¹³ While some mentors might be employed on the staff of the participating organization and serve as mentors as part of their employment responsibilities, DOP expects that a significant percentage of the mentors will be hired from outside the participating organization on a contractual part-time basis.

and/or positive youth development, although it is expected that Contractors would train staff in these modalities. Mentors would:

- Facilitate and participate in cognitive behavioral groups for participants
- Meet one-on-one with the young adult participants.
- Be available by phone for support, advice, and guidance
- Participate in regularly scheduled on-going trainings provided by Contractor

In addition to mentors Contractors would employ a project coordinator who would be responsible for administration of the program, supervision of mentors, and case management¹⁴ for Arches participants. Ideally the project coordinator would have a Masters Degree in Social Work (MSW) or have similar relevant on-the-job experience. The coordinator would be responsible for ensuring that the Arches contract deliverables were met, organizing group and one-on-one mentoring sessions, handling participant stipends, and supervising mentors, including mentor coaching and case conferencing.

Performance Measures

a. Outcomes

Many high risk young adults need a series of interventions to help them desist from criminal activity and strengthen their attachment to education, employment and community. Arches is designed to meet young people where they are in this process of pro-social engagement, focusing on changes in cognition and thinking that often precede the ability to secure concrete attainments in education and employment.

The Arches group mentoring program is based on cognitive restructuring of the thoughts and attitudes that put one at risk of engaging in criminal behavior and on improving social problem solving and social skills. In addition, it draws on principles of effective mentoring programs: a 1:5 mentor/young adult ratio for group mentoring interventions; groups that meet at twice per week; group meetings that are combined with case management; and group processes focused both on the emotional development of young adults and the professional development of mentors.

Outcomes from the Arches transformative mentoring intervention include, for example: (1) through the journaling component, participants' exposure to positive, pro-social ways of thinking/skills as well as attitudinal changes regarding relationships and communication; risky, difficult behaviors vs. positive, responsible behaviors; and participants' perceptions of their own ability to make positive changes for themselves (2) improved access to services that can address broader life challenges which may be identified through case management (e.g., housing, employment, transportation, education, substance abuse or mental health services, etc.). Among other data, contractors will be required to enter information regarding journaling and case management into the online DOP data collection system described below, and a brief DOP-prescribed pre/post-assessment for attitudinal change will be required.

¹⁴ It is anticipated that case management could also be provided by an additional staff member, depending on the proposer's individual program design.

b. Reporting

Contractors will be required to work closely on reporting with DOP as well as measure and report regularly on program outcomes. Contractors will be responsible for monitoring and reporting program enrollment and attendance. Contractors will work with DOP to administer self-report measures, applied skills tests, and to collect reports of mentors in order to assess outcomes at predetermined intervals.

Providers would be required to maintain and submit participant-level data (reflecting participant and household characteristics, attendance, services provided, and outcomes/milestones achieved). Such data would be submitted on a monthly basis or other frequency determined by DOP. Contractors will be required to use DOP's on-line data collection system to record all required participant data.

Funding

a. Funding Amounts/Anticipated Payment Structure

The anticipated annual funding for the contracts resulting from the forthcoming Arches RFP is approximately \$1.5 million. This amount must cover all operations costs associated with delivering the program. It is anticipated that the payment structure for the contract awarded will be performance-based. DOP also reserves the right to reduce the funding amount accordingly or request a reduced program budget if full enrollment is not met.

b. Anticipated Price Per Participant

At an anticipated per person cost of \$7,500, funding will be expected to cover (1) the costs of paying mentors to participate in and facilitate group and one-on-one sessions and attendance at trainings (2) food for each group session, (3) an appropriate site for the group and one-on-one sessions, (4) participant stipends, (5) a project coordinator, (6) case manager(s), (7) a special projects fund for field trips and/or emergency needs; (8) some staff training costs; (9) measuring outcomes/reporting; and (10) administrative overhead.

c. Anticipated Number of Contracts/Contract Term

DOP expects to issue approximately 5-8 contracts to nonprofit organizations to deliver the Arches transformative mentoring intervention that will serve approximately ten to fourteen NYCHA developments. The anticipated contract term is for three years, with an option to renew for up three additional years. Contract terms and amounts are based on availability of funding and are subject to change.

d. Competition Pools

It is anticipated that there will be at least five borough-based competition pools¹⁵.

¹⁵ It is anticipated that some boroughs may only have one site and that some boroughs may be broken into more than one competition, dependent on the final number of sites identified within that borough.

Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to the criteria set forth in the RFP. This will include the quality of the proposer's approach and program design for each key service area comprising the Arches program. In addition, the evaluation will assess the proposer's successful, relevant experience providing similar services. Proposals will also be evaluated based on the organization's staffing model and organizational structure as it relates to capacity to deliver these services. DOP anticipates that evaluation of proposals may include interviews and/or site visits in addition to review of the written proposal.

Procurement Timeline

Release of the RFP is anticipated in Summer 2014 with services anticipated to begin October 1, 2014.

Use of HHS Accelerator

To respond to the forthcoming Arches RFP and all other client and community services (CCS) Requests for Proposals (RFPs), vendors must first complete and submit an electronic prequalification application using the City's Health and Human Services (HHS) Accelerator System. The HHS Accelerator System is a web-based system maintained by the City of New York for use by its human services Agencies to manage procurement.

Only organizations with approved HHS Accelerator Business Application and Services Applications for one or more of the following will be able to propose:

- Community Engagement
- Life Skills
- Case Management
- Conflict Resolution/Mediation
- Preventive Services

To submit a Business and Service application to become eligible to apply for this and other CCS RFPs, please visit <http://www.nyc.gov/hhsaccelerator>.

Contact Information/Deadline for Questions/Comments

Written comments may be emailed to acco@probation.nyc.gov (entering "Arches Concept Paper" in the subject line) or submitted by mail to:

Eileen Parfrey-Smith
Agency Chief Contracting Officer
NYC Department of Probation
33 Beaver Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10004

The deadline for all written comments is **August 8, 2014**.