

Arches: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention

Project Approach

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33 Beaver Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004

Deadline to submit Comments: November 4, 2011

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NEW YORK CITY MODEL OF PROBATION Arches¹: A Transformative Mentoring Intervention

Project Approach

Purpose

The following Project Approach is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Applications (RFA) to provide Arches, a transformative mentoring intervention to young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are on probation in five targeted neighborhoods: Brownsville, Harlem, Jamaica, East New York, and the South Bronx. As part of the Mayor's Young Men's Initiative², the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, in partnership with the Department of Probation (DOP) and the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), will fund up to 23 contracts to deliver the Arches transformative mentoring intervention to 869 young adults on probation supervision. DOP is seeking comments on the Project Approach herein presented.

DOP Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeONs)

With 25,000 people on Adult probation city-wide, almost one-third of whom (approximately 7,500) are between the ages of 16 and 24, probation is by far the City's largest alternative-to-incarceration. Of the young adult clients on probation, about 2,550 live in five neighborhoods: Brownsville (400), Harlem (700), Jamaica (200), East New York (250) and the South Bronx (1,000). Eighty-four percent are men, 50 percent are black and 30 percent are Latino.

As part of our overall strategic plan to address crime and incarceration, DOP is implementing evidence-based, cost-effective policies and practices and putting resources in the communities most heavily involved with criminal justice systems. To this end, DOP is developing Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeONs) in five neighborhoods where large numbers of people on probation live.

By the end of 2011, DOP staff will begin to co-locate with neighborhood-based organizations in each NeON community and join or work to develop effective networks of community organizations, government agencies, local businesses and residents in order to expand clients' access to the kinds of quality opportunities, resources, and services that build on their strengths and reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system.³ NeONs represent a fundamental shift in how DOP engages with probation clients and the community. As Mayor Bloomberg said when he announced the NeONs as a component of the Young Men's Initiative (YMI), "Probation will transform itself into an agency

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

² On August 4, 2011, Mayor Bloomberg announced the launch of the Young Men's Initiative, designed to help young men of color in New York City achieve their professional, educational, and personal goals.

³ NeONs can be conceived as a spider web of resources within one neighborhood, or a bicycle wheel with spokes, rather than a single building with services.

designed to hold people accountable while connecting them to employment and educational opportunities.”

In conjunction with the NeONs and the YMI, DOP is partnering with City agencies, nonprofit organizations and foundations on a number of new programs. While each program takes a different approach, the overarching public safety goal is to help probation clients end any further involvement with the criminal justice system by strengthening their attachment to education, work and community. All of these programs thus share certain fundamental principles that align with DOP’s strategic plan:

- All are designed to enhance public safety. Research has proven that connecting young people in the criminal justice system to programs that help them continue their education, get a job and engage with their communities are more effective and less expensive than incarceration.
- Education is a key to helping people overcome the issues that led to their involvement in the criminal justice system.
- When young people are engaged in the workforce they are far less likely to participate in criminal activity.
- When young people in the criminal justice system feel connected to their neighborhood, they are less likely to harm their neighbors.
- Programs must build on people’s strengths, not merely try to minimize their weaknesses.
- New York City is home to a network of nonprofit organizations of unmatched quality and breadth. DOP will engage these organizations as partners in our effort to help young adults realize their potential.

Probation clients in NeON communities will be offered mentoring, afterschool activities, education, literacy and job skills enhancement, and opportunities to join local neighborhood improvement initiatives. DOP will work closely with community leaders to ensure that NeONs achieve local support, build on existing assets, and reflect client and neighborhood needs.

Arches Transformative Mentoring: The Model

Arches transformative mentoring is a curriculum-based group mentoring intervention that helps justice-involved young adults transform the attitudes and behaviors that have led to 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 development⁴ and uses an evidence-based curriculum employing cognitive behavioral principles. At a per person cost of \$5,000, this intervention will target approximately 869 young adults annually who: (1) are between the ages of 16 and 24; (2) are under probation supervision; and (3) reside in or near one of the five targeted neighborhoods -- Brownsville (120), Harlem (200), Jamaica (100), East New York (80) and the South Bronx (360).

⁴ 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.

The core components of the Arches transformative mentoring intervention include (1) a group process where participants become an important support system for each other; (2) a curriculum based on cognitive behavioral principles delivered by culturally appropriate mentors; (3) 24/7 on call availability for support, advice, and guidance; (4) incorporation of positive youth development values, principles and practices; and (5) case management provided by DOP probation officers. The focus is on the achievement of 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 five paid mentors would deliver a cognitive behavioral curriculum to a group of 20 young adults at least once a week for six months.⁵ DOP is currently exploring two curricula and plans to choose one for the Arches intervention to be employed at all participating sites. One is “Thinking for A Change,” which was developed by the U.S. Department of Justice National Institute for Corrections and is currently used by probation departments nationwide, including DOP. Another is “Interactive Journaling,” an evidence-based curriculum 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.⁶ Both curricula are age-appropriate and suitable for use by a young adult population.

In addition to 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 24/7 for support, advice and guidance. Mentors in each group could share the 24/7 on call responsibility, so that on any given day, at least one mentor from each group would be on call.⁷

In conjunction with the mentoring, participating young adults would work one-on-one with their DOP probation officer, who will receive training in the Arches transformative mentoring approach and provide complementary case management. Young adults, together with their probation officers, would develop Individual Achievement Plans (IAPs)⁸ that address the developmental milestones that will help prepare them to engage productively in education, work and civic life. Mentors, in both group and one-on-one sessions, will work with the young adults to reinforce the goals set forth in the IAPs.

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 period. Patience and understanding are required as are clear expectations. A protocol will be developed that addresses issues of confidentiality and mandated reporting.

The mentoring process would be resourced to provide support to the participating young adults. Hot food would be served at each group session and metro cards provided as needed based on attendance.

⁵ DOP seeks feedback from respondents about whether the intervention would best be delivered in a format where groups meet once a week for two to three hours or twice a week for one to one and a half hours.

⁶ DOP seeks feedback from respondents about their experience with the “Thinking for A Change” and/or the “Interactive Journaling” curricula as well as with other evidence-based and evidence-informed curricula that employ cognitive behavioral principles.

⁷ DOP seeks feedback on how participating organizations would structure the 24/7 crisis intervention responsibility.

⁸ Individual Achievement Plans (IAPs), negotiated by probation officers and their clients, are an essential part of the new NYC Model of Probation for all clients. IAP’s are individualized and transparent probation agreements with specific goals and conditions that match the interests, needs, and challenges of each probation client.

In addition, participating young adults would receive a cash stipend at predetermined intervals during the six month group process.⁹

In addition to the nonprofit organizations delivering the Arches transformative mentoring intervention, the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City will provide funding for ongoing training and technical assistance to mentors, participating nonprofit organizations, and DOP staff in order to ensure that the model is implemented well and consistently across the participating nonprofit organizations and across the five NeONs. DOP expects to create a 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.

Probation Officers in each NeON will be responsible for ensuring that young adult clients are referred to the Arches program, and will maintain regular communications with the participating nonprofit organizations delivering the mentoring intervention.

Program Design

a. Target Population

The target population for the Arches transformative mentoring intervention would be young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are serving a sentence of adult probation and residing in or near one of the five targeted neighborhoods.¹⁰ Most young adults on probation are male (80 to 90 percent) and accordingly, most groups are expected to serve men only. DOP anticipates that some organizations may run a group for young adult women on probation. For young adults under active supervision with a probation officer, DOP would include participation in Arches as part of the supervision plan.

b. Geographic Service Areas/Targeted Areas

Neighborhood Site	Approximate Number of Young Adults To Be Served
Brownsville	120
Harlem	200
Jamaica	100
East New York	80
South Bronx	360

c. Program Hours/Schedule

The Arches transformative mentoring intervention requires that participating organizations 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

⁹ \$940.00 per participant has been budgeted for participant stipends. DOP seeks feedback from respondents about how to best structure the disbursement of stipends to the young adults.

¹⁰ It is possible that some young adult participants may reside outside the five targeted neighborhoods or be justice-involved while not currently on probation.

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. In addition, at least one mentor from each group at any given time must be available to respond to calls from young adult participants 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

d. Site Information

Request for Applications (RFA) will be issued and contracts with up to 23 nonprofit organizations will be awarded to deliver the Arches transformative mentoring intervention in five NeONs. Delivery of the services must occur in the targeted neighborhoods. The minimum number of young adults that an organization could propose to serve in one year would be 40, the equivalent of two six-month long groups of 20 young adults over the course of a year.

Organizations 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. Applications from organizations that do not currently have a presence in the targeted neighborhood would be strengthened by a concrete plan to partner with a neighborhood-based organization for the delivery of this program. DOP encourages such partnerships.

e. Staffing

Participating nonprofit organizations would be responsible for recruiting, hiring and supervising paid mentors.¹¹ Mentors could be full or part-time employees or independent contractors of the participating nonprofit organization.¹² Mentors would be “credible messengers:” culturally appropriate, responsive to the needs of minority individuals, and may have had personal experience with the justice system. Mentors would also possess an understanding of the targeted neighborhood and be familiar with the unique challenges faced by young adults who live there. Outreach to qualified neighborhood residents would be part of a recruitment plan for hiring mentors.

Mentors would include a mix of people who have themselves been 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 and/or positive youth development, although training for mentors in these modalities will be provided. Mentors would:

- Facilitate and participate in cognitive behavioral groups for young adults on probation.
- Meet one-on-one with the young adult participants.
- Be on call for support, advice, and guidance 24/7.
- Participate in regularly scheduled on-going trainings and supervision.

In addition to mentors, the model anticipates that each participating organization would employ a project coordinator who would be responsible for administration of the program and supervision of mentors. Ideally the project coordinator would have a Masters Degree in Social Work (MSW) or

¹¹ DOP seeks feedback on what criteria organizations would use to select mentors as well as what would be an appropriate hourly fee to pay mentors.

¹² 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.

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.

f. Qualifications for Participating Organizations

Selected organizations would have experience working with a justice-involved young adult population as well as an understanding of the New York City criminal justice system. In addition to human resource, fiscal and data management capacity, organizations would also have experience applying the values, principles and practices of positive youth development. Proposing organizations should be able to demonstrate that they have:

- Capacity to manage the program, ideally with an average annual operating budget of at least two times the amount of the grant award in the past three years
- Human resource management capacity
- Fiscal management capacity
- Data management capacity
- Technology to support effective management information systems and inter-agency communications
- Experience delivering services to people involved in the justice system
- Experience with applying values, principles and practices of Positive Youth Development
- Relationships with an array of neighborhood/community based organizations
- Ability to assess the quality of services, policies and procedures and the ability to take corrective actions
- Capacity to measure, analyze and report on process and outcome measures for programs
- Ability to recruit and hire mentors who are gender specific, culturally sensitive, as well as competent and sensitive to providing services to persons of diverse cultural backgrounds as well as responsive to the needs of minority individuals
- Ability to recruit and hire mentors who have first-hand knowledge and experience working with justice-involved young adults
- Experience with the specific neighborhood(s) where services will be delivered, either directly or through a partner

Performance Measures

a. Outcomes

The overarching goal that DOP seeks to accomplish with the Arches transformative mentoring intervention is to help young adults on probation end any further involvement with the criminal justice system. Particularly, DOP seeks to lower the rates of recidivism for young adults in the Arches program by five to ten percent.¹³ Many young adults on probation 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

¹³ The best evidence-driven interventions rarely exceed ten percent reductions in recidivism when subjected to rigorous evaluation (Lipsey & Cullen 2007). Arches is based on the same principles as these successful programs; therefore DOP anticipates that Arches will produce outcomes that average those of similar programs.

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 1:4 mentor/young adult ratio for group mentoring interventions; groups that meet at least once a 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.

Short-term outcomes from the Arches transformative mentoring intervention include behavioral changes such as increased well-being, decreased substance abuse and violent behaviors, and decreased self-harm as well as attitudinal changes including better personal and family relationships, increased self-esteem, self-efficacy and social competence, and improved skills for avoiding risky behaviors and engaging in positive behaviors. Longer-term outcomes include advances in education, employment and self-sufficient living as well as the cessation of criminal activity.

Participating nonprofit organizations will be responsible for monitoring enrollment and attendance in the Arches program. Organizations 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. DOP will collect reports completed by probation staff as well as track recidivism as measured by new arrests, arrests for felonies, arrests for violent felonies, criminal convictions and technical violations of probation.

b. Evaluation

Arches will be evaluated by New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). DOP/CEO or its external evaluator will periodically visit providers to observe program activities and obtain detailed data on young adults' activities within the program. Other monitoring and evaluation activities may include surveys, focus groups and administrative record reviews. This is in addition to regular contact to document the program's status and to follow up with participants after program completion. DOP/CEO or its external evaluators will also conduct staff and enrollee interviews as well as obtain and analyze baseline and program data for the research. In the event of an evaluation using an experimental design, providers may be required to alter recruitment practices to ensure random assignment of potential participants to a group that is enrolled in the program intervention or a control group that is not.

At a minimum, providers would be required to maintain and submit participant-level data (reflecting participant and household characteristics, services provided, and outcomes achieved). Such data would be submitted on a monthly basis or other frequency determined by DOP/CEO in an electronic format that can be read by a commonly available commercial spreadsheet program, such as Microsoft Excel.

c. Reporting

Participating organizations would be required to work closely on reporting with DOP and CEO as well as measure and report regularly on program outcomes.

Funding

a. Funding Amounts/Sources

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City has received \$4.7 million annually over three years for this initiative.

b. Anticipated Price Per Participant

At a per person cost of \$5,000, funding to each participating nonprofit organization will be expected to cover (1) the costs of paying mentors to participate in and facilitate group and one-on-one sessions, attendance at trainings, and for being on call 24/7, (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) a special projects fund for field trips and/or emergency needs¹⁴; (7) some technical assistance and training costs¹⁵; (8) measuring outcomes; and (9) administrative overhead. The grantee organizations' per-participant cost assumes that DOP probation officers will provide case management, and that most of the training and technical assistance costs will be centralized.

c. Anticipated Number of Contracts/Contract Term

DOP expects to issue up to 23 contracts to nonprofit organizations to deliver the Arches transformative mentoring intervention in the five NeON neighborhoods. The contract term is for one year, with an option to renew for two additional years. Contract milestones will be calculated by enrollment, attendance and retention of participants. DOP expects enrollment at 95 percent, 30 day retention at 80 percent, 90 day retention at 75 percent, and program completion at 65 percent. In addition, DOP expects an average attendance rate of 70 percent.

d. Competition Pools

Each of the five targeted neighborhoods (Brownsville, Harlem, Jamaica, East New York, and the South Bronx) will constitute a separate competition pool.

Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated pursuant to an evaluation criteria set out in the Request for Application. These will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capacity, and the quality of the proposed program approach and design. DOP anticipates that evaluation of proposals will include a review of written materials, interviews, and site visits.

Procurement Timeline

Release of the Request for Applications (RFA) is anticipated in Fall 2011 with a proposal submission deadline a month later, and services anticipated to begin by Spring 2012.

¹⁴ DOP seeks feedback about a reasonable amount to include in such a fund.

¹⁵ While most of the technical assistance and training costs will be centralized, it is anticipated that no more than five percent of the \$5000 per participant that would go to the contracting organization may be required to supplement these costs.

Public Forum

Date: October 20, 2011
Time: 9:00am to 11:00am
Location: 33 Beaver Street, 18th Floor Auditorium
New York, New York 10004

Attendance is optional. If you plan to attend the Public Forum, DOP/CEO requests that you RSVP in advance. Please send an e-mail to Vincent Perneti (vpernetti@probation.nyc.gov) with the name of your organization and the number of people attending. Due to meeting format and space each organization is limited to no more than two representatives.

Contact Information/Deadline for Questions/Comments

Written comments may be emailed to vpernetti@probation.nyc.gov (entering “Arches Project approach” in the subject line) or submitted by mail to:

Vincent Perneti
Agency Chief Contracting Officer
NYC Department of Probation
33 Beaver Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10004

The deadline for all written comments is **November 4 2011**.