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Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) Evaluation

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BACKGROUND

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) is an internship program for people with disabilities (PWD) that was launched in early 2019 with support from the Taft Foundation. The program was designed by the the NYC Department of Social Services' Office of Disability Affairs (DSS ODA) in collaboration with AHRC New York City, a family-governed organization serving individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Program management is provided by a dedicated PII Coordinator based at DSS. The Coordinator's responsibilities include, among others, developing internship opportunities throughout DSS, including in the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), pre-screening intern candidates, providing a range of ongoing supports to interns and supervisors, and monitoring and tracking program operations. The PII Coordinator also works closely with a range of partner agencies, who are responsible for identifying potential intern candidates and referring them to the PII program.

During its first year, PII aimed to place approximately 30 individuals with disabilities in internships with DSS/HRA/DHS. The overarching goals of the program are to:

- Provide PWD with an opportunity to gain meaningful work experience and job skills through internships in NYC government.
- Create a pathway to employment by building work experience and leveraging the 55-a program, an underused city provision that waives the requirement to pass a civil service exam for PWD who are otherwise qualified for a position.
- Promote a culture at DSS that encourages respect for and hiring of PWD.
- Build the capacity of DSS' human resources team to serve PWD by creating training, curricula, and partnerships to continue to grow PII.
- Create a successful internship model that can be replicated at other City agencies.

In partnership with ODA, the DSS Office of Evaluation and Research (OER) conducted an implementation and outcome evaluation of the program. The evaluation explored the following key implementation questions:

1. How many interns, placements, and supervisors did PII engage?
2. Are onboarding procedures, training, and support activities for interns and supervisors clear and supportive? Are there challenges or recommendations for improvement?
3. Is PII offering a diverse range of internship opportunities and tasks for PWD? Should PII target other areas of the agency to ensure balance?
4. How are interns, supervisors, and referring partner agencies experiencing the program?

Additionally, the following outcome questions were addressed:

1. How long did interns remain in their placements, how many hours did they complete, and what were the reasons placements ended?
2. What proportion of interns were recommended for employment post-internship? Among those recommended for employment, what proportion found post-internship employment? Of those, how many were through 55-a?¹
3. Six months after internships ended, what are interns' outcomes (permanent employment, temporary employment, school, etc.,) as tracked by partner agencies?

The next section outlines key findings from the evaluation. We then describe the methods and data used. This is followed by a detailed discussion of findings and brief concluding thoughts.

KEY FINDINGS

Implementation

- PII placed 41 participants in DSS-HRA-DHS internships during the first program year, far exceeding its first-year placement goal of 30. These interns were placed with a total of 25 supervisors (many supervisors had multiple interns). Most placements involved clerical or data entry work.
- Interns, supervisors, and partners were satisfied with the PII program's support. Overall, the fit between the interns and available positions was appropriate, although there were a handful of cases in which interns expressed some dissatisfaction with the details of their assignments. The PII Coordinator's responsiveness emerged as a program strength. Program Lunch and Learns were also well received.
- Partners were consistently appreciative of the program. Recommendations included expanding the number of available positions as well as the range of placement options. Although the clerical field, where most interns were placed, appeared to be a good fit for most, targeting opportunities in other fields—including information technology—would better respond to the full range of potential PII interns.
- All participants—interns, supervisors, and partners—reported a positive experience with the program. Interns valued the opportunity to get work experience, felt more

¹ Most positions in NYC government require passing a written civil service exam. However, Section 55-a of the New York Civil Service Law allows qualified persons with disabilities to be appointed to competitive civil service positions without taking the exam. To be eligible for the 55-a Program, an individual must be certified as having a disability and deemed qualified to do the job—sometimes with a reasonable accommodation. New York State's Office of the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) determines this eligibility.

prepared for work after participating, and gained computer and interpersonal skills. Supervisors reported benefitting from having motivated interns as part of their teams. Additionally, the program helped some supervisors feel more comfortable working with and managing PWD, suggesting success in the goal of promoting a culture that encourages the hiring of PWD. The supportive nature of PII supervisors was highlighted by partners as a program strength.

Outcomes

- More than half of the interns had completed their internships by the end of 2019. Among 22 completions, the average duration of the internship was three months, with an estimated average of 239 internship hours.² Two interns chose to end their internships early, while the remaining 17 continued into 2020.
- More than half of the interns who completed the program were recommended by the PII Coordinator, in consultation with their supervisors, for employment (n=13). Four of these individuals were still in school and not looking for a job until after graduation. Of the remaining nine, three found post-internship employment using the 55-a provision—two with DSS and one with the New York City Police Department (NYPD). Two more were hired by DSS on temporary staff contracts.
- The sample for six-month follow-up results was too small to draw conclusions about longer term outcomes. Among the ten interns who had completed their internships by August 2019, 6 months later, eight were still in school, one was working as a temp at DSS, and another was in a job search program with a PII partner agency. All had the same status they had at the end of their internships in 2019.

METHODS

Data used for this report were taken from a variety of sources, as described below. PII program staff provided program data, while other data were collected directly from program participants through exit surveys and interviews.

Program Data and Sample Selection

Individual-level program data were tracked by the PII program using an internal database. OER was given direct access to this database, which included demographic intern data as well as data about their internships and post-internship outcomes (including employment and education outcomes after six months). OER based the 2019 cohort and immediate outcome data in this report—including demographic information—on a database pull

² As discussed below, most internships were sponsored by the ACCES-VR program, which approves 'Community Work Experience' placements that range from 160 to 320 hours.

completed January 8, 2020. The sample we used for this report included all 41 PII participants who had been active in their internship during 2019. Outcomes focused on 22 participants who had *completed* their internship in 2019. For six-month follow-up data, OER completed an additional pull on February 24, 2020. Ten interns had finished their internships early enough in 2019 to have longer-term follow-up information.

Surveys

With input from PII program staff, OER designed exit surveys to be sent via e-mail to interns and supervisors after the completion of each internship with the goal of capturing perspectives on the internship experience from onboarding through the intern's last day as well as on the overall program value. Surveys consisted of a combination of open- and closed-ended questions and were sent by the PII Coordinator. Intern surveys were identified, and supervisor surveys included an option to self-identify at the end. (See appendices A and B for intern and supervisors survey tools.) It is worth noting that supervisor surveys were sent *per intern graduated*—some supervised several PII interns, so one supervisor could have filled out more than one survey. Thus, in the supervisor survey analysis, the unit of analysis is intern placement (not supervisor). As seen below, 24 interns completed or otherwise ended their internship during 2019. All of them were eligible to fill out a survey. From July 2019, when surveys started going out, through December 2019, we received 13 intern responses and 11 supervisor responses³—for response rates of 54 and 46 percent, respectively.

Interviews

OER collected qualitative research data through in-person and telephone interviews with several PII supervisors at DSS and select staff at referring partner agencies using interview guides developed with input from PII program staff. From October 2019 through January 2020, OER interviewed five supervisors and six partner staff members. Some of the supervisors had supervised more than one PII intern. As for partner interviews, staff interviewed had different roles with varying degrees of direct contact with interns. Partner agencies were also varied—we interviewed staff at both private and city agencies. (See appendices C and D for supervisor and partner interview guides.)

FINDINGS - IMPLEMENTATION

This section begins with a discussion of the characteristics of the interns placed through this program and of the internship positions into which they were placed. We then describe findings regarding the program structure and level of support provided to participating

³ Out of 11 supervisor responses, 8 were identified, all with different names—so at least 8 different supervisors responded.

parties, before turning to a more detailed exploration of the experiences of interns, supervisors, and program partners.

Internship Placements

The first PII intern started in April 2019. By the end of 2019, a total of 41 interns had been placed through the program, far exceeding the program's goal of 30 placements by the end of the first program year. Table 1 shows select characteristics of these 41 interns. A small majority of interns was female, half of the interns were under the age of 25, and the race and ethnicity distribution was fairly even between white, black, and Hispanic with a smaller number of Asian participants. All but one intern (who was still in high school) had at least a high school degree or equivalent, and a third of the cohort was enrolled in school at the time of internship start.⁴ More than half of the interns had developmental disabilities—the population served by AHRC, the program's main partner.

⁴ As discussed below, some interns were not available for post-internship work placements until after graduation.

Table 1: Intern Characteristics

	#	n=41	%
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	23		56.1
<i>Ages</i>			
17-24	21		51.2
25-44	12		29.3
45+	8		19.5
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
White, non-Hispanic	12		29.3
Hispanic	12		29.3
Black, non-Hispanic	11		26.8
Asian	3		7.3
Other/Unknown	3		7.3
<i>Highest Education Level</i>			
Still in high school*	1		2.4
High School or equivalent**	18		43.9
Bachelor's Degree	10		24.4
Associate degree	6		14.6
Some College	6		14.6
<i>Type of Disability</i>			
Developmental disabilities	24		58.5
Mobility	6		14.6
Sensory (vision/hearing)	1		2.4
Health impairments/unknown	10		24.4
<i>Enrolled in school at internship start</i>	13		32.5

Source: PII Administrative Database on FileMaker Pro

Note: Missing values not included in calculations

*17-year old participant

**Includes IEP, Regents, and GED

The 41 interns were referred by a total of seven partner agencies, including two City agencies (see Table 2), and they were placed with a total of 25 supervisors—eight of these supervisors worked with multiple PII interns, often simultaneously.⁵ Nearly 90 percent of the internships were paid, primarily through the NYS Office of the Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) program (see Table 3). The remaining 10% of participants received class credit for their internship or participated in a Medicaid Waiver program that precluded payment. In addition to providing internship funding, the ACCES-VR program is important because participation in it establishes eligibility for Section 55-a. While most positions in NYC government require passing a competitive civil service exam, Section 55-a of the New York Civil Service Law allows qualified PWD to be appointed to competitive civil service positions without taking the exam.

⁵ Five supervisors had two interns each, another supervisor had four interns, and two had five interns each.

Table 2. PII Partners

Referral Agency	# Interns Placed in 2019	Type of Organization	Population served
AHRC	13	CBO	Individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities
Institute for Career Development (ICD)	11	CBO	Students with all kinds of disabilities
City University of New York (CUNY), LEADS Program	8	School, City Agency	Undergraduate and graduate CUNY students with a wide range of disabilities
HRA Customized Assistance Services (CAS)	3	City Agency	HRA clients who report a barrier to employment that involves a chronic medical condition
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) ATWORK Program	2	City Agency	Jobseekers with any kind of disability. Emphasis on placing candidates in city agencies.
Yachad	2	CBO	Individuals with developmental disabilities
Jewish Community Center (JCC)	1	CBO	Individuals with varying special needs

Sources: PII Administrative Database on FileMaker Pro for placement count by partner. Key informant interviews, Taft grant document, and organization websites for information on population served by referral agencies.

Note: One intern was referred by an individual, as opposed to being referred by one of the partner agencies.

Table 3: Internship Placement Characteristics

	#	n=41 %
<i>Agency</i>		
HRA	24	58.5
DSS	10	24.4
DHS	7	17.1
<i>Type of work (main)</i>		
Clerical*	17	41.5
Data Entry	10	24.4
Human Services/Customer Service	9	22.0
Research Assistant	2	4.9
Architecture	1	2.4
Finance/Accounting	2	4.9
<i>Other</i>		
Paid Internships	34	87.2
ACCESS-VR**	31	79.5
Job coach assigned	15	36.6

Source: PII Administrative Database on FileMaker Pro

*Clerical positions vary and can include mailroom support and mail delivery, administrative assistant support, document management, scanning and indexing, and filing.

**Most of the internships were paid through the ACCES-VR program. Other internships were funded through a PII stipend.

As seen in Table 3, interns were placed in different parts of DSS, although more than half in HRA, and placements involved varying types of work. With the caveat that not all job descriptions work for all interns and types of disabilities, the mix generally seemed to align with candidate interests and skills. The most common fields were clerical and data entry, which according to supervisors and partner staff that we interviewed, were often a good fit. One partner, when asked about the benefit of PII to interns, cited experience in the clerical field specifically: “Those interested in clerical field will get a broad idea of what that work entails (customer services, data entry, keeping track, assisting customers).”

At the same time, staff from four of the partner agencies expressed a need for more varied placements, as some of the interns had specific interests or career paths beyond these three areas. One partner, for example, had candidates with developmental disabilities who had degrees in information technology. This partner explained that experience in information technology is particularly hard to build because employers in this field do not hire anyone without experience, making an internship particularly useful. The partner furthermore explained that it’s easier to get ACCES-VR approval for internships that are in line with a candidate’s stated career path, as the state agency’s preference is that internships be in a candidate’s career field. Another partner noted that some interns need internships with particular types of tasks in order to gain school credit. Finally, a couple of partners

emphasized the need for a *larger number* of placements (across fields), as they had more interested candidates than our PII program could accommodate.

Program Support

When placing interns, the PII Coordinator provided supervisors with information about the candidates' skills and abilities, as well as guidance through the interview process. One of the supervisors we interviewed particularly appreciated the guidance that was provided regarding useful interview questions to ask intern candidates with disabilities. All supervisors interviewed highlighted the responsiveness and availability of the PII Coordinator, during the hiring process and/or throughout the program. Supervisors also consistently reported a good fit between their interns and the position assignments. One supervisor emphasized the value of the fact that interns who came for interviews were already screened by the PII Coordinator, reducing the chance that they'd have to turn a candidate away. In general, matches seemed carefully selected. Another supervisor recalled meeting all the interns at a luncheon and feeling like they had the best match: "We got the one we wanted!"

This finding was echoed by survey responses: all supervisor respondents agreed that their PII intern was a good fit for their team, and all intern respondents agreed that their internship assignment was a good fit for their skills. Survey results additionally indicate that program communications were clear and support for supervisors and interns was adequate (see Tables 4 and 5). Just one supervisor expressed a need for additional support in two areas: better preparation for the time commitment that the program entails and support in understanding supervisory roles and responsibilities. Similarly, in the intern exit survey, just one intern indicated that they would have liked more support finding strategies to address challenges that arose during the internship (See Table 5).

Table 4: Program Support for Supervisors

	n=11 Enough Support	
	#	%
Getting a good sense of the intern's skills.	10	100.0
Selecting appropriate assignments for the intern.	9	100.0
Finding strategies to address challenges that arose during the internship placement.	6	100.0
Understanding the time commitment that being a PII intern supervisor entailed.	9	90.0
Understanding my role and responsibilities as a PII supervisor.	9	90.0

Source: PII supervisor exit survey. Not applicable/missing answers excluded.

Table 5: Program Support for Interns

	n=13 Enough Support	
	#	%
Understanding my role and responsibilities as a PII intern.	13	100.0
Understanding my schedule and hours.	12	100.0
Finding strategies to address any challenges that arose during my internship.	10	90.9

Source: PII intern exit survey. Not applicable and missing answers excluded.

As part of program support activities, PII staff organized monthly ‘Lunch and Learn’ events for all participants, including supervisors and partners. At these events, partner service providers would often do presentations about services available to PWD. In interviews and survey responses, PII luncheons were described as valuable by supervisors and partner staff. Interviewees explained that the luncheons provided a useful opportunity for interns and supervisors to meet, receive support, share stories, and gain greater insight into the PII program as a whole. In the supervisor exit survey, one respondent wrote that luncheons also provided an opportunity to gain awareness about PWD:

While I benefitted from [the intern’s] assistance, it was the monthly PII Intern lunches I was able to attend that made a big impact on me. I learned much more about the levels of function, challenges faced and some of the benefits available targeted to the categorically disabled population. Extremely interesting.

While the intern exit survey didn’t ask specifically about these luncheons, one intern used an open-ended comment in the survey to state that they had enjoyed the luncheon meetings—and to ask to be invited to future ones.

Finally, all the partner staff we interviewed shared positive comments about their experiences working with the PII Coordinator, explaining how she went out of her way make the program work smoothly for all parties. Examples included going to the partner site to interview interns when needed and giving presentations directly to subcontractors who could refer intern candidates. Partners also spoke positively about the careful matching and the referral process, reinforcing the survey findings discussed above.

Intern Experience

All interns who completed the exit survey reported being satisfied with their internship experiences. Respondents consistently gave positive feedback about their supervisors and their teammates (see Table 6). Moreover, all stated that they felt more prepared for work after their internship and felt they had developed helpful skills through their participation in PII—a perception that supervisors shared when answering a similar question in their surveys. In an open-ended question about the benefits of the program, most responses (n=9, out of 12 who answered this question) highlighted work experience in general as the main

benefit. Two interns thought that the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills was most valuable, and one person mentioned the opportunity for self-exploration. The partner staff we interviewed spoke of similar benefits for the interns, including gaining confidence and having the opportunity to do “real work.” Partners also reported that interns were enjoying their experiences.

The intern survey also included an open-ended question about any challenges experienced. Most respondents did not report any challenges; one wrote: “I would not change a thing.” Among the five interns who reported challenges, two said that their expectations of getting a job weren’t met, and one each described interpersonal challenges, inaccessibility of the 4 World Trade Center building, and struggles with time management.

Table 6: Intern Experience

	n=13 Strongly Agree/Agree # %	
<i>Overall experience</i>		
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience as a PII intern.	13	100.0
My internship assignment was a good fit for my skills.	13	100.0
Participation in the program helped me make connections with people who can help me with my career.	12	92.3
The tasks that I was assigned were tasks I expected.	12	92.3
<i>Experience with supervisor and team</i>		
I felt comfortable asking my supervisor for help if I needed it.	13	100.0
My internship supervisor provided helpful guidance, so I could do my job.	13	100.0
My supervisor let me know how I was doing.	13	100.0
I was a valued member of the team in my office.	13	100.0
I felt comfortable asking different people in my office for help if I needed it.	12	92.3
<i>Perceived gains in skills</i>		
I feel more prepared for work after my internship.	13	100.0
Through this program, I developed skills that will help me with my career.	13	100.0
At the end of my internship, I needed less support than I did at the beginning.	12	92.3

Source: PII intern exit survey

While the exit survey didn’t ask about the nature of respondents’ disabilities, findings from partner interviews suggest that the program benefitted interns with all types of disabilities. When asked whether the program benefitted people with a particular type of disability most, one partner explained that the experience rather benefitted people *differently* depending on their disability, adding that “work experiences are good for anyone, disability or not.” In our interviews, partners serving interns with intellectual disabilities tended to emphasise the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills as a benefit for that group. One partner also

mentioned the social aspect of the experience as particularly valuable for an intern who suffered from a chronic medical condition and depression. For physical disabilities, the value of the work experience more generally was emphasized. One partner highlighted the fact that PII supervisors did not discriminate or “give the student less work than they would another person,” thus providing interns with an opportunity to do work involving real responsibilities.

The exit survey also asked interns about the specific skills they gained through PII using a multiple-choice question. The top five skills that interns selected were: computer proficiency, interpersonal skills, time management, research and analysis, and verbal communication. We asked a similar question to supervisors about skills their interns had developed and, interestingly, the same five skills were ranked at the top, although in a different order: in this case, interpersonal skills ranked at the very top of the list. When we asked this question to supervisors in a less structured way in our interviews, four of five supervisors mentioned that their interns had gained confidence, which may relate to the interpersonal skills selections in the survey.

Table 7: Skills Developed through PII Internship

	Intern Responses (n=13)		Supervisor Responses (n=11)	
	#	%	#	%
Computer proficiency	10	76.9	6	54.5
Interpersonal skills (general)	8	61.5	9	81.8
Research and analysis	8	61.5	7	63.6
Time management	8	61.5	6	54.5
Verbal communication	8	61.5	5	45.5
Critical thinking	7	53.8	4	36.4
Accepting feedback	6	46.2	4	36.4
Writing	5	38.5	2	18.2
Other: "Customer Service"	1	7.7	0	0.0

Sources: PII intern and supervisor exit surveys.

Note: Ranked by intern frequency of answers in intern survey. Top choices for each group are in bold.

Partner interviews reinforced these results. Four of the six partners interviewed referred to interpersonal skills enhancement directly or indirectly. Additionally, two partners mentioned Excel as a specific skill their interns had gained, in line with interns’ stated gains in computer skills.

There were a small number of reports of interns who expressed some disappointment in their job responsibilities. One partner cited the case of an intern who needed experience working with clients beyond basic customer service tasks to obtain school credit, but the supervisor was reluctant to allow such level of client contact, citing concerns about client confidentiality. Another partner mentioned that one of the interns they referred suffered

from anxiety and was uncomfortable with the client interaction that was expected in their position. We also spoke to a supervisor who had interviewed a couple of intern candidates who lost interest in the placement when they learned that it did *not* include customer interaction. While these issues were relatively rare, it may be worth further exploring ways to emphasise the details of job descriptions in communication with intern candidates and partner agencies.

Supervisor Experience

The supervisor exit survey asked about program themes similar to those presented to interns. All responses consistently indicated a positive experience with every program aspect covered. See table 8 for responses broken down by “agree” or “strongly agree.”

Table 8: Supervisor Experience

	n=11			
	Strongly agree		Agree	
	#	%	#	%
<i>Overall experience</i>				
The intern was a good fit for our team.	11	100.0	0	0.0
Would supervise PII intern again	11	100.0	0	0.0
Overall, the intern made a positive contribution to the work of our team.	10	90.9	1	9.1
Would recommend to colleagues	10	90.9	1	9.1
<i>Experience with the intern</i>				
The intern maintained a professional appearance/good personal hygiene.	10	90.9	1	9.1
The intern had good attendance.	9	81.8	2	18.2
The intern was able to complete the tasks assigned.	9	81.8	2	18.2
The intern asked for help when needed.	8	72.7	3	27.3
I was comfortable letting the intern know what they could do better.	7	63.6	4	36.4

Source: PII supervisor exit survey.

Note: As responses were based on the experience with each intern, each supervisor could potentially answer the survey more than once.

Relatedly, survey findings indicate that the program succeeded in its goal of promoting a culture that encourages the hiring of PWD. Four respondents to the supervisor survey indicated that prior to participating in the PII program, they were “very uncomfortable” or (only) “somewhat comfortable” with the idea of hiring PWD—and *all* of these respondents reported feeling “more comfortable” after PII participation. In optional open-ended comments, three of these four supervisors described being impressed with their interns’ work performance; for example:

I consider myself very fortunate to have this experience, because there is more to learn from our side how to work with people with disabilities. People may have mobility impairment but if the person is dedicated and knowledgeable, they can be as productive as anyone who does not have physical mobility impairment.

Finally, all supervisor respondents strongly agreed that they would supervise another PII intern, and all who responded also indicated that they were likely or very likely to hire a person with disabilities in the future. In interviews, a particular benefit mentioned by multiple supervisors was having motivated workers who brought energy and diversity to their teams. As one put it: “The benefit is that you get people to do work who are motivated and happy to be here. Having them around made me feel good, it was inspiring.”

When asked about reasonable accommodations in the survey, only one supervisor reported having an intern who needed one, and this supervisor reported that implementing the accommodation was “easy.” Program administrative data similarly indicates that official reasonable accommodations were rare, needed by only 3 of the 41 interns. When describing their experiences in interviews, supervisors spoke about general informal accommodations such as taking special care to articulate instructions clearly or assigning work more gradually than they might otherwise. While acknowledging that this kind of supervision can be more time-consuming, no one described it as a burden. Rather, supervisors felt that the time invested was manageable—some shared supervision responsibilities with others in their teams—compared to the benefits that the program provided.

Our information about supervisors’ experiences with job coaches was relatively limited. Although the program database indicated that fifteen interns in the cohort had been assigned job coaches, only three of the supervisors we interviewed had experiences with job coaches—and even then, their interaction with the job coach was described as minimal. Their overall perception was that job coaches helped interns for the initial setup, making sure that interns felt comfortable and understood directions. Most job coaches did not return after that. In the only case reported to us where the job coach kept coming over the longer term, the supervisor’s impression was that the job coach was “not doing anything though, it felt like it was of no use.” This was just one example however.

In final interview comments, all supervisors were consistently positive and supportive of the program. Only a couple reported any challenges—for example, one PII intern spoke at a high volume in a work environment that was a shared space. That same supervisor, however, also noted that hiring within the civil service system can present its own challenges: “the challenges (of hiring a PII intern) are the same as with any other staff.” One supervisor we interviewed stated that this kind of initiative is so important that it should be mandatory. In terms of recommendations, one of the supervisors suggested that all interns be paid; as described above, a few of the internships established outside of the state’s ACCES-VR

program were unpaid because the intern received school credit for their internship, or participated in a Medicaid Waiver program that restricted payment. Another supervisor, wanting to ensure the program's continuation, suggested creating a network of potential supervisors who are interested and keeping a database of projects to "make sure that there is always work for [PII interns]."

Partner Experience

We interviewed six individuals across five of the seven partner agencies. One of the partners served individuals with intellectual disabilities, while the others worked with individuals with a range of disability types. When asked about their goals for the PII program, all partners ultimately hoped the program would help individuals with disabilities prepare for employment, although there were some differences in their short-term priorities for the program. Some partners emphasized the importance of interns' building specific skills (e.g., to meet school requirements), others were focused on ensuring interns completed a minimum amount of work experience time, and still others emphasized a quick transition to full-time employment as the primary program goal.

In terms of program implementation, partners gave consistent and positive feedback about the program's referral and careful matching process, and the supportive nature of PII supervisors was cited repeatedly as a program strength. Partners also expressed appreciation for the fact that interns' work was truly valued in these internships. In interviews, partner staff highlighted the real-life nature of PII interns' work experience, explaining that PII supervisors did not discriminate and truly treated interns "as anyone else." Internship payments were additionally cited as an important benefit—and the lack of payment for a few of the internships was highlighted as a challenge. Partners' ideas for improving the program included providing intern progress reports to partners and establishing and measuring concrete intern outcomes so that the partner agencies could get a clearer sense of interns' employability. Altogether, the partners were highly supportive of the program and hoped for its continuation and expansion. One of the city agency partners specifically emphasized how important the program is for hard-to-place individuals, "as other employers are wary."

FINDINGS - OUTCOMES

Internship Completion

Of the 41 interns who started internships in 2019, more than half (53.6%, n=22) had completed their internship by the end of that year. Apart from the 22 who completed their internships, two interns decided to leave the internship early (one due to anxiety; the other to enroll in graduate school), and the rest (n=17) were still active in the program as of the

start of 2020.⁶ Most of the 22 completed internships (86.4%, n=19) were sponsored by ACCES-VR, which among other things means that the interns were automatically qualified for the 55-a hiring provision.

The number of hours worked varied across completed internships, ranging from approximately 148 to 350 (see Table 9).⁷ This range reflects the policies of the ACCES-VR program, which generally approves 'Community Work Experience' placements of 160 to 320 hours. Most interns worked part time for an average of three months, with an estimated average total of 239 hours worked. Three of the 22 internships were extended; two of these interns then transitioned into employment. The three interns with extensions had different disabilities and education levels. One of the three interns had a mobility disability and a Bachelor's Degree and did clerical work. Another intern had a developmental disability and a high school degree, and also did clerical work. The third intern had a health condition that later led to placing the (extended) internship on hold for a couple of months—this intern did financial/budget work.

Table 9. Number of Hours Approved/Completed for Internships*

# Hours	ACCES-VR	Other**	Total
148	1	0	1
160	8	0	8
180	0	1	1
200	1	0	1
300	3	2	5
320	5	0	5
350	1	0	1
Total count	19	3	22

Source: PII Administrative Database on FileMaker Pro for ACCES-VR hours, and program estimates for non-ACCES-VR cases.

* Hours approved for initial internships, does not include hours approved for internship extensions.

**Includes OPWDD and no sponsorship cases. Based on estimated of hours completed.

Employment and Six-Month Follow-Up

Among the 22 participants who completed internships in 2019, over half (59.1%, n=13) were recommended for full-time employment at the end of their internships by the PII Coordinator in consultation with their supervisors. The rest were not recommended either because they were not deemed ready, or because the PII Coordinator understood that they were not interested in employment at that time. Among the 13 interns who were recommended for employment, there were also another four who were still in school and

⁶ Including one intern who was reassigned to a different placement.

⁷ Estimates based on approved ACCES-VR hours (using up the hours approved by ACCES-VR marked the end of these internships). For the cases of interns who did not have ACCES-VR hours assigned, we used an estimate of completed hours provided or reviewed by the PII program.

not interested in immediate employment. Of the remaining nine, five had positive short-term employment outcomes; as of January 8, 2020:

- One was hired through the 55-a provision and was working full-time as an employee with HRA's Family Independence Administration (FIA) in the Training Assessment Group (TAG) office.
- One had recently been offered a job by HRA's Customized Assistance Services, also through the 55-a provision.
- One intern was referred to job search with MOPD after completing their internship (in October 2019) and promptly received a job offer from the NYPD (in November 2019), again using the 55-a provision.
- Two interns were hired as temp workers at the DHS Budget Office and HRA FIA Business Link, respectively. Both were eligible for 55-a, but their supervisors did not have regular staff lines available to hire them as City employees.
- The four remaining interns were referred to job search programs with PII partner agencies at the end of their internships. All four of them were candidates for processing through 55-a if a relevant position at DSS (or elsewhere in the City) were to open.

All five of the internships that led to quick employment had been sponsored by ACCES-VR, although they were referred by different partner agencies: two were referred by ICD, and one each was referred by MOPD, CUNY, and CAS. The five interns varied in terms of type of disability, level of education, and age. In terms of disability, two had mobility disabilities, two had developmental disabilities, and another had a health impairment. Highest education level ranged from high school degrees (2 interns), to associate degree (1 intern), to bachelor's degrees (2 interns). Ages varied substantially, ranging from 22 to 48 years old.

Finally, we explored six-month outcomes for a small cohort of ten interns who had completed their internships by August 2019. As of February 24 of 2020, eight of the ten were still in school, one was working in a DSS temp position, and one was still in a job search program with one of the PII partners: MOPD. In all cases, this was the same status they had had at the end of their internships in 2019.

CONCLUSION

PII not only exceeded its 2019 placement goals by a third, but it succeeded in furthering the key program goals as described at the start of this report:

- All stakeholders agreed that interns gained important skills—interpersonal and computer skills in particular—signaling the program offered a meaningful work experience while improving job skills.

- The program provided an opportunity for interns to build work experience, and early outcome data confirm that the program successfully created a pathway to employment for at least some of the interns, including through the 55-a hiring provision, even during a hiring freeze within NYC government.
- The program promoted a culture that encourages the hiring of PWD by providing supervisors with a positive experience and increasing the comfort level of those supervisors who went into the program with some discomfort regarding working with PWD.

Overall, the program was well-received by all—interns, partners, and supervisors. Partners would like to see more varied opportunities available through PII in the future. In March 2020, the program was temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected workplaces across New York City, including city agencies. Our evaluation findings provide support for the program’s continuation when agencies are able to return to normal functions.

APPENDIX A – INTERN SURVEY

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII)

Intern Exit Survey

Upon internship completion, PII staff will send each intern a link by e-mail asking them to fill out this survey. Interns will also be offered the option to fill out the survey with support from PII staff either in-person or by phone at the time of their post-internship interview (most interns are expected to be able to do the survey on their own).

E-mail introduction:

Hi,

Congratulations on completing your PII internship!

We would like to know more about your experience with the program so we can improve the experience for future interns. To send your feedback to OER, please complete this 7-minute survey online by clicking [\[here\]](#). The information you send will go directly to our agency's Office of Evaluation and Research. They are helping us with the evaluation of the program and they will keep your identity confidential. They will only share general information with us, without providing names linked to answers.

If you have questions or would like support for completing this survey, please let me know by replying to this e-mail or by calling (929) 221- 6874. I will arrange for someone to assist you.

Thank you!

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1. Please enter your name below. **This information will not be shared with PII staff or others.** It will be used only to pull in other information (e.g., from your intake form) so that we can keep this survey short!

First Name:*

Last Name:*

2. The statements below are about your PII internship experience. Please tell us if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a.	My internship assignment was a good fit for my skills.				
b.	My internship supervisor provided helpful guidance, so I could to do my job.				
c.	I felt comfortable asking my supervisor for help if I needed it.				
d.	I felt comfortable asking different people in my office for help if I needed it.				
e.	My supervisor let me know how I was doing.				
f.	The tasks that I was assigned were tasks I expected.				
g.	I felt like a valued member of the team in my office.				
h.	At the end of my internship, I needed less support than I did at the beginning.				
i.	I feel more prepared for work after my internship.				
j.	Through this program, I developed skills that will help me with my career.				
k.	Participation in the program helped me make connections with people who can help me with my career.				
l.	Overall, I am satisfied with my experience as a PII intern.				

3. What skills did you develop or improve during your internship? Please select all that apply from the list below.

- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Computer skills
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Research and analysis
- ☐ Critical thinking
- ☐ Verbal communication
- ☐ Interpersonal skills (general)
- ☐ Accepting feedback
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ I did not develop any skills during my internship.

4. Please rate the level of support you received from the **internship coordinator** (Hannah Cook-Davis) in each of the areas below.

		I received enough support in this area.	I would have liked more support in this area.	Not applicable/I did not need support in this area.
a.	Understanding my role and responsibilities as a PII intern.			
b.	Understanding my schedule and hours.			
c.	Finding strategies to address any challenges that arose during my internship.			

5. Did you have a job coach?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Skip to Q7)

6. Please rate the level of support you received from your **job coach** in each of the areas below.

		I received enough support in this area.	I would have liked more support in this area.	Not applicable/I did not need support in this area.
a.	Preparing for the internship interview (e.g., working on interview skills)			
b.	Understanding how to navigate the office environment.			
c.	Getting guidance on managing interpersonal skills at the office.			

7. Please describe any challenges you experienced during your PII internship or any changes you'd suggest to improve the program. (Open-ended)
8. Please describe the benefits you experienced from participating as an intern in the PII program. (Open-ended)
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the PII program? (Open-ended)

APPENDIX B – SUPERVISOR SURVEY

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII)

Supervisor Exit Survey

Soon after interns complete their internships, PII staff will send intern supervisors a link to fill this survey out.

E-mail introduction:

Hi,

Thank you for being a PII internship supervisor!

We would like to get your feedback to help us improve the program. Our records show that a PII participant recently completed an internship at your unit. Please click [here] to complete a 5-minute survey.

Thank you!

1. Before hosting the PII intern who recently graduated, did you have any prior experience supervising an intern referred by the Office of Disability Affairs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. The statements below are about your experience working with the PII intern. Please tell us if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a.	The intern was a good fit for our team.				
b.	The intern learned new skills during the internship period.				
c.	The intern asked for help when needed.				
d.	I was comfortable letting the intern know what they could do better.				
e.	The intern had good attendance.				
f.	The intern maintained a professional appearance/good personal hygiene.				
g.	The intern was able to complete the tasks assigned.				
h.	Throughout the duration of the program, the intern became increasingly independent at work.				
i.	Throughout the duration of the program, the intern became more comfortable with the team.				
j.	Overall, the intern made a positive contribution to the work of our team.				
k.	I would supervise a PII intern again.				
l.	I would recommend participating as a PII intern supervisor to my colleagues.				

3. What skills did your intern develop or improve during their internship? Please select all that apply from the list below.

- ☐ Writing
- ☐ Computer skills
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Research and analysis
- ☐ Critical thinking
- ☐ Verbal communication
- ☐ Interpersonal skills (general)
- ☐ Accepting feedback
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ The intern did not develop any skills during the internship.

4. Please rate the level of support you received from the PII **internship coordinator** in each of the areas below.

		I received enough support in this area.	I would have liked more support in this area.	Not applicable/I did not need support in this area.
a.	Understanding the time commitment that being a PII intern supervisor entailed.			
b.	Understanding my role and responsibilities as a PII supervisor.			
c.	Getting a good sense of the intern's skills.			
d.	Selecting appropriate assignments for the intern.			
e.	Finding strategies to address challenges that arose during the internship placement.			

5. Did the PII intern you supervised need any reasonable accommodations?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Skip to question 7)

6. How easy or difficult was the process of implementing reasonable accommodations?

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

7. Prior to participating in this initiative, how would you describe your level of comfort with the idea of hiring a person with disabilities?

- ☐ Very uncomfortable
- ☐ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ☐ Somewhat comfortable
- ☐ Very comfortable

8. Compared to your level of comfort before participating in this pilot, how comfortable are you now with the idea of hiring a person with disabilities?

- ☐ More comfortable
- ☐ No change
- ☐ Less comfortable

9. More generally, can you tell us about how this experience may have changed your perspective on hiring people with disabilities? (Open-ended)

10. How likely are you to hire a person with disabilities in the future?

- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely

11. Please describe any challenges you experienced while supervising the PII intern or any changes you'd suggest to improve the program (Open-ended)

12. Please describe any benefits you experienced from participating as a supervisor in the PII program. (Open-ended)

13. Finally, if you are comfortable providing your name, please fill it out below:

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First Name:

Last Name:

APPENDIX C-INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships

Supervisor Interview Tool

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The questions I am going to ask are meant to better understand the experiences of supervisors in the Partnership for Inclusive Internship program. Our conversation should take approximately 30 minutes. Results will be reported only in an anonymized form. Do you have any questions before we start?

The Office of Disability Affairs (ODA) launched the Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) earlier this year. This interview focuses on your experience with interns who are part of PII only, so it excludes any interns who may have been referred to you by ODA before 2019.

1. To start,
 - a. how many PII interns have you supervised?
 - b. what kind of work did the PII intern(s) do?
 - c. did your intern/any of your interns have a job coach?
 - d. Approximately how many hours per week did the PII intern(s) work, and over how many months?
2. How was the fit between the PII intern's skills and the job tasks? Was the intern able to complete all the tasks assigned? What kinds of tasks worked well? Were there any tasks that the intern had a hard time with? (Probe for "hard skills")
3. Apart from their ability to complete tasks, can you tell me a little about your experience with the PII intern? Anything that worked particularly well? Any challenges? (Probe for "soft skills")

If needed, probe for:

 - *Interactions with you as their supervisor*
 - *Interactions with other members of the team*
 - *Professionalism (e.g. punctuality, regard for dress code, etc.)*
4. Are there any specific skills that you feel the intern(s) developed during the period of their internship? Can you provide an example of how you have seen such skills improve?

If needed, probe for/get examples of the following:

 - *Time management*
 - *Verbal communication*
 - *Interpersonal skills*

- *Working independently*
5. *(If experience with job coach—see Q1c)* How was your experience working with the job coach? In what ways was the coach useful? Is there anything you wish the job coach would have done but didn't? Anything you wish they had done more of?
 6. Was there any guidance or information provided by the PII program that you found particularly helpful?
Probes:
 - *Information/guidance provided at onboarding meeting*
 - *Did you participate in a PII supervisor luncheon? If so, was it helpful? What was helpful about it?*
 7. Are there any areas in which you feel additional support or information would have been helpful?
If needed, probe for/get examples of programmatic or logistical information needed
 8. Were there any (other) challenges in your experience with the program that you would like to share? Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?
If needed, probe for any challenges finding enough time to devote to the intern.
 9. What do you think are the most important strengths and/or benefits of the PII program?
 10. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with PII?

APPENDIX D-INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTNERS

The Partnership for Inclusive Internships

Partner Interview Tool

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The questions I am going to ask are meant to better understand the experiences of referring partners with the Partnership for Inclusive Internships program. Our conversation should take approximately 30 minutes. Results will be reported only in anonymized form. Do you have any questions before we start?

The Office of Disability Affairs (ODA) at New York City's Department of Social Services launched the Partnership for Inclusive Internships (PII) earlier this year. This interview focuses on your experience with PII internships and with the PII program.

1. To start, can you tell us briefly about your organization and your role?
 - a. Approximately how many of your organization's clients have been placed as PII interns through the Department of Social Services this year?
 - b. Have you acted as a job coach for any PII interns?
2. Tell me a little about your organization's experience with PII so far. What worked well? What was challenging?
If needed, probe for:
 - Referral process
 - Working with intern's supervisor during internship
 - Working with PII coordinator during internship
3. *(If interviewee was also a job coach)* How was your experience working with the PII intern(s)?
4. In your experience, how have PII interns benefited from their placements? What factors make for a successful placement?
 - a. Was the program particularly helpful for interns with certain types of disabilities? If so, please describe.
5. Have PII placements helped interns develop any specific skills? If so, which skills?
6. Are PII placements helping support the career trajectory of the interns? If so, how?
7. What do you think are the most important strengths and/or benefits of the PII program?

8. Were there any challenges in your experience with PII that you would like to share?
Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with PII?