



**Young Adult Justice Programs
Concept Paper
January 10, 2011**

I. Purpose

This concept paper is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) that will include programming for young adults involved in the criminal justice system. The two proposed competitions within the upcoming RFP are Justice Scholars and Justice Community. The estimated number of contracts under this RFP is four to eight. The goals of these programs are to reduce crime and recidivism and to promote lifelong educational gains, career exploration, employment attainment (and retention) and community/civic engagement for court involved young adults in New York City. Justice Scholars focuses mainly on educational gains, with multiple educational tracks, and uses career exploration to introduce participants to potential career fields. Justice Community is a more flexible model that adapts to the current status of each participant, whether it is education or employment services, and it uses the participants' community as an integral component of the programming.

Court involved¹ young adults face a multitude of challenges returning to their communities, frequently confronting the same issues that led them to an arrest. In the absence of intervention these young people are likely to recidivate, particularly if they return to neighborhoods entrenched in poverty, crime, and record levels of unemployment. Many of these young adults have poor literacy skills and require job-readiness training for employability. Evidence indicates that post-release education or employment has a significant impact in reducing recidivism.

Yet, in New York City and other jurisdictions across the country too few programs focus adequately on the young adult age group who, without assistance, find barriers to education and legitimate work insurmountable, particularly in the current labor market. Moreover, employers are often hesitant to hire individuals previously involved in the criminal justice system, and as a result, usually require evidence that someone is highly motivated and reliable, qualities best "demonstrated by high attendance [in youth development programs] and short stays in transitional work."²

The Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), Department of Probation (DOP), Small Business Services (SBS), Department of Correction (DOC) and other partners have implemented several innovative employment programs targeting specific populations, such as those involved in the criminal justice system, individuals living in high poverty neighborhoods, and public housing residents.

CEO programs that currently serve the court involved young adult populations include Employment Works and NYC Justice Corps. On any given day, the DOP serves 29,000 individuals,³ and employment or active job search are standard conditions of probation. Since the launch of Employment Works in August 2008, more than 1,200 people on probation have gained meaningful employment at an average salary of more than \$10 per hour.⁴ Over one-third of the participants were young adults.⁵ The NYC Justice Corps achieved an above average 70% engagement rate for the entire six month program.⁶

The 2009 NYC Department of Correction (DOC) average daily population was 13,362, with 99,939⁷ admitted annually. According to 2009 data, the DOC had custody status over approximately 3,885 young adults age 16-24 -- 795 were 16-18 and 3090 were 19-24. These numbers include detainees, city sentenced, parole violators, new state sentences and state court returned.⁸

According to the Vera Institute of Justice, up to 60% of adolescents age 16-18 in New York City jails read below a fifth grade reading level.⁹ Furthermore, a research study by Public Private Ventures has demonstrated that two-thirds of young adults returning from New York State prisons never return to school.¹⁰

A three-year study by the New York State Department of Correctional Services (NYS DOCS) looked at the 24,223 people released from prison in 2005. Of these, 13,735 returned to New York City, 39.5% of who were returned to prison within three years -- 29.2% for violating conditions of parole versus 10.3% for a new felony conviction.¹¹ The Independent Committee on Re-entry and Employment estimates that 89% of individuals whose parole or probation is revoked are unemployed.¹²

In 2009, 25,976 people came home from NYS prisons; of the 16,406 who were released for the first time on their current sentence, 8,093 (49.3%) were from New York City's five boroughs and the majority (7,661) were male. Further, 21.2% or 3,489 of those who were released for the first time on their current sentence were between the ages of 17 and 24.¹³

According to a 2009 Editorial Projects in Education Research Center analysis, adults in New York City have a 36.5% greater likelihood of employment if they have a high school diploma. Furthermore, the opportunity for steady employment also increases substantially with a diploma. Only 38.9% of New Yorkers ages 25-64 who did not graduate from high school have steady employment compared to 53.1% of those with high school diplomas.

Given the sizable nature of the problem, CEO/DOP are proposing two new programs to address the needs of the court involved young adult population. These programs would build on several successful national and New York City models, as well as lessons learned from other interventions. All partners are committed to supporting a rigorous evaluation of the two programs, and a broad dissemination of the results.

II. Target Populations

The programs will target court involved young adults and CEO/DOP anticipate that each competition will serve 160 participants for a total of 320 annually. A provider can propose to serve anywhere between 40 to 160 participants. CEO/DOP are open to suggestions about setting the number of participants served under each competition.

The programs will not be limited to specific types of criminal justice involvement and may serve both as an alternative to incarceration and a re-entry program. Providers may serve court mandated populations in their programs. CEO/DOP are interested in learning whether providers would prefer to serve mandated or non-mandated populations.

Providers may be required to state which specific sub-populations within court involved young adults they seek to serve. Providers are encouraged to focus on high-risk populations. For the purpose of this concept paper, high-risk is defined as having multiple prior convictions or involvement with the criminal justice system in any capacity. Providers may be required to indicate how they intend to recruit for the program.

III. Anticipated Outcomes

The programs seek to connect court involved young adults to unsubsidized employment and further education with the goal of reducing involvement in the criminal justice system and promoting educational achievement and career development.

IV. Funding

Currently, the anticipated total annual funding is \$1.6 million to be divided between the two competitions. In each competition, the funding level per contract will range from \$200,000 for 40 participants served to \$800,000 for 160 participants served. For example, a provider proposing to serve 75 participants would receive \$375,000 in funding.

Additional funding may include other public or private resources that may be secured by CEO/DOP. CEO/DOP reserve the right to award less than the full amount of funding requested by proposers.

V. Anticipated Number of Contracts/Contract Term

The anticipated number of contracts under this RFP is four to eight. The anticipated number of contracts for Justice Scholars is two to four and the anticipated number of contracts for Justice Community is two to four. Each contract will be for a period of three-years with an option to renew for two one-year periods.

VI. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Providers must comply with all program monitoring, program evaluation and program reporting requirements established by CEO/DOP). These may include site visits, surveys, interviews, focus groups, administrative records reviews, data collection efforts, and evaluation strategies.

VII. Program Approach

Competition 1: Justice Scholars

Justice Scholars is a program that connects court involved young adults with educational services and aims to keep these young adults engaged for a minimum of six months. The Justice Scholars program goal is to reduce recidivism by providing program incentives and intensive wrap-around support, tutoring, and case management. After the program ends, there are six months of follow-up services provided, thereby increasing educational outcomes such as increasing participants' grade levels, helping participants obtain high school credentials, and helping participants with high school diplomas/GEDs enroll in post-secondary education.

Target Populations and Service Levels

The program is expected to annually serve 40-160 court involved young adults ages 16-18 per contract citywide. Referral sources would include NYC Departments of Probation and Correction, New York State Department of Parole and community-based organizations that work with court involved young adults.

Price per Participant

It is anticipated that the program will be budgeted at \$5,000 per person to cover all program operating costs and participant incentives.

Key Program Elements

Intake and Enrollment

Upon completion of an initial assessment of educational and other needs, the provider would meet with the youth to discuss educational options and finalize a plan of action for the six month program period.

Educational Services

The provider would place youth into one of the following educational tracks based on age and an educational assessment at intake:

High School Track for youth of compulsory age, who are required by law to be enrolled in school. The provider would counsel the student on the benefits of a high school degree and the various alternative high school options. The provider would then refer and escort students as necessary to the appropriate DOE Borough Enrollment Center or other entry point. The provider would monitor participants' school attendance and would coordinate with the school, family and referring agency, as necessary, to ensure participation.

GED Track for youth over the age of 17.5 who test at the sixth grade reading level and above and who do not have sufficient credits and/or interest in pursuing a high school degree. The provider would enroll youth in a GED program, preferably on-site. Providers must monitor participants' attendance, and are encouraged to offer GED tests on-site.

Education Support and Placement Track for youth over the age of 17.5 who test below a sixth grade reading level. The provider would offer basic education classes, preferably on site, with the goal of increasing literacy, numeracy and related scores.

Post-secondary Track for youth who have obtained a high school diploma or GED. The provider would offer support in enrolling in post-secondary education or other career training.

Tutoring Services

The provider would offer ongoing tutoring services as needed, with program participants enrolling on a voluntary basis.

Case Management and Peer Support

The provider would offer weekly individual and/or group counseling sessions on-site with a social worker to discuss problems and on-going issues. In addition, the provider would encourage positive interactions between and among program participants, with methods including seminars and peer mentorship. The provider would also follow up with referrals to ensure that participants' needs are being addressed through partnering service providers.

Contact Hours

It is anticipated that the provider would offer: 12-15 hours per week of educational services; 1-4 hours per week of tutoring services; 2-3 hours per week of career exploration services; 1 hour per week of case management and/or review of program progress. This model is loosely structured to enable providers to best serve participants' needs and interests. Alternate contact schedule proposals will be considered from providers.

Referrals

Young adults who demonstrate significant mental health, substance abuse, or other problems would undergo a full psycho-social evaluation with a social worker, and the provider would make appropriate referrals, appointment escorts, and follow-ups as necessary.

Career Exploration

The provider would introduce participants to an array of potential career opportunities throughout the duration of the program. Providers would emphasize job-readiness, explain the educational requirements for a variety of careers and discuss the steps needed to attain a specific career.

Placements

The provider would identify a suitable post-program placement that is aligned with participants' needs and interests, and the educational and career exploration services received during the program.

Incentives

The provider would use financial incentives to encourage participants to enroll in the program, encourage program retention and reward educational gains. CEO/DOP and the provider may collaborate on the program's incentive schedule, based on an evolving understanding of client needs.

Follow-up Services

The provider would offer follow-up services to participants for a period of six months after program completion. These services shall include: placement retention; meeting with participants at least twice over the six month period to provide on-going support services; developing seminars relevant to participants' goals; and making referrals to appropriate community-based organizations as needed.

Competition 2: Justice Community

Justice Community is a community-based program serving court involved young adults living in communities with high rates of poverty, incarceration, probation and parole. The program would offer employment, education, civic engagement, case management and peer support services. Justice Community seeks to blend education and work experience so program participants may make educational gains while working in subsidized jobs and/or community benefit projects. The program model is flexible to allow for adaptation to local and participant needs. For example, if participants skew young, there may be more of a need for education or if participants are older and have work experience, the provider may invest more in skills training rather than subsidized jobs. This approach requires a local provider with a relevant, proven track record.

Target Populations and Service Levels

The program is expected to annually serve approximately 40-160 court involved young adults ages 19-24 per contract in targeted communities, such as the South Bronx, East and Central Harlem, Ocean Hill/Brownsville, Bedford Stuyvesant, Red Hook, East New York and South Jamaica. Referral services would include Probation, Corrections, Parole and community based organizations who work with court involved young adults.

Price per Participant

It is anticipated that the program will be budgeted at \$5,000 per person to cover all program operating costs and participant incentives.

Key Program Elements

Employment

Employment is a cornerstone of the Justice Community project. The program will offer a range of employment related opportunities and services, including career awareness, job readiness, subsidized jobs, community benefit projects, job search/placement assistance, and referrals for occupational training. Opportunities to earn money and gain work experience would be used as incentives for participation in a broader range of positive activities.

Education

For any participant without a high school diploma or a GED, further education is an assumed goal. Justice Community recognizes that many formerly incarcerated young adults have low reading levels combined with generally negative prior school experiences.¹⁴ The program would: offer basic education and GED classes either off or onsite, make referrals to other educational programs, as needed, and encourage post-secondary academic and technical education. Each participant would be assessed to determine his/her individual needs, interests and appropriate educational setting.

Case Management and Peer Support

Providers would develop a dynamic system of support to meet participants' needs, including assessment, goal setting, basic case management services, and follow up services. The program would include best practices such as dedicating a primary person to each participant and facilitating peer mentorship and support.

Referrals

For young adults who demonstrate significant mental health, substance abuse, or other problems the provider would make appropriate referrals as necessary.

Incentives and Stipends

Stipends or incentives would be offered to support subsidized jobs, promote sustained participation, and recognize achievement milestones. For example, the program might provide a weekly stipend for maintaining high attendance, and additional rewards for reading gains, degrees attained, and paid internships. The program would also sponsor public events and award ceremonies to recognize accomplishments and build community.

CEO/DOP and the provider may collaborate on the program incentive schedule based on an evolving understanding of client needs.

Community/Civic Engagement

The community component of the program supports participation and helps establish a positive local peer group so that participants have meaningful alternatives to negative social networks. The process of civic engagement facilitates beneficial growth in two areas – youth development and crime prevention. Community engagement, based on a Restorative Justice model, also provides a framework by which individuals can become re-integrated into their communities. One researcher notes that critical to re-entry is a “willingness of community to endorse a releasee’s return.”¹⁵

VIII. Planned Method of Proposal Evaluation

It is anticipated that proposals will be evaluated pursuant to an evaluation criteria set out in the Request for Proposals. These will include the quality and quantity of successful, relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capacity, and the quality of proposed program approach and design.

IX. Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that the Department of Probation will release the Request for Proposals in spring 2011 with the proposal submission deadline one month later. It is anticipated that providers will be selected in summer 2011. Programs are anticipated to begin in fall 2011.

X. Comments

The deadline to submit comments regarding this concept paper is February 4, 2011. For comments submitted by email, please email written comments to:

Procurement@probation.nyc.gov

For comments submitted by post mail, please send written comments to:

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New York City Department of Probation
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- ¹ For the purposes of this concept paper, *court involved* refers to individuals who may have been arrested but not necessarily convicted of a crime.
- ² Public Private Ventures. (2000). *Getting Back to Work: Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders*. Philadelphia, PA: Buck, Maria.
- ³ Department of Probation. (2010). *Commissioner Schiraldi and Team Testify before the City Council*.
- ⁴ Department of Probation. (2010). *Commissioner Schiraldi and Team Testify before the City Council*.
- ⁵ NYC Center for Economic Opportunity. Performance Monitoring Data.
- ⁶ NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, Westat/ Metis Associates. (2009). *Evaluation of NYC Justice Corp: Final Report of Year one of Justice Corps Program Implementation*.
- ⁷ NYC Department of Corrections. http://www.nyc.gov/html/doc/html/stats/doc_stats.shtml. Accessed November 15, 2010.
- ⁸ NYC Discharge Planning Collaboration (2009). Adolescents Transitional and Alternative Programs.
- ⁹ Vera Institute of Justice, Just 'Cause, Vol. 15, No. 3, fall (2008).
- ¹⁰ Public Private Ventures. (2008). *Disconnected Young People in New York*. Philadelphia, PA: Wyckoff, Cooney, S.M., Djakovic, D.K., McClanahan, W.S.
- ¹¹ New York State Department of Correctional Services. (2005). *2005 Releases: Three-year Post Release Follow-up*.
- ¹² The Independent Committee on Reentry and Employment (2006). Report and Recommendations to New York State on Enhancing Employment Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated People.
- ¹³ New York State Department of Correctional Services. (2009). *Statistical Overview: Year 2009 Discharges*.
- ¹⁴ Up to 60% of adolescents (age 16-18) in New York City jails read below a fifth grade reading level (Vera Institute of Justice, Just 'Cause, Vol. 15, No. 3, fall 2008).
- ¹⁵ Bazemore, G., & Karp, D. (2004). "A Civic Justice Corps: Community Service As a Means of Reintegration." *Justice Policy Journal*, 1(3).