

Background

The New York City Department of Probation (DOP) is a leader in community corrections, working within the criminal and juvenile justice systems and in the community to create a safer New York City. Using Evidence-Based practices, and a balance of enforcement, structure, treatment and support, DOP holds people on probation accountable and gives them opportunities to forge new pathways so that they can move out of and stay out of the justice system. DOP works with them to get the education and skills they need to be successful in the job market; to repair and restore important relationships in their lives, including their relationships to their neighborhoods and larger community; and to make decisions that keep themselves out of harm's way and from harming others. In this way, probation becomes a stage of opportunity within the justice system, and a time to create a highly individualized "New Now".

To accomplish its mission, DOP is in the midst of incorporating evidence-based policies and practices into virtually everything we do. Evidence-based policies and practices (EBPP) use current research and the best available data to guide decisions and produce the outcomes that our stakeholders-people on probation, their families, victims, and communities- expect.

Young people in New York City who have the desire to be self-sufficient and contribute to their families, the motivation to succeed, and untapped career aspirations, may not always have access to the right opportunities to achieve these goals, or the chance to develop sufficient work-related skills. They may be unable to afford traditional job training and certification programs due to the costs of tuition, exam registration, and credentialing. Providing supportive pathways to sustainable employment is also particularly important to justice-involved young people who face situational and systemic barriers to employment. Many of these young people live in neighborhoods that face substantial environmental challenges including high levels of poverty and unemployment. These communities align with DOP's Neighborhood Opportunity Network (NeONSM): Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, East New York, Harlem, Jamaica, the South Bronx, and Community District 1/Northern Staten Island¹. These neighborhoods are also home to a vast number of young people who are not justice-involved, but who also face similar barriers to supportive job training and placement programs. NeON Works! seeks to remove those barriers, promoting economic and social equity for young adults across New York City.

Purpose

The following Concept Paper is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide NeON Works!, a program to be provided in parallel with the Department of Probation (DOP)'s Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeONs). NeON Works! would assist young adults across New York City with employment services and credentialing, ultimately leading to a career pathway.

¹ DOP anticipates that additional non-NeON neighborhoods may also be included in this initiative.

Through the upcoming RFP, DOP will be seeking appropriately qualified not-for-profit vendors (“providers”) to implement this initiative citywide. DOP is seeking comments on the Concept Paper presented herein.

DOP NeONs:

The NeON model was established in 2011, whereby DOP moved some of its supervision to the neighborhood level, meeting clients within their own communities in Brownsville, Harlem, Jamaica, East New York, Bedford Stuyvesant, Northern Staten Island and the South Bronx. By doing so, DOP joined and expanded the local network of resources available in each community in order to build capacity within the neighborhoods where high numbers of probation clients live. The seven NeON sites, which exist within space co-located with DOP neighborhood offices, provide both a reporting center for probation supervision, as well as a setting for connecting clients with their community and new opportunities. The NeON’s bring together a multitude of resources, a mix of contracted program service providers and other local partners, working toward a common goal of improving public safety and community engagement. For example, NeON’s promote civic engagement through a robust offering of no-cost services and programs to area residents (including probation clients), including arts and sports programming, High School Equivalency classes through a partnership with the NYC Department of Education District 79 Pathways to Graduation program, access to healthy food, clothing, and health insurance enrollment. NeON’s also host open information sessions and events on topics of critical importance to local communities, such as anti-violence efforts and improving health. Some programming is chosen by local Stakeholder Groups made up of a diverse array of local residents, business owners, clergy, probation staff, and people previously under supervision. For more information on DOP’s NeON’s and Stakeholder Groups, please visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/neon/index.page>.

The NeON Works program would add a new dimension to the opportunities already available at the NeON locations, such that 16-24 year olds, in need of such services, would be connected with employment services and ultimately the qualifications needed to pursue a career.

Putting Young People to Work, Works!

Research shows that securing and, importantly, maintaining employment for a period of time can have an impact on the thinking patterns, self-image, and behaviors that are correlated with criminal activity²:

- Putting emerging adults to work saves their lives: Research on the NYC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has shown that those who were 19 or older during the summer they worked were 54 percent less likely to wind up in New York State prison than those who

² <https://www.bja.gov/Publications/CSG-Reentry-and-Employment.pdf>

didn't and they were 20 percent less likely to die young³. Providing young people with work experience promotes positive development and impacts thinking and behavior.

- Hope is critical to long-term well-being. Having a sense of hope, developed through identifying goals and having the opportunity to work towards them, is critical to emerging adult well-being and development, and ultimately, to desistance from criminal activity.
- The impact of a criminal record on seeking employment can be significant, and has been found to be exacerbated for young men of color⁴.

NeON Works Program Design

a. Target Population/Geographic Areas

1. 16-24 year-olds who are under probation supervision⁵, regardless of residence, who are unemployed or underemployed, and motivated to pursue career credentialing. Probation clients would be referred through their Probation Officer.
2. 16-24 year-olds who are not under probation supervision but reside in one of the NeON neighborhoods (Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, East New York, Central Harlem, South Bronx, Jamaica, Northern Staten Island) or who access services at a provider co-located with a non-NeON location, and who are unemployed or underemployed, and motivated to pursue career credentialing, as evidenced by their voluntary enrollment in NeON Works!.

b. Program Model

NeON Works! providers, possibly in conjunction with subcontractors and/or other linked entities would offer participants trainings and the ability to earn credentials in growing and/or stable occupational fields. Participants may pursue more than one credential, as some jobs require several. It is anticipated that services may be divided into different "tiers", based on the intensity of the level of services to be provided within each borough-based service option and would be priced accordingly. Providers would offer a menu of credentials, including those provided through subcontractors, linkages, and offerings from other NeON Works! provider locations. In the event a participant is interested in a credential/field offered through a different NeON Works! provider, a referral would be made.

³ Alexander Gelber, Adam Isen, and Judd B. Kessler, The Effects of Youth Employment: Evidence from New York City Summer Youth Employment Program Lotteries, NBER Working Paper No. 20810, December 2014. See also Sara B. Heller, "Summer jobs reduce violence among disadvantaged youth," Science Mag.Org, 34:6214 (2014), 1219 (discussing impact of summer employment program on youth in Chicago).

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3583356/>

⁵ After the age of criminal responsibility was raised to 16 on October 1, 2018, some of these youth may be under Family Court probation supervision.

1. It is anticipated that the program would be cohort-based for credentialing and training. Other program activities described below, such as workshops and community benefits projects would be open-enrollment so that young adults motivated to get involved in the “world of work” can have exposure to options and engage in pro-social activities, designed to build soft skills necessary for employment, while awaiting launch of the next cohort in the credentialing pathway of choice.
2. Providers would be responsible for offering or connecting participants to all necessary preparatory classes for the credential/field chosen, including any hands-on experience required for the credential(s) in order to qualify and pass any necessary exams.
3. Providers would employ Job Coaches to provide support to the participants from application through job retention.
4. Providers would offer job placement services in chosen fields, upon achievement of all necessary credentials.
5. Providers would make available individualized, wrap-around services to all participants, including crisis management and referral to educational resources if requested, such as High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation and tutoring. Providers would continue to offer services to participants for up to one year post-job placement. For young adults on probation, primary case management responsibilities are held by their assigned probation officers in partnership with the provider organization. For participants who are not on probation, case management services would be the responsibility of the provider.

At the NeONs: When participants are not actively engaged in training classes and hands-on experience in their chosen areas, providers would ensure that they would have access to other relevant skills-building and horizon-widening activities, as follows:

1. Job Coaches employed by the providers would be stationed at selected NeONs and would hold workshops based on the Youth Communications “On My Way” curriculum⁶, designed specifically to develop the social-emotional learning necessary for young people aged 14-24 to succeed in the ‘world of work.’ This strengths-based curriculum is a series of lesson plans centered around stories written by young people, and includes topics such as “Learning on the Job,” “Getting Along,” and “Managing My Future.”⁷
2. Providers would hold or connect participants to a variety of other workshops on topics such as interviewing and resume writing; visits to relevant worksites in their chosen or related fields; and offer presentations from people in their chosen fields.
3. Providers would also offer opportunities for participants to engage in teamwork and skills-building activities including community benefits projects. The projects would be

⁶ <http://youthcomm.org/instructional-support/>

⁷ In 2009, an earlier iteration of this curriculum was used as an educational component of a work readiness curriculum being tested in NYC’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). A participant survey showed that this curriculum was particularly impactful on young people who would be the first in their families to attend college; that descriptor likely applies to many NeON Works! participants.

designed by NeON Works! participants in conjunction with the local NeON Stakeholder Groups, who can offer their on-the-ground expertise on what is available and most needed in their own communities.

Participation in all program activities would include a stipend for participation/attendance, as well as additional incentives to be awarded for reaching milestones, to support continued engagement and personal and professional development. Providers would also arrange for any payment necessary to take credentialing exams, at no cost to participants. Participants would also receive MetroCards throughout the duration of the program to facilitate program participation.

Participation would be based on a “no fail” policy consistent with the principles of Restorative Justice⁸. If a participant misses classes or engages in behavior that disrupts program operation, stipends would be temporarily discontinued until they craft a plan to repair harm done and successfully present it to the Stakeholder Group.

c. Service Hours

It is anticipated that the NeON Works! program would be run during daytime and/or evening hours, depending on specific services offered and individual needs of the community served.

d. Site Information

NeON Works! providers would run the program within the relevant NeON location, if applicable, or for sites that do not have a NeON within the associated geography, a site within the relevant precinct/community district. Providers would ensure that proposed “non-NeON” sites would be easily accessible by public transportation in safe/neutral locations. Sites would meet local fire, health, and safety standards and comply with the Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) standards.

e. Service Levels/Staffing Levels

It is anticipated that NeON Works would serve up to 200 participants per program site. Service levels may be divided into “tiers” whereby different levels of intensity of services would be provided.

Performance Measures

a. Outcomes

⁸ <http://restorativejustice.org/restorative-justice/about-restorative-justice/tutorial-intro-to-restorative-justice/lesson-1-what-is-restorative-justice/>

The following outcomes are anticipated as a result of participation in NeON Works!:

- Identification of a career pathway
- Attainment of relevant education/credentialing necessary to attain career pathway chosen.
- Job placement upon successful attainment of any required education/credentialing

b. Reporting

Providers would be required to work closely on reporting with DOP as well as measure and report regularly on program outcomes. Providers would be responsible for monitoring and reporting on services provided and to whom. Providers would work with DOP to administer self-reporting measures, collect anonymous satisfaction feedback from all participants, as well as input from participants and program staff in order to assess outcomes and integrate such information into service delivery.

Funding

a. Funding Amounts/Anticipated Payment Structure

The anticipated funding level for contracts resulting from the forthcoming RFP is approximately \$375,000.00 annually per site. This amount covers all operations costs associated with delivering the program. It is anticipated that the payment structure for the contract awarded will be line-item reimbursement. DOP also reserves the right to reduce the funding amount accordingly if lower actual participant levels are lower than anticipated.

b. Anticipated Number of Contracts/Contract Term

DOP anticipates up to 10 contracts being awarded to nonprofit organizations to deliver the NeON Works! program. The anticipated contract term is for three years, with an option to renew for up three additional years. Contract terms and amounts are based on availability of funding and are subject to change.

Evaluation of Proposals

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

Procurement Timeline

Release of the RFP is anticipated in Spring 2019, with services anticipated to begin September 1, 2019.

Use of HHS Accelerator

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

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

- Job Placement
- Job/Vocational Training
- Work Readiness
- Community Engagement
- Life Skills
- Case Management
- Outreach
- Diploma/HSE Training

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

Contact Information/Deadline for Questions/Comments

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

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

The deadline for all written comments is **April 23, 2019**.