



Strategic Plan

2012–2017

Approved by the JobsFirstNYC Board of Directors • January 24, 2012

“Why foundations and other backers of the community development field have not sought to replicate the successful use of intermediaries in other fields [and at greater scale] is a mystery. The American system of local job-training programs operated by the public sector and nonprofit organizations, for instance, is largely a disgrace... There are no organized mechanisms for large-scale private capital or employer involvement, or for elevating and spreading the best approaches, or for driving out the purely political operations.” –Paul Grogan, Comeback Cities, 2000

As New York City faces the national specter of continuing economic stagnation, economic circumstances have created a new, lost generation even further disenfranchised from the labor market. Paul Grogan’s experience that intermediaries have tremendous potential to improve outcomes is apt at this moment for a Workforce Development System that has heretofore largely failed older young adults disconnected from school and work.

JobsFirstNYC

In 2006, the New York City funding community focused on workforce development came together to help create JobsFirstNYC—a non-profit intermediary organization with a specific mission to help bring—effectively and efficiently—all available community, corporate, human, organization, private and public resources to accelerate the connecting of out-of-school and out-of-work young adults with the economic life of New York City. Five years into its life, JobsFirstNYC has a revitalized leadership and growing professional staff. Through the extensive work of the Executive Director, it has learned about its strengths and weaknesses and about the field and its partners. JobsFirstNYC will now focus its skills, resources and attention on three key levers for change. It now has a viable plan for what it wants to achieve, how it will accomplish those achievements, and how it and others will know its goals have been accomplished.

Destination—Where Are We Going?

This is a clear articulation of the change that JobsFirstNYC wants to create in five years. It is a BHAG—a big, hairy, audacious goal—to which JobsFirstNYC commits as the overall outcome of its efforts:

↓ 5% IN 5 YEARS

A 5% DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED OR JOBLESS YOUNG ADULTS IN NEW YORK CITY BY 2017

To achieve our BHAG, we will need to demonstrate that we will influence the acquisition of at least 1,800 new jobs for young adults beyond those already working each year. To demonstrate this increase, JobsFirstNYC will do the following:

1. Establish a baseline by industry of people working part-time and full-time between the ages of 18 and 24.
2. Select a representative sample among select industries, and using the same research methodology track, by industry, the changes in the number of jobs for 18-24 year olds in each respective industry over a 12-18 month period.

Operating Assumptions

In order to achieve this BHAG, JobsFirstNYC recognizes these factors and assumptions:

1. We seek to influence the myriad of organizations and customers that they subsequently serve to achieve **more and better outcomes** in terms of connecting young adults to the economic life of the City.
2. We are not just concerned with any jobs, **but quality jobs** that can be used as real-time, building-block learning experiences and create access to career paths that lead to economic mobility of young adults.
3. The reasons behind the scale of young adult disconnection from work and school are varied and complex, and multiple systems must work in tandem to improve results. As such, JobsFirstNYC endeavors, through its organizational competencies (such as convening and brokering/ connecting), to effectively work with or influence the improvement of other systems, such as the public education system, the criminal justice system, among others **where it is judicious and strategic for us to do so**.

The Present Situation for Our Field

- Over 180,000 young people in New York City are neither working nor in school (Community Service Society, Fiscal Policy Institute, JobsFirstNYC, 2012). The challenges facing the City’s out-of-work and out-of-school young adults has only gotten worse over the last several years.
- The capacity of the services available in NYC for out-of-school young adults is less than 10% of this total number. Individual programs are typically under-capitalized and work in isolation, often providing a disconnected set of services of varying quality.
- There is little awareness and common knowledge of the problem outside the practitioners in the field and hence little or no common energy and will to solve the problem.

- Effective communication and connection between employers who might hire these young adults and the workforce development organizations which serve them as potential job seekers is limited at best throughout the “system.”

Positioning JobsFirst NYC

Our comparative advantages, “core know-how” and organizational competencies include:

- In the last five years JobsFirstNYC has developed a keen understanding of both the problem and the field. It has energetic leadership and an enlarged staff of experienced leaders.
- JobsFirstNYC’s “open source” philosophy, leadership and practitioner-driven projects can substantially improve upon the outcomes typically achieved in publicly-funded efforts.
- JobsFirstNYC has become increasingly adept and successful at bringing employers to the table in a more meaningful and structural way.
- JobsFirstNYC is well-positioned to advance a field-wide agenda because of both its own neutrality, authority and presence in the field, and its important connections to other efforts that complement its mission, vision, and direction.
- Our specific organizational competencies—the things we DO very well—will be employed across all the strategies we implement. These competencies include:
 - Convening groups and individuals
 - Brokering connections between organizations, groups and individuals
 - Commissioning research and data collection
 - Supporting, funding, and investing in promising practices
 - Publicizing issues and answers
 - Educating relevant parties

Strategies

So much can and should be done; choices have to be made about what is most likely to have an impact. Based on what others have done, on the research available, and on the extensive interviewing done by the Executive Director, JobsFirstNYC will pursue three focused strategies in its effort to accomplish its BHAG. Our strategies are broad directions or paths. Each has specific activities, tactics and outcome targets associated with them.

1 Engaging Employers

Creating more and better employment opportunities for young adults. Engaging employers involves implementing a set of the activities and projects by JobsFirstNYC with a full range of individuals who play key roles in the hiring and/or employment decisions in the business, commercial, nonprofit and government sectors of the economy.

Projected Outcomes

1. **Evidence of improved alignment between young adult workforce organizations and businesses:** more direct communications; more specific questions and answers—as demonstrated through events/convenings, demonstration projects, and other examples in 2012, 2013 and beyond.
2. The emergence of one or more “Young Adult Workforce Champions”—likely leaders among major NYC Employers—that serve as **ambassadors for effective changes at the systems level** to address the out-of-work/out-of-school challenge (as demonstrated through media campaigns, etc.) directly resulting in more and better outcomes for young adults.
3. The creation of an **Employer Leadership Council** that works at the center of the young adult workforce development system to leverage increased resources for the system, connect employers to workforce organizations, and to create greater, more visible, quality employment opportunities for young adults.

2 Raising Consciousness

Increasing urgency and awareness concerning the out-of-work and out-of-school young adult challenge. Raising broad consciousness and increasing the urgency of the issue demands activities and tactics that clearly and measurably highlight the challenges, opportunities and returns associated with out-of-work and out-of-school young adults and the young adult workforce field.

Projected Outcomes

1. **A common, clearly defined, and widely articulated vision for success** in the young adult workforce development field.
2. **A clear definition of success**, metrics for gauging the level of success, and methods for verifying success achieved are widely shared and widely used by the field.
3. **Critical leaders in the field are known and sought** for input by policymakers.
4. **The issue is more widely known among all New Yorkers** and greater numbers of people and institutions push for positive change to improve the situation.



3 Advancing Practice

Building capacity and improving practice for the young adult workforce development field.

Advancing practice requires a set of activities that directly improve services (the programs and products of agencies that serve the disconnected young adult population) and resources (agencies, staff and money) for out of school/work young adults. This includes the development and continuation of several workforce partnerships that focus on communities where greater concentrations of out-of-work and out-of-school young adults live, or where less resources to potentially serve them currently exist.

Projected Outcomes

- 1. JobsFirstNYC becomes a central and critical voice in the articulation of standards of practice** for individuals, institutions, and organizational collaborations providing workforce (and related) services to young people and to the employers that may hire them. The field looks to these standards as the guide to best practice.
2. New opportunities to enhance promising practices to achieve more and better outcomes in the realms of collaborative strategies and public/private partnerships emerge, are articulated and adopted by members of the field.
- 3. Members of the field fully apply a results-oriented framework** to new or piloted efforts and demonstrate the value (and social ROI) of any programming that JobsFirstNYC sponsors or supports.

- 4. The field adopts a unified definition of outcomes** and corresponding metrics for collaborative projects.
- 5. An increased number of jobs secured by** unemployed young adults such that there is a 5% decrease in unemployed young adults in NYC by the end of 2017.

Note: For Strategy #3, Advancing Practice in the Field, we are going to track the number of young people that are offered, successfully obtain, and successfully retain jobs by doing the following:

- First, select a sample of organizations among the communities where we are already investing resources to advance practice (Lower East Side, South Bronx, Southeast Queens) in order to obtain baseline information.
- Second, track job offer, acquisition, and retention data annually to determine changes among the selected groups to serve as a representative sample.
- Aggregate and present data (and comparative historic data) to be shared among JobsFirstNYC stakeholders.

Summary

Despite decades of social investment to address structural issues impacting the economic possibilities for young people in larger cities throughout the country, we are still in the midst of perhaps the most substantial crisis of our time: the generation of young people coming of working age is substantially less skilled and educated than the generations before it. Further, it is the gaps or outright failures of many “systems” that have resulted in this new, lost generation of young people. The implications of this are vast, complex, and not fully known. JobsFirstNYC intends to be “Paul Revere” on this issue, helping the greater public, as well as all of its concerned stakeholders identify a clear set of paths to improve this situation and to create greater opportunities for all young adults. This plan is a substantial first step in that effort.

Acknowledgments

No strategic planning undertaking is easy, and the best plans are those that become “living documents” that fully connect the mission, vision, strategies, and tactics an organization undertakes to achieve a high-level goal, in this case to measurably reduce the number of young adults between 18 and 24 that are neither working nor in school in New York City over the next five years.

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The JobsFirstNYC Board of Directors and Staff

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Accelerating opportunities to successfully connect out-of-work and out-of-school young adults to the economic life of New York City.