

Request to Participate

A Career Readiness Strategy Leading to Postsecondary Opportunities and Employment

Request to participate due date: April 10, 2018, by 11:59 AM

Submit to Junior Manon at jmanon@jobsfirstnyc.org

Selection notification: Mid-April, 2018

Planning grant: \$25,000-\$50,000 planning grants to selected workforce development providers

Implementation grant: To be determined based on program designed and offered

Key dates and timelines:

- Proposal workshop: March 21, 2018
- Design Learning Community all-day sessions: May 8, May 24, May 25, June 11
- Professional development activities: TBD (summer 2018)
- Launch Learning Community: TBD (late summer 2018 to Spring 2020)
- Initiative Launch: September 2018

**Participation in Learning Community sessions is mandatory for planning grant recipients. TBD dates will be determined collectively by the full partnerships between school leaders and workforce development partners.*

Contact: Junior Manon, JobsFirstNYC, jmanon@jobsfirstnyc.org.

INTRODUCTION

JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for Public Schools are launching a new initiative to transform the school-to-work transition for a set of NYC's Transfer High School students. Through this initiative, we aim to leverage current and new resources to design and pilot a career pathway strategy leading to degree and credential attainment and employment for NYC Transfer High School students within the New Visions for Public Schools network.

Consider the following:

- Too many over-age, under-credited high school students off-track to graduate in New York City are at risk of becoming part of the out-of-school, out-of-work population, and even those who complete high school and enroll in postsecondary programs have difficulty completing their education and experience limited success in attaching to the labor market.
- The NYC Transfer High School design, with an embedded Learning to Work partner, provides a unique opportunity to enhance and enrich student experiences with a sequence of high-quality career development activities. Each Transfer High School has approximately 200 students and is organized by progress toward credit accumulation rather than by age or grade.

- Employers are ready to get involved. There are one million open jobs in New York City that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree, but 46 percent of New Yorkers lack the skills to fill them. By 2020, 65 percent of *all* jobs will require some postsecondary education or training after high school but will not require a four-year college degree. In addition, employers report that they are having significant challenges find skilled talent.
- Transfer High Schools are currently not best equipped to integrate career readiness into their curricula, have limited capacity to work with employers, and face challenges in creating structural on-ramps to career-focused education and training at the postsecondary level.
- These schools can't do the job alone. They need workforce partners.

Through the approach described in this document, JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for Public Schools will work with Transfer High School principals, Learning to Work leadership, workforce development providers, and private sector partners to “reimagine” the transition from school to work for NYC’s Transfer High School students.

THE PROBLEM

Despite a healthy economy, low-income high school students who lack access to traditional educational or training pipelines continue to be left out of today’s labor market. A growing number of occupations require some type of postsecondary training or credential. This fact is particularly concerning for New York City’s 15,000 over-age, under-credited students attending Transfer High Schools. Only about half of these students graduate with a high school diploma, and many become part of the out-of-school, out-of-work population or the underemployed population. Further, roughly a quarter of these students are in special education. For those students who graduate from Transfer High Schools, only about 30 percent enroll in a postsecondary program within six months of graduation, with 15 percent of them entering a CUNY two-year college and 5 percent entering a four-year college. Most do not earn a postsecondary credential.

The economy continues to leave young adults behind.

The overall impact of long-term changes in the economy has continued to work against young people nationally and in New York City. Employment rates for young adults are at all-time lows, a trend that continues even as the economy continues to make gains in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008. New research from JobsFirstNYC also shows that most of the employment gains made in the last five years for 18- to 24-year-olds has been in part-time work. Today in New York City, there are more than 136,000 young adults aged 18 to 24 who are not in school and not working.

Postsecondary education and training is needed for success in today's economy.

It is estimated that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require some type of postsecondary education or training beyond high school. Employers increasingly report that they are having difficulty finding and hiring new talent for a range of jobs. These are jobs that do not require a four-year degree but need some type of specific postsecondary training,¹ signaling the importance of industry-recognized credentials and education and training opportunities that are informed by employers’ needs. While schools today focus on the acquisition of academic skills, occupational, technical, and core employability skills are increasingly important for workforce success. Regardless of the industry, employers consistently underscore that the emerging

¹ Joseph B. Fuller, Manjari Raman et al., *Dismissed by Degrees* (Accenture, Grads of Life, and Harvard Business School, 2017).

workforce must have experience and mastery in all three areas, with a growing priority on employability and professional skills.

Too many NYC public high school students are not college or career ready.

Citywide, only about half of all NYC public high school graduates were considered college or career ready in 2016.² Not surprisingly, nearly 80 percent of the city’s public high school graduates entering CUNY’s community college system require some type of remedial coursework. Importantly, the key metrics used to determine college and career readiness are based on standardized exams such as Regents, ACT, SAT, and CUNY Assessment Tests. This fails to address the need for students to have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate technical/occupational and core employability and professional skills. This also does not consider the other assets or deficits students face beyond what these standardized exams measure for.

Too many NYC public high school students still don’t graduate.

Although the city’s four-year high school graduation rate increased from 66 percent in 2013 to 74.3 percent in 2017, 16.4 percent are still enrolled through the summer months to graduate and 7.8 percent of students drop out without a diploma. Most of the students leaving high school without a diploma were, at their point of disconnection, already over age, under credited, and off track to graduate. These students are the most likely to become part of the out-of-school, out-of-work population.

THE OPPORTUNITY: SCHOOL-TO-WORK INITIATIVE

JobsFirstNYC, a workforce intermediary focused on developing career opportunities for out-of-school and out-of-work young adults, and New Visions for Public Schools, a leading school improvement support organization working to improve outcomes in NYC’s schools, have joined together to develop and launch an in-school career pathway initiative for over-aged and under-credited NYC students. This pilot initiative works with 10 Transfer High Schools and two AIMS Charter high schools within the New Visions network.

We believe that several conditions create an opportunity to reimagine how young people are being prepared for jobs in the new economy.

- The small-school design of Transfer High Schools housed within the New Visions network presents an opportunity to infuse career development as a core element of secondary education to better prepare and connect students to in-demand jobs in the new economy. Additionally, the community-based organizations (CBOs) co-leading these schools supported through the Department of Education’s Learning to Work initiative are an important asset unique to this school model.
- In addition, the flexibility provided by the charter school system to design programs that meet the specific needs of over-age and under-credited students allows for program enhancements and innovations.
- New York City has an emerging young adult sectoral employment capacity, particularly in the growing number of jobs requiring some level of postsecondary degrees or credentials. The Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project—a JobsFirstNYC

² According to the College Readiness Index, which is the percentage of students who, by the August after their fourth year in high school, have met CUNY’s standards for college readiness in English and mathematics as assessed by reaching certain scores on the Regents, SAT, ACT, or CUNY Assessment Tests.

partnership—offers sectoral strategies for out-of-school, out-of-work young adults, giving us much to draw on as we design and implement this initiative.

- The NYC Department of Education and the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development have recently adopted aligned approaches to the development of work-based learning systems and have developed tools and materials to support implementation across the continuum of career awareness, exploration, and preparation. These are important building blocks for the development and implementation of our initiative.

By integrating a range of work-based learning experiences with school-based activities and guidance over time, our initiative will allow students and young adults to set their sights on something higher than an immediate job and encourage them to remain committed to their education and training by completing high school as they pursue their personal and career-related goals.

New Visions is currently supporting a network of 10 NYC Transfer High Schools and two AIM charter high schools, whose principals, teachers, and other staff are hungry for approaches that will better engage and prepare their students for the future. Our initiative will leverage this network and engage it in piloting activities.

JobsFirstNYC has significant experience building partnerships and connecting the out-of-work, out-of-school population to careers. In addition, it has designed, tested, and refined industry sector approaches through the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project and other partnerships, which can be applied to this initiative.

FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

This initiative is a collaborative partnership between JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for Public Schools designed to connect Transfer High School students to careers. Specifically, by offering postsecondary education and training options, it will connect students to employment in targeted industries, primarily in a range of accessible in-demand jobs.

JobsFirstNYC and New Visions have developed an initial framework for a reimagined school-to-work experience for NYC's Transfer High School students. While we expect the framework to evolve through a discovery and design process that will be conducted at the commencement of the initiative, the attached Framework describes our initial thinking based on research and the application of best practices in the field. It also reflects our preliminary assessment of current needs and opportunities.

The core elements of our initiative include the following:

- **Ten Transfer High Schools and two AIM Charter High Schools** within the New Visions network and their school-based CBO partners (one per school with Learning to Work contracts) providing critical socio-emotional wrap-around support services.
- Enriched and extended supports and opportunities for students, including the application of a range of **work-based learning** opportunities across the **career development continuum** of career awareness, exploration, and preparation.
- Multiple employers from **three to four growing employment sectors** with a need to fill occupations that are reasonably accessible to the target population. Initial sectors will likely include, but are not limited to, health, information technology, retail, and hospitality.

Final selection will be based on research conducted during the discovery stage of the initiative.

- Sector-based young adult **workforce development** providers to offer sector-oriented context and training, help make and manage employer connections, and manage work-based learning experiences and job placements, retention, and advancements.
- Partnerships with **postsecondary educational institutions (e.g., CUNY) and sector-specific workforce development training providers with a track record in high-growth sectors.**
- A robust facilitated **Learning Community** of stakeholders and partners from multiple sectors to help inform, design, and implement the initiative.

The initiative's preliminary framework (see attached Framework) articulates a four-phase student experience that includes a core and enhanced curriculum, high-quality work-based learning experiences across the career development continuum, individualized career development support activities, case management and wrap-around support services to ensure that students have access to guidance, and critical services to support their success. The approach is designed to support students in recovering credits, graduating from high school, experiencing success in postsecondary education and training, and launching careers in growing industry sectors. Importantly, this framework is organized in competency-based phases rather than by age or grade, allowing students to progress through the initiative at their own pace.

In **Phase 1, the Career Awareness and Exploration** phase, students experience an enhanced, integrated curriculum delivered in the context of the target industry, participate in project-based activities with their peers, and engage in career awareness and exploration activities (such as workplace tours and job shadowing) that support both career development and credit recovery goals. Students will be supported by skills, interest, and aptitude assessments; individualized educational and career development planning; case management; and a comprehensive set of wrap-around services.

Student outcomes of this phase include progress toward graduation, defined career aspirations and goals, enhanced career and workplace awareness, and a personal commitment to and engagement in their education.

In **Phase 2, the Advanced Career Development** phase, students will continue to experience an enhanced, integrated curriculum delivered in the context of the target industry, participate in project-based activities with their peers, and engage in more in-depth career exploration and preparation activities (such as internships and work experience) that support both career development and credit recovery goals. They will be supported by individualized career development plans, case management, and a comprehensive set of wrap-around services.

Student outcomes of this phase include high school graduation (including the New York State Career Development and Occupational Studies credential), an active career development plan that guides postsecondary education and training activities, and direct work experience through structured work based learning such as internships.

In **Phase 3, the Sector-Focused Postsecondary Training** phase, which will typically begin while the students are still in high school, students will participate in defined degree and

certificate programs, engage in occupational skills training and advanced peer learning experiences, and be supported through continued case management and a peer support network. They will participate in occupational training programs and be involved in deeper work-based learning experiences, such as cooperative work experience, internships, on-the-job training, transitional jobs, and apprenticeships.

Student outcomes of this phase include earning a postsecondary degree, occupational certificate, or credential; documented successful employment experiences; and job placement.

In **Phase 4, the Launch Career** phase, young adults will continue to participate in peer networking activities and receive support to ensure their retention and advancement.

Student outcomes of this phase include stable, employment in a career track of interest

PARTNERS AND ROLES

To successfully implement this initiative, JobsFirstNYC and New Visions will engage and support a set of partners. We have identified and defined roles for several organizations that will offer supports and opportunities at the operational level, including the Transfer High Schools themselves, their CBO partners delivering services to students through a range of public investments, a set of to-be-identified workforce development providers, community colleges and other training providers, and employers from each of the targeted industries. We also seek to collaborate with institutional partners, including the NYC Department of Education, City University of New York, the city's workforce development system, and organized labor.

Leadership

JobsFirstNYC will partner with New Visions in the initiative's design and management. JobsFirstNYC will conduct research and analysis, facilitate partner communications and engagement, identify and leverage community resources, and facilitate a Learning Community among the partners and schools. It will also provide fiscal management and manage evaluation activities for the initiative.

New Visions for Public Schools will collaborate with JobsFirstNYC in the initiative's design and management. New Visions will conduct research and analysis, assist schools in integrating new approaches and partnerships in the core and enhanced school experience, support school engagement and curriculum enhancements, provide professional development for teachers, implement new data systems to capture work-based learning activities and impacts, and inform evaluation activities.

Core Operational Partners

Transfer High Schools will integrate effective and enhanced strategies into school operations and deliver industry-focused academic instruction collaboratively with NYC's Learning to Work program and workforce development providers. Schools will accommodate and support work-based learning activities across the career development continuum and provide student counseling and credit recovery support.

CBOs involved in NYC's Learning to Work program will leverage existing public resources (e.g., Learning to Work, Summer Youth Employment Program, and Ladders for Leaders) and provide wrap-around services and case-management support to

students. They will also provide access to enhanced and enriched subsidized employment and internship opportunities and will support peer learning activities. Finally, they will work with workforce development provider partners to identify workforce development opportunities for students.

Workforce development providers work closely with CBOs and will help identify growth sectors, the talent needs of skilled occupations, and the certificate or degree programs needed to enter these occupations. In addition, they will provide sector-oriented training, engage with and support the participation of industry sector partners, arrange and support work-based learning activities, and offer peer networking activities for students in the workplace.

Community colleges and other postsecondary institutions will support program design and curriculum development, engage in articulation agreements, and provide co-enrollment options. We will work with these partners to arrange tuition-free or scholarship-based educational opportunities that lead to industry-recognized degrees and credentials.

Industry sector partners (i.e., employers and/or employer intermediaries) will provide leadership, guidance, and support for the overall effort, articulate skill needs for the emerging workforce, and identify in-demand occupations and the education or certifications needed to access them. They will also participate in skills mapping and related curriculum development and will provide a range of work-based learning activities. We will work with employer partners on ways they can implement a hiring preference for initiative graduates.

Institutional Partners

NYC's workforce development system will provide access to workforce development-supported services, including work readiness and job readiness training, internship subsidies, and access to individual training accounts and on-the-job training resources. These workforce partners will help connect the initiative to the city's Summer Youth Employment Program, its Career Pathways strategy, and adult workforce development services.

NYC's Department of Education will provide access to Work-Based Learning and Career and Technical Education (CTE) resources as well as other funding opportunities. In addition, it will help connect the initiative to the city's Career Pathways and sector-based initiatives, including the Industry Scholars Program and related industry commissions. It will also support work-based learning coordinators at participating high schools, including by providing assistance in implementing the Employability Skills Profile and processes related to career development and occupational studies.

Organized labor will be encouraged to participate in program research and design activities. It will also be encouraged to provide information about and access to apprenticeship opportunities. When appropriate, it will deliver pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities to students.

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE

Overview

JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for Public Schools are soliciting ideas from the workforce development field interested in joining this initiative. The Request to Participate planning grant provides funding to facilitate workforce development providers' participation in the initiative's Learning Community alongside school-based leaders (e.g., principals) and CBOs (namely, those with Learning to Work contracts) from all 12 New Visions schools. Workforce development providers will serve as the driving force to embed workforce development practice into the design and practice of the schools. The planning grants, ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000, will provide funding from late April to August 2018 to support these providers' participation in the planning and design of the initiative to build a comprehensive partnership with schools.

These partnerships will then have the opportunity to apply for implementation grants for the first two years of the initiative from JobsFirstNYC and New Visions and to present their strategy to private philanthropy and government officials in order to build further capacity. Implementation grants will also offer technical support, responsive Learning Communities, and capacity building. It is important to note that receiving a planning grant does not automatically guarantee an implementation grant.

Proposals that include multiple workforce development providers are encouraged, but respondents to this Request to Participate must identify a lead agency that will serve as the fiscal sponsor and will manage the partnership.

We encourage planning grant applications from a diverse range of organizations, including the following:

- Organizations that are part of the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project and wish to apply their sectoral approach to this initiative
- Workforce agencies serving young adults and students
- Employer-led intermediaries and associations

Planning grant objectives:

- ✓ Create a safe and inclusive professional environment to foster learning, reflection, and building.
- ✓ Develop a shared approach to universalizing career awareness and exploration, integrating career development activities into school design, and building sectoral career pathways for students to access postsecondary opportunities and launch their careers.
- ✓ Identify and provide access to program development so that partnerships can develop stronger program services over time, and use real-time feedback from employers to improve programs.

Activities supported by this grant include the following:

- Participation in all Learning Community sessions
- Participation in site visits and small group design sessions and work
- Receive technical support and professional development
- Engagement with investors and government, and presentation preparation and delivery

Guidelines

To be considered for a planning grant, organizations must submit a Request to Participate—no longer than ten pages—that addresses the areas outlined below. In your request, feel free to use both bulleted text and prose. Also, please remember that planning grants resulting from this request will support active and thoughtful participation in the design and planning phase of this initiative (as opposed to funding direct services). Selected organizations will have an opportunity to submit proposals to JobsFirstNYC and New Visions for implementation grants, and will have the opportunity to present their approach to private philanthropy and government officials to secure further resources.

Please include the following in your response:

- Your organization's name
- Your organization's contact information; contact for lead person for this initiative
- A brief description of your organization and its qualifications
- Brief bios of key staff to be assigned to the planning phase
- Industry sector(s) that your organization supports or is connected to
- For the industry sector(s) mentioned above, the jobs for which you have programs or have identified as opportunities
- Occupation(s) of focus for your current work (or occupations that you have identified as opportunities)
- Industry-recognized degrees or credentials that exist and/or that you offer or plan to offer
- Your organization's formal and informal partnerships with employers (and to what extent)
- Your organization's experience working with vulnerable populations, such as out-of-school, out-of-work young adults
- Your experience working with Transfer High Schools and Learning to Work
- Your track record or evidence base that demonstrates your organization's efficacy
- A brief description of what your organization could bring to this initiative, including the following:
 - How you would work with an individual school, group of schools, or all 12 schools we are working with
 - Your approach to leveraging the Transfer High Schools and Learning to Work model
 - Your approach to leveraging other available resources (e.g., Summer Youth Employment Program; Work, Learn and Grow; Work Based Learning Certificate, etc.)
- What questions do you have and what areas of further planning have you identified?
- How would you attempt to measure the success of your organization's involvement in this initiative?