

# Lower East Side Employment Network

## The Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN)

is a neighborhood group of eight agencies with extensive experience in workforce development, education, and community engagement. LESEN works collaboratively with Manhattan's Community Board 3 (CB3), which recognizes and supports the Network's community interests in local hiring and employment opportunities. Although the member organizations (Partners) have worked together for several decades, they formally joined forces and came together as a Network in 2007 in order to improve connections between work-ready candidates and quality jobs. LESEN connects key employers to a diverse pool of job seekers—including Lower East Side residents and 18- to 25-year-old young adults—for employment opportunities in high-demand economic growth sectors. JobsFirstNYC provides funds to support a Network Coordinator. The Coordinator's main responsibilities are to develop and manage employer accounts, and engage the partner organizations, employers and community stakeholders.

To date, the LESEN has achieved significant results including: 123 employers engaged, 1025 interviews facilitated, 325 hires, 3:1 interview-to-hire ratio, and \$11.82 average wage. These promising efficiencies reflect the Network's overall mission to collaboratively improve workforce development practices and reduce operational costs for employers and agencies, streamlining hiring processes while effectively connecting candidates to high-demand jobs.

## How It Works

LESEN's promising outcomes show that its collaborative, inter-organizational, and employer-centered approach to account management is a groundbreaking new model for workforce development. The Network Partners coach job seekers on how to properly pursue, secure, and retain employment, while the Coordinator builds connections and relationships with employers in high-demand sectors and employers connected to local economic development projects. Although Partners manage separate, individual employer accounts, there is a two-way approach to business development—they also share existing and new relationships with one another in order to maximize access and success. The Network collectively fills a greater percentage of job openings than a single agency would exclusively fill on its own.

The Network ensures quality referrals to employers through formal processes. The Coordinator and the Partners' point representatives recruit, prescreen, and refer work-ready candidates for an employer so that the company may interview a smaller pool of better-prepared candidates than if it were independently recruiting. At the end of a hiring process, the Coordinator works with the employer, and the Partners with the hired job seekers, to get feedback about placements and ensure employee retention.

Partners informally share individual and organizational workforce development best practices through regular meetings and collaborative review. As the agencies put their best foot forward with CB3 support, the Network continues to build local awareness, business interest, and job seeker referrals. The Partners, through LESEN, better

respond to employer demand for a good, large supply of candidates, and also provide job seekers with better access to attractive employment opportunities.

## JobsFirstNYC's Workforce Partnerships

**JobsFirstNYC is an intermediary focused on improving employment and educational opportunities for out-of-work and out-of-school young adults in New York City.**

The development and support of collaborative, inter-organizational Workforce Partnerships, such as the Lower East Side Employment Network, is a key component of JobsFirstNYC's strategy to advance practice in the workforce development field. By capitalizing on JobsFirstNYC's role as a neutral intermediary, fundraiser and facilitator, these inter-agency partnerships benefit both employers and young job seekers directly, by fostering long-term collaboration and sharing of resources and services.

JobsFirstNYC plays a critical role in supporting workforce partnerships by affording CBO's the opportunity to collaborate on common issues challenging their work in their neighborhood. As an intermediary, we support these organizations as they design and implement an effective and different way of working with each other. Through an organic process, these CBOs work together to determine the best strategies to effect change at a programmatic level as well as to define an appropriate outcomes framework. In addition to piloting Workforce Partnerships and carrying them through their demonstration stages, JobsFirstNYC hopes to ultimately create opportunities for their replication and implementation on a wider scale and at the systems level.

The community organizations currently participating in the LESEN include:

