



NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SERVING NEW YORK CITY YOUTH, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

156 William Street
New York, New York 10038
TTY 212.442.5903 www.nyc.gov/dycd

JEANNE B. MULLGRAV
Commissioner



March 19, 2007

Dear Community Members:

Last September, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's Commission for Economic Opportunity ("Commission") published its landmark report "Increasing Opportunity and Reducing Poverty in New York City." The Mayor subsequently established the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), under the aegis of Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, to help City agencies translate key recommendations from the report into concrete programs and policies. In keeping with the Commission's conclusion that the well-being of young adults is of utmost importance, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) was invited to develop a proposal for a service learning program to foster positive youth development in some of New York City's highest-need neighborhoods.

DYCD will shortly issue a Service Learning Request for Proposals (RFP) for provision of service learning programs for youth in grades 7 to 12 at designated locations in New York City. In advance of the release of the RFP, DYCD has developed a Concept Paper, a copy of which is enclosed. This outlines DYCD's vision and rationale relating to the service learning initiative. We welcome input from all stakeholders and invite your review and comment.

I thank you for your careful consideration of the Concept Paper and look forward to your feedback. Please send your comments, in writing, to:

Cressida Wasserman
Planning, Research and Program Development
Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street, 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10038
Ph: (212) 676-8109 Fax: (212) 676-8160

You also may email your comments to cwasserman@dycd.nyc.gov.

Please note that we are only able to consider written comments received no later than 5 p.m. on April 13, 2007.

I urge you to distribute this Concept Paper to anyone who might be interested in this initiative and to share your thoughts concerning this solicitation. The Concept Paper will be posted on our website at www.nyc.gov/dycd.

Sincerely,

Jeanne B. Mullgrav

Enclosure



Learning through Giving: Youth Development and Civic Engagement

Service Learning Initiative Concept Paper

March 19, 2007

- I. Introduction
- II. Purpose of the Request For Proposals
- III. Funding Levels and Anticipated Number of Contracts
- IV. Hours of Operation and Minimum Service Levels
- V. Tracking and Reporting
- VI. Planned Method for Proposal Evaluation
- VII. Procurement Timeline and Proposed Term of Contract

I. Introduction

The mission of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is to promote positive youth development and strengthen families and communities by awarding contracts to community-based organizations to deliver services throughout New York City. With funding from Mayor Bloomberg's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO),ⁱ DYCD is launching a new service learning (SL) initiative to enhance youth development services in some of the city's highest-need neighborhoods.

This concept paper is the precursor to a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP). It presents key features of the SL programs envisaged by DYCD and lays out the rationale for targeting youth in grades 7 to 12.

The concept of service learning. SL is one of several approaches to civic engagement of youth distinguished by its curriculum base and explicit educational goals.ⁱⁱ It has been described as "a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities."ⁱⁱⁱ SL programs adopt youth development frameworks to engage young people in a mix of formal instruction, service activities, and reflection. At their best, these programs provide meaningful service activities that benefit both participants and their communities, fostering life skills, critical thinking, a sense of efficacy and self-worth, and responsible attitudes and behaviors.

SL programs highlight the value of voluntary service and the experience of becoming "givers" instead of "receivers" of services. They offer the chance of rewarding personal relationships beyond a participant's immediate circle of family and peers, help instill an ethic of service, and promote civic engagement. Regular service activities bring repeated chances to build self-esteem, helping participants acquire and practice important life skills while contributing to the well-being of others. Structured learning and reflection enhances the value and meaning of voluntary service while enabling participants to use the cognitive and other skills learned to address complex issues that face them in their own lives. With service and learning combined, the potential of each component to contribute to the well-being of individuals and their communities is increased.

II. Purpose of Request For Proposals

The purpose of the forthcoming RFP is to solicit proposals for SL programs that will enhance youth development services for adolescents in grades 7 to 12 at designated DYCD Out-of-School Time (OST) and Beacon Community Center (Beacon) program sites. The initiative will involve at least 4,500 youth annually and continue for three years. The SL programs will be subject to an external evaluation, and Year 1 findings will be taken into account by CEO in deciding whether to continue the programs in Years 2 and 3.

Service learning: a strategy to help adolescents stay on track. SL programs commonly take place in school settings and can involve children of all ages and adults. However, they have special relevance for youth who are transitioning into adulthood. While many after-school programs offer valuable support, SL may hold greater attraction for adolescents than traditional youth programs and be a useful strategy to foster the social, emotional, behavioral and intellectual competencies that can reduce risk behaviors.^{iv} The potential benefits of SL programs are also greater for adolescents than for younger children, since they can address more complex issues and take on more adult roles and responsibilities.

Adolescence is a time when young people struggle with developmental changes on several fronts. At this stage of life, youth have a special need for challenging activities and supportive programming to promote their positive development and foster the problem-solving and critical thinking skills that help them stay on track.^v Research has shown that participation in SL programs can improve chances of success in school.^{vi} One study showed that SL participants in grades 7-12 were more cognitively engaged in English language arts compared to non-participants while another demonstrated the potential of service learning to engage “at risk” seventh and eighth graders.^{vii} Unfortunately, experts have also found that many youth programs “provide only limited opportunities for youth to participate in community service types of activities. Where these opportunities do exist they usually occur only periodically and for small numbers of the most engaged youth. Even fewer youth appear to have opportunities in these programs to explore the communities around them and understand how they can play a role in their communities.”^{viii}

Need to engage middle and high school youth. While the positive effects of after-school programs are well-documented,^{ix} youth in grades 7 to 12 are less likely to participate in any type of after-school program compared to younger children. For many middle- and high-school students, low participation in out-of-school programs is the norm,^x and providers often struggle to engage older youth in their programs.^{xi} Yet, it appears that programs like SL that allow youth to focus on relevant, real-life issues may have greater appeal for teenagers and the potential to draw in youth who would not otherwise participate in any after-school activities.^{xii}

Key reason for targeting youth in grades 7 to 12: prevention of teen pregnancy and STDs. One fifth of teens have reported having sex before age 15.^{xiii} Teenagers who engage in early sex have low rates of contraceptive use, are more likely to have older partners, and are at greater risk for involvement in coercive sexual relationships.^{xiv} SL programs have been shown to be effective in preventing teen pregnancy.^{xv} To help adolescents make healthy choices, avoid pregnancy, and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, SL programs need to reach youth during the years they are most at risk.^{xvi}

Program duration and impact. Studies of after-school programs have consistently shown that participation for at least two years is positively correlated with positive outcomes and that the longer participants remain in the program, the greater its impact.^{xvii} Similar results have been demonstrated in the context of SL programs. For example, the evaluation of the *Quantum Opportunities Program* (QOP) showed greater program effects (as measured at the end of each high school year) for youth who attended the program for more years than for youth who attended for fewer years.^{xviii} Similarly, an evaluation of the *Reach for Health Community Youth Service Program* targeting African-American 7th and 8th graders also found stronger positive effects for teens who stayed involved for at least two years than for those who participated for only one year.^{xix}

Characteristics and Components of the Anticipated Service Learning Programs

Based on research on the needs of adolescents and the potential of SL programs to prevent teen pregnancy and promote healthy choices, DYCD anticipates that the forthcoming RFP would solicit proposals for SL programs designed for youth in grades 7 to 12. Contractors would use youth development models to engage participants in a curriculum-based service learning program that combines structured learning with service activities.

The SL program designs would include planning, group instruction, and reflection time involving activities such as discussions about service experiences and journal writing. In addition to teen pregnancy prevention, the programs would seek to foster school engagement, personal responsibility, and community connections. Contractors would design programs to engage participants for more than one year, varying the structured learning and service activity components to maintain interest and commitment.

Contractors would also integrate the SL program with other programming at the site. They would also have strong linkages with healthcare providers at the site or in the community to facilitate participant access to health services. In the case of school-based sites, they would have linkage agreements with the school principals.

Program sites. It is anticipated that the SL programs would be located at up to sixty (60) Beacon or OST sites to be designated by DYCD and CEO. Some of the sites would be in CEO target areas including Brooklyn Community District 3 (Bedford Stuyvesant); Queens Community District 12 (Jamaica); and Bronx Community Districts 1 and 3 (Mott Haven/Morrisania). Other SL program sites would be located in at least four (4) additional Community Districts where teen pregnancy rates are above the city average.

Service learning curricula. DYCD is issuing a separate solicitation for technical assistance and capacity-building (TACB) services to support the SL program contractors. In addition to TACB services, DYCD will acquire through this solicitation two or three SL curricula which will either be pre-packaged or tailor-made for out-of-school time SL programs targeting urban youth in grades 7 to 12. It is anticipated that the SL program contractors would be invited to indicate their preferred choice of curriculum, but DYCD will reserve the right to make final decisions.

Incentives to encourage enrollment and retention in the SL program. DYCD would allow SL programs to provide *non-cash* inducements and rewards: for example, group outings and trips, gift vouchers, tickets for sports/entertainment events, and small electronic goods. Program designs might also include ceremonies to acknowledge regular attendance and recognize the contributions of participants to the community through their service activities. In addition, contractors would be permitted to pay stipends to cover participants' travel costs and other expenses. However, DYCD would not permit programs to make regular payments to participants that were equivalent to wages.

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building (TACB) Services. DYCD anticipates that TACB services would train SL providers on implementation of the curriculum and help them meet their Year 1 recruitment, retention, and dosage (i.e., prescribed minimum participant hours for the learning and service components) milestones. TACB services would address challenges such as participant recruitment and retention, integrating service activities with the service learning curriculum and forging relationships with community partners. However,

the SL program contractors would still be responsible for developing and maintaining appropriate service placements and support for the program participants.

Contractor eligibility/use of consultants. To be eligible for a contract award, providers would be not-for-profit organizations. Sub-contracting would not be permitted but contractors would be allowed to retain the services of a consultant, if necessary.

Contractor experience/qualifications.

Contractors would have a history of providing youth programming at the site, either solely or in collaboration with others. They would also have substantial experience in the areas of youth development, civic engagement, and either community service or service learning.

Key program staff would have a minimum of three (3) years experience working with youth in grades 7 to 12 and at least one year of experience working in an SL program.

Linkage agreements/community collaborations. DYCD anticipates that contractors would have links with relevant programs and services in areas where the SL program site is located. All contractors would have linkage agreements with local healthcare providers for referrals to health services. In the case of the school-based sites, the contractor would have a linkage agreement with the school principal.

Note to reader: *DYCD welcomes suggestions about other collaborations that would enhance the effectiveness of the SL programs.*

III. Anticipated Contract Term, Funding, and Competitions and Contracts

DYCD anticipates that contracts would start October 1, 2007 and end on August 31, 2008, with an option to renew for up to two additional years. Maximum annual funding for the SL programs in each of the three years (subject to renewal in Years 2 and 3) would be \$4,500,000. Contracts in Years 2 and 3 would start September 1.

It is anticipated that there will be at least eight (8) competitions, organized by Community District, for programs at the designated sites. (See under “Program Sites” above.) DYCD would award contracts for SL programs at up to sixty (60) sites. In each year, funding would be a maximum of \$1,000 per participant for a minimum of seventy five (75) participants.

IV. Service Levels

In Year 1, it is anticipated that each SL program would comprise at least 135 hours, with a minimum of 45 hours of structured learning sessions and a minimum of 45 hours of service activities. Activities for the remaining 45 hours could be used for structured learning or service activities. Program contractors would be expected to recruit and retain a minimum of 75 youth in grades 7 to 12.

Subject to contract renewal in Years 2 and 3, each SL program would be able to start earlier in the school year and comprise 180 hours, with a minimum of 60 hours of structured learning and a minimum of 60 hours of service activities. Activities for the remaining 60 hours could be used for structured learning or service activities. In each year, contractors would be required to serve a minimum of 75 youth in grades 7 to 12.

V. Tracking and Reporting/External Evaluation

It is anticipated that contractors would track and report participant enrollment and attendance in all contract years. Using an electronic database system developed by DYCD, contractors would demonstrate compliance with required minimum service levels and hours of structured learning and service. DYCD would provide training on the electronic database system.

The SL initiative will be subject to an external evaluation as well as internal monitoring and assessment by DYCD. Year 1 program outcomes would relate primarily to minimum service requirements as indicated by achievement of milestones relating to recruitment, retention, and participant achievement of the required hours of structured learning and service. The external evaluation findings for Year 1 will be taken into account by CEO in deciding whether to continue to fund the SL initiative in Years 2 and 3.

In Years 2 and 3, programs would be required to show additional outcomes: in the short term, these outcomes might include greater connection to community, intention to avoid risk behaviors, and school attendance. In the longer term, outcomes might include reduction in risk behaviors, grade promotion, and lower teen pregnancy rates.

VI. Planned Method of Proposal Evaluation

It is anticipated that proposals will be evaluated pursuant to evaluation criteria set out in the RFP. These will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capability, and the quality of proposed program approach and design, including integration of the SL program with existing DYCD-funded youth programming at the site.

VII. Procurement Timeline

It is anticipated that DYCD will release an RFP for this procurement in May 2007, with a deadline for proposal submission approximately one month later.

Comments

Please provide written comments to DYCD at the following address no later than April 13, 2007:

Cressida Wasserman
Department of Youth and Community Development
156 William Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10038
Fax No: (212) 676-8160

Comments may also be emailed to: cwasserman@dycd.nyc.gov

ⁱ The report of Mayor Bloomberg's Commission for Economic Opportunity which led to the creation of the Center for Economic Opportunity is available at: http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/ceo_report2006.pdf

ⁱⁱ See, for example, [Cynthia Gibson. *From Inspiration to Participation: A Review of Perspectives on Youth Civic Engagement*](#). The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service, November 2001. <http://www.pacefunders.org/publications/pubs/Moving%20Youth%20report%20REV3.pdf>. Retrieved from the world-wide web January 19, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ See National Service Learning Clearing House at http://www.servicelearning.org/welcome_to_service-learning/service-learning_is/index.php

^{iv} See for example, National Youth Leadership Council November 2, 2006 and July 6, 2006 http://www.nylc.org/happening_newsarticle.cfm?oid=5453; Impacts of Service-Learning on Participating Students. RMC Research. March 2005. http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/DocServer/S-L_Impacts_Fact_Sheet_-_Mar_05.doc?docID=801. Retrieved from the world-wide web 01-19-07. This research overview of the impacts of service learning builds on the research by Shelley H. Billig published in 2000. Billig, S. H., & Klute, M. M. (2003, April). *The impact of service-learning on MEAP: A large-scale study of Michigan Learn and Serve grantees*. Presentation at National Service-Learning Conference, Minneapolis, MN. Impacts of Service-Learning on Participating K-12 Students. National Service Learning Clearinghouse. http://servicelearning.org/resources/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/impacts/index.php?search_term=resilience. Retrieved from the world-wide web on 01-17-07.

^v Robert Balfanz & Liza Herzog. *Keeping Middle Grades Students On Track to Graduation*

Johns Hopkins University February 2006. See also: *New York City's Middle-Grade Schools – Platforms for Success or Pathways to Failure?* NYC Coalition for Educational Justice report January 2007.

^{vi} National Service Learning Clearinghouse. http://servicelearning.org/resources/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/impacts/index.php?search_term=resilience. Retrieved from the world-wide web on January 17, 2007. ; Shelley H. Billig. *Using Evidence to Make the Case for Service-Learning as an Academic Achievement Intervention in K-12 Schools*. RMC Research Corporation. <http://nslp.convio.net/site/DocServer/caseforsl.doc?docID=106> Retrieved from the world-wide web January 19, 2007; Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP). Promising Practices Network. <http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=27>. Retrieved from the world wide-web January 19, 2007.

^{vii} Shelley H. Billig. *Heads, Hearts and Hands: The Research on K-12 Service Learning*. http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/Billig_Article2.pdf. Retrieved from the world-wide web on January 17, 2007.

^{viii} Michell Alberti Gambone, Hanh Cao Yu, et al: *A Comparative Analysis of Community Youth Development Strategies*. Circle Working Paper 23. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. October 2004. <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP23Cao.pdf>. Retrieved from the world-wide web January 21, 2007.

^{ix} For recent confirmation of the impact of out-of-school programs, see Joseph A. Durlak & Roger p. Weissberg. *The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) 2007. Executive Summary. <http://www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Exec.pdf>. Retrieved from the world-wide web on January 17, 2007. This report concludes that youth who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance. Programs that used evidence-based skill training approaches “were consistently successful in producing multiple benefits for youth, while those that did not use such procedures were not successful in any outcome area.”

^x Sherri Lauver, [Priscilla M. D. Little](#), and [Heather Weiss](#). *Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in After School Programs*. [The Evaluation Exchange Volume X, No. 1, Spring 2004](#).

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue25/theory2.html>; *Engaging Adolescents in Out-of-School Time Programs: Learning What Works*. Priscilla Little and Sherri Lauver. *The Prevention Researcher*, Volume 12 Number 2 , 2005 , Pages 7-10 . Retrieved from the world-wide web on January 18, 2007.

^{xi} See, for example, Georgia Hall, Laura Israel, and Joyce Shortt. *It's About time – a look at OST for Urban Teens*. NIOST Feb 2004. <http://www.niost.org/AOLTW.pdf>. Retrieved from the world-wide web on January 17, 2007. Anecdotal evidence and DYCD participation data and contractor feedback also suggest that it is much harder for providers of youth services to attract and engage teenagers compared to younger children.

^{xii} For an indication of the popularity of service learning, see, for example, *Afterschool and Service Learning*. Monday, January 22, 2007. The Afterschool Alliance. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_service.cfm. Retrieved from the world-wide web January 22, 2007.

^{xiii} Jennifer Manlove, Kerry Franzetta et al. *No Time to Waste: Programs To Reduce Teen Pregnancy Among Middle School-Aged Youth*. Child Trends and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. February 2004. <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/NotimetoWaste.pdf>. Retrieved from the world-wide web January 18, 2007.

^{xiv} Ibid; Steve Meyer and Kate Sandel. *Bibliography: Research On Service-Learning & Teen Pregnancy/Risk Behavior Prevention*. RMC Research, 2001 <http://learningindeed.org/research/slresearch/riskbib.html>. Retrieved from the world-wide web January 19, 2007.

^{xv} See for example, *Science And Success: Sex Education and Other Programs That Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. Advocates For Youth, 2003. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/programsthatwork/19top.htm>. Retrieved from the world-wide web January 22, 2007.

^{xvi} See, for example, O'Donnell, Stueve et al. *The effectiveness of the Reach for Health Community Youth Service Program in reducing early and unprotected sex among urban middle school students*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 1999 (February); 89(2); Allen, J. P., Philliber, S., Herrling, S., & Kupermine, G. P. (1997). *Preventing teen pregnancy and academic failure: Experimental evaluation of a developmentally based approach*. *Child Development*, 68 (4) summarized in: Steve Meyer and Kate Sandel, *supra*.

^{xvii} Sandra Simpkins Chaput, Priscilla M. D. Little, and Heather Weiss. *Understanding and Measuring Attendance in Out-of-School Time Programs* Harvard Family Research Project. Number 7, August 2004. <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/issuebrief7.html>

^{xviii} While there were no significant differences between QOP participants and the control group at the end of the first year, after two years, scores for participants were higher in all eleven academic and functional skill areas measured, and the difference was statistically significant in five areas. By the time youth in the study were leaving high school, participant scores in all areas were much higher than those of the control group and all differences were statistically significant. Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP) supra.

^{xix} Manlove, Franzetta et al (2004) supra.