

Case Study of an Employment Program Serving People with Low Income

Business Link

Riley Webster and Mary Farrell

Lead entity:

New York City Human Resources Administration

Service area:

New York City, NY

Setting:

Urban

Focus population:

Cash assistance recipients

Number of participants:

About 9,000 in 2019

Years in operation:

Over 20 years

Introduction

Business Link provides job placement and subsidized employment opportunities to cash assistance recipients and other people with low income who live in New York City. The program establishes connections with local businesses and helps them recruit, screen, and hire job candidates. The goal is to help people achieve self-sufficiency by matching participants who are ready to work with available job opportunities. It is housed in the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), the agency responsible for administering the city's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and other social services.

This case study includes the following sections:

[Where Business Link Operates](#); [Who Business Link Serves](#); [What Services Business Link Provides](#); [How Business Link is Organized, Staffed, and Funded](#); [How Business Link Measures Program Participation](#)

[and Outcomes](#); and [Promising Practices and Remaining Challenges](#).

About this report

This case study (OPRE Report # 2021-93) is part of a series of nine comprehensive case studies that showcase innovative approaches for supporting the employment of low-income individuals and families, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients. Each case study highlights key components of implementation, including their linkages to wraparound supports, to expand the knowledge base of these programs. The programs featured in the series represent a diverse range of service strategies, geographies and community contexts, focus populations, and service environments. The case studies are sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in collaboration with the Office of Family Assistance, both within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Where Business Link operates

Business Link serves residents in all five of New York City's boroughs. It has one office in Lower Manhattan that is open to participants from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., five days a week.

With a population of 8.3 million, New York City is the largest city in the country and demographically diverse. In 2018, 29 percent of residents identified as Latinx, 24 percent identified as Black or African American, and 14 percent identified as Asian (U.S. Census Bureau 2019c).

In 2019, the city's economy was strong, with an unemployment rate of 4.2 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020a).¹ The fastest growing sectors of the economy were business services, leisure and hospitality, and health care, which accounted for 60 percent of the city's increase in jobs between 2009 and 2018 (Office of the New York State Comptroller 2020).

Despite low unemployment, almost one-fifth of the population lived in poverty in 2018. One study that surveyed New York City households between 2012 and 2015 found that 45 percent of working-age adults were underemployed, which was defined as working but seeking additional work hours (Collyer 2017). This study found that 44 percent of the unemployed and 33 percent of the underemployed experienced some severe hardship.²

Housing was one of these hardships. According to a report from the Office of the New York City Comptroller (2018), the average city household with income between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in 2016 paid 74 percent of its income on rent. The same report estimated that 60,000 people slept in homeless shelters every night (Office of the New York City Comptroller 2018). Furthermore, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (2019) estimated that the average fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit was \$1,831. The hourly wage required to afford that unit was \$35.21, while the minimum wage in 2019 was \$13.50.



Economic snapshot of New York, New York

Total population (2018):^a 8,336,817

Median household income (2018 \$):^b \$60,762

Percentage of people below poverty level (2018):^b 18.9%

Unemployment rate (2019):^c 4.2%

Sources: ^a U.S. Census Bureau (2019a); ^b U.S. Census Bureau (2019b); ^c U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020a).

¹ Unemployment data presented here do not reflect shifts in the economy that have occurred since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. See box on page 11 for more information about changes to the economy and how Business Link responded to the pandemic.

² The study defined severe hardship as meeting one of the following five criteria: (1) often worrying food would run out without enough money to buy more; (2) having utilities cut off because of lack of money; (3) often running out of money between paychecks or pay cycles; (4) having to stay in a shelter or other place not meant for regular housing, or having to move in with others because of costs, or (5) not being able to see a medical professional because of the cost.



Housing costs in New York City

Average homeless shelter population (2018): 59,611

Minimum wage (2019): \$13.50

Fair market rent for two-bedroom unit (2019): \$1,831

Hourly wage to afford two-bedroom unit (2019): \$35.21

Sources: Office of the New York City Comptroller (2018); National Low Income Housing Coalition (2019).

Who Business Link serves

Although all city residents can participate in some of Business Link’s services, its participants are primarily individuals who receive temporary cash assistance from HRA. HRA provides two types of cash assistance to families and individuals with low income. Family Assistance (FA), the state’s TANF program, serves families that include a minor child and have not received more than 60 months of assistance, while Safety Net Assistance (SNA) serves individuals and families ineligible for FA because they do not have dependents or have reached FA’s 60-month time limit. In January 2020, HRA served about 100,000 FA participants and about 214,000 Safety Net participants, for a total of 314,000 cash assistance participants.

Individuals apply for cash assistance benefits at one of 20 HRA Job Centers across the city. Individuals who are not exempt from participating in employment

services are assigned to one of 34 Career Services providers that have contracts with HRA to help individuals meet their work participation requirements.³

Career Services consists of services designed to help cash assistance recipients increase their job skills and find employment. Figure 1 shows how non-exempt cash assistance recipients progress after assignment to Career Services. As this figure shows, Career Services’ adult participants are first assigned to a CareerCompass provider that assesses the participants’ skills and helps them develop a plan to achieve their short- and long-term goals. CareerCompass may then help them access employment or community services or refer them to a CareerAdvance provider that offers career, education, and training services. Youth ages 18 to 24 are referred to a YouthPathways provider that conducts the assessment and provides career, education, and training services.

Adult and youth participants receiving case management services from a Career Pathways provider may be referred to external programs to help them achieve the goals established in their plan. As shown in Figure 1, these external programs are Alternative Engagement services, which are education and training services provided by



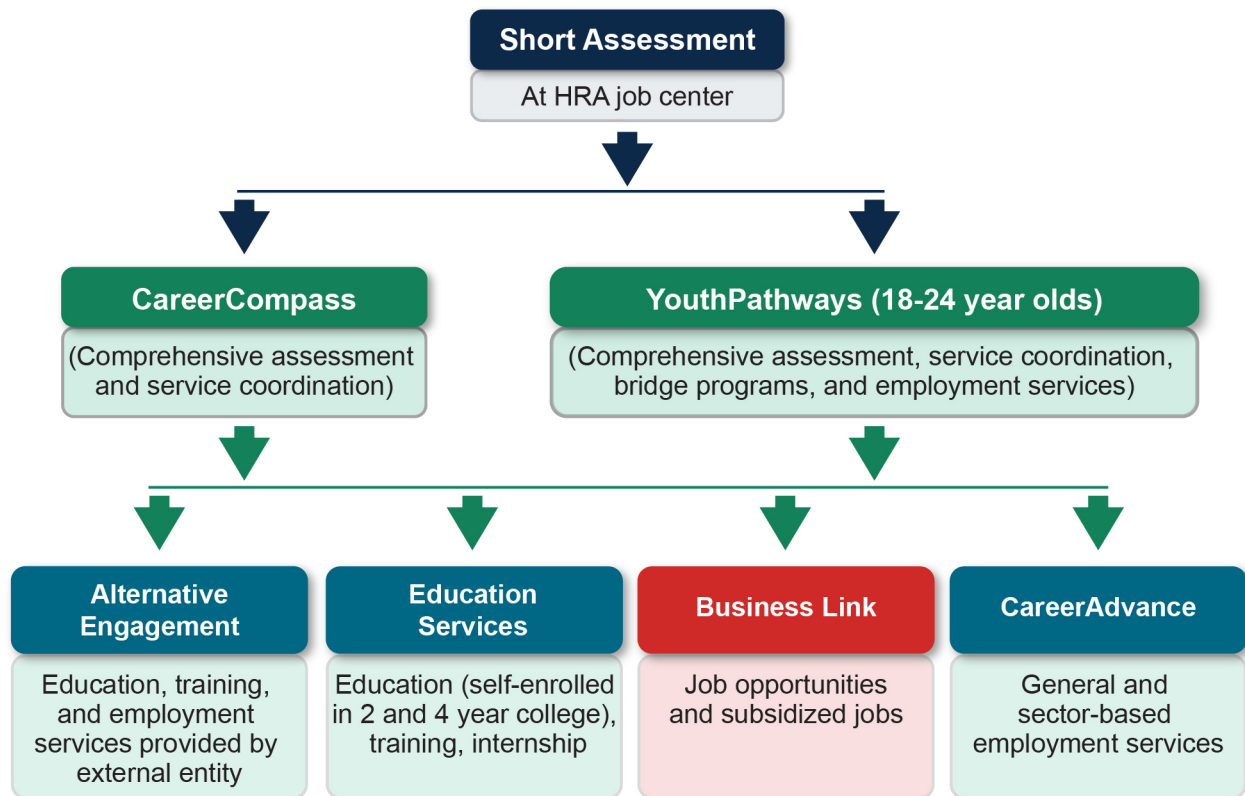
Key program practices

- Dedicated staff work closely with employers to identify job opportunities for qualified city residents
- Several avenues to subsidized employment or short-term work experience placements for cash assistance recipients
- Dedicated employment assistance for residents of homeless shelters

³ Exemptions can be provided to individuals who have a temporary incapacity or disability, are of advanced age, have applied for Supplemental Security Income, are caring for another disabled household member, are victims of domestic violence, or are the parents of a child under 1 year of age.

partner organizations, or Business Link. Participants who are receiving services from these programs continue to meet with their Career Pathways case manager, who is responsible for overseeing their case and monitoring their participation. If participants receiving cash assistance are unable to find employment through Business Link, the Career Services provider is responsible for connecting them to other career, education, and training services.

Figure 1. Cash assistance recipients' path to Business Link from a Career Services provider



Source: Interviews with Business Link staff.

What services Business Link provides

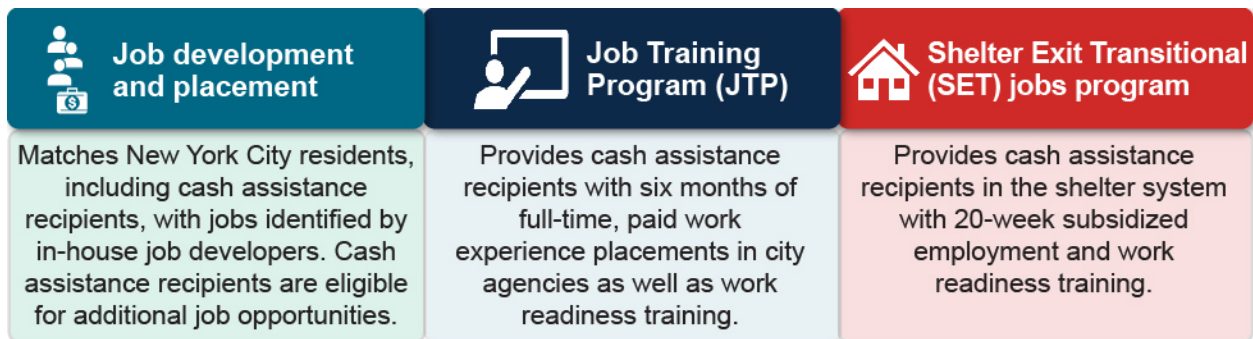
Business Link is the recruitment arm of HRA, matching employers with job seekers who have the skills employers are seeking. It provides free job development and placement services for New York City residents, including individuals who receive cash assistance. It also offers temporary work experience for individuals who receive cash assistance in agencies across the city through its Job Training Program (JTP). Individuals who live in homeless shelters and receive cash assistance are eligible for the more intensive Shelter Exit Transitional (SET) jobs program (Figure 2). The goal of Business Link's programming is to match job seekers with available jobs to help them become self-sufficient and, in the case of SET, move them out of the shelter system. Job seekers can learn more about available job opportunities through Business Link's TXT2Work texting platform, job fairs hosted by Business Link, or staff at Business Link's office in Lower Manhattan.

Outreach

Cash assistance recipients may be referred to Business Link from a Career Services provider if they are interested in Business Link’s services and considered ready to work. In addition, cash assistance recipients and other New York City residents may learn about Business Link through the following two channels:

- **Direct mail.** Business Link sends letters to eligible individuals advertising particular services. For example, Business Link sends letters that introduce the JTP program to recipients of cash assistance and letters that introduce the SET program to individuals who receive cash assistance and live in shelters. The letters contain a date and time for interested individuals to visit Business Link to learn more.
- **Word of mouth.** Staff also shared that participants learn of Business Link through word of mouth.

Figure 2. Business Link services



Source: Interviews with Business Link staff.

Job development and placement services

Business Link’s job development and placement services are available to anyone living in one of New York City’s five boroughs. The goal of these services is to connect people who are looking for employment with employers that are hiring. Services that connect job seekers with subsidized employment are available only to those participants who receive cash assistance.

Staff see participants on a walk-in basis. Job seekers check in at the front desk and are seen by the next available staff member. During their first one-on-one conversation, staff assess individuals’ skill sets, needs, and types of jobs they are looking for. Based on this information, staff try to match the job seekers with a job from their database, which is maintained by job developers.

In-house job developers identify employers with job opportunities. Job developers conduct their own labor market research to determine which industries to target, focusing on



Eligibility requirements for job development and placement services

- Reside in New York City
- Legally authorized and ready to work
- *For subsidized employment:*
Receive cash assistance

job opportunities that match their service population’s skill sets and interests. They gain insights on the industries of interest by talking with the staff who work directly with the participants. Job developers identify interested employers through cold calls and field visits. They then enter information on the open positions into a database. As part of this outreach, the job developers educate employers about the Employer Incentive Program (EIP) subsidy and the HireNYC initiative:

- **EIP.** Employers hiring cash assistance recipients are eligible for a subsidy under the EIP. This initiative reimburses employers for wages up to \$600 a month for a total of three months. The positions must be for a minimum of 20 hours per week. In addition, employers are expected to keep on 70 percent of participants in unsubsidized positions after the subsidy ends.
- **HireNYC.** Through the HireNYC initiative, job developers work to engage employers that have a contractual obligation to hire individuals who receive cash assistance. This citywide initiative requires companies that receive a city contract to hire one individual who receives cash assistance for every \$250,000 the company receives in contracts. Shortly after the contractor receives a contract and registers with the Office of the New York City Comptroller, Business Link will inform the contractor of its hiring obligation and assign a job developer to the contractor. The job developer will work with the contractor to understand the contractor’s business model, recruitment process, and hiring needs. The contractor is obligated to share its job postings with Business Link. These positions must pay at least the minimum wage for at least 20 hours per week. Employers are expected to keep these individuals on their payroll for at least a year.

Job developers also recruit interested employers to participate in quarterly job fairs hosted by Business Link. Each job fair features an average of 40 private and nonprofit employers and 150-200 job seekers in attendance.



Sharing job opportunities through text messages

Business Link uses its mass texting service, TXT-2-WORK, to let job seekers know about job openings.

Staff match participants with job placements. Through the job developers’ efforts, staff have a wide variety of job opportunities to choose from when matching participants. Although any individual can meet with a job placement specialist, called an account manager, and be matched with unsubsidized job opportunities, only individuals receiving cash assistance are eligible for subsidized positions under the EIP program. Participants can also attend job fairs hosted by Business Link to learn about and apply for available job opportunities.

Once an account manager has determined an appropriate job match for a participant, he or she will forward the job seeker’s resume to the job developer associated with that employer. It is up to the job developer who has the relationship with the employer to decide whether or not to send the resume along. One job developer mentioned that she can sometimes convince an employer to downgrade the job requirements, if the participant has the capacity to perform the work but may not have the required work experience or level of education. The account manager serves as the liaison between the job developer and the participant. Account managers and job developers work in the same office, making it easy for the account managers to check in with the job developers for status updates on their referrals. Account managers can also

connect with job developers by email or over the phone. Account managers will remind participants of upcoming job interviews and check in with them on how their interviews went. Because these services are voluntary, there is no requirement for the participant to stay in contact with their account manager.⁴ After the first in-person meeting, account managers mostly interact with participants who wish to remain engaged over the phone or by email.

Participants can receive some post-program services. Participants can come back and meet with an account manager to be connected with Business Link’s job opportunities as many times as they like. Participants can sign up to receive Business Link’s “text blasts,” which advertise available job opportunities. Once an individual is hired, the account manager may check in to see how he or she is doing, but there are no formal retention efforts.

Jobs Training Program (JTP)

HRA partners with the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), Department of Sanitation (DSNY), and Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to place individuals who receive cash assistance in short-term, six-month job placements, mainly in maintenance positions. Participants are paid \$15.45 per hour for 40 hours per week: 32 hours on the job and 8 hours in a job readiness workshop.

Eligible individuals are accepted into a job placement by a city agency. Cash assistance recipients who hear of the program through one of the channels mentioned above can attend an orientation at the Business Link office to learn more. JTP staff refer interested individuals to one of the three agencies, whose staff conduct an interview and background check. Although it is at the agency’s discretion whether or not to hire the individual, HRA leadership estimated that 1 out of every 3 to 4 applicants are placed as JTPs and are usually placed within a month.

Participants gain employment experience. Participants are expected to work at their job placement four days per week. JTP staff monitor their attendance closely. JTP workers are allowed six excused absences during the six months they participate. If a participant has two absences, the partner JTP agency will work with the participant to identify and address any underlying issues.

Participants receive job readiness training. One day per week is reserved for participating in job readiness workshops. Participants are paid for their attendance. Individuals placed at the DSNY Outdoor program attend their job readiness training at the Business Link office one day per week. JTP staff conduct the training, which covers interview skills, resume development, and job searching. Parks, DCAS and the DSNY Indoor programs conduct their own, internal job readiness training.

Limited post-program services are available. After the six-month placement, agencies are not required to keep participants in permanent positions. The job readiness workshops are designed to help individuals find employment in preparation for the end of the placement. However, six months after the end of their

⁴ Individuals who receive cash assistance and are not exempt are required to engage in work and/or educational activities, though they are not required to meet these requirements through Business Link.



Eligibility requirements for JTP

- Receive cash assistance
- Ready to work
- Accepted into a placement by one of three city agencies

placement, participants may be eligible for another three-month assignment. Participation may not exceed 12 months. After participating in JTP, interested participants could engage with other Business Link services if they have not yet found employment.

Shelter Exit Transitional (SET) jobs program

SET is a voluntary program for individuals in the shelter system who receive cash assistance. Staff work one-on-one with job seekers to help them find employment in order to move out of the shelter system. Staff reported that many participants face barriers to obtaining employment, including child care needs, criminal records, and limited work experience. To help participants overcome these barriers, SET has a case management component. Dedicated case managers also help participants work through any issues that may arise to help them maintain employment. Participation in SET counts toward their cash assistance work requirements.



Eligibility requirements for SET

- Live in a homeless shelter
- Receive cash assistance
- Ready to work

Eligible and interested individuals are connected with an employment counselor.

SET staff host an orientation for interested job seekers three days per week. Individuals sign in before listening to a presentation on what they can expect from the program. During orientation, the SET assistant director checks to ensure that all the job seekers meet the program's eligibility criteria: they live in a shelter and have an open, active cash assistance case.

Those who are still interested in participating after the orientation sign a Participant Statement of Understanding. They then immediately meet one-on-one with a SET employment counselor, who will be their employment counselor for the duration of their participation. The

employment counselor assesses the participant's readiness for work to identify any barriers that will make working a full-time job challenging, such as a lack of child care.

Participants receive job readiness training. Once enrolled, SET participants must attend workshops that are designed to build their job readiness skills two days per week, until they find a job placement. These workshops cover topics such as resume building and interview preparation. The other three days of the week are left open for job interviews.

A dedicated job developer identifies job opportunities. The SET program has a dedicated job developer, who seeks to identify employers that are willing to hire SET participants. If general job developers identify an employer interested in participating in SET, they would send that employer's information to the SET job developer. SET offers employers a phased wage subsidy, with wages subsidized at 100 percent for the first six weeks and 80 percent for the following 14 weeks. SET participants are expected to work 30 hours per week during the first 6 weeks of employment and 35 hours per week the following 14 weeks. The expectation of weekly hours to be worked is divided into two phases to allow new hires additional time to secure long term housing and move out of shelter during their first six weeks employment. In addition, employers are expected to keep 80 percent of the participants on in unsubsidized positions after the subsidy ends.

Participants engage in subsidized or unsubsidized job placements. SET participants work with their employment counselor to find a match in the job opportunities identified by the SET job developer. Upon entry into SET, participants have six weeks to find either a subsidized or unsubsidized job; otherwise, they could be removed from the program.

Employment counselors continue to work with participants for 20 weeks after they start working, even if the job is unsubsidized. If a participant is having an issue with his or her employer during the subsidy period, the SET employment counselor requests that the SET job developer have a

conversation with the employer to better understand the issue and try to come to a resolution. Likewise, if an employer is having an issue, he or she can communicate with the SET job developer, who will share the feedback with the SET employment counselor. SET employment counselors are available to help participants navigate such issues in order to retain employment. If a job is not working out, the employment counselors will work with participants to find another job before leaving the first job. No further services are provided after 20 weeks. A former SET participant may re-enroll in the program if he or she still meets the eligibility requirements. A former participant may also be served by Business Link's other employment programs.

SET staff perspective

"We want to try to help clients find jobs and become eligible for a housing voucher, so they can move out of the shelter."

Wraparound services

Business Link staff aim to quickly connect individuals with job opportunities because their expectation is that individuals are ready to work. The majority of Business Link participants who need child care assistance receive it through their participation in cash assistance. Child care assistance is managed through the city's Job Centers, which process benefits and determine ongoing eligibility for cash assistance recipients. The wraparound services provided by Business Link are focused on getting individuals to and from work.

Participants can receive transportation assistance. Business Link participants can receive subway fare for their travel to and from the Business Link center in Lower Manhattan and job interviews as needed. Both JTP and SET participants receive metro cards as part of their participation. JTP participants receive metro cards for up to three weeks and SET participants receive weekly or monthly metro cards for up to 20 weeks, saving participants nearly \$700.

Information about other supportive services is provided as needed. For those who do not receive supportive services through participation in cash assistance, account managers share a general list of community organizations and resources for a variety of participant needs, such as food pantries and Bottomless Closet for participants who need interview attire. Business Link does not make formal referrals to supportive service providers.

How Business Link is organized, staffed, and funded

The Career Services Division, which includes Business Link, CareerCompass, CareerAdvance, and YouthPathways, is overseen by one of HRA's four assistant deputy commissioners. Business Link is overseen by the assistant deputy commissioner for client provider and business services, who also oversees the Career Services providers. Business Link has two deputy directors. One deputy oversees the account managers and job developers. The second deputy oversees back-end operations, such as ensuring

accuracy in the coding of cash assistance cases in the system that tracks cash assistance recipients' participation and requirements. Other responsibilities include coordinating with partner agencies, such as those that participate in the JTP program.

Each of the Business Link services have their own staff. Staff do not receive formal training but instead learn on the job.

Job Development and Placement frontline staff are overseen by one deputy director. There are two categories of frontline staff:

- **Job developers.** Five job developers are responsible for (1) reaching out to employers to advertise Business Link's services and (2) establishing relationships with those interested in hiring cash assistance participants.
- **Account managers.** Five account managers see new and returning participants on a walk-in basis. They review participants' resumes and, based on their qualifications, try to match them with open positions listed in the database maintained by the job developers.

For JTP, a **project** manager oversees four JTP staff members and coordinates placements at partner agencies. The JTP staff serve multiple roles, including as instructors for the job readiness portion of the DSNY Outdoor JTP program. They also serve as the liaison between job developers and JTP participants, sharing available jobs with participants in preparation for the placement's end.

SET's assistant director oversees the frontline staff dedicated to the SET program:

- **SET employment counselors.** The SET program has four employment counselors, who are responsible for the day-to-day case management for the SET program. They run the job readiness workshops and work directly with participants to find and maintain job placements. They are available to participants for the 20-week duration of the program.
- **SET job developer.** Although similar to general job developers, the SET job developer focuses specifically on recruiting employers to participate in the SET program, which involves educating employers about the two-phased subsidy available to them.

Business Link wage reimbursement to employers is funded primarily with city tax-level dollars. It receives some funding through grant diversion for JTP and EIP. When individuals who receive cash assistance receive subsidized wages through JTP or EIP, their incomes increase, which decreases their cash assistance amount. This reduction is used to fund those subsidies.

How Business Link adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic

The location of one of the earliest documented and most severe COVID-19 outbreaks in the United States, New York City had logged 2,604 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents by the end of June 2020. This was more than three times as high as the national rate of 821 cases per 100,000.^{a,b} As the state and local government began to take measures in response to the outbreak, the unemployment rate in New York City increased from 4.0 percent in March 2020 to 14.7 percent in April 2020, peaking at 20.4 percent in June 2020.^c At the height of the pandemic, Business Link was serving fewer participants, and during this time, HRA did not enforce participation in work requirements. Some Business Link staff were deployed to help with an increased demand for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. To respond to the needs of participants, Business Link did the following:

- **Leveraged existing communication channels.** Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Business Link relied on mass text blasts to alert interested individuals to available job opportunities. With nearly 3,000 individuals already opted into receiving these messages, Business Link was able to get the word out about job opportunities at a time when many people were losing their jobs.
- **Recruited employers in essential industries.** Job developers continued to conduct labor market research and focus their efforts on employers who were hiring throughout the pandemic for essential positions such as delivery workers, nurse's aides, and home health aides.
- **JTP temporarily stopped enrolling new participants.** JTP participants working for the Department of Parks and Recreation continued to work in their JTP placements after enrollment stopped. Enrollment in the Parks and DSNY Indoor programs resumed October 19, 2020. Since referrals resumed, there have been 600 Parks JTP placements and 41 DSNY Indoor JTP placements.

Provided virtual employment counseling and connections to supportive services in SET. Although the pandemic halted recruitment for the SET program, employment counselors continued to connect virtually with participants who were already in the program. Employment counselors tried to help participants in any way they could, whether that meant trying to connect them with resources in the community, speaking with employers on their behalf, or simply being good listeners. One employment counselor, along with the job developer, worked with an employer to ensure a participant had access to the protective gear necessary to do their job safely.

Sources: ^a The New York Times (2020); ^b Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (2020); ^c U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020b).

How Business Link measures program participation and outcomes

Business Link staff track information on participants in their various services. Staff track the number of job seekers who walk into their office; the number of participants placed with each of their subsidized employment opportunities (EIP, JTP, and SET); and how many exited with an unsubsidized job. Account managers log the details of their meetings with participants and keep track of whether they found employment (as reported by the participant). These case notes are kept on Business Link's internal case management system. SET staff are able to access the New York City Work, Accountability and You (NYCWAY) computer system to record individuals' program participation and document whether they are meeting work requirements. Participants in the other Business Link services provide attendance forms signed by Business Link staff to their Career Pathways case manager, who enters the data to track compliance with work requirements in NYCWAY.

According to HRA data, of about 9,000 job seekers that participated in Business Link services in fiscal year 2019, just over 5,000 were placed in subsidized employment through SET, EIP, or short-term placements through JTP. The majority of those job placements occurred through JTP. Among those who received subsidized employment or a JTP placement, more than half exited the program with an unsubsidized job.

Promising practices and remaining challenges

Promising practices. Business Link staff mentioned several promising practices that they use to match cash assistance recipients seeking employment with employers looking for qualified employees:

- 1. Providing employer subsidies for hiring individuals with low income.** Business Link's subsidies encourage some employers to hire individuals whom they might not otherwise take a chance on. Employers that hire job seekers who live in shelters can receive more generous subsidies, which can help those individuals transition out of the shelters.
- 2. Creating close relationships with employers.** Job developers reported that they have established good relationships with employers. They get to know what the employers are looking for and meet with the account managers to find good candidates.
- 3. Dedicating staff to work with job seekers experiencing homelessness.** The SET staff provide more intensive case management services to individuals in the shelter system, helping them with issues they are facing, while also helping them find employment to move out of the shelter.

Challenges. Business Link staff discussed three challenges they've faced in implementing their services:

- 1. Participants may lack required skills.** Job seekers do not always come to Business Link with the education or work experience required for many of the available jobs. Most jobs require a high school education, which some cash assistance recipients do not possess. Many of the available jobs also require basic computer skills (for example, fluency with word processing and spreadsheet software), which some job candidates lack. Sometimes, the participants have unrealistic expectations about their employment prospects.
- 2. Employers may not be engaged in Hire NYC.** Businesses that contract with New York City are required to make good faith efforts toward HireNYC's hiring, retention, and advancement goals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Business Link

Schamiqua Young-D'Amato
Assistant deputy commissioner
HRA Career Services Provider, Client
and Business Services
youngsc@hra.nyc.gov
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/businesslink>

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families

Girley Wright
Senior program analyst
girley.wright@acf.hhs.gov

Project Director

Linda Rosenberg
Principal researcher
lrosenberg@mathematica-mpr.com

MEF Associates

Riley Webster
Research analyst
Riley.webster@mefassociates.com
Mary Farrell
Executive vice president
Mary.farrell@mefassociates.com

However, staff noted that some employers just go through the motions. Although they have a hiring goal and must cooperate with the program by utilizing its services and providing notices of hiring opportunities, they will generally not be penalized for not reaching the workforce development targets.

- 3. Employers may not retain subsidized workers after the subsidy ends.** Staff noted that retaining workers is a mixed bag. Some employers are committed to retaining workers, including helping workers who face challenges on the job. Others let the workers go after the subsidy ends because of financial considerations. The job developers noted that when they notice a pattern of an employer retaining fewer than 50 percent of the workers, they will not offer them the subsidy for future candidates.

Methodology

The State TANF Case Studies project seeks to expand the knowledge base of programs that help low-income individuals, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients, prepare for and engage in work. The study is showcasing nine programs selected because of their different approaches to working with these individuals. Mathematica and its partner, MEF Associates, designed and conducted the study.

To select programs for case studies, the study team, in collaboration with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), first identified approaches that showed promise in providing low-income individuals with employment-related services and linking them to wraparound supports, such as child care and transportation. These approaches might increase self-sufficiency directly by helping participants find employment or indirectly by providing supports and alleviating barriers to employment. The study team identified four approaches, or domains:

1. Wraparound supports
2. Full-family transitional housing and supports
3. Employment-based interventions
4. Collective impact and collaborative community initiatives

Within each domain, the study team then identified potential programs by searching key websites, holding discussions with stakeholders, and reviewing findings and lessons from ACF and other studies. The next step was to narrow the list of programs based on initial discussions with program leaders to learn more about their programs and gauge their interest in participating. The final set of case study programs was selected for diversity, in terms of geography and focus population. Case studies of these programs illustrate the diverse practices operating around the country to assist TANF recipients and low-income individuals in finding and maintaining employment. Their selection does not connote ACF's endorsement of the practices or strategies described.

For the other eight programs, two members of the research team conducted a two- to three-day site visit to each program to document its implementation. On average, the site visit teams visited two locations per program. Each site visit consisted of semistructured interviews with administrators of the program, leaders of their partner agencies, and the staff providing direct services. The site visit teams interviewed, on average, 15 staff per program. The teams also conducted in-depth interviews with an average of three participants per program and reviewed anonymized cases of an average of two participants per program. In addition, teams observed program activities, as appropriate.

For this case study, two members of the research team conducted semistructured interviews with eight staff, including the administrator, managers, account managers, and job developers via video conferencing in summer 2020. An in-person site visit to New York City was planned for April 2020, but was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team was not able to meet with participants or observe program activities due to the virtual nature of the data collection.

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