



New York City Human Resources Administration’s Business Link

Summary

New York City Human Resources Administration’s (HRA’s) Business Link provides job development and placement services to New York City residents, as well as temporary paid work experiences and subsidized employment opportunities to residents who receive cash assistance. The intervention establishes connections with local businesses and helps them recruit, screen, and hire job candidates. The intervention’s goal is to help people achieve self-sufficiency by matching participants who are ready to work with available job opportunities.

Funding source



Business Link is funded primarily with local government funding. It also receives some funding through grant diversion from cash assistance programs administered by the city. Grant diversion is related to the reduction in cash assistance Business Link participants receive when they earn subsidized wages through Business Link’s services. As participants’ incomes increase because of these earnings, the amount of cash assistance they receive decreases, and HRA uses this reduction to fund the subsidized wages.

Intervention description



Business Link aims to match employers with job seekers who have the skills employers are seeking. It provides free job development and placement services for New York City residents. It also offers temporary, subsidized work experience to people who receive cash assistance, and it offers a more intensive set of services to people living in homeless shelters. The goal of Business Link’s programming is to help people achieve self-sufficiency and, for people living in homeless shelters, move them out of the shelter system to stable, permanent housing.

Services provided



Case management;
Supportive services;
Work and work-based learning
(Subsidized employment; Transitional jobs; Work experience);
Work readiness activities *(Job development/job placement; Job search assistance)*

Populations served

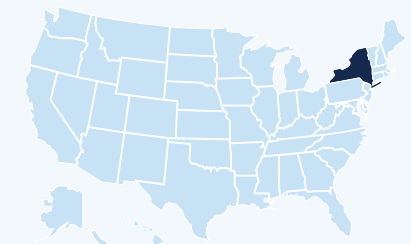


All New York City residents are eligible for Business Link’s job development and placement services, although most of Business Link’s participants have low incomes. However, only people who receive temporary cash assistance from New York City’s HRA are eligible to participate in Business Link’s subsidized employment services.

Setting



New York City, NY



Year first implemented

Before 2000 (ongoing at the time of data collection)

What are case studies?

Case studies provide practitioners with information about innovative interventions that states, counties, community-based organizations, or other entities are undertaking to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other individuals with low incomes, especially public assistance recipients. **Case studies cover interventions not included elsewhere in the Clearinghouse because they have not yet been rigorously evaluated.**

New York City's HRA implements Business Link. HRA administers the city's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and other social services.

Most of Business Link's referrals come from the city's Career Services providers, which are organizations that serve cash assistance recipients who are required to participate in the city's employment services. Career Services providers refer participants to Business Link to help them achieve their employment goals. In addition, people receiving cash assistance and other New York City residents might learn about Business Link through word of mouth and direct mail that Business Link sends to eligible people to advertise its services.

The goal of Business Link's general job development and placement services is to connect people who are looking for employment with employers that are hiring. For these services, account managers see participants on a walk-in basis. During their first one-on-one conversation, account managers assess individuals' skill sets, needs, and types of jobs they are looking for. Based on this information, account managers try to match the job seekers with a job from their database, which is maintained by in-house job developers. Job developers conduct labor market research to determine which industries to target, focusing on job opportunities that match their service population's skill sets and interests. They gain insights into industries of interest by talking with the account managers who work directly with the participants.

Once an account manager has determined an appropriate job match for a participant, they will forward the job seeker's résumé 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 to send the résumé along. If the job developer forwards the participant's résumé and the employer accepts it, account managers will remind participants of upcoming job interviews and check in with them about how their interviews went.

Business Link offers two initiatives to support employment for participants who receive cash assistance: the Employer Incentive Program (EIP) and HireNYC.

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- **EIP.** EIP offers a subsidy to employers who hire cash assistance recipients. This initiative reimburses employers for wages up to \$600 a month for 3 months. Employers are expected to retain 70 percent of participants in unsubsidized positions after the subsidy ends.
- **HireNYC.** The HireNYC initiative requires companies that receive a city contract to hire one person who receives cash assistance for every \$250,000 the company receives in contracts.

Business Link also offers a more robust set of services to participants who receive cash assistance that a separate set of staff provide: the Jobs Training Program (JTP) and the Shelter Exit Transitional (SET) jobs program.

- **JTP.** HRA partners with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Sanitation, and Department of Citywide Administrative Services to place people who receive cash assistance in short-term, six-month job placements, mainly in maintenance positions. Interested individuals first attend an orientation before being placed at one of the three city agencies. Participants work at their placements four days a week and participate in job readiness workshops one day a week. The job readiness training varies by placement but generally covers interview skills, résumé development, and job searching. Participants earn \$15.45 per hour for 40 hours per week: 32 hours on the job and 8 hours in a job readiness workshop.
- **SET.** People in the shelter system who receive cash assistance can voluntarily participate in SET and count their participation toward their cash assistance work requirements. Staff work one-on-one with job seekers to help them find employment in order to move out of the shelter system. After attending an orientation, participants meet one-on-one with their dedicated SET employment counselor. Employment counselors first assess whether

participants are ready to work full time before helping them find a placement at one of the opportunities identified by dedicated SET job developers. Participants attend job readiness workshops two days a week until they find a placement, which can be subsidized or unsubsidized. Employers who hire SET participants receive a phased wage subsidy, with wages subsidized at 100 percent for the first 6 weeks and 80 percent for the following 14 weeks. Employers are expected to employ participants in unsubsidized positions after the subsidy ends. Employment counselors continue to communicate with participants during the subsidy period and are available to help participants work through any issues that might interfere with their ability to maintain employment.

Business Link provides support to help participants get to and from work. Participants can receive transit cards for their travel to and from the Business Link center and job interviews. JTP and SET participants receive transit cards as part of their participation. JTP participants receive transit cards for up to 3 weeks, and SET participants receive weekly or monthly transit cards for up to 20 weeks.

Business Link staff share information about other supportive services as needed. Account managers share a general list of community organizations and resources for a variety of participant needs, such as food pantries and organizations that provide interview attire.

Job developers and account managers provide general job development and placement services and are overseen by one deputy director. Four JTP staff provide JTP services and serve in multiple roles, including as instructors for the job readiness portion of the intervention. They also serve as liaisons between Business Link job developers and JTP participants, sharing available jobs with participants in preparation for the end of their placements. The four JTP staff are overseen by a project manager who coordinates placements at partner agencies. SET's assistant director oversees the frontline staff dedicated to SET. SET has four employment counselors, who are responsible for the day-to-day case management for SET participants. The SET job developer focuses specifically on recruiting employers to participate in SET, which involves educating employers about the two-phased subsidy available to them.

Staff noted they faced several challenges while

implementing Business Link's services. Staff reported that they see the relationships job developers establish with employers as key to Business Link's success. However, 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, and Business Link does not provide education services. Many of the available jobs also require basic computer skills (for example, fluency with word processing and spreadsheet software), which some job candidates lack.

Staff also noted that there are mixed results when it comes to employers retaining workers after subsidies end. Some employers are committed to retaining workers, including helping workers who face challenges on the job. Others let workers go after the subsidy ends because of financial considerations. When job developers identify an employer that tends not to retain workers, they will not offer that employer the subsidy for future candidates.

Research on intervention to date



This intervention has not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness.

There have not been any evaluations of the effects of Business Link's intervention. Business Link tracks outcomes for participants served. According to HRA data, of about 9,000 job seekers that participated in Business Link services in fiscal year 2019, just more than 5,000 were placed in subsidized employment through SET or EIP, or short-term placements through JTP. Among those who received subsidized employment or a JTP placement, more than half exited with an unsubsidized job.

This intervention was selected as one of nine innovative interventions supporting the employment of people with low incomes in the [State TANF Case Studies](#) project, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. These nine interventions are described in a series of in-depth, descriptive case studies. The case study for that project documented information on the services Business Link offers, including populations served; funding; measurements of participant progress; and promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned. This information was obtained through a virtual site visit, including interviews with staff and leaders and document reviews (Webster and Farrell 2021).

Case study information sources

The primary source of information for this case study was the State TANF Case Studies report described earlier, which was based on primary data collected via videoconference in April 2020 and a review of participation data provided by the site. The Pathways

Clearinghouse shared a draft of this case study with HRA and incorporated revisions for accuracy and completeness. For more information about the methods for selecting and developing the case studies, please see the Protocol for Pathways Clearinghouse Case Studies on the [Pathways Clearinghouse project page](#).

More information



More information on this intervention is available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/businesslink/index.page>.

Webster, R., and M. Farrell (2021). *Case study of an employment program serving people with low income: Business Link*, OPRE Report #2021-93, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/case-study-employment-program-serving-people-low-income-business-link>.

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