BRIDGES TO BETTER JOBS:
Providing Access to Training and Jobs for Low-Skill New Yorkers to Lift Themselves Out of Poverty

The City needs to deliver on its promise to invest $60 million in Bridge Programs in the FY 2020 budget, in order to create long term changes for the most vulnerable populations within NYC.

We can bridge the divide between the 43% of New Yorkers who lack reading and math skills and the training programs that will enable them to advance into better jobs, by investing in programs and partnerships that provide intensive literacy and numeracy, job training, and supportive services.

New York City is in a state of strong economic growth, but this growth is not accessible to all New Yorkers. As the economy has grown it has dramatically changed, shifting towards part-time, low-wage work. Over half a million NYC households live below the federal poverty level, and a million others are earning too little to cover the high cost of living in this City. These unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers need support to address their barriers to employment: limited work experience, lower education levels, childcare needs, transportation costs, and health challenges.

Even as the number of jobs in NYC grows, the demand for more advanced credentials continues to grow among employers. However, 43% New Yorkers either lack a high school diploma or have low literacy and numeracy levels. For those who lack these basic skills and educational credentials, prosperity appears to be growing more distant. The economic challenge NYC faces is not raw job creation, but the skills gap between local residents and the jobs that are growing in our communities. Adapting to this new economic reality requires supports which will set job seekers on the path to success. We must bridge the divide between our working poor and the better jobs they aspire to attain.

In 2014 Mayor de Blasio released the Career Pathways: One City Working Together blueprint to transform the City’s workforce system, which included a promise of $60 million to be allocated annually by 2020 for bridge programs to help the most vulnerable New Yorkers obtain the academic credentials, experience, and technical skills required to advance into skilled training, secure entry-level work and access long-term economic mobility.

Bridge programs are hybrid educational programs with a career focus, helping jobseekers resolve crucial deficiencies in their educational attainment while simultaneously preparing them for their next step in either education, skills training, or employment. They offer career focused basic education aimed at people with low to moderate levels of education, emphasizing pathways into an in-demand career track, and the basic language, literacy and numeracy skills relevant to that track.

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The Bilingual Medical Assistant Training Program is an intensive year long program that teaches clinical and language skills to help unemployed and underemployed English language learners gain employment in the high demand bilingual medical assistant field. The program is supported by the NYC Department of Small Business Services, and offered in partnership with the Washington Heights Workforce1 Center and Robin Hood.

Investing in What Works: Effective Bridge Program Models

**TechBridge - Per Scholas & The Door**

TechBridge offers a connection to technology training, job placement and career development services for young adult applicants (18–25 years old) who do not meet Per Scholas’ rigorous eligibility requirements of 10th grade levels in reading and math. Throughout the process, students are supported by a MSW-degree Navigator at Per Scholas and counselors at The Door. The program was developed with support from JobsFirstNYC through the Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project.

**IT Bridge Program (5 weeks)**

- @ Per Scholas: career exploration & IT Support pre-training
- @ The Door: contextualized academic support & wraparound services (transportation, mental health, childcare etc)
- 60 enroll / year
- 83% completed and leveled-up to IT Support
- 17% pursue other sector training/job
- $6,000/student

**IT Support Program (15 weeks)**

- @ Per Scholas: hands-on IT training: customer service training:
  CompTIA A+ & Network+ certifications; professional development, resume & interview coaching
- @ The Door: wraparound services
- Internship and/or entry-level job through 200+ employer network
- Access to high skill training ex. Systems Administrator & Cyber Security
- 80% graduated program
- 73% secured employment
- 27% in internships and/or continuing job search
- $9,000/student

**Bilingual Medical Assistant Training Program - LaGuardia Community College**

The Bilingual Medical Assistant Training Program is an intensive year long program that teaches clinical and language skills to help unemployed and underemployed English language learners gain employment in the high demand bilingual medical assistant field. The program is supported by the NYC Department of Small Business Services, and offered in partnership with the Washington Heights Workforce1 Center and Robin Hood.

**Activities**

- Contextualized English language courses to healthcare sector
- Enhanced medical assistant training
- 100-hour internship in a local community health center or physician’s office via network of 10+ employer partners
- Educational case management
- Tutoring, job readiness, resume and interview coaching
- 85 enrolled to date, with 90% completing the program
- 100% passage rate on all national certification exams:
  - National Healthcareer Association’s Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, EKG and Phlebotomy certification
  - 85% of jobseekers employed as medical assistants

**Outcomes**

- ESOL bridge course: $3,500/student
- Medical assistant training and internship: $10,500/student

**Who We Are**

Invest in Skills NYC is a city-wide coalition that understands the economic imperative of investing in a skilled workforce for New York State and New York City. The coalition aims to make workforce development an economic priority and achieve policy change that streamlines the workforce development system through significant sustained state and local investment.

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