



## BronxWorks: Youth Employment Portfolio

Few cities approach the breadth and quality of community-based organizations as New York City, which is exemplified by an organization like BronxWorks. Founded in the 1970's as the Citizens Advice Bureau, it was modeled on British programs that offer help and advice to local residents. Forty years later, and after a 2009 name change, BronxWorks has 28 offices around the borough and serves some 37,000 people annually.

BronxWorks offers numerous employment services to the Bronx community. The quality of its work was recognized in a recent grant from New York City, as the Social Innovation Fund provider for the Jobs Plus initiative in the Bronx. This program will provide public housing residents with job training, placement and related services.

In the youth employment portfolio BronxWorks operates programs that meet young people where they are by offering several levels depending on the skills and educational attainment of the young people. The WIA Out-of-School Youth program trains young people to become certified in customer service, a credential offered by the National Retail Federation. Elisa Istueta, who heads BronxWorks' programs for children and youth, says that she elected this training option because "we wanted an approach that would attract all the young people in our community. We thought if we went into medical training, it would attract women; and if we went into something like security guards, it would favor men."

While the training focuses on retail establishments, the customer service skills that participants acquire are generic and position the young people to work in both non for-profit and private sector entities. WIA participants also attend GED or Pre-GED classes, depending on their skill levels, and some have paid internships in museums and other organizations. Says Istueta, "We place them in a mix of part-time and full time jobs; some are placed in college or further training. As the recession has begun to recede more jobs are opening up." During the past year, BronxWorks served 219 young people in their youth employment portfolio. To date, 86 percent of these individuals have been placed in a job or continued on to college or further training.

Istueta cites several familiar challenges to this work. "With WIA, we find that the eligibility requirements present major demands of our time and that some of our students feel threatened by the information that is required of them, or have difficulty obtaining the correct documentation."

The skill levels of those who apply, often, are quite low which is why BronxWorks has continued to provide Pre-GED preparation classes, using Community Education Pathways to Success, the approach established by the Youth Development Institute. "We really need a funding strand that recognizes interim results so that we are not penalized for enrolling young people who come to us with low reading levels, and need a longer time to move to the GED level – by far the majority."

## Be Counted!

Where are New York's green jobs and who is training for them?

In what sectors and in what locations are New York's green jobs? What skills do people need to be employed in this high-profile field? The New York State Department of Labor and the New York City Labor Market Information Service at the CUNY Graduate Center are conducting research to find out the answers to these questions. New York City's job training providers are essential to the research. Current education and training institutions are critical to preparing the "green" skills workforce that will be needed by New York's employers. If you are a provider of "green" or sustainability-related training or education, NYCETC asks that you access the green jobs survey and complete it by using this link:

<http://svy.mk/jYZi95>

This will mean that your "green" education and training offerings can be included in this research and can be listed on New York State's green careers portal [www.greencareersny.com](http://www.greencareersny.com)

If you have questions about this data collection instrument, phone 212-253-6967 or e-mail: [lrestler@nycetc.org](mailto:lrestler@nycetc.org)