Creating an Innovative Workforce Development Program for the Harlem Community Development Corporation

Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs
Capstone Workshop Program
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**Project Scope**

Analysis and recommendations will be based on the following:

I. Providing high-quality, sustainable jobs across the spectrum of skill levels.

II. Advancing job seekers in positions with existing businesses.

III. Integrating HCDC into the existing workforce development framework, rather than developing a new free-standing program.
Project Goal

Develop a model workforce development program for Harlem’s unemployed population, by:

I. Linking HCDC to existing workforce development networks.

II. Utilizing existing resources to fill current workforce development gaps in the community.

III. Determining what workforce development opportunities HCDC should pursue, and consequently how HCDC should position itself within the Harlem workforce development landscape.
Research Conducted: Primary Sources

The SIPA team interviewed primary sources, including government officials, thought leaders, academics, community leaders and members of the private sector.

Jackie Mallon, *Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development*, NYC Department of Small Business Services
Philip Weinberg, *Chief Executive Officer*, STRIVE International
Lakythia Ferby, *VP of Programs*, STRIVE International
Hope Knight, *Chief Operating Officer*, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone
Debbie Boar, *Deputy Director of Reentry*, Harlem Community Justice Center
Ester Fuchs, *Professor and Director of Urban and Social Policy Concentration*, Columbia University
David Dinkins, *Professor of Practice of Urban and Public Affairs*, Columbia University
Andre White, *Deputy Director*, SYEP, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
Nina Demartini-Day, *Principal*, DMM Development
Aliyyah Baylor, *President*, Make My Cake
Lesley Hirsch, *Director*, NYC Labor Market Information Service
Ariel Quinones, *Associate Manager – Programs*, WHDC
Career Counselors, *Workforce1 Harlem*
The SIPA team reviewed an array of secondary sources, research reports, and data, including:


**Reports:** JP Morgan Chase - *Closing the Skills Gap: Preparing New Yorkers for High Growth, High Demand, Middle Skill Jobs*; Partnership for New York City - *NYC Jobs Blueprint: Re-Envisioning the New York City Workforce System*


**Commercial Data:** Crain’s New York Business - *Stats and the City 2014*; Cushman & Wakefield - *Real Estate Markets Report: Manhattan Retail Snapshot*
Landscape & Key Considerations
Out of the approximately 350,000 people living in Harlem, 30% are living below the poverty line, 42% are on income support, and 20% don’t have a high school diploma.

Source: New York City Department of City Planning
Connection Between Education, Earnings and Unemployment

Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment

- **Unemployment rate in 2013 (%)**
  - All workers: 6.1%
  - Doctoral degree: 2.2%
  - Professional degree: 2.3%
  - Master's degree: 3.4%
  - Bachelor's degree: 4.0%
  - Associate's degree: 5.4%
  - Some college, no degree: 7.0%
  - High school diploma: 7.5%
  - Less than a high school diploma: 11.0%

- **Median weekly earnings in 2013 ($)**
  - Doctoral degree: $1,623
  - Professional degree: $1,714
  - Master's degree: $1,329
  - Bachelor's degree: $1,108
  - Associate's degree: $777
  - Some college, no degree: $727
  - High school diploma: $651
  - Less than a high school diploma: $472

The most compatible sectors for initial focus are food service, construction and retail. Employees suitable for work in these sectors align with the unemployed population of Harlem. In addition, HCDC’s capacity to build relationships with employers in these sectors is promising.
I. Food service is a growing sector that HCDC has already successfully collaborated with, leading to at least four placements.

II. Food service provides robust growth opportunities for people with low to mid-level educational attainment.

III. An array of certifications and trainings can advance a career in food service, creating growth potential for employees. Trainings are available at many local institutions, including: The City College, Laguardia Community College, Hostos Community College, & Kingsboro Community College.
I. HCDC has existing relationships in the construction sector that they could leverage to create job opportunities.

II. The sector is growing and provides sustainable wages and opportunities for growth based on certifications, advanced trainings and hands-on experience.

III. Many local institutions provide dynamic training opportunities, including: STRIVE, Center for Employment Opportunities, Building Skills NY, The Fortune Society.

IV. Construction offers opportunities for disenfranchised communities, such as the previously incarcerated or those without a high school diploma.
I. HCDC has proven their capacity to build relationships with local businesses. This can also extend to the retail sector.

II. Retail provides opportunities to people low educational attainment and can teach important skills such as professionalism, customer service and perseverance.

III. Retail offer on-the-job training opportunities, making it an ideal partner for workforce placement agencies.
Recommendations
Fill the Need for Coordination

“There are already a lot of workforce development efforts going on in the community, but these are happening disparately -- people are knocking on the doors of the same employers.”

- Lakythia Ferby, VP of Programs, STRIVE

I. Many organizations are participating in the workforce development space throughout Harlem, however, there is a lack of coordination and communication.
   A. There are at least 15 organizations serving the approximately 13.6% of the population of upper Manhattan that is unemployed or underemployed.
   B. Key programs include:
      1. Government: Workforce1 (SBS), Jobs-Plus (HRA/CEO/NYCHA), Young Adult Internship Program
      2. Nongovernmental organizations: STRIVE, West Harlem Development Corporation, UMEZ
      3. Educational institutions: The City College, Hostos Community College

“...the disconnect across agencies and programs is a barrier to helping job seekers increase their earning potential and cultivate the skills and qualifications that employers need.”

- Career Pathways: One City Working Together

When designing a workforce development program, be cognizant of duplication and overlap. When working to coordinate, it is important to understand and be responsive to the needs of all partners.
Fill the Need for Coordination (cont’d.)

“Workforce development organizations are looking for unique opportunities; gaps in the landscape that provide support for employment opportunities that you can actually identify.”

- Hope Knight, COO, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

I. Establishing or supporting a networked approach can streamline efforts and focus resources towards achieving workforce development goals
   A. A well-structured workforce development network creates the most appropriate connections between jobseekers and employers, eases the sharing of information and best practices, and leads to fewer areas of operational overlap.
Utilize A Demand Driven Strategy

“You need to look at workforce development in terms of economic development, rather than as a social service.”
- Hope Knight, COO, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

I. Effective workforce development starts with understanding and cultivating relationships with employers.
A. “Ask nontraditional questions, dig deeper with employers. Visit their offices, and try and understand the job culture,”
   -Lakythia Ferby, VP of Programs, STRIVE International
B. “It’s all about the account manager. She has come to our store, seen all the moving parts, and can describe to the
   candidate what the business environment is like,” -Aliyyah Baylor, President, Make My Cake
C. “Our account manager visits frequently and knows our business. I completely trust her judgement,” -Nina
   Demartini-Day, Principal, DMD Development
D. “It is only when you understand the staffing needs and preferences of firms in a meaningful way that you can
   identify, prepare, and connect workforce development customers who can meet them,” -Lesley Hirsch, Director,
   NYC Labor Market Information Service
E. “Working with employers has to be a two-way street. Strong workforce programs listen and are nimble to train and
   meet employer needs,” -Angie Kamath, Executive Director, Per Scholas

Strategic workforce development must include a thorough and deep understanding of employer needs. Without a solid relationship with employers, programs will miss training and placement opportunities resulting in lower program efficacy and sustainability.
Deploy a Business-to-WFD Model

The resources necessary for the execution of an effective workforce development training program are varied. Organizations seeking to enter into the workforce development arena must ensure their respective input is of added value to job providers and job seekers alike.

Given HCDC's traditional community development role, and connections to numerous businesses within Upper Manhattan, our research indicates that the implementation of a Business-to-WFD model would be best suited to the organization’s strengths. HCDC should therefore focus on:

1. Outreach to Businesses
2. Outreach to Workforce Development Programs
3. Performing a Match

HCDC should serve as an intermediary between businesses seeking to hire, workforce development organizations seeking to train, and workforce development organizations seeking to place employees with specific skills.

Businesses are profit oriented. Establish targets and performance measures with this in mind. Collaborations and alliances may involve many organizations with different benchmarks for success; transparent conversations about shared goals based on economic conditions, data, and local trends are integral.
Deploy a Business-to-WFD Model (cont’d.)

Harlem Community Development Corporation

- Technology
- Food Service
- Construction
- Social Service
- Health Care
- Retail

Workforce development placement organizations

Workforce development training organizations

Jobseekers
Implement Business-to-WFD Model

“HCDC could be the central workforce node for businesses that are hiring in Harlem, but also for organizations that want to invest in workforce in Harlem.”
- Ester Fuchs, Director, Urban and Social Policy at Columbia SIPA

The Strategy:

I. Gather market intelligence through sector based focus groups & evaluate metrics to ascertain sector skills and training deficits while continuing to build thoughtful relationships with the private sector.

II. Connect businesses with placement- and/or training-based workforce development organizations to ensure sustainability.

III. Allocate support (ie. funding, endorsement) to these programs in line with sector demand and HCDC objectives.

IV. Measure success by employer satisfaction (evaluative interviews & surveys).

V. Maintain records which track the efficiency of workforce development organizations to train and/or place participants.

Offer businesses connections to training and placement programs after they’ve been filtered and evaluated.
Build on HCDC Strengths

“The city knows it failed at connecting economic development investments and spending to potential employment opportunities.”
- Career Pathways: One City Working Together

I. Experience in the construction and development sector
II. Existing community partnerships
III. Comfort communicating with and working alongside for-profit entities
IV. Access to community stakeholders
V. Community-wide influence
Recommended Next Steps / Further Analysis

I. Create a list of the businesses, community organizations, and workforce development organizations with which HCDC already has relationships. Determine with which groups it would be best to partner for HCDC’s initial project under the Business-to-WFD model.

II. Reach out to these businesses and organizations to gauge their interest in participating in HCDC’s initial project under the Business-to-WFD model. Work with them to determine their core competencies, with an eye to which connections can be made between appropriate businesses and workforce development programs.

III. Devise metrics for evaluating the potential success of these partnerships and the workforce development efforts that they produce. An independent consultant may be of use here to develop appropriate metrics for evaluation; this could also be a project for a future SIPA Capstone team.

IV. Bring this proposal to the HCDC Board and elicit their feedback. Determine from the Board whether funding will be available to support this initiative.
Thank You! Questions?