

City of New Rochelle
Department of Development

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
THRU: Charles B. Strome, III, CITY MANAGER
FROM: Luiz C. Aragon, COMMISSIONER OF DEVELOPMENT
DATE: February 13, 2017
SUBJECT: Westhab First Source Referral Center Program

Information:

The Westhab First Source Referral Center Program Overview

The First Source Referral Center program, led by Westhab, will connect unemployed or underemployed New Rochelle residents (customers), including Opportunity Youth, with local employers in need of high-quality employees. The program will partner with local community organizations and leaders to conduct outreach and accept referrals from various sources, provide training and support for customers to prepare them for employment, and refer them as candidates for open positions. Westhab will work with their customers from the time of their referral through employment and remain a resource after employment is obtained.

Westhab is uniquely qualified to operate the First Source Center. They have **over 20 years of experience providing effective employment services in Westchester County**. They provide these services for opportunities in all employment sectors, with a focus on those that are, or are projected to be, the highest-need sectors/positions for employers. Additionally, as the largest provider of housing and support services to homeless and low-income individuals/families in Westchester County, Westhab has 35 years of experience working with and managing construction projects. This organizational familiarity with the construction sector will be helpful in identifying, training, and supporting candidates for these positions. Additionally, they will work with Southern Westchester BOCES to provide additional occupational training when it is required.

Westhab's First Source Center will benefit from the partnership between Westhab and STRIVE, the nation's leading network of workforce development practitioners creating opportunity and tackling poverty in 20 cities – and counting – across the U.S. STRIVE is at the forefront of collaborating with city and community leaders to ensure that residents have the skills required to succeed and that employers have the talent needed to compete and

prosper. STRIVE has a proven employment model that helps men and women permanently lift themselves and their families out of poverty through intensive attitudinal and skills training programs that lead to sustained, living wage employment. In their 30 years, STRIVE has brought economic self-sufficiency, dignity and a brighter future to over 60,000 individuals and their families.

Westhab integrates best practices from STRIVE New York's East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN), a pioneering program launched in 2014 to build a unified talent pipeline for local employers and jobseekers in Upper Manhattan. EHTN organizes over 100 community-based organizations and over 30 local businesses, providing employment screening and referral services. EHTN provides employment screening and referral services, staffed by a full-time team of two professionals. It has made more than 100 full-time placements in its short history.

Westhab will work out of the NR Future office and be staffed Monday through Friday 9AM-5PM. Westhab anticipates that approximately half of the customers will be employment-ready and need assistance connecting to opportunities; the remaining half will benefit from attitudinal/motivational training. A smaller subset will also utilize some occupational skills training, the details of which will be determined after consulting with employers and learning their needs.

The Westhab staff will provide a comprehensive assessment of employment barriers, assets, and interests for all customers and quickly gauge the customer's readiness for employment, as well as their skills, interests, and experience. This upfront triage process will quickly assess the customers' employability barriers and assets and staff will immediately work to determine the right track for customers based upon the results of their assessment.

Upon successful completion of the assessment, the staff will use the results to develop a written Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that will initially place the customer in one of three service tiers – Work Ready, Near-Work Ready, and Developmental. The services will vary, based on the determined service tier, with the highest tier customers focused on skill building as they move up through the tiers to the Work Ready tier.

Staff will also connect customers to childcare and transportation subsidies available through DSS and other sources, and will ensure that customers apply for any public benefits (e.g. SSA or Section 8) for which they are eligible. Staff will also refer customers to other needed services (medical, mental health and/or substance abuse treatment) and follow up to document the outcome of the success of these referrals. Staff will have at least two contacts per month with each of his/her customers, and will record contact notes in physical case file and/or computerized records, as applicable.

A STRIVE-certified trainer will deliver eight four-week cycles throughout the year, providing soft-skills training with an attitudinal/motivational component. The STRIVE Trainer will help to develop customers' job readiness, to ensure that at least 75% of those enrolled in STRIVE complete the training.

The STRIVE Trainer will give each participant a pre- and post- work readiness assessment to measure their knowledge, reveal areas that need improvement, and measure gains. This

component will include interviewing skills/techniques, resume preparation, soft-skills, critical thinking, decision-making, conflict resolution, and financial literacy.

The next step is occupational skills training for those who need it and after learning from employers what skills and/or certifications are required for specific positions.

Staff will then coordinate with Westhab's job development team to leverage resources and connections to employers to make job placements. Westhab has long-standing linkages with hundreds of employers, and in 2015, they placed people in jobs with 256 unique employers.

Westhab will work with the appropriate City staff to develop a plan for formal feedback and reporting.