

## **The Zone Model: An Evaluation of REES Zone Partnerships**



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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not, in any way, reflect the official policy or position of The New School

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## Abstract

New York City has a population of approximately 8 million, with approximately 45 percent of the population in poverty or near poverty. Statistics show a high rate of inequality and a lack of access to adequate resources. Housing is particularly expensive, hence the need for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to step in and provide housing for the residents. NYCHA residents are required to spend 30 percent of their income on rent, based on their earnings. Moreover, NYCHA recognizes that such families are struggling. In 2012, the New York City Housing Authority office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (NYCHA-REES) created the zone model to economically empower the residents. The zone model centers on partnerships with other organizations, where residents are connected to training and work opportunities. The purpose of this evaluation research was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the zone model, and provide recommendations to improve the model. The research evaluation used a qualitative method approach to collect data from both the zone partners and the zone coordinators. The results showed that both the zone partners and the coordinators have the same mission of empowering the residents economically; however, the extent of the project's success was unclear. This is because most of the partners do not have disaggregated data to track NYCHA residents. It was also established that communication channels between the zone coordinators and the partners are weak across all zones, apart from Downtown Brooklyn. Some of the partners mentioned they were not obligated to share feedback with the coordinators. On a positive note, it was established that the strength of the model emanates from the partnership, where most partners have vast experience providing the services, and are locally based, hence are well integrated into the fabric of the community. Lastly, the research evaluation provided recommendations to strengthen the zone model. These include strengthening communication and feedback channels, enhancing methods for tracking residents, and having an agreement in place that clearly articulates the mission, vision, and goals of both the partners and the coordinators, while at the same time clearly defining their roles.

## 1.0 Introduction

New York City is the largest city in New York State, and it consists of five boroughs: Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, The Bronx, and Staten Island. New York City is one of the most popular cities in world and of the most attractive to millions of tourists. It is considered to be one of the fashion capital cities of the world, and well known for the financial centers--the New York Stock Exchange and Wall Street. New York City not only attracts millions of tourists each year, but also international immigrants and local emigrants seeking economic freedom and an opportunity to provide a better life for themselves and their family.<sup>2</sup>

As the City grows financially, people of higher incomes benefit more, and continue to gain financial wealth. According to Paul Krugman of *The New York Times*, “the concentration of income in the hands of a small minority has soared over the past 35 years...in big metropolitan areas like New York, because those areas are both where high-skill, high-pay industries tend to locate, and where the very affluent often want to live”.<sup>3</sup> As more young professionals immigrate to NYC seeking better business opportunities, the demand for housing within commutable distance to the central financial hub in Manhattan increases. Young professionals crave housing, which results to gentrification, and thus leads to a substantial increase in housing costs city-wide. This forces people of lower income to leave their communities to more affordable neighborhoods, which are usually farther from Manhattan. As a result, people are forced to travel longer distances to their jobs and will often have to pay more for transportation. The increased cost of housing and transportation forces many people to remain or fall in the lower income bracket. As more people are forced to move to affordable communities, the demand for affordable housing increases.

According to the New York City’s Census FactFinder of 2010, New York City has a total population of 8,175,133.<sup>4</sup> With all of the city’s glory, glamour, and wealth there is a great divide between the wealthy and the poor within New York City. Approximately 20.7% of the New York City residents are living below the poverty line, with the threshold set at \$31,581, and 45.2% are near poverty.<sup>5</sup> The New York City’s census reported that 3,113,535 household earns less than \$10,000 annually.<sup>6</sup>

Poverty is multidimensional, and there are many factors that contribute to its multidimensionality. The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford indicated that, “poverty is made up of several factors that constitute poor people’s experience of deprivation – such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard, lack of income (as one of several factors considered),

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<sup>2</sup> Krugman, Paul. “Inequality and the City”. *The New York Times*. Nov. 20, 2015. [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/30/opinion/inequality-and-the-city.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/30/opinion/inequality-and-the-city.html?_r=0)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “New York City, New York”. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/map/INC110213/3651000/accessible>

<sup>5</sup> CEO Poverty Measure 2005-2015. Annual Report from the Office of the Mayor. (2016). <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/downloads/pdf/CEO-Poverty-Measure-2016.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> “New York City, New York”. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/map/INC110213/3651000/accessible>

disempowerment, poor quality of work, and threat from violence.”<sup>7</sup>

## 2.0 About NYCHA and REES

New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) was created in 1934. NYCHA’s mission is to provide safe and affordable housing throughout the five boroughs of New York City. With over 400,000 residents, NYCHA is the largest public housing authority in North America. According to the NYC Housing Authority, “NYCHA’s Conventional Public Housing Program has 177,657 (as of March 1, 2016) apartments in 328 developments throughout New York City, in 2,547 residential buildings containing 3,315 elevators.”<sup>8</sup> NYCHA’s developments caters to 175,817 families and 403,275 authorized residents (as of January 1, 2016).<sup>9</sup> Not only does NYCHA provide public housing, but also vouches for private rentals, which is referred to as Section 8 Housing. NYC Housing Authority indicated that, “NYCHA residents and Section 8 voucher holders combined occupy 11.9 percent of the City’s rental apartments and comprise 7.0 percent of New York City’s population”.<sup>10</sup> NYCHA’s mission is not only to provide safe and affordable housing to low income residents, but also to provide access to community programs, such as educational and recreational programs, as well as job readiness and training initiatives”.<sup>11</sup>

The Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES) is a department in NYCHA. The department was established to “support[s] residents to increase their income and assets through programs, policies, and collaborations in four key areas:

1. Employment and Career Advancement
2. Adult Education and Vocational training
3. Financial Empowerment
4. Resident Business Development

REES is committed to connecting residents to high quality programs in neighborhoods throughout New York City, which is done through collaboration and partnership with local organizations. In order to connect with their over 400,000 residences to services, such as the vocational training and financial empowerment, REES has created the “Zone Model.”<sup>12</sup> Through this model, NYCHA’s Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES) coordinates services with local partners to support residents to increase their income and assets. Listed below are some key elements of the Zone Model:

<sup>7</sup> “Policy-A Multidimensional Approach”. Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative. University of Oxford. <http://www.ophi.org.uk/policy/multidimensional-poverty-index/>

<sup>8</sup> “About NYCHA”. NYC Housing Authority. <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/about/about-nycha.page>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> NYCHA 2017 Fact Sheet. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/factsheet.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> “Programs Near Me”. OpportunityNYCHA. <http://opportunitynycha.org/programs-near-me/>

- The model focuses on partnerships, instead of offering direct services to help NYCHA residents access services through partners.
- The partners coordinate services within a geographic “zone,” allowing NYCHA residents to access services in their local area.
- REES helps residents access services that meets their needs in the areas of adult education, workforce development, financial empowerment, or business development services.
- The Zone Model takes advantage of unique local opportunities, such as large scale hiring initiatives for businesses located in the zone. The model also brings new investment and resources to under-resourced communities.<sup>13</sup>

There are 15 geographical zones in which REES collaborates with partners to connect their residences to economic and social opportunities. These programs can be found throughout the five boroughs. This paper will focus on three zones: East Harlem, Lower East Side and Downtown Brooklyn.

## 2.1 Zone Demographics

### 2.1.1 East Harlem

Harlem, Manhattan is considered a historic black urban enclave. From an urban studies perspective, Harlem racist and classist policies of urban segregation. Prior to the 1970s, the Harlem community featured depressed housing values and disinvestment. With a specific focus on East Harlem, this study will use current homeless and housing data to validate and reflect on key aspects of the built environment. Based upon current homeless and housing data, East Harlem is now the center for change.

According to New York City’s *Census FactFinder Census Profile for 2010*, Northern East Harlem’s total population is 58,019. In terms of demographics, East Harlem is 6.8 % white, 35.5 % Black/African American, 3 % Asian, and 52.7 % Hispanic origin.<sup>14</sup> Regarding Northern East Harlem’s household size, 35.1% are in 1-person households, 26.6 % are in 2-person households, and 15.6% are in 3-person households. Census FactFinder includes data collected from *2009-2014 American Community Survey* on employment and poverty figures. Northern East Harlem’s unemployment rate is 12.7 %, which is especially high in comparison to the borough of Manhattan, where the unemployment rate is 8.8 %<sup>15</sup> Data collected on annual incomes shows that in Northern East Harlem, 22 % of total households earn less than “\$10,000,” 12.5 % earn “\$10,000 to \$14,999,” and 15.5 % of households earn “\$15,000 to 24,999.”<sup>16</sup> When comparing Northern East Harlem to Manhattan, households feature lower percentages of people in poverty and higher percentages of populations earning over \$75,000.<sup>17</sup> As this data highlights, Northern East Harlem’s cluster of residences feature elevated risks to gentrification, poverty, and homelessness.

<sup>13</sup> “Programs Near Me”. OpportunityNYCHA. <http://opportunitynycha.org/programs-near-me/>

<sup>14</sup> “Census FactFinder: East Harlem North.” NYC Department of City Planning. Retrieved from <http://gis.nyc.gov/census/>

<sup>15</sup> Census Profile 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Income insecurity and poverty are major factors that increase homelessness. The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) issued a report titled, *On The Map: East Harlem Community Snapshot*, offering insights into urban inequality. As noted by ICPH, the median annual household income for Community District 11 is \$31,340.<sup>18</sup> In comparison, the median household income for the borough of Manhattan is \$76,089. As these differences in median household income indicate, Manhattan features a clear polarization between high earning incomes and lower earning income groups. For Community District 11, the top two reasons for shelter entry are domestic violence (32% reported) and eviction (19% reported).<sup>19</sup> The East Harlem community is currently in the midst of a hybrid rezoning initiated by Mayor Bill de Blasio's *Ten-Year Plan*. Ultimately, this plan provides little affordable housing for East Harlem residents. This plan is a great incentive for developers and has potential to change the social and physical development of East Harlem.

### 2.1.2 Lower East Side

As part of the immigrant hub that became New York City, most immigrants settled in the Lower East Side (LES). To name a few, Italians, Greeks, Russians, Poles and Slovaks arrived around the 1840s. Contrary to the Lower East Side's current popular image, this area once featured slum-like conditions. Home to the first public housing project in the United States, the first houses were built in 1935. Given the cycles of development and decline, by the 2000s the East Village/Lower East Side areas have transformed into trendy neighborhoods.

According to the United States Census of 2010, the Lower East Side's total population is 72,957, signaling a 1% increase since 2000.<sup>20</sup> In terms of demographics, the Lower East Side is 22.6% White, 10.9% African-American, 0.2% Native American, 24.9% Asian, and 39.6% Hispanic or Latino. The Lower East Side Zone ranges vertically from East 59th street down to the Brooklyn Bridge and horizontally from the FDR Drive to Madison Ave. Known as Zone 10, the Lower East Side is comprised of twenty-nine NYCHA developments. 57% of its residents report an income from employment and 17,439 residents are of working age. Some of the service areas include workforce development, adult education and training, and financial literacy, and asset building.

### 2.1.3 Downtown Brooklyn

First settled on by the Dutch in the 17th century, Brooklyn is separated from Manhattan by the East River and connected to Manhattan by three bridges: the Brooklyn Bridge, the Williamsburg Bridge, the Manhattan Bridge, and the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel. Brooklyn is an area of high ethnic concentration. The borough has always attracted

<sup>18</sup> "On the Map: Community Snapshots." *Institute for Children, Poverty, & Homelessness*, May 2016. Retrieved from [http://www.icphusa.org/filelibrary/ICPH\\_Manhattan\\_11.pdf](http://www.icphusa.org/filelibrary/ICPH_Manhattan_11.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> ICP 2016.

<sup>20</sup> US Census Bureau, 2010 Census, SF1



different ethnic groups, but in more recent years, it has also begun to attract young professionals, ‘hipsters’, and ‘yuppies’. This is because of the constant gentrification in the borough which, drives the increase cost of living, and cost of housing and therefore causes a decrease of the affordable housing and cost-efficient lifestyles.

Brooklyn is the second largest of the five boroughs of New York, the most populous and the second most dense. According to the US Census, Brooklyn’s population was approximately 2,629,150 in 2016. In terms of demographics, in 2015, 49.3% of the population were white; 34.8% were black; 19.5% were Hispanic or Latino; 12.5% were Asian; and 2.4% were mixed race. 37.5% of the Brooklyn population were foreign born residents. Majority of the population obtained a high school diploma or equal education level, at 79.3%, while bachelor's degree or higher earners were 32.8%. 63.2% of residents worked in the civilian workforce. The median household income in 2015 was \$48,201 while 22.3% were living in poverty.<sup>21</sup>

In NYCHA, Downtown Brooklyn is known as Zone 6. There are approximately nine community partners to connect NYCHA residents to job training and placements, financial literacy, and workforce development.

## **2.2 Project Response**

### **2.2.1 The Zone Model**

The NYCHA REES Zone Model approach was established in 2012. According to Councilwoman Rosie Mendez, "NYCHA’s implementation of a Zone Model will create meaningful economic empowerment with resident participation by identifying outside partnerships or resources that will lead to targeted opportunities and economic advancement for all NYCHA residents."<sup>22</sup> The main purpose of the zone model is to coordinate services with local partners to provide NYCHA residents with services, with the goal of increasing their overall economic opportunities. The zone model initially started in Downtown Brooklyn, and expanded into other zones throughout New York City. Currently, the zone model is implemented in fifteen zones throughout New York City. Throughout these zones, there are approximately 11,000 NYCHA housing units.

The main goal of the zone model is to collaborate with economic opportunity providers around outcome evidence based projects. NYCHA REES provides additional technical assistance to their zone partners to better serve NYCHA residents achieve their needs. They bring in private and public investments into supportive housing to support positive outcomes for NYCHA residents. These include replicating current economic models in neighborhoods where resources are scarce, and testing new approaches. Lastly, NYCHA REES strives to build a “learning community” throughout New York City, which will develop expertise around supportive housing to help residents achieve their

<sup>21</sup> Kings County (Brooklyn Borough) New York. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/36047>

<sup>22</sup> "Press Release." NYCHA - Rees Zone Launch Pr May12-21. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Mar. 2017. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/about/press/pr-2012/rees-zone-launch-pr-may12-21.page>.

economic goals. The learning community in NYCHA will test and implement new practices among stakeholders and residents.<sup>23</sup>

The key aspects of this model are to focus on partnerships which help NYCHA residents access services from these partners, to have coordinated services within each geographic zone to help residents access these services within their neighborhoods, to make sure that residents can have services and programs that fit their needs, and to help bring new opportunities to underserved communities and residents. Additionally, NYCHA REES works with zone partners in four prospective areas: adult education, workforce development, financial empowerment, and business development services. In each zone, there is a designated zone coordinator who works with stakeholders, resident leaders, partners, and NYCHA offices to ensure that residents obtain and have access to these quality services.<sup>24</sup>

## **2.2.2 The Aims of the Zone Model**

The objectives of the zone model initiative come from the partnerships that NYCHA REES establishes in each zone. Through partnerships, NYCHA REES staff makes connections for NYCHA residents. When residents meet with NYCHA staff, residents are given services to meet their initial needs, and then the zone partners provide residents with additional services they would not be provided otherwise. With the help of a zone coordinator, zone partners are able to understand NYCHA policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities. Having this information enables zone partners to better serve NYCHA residents in these programs. Zone partners, with the help of NYCHA REES, have the ability to advertise their services through information sessions, flyers, email blasts, and social media.

In employment and advancement, NYCHA REES works towards increasing the number of NYCHA residents enrolled in services and organizations pertaining to these issues. They also help participants with things such as: obtaining and retaining a job, helping residents gain skills in vocational training, and getting residents a new job in a different or related field. Within the adult education and training programs, NYCHA REES strives to increase the number of residents who advance through one or more levels of the Adult Basic Education/Pre-GED program, GED or ESOL classes, and hopefully therefore, increase the number of residents who actually obtain their GED. Within financial literacy and asset building program, NYCHA REES works to increase the number of residents who have emergency savings and adequate credit scores, supports and helps residents reduce debt and gain access to affordable funding streams, increases the number of residents with income supports, and increasing their assets. Thus, helping residents to move from renting an apartment to owning a home. Lastly, within business development, NYCHA REES seeks to increase the number of residents that have access to

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<sup>23</sup> "NYCHA REES Overview." New York City Housing Authority REES. N.p., 16 Feb. 2016. Web.

<sup>24</sup> "The Zone Model." OpportunityNYCHA – REES » The Zone Model. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Mar. 2017. <http://opportunitynycha.org/what-is-rees/zone-model>.

high quality business development services, the number of resident owned businesses with accessible capital and funding streams, the number of residents having affordable space to own their businesses, and enhances the profitability of resident-owned businesses. Through these objectives of the NYCHA REES zone model, NYCHA REES will continue to work with their zone partners to create the best positive outcomes to help NYCHA residents gain access to more economic opportunities in their communities.<sup>25</sup>

### **2.3.3 Zone Partners**

#### **2.3.3.1 East Harlem**

This neighborhood, along with the rest of New York City, is deeply affected by gentrification and a lack of affordability. The Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES) has implemented programs and collaborations with partners to serve NYCHA residents in East Harlem. The zone model developed by REES engages with local community, increases investment, and provides resources to overlooked neighborhoods. For the purpose of this study, we focused on four partners servicing East Harlem residents.

Founded in 1964, Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) provides free academic programs to adult learners, including English for speakers of other languages, High School Equivalency Preparation and College Prep. MEOC is funded by State University of New York (SUNY) and administered by the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC/CUNY). The second partner our study will focus on is STRIVE - East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN). This organization recruits partners and offers an employment model to support residents. Services provided include job readiness, job placement, and skills training. STRIVE's objective is to work with all residents toward successful employment—especially residents with the most challenging circumstances. The last partner of our study is New York Urban League (NYUL). As a referral system partner, the NYUL offers a wide range of services. These services include workforce development services and employment assistance. Overall, these three partners work toward improving the quality of life for NYCHA residents.

#### **2.3.3.1 Lower East Side**

The Lower East Side is a socially diverse community, with deep histories dating back to the late 1800s. Known for its immigrant populations, beginning with Eastern Europeans and followed by a large Latino/Hispanic influx, the neighborhood has been changing drastically since its earliest days. In most recent years, the area has succumbed

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<sup>25</sup> "NYCHA REES Overview." New York City Housing Authority REES . N.p., 16 Feb. 2016. Web.

to the effects of gentrification, resulting in an upheaval of the ethnic communities that once lived there. While there are still remnants of old, Eastern European local businesses, like Kat'z Delicatessen and Russ & Daughters, the Lower East Side now features newer, more mainstream and “trendy” shops and restaurants. Rent has skyrocketed, and the historical tenement buildings that once defined the neighborhood have been renovated and knocked down, making space for larger upscale condominiums and boutique hotels.

While most of the immigrant population has been forced out of the neighborhood due to these increased prices, NYCHA has retained many properties on the Lower East Side, allowing for lower income residents to remain. The Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability has created two very important partnerships, further, aimed at catering to the needs of NYCHA residents on the Lower East Side offering them opportunities to learn new skills that can help to make them more competitive in the professional world. For this study, we focused on two partners that serves residents on the Lower East Side.

The first partner that our study focuses on, and the only active partner on the Lower East Side at the moment, is the Henry Street Settlement (HSS). The programs offered through Henry Street Settlement are vast and plentiful, resulting in job placement and readiness for many members of the Lower East Side community, and NYCHA residents. HSS seeks to help residents with job readiness by offering programs to develop adult literacy skills and bridge the “digital divide. Some workshops offered by them are “Free High School Equivalency Prep” and “Income Tax Assistance.”

The second partner that our study focuses on is the University Settlement (US). Founded over 130 years ago, this organization believes in catering to the needs of the immigrant and low-income families in New York City. Through their programs, they aim to provide “quality education, decent housing, access to open space for exercise and health, and support for the aging.” Services that cater to these needs, provided by both HSS and the University Settlement, are imperative in providing a basis for economic stability and social relief for NYCHA residents.

### **2.3.3.3 Downtown Brooklyn**

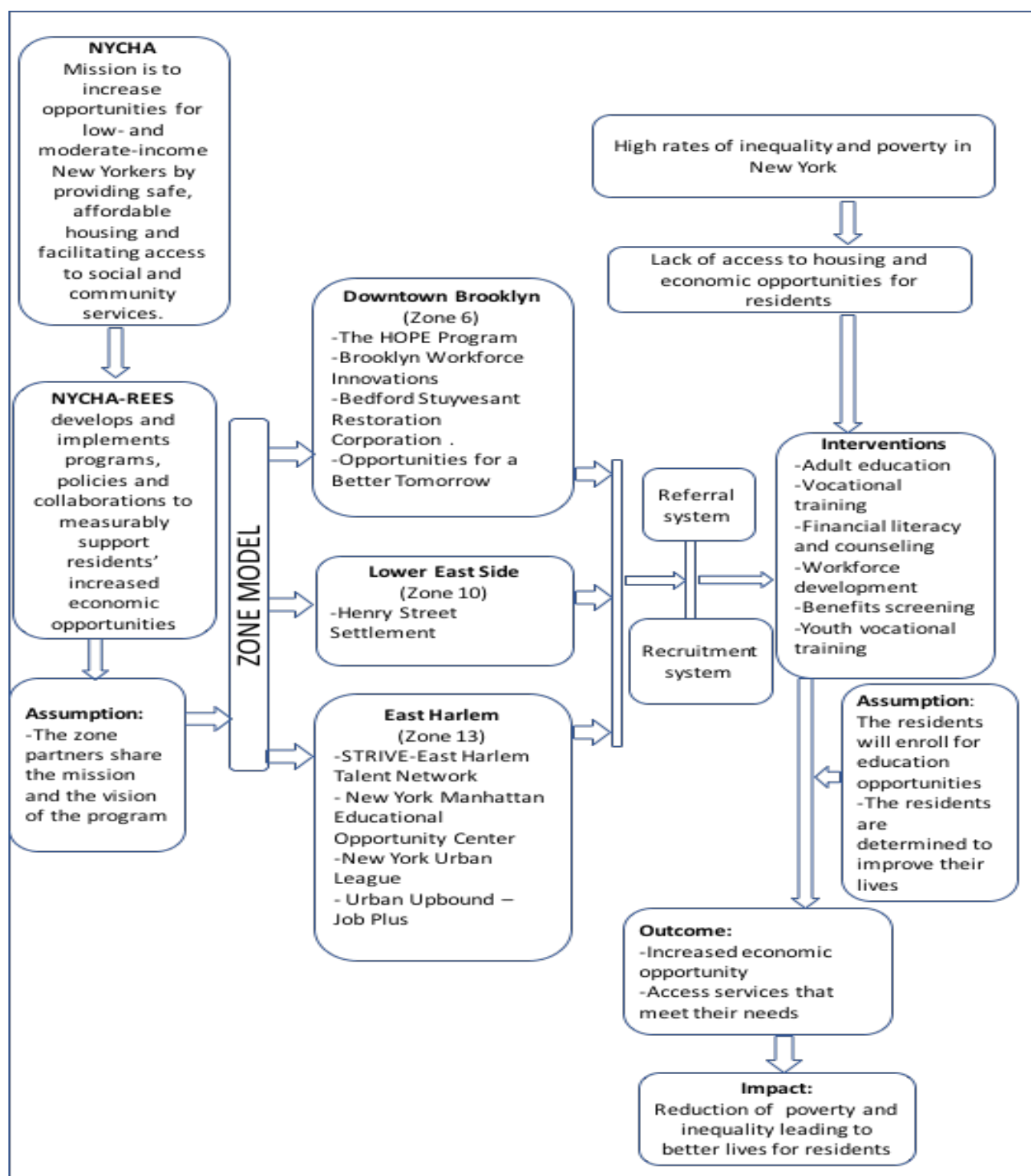
Downtown Brooklyn is a thriving and cultural neighborhood with an excellent innovative economy. On the other hand, this neighborhood has been affected by gentrification, creating a divide between rich and poor residents. NYCHA REES through its zone model has worked with various partners to deliver high quality services to all residents of Downtown Brooklyn. These services help to increase economic opportunities, community services, vocational training, and adult education. There are seven partners that service Downtown Brooklyn residents. For the purposes of this study, we have focused on four of those partners.

The Hope Program was developed from the parent organization of Sustainable

South Bronx. The purpose of this Program is to provide residents with training, basic adult education, internships, certifications, job placement, and work wellness services. Additionally, this program gives continued long term support for its residents. Through these services, residents are shown how to advance their careers, and therefore aimed away from poverty.

Brooklyn Workforce Innovations was founded in 2000 to build a bridge between Leap Inc. and Fifth Avenue Committee's workforce development programs. Brooklyn Workforce Innovations helps low-income and moderate income residents by helping them create a living wage employment for themselves and have access to career paths. This organization has designed programs to counter inequalities in the workplace. These inequalities include racial, gender, and economic. The work of the Brooklyn Workforce Innovations is done through skills training, access to employer recognized credentials, job placement, and career development support. These services are available to residents for two years. Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation is the first community development organization built in the nation. The purpose of this organization is to improve quality of life for residents in Central Brooklyn. Their goals include attracting investment into communities, improving business climate, uplifting families' economic stability and sufficiency, job readiness training, college prep, job placement, career coaching, financial literacy, addressing health disparities, entrepreneurships, and cultural instruction. The Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow was founded in 1983 in Sunset Park. The purpose of this organization is to help disadvantaged youth and adults gain back their self confidence and advance in their careers through financial security, self sufficiency, job training, job placement, GED prep classes, and ESOL classes.

### 3.0 Theory of Change (ToC)



*Note: ToC reflects concepts presented in the project document. It also factors the evaluation team's interpretation of the project gained through meetings, reviewing of reports, and desk research.*

## 4.0 Objectives of the Evaluation

This will be a process evaluation conducted to assess if the programs are achieving the objectives that they had originally intended to achieve. The evaluation will also assess the nature of the partnerships to establish best practices and find ways of improving them. The evaluation is important because it will assess the extent to which the project has achieved its objectives by identifying supportive factors as well as constraints, which will help NYCHA-REES maximize their efforts for optimal outcomes and impact.

Listed below are the four general objectives:

### 1) Evaluating the Success of the Project

- ☐ Assessing the *effectiveness* of zone coordination in facilitating the partner's work.
- ☐ Examining how partners in each zone are best serving NYCHA residents.
- ☐ Assessing the efficiency of the partners in meeting their objectives.
- ☐ Exploring the ways in which zone partners are utilizing the data system to document outcomes for each NYCHA resident case.
- ☐ Examining the social markers in each zone to get NYCHA residents out of poverty.
- ☐ Investigating the partners' *perceptions* of or/and *attitudes* towards NYCHA's participants as well as changes in these perceptions over time.
- ☐ Exploring the role of *cultural competency* (learned soft skills) in the provided services.
- ☐ Examining the *perceived* usefulness of digitization.

### 2) Evaluating the Success of the Partnerships

- ☐ Partnership vision
  - Assessing if there is a mission and shared goals that are clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial.
  - Measuring the *expectations* at both ends.
  - Assessing the presence of concrete action steps for accomplishing partner goals (timeline, expected outcome/output).
- ☐ Institutional leadership
  - Shared partnership decision-making.
  - Shared accountability for partnership goals.
  - Participation in partner meetings.
  - Jointly identify resources for common good.
- ☐ Communication and Collaboration
  - Clearly documented communication channels.
  - Progress reports done in a timely manner.
- ☐ Accountability
  - Roles and responsibilities are clearly define. d.
  - Agreement on performance measures.
  - Data sharing.

**3) Assessing the Sustainability of the Project.**

- ☐ Level of continuation of service delivery.
- ☐ The evolution of project adapting to changes.

**4) Generating Recommendations to Achieve a Strategic Partnership**

- ☐ Best practices.



## 5.0 Approach to Evaluation

### 5.1 Measuring Poverty

In the United States and throughout the world, poverty is a blanket term used to define anyone who falls below the estimated level of income needed to cover the basic needs of survival. To expand this definition, there are specific questions that can be asked, in order to determine whether someone is, or is not living in poverty. In the United States, the poverty status is determined by comparing annual income rates to three times the annual cost of the minimum food diet, and updated annually to incorporate inflation. It is then adapted to factor in family size, composition of the household, and age of the homeowner/renter.<sup>26</sup> Poverty, as defined by these terms, can be used to measure and compare trends, track poverty over time, between different demographic groups, and neighborhoods. Additional factors of poverty include average child mortality rate, general mortality rate, literacy rate, and crime rate of neighborhoods.

### 5.2 Measuring Partnerships

NYCHA-REES uses the zone model to achieve its objectives. These objectives include forming partnerships with local organizations for the benefit of the community. Such partnerships are important because they bring diversity and strength to the project. It is vital to measure the effectiveness of these partnerships to establish what the best practices are, as well as to identify the areas that need attention. This will not only increase the performance of the partnership, but it will also help create sustainability. Partnerships are dynamic, and they evolve over time to cater to current situations and events, and the evaluation framework should cater to such changes.<sup>27</sup> Indicators in the evaluation framework include the assessment of common goals, communication channels, transparency, common understanding of the context, and commitment.

### 5.3 Qualitative Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

The fieldwork consists of semi-structured formal interviews with zone partners and coordinators. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the provider by zone. The period of this data collection is from March 15<sup>th</sup> to April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews, with an average estimated time of 30 minutes per respondent. The semi-structured interview guide consists of 28-30 open-ended question items. The unified instruments consists of sections on the partnership vision, collaboration effectiveness, expected responsibilities, and communication channels. Other sections include partner's perceptions of NYCHA's participants and changes in these perceptions over time. A similar interview guide is administered to the zone coordinators. A complete copy of the interview questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. This method is useful for

<sup>26</sup> Institute for Research on Poverty. How is Poverty Measured in the United States? (2016) Retrieved from: <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/faqs/faq2.htm#fn1>

<sup>27</sup> Partnership Note Series. Partnership Indicators by Caplan and Jones (2002). Retrieved from: <http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/msp/indicate.pdf>

gathering detailed information concerning the subject's experiences and reflections on the partnership. There are two limitations to this study, which are internal validity: limited field test of the instrument due to the small sample size and external validity: limited generalizability resulting from an incomplete coverage of all REES's partners and exclusion of South Bronx, an inaugural zone, from the study. Previously administered interview questions are included in the guide.

**Table 1. Zone Partner List<sup>28</sup>**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Partner</b>
<b>Zone 6 - Downtown Brooklyn</b>	The HOPE Program
	Brooklyn Workforce Innovations
	Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
	Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
<b>Zone 10 - Lower East Side</b>	Henry Street Settlement
	University Settlement <sup>29</sup>
<b>Zone 13 - East Harlem</b>	STRIVE - East Harlem Talent Network <sup>30</sup>
	State University of New York Manhattan - Educational Opportunity Center
	New York Urban League
	Urban Upbound

<sup>28</sup> List provided by REES

<sup>29</sup> Not face-to-face interview.

<sup>30</sup> STRIVE covers East Harlem, Central and West Harlem Zones

## 6.0 Zone-Based Analysis

### 6.1 East Harlem

#### Summary of East Harlem Zone:

- Our findings suggest that East Harlem zone model is “somewhat” successful. There are, in other words, positive and negative features of the zone model is discussed in the analysis.
  - The East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN) offered an overall successful partnership; however, this partner is a recent addition to the NYCHA-REES zone partnership model.
- The zone coordinator Pedro Zapata and all zone partners are well-informed of NYCHA residents’ needs as well as the impending changes to the East Harlem community.
  - While New York Urban League (NYUL) suggested zone partnership complications, this partner provided a crucial level of depth into the East Harlem community.
- Our findings suggest a consistent theme of weak communication channels.
  - All partners recommended more contact via meetings with NYCHA-REES.
- To achieve sustainability, the East Harlem zone model must establish better communication channels and information-sharing systems.

### Objective 1. Evaluating the Success of the Project

Despite some pitfalls, the findings indicate that the zone model approach is *somewhat* successful in East Harlem. From the interview, it was evident that the project conducted by Urban Upbound through the Job-Plus contract is achieving its goals. Humphries, the community engagement manager, mentioned that success is verified through 3 month, 6 month, and one year retention milestones, where the residents are given incentives to bring pay stubs which show that they are currently working. In addition, the organization continues to work with residents after they have secured a job. It was also evident that East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN) is successful in serving *different* age groups of NYCHA residents. Unlike other hiring agencies, EHTN services are free of charge. From the interview, it was evident that the partnership project made a *partial* achievement of its immediate objectives. In addition to resident retention, EHTN helped in placing 34 residents in jobs related to the foodservice businesses. However, it failed to put together a food service-based training for ten residents. The reasons for this failure included lack of time and inadequate funds. Similarly, Paleski, the director of operations at Manhattan Educational Opportunity Centre (MEOC), believed that the project is successful, because they have graduates who become successful after taking

their services. However, she pointed out that the organization experiences dropout rates of 25-40%, depending on the program. She mentioned that the main reason that someone would drop out of the program is because it becomes harder to convince an adult to stay in class for a long period while their goal is to immediately make money, and sometimes they have other family commitments. She argued that people who stay in the program have better job placements, because it is harder to get a job without the certificates they offer upon completion of the program. These findings are *slightly* in align with the findings based on the zone coordinator interview. The main goal for REES is to increase residents' ability to pay their rent and increase their access to being able to become financially stable. For REES, the zone model project seems to achieve its immediate objective. Zapata, East Harlem's zone coordinator stated, "I have seen residents from having no job to being able to get a new job and continue getting promotions and even now be at a point where there are looking to buy a house. When four years ago, they were barely being able to make rent."<sup>31</sup> It is worth mentioning that the zone partnership model may sometimes offer residents the services outside their local communities. This seems to defy the whole purpose of the zone partnership model, which is to allow residents to take the most advantage of the resources provided in their zone. Zapata pointed out that this option is only available to those who have no problem with commuting.

There is a general indication of a pronounced and versatile effort that is put forth to serve the East Harlem residents. New York Urban League has participated in the zone coordination model since 2013. Coleman, the director of career & employment services, explained that joining the NYCHA-REES program was "a more effective way to reach out to the underserved population."<sup>32</sup> In terms of services offered to NYCHA-REES, Coleman emphasized four methods to job readiness that assist clients: assessment, updating resumes, interview techniques, and job searching. NYLU services help residents engage with new technologies to gain employment. Similarly, the interview with Humphries highlighted that Urban Upbound provides several services to NYCHA residents to enable them to uplift their lives and break the cycle of poverty. The organization operates a Job-Plus contract that focuses on three NYCHA developments: Jefferson, Johnson, and Clinton, and works closely with NYCHA-REES through a referral system. Within the system, the residents are referred to Job-Plus for different types of services including financial, training, and pre-employment services. Job-Plus also offers rent incentive programs, and conducts workshops for small businesses. Further expanding on their services, Humphries further stated that they offer tax preparation services for anyone who lives in NYCHA development, and that makes under \$ 64,000 a year. They also offer a somewhat free employment agency to help fast track employment opportunities for NYCHA residents by building resumes, doing mock-up interviews, helping in credit repairs and debt reduction, and offering financial counselling. The goal of these services is to create financial independence. Moreover, MEOC works with NYCHA residents through a referral system from NYCHA-REES, and its main goal is to help eligible New Yorkers in their program to attain education and workforce credentials. MEOC offers academic and vocational training. The organization offers English classes, preparation for high school

<sup>31</sup> Zapata, P. (2017, March 8). Personal interview.

<sup>32</sup> Coleman, D. (2017, March 18). Personal interview

equivalency diploma, prepare for college, and earn vocational credential certificate. Additionally, it offers career readiness services and workshops. Apart from offering trainings, Paleski also mentioned that the organization offers pre-employment services, and partners with other services providers that help the students connect to job opportunities. Lastly, EHTN is an incubated program at STRIVE International. EHTN, a job placement agency, has been working with REES for a year. It focuses on local hiring only, from GED to masters holders, by placing East Harlem residents in one of the four training tracks and then placing them in jobs. Given its recent program expansion, the organization is able to serve the youth community through the Serve UP Harlem training. The program prepares the youth aged 18-24 years old to serve in the hospitality industry. Moreover, EHTN is successful in providing cultural competence training to residents. Developing soft skills is considered to be the core program of EHTN. The organization has been founded on the basis of fostering interpersonal and interviewing skills, self-development and professionalism. In short, EHTN mission focuses on the “mindset to get someone ready to go to work,” as Mack, EHTN’s director mentioned.

The role of zone coordinators seems to provide an *effective* facilitation of the project. This would eventually assist in the overall successfulness of the project. It is worth noting the role of the zone coordinators has changed over time. The first wave of zone coordinators followed a more scientific and analytical approach to policy implementation and program delivery. In addition to maintaining data, the second wave of zone coordinators adopted a more community engagement approach. Compared to the former, the latter method seems to be more inclusive. Zapata stated, “these are two totally different methodologies working toward the same goals and two different backgrounds...they were more research-based, more analytical. As opposed to [the] second wave; they were more community engagement, more community interaction. And it happened to work better that way.”<sup>33</sup> The zone coordinator ensures that the workforce development programs are catering to the current status of the labor market to optimize success. This is performed by assessing the labor markets and the types of jobs that are in demand. For example, Zapata noted, “hotels’ services, hospitality, and food service are the biggest new economic indicators”<sup>34</sup> in East Harlem. Therefore, the programs are geared towards those sectors as a response to emerging markets and opportunities. During selection phase, the zone coordinator looks for partners with an understanding of the public housing residents and culture. Additionally, the coordinator looks for residents with experience in working with public housing community. The zone coordination unit provides services to the residents based on their expressed needs. Zapata stated, “A lot of residents come to us because of a problem or an event that would trigger them not to be able to pay their rent...others are based out of recruitment events or referrals at recruitment events. They have pretty stable job but in order to receive that promotion they need a HIC...and they know...we have partners that provide those programs.”<sup>35</sup>

Overall, there is a common practice among zone coordinator and partners for tracking progress of their beneficiaries. Similar to other partners, EHTN uses data to track

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<sup>33</sup> Zapata, P. (2017, March 8). Personal interview.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

the performance of not just the client, but also the program. REES is also successful in maintaining an internal dataset, which tracks if a resident attended REES's events, had an interview, received an assessment by the specialist, enrolled into the program, completed a program, and obtained a job. However, it is evident that the post first-level interactions between residents and partners are not tracked in the system. Zapata explained, "they have come to a healthcare seminar...in May but after they went to that first interview, they may have found out that about other programs that they may be interested in or other services that they could take advantage of at the same partner, at the same site. We don't know if they went that route or what route they went to and that's what I wanted to add" into the referral system.<sup>36</sup>

When asked about the organization's perceptions of NYCHA's participants and if these perceptions have changed over time, the partners took a neutral leaning positive stand. Coleman acknowledged that a balanced perception of the East Harlem community is a major component to engage with NYCHA residents. Coleman stated she experienced *more* positive relationships with residents, but suggested that in recent years referrals are increasingly uniformed. Notable, Coleman identifies her relationship to the community as having a major impact on providing services. She stated, "I am also a Harlem resident and I know the difference. *You don't want to label or stigmatize someone from where they live. So that's the equity part of it.* You treating everyone exactly the same and when they come you see where they are."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Mack indicated that there is no generalized perception of NYCHA residents. She clarified, "my perceptions of NYCHA residents are people who are looking for opportunities, employment and get connected to that information. One of my staff members here is a NYCHA resident ... she has a Bachelor's degree...But there are some people who may lack skill set or lack accessibility to technology...But that doesn't mean that is a NYCHA thing, that may just be that person circumstance. So I don't have a generalized idea of NYCHA residents."<sup>38</sup>

## Objective 2. Evaluating the Success of the Partnerships

The NYCHA-REES program aims to improve the living conditions of residents. To improve life opportunities, the success of the Zone Coordination Model is crucial. This section will highlight the success of the following partnerships, which include New York Urban League, Urban Upbound, Manhattan Education Opportunity (MEOC), and East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN). Before elaborating on each individual partner, it is important to establish the vision of the zone coordinator. According to Pedro Zapata, the East Harlem Zone Coordinator, the partnership model is generally successful. Zapata suggests that the mission of the program is clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial. For Zapata, a "common vision is crucial."<sup>39</sup> Lastly, the success of the partnership model relies on communication channels between the zone coordinator and partners.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> Coleman, D. (2017, March 18). Personal interview.

<sup>38</sup> Mack, A. (2017, March 22). Personal Interview.

<sup>39</sup> Zapata, P. (2017, March 8). Personal Interview.

The qualitative methodology, which consisted of semi-structured interviews reveals an unexpected weak communication between NYCHA-REES and zone partnerships. Before addressing the complications, it is important to acknowledge a positive feature of the zone coordinator model. For all the zone partnerships, NYCHA-REES plays an instrumental role in connecting zone partners to East Harlem's underserved population. In regards to dilemmas facing the partnership model, Urban Upbound, NYUL, and MEOC offered varying degrees of documented communication channels. For example, NYUL's interviewee emphasized a generalized expectation from NYCHA-REES. The respondent noted that the last progress report received was two years ago. In the case of Urban Upbound, the interviewee described the zone partnership as a "nebulous relationship."<sup>40</sup> In other words, NYCHA acts as a gateway to clients and Urban Upbound focuses on providing meaningful services. MEOC acknowledges that contact does occur through phone and email, but there are no clear guidelines of communication. Unlike these three partnerships, EHTN offered a more positive view of communication. Over the course of a 1-year contract, the interviewee stated a "somewhat effective communication channel."<sup>41</sup> While Urban Upbound, MEOC, and EHTN suggest a similar vision, NYUL's interviewed emphasized that the "vision has not been communicated."<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, partners like MEOC, EHTN, Urban Upbound suggested an established partnership vision; on the other hand, NYUL emphasized the opposite. Unlike EHTN, a majority of zone partners offer insights into lack of accountability, shared leadership, and communication channels. Overall, our research findings present a marked contrast from the zone coordinator. These findings have practical implications for the zone coordinator who wishes to increase sustainability. In order to address complications of NYCHA-REES, better planning is needed as well as better communication between the zone coordinator and partners. By establishing better communication channels in existing partnerships, other gaps can properly be addressed.

### **Objective 3. Assessing the Sustainability of the Project**

The sustainability of the zone model in East Harlem emanates from several factors, including the nature of the model. REES partners with various organizations who are place-based, and have vast experience working with low income communities. For instance, Urban Upbound, operating under the Job Plus contract, has 13 years of experience and is based in one of the NYCHA developments. This not only creates accessibility and convenience, but it also helps these organizations integrate into the fabric of the society, making residents feel at ease as they solicit for services. Having awareness of the changing markets is another great factor that contributes to the sustainability of this project. This attribute was strongly mentioned by both New York Urban League (NYUL) and East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN). The partners explained that the hospitality industry is booming in East Harlem, hence they have had to adjust their services to cater to the market change. Other factors contributing to sustainability includes great leadership as mentioned by Manhattan Educational Opportunity Centre and the voluntary nature of the services offered, which ensures that residents in need are

<sup>40</sup> Humphries, J. (2017, March 20). Personal Interview.

<sup>41</sup> Mack, A. (2017, March 22). Personal Interview

<sup>42</sup> Coleman, D.(2017, March 18). Personal Interview.

helped.

Despite all of the factors that enhance sustainability, several challenges have been observed, stated by both the zone coordinator and the partners. One of the main challenges is that residents have conflicting life priorities. In some cases, it becomes increasingly difficult to convince an adult that a few weeks of trainings would lead to a job. Some of them want instant jobs, which are hard to get without certifications. Other challenges that were observed across partners is the lack of partnership agreements and clearly stated mission, vision, and communication channels for feedback. Most partners seemed to elude that meetings between REES and partners do not occur as often as they once did, and that information is not shared as often, despite the zone coordinators stating that there is clear communication and information sharing. Another challenge expressed included a lack of adequate resources, and restrictions to a specific type of service or geographical area. This was especially expressed by East Harlem Talent Network who was tasked to provide food service training, but they did not have adequate resources to meet the target within the specified timeline. Also, Job Plus stated they are forced to turn away some residents because they do not belong to the three developments they serve.

#### **Objective 4. Generating Recommendations to Achieve a Strategic Partnership**

NYCHA REES is encouraged to create a partnership agreement with its zone partners, with clearly stated mission and goals. Communication channels should be clearly stated with an avenue for feedback sharing. While acknowledging that e-mails and phone calls are great tools for communication, it is recommended that face to face meetings are incorporated in these agreements. Quarterly meetings will be especially useful to discuss project and partnership challenges, share information, and find a way to move forward in the partnership. It may also be good to consider one annual meeting where all partners are invited to share their experiences and best practices.

Lastly, and most importantly, the definition of project success should be expanded by NYCHA REES. Despite the use of a quantitative approach to measure success, it is not clear whether they are measuring the full extent of project success, which is exacerbated by the fact that tracking the residents is hard in some instances. This is clearly seen when the zone partner (Pedro Zapata) was asked about how they track the residents, and he is quoted saying it can be difficult to track what happens to the residents after the initial interview. Below are Pedro exact words

“This is a question that I ask myself a lot since I am always trying to figure out how to tell the data or explain the data... What we don’t know is, what happens to the resident after they attend that interview or that intake interview with that partner...Let’s say the partner that they were referred to was a multiservice partner...after they went to that first interview, they may have found out that about other programs that they may be interested in or other services that they could take advantage of at the same partner, at the same site. We don’t know if they went



that route or what route they went to.”<sup>43</sup>

It is important that NYCHA REES incorporates a reporting mechanism, where the residents can be properly tracked. As an example, Job Plus seems to elude that they do a great job tracking the residents up to one year after an initial job offer, however this information is not shared with NYCHA-REES. It would be great for other partners to adopt a similar mechanism that would track the residents over a specified time. On REES’s side, it would be vital to assign permanent identifiers to each resident they refer or recruit. This will help REES know which residents succeed, as opposed to a situation where referred residents keep retuning for help.

## 6.2 Lower East Side

### Summary of Analysis:

- Goals were the same across all platforms: Provide participants with the skills needed to rise up and out of poverty
- Emphasis on both hard and soft skills to obtain and retain employment
- Miscommunication was high because of a decrease in face to face meetings between zone coordinator and partners
- No feedback system was required which made assessing success of the partnerships difficult

### Objective 1. Evaluating the Success of the Project

Lisa Jaradat and Lisa Tomanelli (Henry Street Settlement; HSS) have stated that they do try to converse as much as possible about their partnership, and even more about the specifics of the programs available, in order to ensure that the best possible outcomes are produced on both ends. However, Jennifer Vallone (University Settlement; US) seems to lack a clear channel of communication with REES.

For HSS, even more surprising information was revealed throughout the interview with Lisa. As we have stated before, HSS has been serving the Lower East Side Community for decades, and only recently began this partnership with REES. For this fact, among others, Lisa has said that they rarely distinguish the NYCHA residents from other participants of the programs they offer. For this reason, there is virtually no way that REES, Henry Street, or ourselves can truly assess how the partners are serving the NYCHA residents. All participants are looked at as one collective group, (i.e. residents of the Lower East Side), rather than broken up into NYCHA residents, REES participants, etc. We have noted that this may not be the best option for the reasons of our project. The reason being, in order to be able to assess how the partner is serving the NYCHA residents, they must be identified throughout all of the programs that they participate in, in order for us to

<sup>43</sup> Zapata, P. (2017, March 8). Personal Interview.

obtain feedback as to how these programs have served them in the long-run. If there are no long-term results, then perhaps a modification should be made to the program. However, with the current information system in place, these results are null. The same holds true for University Settlement. From the answers provided by Jennifer, it is clear that participants are not labeled as NYCHA residents, therefore resulting in the same outcome as HSS. Regardless, the partnerships do seem to show overall successes in their practices. It is difficult to assess the success of NYCHA residents for this reason.

Moreover, because HSS and US do not identify NYCHA residents from other participants in the referral system, this practice is both effective and ineffective. REES does refer prospective participants to Henry Street and Henry Street will then reach out to them because of this referral. In that respect, the referral system is instrumental in pulling NYCHA residents into the programs. However, there is no data system to then track those residents throughout their progress and time at Henry Street or University Settlement, something that should be implemented to more easily and organizationally facilitate feedback to give to REES.

In meeting with the zone coordinator, Lisa Jaradat, she explained the overall demographics of NYCHA participants in her zone to be primarily people of Latin American descent, and some Southeast Asian groups as well, made up the largest percentage of people involved. For housing purposes, she expressed that most of the participants are single mothers, looking for help finding a job and housing, and help with the children in order for her to get a proper, full-time job. However, because both HSS and US do not identify who is a part of NYCHA housing and who is not, there is no way that they can discriminate or have a more distinctive attitude towards the participants.

In looking at the programs that HSS provides, a lot can be examined from them as well. The Jobs Plus program, the High School Equivalency program, and the English as a Second Language program are all social markers that can be used to analyze and explain, and further propel them to climb out of poverty. These programs are useful in assessing that many members of the Lower East Side are without a job, without a high school diploma, and have little to no working knowledge of the English Language. In identifying these social markers as key issues that contribute to poverty, HSS has been able to devise these programs to combat these issues, and ultimately, educate participants to rise above poverty.

In this respect, it is important to point out that HSS is very concentrated, almost exclusively, on the importance of soft skills. Almost every program that they provide, with the exception of the High School Equivalency program, is aimed at further developing participants "soft skills," to make them more marketable and competitive when looking for jobs. They stress the importance of conversational language skills.

University Settlement, on the other hand, offers two very specific programs; however, their ultimate goals are still similar to that of HSS. The eviction protection program is a program to help residents avoid eviction by obtaining and retaining employment, as well as build preparedness if eviction were to occur. According to Jennifer,

this program has been quite successful in respect to receiving referrals. The other program is one that helps to complete food stamp applications for NYCHA residents. While Jennifer did state that this program has seen less referrals and therefore less success, it is clear that both programs, similar to those offered by HSS, are ultimately aimed in promoting and aiding in the overall success of residents of the Lower East Side.

## **Objective 2. Evaluating the Success of the Partnerships**

Both Lisa Tomanelli and Jennifer Vallone were truthful in saying that in recent months, communication between REES and their organizations had become less organized. Originally, the Henry Street Settlement and REES held face to face meetings once every three months to discuss objectives, goals, and outcomes. However, she has stated that now, they communicate solely through unscheduled telephone calls and emails. Lisa was quick to admit, further, that the face to face meetings with REES were much more helpful than the scattered phone calls. In order to make this facilitation more successful, in-person meetings between the two organizations should be reinstated.

Jennifer Vallone, too, seemed less than enthusiastic about the communication channels between the University Settlement and REES. At first, she stated that she had never received feedback from REES, and then recanted the previous statement. Further, when speaking with Lisa, we were notified that the US partnership was a non-active partnership at the moment, because she reached out to them multiple times and received no reply. However, from interviewing Jennifer, it was clear that she still believed the partnership was an active one. This indicates large miscommunications between the two.

There are no effective partner meetings taking place at the time, between either of the partners and REES. There were meetings that took place when the partnerships were initiated, but they gradually phased this out over time. Now, according to HSS, unscheduled and intermittent phone conversations and email exchanges are the basic lines of communication between the zone coordinator and partners.

Both HSS, US, and REES share the common goal of helping residents of the Lower East Side, whether they are NYCHA residents or other residents, in furthering their soft and hard skills such as interview etiquette, eviction preparedness and prevention, high school equivalency preparation, English language skills, researching, obtaining, and retaining successful jobs. With that being said, the main take away of all organizations through this partnership is to provide their residents with the means to rise out of poverty, and move into successful lives.

## **Objective 3. Assessing the Sustainability of the Project**

Some of REES' projects seem to have adapted well to changes such as going through different zone coordinators and different contact people from the partner organizations and agencies. Although the point people change, the partnerships seem to be strong enough to hold new people coming in and adapting themselves to the level of work and passion these partnerships require for success. This did not affect the level of continuation of the services being delivered, it could increase it.

## **Objective 4. Generating Recommendations to Achieve a Strategic Partnership**

One of the best practices for success in current and future partnerships, and one recommendation we have for improving the success of the partnerships, is more active communication from both the zone coordinators and partners. While the partners and zone coordinators have the same goals and hopes for the partnership, and both partnerships do offer much success, a line of structured communication is needed to ensure that things continue moving in the right direction. Reinstating monthly or bi-monthly in person meetings would allow for easier communication and less miscommunication. It would also allow for more productive planning if any modifications for programs take place.

Further, if there is some way that both partners could record which residents were part of REES, it would be easier for them to send feedback of how those participants have evolved. We feel that it is necessary for REES to receive feedback in order to assess the success of their referral system, and whether any changes need to be made to programs.

### **6.3 Downtown Brooklyn**

#### **Summary of Analysis:**

- All the partners and the zone coordinator, Kisha Jackson feels that the REES project has achieved its goals, and success of REES depends on the dedication of residents and partners involved in this project.
- The zone coordinator Kisha and all the partners, except The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation believe that the partnerships are successful because of the services they provide to NYCHA residents and the mechanisms each partner uses to track the progress of NYCHA residents in their programs.
  - The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation prefers that residents be more responsive when requesting services.
- Soft skills provided to NYCHA residents helps with sustainability of partners' relationship with REES.
  - Partners would like to understand any changes in the REES program, understand goals of the partnership, and success rates.
- Partners have suggested they would like more structural meetings with Kisha, clear data on their progress, and surveys filled out by NYCHA residents to understand their concerns about the services they receive from REES and its partners.

## **Objective 1. Evaluating the Success of the Project**

Based on the interview with the zone coordinator Kisha Jackson, the project has achieved its immediate goals, had positive outcomes, and many participants completed

the programs. Overall, there have been no revisions made to the project and Kisha has never terminated a partnership. Kisha describes her role as bridging the gap between NYCHA residents and community partners. Based on the interviews with the partners, each partner has suggested that the REES project is successful. However, they had some concerns with NYCHA residents. Jako Borren from the Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation stated that he “wanted the partnership they already had with REES to deepen.”<sup>44</sup> While he ultimately described the project as being successful he is also concerned with NYCHA residents when they need services. His main concern is, “many residents need services and many of them who are offered services do not follow through on completing these services. He would like for the residents to be more responsive.”<sup>45</sup> Mr. Borren also suggested that NYCHA REES find more ways to engage the community with NYCHA residents. Yet, Mr. Borren feels that the REES project has achieved its immediate objectives with them pretty well despite needing more referrals. Unlike the Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation, BWI Stronger Together would describe the success of the partnership as natural since the location of this organization is close proximity to Red Hook having access to NYCHA residents. Typically, Mr. Franklin emphasized that, “he had no particular perception having an abstract micro view and his perception of the project changed to identifying priority needs and having a clear understanding of those needs.”<sup>46</sup> Mr. Franklin believes that the project’s success is due to the diligence of Kisha. He explains that, “some doors were open due to the partnership and the REES project has enabled BWI Stronger Together to create their own long term vision for their organization.”<sup>47</sup> BWI Stronger Together will continue to grow with NYCHA REES. The Hope Program is unique because NYCHA REES reached out to them to establish a working partnership. They believe that the success of the REES project has gone very well. According to Hertzberg, “...the Hope Program has seen success among its clients. The Hope program has a great partnership with NYCHA /REES and hopes to continue with the partnership.”<sup>48</sup> In the opinion of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow,

“The responses of the info sessions depends on the area of the sessions. For example sometime ago OBT had info sessions in the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. There was a low turnout at the Bronx info session, but everyone enrolled in the program, while in Coney Island where there were approximately 50 people showed up...the info sessions are definitely worth continuing.”<sup>49</sup>

Success of the REES project depends on the client’s willingness and dedication of the partners that are involved in this project.

## **Objective 2. Evaluating the Success of the Partnership**

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<sup>44</sup> Borren, J. (n.d.). Interview with Mr. Jake Borren, Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation [Telephone interview].

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Franklin, N. (n.d.). Interview with Mr. Nigel Franklin, BWI Stronger Together.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid..

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Hertzberg, (n.d.).

<sup>49</sup> Hills, E. (n.d.). Interview with Emily Hills, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow [Telephone interview].

According to Kisha, the mission of the partnerships is clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial. The expectation from the partners and Kisha's expectation is that each partner serves as many NYCHA residents as possible. Each partner requires different needs and some partners need more help than others. All of the partners that were interviewed has shared that their partnership is successful because of the services they provide to NYCHA residents. The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation offers benefit services, financial services, job readiness training, and workforce development. Their soft skills are promoted through outreach efforts, community coaches, website, social media, and word of mouth. Mr. Borren would like if residents can be more responsive to their services and take advantage of these services. This organization does have a common vision when forming this partnership and making sure that NYCHA residents have access to services. Compared to the Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation, BWI Stronger Together has an integrated service model that makes the partnership successful. This model includes education training, sector based training, benefit counseling, community services, legal services, financial literacy, and employment assistance. Thus, this zone model engages residents where they are in their services. Because of the connection BWI Stronger Together has with REES, "there is information about resources and Kisha has helped to set up meetings with outside partners."<sup>50</sup> The Hope Program offers job training, job placement, job retention, and advancement training in the current job. Soft skills training is an integral part of the job training. This is one of the Hope Program's success. The Hope Program measures success, "if someone completes the program, how fast they are able to get a job after the program, and their attention milestones. Once they get a job are they staying on their job, 30 days, 60 days, a year? Are they getting promoted? Are they contacting the Hope Program for advancement opportunities?"<sup>51</sup> The Hope Program remains in contact with graduates to see if they will need additional support. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow offers job training and GED classes. This organization also offers ESL classes to those who are not native English speakers. The success of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow is that all of their clients gain the skills and knowledge they need to survive and succeed in the workplace. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow uses before and after test assessments to see the progress of NYCHA residents.

### **Objective 3. Assessing Sustainability of Partnerships**

In order to maintain partnerships in the Downtown Brooklyn zone, Kisha encourages open communications with partners and has created contracts between the partners and REES. Partners want to be informed of any changes in the REES program, understand goals of the partners, success rates, and wants praise. The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation's sustainability depends on "REES's ability to connect with us with project management and other partners."<sup>52</sup> BWI Stronger Together's sustainability is the comprehensive services offered by the REES project through BWI Together and having an individualized approach to serving their clients. In contrast to The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation and BWI's Stronger Together, The Hope Program's sustainability differs

<sup>50</sup> Franklin, N. (n.d.). Interview with Mr. Nigel Franklin, BWI Stronger Together.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Hertzberg, The Hope Program. (n.d.).

<sup>52</sup> Borren, J. (n.d.). Interview with Mr. Jake Borren, Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation [Telephone interview].

because they rely on communication from NYCHA residents and communication from Kisha on a weekly basis to maintain contact. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow's sustainability is, "the fact the NYCHA/REES wants to empower their residents and OBT has services that they would like to offer to the NYCHA residents."<sup>53</sup>

## Objective 4. Recommendations

Based upon the recommendations from both Kisha and the partners, our recommendations to improve the REES project and partnerships are listed below.

All partners should respond in a timely manner to all requests from Kisha and NYCHA residents. These requests include making sure that all residents receive the services they need. The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation should have "more structural meetings and more structural forms of communication between Kisha and myself."<sup>54</sup> BWI's Stronger Together should have more internal capacity, formal ways to pursue funding from NYCHA REES, not placing all of the pressure on Kisha, and create surveys that NYCHA residents to ensure that they are satisfied with their services. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow wants to have a clear set of data to show if the partnership is successful.

## 7.0 Cross-Zone Analysis

### 7.1 Evaluating the Success of the Project

Despite some obstacles, the results reveal that the zone model approach is *somewhat* successful across the three zones. While the majority of the zone partners indicated that the zone model project is successful, few partners encountered difficulties in achieving all target outcomes. This is especially the case for EHTN (foodservice training), MEOC (substantial dropout rates), HSS (distinction of NYCHA residents from other program participants), University Settlement, and Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation (less referrals). Regarding the organization's perceptions of NYCHA's participants, some partners appear to hold impartial attitudes. While NYLU took a neutral leaning positive stand, there is no generalized perception of NYCHA residents for EHTN. For HSS and University Settlement, it is the inability to identify who is a part of NYCHA housing and who is not. These results are *to some extent* in alignment with the results based on the zone coordinator interviews. For REES's coordination unit, the zone model project appears to achieve its immediate objective. The main aim for REES is to increase residents' ability to pay their rent and increase their access to being able to become financially stable. The role of zone coordinators, as connectors, seem to provide an effective facilitation of the project by bridging the gap between NYCHA residents and the community partners. Furthermore, there are evidential assertions of the multipurpose efforts by the partners to serve the East Harlem community. While some partners, such as MEOC, HSS, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, and BWI's Stronger Together, offer both

<sup>53</sup> Hills, E. (n.d.). Interview with Emily Hills, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow [Telephone interview].

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

educational (i.e. High School Equivalency program and English as a Second Language program) and workforce credentials (i.e. Jobs Plus program and employability skills workshops.), others, such as NYLU, Urban Upbound, University Settlement, Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation, The Hope Program, and EHTN focus on the provision of workforce development (i.e. Job-Plus, job readiness, local hiring and eviction protection program). Based on the analysis of the interviews, the incorporation of soft skills into services has been indicated as key skills to some partners. This is true in the case of the following organizations: HSS, EHTN, Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation, and The Hope Program. Except for HSS, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, BWI's Stronger Together, and University Settlement, our findings show that there is a common practice among zone coordinators and partners for tracking progress of their beneficiaries by maintaining internal datasets. Lastly, it was evident that the post first-level interactions between residents and partners are *not* tracked in REES's system.

## 7.2 Evaluating the Success of the Partnerships

In order to measure the success of NYCHA-REES Zone Coordination Model, undergraduate and graduate students conducted interviews with zone partners. Given the established criteria for evaluating the success of zone partners, the purpose of our project was to suggest areas in need of improvements. This section highlights general perspectives of zone partners in the following zones: Downtown Brooklyn, Lower East Side, and East Harlem. The content discussed below offers a stark contrast between the success zone partners in Downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan.

To begin, zone partners in Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn express overall common values. For example, individual zone partners are committed to expanding opportunities to NYCHA residents. In terms of a collective vision, all zone partners in Downtown Brooklyn claimed to have a successful partnership with REES and a vision that is mutual. The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation offers benefit services, financial services, job readiness training, and workforce development. The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation offers benefit services, financial services, job readiness training, and workforce development. Even though this partner is successful, their coordinator wishes that more NYCHA residents take advantage of their services. Compared to the Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation, BWI Stronger Together has an integrated service model that makes the partnership successful. Thus, this model engages residents where they are when NYCHA residents receive services. Because of the connection BWI Stronger Together has with REES, "there is information about resources and Kisha has helped to set up meetings with outside partners."<sup>55</sup> The Hope Program measures success, "if someone completes the program, how fast they are able to get a job after the program, and their attention milestones. Once they get a job are they staying on their job, 30 days, 60 days, a year? Are they getting promoted? Are they contacting the Hope Program for advancement opportunities?"<sup>56</sup> The Hope Program remains in contact with graduates to see if they will need additional support. The success of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow is that all of

<sup>55</sup> Franklin, N. (n.d.). Interview with Mr. Nigel Franklin, BWI Stronger Together [Personal interview].

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Hertzberg, The Hope Program [Personal interview]. (n.d.).



their clients gain the skills and knowledge they need to survive and succeed in the workplace. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow uses before and after test assessments to see the progress of NYCHA residents. The Lower East Side offers positive feedback as well. University Settlement provided a general statement that their common vision is helping residents. While Henry Street Settlement expressed positive feedback, they went a step further and stated, “we both share a common goal helping residents to improve their lives, develop skills, and retain meaningful employment.”<sup>57</sup> Regarding the East Harlem zone, three-out-of-four zone partners suggested a “similar vision.” In East Harlem, NYUL was the only partner in our study who stated the “vision hasn’t been communicated.”<sup>58</sup> In sum, a majority of zone partners throughout the zones have a successful vision with REES.

Moving forward, elements such as institutional leadership, communication channels, and accountability highlighted significant differences across boroughs. Overall, Downtown Brooklyn offered positive response to all three elements. In contrast, zone partners throughout Manhattan expressed negative feedback. Both partners in the Lower East Side stated a lack of effective communication. A response from a coordinator at Henry Street Settlement explained that, “there is no feedback from NYCHA, after a participant is in place.”<sup>59</sup> University Settlement offers less enthusiasm when responding to the element of communication channels. In East Harlem, one-out-of-four zone partners suggested a lack of leadership, communication, and accountability. As anticipated, our research highlights that communication between REES and zone partners is less organized. It should be noted that partners in East Harlem and Lower East Side offer a consistent trend: the beginning stages of the partnership featured stronger communication in discussing objectives, goals, and outcomes. After a few months, the communication dissolved into unscheduled telephone calls.

Overall, our interviews determined that to improve the success of the NYCHA-REES program, better communication channels must be established. These findings have practical implications for achieving positive results. In order to address complications, REES must better plan for meetings with zone partners. By establishing better communication channels, other elements in this evaluation can be properly addressed.

### **7.3 Assessing the Sustainability of the Project**

NYCHA REES partnered with organizations that promote and provide the same services that REES wants to empower their residents. NYCHA REES partnership is sustainable and will continue to be sustainable as their partners are experienced in working with and have accessible to low income communities. NYCHAREES partners with organizations such as Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow and The Hope Program that offer services such as GED and ESL classes, computer classes, job training, job placement, and job advancement counseling. Urban Upbound and Henry Street Settlement offers

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<sup>57</sup> Jaradat, L. (2017, March 15). Personal Interview.

<sup>58</sup> Coleman, D. (2017, March 20). Personal Interview.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

speciality job training in Hospitality. These partners have been offering their services to the public for over 13- 30 years.

The Lower East Side has a very strong bond with their main (most active) partner, Henry Street Settlement. Unfortunately, there are not many active partners in this zone currently, so it is difficult to draw a concise conclusion about their sustainability. However, according to the interviews done with this partner, the partnership seems to be strong enough to hold new people coming in and adapt themselves to the level of work and passion these partnerships require to witness success. Some of REES' projects seem to have adapted well to changes such as going through different zone coordinators as well as different contact people from the partner organizations and agencies. Through the conversation with those involved, it appears that these changes may have increased continuation of services.

The sustainability of the zone model in East Harlem emanates from a number of factors, including the nature of the model. REES partners with various organizations who are place-based and have vast experience working with low income communities. For instance, Urban Upbound operating the Job Plus contract has 13 years of experience and is based in one of the NYCHA developments. This not only creates accessibility and convenience, but it also helps these organizations integrate into the fabric of society, making the residents feel at ease as they look for services. The awareness of the changing markets is another great factor that contributes to the sustainability of the project. This attribute was strongly mentioned by both New York Urban League(NYUL) and East Harlem Talent Network (EHTN) as they both mentioned that hospitality industry is booming in East Harlem. Hence, they have had to adjust their services to cater to the change. Other factors contributing to sustainability includes great leadership as mentioned by Manhattan Educational Opportunity Centre and the voluntary nature of the services offered, which ensures that NYCHA residents are helped by these services.

Despite all the factors that enhance sustainability, several challenges have been observed as stated by both the zone coordinator and the partners. One of the main challenges is that many residents have conflicting life priorities. In some cases, it becomes increasingly difficult to convince an adult that a few weeks of trainings is worth it. Some of them want instant jobs, which are hard to get without certifications. Other challenges that were observed across partners is the lack of partnership agreements. Meaning that there is not a clearly stated mission and vision in place, nor is there very good communication channels for feedback. Most partners seemed to elude that meetings between REES and themselves do not occur as often as they once did, and that information is not shared as often, despite the zone coordinators claiming that there is clear communication and information sharing. Another challenge expressed included lack of adequate resources and being restricted to a specific type of service or geographical area.

In order to maintain partnerships in the Downtown Brooklyn zone, Kisha has established a channel for open communications and created contracts between REES and the partners. Partners ask to be informed of any changes in the REES program, understand goals of the partnership, success rates, and be acknowledged by REES. The Bedford

Stuyvesant Corporation's sustainability depends on, "REES's ability to connect with us with project management and other partners."<sup>60</sup> BWI Stronger Together's sustainability is the comprehensive services offered by the REES project with the partnership and having an individualized approach to serving their clients. In contrast to The Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation and BWI's Stronger Together, The Hope Program's sustainability differs because they rely on communication from NYCHA residents and communication from Kisha on a weekly basis to maintain contact. Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow's sustainability is, "the fact the NYCHA REES wants to empower their residents and OBT has services that they would like to offer to the NYCHA residents."<sup>61</sup> For continuous partnerships, open communications are important between NYCHA REES and the partners. The partnerships could adopt to changes as their common mission evolves to help residents be empowered to grow in upcoming years.

## 8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

After carefully analyzing the information gathered from interviews and observations we have concluded that the partnerships have been partially successful. We acknowledge everything that has been achieved, but we believe that work could be done more effectively, so that more clients can get served through REES and its partners. Due to this realization, we have a few recommendations to improve the potential and overall performance of partnerships. The main issue, across all zones, has been communication. Zones coordinators and partners used to have quarterly meetings which helped to keep everyone on track of what is expected of all parties involved; however, these meetings started to get less frequent and stopped altogether. Constant and effective communication between REES and the partners will not only improve their business relationship, but will also improve the relationship between partners and clients.

A second recommendation is to update the Memorandum of Understanding that is in place. It is essential to the program that both parties are clear on what one expects from the other. Additionally, a clear and concise document, although not legally binding, will also help improve the overall success of the partnerships. Some zones have made it clear that they would appreciate some more funding from REES in order to provide residents with more workshops. Due to some limitations, residents are referred for a particular certification in a particular industry, which could hinder their opportunities in other training areas.

Some partners discussed that there is no clear way for them to track success of the participants and programs. Our recommendation is the adoption of institutional surveys for residents to fill out after they receive services. This will inform partners of any problems NYCHA residents and other clients encounter as they are offered services. The surveys will also provide information and suggestions for partners to improve their performance. Our last recommendation is to find a way to track residents post first-level

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<sup>60</sup> Borren, J. (n.d.). Interview with Mr. Jake Borren, Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation [Telephone interview].

<sup>61</sup> Hills, E. (n.d.). Interview with Emily Hills, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow [Telephone interview].

interaction. Useful information can be lost by not knowing if residents got the services they were referred to with a particular partner, if they received more than one service , and if they succeeded in not only obtaining a job, but retaining a job for a certain time.

The evaluation project had various limitations. These limitations include the projected scope of the project and the size of the team. As a small team we were not able to interview coordinators and partners from every zone, which would have given us a more general insight as to how the partnership model is working for both REES and the partners. Therefore, for future evaluations we recommend first, to conduct observational research of NYCHA's participants and zone partners during one-on-one recruitment sessions. This method aims to offer a brief documentation of the interactions between NYCHA's participants and zone partners. Second, to conduct a time-series analysis (2013-present) using data developed by REES (i.e. web-based referral, recruitment systems, and outcome data). In the non-experimental time-series design, markers of poverty and demographic trends of NYCHA's participants can be reported. Patterns of the intervention's outcomes can also be examined. More specifically, the following factors can be analyzed: the proportions of the working age participants who were 'referred,' 'made appointments,' 'attended appointments,' 'completed first step,' 'enrolled,' 'completed class,' and 'recruited'. This kind of data analysis will serve as an extension to REES's 2013 Year End Zone Partnership Report.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Questionnaires

#### 1. Zone Partners

**Name of partner:**

**Date:**

**Interviewee Name/Position:**

#### A. Basic Information

- How long have you been a partner?
- What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?
- What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?
- What is the process involved in offering these services?

#### B. NYCHA's Residents

- Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?
- What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?
- Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?

#### C. Implementation & Monitoring

- In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?
- How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?
- Are before and after "trackers" installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.
  - Connect to adult education programs
  - Connect to vocational training opportunities
  - Connect to resources to start or grow a business
  - Connect to job opportunities
  - Connect to financial counseling services

- Offer information on rent incentive program (EID)

#### **D. Communication Channels**

- If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?
- Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?
- Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?

#### **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?
- Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.
- What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?
- Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.
- How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?
- How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?
- Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain
- How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?
- Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?

Terminated partnerships? *[Interviewer: Skip if partnership is active and ask section F questions]*

- Why was the partnership terminated?
- What did you learn from the termination that could help NYCHA-REES current/future partners?
- Would you accept to be a partner of NYCHA-REES once again if requested? Explain.

#### **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?
- What are the challenges facing your organizations while providing services to NYCHA's participants?
- How do think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership?

## 2. Zone Coordinators

**Zone:**

**Date:**

**Interviewee Name:**

### A. General Questions

- How long have you been a zone coordinator here?
- Can you briefly describe the demographics of the zone?
- How do you select the partners to work with? Any specific qualities you look for?
- How do you maintain such partnerships?

### B. NYCHA's Residents

- Is NYCHA's definition of poverty a universal definition (\$1.90), or are there specific facets of poverty that you look for when assessing potential REES applicants?
- How do you select your beneficiaries (NYCHA residents)? And are they restricted to receiving services only within their zones?
- Could you explain how NYCHA residents are placed with certain partners?

### C. Implementation & Monitoring

- In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?
- Has REES revised the program to cater to current events and to optimize success. If so, how?
- How do you track progress of beneficiaries (NYCHA residents)? Do you feel this method could be improved? If so, how? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.
  - Connect to adult education programs
  - Connect to vocational training opportunities
  - Connect to resources to start or grow a business
  - Connect to job opportunities
  - Connect to financial counseling services
  - Offer information on rent incentive program (EID)

### D. Communication Channels

- If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with the partner, and vice versa? How?
- Does REES inform the partner of any revisions or suggestions on the project?
- Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to partners? How?

## **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- Do you have a common vision with the zone partners?
- Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.
- What is the expectation from the partners and your expectation from this partnership?
- Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.
- How is the decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?
- How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?
- Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain.
- How would you describe your role in relation to zone partner's role?
- Has your role or that of partners been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?
- How would rate the success of each partner? Why?
- What would you change to improve this partnership?

### **Terminated partnerships?**

- Have you ever terminated a partnership?
- What led to this decision?
- What did you learn from that termination that could help avoid such situations in the future
- Would you form a partnership with an already terminated partner? Under what conditions?

## **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?
- What are the challenges facing REES while coordinating services?
- What different service gaps do you notice among the different zone partnerships?



## **Appendix B: Transcripts**

### **B.1 East Harlem**

#### **B.1.1 East Harlem Zone Coordinator**

**Interviewee: Pedro Zapata**

**March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at NYCHA-REES, 1:00 pm**

**A. Background/General Questions:** Please tell me the following...

**Interviewer: How Long have you been a Zone Coordinator here?**

Interviewee: 16 months.

**Interviewer: How do you select the partners to work with? Any specific qualities you look for?**

Interviewee: I generally look at partners that understand public housing residents and the culture that comes with public housing and living in public housing. A lot of our residents are working, they are either underemployed or employed. The first thing that I look at is if a partner understands what that really means and how to approach our residents and problems. Let's say a problem being the underemployment issue in East Harlem or maybe crime and or maybe working with residents that receive other benefits or working with residents that are working but have issues with child-care or aftercare, things like that. So as long as a resident is fully aware and understands or has a track record of working with public housing residents or people that are within a public housing community. That's the first sign of what would make a good partner because education and engagement is very important. Meaning education or knowledge of the community is one thing but also how you approach the community is another.

**Interviewer: How do you maintain such partnerships?**

Interviewee: Routine contact and what I learned in school is mutual goal setting. Finding out the most fundamental aspects of an organization's goals. And doing a goal alignment. Meaning, outside of everything that they do, what do they do really really well and how can we benefit or mutually assist each other in reaching these goals. So, for example, the only organization that I was able to bring up on my own is Isaacs Center. And Isaacs Center is a CBO that works out of and manages the senior and childcare center over at Isaac Homes towers, if you will. And, they do childcare very well and they do senior care very well. So, part of their workforce development model is using young adults and bringing them on into these fields. So, they take students, that were probably in their aftercare or childcare and they promote throughout their tenure or their experience. Meaning that they will be peer educators and they will be counselors and then once they are counselors and sometimes they get an internship to be program coordinator. And in the senior care section, they do "meals on wheels" and

they also provide home health aide training. And this is again how I do mutual goal setting. If this is how they employ people then they are also good at training. Lastly revisiting the partner every week and making sure our outreach coincides their enrollment. The Isaac Center is the one I have seen from the beginning until now. The others are zone partners that I have inherited or co-sponsor with another zone coordinator or co-manage with another zone coordinator. Those are easier because they have been more established and all we do is meet every quarter or so.

## **B. NYCHA's Residents:**

**Interviewer: How do you select your beneficiaries? And are they restricted to receiving services only within their zones?**

Interviewee: So any NYCHA resident that is on the lease is technically and 18 and over is our catchment zone. Meaning, anyone that is one a lease and or family composition that lives in a public housing development or receives a NYCHA Section 8 voucher in a private housing development is eligible for our services. Some of our partners do not or aren't as stringent on these requirements. So, we may work with "Partner A" in East Harlem that may cater to the entire city and they may cater to anyone. But for us, our outreach efforts have to be targeted to this mandate constituency. So, the way the zone partnership model was intended to work is that we wanted the residents to take the most advantage of the resources in their local communities which would make it easier and more accessible to them because they are the most at-risk and in need of services. So that was why we first tried to work within the confines of their zone but if they are in need of services that aren't offered in their zones and they don't have a problem commuting or traveling then we give them that option to use other partners in different zones. Given that said partner does not have location-based parameters based on their grants or their mission. So, there are certain partners that have certain grants from the Department of Labor or HRA or other agencies that limit; for example, in East Harlem we have STRIVE. They got a grant from NYCHA last year to do employment assistance and employment-linked training but only for NYCHA residents in East Harlem. And that came out of there not being a service coordinator or zone coordinator in the area for a long time or dedicated service coordinator in the area for a long time so we still needed to provide these services to this zone or this community so we got a grant from a different funder to give this to STRIVE so they can help us.

**Interviewer: Could you explain how clients are placed within certain partners?**

Interviewee: Based on need. Some of our residents find out about us through a problem unfortunately. So, either they lose their job and they are at risk of losing their housing or again underemployment, they have lost their ability to rent, their flat rent or it changes or has already changed or backed up. So, they have to have an interview with or meeting with their housing assistant and their housing assistant will refer them to us as an intercepting service. So, a lot of residents come to us because of a problem or an event that would trigger them not to be able to pay their rent or not being able to pay their rent would cause one of our other departments to say "hey what's going on with this resident, maybe they need help." And that's how we come across most

residents. Others are based out of recruitment events or referrals at recruitment events. So, it's all from what the resident is in clear need of or express need of. So, if they come to us through our website just for like, let's say they are on time with their rent payment, they have pretty stable job but in order to receive that promotion they need a HIC or they need an "OSHA 30 Training" and they know that we provide those or we have partners that provide those programs so they will come to us for that.

### **C. Implementation & Monitoring**

**Interviewer: In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**

Interviewee: Unfortunately I wasn't here when it implemented or first implemented or even drafted up but given my academic background in public-private partnerships and consorted service delivery or hybrid service delivery models, I believe that it did. Meaning, our main goal is to increase residents' ability to pay their rent and increase their income or their access to being able to become financially solvent. So, I think that we are doing a good job at getting people there. I have seen residents from having no job to being able to get a new job and continue getting promotions and even now be at a point where there are looking to buy a house. When four years ago, they were barely being able to make rent. So, in that aspect, I believe that we are achieving our goal. Especially, in our direct entry into our resident academy and our TA and that's something we have a little more stake in because that is something that residents can be trained and directed placed into jobs with NYCHA. And sometimes even being a part of NYCHA as an agency in that's security for them as well.

**Interviewer: Has REES revised/adopted the program to cater to current events and to optimize success. If so, how?**

Interviewee: I think it did. Workforce development programs have to innately always be on par with the labor market. And in certain instances, where we have "Job Plus" sites at our development, they do a better job at assessing the labor markets, both nationally throughout the city and sometimes even in certain neighborhoods they have been doing analysis of what's available, what jobs are in demand. Like for example, I know that in East Harlem that hotels services, hospitality, and food service are the biggest new economic indicators. So, workforce development programs in the community have gone towards those sectors, specifically. So, with our partnerships, I think they do a better job at either responding to a new emerging market or opportunity and then we just follow suit by "piggy-backing" off of them. The service delivery model hasn't really changed. The only thing I know that has changed is the way that we revise and re-access partnerships before partnerships were basically at-will for a term limit of two to four years depending on the partnership. And then they would be reassessed or reexamined by the department or the office but now if everything is going well, they just go on automatic renewal. So, that also takes time away from having to change MOUs or draft new term sheets. So, as long as everything is working and we are both meeting our goals and both meeting our fulfillment requirements then we just continue with partnership and it doesn't have to go through another examination process.

**Interviewer: How do you track progress of beneficiaries? Do you feel this method could be improved? If so, how?**

Interviewee: This is a question that I ask myself a lot since I am always trying to figure out how tell the data or explain the data. But, I had an idea of the way we can track and do more of a “workflow model” of tracking residents’ progress. We have an internal data-base which we call SSTS. I don’t know what that stands for anymore but it’s a system where we track whether residents have been present at events, whether they have had an interview or intake assessment with our assessment specialist or if a resident was entered into a program, whether they completed that program and whether it results into a job or not. And while I think that works with direct engagement with our referral system model or avenue, I don’t think it’s as qualitative as it is quantitative. So, we know if a resident was referred by either a self-referral online or through a paper referral with an interaction in the zone with a zone coordinator or if they were referred to by an intake assessment specialist in their first interview or their first event here at REES. What we don’t know is, what happens to the resident after they attend that interview or that intake interview with that partner. So, we know that they attended and then we may find out in a year later or couple months later that they completed or not the program, like a HSC program or just like a five-week work training program, we know that but we don’t know if we have, let’s say the partner that they were referred to was a multiservice partner. Meaning they do more than just workforce development or job training, they also do financial counseling or they also do benefit screening or they may even provide childcare, like some partners like the Isaac Center. We don’t know what happens after that first level interaction. And what I wanted to implement into our new referral system is: “yes, they have come to a healthcare seminar or information session for an Allied Health program in May but after they went to that first interview, they may have found out that about other programs that they may be interested in or other services that they could take advantage of at the same partner, at the same site. We don’t know if they went that route or what route they went to and that’s what I wanted to add. So that’s one change or one implementation thing that I think would be better for us because it tells us more of a story. And what we put into it is also what the partner can get out of it so if they can explain a more enriched interaction with our residents, it will only make their reporting and their grant proposals or grant applications a lot more qualitative. So, let’s say they engaged with one-hundred NYCHA residents in 2017 for their job training seminar, they could say that they encountered one-hundred initially and then out of those one-hundred, five-hundred or fifty went into a different track but also got this service and that level of service, so it just tells a better story.

**D. Communication Channels**

**Interviewer: If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with the partner, and vice versa? How?**

Interviewee: Yes, that is our first line quality insurance. In our demographics, our community, or any community, word of mouth speaks volumes. So if you get a bad service from Starbucks, you will post it or tell your friends. And that friend is not going to go there and it’s just going to go into a snowball. We encounter this same challenge with

community based organizations that is just work or say they will do something to get funding to do it. But how they do it or how they do it, does not coincide with the overall mission that they stated they would do in the grant or with this program. And we take great responsibility in what we expose our residents to and quality partnerships. So we would rather continue working with partners that value or see value in our residents and in our communities, and do their best to do what they said they would do and what they agreed to do. I know I had complaints from residents with certain partners. It is either does not work with their work schedule or their child's school schedule. So it's not really feasible or convenient for residents that work and/or have children. And that's something that we always should keep in mind because it's the majority of our residents. And/or partners who do not respond within the time frame, they said they were going to respond in. We can track that internally, and we have cases that are left open, or they were inconsistencies in partner filling out or reporting back to us on referrals that we do, electronic referral system. That's how we track internally but if resident comes with complaints, we take those complaints and we go to partner or contact at that organization to ask "hey, can you explain this situation or we received more than one complaint about this program's time frame or time period, is there a room to work so that it is more convenient for the resident?" Or we give them information saying that our residents do not respond that well to this time or this and that, is there any way that we can reshape the program so that it become more successful and that's how we try to change the tone of the conversation and vice versa. We have partners who may say "so the residents worked well but not as well as we expected them...or those who have an AHC were a lot more successful than those without it...or we think they were good but we think they need to spend little bit more time in work environment" so then we go back to our team meetings and say "hey, before we refer to these residents next year or next cycle openings, how to we make our residents more attractive or employable?" And again it's not always the resident fault, it can be us preparing the resident, giving them the tools for them to succeed.

**Interviewer: Does REES inform the partner of any revisions or suggestions on the project?**

Interviewee: yes, we tend to work collaboratively with our partners, even with our internal staff. We may have an idea from the top down, where we are given instructions or given recommendations on a new program or changes to a program, they [supervisors and assistant directors] take our feedback, with high regard. Because they know that we the "ear to the street", per se. or we know how it's implemented or how it's perceived at the community level. So the grass roots or field information sometimes it's brought back to director of program who manages to best fit our residents needs or needs of the community.

**Interviewer: Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to the partner? How?**

Interviewee: basic contact level information is shared between the two. So we don't share identifying information out. So we don't discuss resident's financial situation or social security or any identifying personal level information. What we do share is contact information or workforce history, academic history and that's with expressed consent of resident. If resident signs release for adult education, that does not mean they are comfortable signing the same release for financial counselling. So in release forms, we list

the date of the recruitment event and the recruitment event title as well as partner's information, so they know exactly what are they signing up for.

### **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

**Interviewer: Do you have a common vision with the zone partners?**

Interviewee: that's first and foremost. I think understanding the mission of the organization meaning us REES, and understanding our respective zones is important because not every partner we have city wide will work with our community. So understanding the community, understanding the culture of community is the first thing and how REES related to it. Understanding the partner's goal and their fundamental goals is the most important meaning what is the most high value goal in their mission. You have to align this with yours. I believe that is very important. Once that's clear, and expectations are set and they are reasonable, it's just make everything else work a lot smoother and effectively.

**Interviewer: Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial?**

Interviewee: yes, we want their residents to be able to pay their rent and/ or make themselves more...develop themselves professionally. So that someone down the line won't be just able to pay their rent but also be able to continue climbing their social economic ladder, whatever that might be for them.

**Interviewer: What is the expectation from the partners and your expectation from this partnership? (question has been answered, a follow up question: would expectations be different with different partners?)**

Interviewee: if one partner is really good with job training but not so good with adult education. Just because they provide adult education, does not mean that you are going to work with them mostly in adult education as well as you are going to work with them in job training because you know that they do job training really really well. But you have another partner who does only adult education and they do that really really well. So you probably be a lot more preferential to what the partner does best, and that could be historical data or outcomes who you may have from the partner from REES-partner relationship or just data points that partner just shares in the research.

**Interviewer: Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline?**

Interviewee: no, we work within the general timeline meaning a year for data. So we may work with partner where some partnership are rolling meaning have bi-weekly recruitment events with. There are also partners who do multi service recruitment events and we do those maybe once or twice a quarter depending on the offering. So it all depends on partner's program cycles and/or enrollment cycles. So some partners may have a grant or an award to run a program for a year others have six months so or more than a one year...two years, so we work along their deadlines and schedules. But we work on a yearly basis, so we do our data...matching once a year.

**Interviewer: How is the decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?**

Interviewee: so we have experts in each designated functional area like financial counselling and assets building...adult education. Within REES, we directions from

director and assistant director and zoon coordination supervisor. If I need help with an adult education-based partner or I have an adult education program or opportunity, I will discuss it with assistant director for adult education. And any time I make a decision based on the program of any of our offerings, we bring to the table. But in everyday zone partnership or in implementation or running of the program, it's mostly left to the zone coordinator and program coordinator or executive director of the organization. We are given a flexibility with that.

**Interviewer: How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?**

Interviewee: most of the time, yes. Most of the meetings are done monthly or quarterly based depending on type of partnership and offering. We also meet with each other biweekly to discuss zone activities, partnerships, and things like that.

**Interviewer: Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain.**

Interviewee: mostly things are done by email. So yes. And referral system tracks engagement between partners and residents, so yes, I would say so.

**Interviewer: How would you describe your role in relation to zone partner's role?**

Interviewee: we are like the consultants for public housing, I would say. So every zone coordinator manages their zones in their own style. The most successful zone coordinators are those who keep their data, they are really good in keeping their data, tracking their data, and managing their partnership really really well meaning they do a lot of qualitative data tracking and that depends on partnership, and partner and the zone. For me, it has been a hybrid of doing like in person, I tend to look at it in a more comprehensive way. Not just data, I try to be as present as possible. I try to work with not just one point of contact, but various points of contacts in the organization in order to meet my goals. So if I meet my goals, they are automatically meeting theirs, and vice versa. So I see myself as consultant or as an intermediary between our public housing residents, the community and the organization. So we have most historical data on what it works best, why we think it works best, and how it works best. We tend to share best practices throughout/ among our coordinators as well.

**Interviewer: Has your role or that of partners been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?**

Interviewee: yes, from what I read. The beginnings of coordinators were consultants and they came and created partnership as consultancy project so they were a lot more focused on policy implementation and program delivery or program management as opposed to service delivery. They set up the foundation of how it should be run or for the model to work. But the next wave of zone coordinators took their previous experiences working in community centers throughout the city and brought out into the actual implementation of the zone partnership model. And I think that has made it more dynamic and more enriching approach because these are two totally different methodologies working toward the same goals and two different backgrounds. Mostly were either from policy based schools or programs...they were more research-based, more analytical. As opposed to second wave, they were more community engagement, more community interaction. And it happened to work better that way.

**Interviewer: How would rate the success of each partner?**

Interviewee: resident engagement and volume, and not just that. But also do they meet their own outcomes because if they meet their own outcomes, then they meet ours. And

that's our goal is to help the partner to meet their outcomes. Because when that happens then we all win. And it's different by different partner. Because we may have smaller development than others and some zones who are way bigger than others. For example, I do better in recruitment than referrals. Because my experience hasn't been as fruitful with referrals with property manager as oppose to me getting the word out for events.

**Interviewer: Besides tracking post first-level interaction with partners. What would you change to improve this partnership?**

Interviewee: I think that is it. Because if we did that, we will have real time data for us to assess program enrollment and program completions. At the end, we won't have to wait for data matches at the end of the year, when we can track it as it goes like as it happens. And that makes it more of a learning opportunity. So we can analyze what have triggered certain peaks or drops in engagement and/or enrollment

Terminated partnerships?

**Interviewer: Have you ever terminated a partnership? What led to this decision?**

Interviewee: I haven't but I am currently thinking that one of my partnerships is not as fruitful. So I don't think they are as engaged with us as others are, or as others see value in working with us. So my recommendation to my supervisor that we don't continue that partnership because lack of engagement for events.

**Interviewer: What did you learn from that termination that could help avoid such situations in the future?**

Interviewee: Not applicable

**Interviewer: Would you form a partnership with an already terminated partner? Under what conditions?**

Interviewee: Not applicable

## **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

**Interviewer: What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?**

Interviewee: historical understanding of the NYCHA community from the partner, their previous involvement with public housing residents and that would apply to someone who have worked in two zones, and that give them general experience in working with public housing. They have some sort of knowledge or idea of what they are coming into even if it was a different zone.

**Interviewer: What different service gaps do you notice among the different zone partnerships? (interviewer: within East Harlem).**

Interviewee: adult education. It is the hardest fruit to catch or to pick. unfortunately , I think adult education has to be tied to financial incentives for it to be attractive to residents. And that is understandable, it's time. Residents come to us because they need to pay their rent, they need to pay their bills. And while education may be good in the long run, it's not going to help them put food on the table for next week...next month. So I think we should reshape the way we market and develop adult education programs. They have to be a little bit more comprehensive specifically with the young population, which at most risk because the older population has at least work experience under their belt, where they can make up for educational experience, where younger population does not have that work experience.



**Interviewer: What are the challenges facing REES while coordinating services?**

Interviewee: from academic point of view, we are not sure if new residents or the influx of new residents will supersede the inputs of new referrals. So there will be a time where our threshold level will increase to a time where instead of increasing referrals or engagement, it's going to fall off. Because if we do our job better, we are not going to be seeing many new residents as possible. There is no way to make it a sustainable goal if the goal increases or stays the same every year. I think it's more realistic for the goal to stay the same every year as opposed to increasing because we shouldn't be reaching our limit. If it reached to its limit, we will have to do more services or change how we are addressing or engaging with residents.

**B.1.2 New York Urban League**

**Interviewee: Diana Coleman**

**March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at Harlem's New York Urban League Office, 2:00 pm**

A. Background/General Questions: Please tell me the following...

**A.P.—How long have you been a partner?**

D.C.—I would say since about 2013. Really 2012 to 2013.

**A.P.—What made you a partner with NYCHA REES?**

D.C.—I thought a more effective way to reach out to the underserved population.

**A.P.—What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**

D.C.—It's job readiness services. So we are job readiness that would be assessing employment and career goals. because too often the underserved focus on jobs and so we make sure that we assess them fully, find out what the urgency is for employment, and then give them a path to work on both. Cause if you got to pay your rent and you're getting ready to be put out, you need a job right away. You are not thinking about going to school, not thinking about training. So that's quite different from somebody that wants a career. They know that they like working with people in a hospital or some type of clinical setting, and maybe they want to go for certified nurse assistant. So that means you gonna have to give up six months with no pay, in order to complete that training. So that's the assessment part. The other part of job readiness is...is their resume up-to-date? Third, we will call it interview techniques but you have a lot of people, they can't articulate what skills they bring to the table, but they do have skills. Or they have always heard, "stop bragging, don't toot your own horn." And with the competition in today's job market, it's the opposite, you need to toot your own horn. So that's three, let's see. Four, would be methods for job searching. The population we serve, it's more reactive than proactive. And so sometimes they may ignore those commercials, unless it applies to them. What is their technology? What sort of technical skills do they have and it could be from basics, in terms of Microsoft applications, but when we are also finding a lot of the times they don't know how to upload their resume, they don't know how to download an application. Many employers have assessments. And then the last category would be skills training.

B. NYCHA's Residents:

**A.P.—Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your services?**

D.C.—We try to be equitable with all clients. And when you assess the client, which is step

one. You can kind of come up with an action plan of how long or what path works better. So here is an example. I have a NYCHA client I met in 2013. She actually has a college degree from city college. I think she is an art major, liberal arts but concentrated in film editing or something. Never used the degree because when she graduated, the urgency was to be employed because she manages a household. So she has been working in a photo lab for the last ten years. Good salary, no benefits. So she takes a day off, she just doesn't get paid for that day. We still keep in touch and we are just waiting for the right opportunity that comes up that she can do something different because at this point it's a dead-end job. There are quite a lot of NYCHA clients, especially the ones I met in 2012 to 2013 in similar situations. So I want to go back to the equity because I am also a Harlem resident and I know the difference. You don't want to label or stigmatize someone from where they live. So that's the equity part of it. You treating everyone exactly the same and when they come you see where they are. So second example, I may get a NYCHA client because that's where the referral is from and I see gaps in the resume and I am familiar social services programs and I see that the only time that they worked was because they were forced to work. So I am going to be straight with them and find out. We don't want to waste each-other's time. If you just going through the motions, so one of the things with NYCHA, I need to find out how did they find out, what did they do to find out about the REES program. With the REES system it tells you the referral type, was it the management deciding "okay this person needs to bring more income into the household," or was it family services, or was it the property manager, or was it an event? That makes all the difference in the world on how motivated they are in terms of finding employment.

**A.P.—What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And did your perceptions change over time?**

D.C.—I kind of answered that but I will try again. I know it is going to be hit or miss. How they respond, so I have been working with them for a number of years, my staff haven't. So when I have interns or new staff, we have a script. We don't know, when you call them you need to let them know who we are and how we got their contact information, what we do, don't assume. Above all, you have to emphasize to them, we are not going to get them job with NYCHA, cause that's what we hear all the time. So in terms of perception, I have noticed more recently, they are not as informed as previous. So when I go back and look at the referral, I'm like "how did they know about it."

**A.P.—Generally speaking would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**

D.C.—The ones that show up or the ones that just call in? The ones that show up, I would say positive. And the reason why, which they have said is the energy that I put out. I am not judging them but I am also being realistic. If you don't have a high school diploma, how are you going to be an electrician?

C. Implementation and Monitoring:

**A.P.—In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**

D.C.—The ones that actually come? It varies from one contract year to another. I would say 50/50. People go through stages, just like death. They lost their job—"oh my god I can't believe I lost my job." I have a college degree—"I spent all this money, I have been working, how come I am not employed?" So sometimes they are motivated for a while and you have to do things to keep them engaged and motivated because depending on the job

they are going for, there could be a lot of positions but often times it's not that often. So you have to think of different ways to keep them engaged and motivated. Now this is part of it, sometimes the urgency is not as great with a NYCHA resident than with somebody else who has a fixed rent. Because NYCHA whatever your income is, you're paying thirty percent of it. But let's say my rent may be a \$1,000 whether I have a job or not, it's still gonna be \$1,000. So my urgency is going to be different than someone that falls into a pattern.

**A.P.—How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?**

D.C.—We promote it a lot. So the skills training which I didn't mention, use to be a five week/sixty-hour training. And there was an assessment from the retail industry at the end. We weren't able to offer that anymore but we still want to offer three days of customer service which is the soft skills. Because all industries call for it and this is something that is true of NYCHA residents, they may have a greater chance of having limited experiences and exposure to other surroundings, other cultures, and people interactions. An example of that, you go to the corner store, you ask for something and the clerk may give it to you, never saying a word. They will reach out their hand for the money or you give them the money and there are no words exchanged. Like I bought a sandwich, "may I have a nap-kin please." You know that's not normal ha-ha. Within this environment it may happen and so if you have limited experiences or exposure, you think that is normal—and it's not. Another example is transit authority started putting advertisements in the train about "this is not your dining room." It's like second nature, if that's all you experienced. There are some things that are culturally acceptable and now that Harlem is more integrated, it's causing a clash. Like if you don't have a backyard but you have a barbeque pit and it's the summer, people will take and barbeque on the sidewalk. That's a complete answer.

D. Communication Channels:

**A.P.—If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?**

D.C.—No they haven't shared in more than, I wanna say two years. They use to have quarterly or semi-annually meetings, they don't have that anymore. I use to meet with my zone partner because I would let them know the developments I would prefer to reach out to because it's a higher success rate if they are closer to where we are. So in Harlem, I have developments that are in walking distance of here. And in the Bronx, the same thing. I have five developments near our Bronx office. Well in the Spring they are walking distance. They have not...no, I just get the referral and that's it.

**A.P.—Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?**

D.C.—No.

**A.P.—Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?**

D.C.—Not anymore.

**E. Partnership Vision and Expectations:**

**A.P.—Do you have a common vision with NYCHA-REES?**

D.C.—Yes, but it's not...Actually, not really because I think there are assumptions made.

**A.P.—Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial?**

D.C.—Well the vision hasn't been communicated. We had a meeting maybe a year ago and that was Jose Caldera. Somewhat, again, I am assuming what the mission is.

**A.P.—What is the expectation from NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?**

D.C.—They will refer clients who are willing to work, they are over eighteen, and they can speak English. Their expectation (NYCHA-REES), anyone who is referred, we will give them a call within forty-eight hours. And that we will update the system accordingly.

**A.P.—Are there specific objectives you have met within a specific timeline?**

D.C.—Initially we started off quarterly and there was a report I did quarterly that just stopped. There was a quarterly report and then there was an annual report. The last report I have from them was about two years ago and that was some new software. I think it was bigger than the REES program that NYCHA was doing for all of their...some sort of tracking software that was developed and they wanted to know how many of NYCHA's residents came to us for services. And I was not willing to give them my database so that they could do it themselves. Fortunately, I had three interns and so they did the project, so that's why I know that all of our files has—you can see the name and you can see it's a NYCHA resident because it will say NYCHA on one end.

**A.P.—How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?**

D.C.—Any employment services program, you have to have community resources that you can reach out too. And so, with NYCHA as a partner, it's so many developments. The outreach component is there and we are as a non-profit organization with a tradition of helping the underserved we are pretty much equipped to help those who want the help.

**A.P.—Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?**

D.C.—Well, one of the things I know in the last two years, one of the zone partners had a big presence in East Harlem and so we were getting more referrals from East Harlem because of that. But we are actually located in West Harlem.

#### **F. Sustainability and Challenges:**

**A.P.—What are challenges facing your organization while providing services to NYCHA's participants?**

D.C.—Well let's see I answered that, let's see how I will answer it now. I guess no more than any other underserved population.

**A.P.—How do you think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve the partnership?**

D.C.—Maybe go back to quarterly meetings with the zone partners. I met my zone partner for the Bronx and that was it. I know what it is, having the same challenges myself with a limited staff, is you're covering a big territory, so covering a big territory is kinda difficult. Although it's extra work, I liked getting the spreadsheets semi-annual-or whatever of all of the participants that came through our program because once you close out of a referral you don't see it anymore. I got tired of retaining all those papers.

### **B.1.3 Urban Upbound**

**Date: 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017**

**Interviewee Name/Position:** *JOSHUA HUMPHRIES/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER*

**Total Interview time:** *48:50 minutes.*

#### **A. Basic Information**

- **Interviewer:** *How long have you been a partner?*

**Joshua:** I don't know exactly how long, since before the I was around, I believe they have been partners with Job-Plus. So, Urban UpBound operates a Job-Plus contract. REES partner with us on that contract. As far as I know, it has been since Job-Plus was created and been operating since 2013.

- o **Interviewer:** *When did you start?*

**Joshua:** I started last summer (2016)

- **Interviewer:** *What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?*

**Joshua:** It's a government contract we work with that works very closely with NYCHA, and REES kind of operates as a facilitator between our program and different NYCHA institutions. Working with property managers, maintenance, different things to give us more seamless access to NYCHA residents. We work with NYCHA, we are in a NYCHA building. But we are not NYCHA, we are a different contract, and so REES helps us work through some of these things.

- **Interviewer:** *What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?*

**Joshua:** We don't necessarily do anything for REES, REES does more for us than we do for them. They operate more as a facilitator for us. Our program does more like employment services, financial services in the neighborhoods for the development we work in. Our main work, with REES is helping, is building key relationships to enable us offer these services.

- o **Interviewer:** *Did you mean build relationships with residents?*

**Joshua:** We build relationships with residents. REES helps us build relationships with property managers, which in turn enables us to build relationships with residents. Managers can be hard or easy to work with, and if they are hard to work with, then it becomes difficult for us to build relationship with residents. REES helps to make sure those relationships are good so that the managers and community leaders are more willing to work with us.

- **Interviewer:** *What is the process involved in offering these services?* Answered above

#### **B. NYCHA's Residents**

- ***Interviewer: What services do you offer to Residents?***

**Joshua:** We provide a lot of financial services. For instance, today we have free tax preparations going on during tax season. For anyone who lives in the development—that is actually anyone who lives in the neighbourhood—and makes under USD 64,000 a year has access to free tax prep services.

We do pre-employment services. So, we work with employers and operate somewhat a free employment agency to help fast track people that live in NYCHA development to get to get the job readiness training. We also do resume building, market interviews and stuff like that to help them for a job interview. We do financial counselling, credit repair, debt reduction.

The goal is to alleviate a lot of financial stress and empower the residents to have greater financial independence. Not just getting a job, building a career pathway, not just basic services. We don't want them to live from paycheck to paycheck. We want to create independence. We address anything from predatory lending issues to employment issues and barriers to employment. We build individualized personalized tracks, so that they can have opportunity for greater financial independence.

- ***Interviewer: Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?***

**Joshua:** We are contracted to work with three different NYCHA developments. They target the developments and give us restrictions on who we are to work with. We work with Jefferson, Johnson and Clinton houses here in East Harlem. It is around 3500 units, with approximately 10,000 people (We don't have actual head count of people living there). So, it is basically anyone who lives in these residences, including employed people who can access other services we offer, such as financial counselling or tax preparations. There is around a 40% unemployment rate in this development. We are housed within Jefferson, and so we are close to the people and they can just walk in.

- o ***Interviewer: Can other NYCHA residents who don't live in the three residences solicit advice from you?***

**Joshua:** In limited ways, we can't help them with employment services, we have to refer them to other organizations. We build a referral system. It is hard to tell someone who needs services that you can't help, so that's a downside. However, the programme targets particular households who are in great need within these developments. We hire experts just to focus on these three residences. So, we are unable to help everyone. We target our investment into particular neighborhood to lift that neighborhood. Job-plus model has seen on average 18% employment rate increase in the neighborhoods we work in. I think it has been a successful model in helping lower the unemployment rate in the neighborhood.

- ***Interviewer: What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?***

**Joshua:** We are a voluntary program, the people who come to us want our help. I don't think there is any ill will from anyone because, I think we do a good job in building ourselves into the fabric of the community—we show up to community events, attend association meetings, and everything else to make sure that we know what's going on. Not to get something out of it, but we are investing in the community. And, most of the feedback we get, is that people are really happy that we are here and that we are helping part of the community

- **Interviewer:** *Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?*

**Joshua:** For sure, positive experience.

- o **Interviewer:** *Do you have residents who keep coming for services, for example, you help them find a job, but they do not retain it.*

**Joshua:** Yeah, and it puts us in a bad spot. So, we build relationships with these residents, and we build relationship with employer. If we have someone who had gotten fired in the last two or three jobs that we help the get that starts hurting our reputation with the employer. That becomes a precarious situation because we don't want to keep sending someone who keeps getting fired.

- o **Interviewer:** *What do you do about it?*

**Joshua:** We have to get creative, and maybe it requires seeing if they are willing to work with us on the issues that are causing them to be terminated. We have a strong post placement program. So, as soon as you get placed, we put you into a retention programme, where you have a career counselor who will sit and work with you, to help make sure you don't get fired and to help make sure you are able to grow in your career. I think this definitely reduces the number of times it happens.

- o **Interviewer:** *Are you able to track residents in the long term?*

**Joshua:** We are able to track people we work with. Some of it is voluntary based because we know their employers too. Our retention system tracks residents for a year using different milestones—for example, 90 day, 180 day, then a year mark. Our model tracks you for the first year, and helps you keep the job for the year. Then again, we continue working with you beyond that.

- o **Interviewer:** *Do you share these information with REES?*

**Joshua:** I don't know what the relationship is as far as sharing the information goes. We are contracted through Human Resources Administration, and that is who asks for the data. So, I don't know exactly about the sharing data with REES entails.

REES shares demographic data, resident's information on which units have a working age resident, and unemployment rate among others. This information helps with the planning,

for example, having Spanish speaking employees to cater to the residents (53% Latino).

### C. Implementation & Monitoring

- ***Interviewer: In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?***

**Joshua:** On two sides: I work on the Job-plus side in Astoria and here in East Harlem. The one in Astoria, we don't work with REES at all, we have been there for years. Urban Upbound has been in Astoria, longer than Job-Plus has been in Astoria, so we don't necessarily need their connectivity services. On the other hand, here, they have been super helpful because we are new to the neighbourhood as an organization. Pedro has worked well with me to create sit downs with each of the three different development property managers and association leaders. It has been meetings that would be harder for me to get on my own.

Also, REEs would be very helpful in problem solving situation, for example, if there is a conflict between Job-Plus and one of the property managers gets annoyed or frustrated, REES steps in to mediate.

- ***Interviewer: How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?***

**(Interviewer Notes:** This question was mistakenly omitted; however, it can be deduced that they get these skills from the trained offered as shown in the proceeding questions).

- ***Interviewer: Are before and after "trackers" installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.***

- ***Connect to adult education programs***

**Joshua:** We refer to other partners.

- ***Connect to vocational training opportunities***

**Joshua:** Certificate training. For example, to do construction, you need basic OSHA 10 certificate. We have people interested in the construction and so they need the certificate. We will pay subsidized price so they are able to do training.

Also, we do coding classes and tech trainings to build vocational skills that will empower people to get jobs quickly.

- ***Do you have people dropping out and how do you prevent that?***

**Joshua:** Yes, people drop out sometimes. Some people will show up to get free training, but at some point, they would drop out. We screen people to avoid such situations and to



make sure you are training in a training you are really interested in. This approach is better than just offering many free certificates not related to individual preferences. So, we try to sit down and make sure people can, like horn in a plan and move on from there. Otherwise, it could be wasteful to pay to go for a class which is not aligned with their interests.

- *Connect to resources to start or grow a business*

**Joshua:** We do small businesses workshops.

- *Connect to job opportunities*

**Joshua:** Retention model milestones-3 months, 6 months, and one year. We give incentives to bring pay stubs to show they are working i.e metro cards.

- *Connect to financial counseling services*

**Joshua:** We work with them, we do credit checks, and a lot of that is voluntary. It depends on how much access they want to give us to their financial information. We can be as helpful as we can be, but it is voluntary based.

- *Offer information on rent incentive program (EID)*

**Joshua:** We have Earned Income Disallowance for our members. Don't have to report that income to NYCHA the first one year. Second year you only have to report 50% of it, and the third year is when you start paying in full. The way rent works with NYCHA is 30% of your income.

One of the disincentives of getting a job within NYCHA is that your rent goes up, because it is based on your income, so it sort of disincentives going out to get a job. To cater for this, EID helps create this incentive to look for a better job. We teach them how to save for the two years, asking them to create a savings account.

#### **D. Communication Channels**

- *Interviewer: If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?*

**(Interview notes:** REES doesn't share this information with Urban Upbound but this question was answered based on direct feedback from residents to Urban UPbound).

**Joshua:** We are careful to create individual plans; every person has different needs. For example, a single mum can come in and has a degree, then the barrier to employment becomes child care. Another person is a felon with no job experience nor education qualifications, and these become his barriers to employment. We have to make sure everyone addresses the barriers that they have and pursue a career they wish to pursue. We have a career counselor that addresses different barriers to the careers residents want to pursue, and creates a plan of how to achieve it. Building the career is more important than just placing some at some job to earn from paycheck to paycheck.

- *Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?*

**(Interviewer notes:** It wasn't asked as the contract is not between them and REES but between HRA and them).

- ***Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?***

**(Interviewer notes:** This question was answered above. Joshua was not aware of such information).

## **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

***Interviewer: Do you have a signed agreement with REES?***

**(Interview notes:** This was question was asked because from the information above, I had suspected Joshua was unaware of any clear partnership goals with REES).

**Joshua:** I don't know. It is a bit of a nebulous relationship from my level of understanding. Pedro was great to work with, which is why he got a promotion. We just work together, he helps facilitates and most of our communication is through email. I have seen him only three times this year. He doesn't work from this office. My other relationship with REES is pretty much non-existence before working with Pedro.

- ***Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?***  
*(Not asked because it was clear there wasn't).*

- ***Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.***  
*(Same comment as above)*

• ***What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?***

*This question was restructured to below based on above information*

o ***Interviewer: How does this partnership work? I had thought you have to report to REES, but this doesn't seem like the situation.***

**Joshua:** They give us demographic data and they help us build relationships. At least that is the extent of my relationship with REES on either location working with the zone coordinators.

- ***Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.***

**(Interview notes:** Does not apply between REES and Urban UPbound-Joshua un aware as shown above).

- ***How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?***

**(Interview notes:** Does not apply between REES and Urban UPbound-Joshua unaware as shown above).

- ***How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?***

**( Interviewer Notes:** Joshua already mentioned he has seen Pedro only 2-3 since January. Meeting pretty much seem non-existence).

- ***Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain***

(This question was reframed based on previous information as below)

• ***Interviewer: How is the information shared? It seems like most of the communication happens between you and Pedro, but you are not sure the extent to which information is shared between the organizations in terms of tracking the residents?***

**Joshua:** Yeah, I don't. I know they share the demographic data with us, but I think it is voluntary. I don't think we are required contractually to share any information with them. And they don't typically approach us about that, at least at my level in the organization.

- ***Interviewer: How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?***

**(Interviewer Notes:** This was asked on a personal level, how he works with Pedro because it was clear that his only relationship with REES).

**Joshua:** I have seen Pedro maybe two or three times since January. I work with him mainly over email. He doesn't work out of this office, I think he works out of one of the NYCHA offices. I work with him mainly over email. Again, like I said he facilitates meetings and helping us with data that we need. Such as demographic make-up, employment rate, and which units have a working age resident.

- ***Interviewer: Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?***

**Joshua:** No, but my relationship with REES is pretty recent. The offices were open in January

**Terminated partnerships? Section Skipped**

## **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- ***Interviewer: What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the***

*project?***Joshua:**

- I like that it is voluntary, and it is humanizing. It gives you a space to go and pursue your dream rather than force you to show up and log in for certain hours.
- I think its successful because it is place-based, it is in the neighbourhood. We are inside Jefferson houses, and we work with Jefferson residents as well as Johnson and Clinton residents. Being place-based, being a part of the fabric of the community, attending association meetings and events, really makes a difference.
- The third reason why I think it works so well is that, it contracts out to nonprofits who are committed to these kind of work already. Urban UPbound has been trying to attack poverty in NYCHA developments for 13 years now, and we are good at it, and have had a lot of success doing it, and we have run different programs like this. We work in NYCHA development all over the city and so we are able to address issues on a kind of level that maybe NYCHA itself won't be able to.
  - o We are not NYCHA so it helps. For example, if you commit a felony, you are automatically removed from being a leaseholder in NYCHA and no longer eligible to be a leaseholder. This can make you homeless or you can still live there and not be on the lease. At that point, you risk the entire household, because if NYCHA finds out someone who committed felony lives there, they will vacate the whole family. So, you have to live in the shadows, vulnerable to the family. If NYCHA ran this program, that person could not be helped, but since we are not NYCHA, we can still help the person access jobs and opportunity. I think this is so important because such people have a lot of social services stripped away from them.

- ***Interviewer: What are the challenges facing your organizations while providing services to NYCHA's participants?***

**Joshua:**

- **Many people have different barriers to employment. I.e. felonies, child care. Challenge is trying to pick up people that have legitimate reasons for not working, but need to work.**
- There are high gang activities in this houses. Jefferson houses, had the highest crime rate of any NYCHA development house in the NYC last year. One of the officers said they arrested a nine-year old with a firearm. Kids are getting recruited before working age into gangs. Then there is the gang culture and the pressures associated with it, in addition to the threat to their lives and the possibility of jail time. There is also quick money to be made Vs working to be paid by the hours. The challenge is other things that are competing for their time and their commitments than a job. We don't work with anyone under 18; however, by the time the nine-year-old reaches the age, in most cases they have already made up their mind, due to pressure or any other reasons, on the kind of life they wish to pursue. By 18 years, it already too late in some cases.

- ***Interviewer: How do think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership?***

**Joshua:** With REES, should have many zone coordinators (More Pedros in REES). Contrasting with their work in Astoria, they don't have the REES facilitation.

**Joshua: NYCHA Residents**

I would love for it not be limited to the three developments. I appreciate the limitations, but I wish we would help more residents from the neighboring communities. For all the good reasons that is limited, I wish it would be opened up, because East Harlem is a low income community with many people needing help who are unable to receive services. We have people coming from neighbouring places, but we have to turn them away all the time. We can give some basic help, but that is just it. I do understand that the money comes in for certain reason and we have to give access to just those residents within the contract.

**Extra Notes:**

***Interviewer: REES is trying to find a way to strengthen the relationship better, so we are trying to find the best way to do so.***

**Joshua:** NYCHA has a referral system through REES. For example, if a resident goes to the management office to say “ I can’t pay rent because I lost my job”. NYCHA then refers the resident to us to help them. REES is working on building the referral system so that it is not just referral of the residents, but also for Job-plus to get tagged with the contacts of the residents making it easy to reach out to them. This helps eliminate the gap of residents not reaching out to organizations, like Urban Upbound, as Urban Upbound is also able to follow up.

***Interviewer: Would you know a percentage of the residents you are helping out of the total that you should be helping and that need help?***

**Joshua:** We are new here. We have a three-year contract for 2017-2019/20. The goal is to bring in 1600 members out of the three developments. So, out of the 10,000 that live here. Of that goal 40 new members for the month and out of it 17 members to get a job, and around 50% of 17 members retention in their jobs. This is in partnership with HRA and it is city funded. HRA does lots of social services.

***Interviewer: Out of these, how many members do you have now?***

**Joshua:** We inherited from the previous organization about 1000 or 1100 members. Then since we opened in January, we have had another 100 members come in. Takes time to build up. So, we have people going knocking on doors, and distribution of fliers to create awareness. That’s the team I lead. I lead community engagement.

**B.1.4 East Harlem Talent Network**

**Date: March 22, 2017**

**Interviewee Name/Position: Adriane Mack/ Director**

**Total time: 21 minutes**

**A. Basic Information**

**Interviewer: How long have you been a partner? What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?**

Interviewee: It is better to give some context to East Harlem Talent Network, which will help describe how our relationship with REES started. East Harlem Talent Network is an incubated program at STRIVE International. Strive has been around for 32 years. East Harlem Talent Network, which we will refer to as EHTN. EHTN has been little over two years, two and half years, and we focus on local hiring only. We initially started with no trainings. It was direct placement...GED to masters...18 years old. Everything from entry level to intermediate positions in various industries. STRIVE worked with REES for many many years. I do not know exactly how many. For EHTN, we have been working with REES since the most recent contract we have with placing East Harlem residents in one of the four training tracks and then helping them with job assistant. So maybe I would say for a year now. We have 120 community-based organizations that we work with; EHTN does not have their own clients. It is like a temp. agency.

**Interviewer: What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**

Interviewee: so 50 percent of placements come from East Harlem residents. 30 percent needs to be from Upper Manhattan residents and 20 percent need to be out of borough residents...Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens. We have now expanded the program, we offer a training called serve up Harlem. That serves Youth 18 to 24, for those who are interested in getting into the restaurant industry...hospitality industry. It does not require GED education and if you have felony, you are still welcome to take the class.

**Interviewer: What is the process involved in offering these services?**

Interviewee: we have monthly partner meetings. The zone leaders invited to come. I believe they also receive all our job orders that we put out. Flyers. Anything. We basically share everything with our partners so that's how we connect with REES. They definitely get the information from us via email. And then also partner meetings.

**B. NYCHA's Residents**

**Interviewer: Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?**

Interviewee: not just NYCHA residents but for all, we look for if they are job ready. So if they have a resume. Do they have a valid ID and a tangible social security card? Do they have childcare in place? Do they have a professional attire? Just like any other temp agency or job placement agency that charges for their services. We don't charge, we are free. Basically that they fit the requirements of what the employer is looking for when it comes to placing them in a job opportunity so it's the same thing.

**Interviewer: What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?**

Interviewee: although we have been under one contract with REES, we have been working with NYCHA residents since the inception. So it wasn't just a year ago working with NYCHA residents. Umm, my perceptions of NYCHA residents are people who are looking for opportunities, employment and get connected to that information. One of my staff members here is a NYCHA resident, she does not live in East Harlem but she lives in West Harlem. She has a Bachelor's degree. Phenomenal. Very professional. So I am sure someone has a perception that one from a public housing, one may not be educated but that's not true. As I mentioned I have one of my staff members has a bachelor's degree and is getting her graduate degree...hard working...very smart... diligent, so that's what I believe NYCHA resident to be. But there are some people who may lack skill set or lack accessibility to technology...things like that. But that doesn't mean that is a NYCHA thing, that may just be that person circumstance. So I don't have a generalized idea of NYCHA residents.

**Interviewer: Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**

Interviewee: I won't have said I have positive or negative one.

**Interviewer: probing question: would you be leaning toward negative or positive**

Interviewee: I think that is a little bit of black and white question, don't you think. Do you like them or you don't like them. I think everyone is an individual and that question kind of pegs them... if you from NYCHA, that's who you must be. That is little too short sided, I think. Umm, just because I said I have one of my employees who live in a NYCHA building. Then I have also dealt with NYCHA residents that don't come on time, that don't have a computer, that are not professional so that's a vast... Neutral, I have NYCHA residents who are phenomenal, they come in, they dress professionally, they are ready to work, they looks great, they know what they are doing and they get their jobs and they keep them. And I have NYCHA residents who don't show up, not professional, don't take a shower, don't get dressed, don't take advantage of what we offer. I think it's case by case.

### **C. Implementation & Monitoring**

**Interviewer: In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**

Interviewee: So we are still in the contract now, where we are doing retention. I felt like we need little bit more time. There is one particular part of the contract where we had to do food service. Because we did not have an existing food service program and they gave us the opportunity to place people in food service. There was no time to put together some sort of a training, that would actually benefit the NYCHA residents. There was not enough funds to create anything for them. So once we were able to do that, create an actual training and all of that, the contract had ended as far as giving the people the opportunity to train so 10 people didn't get the opportunity. Because first of all there was no enough funds to create training program and number two, once we did acquire funds elsewhere

and we were able to share them, the contract was then over and we were denied an extension of two weeks. So we wanted to be able to like say “hey we finally got this training, within two weeks, we can get someone trained and they are ready to go” but based on that we couldn’t do that. So now we are only focusing on the retention of the people who received jobs already.

**Interviewer: How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA’s participants?**

Interviewee: that is our main mission. That’s what STRIVE was founded on, which is the core program which is duplicated in 20 other locations nationwide. So our core program focuses on interpersonal skills, self-development, professionalism, interviewing skills, resume prep, the mindset to get someone ready to go to work, so that’s what we were actually founded on.

**Interviewer: Are before and after “trackers” installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program?**

Interviewee: at STRIVE, we use data to track the performance of not just the client but the program itself. So there is milestones for many different contracts. So using the data allows us to do that. So this particular individual was referred and completed training and was referred to four different opportunities for jobs and then was hired, and then either the person is still at work or may not be working. Or there is someone who was referred to a training but did not complete it. Like we will have all of that in the database as well.

#### **D. Communication Channels**

**Interviewer: Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project? Sharing feedback with REES, in particular?**

Interviewee: yes, that is done through reporting (data through reports).

**Interviewer: Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?**

Interviewee: so based on whatever the contract requires for us to share, we definitely share all the information that they require us to share. So for instance on the last contract that we are still in the middle of, it asks us was the person enrolled in job training program? Did they complete it? When was the day they started it and ended it? Um, it asks what development they come from? It also asks did they complete their occupational training? When did their occupational training start and when did it end? Did the person get placed at a job? And they asks us when did they start working? It asks us about retention, have they been employed for 30 days, 60 days, 90 days...that type of thing.

#### **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**



**Interviewer: Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?**

Interviewee: what I found with REES is that there cannot be one mission per se. because that's not how REES functions. Everyone functions in workforce development in general...is to get the person placed at work and they hopefully keep their job and we assist them with that. So with the particular contract we had is to successfully help 44 East Harlem NYCHA residents get training and referred to employment. That's the vision of the contract, so yeah that's our shared vision. That's why we got the contract in the first place.

**Probing question: do you have access to referral system with REES? So when NYCHA residents come to REES, they fill out applications and based on that the partner would look into the system and select from NYCHA residents?**

Interviewee: so no, what normally happens, there is recruitment events the zone leader would put together, and then we would be invited to come to these events to help with some of the recruitment into the training we offer.

**Interviewer: Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.**

Interviewee: I think so, but I think there is a part that does not share the mission so many of the contracts that REES puts out, it's only for the people who are on the "lease," right. So many of the people who live in these NYCHA apartments are not on the lease. So if you are the mom and you are on the lease, you don't need the training but your son who sleeps on the couch does. The son has to have some proof that he still lives there. Sometimes these kids do not have a relationship with their parents and things like that. Or people might be living with their sister, or uncle or aunt and would be like "I could take advantage of this opportunity and I do live in here" but they don't have any proof, or getting the proof they need in order to get the training. So that is where the disconnect. A lot of people who needs these stuff are not on the lease. So sometimes the REES contract requires them to have documentation or some type of letter living with.

**Interviewer: Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.**

Interviewee: yes, January 4/5. Our part of contract training ended, now we are focusing on retention in employment. So now that they have been trained, we should be referring them to jobs, and then also for those who have been placed at jobs, we should be tracking how long they have been at work.

**F. Sustainability & Challenges****Interviewer: What factors have contributed to the success of the partnership? If you think it's a successful?**

Interviewee: I think because we have existing programs like existing training such as having partnership with Security Company, the green construction maintenance. That is a huge part of why we are successful in many of those trainings, because they already

existed, they have been already created. So having a place to send them somewhere. I think some of the events that the zone leader put together were successful which brought a lot of the residents we wanted to be in contact with. That was also successful.

**Interviewer: What are the some of the challenges facing your organization/agency while providing services to NYCHA's participants?**

Interviewee: again, the biggest challenge that the food service training has not been created yet. That was the biggest challenge. Or that there was no funding to create a food service training. Also the food service training was very limited, so the hospitality industry is a vast industry and there is many credentials and certifications... licenses that you can get. However they have limited us to doing food services. But one could get bartender license, one could get tips (taps) license. So the funds were there to refer people to them if we don't have them in our program but it only limited us to one certification. So that was also a challenge too.

**Interviewer: How do think the overall partnership could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership? For example, would you say expansion of license?**

Interviewee: yes, allow us to not just do a particular certification in one particular industry. For instance, in construction and maintenance you have solar, green power like all of these different certifications one could get, so just saying make industry standard more broad. And then providing additional funding to create programs. Also allowing to connect with the residents outside of the zone leader so really there is no way to connect with them. So yeah one could go to their buildings and put flyers up but that's not effective. That's a waste of money.

#### **B.1.5. State University of New York Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center**

**Date:** 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017

**Interviewee Name/Position:** Carmel M. Paleski - Director of Operations

**Total Interview time:** 56:15 minutes.

#### **A. Basic Information**

• **Interviewer: How long have you been a partner?**

**Interviewee:** I would say easily three years. But, if I were to look at actually when it started, historically accurate number, I am not exactly sure, but at least three years.

• **Interviewer: What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?**

**Interviewee:** A number of our students are already in NYCHA housing, so it was a mutually beneficial fit. The goal of NYCHA REES with the zone partners is to really help their residents further their education and employment. And our goal is to help eligible New Yorkers or our program attain education and workforce credentials. It was mutually beneficial potential partnership to help New York residents improve their lives options.

- **Interviewer: What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**

**Interviewee:** Manhattan Educational Opportunity Centre offers academic and vocational training. We help people learn English, prepare for high school equivalency diploma, prepare for college, and earn vocational credential certificate, for example, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) license, security guard license. We do individual advisement, one on one advisement, small group advisement, carrier readiness, employability skills workshops. We have supplemental instructions online on the computer, individual tutoring, one on one and small group tutoring. Not only do we provide all the classes and the instructors, and nice graduation ceremony, but also all the wrap around services, like a tenant's outreach and things like that.

- **Interviewer: What is the process involved in offering these services?**

**Interviewee:** The reason I said it is mutually beneficial is because NYCHA-REES sends you an email. For example, Carmel is interested in food service, or Carmel is interested in improving their English to get a better job. Now I know Carmel, I know where she lives, I have her telephone number. Within 24-48 hours, you are supposed to respond back to the person. for example, "hi Carmel, this is John from MEOC, I hear you would like to learn English, we have a class in March, are you interested?" Ohh no I am not interested or ooh yes I am interested, but only evening. Do you have evening classes? In the electronic system, you enter the conversation. i.e made contact, interested, no longer interested. When they come for the information session, you update the information in the electronic system. When they register, you can update the information.

## **B. NYCHA's Residents**

- **Interviewer: What services do you offer to Residents?**

**Interviewee:** When the residents approach their case manager because they are unable to pay rent, then they are referred to us. And we have to get in touch with the resident. It is not cold-calling from their end, but it is our responsibility to reach out to them. We make it easier for the residents, we know we are reputable and we are not taking their money or that kind of thing. Then the residents know that there are these places that NYCHA is working with. The workers know information about the residents that we don't know. For example, NYCHA tells them they have to pay rent if they had missed for a couple of months threatening eviction. Then the residents say they can't get a job because they don't have a high school diploma. Then NYCHA tells them, "have you heard of SUNY MEOC, it is seven blocks from where you live. I am going to refer you for that." Then we get the email. Of course, we don't have to know their particular financial situation.

- **Interviewer: Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?**

**Interviewee:** We are not allowed to look into that kind of thing. You have meet basic eligibility requirements: be a US citizen, permanent residents or a refugee; have lived in NY state for at least a year; meet low income guidelines; cannot have a college degree; can't be attending college in good standing; cannot have more than 24 college credits; have to have a photo ID. Must have proof of all these things, you have to show if you are registered to vote, if you have a lease, a bank statement, something with formal mail. Same thing with income. If it is through income, then taxes, SSI, or HRA budget letter—which is like a welfare. Those are general guidelines for everyone who comes at the center. We are funded by the state administered by the city, so, they want the services to go to the residents of the state in the city.

- **Interviewer: What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time? Do you get students who start and drop off?**

**Interviewee:** Sure! We have people who want to drop off. That why I said they could have told their worker at NYCHA they are interested, because they are really interested or because they are just telling their workers something, we don't know. But, we do know we have students who when you call, they say, oh no, I am not interested, or I enrolled in another program. And when you put that in there, then NYCHA REES says, but we did not refer them to another program.

- o **Interviewer: Do you get many of those?**

**Interviewee:** I think it is a mix. You would think the data tells you these are people in need, we would try help them. There's a high number of people. Let's see what we can do with the referrals, but that doesn't mean people are ready for the service.

- o **Interviewer: Would say it's less or more than 50 %**

**Interviewee:** Overall for the center, we serve about 1500 people a year—somewhere 1500 and 2000. Last academic year (15/16), we served about 200 of that number that were listed as NYCHA residents. Our overall withdrawal rate varies—anywhere from 25% to 40 % depending on the program, the academic year, and the person. If you apply the 25% for the NYCHA residents, it is not half, but are they closer to the 40%? Then I can't say without looking at the numbers. But if you really need it, I could check. But I think, the reason why the partnership was created, is that there is a group of people that need the help, and whether you offer a program, not everyone is going to take it. For others, there are many things going on in their lives, which need to be addressed before they can spend much of their time in class. For examples if they just had a baby or someone who is sick. Then the ones that are really interested, they come, they are interested, and they are successful. I would say that is true for all our students. We take all students that meet the eligibility criteria.

- **Interviewer: Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**

**Interviewee:** Personally, I would say positive. But, there are people who are responsible

for calling and following up. I think those people, sometimes, when they find people who say they are not interested. Say, I am given a list of 15 people, 3 say they are interested, left a message for 4, 7 say am not interested, they could feel like it is a waste of their time. Or why are we doing this?

Me personally working with zone coordinators, network meetings, we have had them here, presented our programs to them, gone over to NYCHA to meet with them—all that is positive. Good people trying to do good work. In the nitty gritty, you are like, how many are really come, are they here just to get there caseworker off their back? Do I need to call 47 to get 12 people to come in? Maybe? But, that's the work. That is our work.

### C. Implementation & Monitoring

- ***Interviewer: Do you have a partnership agreement?***

**Interviewee:** We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Technically expired, probably a year ago. What happened was that in CUNY the system for MOU changed, and in NYCHA the system for MOU changed. Also, we had a person retire here, and they had high level person leave and, it is not that we can't do our work. It is just that; the parameters are continuing as they were. We had committed to certain numbers, meetings, programs, and timelines. We offer hospitality now, it is not there because we did not offer that before. And it is more of a function of CUNY SUNY legal, NYCHA legal, and the bureaucracies that we work for, working together to update the MOU. There is a process for it.

- ***Interviewer: In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?***

**Interviewee:** To some degree, yes. Aahh.. you know, and I think that's the nature of the work—someone gets referred, but is everyone getting a high school diploma? Is everyone improving their English or meeting their goal? Probably not. But the objective of NYCHA recognizes their houses, not education, and we recognize education, not housing. Right! Let's build on the strength of each individual organization. If all our people are coming to us saying, "I need a high school diploma" then they are not going to have classes [at REES], so they refer them to us. That was the original objective. NYCHA may not be able to offer everyone classes on site at the community room, but they can refer people to organizations like us who have been in the state for 50 years, funded by the state, administered by city. All of our programs are offered at no cost to people. In that sense, that's the main objective. In the sense that are we meeting the objective target, because they have high conversion. No! Because they have high.. just like us.. our funders have high outcomes expectations. So, it depends what lenses you use to measure success.

- ***Interviewer: How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?***

**Interviewee:** Yeah. Especially for vocational or workforce career development. For employability workshops, we work with them on eye contact, handshake at the interview, the resume, communication, how do you tell your boss or supervisor "my kid is sick and I can't come to work" without that person judging you and not giving you an extra shift? Or

you are a CNA and you have an incident with one of the patients or clients, how do you relay that information? We also do college readiness workshops, and I think some of the soft skills are embedded in the programs themselves, even if you did not attend a workshop, depending on the program itself. For academic programs, it more about making sure people read right and compute or do arithmetic on the grade level. The soft skills can be learned from presentations, but it is not the main goal. College prep has more of it and literacy development may have less of it, because they have tests, i.e we want to help you pass this test to get a high school diploma, no one is asking you to do a presentation. It is more test prep.

- ***Interviewer: Are before and after “trackers” installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.***

- ***Connect to adult education programs***

**Interviewee:** We have stakeholders’ performance measures that we are held accountable to. And so, for ESOL, we are looking for people to improve their reading, writing, listening, speaking, and conversation levels year to year or pretest to posttest. Same thing for literacy development and developmental studies. These are all adult programs. The goals for these programs are academic gains. So, by the end of the year, or the semester or the program, did they improve a grade level? They take the TABE test. They take initial test at admission, and they take after the end of the semester. For example, from 4.2 reading level to 5.2 reading level. For our intro to high school equivalency and high school equivalency, our objective is to get them to high school equivalency diploma. The objective for college prep is for them to get into college without remedial needs. The colleges have exams, but our students are alternative students with a wide age range from 19 to 50s, 60s and so, they are not coming out straight out of high school, where they can use those results to be admitted. So, they are going to take a test to get into college. For CUNY, it is CUNY assessment test in reading, writing, and math. So, we give them general college prep, general college access stuff, but also what test are you studying for so you don’t test into remedial classes when you get into college.

- ***Connect to vocational training opportunities***

**Interviewee:** The goal is employment, or a certificate or license or both. So, all of them the goal is - of course - employment, that’s why we are training them on a particular thing. Most of them include a license, or a certificate or some other thing by NY state division of licensing or NY state department of health or but another organization. For example, CNA is a New York state license, and one has to pass the test before the license is issued, you have to get fingerprinted, then apply for the license. We help our students throughout the process. Not only are our classes free but all these help is also free.

- ***Connect to resources to start or grow a business***

**Interviewee:** If they are interested in entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial skills, yes. But do we do it just do it? No.

- ***Connect to job opportunities***

**Interviewee:** We have employment advisors who would work with them on a resume, sit with them and prepare for an interview, and we will, from time to time, workforce 1—another government organization. They will have a vendor, whether it is a security firm from the airport or from bank or store. Whole Foods is opening a new store. They will say “they made some agreement with the city, they are going to open here, 15% of the people working in the store need to be from the neighborhood, because they get a break on some kind in taxes. Many business do that, so, they will reach out to Workforce1 saying, for example, “I have 20 slots for security guards”, Workforce1 will then reach out to us, asking for students who have completed security guard classes because they need to fill the 20 slots.

- ***Connect to financial counseling services***

**Interviewee:** We used to, then we stopped. We are trying to see if we can re-offer them again. The grant money for that ran out, maybe four-five years ago, but the state just got additional grant money. All day yesterday and today, there has been an ongoing discussion on how to offer it again and implements it here, which I will hear more about it.

- ***Offer information on rent incentive program (EID)***

**Interviewee:** Yes, any kind of incentive, even if it is SNAP or rent. The thing is, someone has to say I need it, in most cases. We will offer it from time to time, a legal clinic. For example, with the recent immigration, we brought in someone to explain what people’s rights are, how do they respond. We offer these sometimes, but the student has to ask for the service. for example, if they say they are struggling.

## **D. Communication Channels**

- ***Interviewer: If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?***

**Interviewee:** Absolutely, there is feedback. The meetings that I was a part of, we got together with the zone coordinators and the managers of the zone coordinators, face to face meeting. Maybe just once or twice or you pick the phone and call. Maybe once a year almost. Even though it might make sense to meet quarterly or twice a year, that doesn’t mean that’s the only time we talked. We can always chat via the phone to discuss the project. For example, we had staff leave and a new person was hired, and the email address that the referrals were coming into wasn’t being monitored for a period. Right, so what’s going on? Someone hasn’t received a call in 30 days? Not that we want to have that happen, but it happened. So, we made sure we were able to update the email addresses and reassign the work. But, that came from leadership changes here at the center. Maybe people did not know the level of detail or how the system works to know how to reassign to someone else.

- ***Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project? Vice versa***

**Interviewee:** Absolutely, there is something with the email where you get more than one email (they may have fixed this by now). You basically get 15 emails if you get 15 referrals. If you did not close it, it re-sends you the full information, instead of sending you the information on the 16<sup>th</sup> person.

We all have given suggestions on both sides. For example, I don't know if it was a NYCHA REES zone coordinator or from our side, we said "we have information session here, why don't we offer some sessions at the NYCHA REES offices?" We did that twice. In one, we offered testing on site. We explained all the benefits of the program and asked if anyone was interested in the program, filling up the paperwork, and taking exams. We had informed the residents in advance so they came prepared to stay for up to four hours if they chose to do the test.

We also worked on the flyer together, that is not a requirement of the zone partnership, but it is something we wanted to do.

- ***Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?***

**Interviewee:** We share user identification scripts from the data. You wouldn't know who the person is. The agreement asks us to identify the number of NYCHA residents we serve. So, we give the address, but no apartment number or name. That is stipulated in the MOU for confidentiality. We remove the identifying number when we share the formation. However, NYCHA REES give us all information, the address (I think) and number to enable us to contact the residents. Sometimes also email.

## **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- ***Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?***

**Interviewee:** I think our missions are similar, in that we want to help people. And I think it varies with the types of help you are providing, whether it is housing or education. Then of course they have some things that are just their own, like housing, which we don't have. There are some overlap but not 100%.

- ***Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.***

**Interviewee:** I definitely think it is mutually beneficial or in agreement. Our outcomes are easily measurable. Where it is trickier is where people drop out or where they say no.

- ***What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?***

**Interviewee:** The expectation is that there are referrals, so that we are able to help people. Some support on the referrals on the people who are not interested. Yeah, generally just referring people.

- ***Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.***

**Interviewee:** We are supposed to respond within 24-48 hours and convert a number of



the referred residents into our students. I don't remember the percentage off top of my head but they are high. Like they have definitely over 70%, if it's over 80 or 90% I don't remember off on top of my head, but they run reports from the system, because we are imputing the information. For example, someone came and took the test, someone came for information session, or no show, or number not in service. They will run reports and may say "MEOC has low response rate or has high ESOL attainment" or something. So, you can see your higher low performance.

- ***How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?***

**Interviewee:** I think either person in the partnership can call the other to say this isn't working. For example, REES saying we need to convert more people or we say every person they refer to us is not really interested. I don't know if it is explicitly stated anywhere, but I think professionally, either partner can offer decisions.

- ***How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?***

Interviewer notes: This was answered above. Once a year for the meeting.

- ***Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain***

Interviewer notes: Explained above, by mail and phone

- ***Interviewer: How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?***

**Interviewee:** REES refers to us by emails and the center acts on the information by contacting the residents. (Interviewer notes: Clearly articulated in the preceding questions above).

- ***Interviewer: Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?***

**Interviewee:** I mean, I think they have become more innovative from their end. There are different services being offered, with the food and the youth—youth leadership teams. Not sure if it started like that, but maybe it did. From our end, we serve these population, but we can serve more. I think, we realized it requires attention to detail, someone dedicated to responding, someone who asks questions and has answers. We train our staff to have them informed. We have had changes, so training staff on the partnership and how important it is to be responsive, is important. So, I think, we had some poor preference—can't deny it. I think what happened, was that there was enough of a working relationship between some of the NYCHA employees and us and we said "we value this relationship;" so having poor performance was alarming, as NYCHA felt they could rely on us, but the performance was low. At the time we had change in the executive director. So, I think if we had not worked to build the interpersonal relationship at the beginning, they might just say, let's stop referring people there. That did happen for a little while, because they were not sure what has happening in our offices. I am not trying to over blow it, I am just giving you background, because I know you don't know that. So, but then we were able to

overcome that and hopefully, we will continue to overcome that and continue to help people.

## **Terminated partnerships? Section Skipped**

## **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- ***Interviewer: What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?***

**Interviewee:** I would say one of the things was the drive of one of the regional managers who is no longer there at NYCHA REES. His commitment, vision, and dedication to the outcome and to the numbers. For example, if I have 76 residents and I need to get 50% or 90% of them, then I know the target. I think when you work with someone who is comfortable of the environment, who is not afraid to go to NYCHA housing. I have been in NYCHA housing and gone to events. You have to have ease in the environment and the community. You can't act afraid, it is not going to take you anywhere.

But apart from openness and willingness, you need to have someone who is data driven and enthusiastic about this very difficult task of helping people in high need move ahead.. When you have someone like that in leadership role, it has impact beyond that.

- ***Interviewer: What are the challenges facing your organizations while providing services to NYCHA's participants?***

**Interviewee:** Like any good educator, just reminding yourself that you need to have good expectations and higher education standards. You want the staff to be of the opinion that this population is worthy of being supported. If you call 17 people and they tell you "why did you call me? How did you get my number? Of course not, I am not interested" that is worth the four or eight people that you are able to help. But I think that is the nature of helping people who might be in their 30s or 40s, and who do not have a high school diploma and want to come back to school after being out for 10 to 20 years. School is different from what it was. A number of people are like "I have kids who I took care of, now they are in college, and it is my turn to go back to school. Welcoming them can become challenging, because it is a different population, and they also have other responsibilities other than school or classes. For example, if a child is sick, or a spouse. Someone who is 30 or 40, you have a life, it is not just school. If something dramatic happens, I mean in high poverty areas, there is less access to affordable food and affordable housing (that NYCHA takes care of), and this and that. But, is it the safest? you have other stresses and pressure. The challenge is working with the population and helping them to see the value of taking a year and half to get high school equivalency diploma. People want it fast, they just want to take the test and pass. NY state has the lowest high school equivalency passing rate for the test in all states, and there are a number of reasons. Iowa has the highest, but they charge about approx. USD500 or more to take the test, while in NY it is legislated that you can't charge for the test. There is a psychological thing about spending the money on something and valuing it. Also, if you are finding people who can afford the cost, then it means they are prepared for the test. On the other hand, someone with limited resources would prioritize other things over the test.

Some people need a job yesterday, telling them “well, you tested and so you are 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, so that’s 15 weeks to improve your reading level. At the end of the semester you are going to take a test, and then, depending how you do, you will either join intro to high school equivalency or high school equivalency, then you will do that for 15 to 30 weeks”. They would be like, wait! a year and half. I need a job now. Yet, in the city it is hard to get work without a high school diploma. Restaurants, probably care less, but with security and CNA, you need it.

- ***Interviewer: How do think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership?***

***Interviewee:*** I think regular feedback loops, doesn’t have to be in person, but regular feedback loops—whether it’s quarterly basis might be good. Also, just doing some of the paperwork to make sure MOU is finalized. Even if the legal structure was changed and it is harder to do, we should still do that.

For the clients, maybe looking at referrals. NYCHA REES refer for non-housing, and we refer for non-education, so we both do referrals. So, looking at that and helping people navigate other factors that affect their lives other than housing and education. Whether it is child care, transportation costs, food services or feeding their families. I mean, what are those things that are out of housing and education that we need to address? I think they do, I know they have social workers, but you still get people who are not in a place to take advantage of the opportunity.

## **B.2 Lower East Side**

### **B.2.1 Lower East Side Zone Coordinator**

**Lisa Jaradat**

**March 15<sup>th</sup> 2017**

**Q: How long have you been a Zone Coordinator?**

**A:** I started in November 2014 so that's 2 years and like 4 months.

**Q: Were you initially with the Lower East Side?**

**A:** Yes, I started with the Lower East Side.

**Q: Do you get to know the clients/residents that you work with on a personal level?**

**A:** Yeah absolutely I mean I don't really work per se with the residents of the lower East Side; I primarily come in contact with them when they come to any of the events that I coordinate.

**Q: Do you know the demographics and the characteristics of the zone that you work with?**

**A:** Not really. I would suggest for accuracy to look into the census bureau for the demographic breakdown of the neighborhood. Although, I do know that it's a Heavily Hispanic community. There is also a small percentage of people from Bangladesh.

**Q: How do you select the partners that you work with? Do you look for any specific qualities in a partner?**

**A:** The goal is pretty much more or less to first identify service gaps in the area. And then we strive to identify and increase the assets of the residents in the functional areas of adult literacy, employment, business development etc.

Henry Street was Originally selected as the inaugural partner because they're one of the oldest settlements in the Lower East Side.

**Q: Do you specifically pick the partners on the Lower East Side, do you do the research of potential partnerships?**

**A:** Partners for the Lower East Side are chosen solely by me. In the two years that I have been here, I have on-boarded 2-3 applicants. They are BMCC and the Lower East Side peoples' credit union, but credit union has not been completely accepted yet. BMCC is an official partner. I do the research, I figure out who can provide what services and we take it from there. Ultimately we decide on who our partners are, offer the applications and as coordinators we present it to the board to plead our case as to why we want these people on board.

**Q: If a partnership is approved, how is it maintained? After the first cycle, if you**

**receive negative feedback, do you try to modify and speak to the partners to change the programs they offer, or is negative feedback automatic grounds for dismissal?**

**A:** I inherited both of those partners. With University Settlement there was no deselection. We did not communicate with them to say we don't want your services. We just phased them out.

For obtaining partners, there are two different kinds. There is a referral system partnership, and recruitment based partnership. Both University Settlement and Henry Street Settlement were referral systems. With University Settlement they kind of phased out, because I do generate reports. They were inconsistent, therefore we both deemed that it wasn't feasible for us to remain partners.

With Henry Street Settlement we meet on a nearly quarterly basis, and I do generate reports for them and they see how their system matches up in order to make tweaks where necessary. They specialize in areas such as service workforce development, employment advancement, financial literacy, and adult education. For Adult Education we have been holding events for them to learn about program.

**Q: Do the partnerships require their participants to give feedback or is it not a structured aspect? Do they report back to you or the partners about their experience/success?**

**A:** Honestly we don't; No. Unless there is a request for a success story I would contact them to have them feature a success story.

**Q: In terms of how you monitor the success of the partnership, do you look at the success as participants going to the workshops, or do you look at success as participants gaining employment from these workshops/classes?**

**A:** We haven't really...I would have to say we haven't really evaluated in terms of how we evaluate success. It is primarily event based. With the adult education part people are coming in and testing, and then they enroll on the spot. So that's a success within itself. They get placed into certain classes and each level has a certain amount of classes. Our ultimate goal is to have people complete high school equivalency education. Attending 12 classes or so is a milestone within itself.

With the referrals, someone attending their appointment is a huge success. We don't really look for job placement successes in most cases. In terms of Henry Street Settlement they work off of job placement so we get reports of that. Ideally we would like to see what the placements are but we really haven't explored that. It's the same thing for financial counseling. As long as they attend the appointment we don't really seek further information. Such as credit information, or if they've opened an account etc. We are hoping to do so but have not. With Henry Street Settlement we do referral system meetings just to see how many each zone is obtaining; what type of referrals they are etc.

## **B.2.2 Henry Street Settlement**

### **Interview #2**

#### **Zone Partner**

**April 11th 2017**

#### **Q: How long have you been a partner?**

A: I have been at Henry Street Settlement for almost three years now, and I believe the partnership started before I came on board, so at least three years.

#### **Q: Do you know what made Henry Street Settlement partner with REES?**

A: I don't have the history. The one contract that Henry Street has is the jobs plus contract. Are you familiar with that contract?

#### **Q: No.**

A: Jobs plus is a model that provides services to NYCHA residents directly, so there are 9 jobs plus contracts in the city with providers that are assigned NYCHA development and they have to provide a set of services. These include job support, job retention support, financial literacy, education, exploration and support to developments. We have two developments in the lower east side; Jacob Rees and William Wald, which are also in the NYCHA REES zone. Lisa Jaradat works with me on all of my programs but also works with jobs plus, which is under me, on referrals to get those residents into that program specifically.

#### **Q: Besides jobs plus, do you offer other services?**

A: I work with REES on employment. I have another employment program and it looks like jobs plus but it is for city-wide residents. I have ESL programming, HSE programming, which is High School equivalency, and clients of those services can access financial counseling services and services through our neighborhood resource center. Henry Street has its own relationship between REES and the neighborhood resource center. Lisa's people or through the system can refer directly to NRC or if clients come through the employment education program, they can also get there. NRC also helps with benefits; food stamps, any sort of government benefit, healthcare, health insurance, legal issues, financial counseling and rent assistance.

#### **Q: Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA residents/applicants to enroll in your services?**

A: We don't differentiate clients based on where they live. As long as they're city residents, they can come to our services. Unless they are going to jobs plus programs, then we have to ensure they live in those buildings. But as far as personal characteristics from a client, being a NYCHA resident doesn't fall in our assessment. HSE assessment is based on a test of adult basic education, TABE score, so you have to be at a certain level in order to join HSE classes. For ESL classes there's a test called the BEST test, you have to be at a certain level to join the different ESL classes. To join my jet program, you have

to want and need the specific type of job search assistance that we provide. We don't place anybody in jobs, we are often not equipped to deal with mental illness issues or disability issues so we might refer them to a better program but where they live is not an issue.

**Q: What is your perception of NYCHA's participants, and has it changed since you have been working here? Do you know the NYCHA residents as set aside from the other participants?**

A: No. I know that there is a referral system that when REES needs to make a referral to the programs, they send it through the system. A lot of clients that come through that system don't show up, don't respond to our outreach. Can I make generalized judgments about NYCHA residents? No. Would I? No, but there is that correlation. There might be that for every one person who does not come to the referral system, ten might come on their own that live in NYCHA so I don't have anything to balance it out with.

**Q: Generally speaking, would you say that you have a more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**

A: No more than any other sub-population of our clients.

**Q: Do you have residents who keep coming for services, for example you help them find a job, they don't retain it and they come back?**

A: Yes, because I have a jobs plus contract and all of those clients are NYCHA residents I can say that yes, there is a range of client. From the client that is able to retain their job for a year to the client that can't even connect with employment.

**Q: The people that you see, that keep coming back and can't hold a steady job, do you at some point turn them away or what do you do about it? Can you refer them to another program?**

A: It depends on the reasoning. A motivated client that can tolerate some feedback about maybe it being a personal attribute as to why they can't retain work; we'll help them work through that. A client that has entitlement issues, that expects us to keep placing and placing them, we might say there are other resources that would better help you. It could be a workforce one or a hard skills training course, we try to tailor it to what the client needs, so it becomes a case by case basis.

**Q: Are you able to track residents for long terms?**

A: We track our clients for a year; all of our contracts require that. Some of our clients maintain contact with us beyond a year.

**Q: Do you share this information with REES? Do you give them feedback on how each client is doing?**

A: I believe they track the people they refer through the system; I don't think they track everybody that comes to us from NYCHA. Because so few who come through the system actually connect to services, there's not much to report. But we would as long as we have the information.

**Q: In your opinion, how well has this partnership achieved its objectives?**

A: From my perspective, it is wonderful to have a partner that is so connected and has their own connections to people in the developments. My budgets are so small; I don't have people to constantly do outreach and connect with a population, at least on the surface and various anecdotally even or stereotypically needs a lot of services. So it's nice to have the outreach support but I don't know what kind of impact we're making.

**Q: How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, like communication or interpersonal skills as opposed to hard skills?**

A: We are more about the soft skills. We don't do any hard skills training outside of ESL. ESL is teaching a language, but employment is about the job search and employment retention is about interpersonal skills.

**Q: Are before and after trackers installed throughout the program in terms of assessment tests, in order to track learning objectives and outcomes?**

A: For ESL yes, we do a pre and a post on the BEST test. For HSE is whether or not you get the credential but we do use the TABE test, we test throughout so they can also see their progress. It's for us as well as for the clients so they can be motivated.

**Q: Do you have a lot of people who drop out, and do you try to do anything to prevent that?**

A: We are always trying to focus on the relationship and really feel that we can affect the best change with clients through the relationship. We are always talking about how to strengthen engagement skills with clients. For an HSE program, I have a young adult internship program, for the jobs plus program retention in the program is important. Mostly the retention then focuses on employment, are people retaining their employments? Therefore if they're connecting with us, they're usually still in the program.

**Q: If feedback is given from participants to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa?**

A: One of the things we don't do so much is collect systemized client feedback through surveys but any client that comes through the system we report on so yes and no.

**Q: Does REES ever give you revisions or suggestions on how to improve a program or modify it?**

A: No. We problem solve together on outreach. We share that we want to serve more clients as a goal.

**Q: Do you have a signed contract with REES?**

A: There is an MOU, a memorandum of understanding, it's not a contract. It is between the agency of Henry Street and REES.

**Q: Is REES' vision for the program clear? Is it mutual? Do you understand fully what they expect from you?**



A: It's been awhile since we have had a more formal agency to agency meeting. I talk to Lisa Jaradat all the time as does my staff, so on a very drilled down level it's clear. I don't know that as an organization, that it has trickled down what the bigger objectives are, what the vision and what we're working towards is.

**Q: Are there specific requirements or objectives that you have to meet within a time limit given to you by REES?**

A: There are. When we get a referral we have so much time to reach out to that client, we have to reach out to them three times and then make sure we complete the information in the database. There's no time limit on service delivery, there is only a time limit on connecting with that client. But that all depends on what they're here for, getting a job can be much faster than getting an HSE.

**Q: How often do you and REES hold meetings?**

A: It used to be that we had quarterly agency to agency meetings, which were helpful. Now it's essentially: catch all, catch can. It's random, who needs what, who has an event coming up, let me see if Lisa Jaradat is interested in this. The jobs plus program talks with REES much more frequently because there are some very specific goals. One is not only around referring clients but around getting clients connected to an EID, and that's about rent. It is earned income disallowance; it's about making sure that your rent is in the right NYCHA proportion to your income. So you can either lower your rent if your income has lowered or your rent will go up if your income has increased. My HSE program has monthly meeting on the books with NYCHA to get clients in here for info sessions.

**Q: Do you have clearly documented communication channels?**

A: Yes, I talk to Lisa Jaradat on the phone and via email.

**Q: How is information shared?**

A: Mostly via email but it depends on the information. There is the database, when there is a referral the person in charge gets an email. I have three different staff members getting emails from the RESS database. They know the rules and they have to go in and respond other than that it's just talking with Lisa Jaradat.

**Q: What enabling factors have contributed to the success of this project?**

A: I think it comes down to Lisa's perseverance and constant contact. It hasn't always been Lisa and when I came on board I don't remember who was in charge but I don't think it was as fruitful a relationship. You need someone to manage it; it is not necessarily going to run by itself. I imagine she does a lot of work on her end with her NYCHA developments. We also share the same goals; we need clients and she wants clients and services.

**Q: Are you facing any challenges right now with providing these services?**

A: One of the challenges is that NYCHA has rules for marketing materials, if they're going to do anything their logo has to be on it. There is this seemingly convoluted approval process, internally. It sounds bureaucratic and it takes so long and nonprofits don't have

the luxury of time, we are often already late with stuff so then to be waiting we often miss deadline and sometimes is not worth it because we don't have the time.

**Q: How do you think this overall project/partnership could be improved, if at all? If you could change anything to improve it, would you?**

A: I would re-institute quarterly meetings. I would have more planning time which will force me to do things ahead of time and more outcomes.

## **B.3 Downtown Brooklyn**

### **B.3.1 Downtown Brooklyn Zone Coordinator**

**Zone:** Downtown Brooklyn

**Date:** March 31st, 2017

**Interviewer Name:** Chelsea Wilson

Kisha Jackson has been a zone coordinator at NYCHA REES for 3 years. She would describe the demographics of the Downtown Brooklyn Zone as commercial and mostly professionals. This area is in the pocket of poverty and most rentals are condos with a small amount of affordable housing. The partners in the Downtown Brooklyn zone are the first set of partners and were already chosen and given to Ms. Jackson to coordinate and maintain. She maintains partnerships through open communications, contracts that are established between her and the zone partners, make sure each party understands the goals of these partnerships, success rates, and acknowledgment with praise.

NYCHA REES residents just show up going through intake and assessment. Based on the intake and assessment, this information is logged into their system referral. Ms. Jackson states that there is cross recruitment, but some partners are zoned specific. There are partners who are under certain grants. NYCHA REES residents are not placed. These residents are put with partners and services who meet their needs. In achieving its immediate objectives, the partnerships did have number goals that were reached, positive outcomes, and at least half or more completed the program. Outcomes are focused on how many people not only were served, but how many residents completed their services. NYCHA REES has not revised this program or partnerships. Ms. Jackson tracks progress of NYCHA residents through follow ups and system referrals. Feedback is given from participating members to REES and that information is given to the partners to either reform their program or to improve their program. There has been no revisions or suggestions on the partnerships. However, Ms. Jackson did emphasize that language does matter. For example, NYCHA REES and the partners have different definitions for different concepts. For partners, enrolled means that the participant has been in the program for two weeks. For NYCHA REES, enrolled means that the applicant filled out an application to enroll in the program. Outcome data of NYCHA participants are shared and reported to partners through data matching and this data focuses on identifying NYCHA addresses. These addresses imply that a NYCHA resident was served. However, this data does not identify the person being served or their gender. Unless it is a youth program, it is hard based on services received who that person may be.

A common vision that Ms. Jackson has with the zone partners is that 85% of the residents they refer complete the program. The mission of the partnerships is clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial. The expectation from the partners and her expectation is that each partner services as many NYCHA residents as possible. Each partner requires different needs. It depends on the partner. Some partners need more help than others. The higher up professionals make the decisions. Zone coordinators do not make any decisions. Ms. Jackson have big meetings quarterly and partners participate in these meetings. She documents communication through the system referral system and

emails to the partners. Ms. Jackson describes her role as being a connector and bridging the gap between NYCHA residents and community partners. Her role has not changed. Some partners can be difficult. Each partnership can improve on time management. She would like if partners respond quickly to emails and other communications with the residents. Ms. Jackson has never terminated a partnership because these partners are the first set of partners with NYCHA REES. She has experienced any enabling factors that contributed to the success of the project. Ms. Jackson does not seek the same type of service within the area. Thus, having this concept does not allow partnership competition and everyone can work together towards a common goal.

## **Downtown Brooklyn Zone Partners**

### **B.3.2. Bedford Stuyvesant Corporation**

**Date: April 11, 2017**

**Interviewee Name/Position: Jako Borren/Director of Operations**

#### **A. Basic Information**

- **How long have you been a partner?**

4 years – Since 2012.

- **What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?**

He wanted the partnership they already had with REES to deepen.

- **What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**

Benefits services, financial services, job readiness training, and workforce development.

- **What is the process involved in offering these services?**

They go through the referral system and tracking system REES offers them to seek NYCHA residents.

#### **B. NYCHA's Residents**

- **Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?**

He does not look for specific qualities in NYCHA residents. They accept anyone who wants the services.

- **What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?**

Many residents need services and many of them who are offered services do not follow through on completing these services. He would like for the residents to be more responsive. He did not have a specific perception about NYCHA residents.

- **Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**

Positive

#### **C. Implementation & Monitoring**

- **In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**

Pretty well. We used the referral system, but we want more referrals. Some of the challenges we have are following through and operation management. We want to be better informed of the services and the training the central NYCHA offices in each NYCHA building receives to better connect residents to services.

- **How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?**

Soft skills are promoted through outreach efforts, community coaches, website, social media, and word of mouth.

- **Are before and after "trackers" installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers assess for service,**

Yes, residents are given assessment tests and they are used to determine what services they receive.

#### **D. Communication Channels**

- **If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?**

Feedback is given through REES referral system.

- **Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?**

Yes, they do.

- **Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?**

Every year, we provide them with a full list of clients who we interacted with during the year so REES can see who are the NYCHA residents that receive services.

#### **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- **Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?**

Yes, in terms of forming the partnership and making sure NYCHA residents have access to services.

- **Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial?**

Yes

- **What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?**

We respond in a timely matter to the referrals of NYCHA residents. We inform REES of new developments and form new partners from NYCHA REES.

- **Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline?**

No

- **How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?**

Decision making is through zone partner coordinator.

- **How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?**

There are no scheduled meetings. We met a couple of times with Kisha and we are going to have more structured meetings.

- **Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain**

Not structured forms of communications. Most communication comes through emails.

- **How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?**

My role is the first line of contact and then I assign roles to my staff who need to be involved.

- **Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?**

No

## **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- **What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?**

REES's ability to connect us with project management and other partners.

- **What are the challenges facing your organizations while providing services to NYCHA's participants?**

Finding ways of community engagement of NYCHA residents.

- **How do think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership?**

No recommendation for the overall project. However, more structural meetings and more structural challenges of communication between Kisha and myself need to be established.

## **B.3 3 BWI Stronger Together**

**Date:** April 4, 2017

**Interviewee Name/Position:** Nigel Franklin / Data Analyst

### **A. Basic Information**

- **How long have you been a partner?**

- o Formally - 2 years

- o Informally- 5 years

- **What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?**

- o The partnership was natural because of the location proximity to Red Hook and this organization has access to the NYCHA residents.

- **What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**

- o Integrated service model – education, sector based training, benefit counseling, community services, legal services, financial literacy, and employment.

- **What is the process involved in offering these services?**

- o We accept walk ins

- o Strategically outreach to residents

- o Word of mouth by residents who have been to BWI Stronger Together

- o Email

### **B. NYCHA's Residents**

- **Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?**
  - o No
  - o We offer integration
  - o Engage people where they are
- **What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?**
  - o No particular perception
  - o His perception is through the lens of the mission of BWI Stronger Together: Engage NYCHA residents who are underserved or unemployed
  - o Have an abstract micro view
  - o Changed perception to identifying priority needs and having a clear understanding of those needs
- **Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**
  - o More positive experiences
  - o The negative experiences are few and far between
  - o The environment can produce negativity

### **C. Implementation & Monitoring**

- **In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**
  - o Quite well
  - o Kisha is very diligent about setting up meetings with outside partners
  - o Some doors were open due to the partnership
  - o Information about resources
  - o Long term vision for this organization is to set up own network
- **How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?**
  - o It depends on the program.
  - o Soft skills are apart of the services we provide because it is needed.
  - o Where the needs are
  - o Soft skills are necessary and specific
- **Are before and after "trackers" installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.**
  - o Data is a huge part of this initiative
  - o There are baseline tests, TABE testing, and evaluations that each NYCHA resident takes

### **D. Communication Channels**

- **If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?**
  - o Whatever can be shared is shared with BWI Stronger Together

- o Updates from REES is shared with BWI Stronger Together
- **Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?**
- o Yes, through communications such as email and in person meetings
- o Outreach will inform us to revise flyer or communication piece
- **Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?**
- o As needed
- o Data is always available

## **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- **Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?**
- o Yes
- o The Services provided are complementary with REES
- **Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.**
- o Yes
- o Narrative report
- **What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?**
- o Continue support and collaboration
- o Networking and growth
- o Identify new needs continue together to address those needs
- **Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.**
- o Yes
- o Milestones and goals are time sensitive
- **How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?**
- o Committees
- o Steering Committee
- o Formally and informally leaders including REES and property managers achieving outcomes and goals
- **How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?**
- o Monthly
- o Active participation from both ends
- **Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain**
- o Yes
- **How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?**
- o His role is to provide complementary services through NYCHA residents through a network of services
- **Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?**
- o Yes, for the same reasoning and driven by experiences
- o Generic and specific to the needs of resident



**Terminated partnerships? [Interviewer: Skip if partnership is active and ask section F questions]**

**Did not ask these questions since the partnership is currently active.**

- Why was the partnership terminated?
- What did you learn from the termination that could help NYCHA-REES current/future partners?
- Would you accept to be a partner of NYCHA-REES once again if requested? Explain.

#### **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- **What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?**
  - o Comprehensive services offered by REES and the partnership.
  - o Complete and individualized approach to services.
- **What are the challenges facing your organizations while providing services to NYCHA's participants?**
  - o Scheduling conflict
  - o Bureaucracy – red tape
- **How do think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership?**
  - o Internally – capacity
  - o Formal to pursue funding
  - o All of the pressure is not on the zone coordinator
  - o Surveys that NYCHA residents take
  - o Get real time from resident on what their needs are
  - o How fast can they receive that training

### B.3.4 Hope Program

**Date:** March 27, 2017

**Interviewee Name/Position:** TZlil Hertzberg / Recruitment and Intake Coordinator

- **How long have you been a partner?**
  - The Hope Program have been a partner of the NYCHA\REES program for 4 years
- **What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?**
  - The Hope Program and NYCHA\REES have the same common goals. The Hope program was contacted by the NYCHA\REES program in order to establish as relationship.
- **What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**
  - The Hope Program offers the same services to the NYCHA residents as it does to all the Hope Program clients. The Hope Program offers Job training, Job placement and Job retention and advancements in the current job.
- **What is the process involved in offering these services?**
  - NYCHA\REES provides a list of reference of their residents that the Hope program uses to contact potential clients. The representative from the Hope Program will contact the resident base on the referral list and invite the resident to visit the Hope Program office to learn more about the programs offered.
  - Should the resident decide to visit the Hope Program office and shows interest in the program the resident will be required to participate in the programs evaluation as all other potential clients.

### **B. NYCHA's Residents**

- **Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?**
  - All the NYCHA residents have to qualify for the programs as all potential clients. There are no specific requirement for NYCHA residents. All potential clients for the Hope Program are expected to pass the reading and writing requirement, Be over the age of 18, Be willing to commit to work full-time and to participate in the programs that the Hope program has to offer. Once a NYCHA resident shows interests and is deemed eligible for the Hope Program they are not just another client of the Program.
- **What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?**
  - Do not have any perception of the NYCHA residents as the Hope program different from other clients of the program. The Hope Program do not keep specific records of the NYCHA residents than that of other clients. NYCHA residents are the same as other clients of the program, there are some who are willing to work toward success of the program and there

are others who do not see through the entire program.

- **Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**
  - The Hope Program does not maintain specific records of NYCHA residents different from other clients. There are various results of the clients of the Hope Program.

### **C. Implementation & Monitoring**

- **In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**
  - Very well, the Hope Program have seen success among its clients. The Hope Program has a great partnership with NYCHA\REES and hopes to continue with the partnership.
- **How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?**
  - Soft skills training is an integral part of the job training. Once a client is placed in a job it is important for that client to maintain the position and learn to communicate with his\her colleagues and supervisors. It is one of the Hope Programs important job training preparation program.
- **Are before and after "trackers" installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.**
  - There is a before and after track evaluation within the Program. Once a client completes the program he\she has to take a written and reading test similar to the one given at the time of program eligibility determination. The before and after tests are evaluated. The success is measured if someone completes the program, how fast they are able to get a job after the program, and their attention milestones. Once they get a job are they staying on the job, 30 days, 60 days, a year? Are they getting promoted? Are they contacting the Hope Program for advancement opportunities? That is how the Hope Program measures success. The Hope Program maintains contact with the clients as long as the clients need assistance. The frequency of contact between the Program and the client lessens after 2 years. Graduates are invited to holiday parties and graduations. The Hope Program is open to all graduates should they need additional assistance or may have questions, whether they still have their job or have lost their job.

### **D. Communication Channels**

- **If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?**
  - There are no specific feedback from NYCHA residents as The Hope Program do not separate NYCHA residents from their other clients. NYCHA zone coordinator communicates with the Hope Program on a weekly basis and maintain contact.
- **Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?**
  - Through weekly in person contact.
- **Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to REES? How?**
  - Does not apply

#### **E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- **Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?**
  - Absolutely, the NYCHA-REES mission is part of the Hope Program motto.
- **Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.**
  - As explained above the mission of the program is measurable and benefits the clients of the program, should that client take advantage of the program.
- **What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?**
- **Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.**
- **How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?**
  - Not sure
- **How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?**
  - Answered above
- **Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain**
  - Through emails
- **How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?**
- **Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership?**

### **B.3.5 Opportunities for A Better Tomorrow**

**Date:** April 11, 2017

**Interviewee Name/Position:** Emily Hills / Coordinator of Outreach & Recruitment

#### **A. Basic Information**

- **How long have you been a partner?**
  - Not sure, just started at the organization for a year now but realized that program has been in partnership with NYCHA\REES for sometime particularly citywide.
- **What made you partner with NYCHA-REES?**
  - Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow's goal is to provide programs to seeks to improve the economic stability of New York residents. NYCHA\REES has the same mission and has a huge potential. Looking at NYCHA there are residents who are seeking jobs, to obtain their GED and REES in particular because they work with focusing on getting people help with financial literacy, education, employment. OBT saw this as an opportunity to partnership with REES because REES have people in need and OBT have the services.
- **What services do you offer to NYCHA-REES?**
  - OBT offer job training and GED classes. ESL is also offered those who are interested, direct job placement assistance to qualified individuals. This is offered to all OBT clients not only to NYCHA residents.
- **What is the process involved in offering these services?**
  - OBT recruit NYCHA residents by attending recruitment events hosted by NYCHA and host info sessions at what the site of the event. OBT try to do a site specific recruitment event and to gage interests in the OBT program. They will then invite attendees to visit their location to complete their application. Once the NYCHA residents and other potential clients visit the OBT office, they will then be informed of all the services OBT offers whether it is full or part time. If qualify the potential client could chose to do only one of the service instead all the course\training offered by OBT.
  - OBT is included in NYCHA\REES newsletter and the zone coordinators can also assist in the recruitment by allowing OBT to post fliers in the NYCHA offices. OBT also takes advantages of all the platforms that REES uses in the recruitment process. OBT is listed on REES's website.

#### **B. NYCHA's Residents**

- **Do you have specific qualities that you look for when selecting NYCHA applicants to enroll in your service(s)?**
  - When NYCHA applicants are applying for the program, they are treated the same why that other applicants are treated. They have to meet the qualifications in order to do the program. There is a reading requirement for OBT programs, applicants have to complete an application form, there

is an intake interview. The OBT staff will sit down with the potential applicant and discuss the best program for the applicant, to determine any needs that the applicant and determine if the program is the right course for the applicant. OBT offers programs everyday from 9AM- 4PM and the applicants are expected to attend everyday, this is determine during the intake interview if the applicant is willing to comply with this requirement. OBT is looking for someone who is willing to attend the course everyday and the willingness to work, to try to gain the skills needed to succeed.

- The reading level that is required by OBT various. It could be the 4th or 6th grade reading level, or higher such as the 8th grade reading level. Each program requires different reading level. OBT need to determine if an applicant wishes to do a program they need to be able to read at the required reading level. If the applicant does not meet that specific reading level then an OBT staff would refer to applicant other programs at the reading level of the applicant.

- **What are your perceptions of NYCHA's participants? And, did your perceptions of them change over time?**

- NYCHA residents are usually perceptive of the program and the requirements. NYCHA residents are use to programs with requirements and meeting those requirements.

- **Generally speaking, would you say you have more positive or negative experience with NYCHA residents?**

- Cannot say one or the other. OBT have a challenge in having NYCHA residents to leave their communities to attend the courses\programs offer. The residents usually ask if programs are offered in their development in which the OBT staff would usually explain that the program is offered in another location. Sometime there is a reluctance for the residents to leave their development, but the same can be said for other clients. There have been NYCHA residents who have participated and succeeded in the program. It more depends on the person.

### **C. Implementation & Monitoring**

- **In your opinion, how well did the partnership project achieve its immediate objectives?**

- Will need to follow-up with supervisor as the interviewee did not and was not a part of creation the partnership the objectives of the program. Over the past year OBT have had info sessions at NYCHA locations with varying results. The responses of the info sessions depends on the area of the sessions. For example sometime ago OBT had info sessions in the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. There was a low turnout at the Bronx info session, but everyone enrolled in the program, while in Coney Island where there were approximately 50 people showed up and out of the 50 people may be

have enrolled in the program. It all depends on the area and the time of day, current events of the time. In the interviewee's opinion the info sessions are definitely worth continuing.

- **How much does your organization promote the development of soft skills, such as communication and interpersonal skills, when providing the services to NYCHA's participants?**
  - It is an integral part of the programs. In addition to providing the technical skills a huge part of the program is providing communication skills as OBT understands that having all the technical skills is great but that does not mean the individual knows how to interview, how to keep a job, conflict resolution, high management. Once a client gets a job they are invited to a pre group to share with others how to communicate in an interview, this a large part of the OBT services.
- **Are before and after "trackers" installed throughout the program, in terms of assessment tests, etc., in order to track learning objectives and outcomes, and success of the program? \* Ask for each service depending on what the zone offers.**
  - There is the test that each applicant's take before enrollment and then they repeat the test at the end of their program. Especially for the GED program where the applicants are tested for readiness. This is more on the programmatic side of the organization. OBT wants to see if their clients are improving.
  - Do not necessarily keep a track specially for NYCHA residents internally, but have a tracker of NYCHA residents that shows how many of the NYCHA residents are enrolled in the program and this is shared with NYCHA.

#### **D. Communication Channels**

- **If feedback is given from participating members to REES, does REES share that information with you, and vice versa? How?**
  - Meet regularly with the zone coordinators. One of the things discussed is how OBT is offering the services to the NYCHA residents. It is unknown if there is a formal communication different from the data that OBT provides NYCHA annually. OBT and NYCHA's zone coordinators are constantly in contact and talk about how to improve what OBT is doing.
  - OBT gives feedback to the NYCHA zone coordinators on how the NYCHA residents are doing on the program.
  -
- **Does REES inform you of any revisions or suggestions on the project?**
- **Are the outcome data of NYCHA participants shared with or reported to**

**REES? How?**

- Discuss with the zone coordinators.

**E. Partnership Vision & Expectations**

- **Do you have a common vision with the NYCHA-REES?**
  - Yes. REES's goal is socio-economic empowerment and equip their residents with the skills that they need to advance. This is the key mission for OBT as well as they ensure that all clients gain the skills and knowledge they need to survive. OBT and NYCHA\REES have a common vision.
- **Is the mission of the program clear, measurable, and mutually beneficial? Please explain.**
  - Believe so, do not sure it is measurable. As there is no clear data specific for NYCHA residents, but the OBT has their own internal data. It is mutually beneficial as NYCHA\REES would like to empower their residents and OBT would like to offer their programs to the NYCHA residents.
- **What is the expectation from the NYCHA-REES and your expectation from this partnership?**
  - Look for to continue working with NYCHA\REES to continually offer OBT services to the residents. OBT would like to continue have NYCHA\REES inform their residents of all the programs offered by OBT.
  -
- **Are there specific objectives that you have to meet within a specific timeline? Explain.**
- Yes, but not necessarily with the partnership. OBT have to serve a certain amount of people each year and have to meet a certain amount of outcome each year for a contract, more likely NYCHA\REES has the same. OBT has their own objective and specific time to meet.
- **How is decision making done? In terms of how to improve the program and identify resources?**
  - This is done through weekly meetings with the NYCHA\REES zone coordinators.
- **How often do you hold meetings and is there active participation from both ends?**
  - Weekly and there is an active form communication.
- **Do you have clearly documented communication channels? Explain**
- 
- **How would you describe your role in relation to NYCHA-REES role?**
  - As a service provider for NYCHA\REES residents in order to empower the



residents and to gain skills and knowledge.

- **Has your role or that of NYCHA-REES been altered at any point since the beginning of the partnership**
  - Not for the last year when the interviewee started working at OBT. Unsure in the previous years.

## **F. Sustainability & Challenges**

- **What enabling factors have contributed to the success of the project?**
  - The fact the NYCHA\REES wants to empower their residents and OBT has services that they would like to offer to the NYCHA residents.
- **What are the challenges facing your organizations while providing services to NYCHA's participants?**
  - It is often difficult to convince some residents to leave their communities to participate in the programs offered by OBT in other locations, again this could be said about other clients.
- **How do think the overall project could be improved? What would you change to improve this partnership?**
  - A clear data to show if the partnership is successful
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