

March 2022

## What the Budgeted Expansion Means for the City’s Summer Youth Employment Program & What Questions Remain

The Adams Administration increased funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) by \$57.2 million annually for fiscal years 2023 through 2026 in the Preliminary Budget. This will support the addition of 20,000 slots to the program—which provides six weeks of paid work to city youth—and is a 20 percent increase in program capacity compared with recent years. The Administration also allocated \$7.5 million in additional funding for the current fiscal year to help providers ramp up staffing and provide support for employer recruitment and job development before the program begins in July.

Prior to the additions made in the Preliminary Budget, funding levels for fiscal year 2023, which like SYEP begins in July, would have allowed for approximately 70,000 slots. In recent years, however, the City Council regularly added funding at the city’s budget adoption in June to increase the number of available slots for the coming summer by 5,000. Over the last three program years, participation in SYEP has averaged 74,600 youth, while total applications to the program averaged around 156,500.<sup>1</sup> With the additional funding provided, this summer’s SYEP will have 90,000 slots, the largest number of slots available in the history of the program. The total amount currently budgeted for the program for this summer is \$186.6 million.

Overall, the Mayor has stated that a total of 100,000 youth jobs would be available in this and future summers through city programs. This total includes the now 90,000 SYEP slots as well as an additional 10,000 slots for other summer workforce programs for youth, funded with an additional \$22.2 million baselined for fiscal years 2023 through 2026 in the Department of Youth and Community Development’s (DYCD) budget. These programs, which operate separately from SYEP, are administered by the Department of Education, City University of New York, Human Resources Administration, Department of

Probation, Administration for Children’s Services, and the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice.

SYEP is operated by community-based organizations, under contract with DYCD. They connect youth with jobs in the nonprofit, government, or private sectors and provide youth with professional development and other supports. Currently, SYEP has a mix of program areas including community-based, school-based, and special initiatives, such as slots designated for youth living in public housing, justice-involved youth, homeless and runaway youth, and other categories. Many of these program areas are divided into two age cohorts: younger youth (ages 14-15) and older youth (ages 16-24).

The funding added in the Preliminary Budget will expand the number of slots in all program areas, according to DYCD. With the additional funding, SYEP will provide a total of 60,000 slots for the community-based program, 20,000 slots for CareerReady (or the school-based program), and a total of 10,000 total slots for the special initiatives.

According to DYCD, the expansion will be through the current SYEP provider contracts, which will be renewed

Expansion Increases Slots in All Program Areas		
Summer Youth Employment Program Area	Slots, by Fiscal Year	
	2022 Program Slots, (Summer 2021) Actual Enrollments	2023 Program Slots (Summer 2022), as of Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget
Community-Based	50,139	60,000
CareerReady (School-Based)	12,232	20,000
Special Initiatives	7,221	10,000
Council Slots	5,292	
<b>Total Slots</b>	<b>74,884</b>	<b>90,000</b>

SOURCE: Department of Youth and Community Development; DYCD 2021 SYEP Annual Summary

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from March 2022 through March 2025 to include the expanded capacity, with a price per participant (PPP) rate similar to the previous round of contracts. Under those previous contracts, the PPP ranged from \$450 to \$1,000 depending on the program area, service option, and age group. Wages for participants, which are paid directly to the participants by the city, vary among the age groups and program, with a \$700 stipend for younger youth and the New York State minimum wage or higher for older youth and other program area participants.

**Questions Remain.** As of publication, some short and long-term budgetary and programmatic questions remain unanswered as SYEP expands. The relatively advanced notice of the increase in slots compared with prior years –when typically 5,000 slots were added at city budget adoption in late June, only a few weeks before the program began– as well as the tools DYCD is offering before summer begins, should help providers prepare for the program’s expansion. However, the large increase in slots could expose capacity issues, which could hamper the city’s attempt to provide all 90,000 slots for this summer. It remains unclear what type of contingency plan is in place

if the existing providers are unable to provide services for all 90,000 participants and whether the city would open up the program to new contractors before current contracts expire in 2025.

Additionally, Mayor Adams has made the expansion of SYEP and other youth work programs an important pillar of his anti-gun violence initiative. Details on any changes to how the city and providers may recruit participants or whether there will be any programmatic changes to help meet this goal, have yet to be described.

Lastly, it remains to be seen whether the baselined expansion means the end to the pattern of adding slots each year at the city’s budget adoption. SYEP has long been a priority of the City Council and with many new members it is unclear whether given the baselined expansion— while much larger than the number of slots historically negotiated—there were still be an effort by the City Council and advocates to expand the program further to provide capacity that is even closer to typical application numbers.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This excludes fiscal year 2021 (summer of 2020), when the city suspended SYEP due to the Covid-19 pandemic and instead provided a modified, online-only program called Summer Bridge.