

Summertime Blues: Nearly 15,000 Fewer Summer Jobs for Teens

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Despite an increase of \$8 million in city funds for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), 14,848 fewer New York City teens were able to secure jobs compared to last summer. The program, which provides jobs and wages for tens of thousands of low-income youth each summer, has experienced considerable funding uncertainty since July 2000 when the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) went into effect and eliminated funds dedicated specifically to summer jobs for youth. Now, opportunities to stabilize the program are emerging—pending legislation in Albany would create a state-sponsored summer jobs program, and WIA is up for reauthorization by Congress in 2003.

Roughly 35,000 teens started work this month under the program, which is administered by the city's Department of Employment (DOE). The department budgeted \$44 million for this summer's program, including \$11 million in federal WIA dollars, \$15 million in state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars, and \$18 million in city tax-levy dollars. Funding for last summer's program totaled \$60 million, including \$50 million in state TANF funds but no WIA funds.

Application decline. Although the department extended the application deadline from May 4th to May 25th, fewer youth applied for SYEP this year. Last year DOE received 66,000 applications for the program, and hired approximately 50,000 youth. This year the agency received 55,000 applications.

SYEP operates through performance-based contracts—payments to vendors are made when specific goals are achieved—with community-based organizations responsible for many facets of the program, from recruiting applicants to securing job slots. DOE extended contractual agreements with 51 community groups that had provided SYEP job slots last summer; only one organization declined to renew its contract.

The youth are placed in jobs at day camps, senior centers, hospitals, and other community service centers, as well as at some city agencies. Each youth employment slot is budgeted at \$1,257 this year. Participants are expected to work six hours per day, four days per week for seven weeks, and they are paid the minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour). The youth earn about \$865 each for the summer, while the balance of the funding for each slot pays the community group for running the program, including the provision of support service for some youth.

Legislation alters funding priorities. The Workforce Investment Act consolidated a number of federal jobs programs and emphasized year-round services (see *Inside the Budget* No. 68 for

details). Summer jobs became just one of ten activities a locality could provide to youth using its federal block grant. To draw down WIA dollars for summer jobs, DOE must provide program participants with follow-up services (e.g. leadership development and other supportive services) for at least 12 months. Of the 35,000 jobs to be provided this summer, 9,000 will be funded with federal WIA dollars.

Prior to WIA, support for summer jobs came predominately from Washington, with the city providing some funds for youth whose family incomes were slightly higher than federal guidelines allowed. Without a separate funding stream under WIA, the program has relied more heavily on state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families dollars and city tax levy dollars to stay afloat. The use of TANF funds has always been viewed as a stopgap, and availability of these dollars for subsidizing the program in the future is uncertain.

Changes ahead? Legislation has been introduced in Albany to establish a permanent and stand-alone New York State summer youth employment program. The program would be administered independent of any other federally funded year-round, after-school, or summer jobs program. In addition, priority for summer jobs would be given to 14 and 15 year olds, who have the most difficulty finding private sector jobs, although youth ages 16 to 21 would still be eligible. The legislation does not identify a specific source of funds or level of funding for the proposed program.

Moreover, the federal WIA legislation will be up for reauthorization in 2003 and some changes are likely. The U.S. Department of Labor is currently gathering information on key issues that might be addressed during the reauthorization process. The need for a stand-alone summer youth employment program is likely to be considered during the reauthorization.

Additional youth employment opportunities. The Mayor's Commission on Youth Empowerment Services, known as the YES Commission, also helps address the employment needs of youth ages 14 to 21. YES, created in 1996 by Executive Order No. 28, is administered by the Department of Youth and Community Development. Unlike the summer jobs program, YES does not offer publicly subsidized jobs and instead recruits employers from the private sector. The commission's operating budget for 2003 is \$144,665.

The YES Commission provides job referral services, resume preparation, interview and basic skills training, and job-retention skills. Each applicant must complete an orientation

program that runs for approximately three to five hours in order to be eligible for job placement. In the summer of 2001, 718 applicants completed the orientation program. Of the 718 applicants, 411 found employment through YES and 30 more found employment on their own. Of the remaining applicants, 200 were required to attend summer school and therefore could not pursue summer employment. YES also offers employment opportunities during the school year. Between September 2001 and April 2002, the commission placed 196 youth.

Written by Ana Ventura

Volume of "MGP" Recyclables to Drop 80 Percent, City Saves \$40 Million

With Mayor Michael Bloomberg poised to announce the outline of a new long-term plan for disposing of the 11,000 tons of trash the city collects daily, the Department of Sanitation (DOS) also must wrestle with a new issue: how to efficiently continue the pick up of recyclable metal. The preservation of this portion of the city's metal, glass, and plastic (MGP) recycling program was part of an 11th hour deal that helped complete the recent budget negotiations between the Mayor and City Council. DOS estimates the cost of continuing metal pick up to be \$12 million. Suspension of glass and plastic collection will save \$40 million.

Metal recycling costs. The city was collecting roughly 1,000 tons per day of recyclable metal, glass, and plastic, of which 20 percent was metal. In addition to the cost of collection, the city paid \$65 per ton to recycling processors to cover the costs of sorting the recyclables to eliminate contaminated material and to dispose of material—such as green glass—for which no market exists. In fact, up to 40 percent of the MGP recyclables collected each day ended up back in the regular waste disposal stream—shipped to out-of-state landfills or incinerators.

The strongest market is for recycled metals. Metal recyclables will now be taken to the city's four existing consumer bulk-metal drop-off sites (one in each borough except Manhattan). The vendor operating the drop-off sites is not equipped to process metal mixed with glass and plastic, and can only process metal with, according to DOS, "minimal residue." As long as the metal is substantially clean the city

will receive revenue for the metal recyclables, offset by any necessary processing costs. DOS will therefore not be collecting any metal that is mixed with glass, plastic, or paper, nor will it collect metal that is visibly dirty.

Adjusting collection routes. DOS projects that the elimination of glass and plastic will decrease recycling collections by about 80 percent compared to the previous metal, glass, and plastic pickups (paper is picked up separately in most locations). There are three operational issues that DOS will take into consideration as it adjusts collection routes in response to the reduction in volume in recycling.

First, collection routes for recyclables will need to be extended. In some districts, fewer trucks are already running the routes, but DOS is still figuring out exactly what the collection needs will be. One major determinant will be how city residents choose to put out their metal recyclables: in small, weekly quantities or larger, less frequent quantities. Second, DOS will most likely need to adjust regular waste collection routes according to when in the route the truck is full. This will take “on the street” observation. Finally, in the 15 sanitation districts (out of 59 total) with dual-bin collection trucks—trucks that collect paper and metal at the same time using separate containers—DOS will need to figure out the most efficient frequency for dumping the loads. Prior to the program change, both the paper side and MGP

side would fill up at roughly the same rate, meaning that the truck would unload both containers once a day. Now, however, the paper side will most likely fill up faster than the metal side, so DOS is exploring the alternatives of either emptying the metal side less frequently while retaining the old schedule for paper unloading, or continuing to unload both sides at the same time regardless of how full the metal container is.

Future costs. There is widespread agreement that the previous recycling program was inefficient and costly. However the city is faced with another garbage-related dilemma. The city had hoped to replace its current truck-based waste export system with a cheaper and cleaner system using trains and barges. But with the ongoing investigations into ownership issues at the proposed Linden, New Jersey transfer station—the linchpin of the train and barge system—there is no workable long-term plan for disposal of the city’s garbage. The addition of 260,000 tons of previously recyclable material—an 8 percent increase to the regular waste stream—puts further pressure on the city to come up with a viable long-term plan. Recycling advocates also remain concerned about city residents getting out of the habit of recycling after the city invested a decade’s worth of effort into building the recycling program.

Written by Merrill Pond

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