

City of Seattle Office of City Auditor



July 31, 2013
The Honorable Mike McGinn
Seattle City Councilmembers
City of Seattle
Seattle, Washington 98104

Attached is the first of three reports evaluating Career Bridge, a program jointly initiated by the City's Office of Economic Development (OED) and Human Services Department (HSD) in mid-2012. Career Bridge provides extremely disadvantaged individuals facing multiple barriers to employment with access to mentoring support, education and job readiness training, and the wrap-around social services they need (e.g., housing, childcare, transportation) to succeed as students and in the work force.

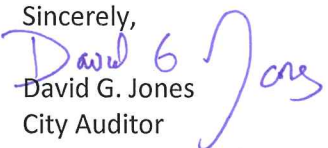
In the fall of 2012 the City Council adopted a Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) requesting that our office develop an evaluation plan for Career Bridge, and coordinate with OED and HSD to deliver:

- A report on initial outcomes for Career Bridge, showing the jobs obtained by program participants;
- Estimates of Career Bridge's fixed and scalable costs;
- A detailed annual reporting plan that identifies specific, measurable, target program outcomes;
- A description of a methodology that would be used to compare the outcomes of Career Bridge participants with those of a similar population not involved in the program; and
- A description of a methodology that would be used to compare the programming model and outcomes associated with the Seattle Jobs Initiative's standard program of employment training and placement services with the programming model and outcomes associated with Career Bridge.

Our office entered into a contract with MEF Associates to conduct this work. The attached report provides an analysis of participant characteristics, a discussion of early employment outcomes for the first Career Bridge cohort, an analysis of program costs, and a discussion of challenges that have implications for program expansion.

We have also attached OED's and HSD's response to the MEF Associates report. A second report to be published in mid-September 2013 will cover options for a more rigorous program evaluation. Please contact Mary Denzel, the project manager of this evaluation (684-8158) or me (233-1095) if you have any questions about the report.

Sincerely,


David G. Jones
City Auditor

Attachment

Street Address: 700 5th Avenue, Suite 2410, Seattle, WA
Mailing address: PO Box 94729, Seattle, Washington 98124-4729
Phone Number -- Office: (206) 233-3801
Email: davidg.jones@seattle.gov



Evaluation of Career Bridge

Preliminary Report

Prepared for:

The City of Seattle – Office of City Auditor

Prepared by:

MEF Associates

Asaph Glosser

Emmi Obara

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MEF Associates is conducting an evaluation of Career Bridge under a contract with the Office of City Auditor, City of Seattle (Contract Number: OCA 2013-03). The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the Office of City Auditor.

For more information about MEF Associates and our work, see our website: <http://mefassociates.com/>



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Overview

In response to a spate of gun violence in Seattle in early 2012 the Mayor's office, the Seattle Office of Economic Development (OED) and the Human Services Department (HSD) began thinking through alternative strategies to support the needs of low-income former prisoners in the city. The resultant program, Career Bridge, represents an effort to improve access to employment, education, and training for low-income, African American men with criminal backgrounds.

Career Bridge is focused on developing pathways to economic opportunity while strengthening community and families. Career Bridge was developed and is managed jointly by HSD and OED. Community sponsors, who are volunteer community members and organizations, conduct recruitment activities and provide mentorship and support services to Career Bridge participants. The program's job readiness training workshop and job development services are provided through the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI).

This report provides a preliminary analysis of the implementation of Career Bridge, participant characteristics and outcomes, and the estimated costs associated with operating the program. In addition, we discuss challenges we identified both in the current program operations as well as additional potential challenges should Career Bridge be expanded.

Our conversations with city staff, Career Bridge stakeholders, and Career Bridge participants revealed a clear consensus that Career Bridge represents an integral addition to the existing array of programs serving low-income individuals in Seattle. In particular, respondents consistently emphasized that Career Bridge helps fill a particularly glaring gap in services for low-income African American men, especially those with prior criminal convictions. Additionally, early outcomes data suggest that the program has had some success in assisting participants in securing employment. While these jobs are generally low wage, entry-level positions, they represent an important first step in engaging (or reengaging) this population in the labor force and moving them toward longer term careers and self-sufficiency.

Moreover, all were clear that much of the value of Career Bridge, and what sets it apart from other programs serving a similar population, is that it is a community-driven, bottom-up effort. All of the individuals we spoke with emphasized that a key component of Career Bridge is the involvement of community members and the participants in the development and ongoing operation of the intervention. This role ensures that the intervention honors the needs of this population and empowers them to a degree that traditional service delivery models do not allow.

Despite the strong support for Career Bridge among stakeholders and participants, it was clear that there are ongoing challenges that the city needs to address, especially as it seeks to expand Career Bridge and transfer responsibility for program operations to a Community Based Development Organization (CBDO). The facets of the program that differentiate it from other services available to this population – strong, personal relationships and grassroots implementation – are hard to replicate at scale. The report identifies several challenges associated both with current operations as well as those that have implications for program expansion. Notable challenges facing Career Bridge include:

- ***Transition to qualified Community Based Development Organization (CBDO).*** The transition of program operations responsibilities from city staff and SJI to a new CBDO represents an opportunity to deliver a more consistent set of services to Career Bridge

participants. This includes maintaining the consistency in job development services and delivery of the job readiness training as well as expanding case management associated with career navigation and assistance in accessing necessary supportive services.

- ***Increased connections to career pathways.*** One of the central goals of Career Bridge is to increase participants' skills and work experience to support access to higher-wage occupations. While Career Bridge is still in the early stages of implementation, there is limited evidence that the current program model has the necessary processes in place to consistently support the transition to higher-wage jobs or education and training programs.
- ***Need for more consistent case management.*** Career Bridge participants face an array of barriers and would benefit from improved case management and increased support services. However, the current model for providing these services or directing participants to appropriate resources is limited in its ability to effectively identify participant needs and direct participants to appropriate resources.
- ***Limited sponsorship pool.*** The Career Bridge model and its emphasis on personal relationships between participants and sponsors is contingent on a dedicated cadre of community members who are willing to invest substantial time and effort to the program. The difficulty associated with identifying new sponsors has been one of the primary constraints on program enrollment.
- ***Diffuse leadership model.*** The nature of Career Bridge is such that it is difficult to identify program leadership. The commitment to a more group-based decision-making model involves a collaborative approach that does not clearly delineate responsibility for program operations. While this appears to have benefits in terms of empowering community members and participants, it results in more limited program accountability and limits the ability for anyone involved in Career Bridge to make quick, decisive decisions.

In addition to operational challenges, any efforts to expand Career Bridge should be cognizant of the costs associated with program operation. While still preliminary, our review of cost data suggests that Career Bridge is an expensive program to operate. This may constrain any potential expansion. There may also be implications for the broader workforce development and human services systems associated with diverting staff time and city resources to Career Bridge. While outside the scope of this report, it may be useful for city staff to further explore how this reprioritization of resources impacts the broader service delivery within these systems.

The current model may also limit the population that can access Career Bridge services. Participants are primarily recruited through informal social networks, and are often individuals who have pre-existing relationships to program stakeholders or other participants. This approach has the potential to exclude other, more isolated segments of the population who may also benefit from participation.

Given that Career Bridge remains a relatively new intervention, many of the concerns we raise should be expected. Indeed, many of the individuals we interviewed were the ones who identified these concerns, as well as suggestions for how to address them. More generally, it is clear that there is a committed group of individuals who, both professionally and personally, are heavily invested in the success of Career Bridge and its participants.

I. Introduction

In response to a spate of gun violence in Seattle in early 2012 the Mayor's office, the Seattle Office of Economic Development (OED) and the Human Services Department (HSD) began thinking through alternative strategies to support the needs of low-income, former prisoners in the city. The resultant program, Career Bridge, represents an effort to improve access to employment, education, and training for low-income, African-American men with criminal backgrounds.

Career Bridge is focused on developing pathways to economic opportunity while strengthening community and families. Career Bridge was developed and is managed jointly by HSD and OED. Community sponsors, who are volunteer community members and organizations, conduct recruitment activities and provide mentorship and support services to Career Bridge participants. The program's job readiness training workshop and job development services are provided through the Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) – originally an effort of the Office of Economic Development under former Mayor Norm Rice, and now an independent nonprofit organization that functions as a workforce development intermediary offering sectoral training and support to low-income individuals.

The initial program design and target population emerged out of a series of conversations between city staff and community leaders, which emphasized the acute needs of this population and the potential implications for reduced violence. City staff and key community stakeholders sought to develop an intervention designed specifically to challenge the existing paradigm for how to support former prisoners around employment services. This included an emphasis on grassroots involvement of community members in the design and implementation of the intervention and a process that empowered participants and community members.

As a result of this process, a program with a dual set of goals emerged. While much of Career Bridge is focused on the employment outcomes of the target population, the city and stakeholders collaborated to design a program that seeks to address the institutional and systematic barriers in the city facing racial and ethnic minorities and those with criminal convictions. These broader, community-level goals included an emphasis on increasing the capacity of community-based institutions to provide direct services for this population as well the ability to advocate for policy change impacting this population.

In April 2013, the City Auditor's Office contracted with MEF Associates to conduct an evaluation of Career Bridge. The city wanted an evaluation that explored the underlying theory of change driving Career Bridge and documented early program implementation. In addition, the evaluation was to focus on the viability of a more rigorous evaluation of Career Bridge and the development in collaboration with OED and HSD of an annual reporting plan that identifies specific, measurable, target program outcomes.

This preliminary report is the first of three reports MEF Associates will deliver as part of this contract. It has seven sections:

- **Section II** describes our methodology.
- **Section III** describes our understanding of the intervention. This includes describing the initial program design, an employment-focused theory of change as well as additional program goals we identified, and the current service delivery structure.

- **Section IV** is an analysis of participant characteristics and a discussion of early employment outcomes for the first Career Bridge cohort.
- **Section V** discusses program challenges that we observed and the implications for any program expansion.
- **Section VI** presents an analysis of program costs. We develop an estimate of per participant costs.
- **Section VII** begins to discuss the implications of our initial research in terms of options for more rigorous program evaluations.
- **Section VIII** discusses the next steps in the project and plans for the next report.

This report represents a formative evaluation of a program still in its early stages. Even during the short time we were conducting our research we observed changes in program operations and evolving perspectives on the goals of Career Bridge. While we examined the program with a critical eye, our goal was to conduct a preliminary evaluation that could support further program improvement.

II. Methodology

This preliminary evaluation of Career Bridge is an opportunity to document the efforts to bring this pilot program to scale, early outcomes, and the longer-term implications of these efforts for program sustainability. To this end, we focus on documenting outcomes, program processes, program implementation, and service delivery. Our primary data collection methods were qualitative. We attended several Career Bridge weekly meetings and other events, reviewed Career Bridge documents, and engaged in interviews or focus groups with program staff, community partners, and participants. In addition, we used administrative data provided by program staff to provide descriptive statistics on program outcomes for the initial cohorts and to conduct an analysis of the program costs associated with delivering the Career Bridge intervention with an emphasis on the potential for scalability.

The analysis of the cost data covers the costs associated with delivering the Career Bridge intervention during the 2013 calendar year, while the analysis of the participant data covers the first four cohorts, although Cohort Four had not yet completed the program.

Interviews with key stakeholders. We conducted 60- to 120-minute phone and in-person interviews with a variety of key stakeholders. While the topics we covered were tailored to each interviewee, we sought to hear all respondents' perspectives on the initial development of the program, the goals of Career Bridge, the main components of the program, needed improvements, and prospects for scalability of the current model. Our conversations with four staff members from Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) focused on how SJI came to be a part of Career Bridge, the 20-hour job readiness training, job placement, and SJI's present and anticipated future role. Our interviews with HSD and OED staff members working on Career Bridge focused on the inception of Career Bridge, the extent of city staff involvement, the role of HSD and OED in providing services, how the program has changed since the initial design, and the theory of change guiding program operations. In addition, we spoke with five community sponsors and supporters about how they became involved in Career Bridge, the referral, recruitment and enrollment process for new participants, and how participants are provided with supportive services and case management.

Attendance at Career Bridge events. We attended several of the Tuesday night meetings held weekly at Southside Commons, which are typically attended by varying numbers of city staff, sponsors, participants, and other stakeholders. This included the enrollment deadline meeting and the launch celebration for Cohort Four. We also observed one day of Cohort Four’s job readiness training provided by SJI at South Seattle Community College and the focus group discussion for the internal evaluation led by HSD that occurred following our classroom observation.

Focus groups. On June 13th, 2013, we conducted a focus group with six program participants who volunteered to speak about their experiences in the program. We offered incentives for participation (gift cards, food, and bus passes) and extended the offer to all enrolled participants. Five of the six participants were from Cohort One and one participant was from Cohort Four. Participants led the flow of the informal discussion, and we asked probing questions. The conversation lasted just over an hour and addressed participants’ initial recruitment into Career Bridge, program goals, participant barriers, the 20-hour training, job placement services, supportive services and case management provided by community sponsors and staff, and possible program improvements.

Review of Career Bridge documents. We collected program documents throughout the evaluation. These documents included the participant enrollment and initial intake assessment forms, the Career Bridge schedule of events, the PowerPoint presentation and assignments used in the job readiness training, and forms developed by staff to identify and address participant needs. We also reviewed materials Career Bridge stakeholders presented at City Council meetings.

Analysis of program data. Administrative data on Career Bridge participants are housed in Seattle Jobs Initiative’s JobStat client database. The SJI data analyst provided us with de-identified individual-level data on all the participants in the first four cohorts. These data included baseline information collected through participant responses to the initial intake form, which covered a wide range of topics such as past employment history, program expectations, and participant barriers. In addition, SJI provided job placement data which tracked each participant’s employment activities following the 20-hour training. As a function of the short time period since the program launch and the evaluation, we focus on the outcomes of the 18 participants in Cohort One, though we provide descriptive statistics on the baseline participant characteristics of all four cohorts.

Analysis of costs data. HSD and OED provided MEF with estimated expense data for 2013 and a projected budget for 2014. This includes personnel and material costs associated with Career Bridge’s development and startup, implementation, and management. The 2014 budget also assumes the transition of some responsibilities from SJI to a Community Based Development Organization (CBDO).

III. Description of Intervention

In this section we describe the key components of Career Bridge. Still in its pilot phase, the goals and structure of the intervention are still evolving. Because of this ongoing change, we divide our discussion of the intervention into several components. We begin by outlining the initial design of the program and the motivations for establishing Career Bridge. We then outline an employment-focused theory of change that presents our understanding of the underlying logic model driving the employment services component of the intervention. Following discussion of the logic model, we address the many additional program goals that stakeholders, city staff, and

participants identified during our interviews. Finally, we describe the current intervention and each of the core components of service delivery.

A. Initial Program Design

As mentioned above, the Office of Economic Development and Human Services Department began developing the Career Bridge program in response to the spate of gun violence and deaths in Seattle in early 2012. Research indicates a strong correlation between unemployment and crime/incarceration¹ and suggests that education and employment reduce recidivism.² As a result, OED and HSD initially approached Career Bridge as an intervention designed to prevent violence by facilitating disadvantaged individuals' access to pathways to economic opportunity.

The 2013-2014 City Council Adopted Budget included funding for Career Bridge with the understanding that it would be a program designed to provide skill-building assistance and connections to resources to move disadvantaged individuals facing multiple barriers toward longer-term employment, degrees, and credentials. The program would focus on jobless or underemployed adults, who may be low-income men of color, may have been formerly incarcerated, or may have limited English skills. OED and HSD proposed a partnership to provide integrated human and employment services tailored to meet the unique needs of the participants. The experiences of other reentry programs indicated that this population would need mentoring support, job readiness training, and assistance with housing, childcare and transportation in order to be successful.³ OED and HSD staff also intended for Career Bridge to serve as a way to help participants find employment while preparing them to be successful in SJI's Career Pathways program – an initiative to assist low-skilled working-age adults complete a professional degree or credential that leads to a better paying and more secure job with benefits and opportunities for career advancements.⁴

Research suggests that reentry programs need to be embedded into the communities in which they are serving reentering individuals.⁵ HSD and OED met with community members from community resource networks, faith-based institutions and informal and formal support organizations as well as with men of color looking for economic and educational opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency. Based on these conversations, stakeholders defined several core program components:

- Integration of wrap-around support services addressing issues such as housing, childcare and transportation, into employment and training services;
- community sponsors who support program completion and on-going success by providing mentorship, case management, and a network of highly accessible support resources;
- a job developer who cultivates relationships with employers in target sectors and assists participants in job search; and

¹ Harlow, Caroline W. 2003. *Education and Correctional Population*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

² Visher, Christy, Winterfield, Laura, and Coggeshall, Mark. 2005. *Ex-Offender Employment Programs and Recidivism; A Meta-Analysis*. *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 1:295-315

³ Leshnick, Sengsouvanh Sukey, Christian Geckeler, Andrew Wiegand, Brandon Nicholson, and Kimberly Foley. 2012. *Evaluation of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program: Interim Report*. Washington DC: Social Policy Research Associates.

⁴ <http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/jobseekers/career-pathways-program/>

⁵ Ivry, Robert and Doolittle, Fred. 2003. *Improving the Economic and Life Outcomes of At-Risk Youth*. MDRC.

- a weeklong 20-hour job readiness training module provided by SJI that would be tailored to individuals with criminal records.

These components map well with what studies of reentry and low-income workers have suggested are successful practices. Employment-focused programs that provide training and supportive services such as Portland’s NEWWS and Riverside GAIN – both of which targeted low-income individuals and families – demonstrated positive effects on earnings and savings, program retention and in some cases, employment stability and wages.⁶ Research suggests that positive social networks, role models, and post-employment case management are program components that increase employment retention and other long-term positive effects.^{7,8} The initial program goals of Career Bridge aligned well with prior research on successful self-sufficiency and reentry practices as well as the needs identified and defined by the community and the target population.

B. Employment-Focused Theory of Change

Based on conversations with OED staff, other Career Bridge stakeholders, and a review of Career Bridge program materials, we developed a logic model (*Figure 1*) where we attempt to summarize Career Bridge’s underlying theory of change.⁹

Despite an array of stated goals from various Career Bridge stakeholders, there is a clear emphasis on employment that focuses much of the activity within Career Bridge. It serves as one of the primary motivations for participants to enroll, and the initial formal component of the intervention – the job readiness training – is an employment-centered intervention. Moreover, the stated goals of OED include linking Career Bridge to the broader set of employment and career pathways initiatives within the city.

Conversations with OED leadership and Career Bridge materials emphasize that Career Bridge is designed to link an especially disadvantaged population to the existing employment and training programs that exist within the city. In particular, OED staff expressed an interest in Career Bridge preparing participants to transition into the career pathways programs that SJI currently operates.

Simultaneously, OED staff acknowledged a more near-term set of program outcomes that can both support these longer-term career opportunities as well as assist participants in more near-term financial and social stability.

The logic model reflects a service delivery approach focused on engaging and supporting the near-term needs of the target population while moving them towards a longer-term career pathway. It outlines the conceptual logic of the intervention, identifying key program activities,

⁶ Gueron, Judith M., and Gayle Hamilton. 2009. *The role of education and training in welfare reform*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.

⁷ Brown, S.D., and Krane, N.E. 2000. “Four (or five) sessions and a cloud of dust: Old assumptions and new observations about career counseling. In S.D. Brown and R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 740-766). New York: Wiley.

⁸ Miller, Jennifer, Frieda Molina, Lisa Grossman and Susan Golonka. 2004. *Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency*. New York, NY: MDRC and National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

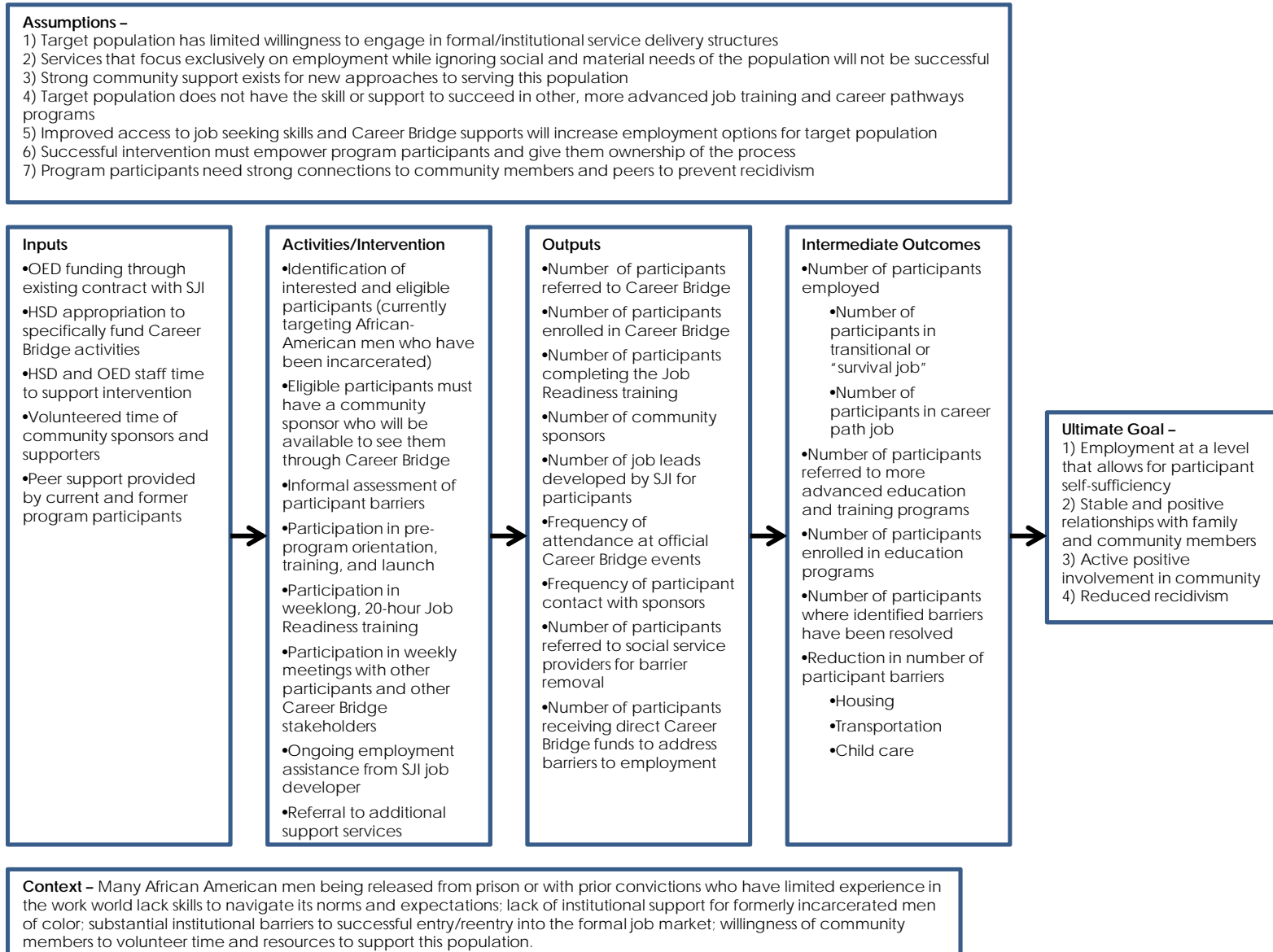
⁹ It is important to note that the logic model presented in this section is based primarily on OED’s stated vision for Career Bridge. It does not necessarily align with how all Career Bridge stakeholders view the program and its primary goals.

outputs, outcomes, and goals. Conversations with leadership at OED and HSD emphasized the following long-term goals of Career Bridge:

- Employment at a level that allows for participant self-sufficiency
- Stable and positive relationships with family and community members
- Active positive involvement in community
- Reduced recidivism

The logic model and underlying theory of change we present acknowledges that Career Bridge seeks to shift the paradigm of traditional employment and training programs by embedding the intervention within a structure of community support. The model relies heavily on community members and actively works to empower program participants to have a voice in the decision-making process. Many of the Career Bridge participants have previously received employment or supportive services through other publicly funded or non-profit programs with limited success. The theory of change presented in this model assumes that programs and interventions too closely associated with formal public institutions will have limited efficacy. To that end, the program is based on a community sponsorship model that requires each participant to have a sponsor who is available to them throughout the process. The intervention draws on a small but engaged network of community members (many of whom also have more formal positions within city government or the nonprofit community) to provide the ongoing support for program participants.

Figure 1: Career Bridge Logic Model



In addition to the more grassroots aspects of the program, Career Bridge is focused around a 20-hour job readiness training program currently delivered by SJI. Adapted from an existing SJI program, this weeklong training seeks to demystify the job search process and empower participants with the tools necessary to succeed in a competitive labor market that can often be unwelcoming to racial and ethnic minorities and individuals with criminal records. Following completion of the job readiness training, Career Bridge participants can work with a job developer that SJI has contracted with for Career Bridge.

Participant engagement in Career Bridge activities following the job readiness training can vary substantially depending on participant needs. While there are a number of regularly scheduled activities (e.g., weekly meetings, celebrations for new cohorts), OED staff indicated that they wanted Career Bridge to “be flexible with no minimum threshold.” Staff indicated that the structure of Career Bridge is intended to build trust with participants with the hope that ongoing, participant-driven engagement will support longer-term positive outcomes.

The logic model outlines key program outputs which align with the broader program goals. Many of the outputs seek to capture ongoing participant engagement (e.g., number of participants enrolling, attendance at official Career Bridge events) while others seek to capture program capacity and service delivery (e.g., number of sponsors, referrals to additional support services, distribution of Career Bridge funds for barrier reduction).

In both cases, the rationale for key program outputs is driven by the assumptions regarding the target population and the service delivery environment. In particular, Career Bridge stakeholders place a premium on ongoing connections to positive social supports, including peers and mentors. Career Bridge stakeholders believe that, especially for individuals recently released from prison or who recently stopped engaging in criminal activity, positive connections to community members and supports represent an important component of a shift toward legitimate employment. Moreover, the emphasis on job leads and barrier removal recognizes the need to develop and increase access to services and employment options aligned with the unique needs of the target population.

While the program outputs recognize the emphasis on ongoing support for program participants, the intermediate program outcomes are more directly tied to steps participants are taking toward long-term self-sufficiency. In particular, employment and enrollment in more advanced training represent key program outcomes that can help transition participants to more stable, self-sufficient lives. Similarly, Career Bridge stakeholders consistently stressed that long-term employment stability is dependent on adequately addressing key participant barriers, with a particular emphasis on housing, transportation, and child care.

C. Additional Program Goals

The logic model in the previous section reflects a strong focus on the employment goals of Career Bridge. In particular, it reflects how OED sees Career Bridge as an on-ramp to improved near-term employment outcomes as well as more advanced education and training options within the city. However, conversations with key Career Bridge stakeholders – including city government employees, non-profit partners, individual community members, and program participants – revealed a far more diverse set of program goals. All of the stakeholders with whom we spoke emphasized that Career Bridge is a community-driven intervention that must remain inclusive of the array of views represented among the stakeholders. In this section we

discuss the multiple goals of Career Bridge we heard based on conversations with stakeholders and participants.

All respondents indicated that employment was a central goal of Career Bridge, yet we encountered varying perspectives on the degree to which the sole focus should be on employment or whether the service delivery model should include attempts to address the broader array of human services barriers facing participants. Some respondents suggested that the role of Career Bridge is to facilitate the full range of services necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. However, others felt that this approach (and the associated time and resource commitment) diluted the impact of the services and distracted from the central goal of employment.

In addition to goals focused on the needs of individual program participants, stakeholders and participants consistently discussed the role of Career Bridge in addressing community-level issues – in particular their desire to address inequalities facing African Americans and former prisoners. While these goals are not necessarily incongruent with the core components of the intervention as outlined in the logic model, they do suggest a more expansive vision of Career Bridge.

There are several key stakeholder assumptions that underpin this broader set of community-based goals. First and foremost is the fact that there are systematic, race-based inequalities that have substantial implications for the target population – inequalities that are further exacerbated by the difficulties facing former prisoners upon reentry. While these manifest themselves in the job search process, there are broader barriers limiting access to other core services that systematically disenfranchise and isolate this population.

There is a strong belief among stakeholders and many city staff affiliated with Career Bridge that the way to address these inequalities is through a bottom-up effort to provide social and relationship supports to program participants. These include use of a sponsorship model where there is a collective responsibility for the welfare and outcomes of the target population. This is intended to have the dual effect of strengthening important community institutions and providing a more holistic set of supports to participants.

Stakeholders consistently pointed to Career Bridge as a means to work collaboratively with government to address these inequalities. While the individuals with whom we spoke varied in how they characterized the nature of this collaboration, there were several common themes that emerged in discussing how Career Bridge could support broader, community-level outcomes.

Build and strengthen community institutions. City staff and community members consistently emphasized the role that Career Bridge can play in advancing the capacity of community-based organizations to support this population. Many stakeholders emphasized that there are strong individual relationships within the African American community and a strong support network through faith-based institutions, but there is a less robust infrastructure for providing employment and supportive services among existing community based organizations. Stakeholders articulated a number of goals within this broader capacity-building effort.

In some cases, they see Career Bridge as a way to educate community leaders about how to navigate the existing service delivery structures within the city. This has the potential to improve access to services and to support community organizations as they seek to identify and direct individuals to the most appropriate services.

Additionally, respondents noted a more general need to strengthen the capacity of community organizations to directly serve participants. This includes building the organizational infrastructure necessary to compete for city contracts or to seek out alternative funding sources and to manage service delivery. Some stakeholders noted that this increased capacity will allow for more formalized linkages with existing efforts to support prisoner reentry (e.g., the Black Prisoner’s Caucus¹⁰).

Empower participants. A common theme in many of our conversations with stakeholders and participants was the desire to differentiate Career Bridge from the typical employment or support service program. Stakeholders regularly noted that they hesitate to characterize Career Bridge as a “program,” instead thinking of it as a “process” or a “social movement.” Several stakeholders noted that many of the typical, existing service delivery models do little to empower participants and often focus on participants’ discrete problems (e.g., lack of child care, food insecurity) as opposed to thinking about holistic approaches aligned with individual strengths and barriers. A key facet of the critiques we heard regarding existing programs is that they do little to empower the participants. This reinforces a power dynamic where participants feel as though they have little agency, and it can exacerbate the alienation participants feel based on the barriers they encounter due to their race, ethnicity, or criminal background.

The design of Career Bridge seeks to alter this dynamic by utilizing a consensus-driven approach where participants are granted an equal voice in program decision-making. Stakeholders noted that this has both individual-level benefits for the participants as well as group-based benefits – it can help empower communities as well as demonstrate an alternative model for program design and implementation.

Policy change. Conversations with stakeholders, including city staff, often centered on the limited services available to support the needs of low-income, former prisoners. In particular, they noted the barriers to self-sufficiency posed by the presence of a criminal record and the acute needs that result. Most prominent is the lack of affordable housing. Aside from broader trends in the Seattle housing market that limit affordable options for low-income individuals, many landlords will not rent to individuals with criminal records, especially felony convictions. In 1988, Congress amended the U.S. Housing Act to deny admissions and mandate evictions for alleged criminal activity, allowing Public Housing Authorities to perform criminal background checks prior to admission and requiring them to include a provision in their lease agreements that tenants and their families can be evicted for the criminal behavior of a household member, guest, or “other person under the tenant’s control”.¹¹ This can be limiting to individuals with criminal backgrounds, as it makes it difficult to even stay with family or friends who do not have records. The resultant housing instability makes it difficult for these individuals to achieve the necessary stability to enter or reenter the workforce and maintain positive family relationships. In addition to efforts to support improved individual-level housing outcomes through Career Bridge, city staff and other stakeholders noted that they see Career Bridge as a way to draw attention to this

¹⁰ African-American Men incarcerated at the Washington State Reformatory at Monroe founded the Black Prisoners’ Caucus in 1972. Their purpose is to provide a medium for incarcerated African-American men to work collectively to improve family relationships, their facility, and their communities through workshops and annual summits held at the prison and advocacy work with community partners.

¹¹ Hirsch, Amy E., Sharon M. Dietrich, Rue Landau, Peter D. Schneider, Irv Ackelsberg, Judith Bernstein-Baker, and Joseph Hohenstein. 2002. “Every Door Closed: Barriers Facing Parents with Criminal Records.” Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications_archive/files/0092.pdf

issue more generally. In developing a program specifically targeting individuals with prior convictions, respondents emphasized the opportunity to focus attention on gaps in the current human services offerings within the city.

Similarly, Career Bridge stakeholders and participants consistently emphasized the barriers that face individuals with felony convictions in the job search process. One participant shared in the focus group that despite the fact that he had been out of prison for over 10 years, his past felonies were still an issue in his job search. Even when individuals are otherwise qualified for a job, the presence of a conviction is often an insurmountable barrier to employment. This is the case both for more advanced positions along a career pathway as well as many of the lower skilled “survival” jobs that often serve as an entry point to the labor market. One participant explained, “If you have a barrier, they have so many resumes, they got to cut someone, and we just seem to be the sort of guys that get cut.... How do you talk about your felony?” Respondents see Career Bridge as a means to raise awareness about the negative implications of such policies, both to individuals and society more generally, which further marginalizes this population.¹²

In addition to these broader community-level goals, respondents articulated additional individual-level goals, aside from those specifically focused on employment, which could translate into benefits for the broader community. Almost universally, stakeholders and participants framed these goals in terms of building and maintaining strong, positive relationships. In addition to the efforts around community empowerment, respondents discussed the ways in which they believe Career Bridge can support positive relationships between participants and their families, employers, and communities. In each case, the focal point is developing the language, skills, and support necessary to reframe how participants interact with each of these groups.

Strengthening community ties. In discussing the goals of Career Bridge, the primary frame of reference for many of stakeholders and affiliated organizations is the barriers facing formerly incarcerated individuals. In many ways, Career Bridge is an extension of previous community-based work to help with prisoner reentry, especially through the Black Prisoner’s Caucus. It is born out of a recognition that strong community ties are essential in helping former prisoners reintegrate into society. In addition to the material needs necessary to support stable reentry, stakeholders and participants consistently emphasized the need for strong relationships to family members and the community.

Respondents consistently emphasized that a key goal of Career Bridge is to instill in participants a sense of responsibility to the broader community. From the outset, Career Bridge stakeholders try to impress on participants the role that they can play in giving back to their community. This reinforces efforts to empower participants and give them a sense of purpose that can act as added motivation for personal success. The cohort-based approach encourages longer-term engagement in the intervention with the goal of earlier participants serving as models/supports for newer entrants. Additionally, stakeholders see potential long-term benefits in building a set of positive role models for others in the community.

¹² City Council passed Council Bill Number 117796 on June 10, 2013. This bill would limit employers’ ability to use criminal records to disqualify applicants.

Workplace skills. The relational element of the program, in the case of employers, is explicitly in service of improved employment outcomes. Stakeholders see both the job readiness training and the ongoing interaction with the Career Bridge community as an opportunity for participants to develop the skills necessary to operate within an employment environment. This means learning how to navigate the norms that dictate behavior and success in the workplace.

Violence reduction. For some respondents, this focus on relationships is in service of violence reduction. Some city staff as well as several of the community stakeholders we interviewed emphasized that the ultimate goal of Career Bridge was to respond to increased violence in the African American community in Seattle. They see Career Bridge as a way to grow the number of positive role models in the community and to develop a community institution that presented an alternative to criminal activity. To that end, many respondents note that reduced recidivism is a central goal of Career Bridge.

However, others were more reluctant to have Career Bridge characterized primarily as a means to violence reduction. Instead, they saw the high-profile violence that catalyzed support for Career Bridge as an opportunity to address broader systemic issues facing former prisoners and the African American community more generally.

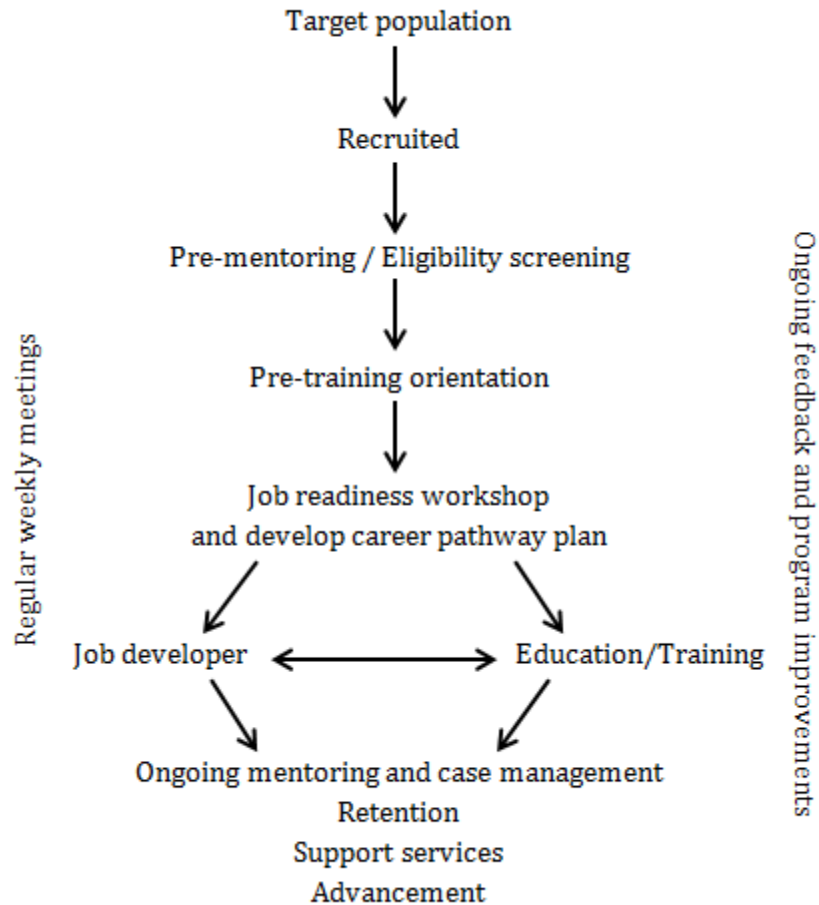
The inclusive nature of Career Bridge, combined with a large group of stakeholders with a diverse set of interests and goals, creates a degree of tension in any attempt to explicate a single uniform vision of the intervention. Among many stakeholders, there is a hesitancy to make Career Bridge too institutional or similar to a more typical employment program. Among others, there is a more explicit desire to link Career Bridge to the more formal existing institutions in the city that can provide more advanced employment and training services. While this tension appears to have generated many constructive conversations regarding program design and implementation, it does limit our ability to clearly articulate a cohesive set of program goals and a corresponding theory of change.

D. Service Delivery Structure

In this section we present a description of the Career Bridge model and service delivery structure. Career Bridge is a community-based support and sponsorship model where participants are recruited and heavily supported by dedicated community members. SJI provides the formal centerpiece of the program: the 20-hour weeklong job readiness training workshop and the job placement services. The participants themselves shape Career Bridge through the group-based interaction model of participation. City staff provide management and oversight to the program, but they also are involved in more on-the-ground services such as case management.

Figure 2 provides a general conceptual model of the service delivery structure. Although the weeklong job readiness training and weekly meetings of participants, stakeholders, and city staff anchor the organization of the other program components, the sequence and intensity of services provided post-training vary. The services Career Bridge provides depend on individual participant need and level of engagement.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Service Delivery Structure



1. Community-based support and sponsorship model

Career Bridge participants and stakeholders consistently stressed the importance of the community having a sense of ownership in program design and implementation. As such, community members are responsible for identifying and screening enrollees into the program and supporting individuals who they introduce to Career Bridge. The community sponsors and supporters are individual community members who volunteer their time to support Career Bridge participants. Many are part of faith-based or local organizations with an interest in building and strengthening local institutions in the African American community. Some key sponsors and supporters are affiliated with the following organizations: Black Prisoner’s Caucus, Guiding Academic Motivation for Excellence (GAME), Village of Hope, FAVOR, TrueVine Baptist Church, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, and the Clergy, Community, and Children/Youth Coalition (4 C Coalition). Many of the sponsors have prior relationships with one another due to their other work, church connections, or families.

a. Participant Recruitment

Most participants are recruited into Career Bridge through community sponsors, with some brought in by city staff and past participants. Sponsors target potential participants who they

know have had difficulties with employment and highlight Career Bridge’s tangible employment services to interest potential participants in attending one of the standing weekly Career Bridge meetings. The level of engagement and support community sponsors must commit to providing to each of the participants they sponsor is substantial. As a result, sponsors are selective about who they bring into Career Bridge; they usually have had long-standing personal relationships with their participants. Sponsors explained that “Career Bridge is not a program you refer people to” and that in order to bring in someone, you have to be willing to “walk with them every step of the way,” meaning providing ongoing strong support to participants to help address their many barriers. However, some participants have been referred to the program without a committed sponsor and stakeholders acknowledged this as an issue due to their limited number of sponsors.

For every cohort, HSD staff set a deadline roughly two and a half weeks before the start of the weeklong training by which time recruits must decide whether or not to formally participate and complete the initial enrollment and intake assessment form. Formally participating in Career Bridge entails attending the weeklong job readiness training and having access to the job developer.

Those who decide against formally participating in a specific cohort may remain engaged in the weekly meetings and decide to participate in a later cohort. A recruit and sponsor may choose this course if they feel the recruit has barriers, such as a substance addiction, that need to be addressed first in order to fully participate. Some past participants also indicated that they stress upon the potential participants that Career Bridge demands a great deal of effort and commitment on the part of the participants in order to confirm they are ready to enroll, explaining that “I keep saying, ‘Career Bridge is not for those who need it, it’s for those who want it’, and if you look around, the men who want it and keep coming back are doing the work.” Another expressed, “I saw a lot of people turned away because they were just like, ‘you mean I can’t just do the week training, do the twenty hours and then [I’ll] get a job at the end?’ ...you gotta put some work in.”

b. Ongoing Support

Ongoing participant interaction with key stakeholders is a key component of Career Bridge. This interaction includes individual mentoring as well as group-based support.

Career Bridge members meet weekly on Tuesdays and Saturdays to discuss the status and needs of current participants and to discuss program design and implementation. The meetings are attended by city staff, SJI staff, community members, and current and potential participants. The number of attendants varies – mandatory new cohort meetings may be attended by over 40 individuals, while an optional Tuesday meeting between cohorts may be attended by 15. The two-hour long Tuesday evening meetings are typically led by staff from HSD and often include breakout sessions where a participant from an earlier cohort facilitates a discussion among the participants, while community members and program staff meet separately. These breakout sessions are used to orient new participants and community members to the program, as well as to identify possible program improvements; groups report back to the whole about their discussion. Tuesday and Saturday meetings are also used to conduct Solutions Team meetings where participants can bring their support service needs to the group to brainstorm possible solutions. The Saturday meetings last longer and are led by the community sponsors; in the two to three weeks prior to the start of the weeklong job readiness training, the meetings focus on new participant registration and orientations. Meetings are also an opportunity to disseminate

program information and for participants to check in with their community sponsors in person. Agendas for Tuesday and Saturday evenings are set at the weekly Friday Working Committee meetings, composed of representatives from HSD, OED, SJI and the community sponsors.

In addition to regular meetings, each participant has one main sponsor who is committed to providing them with ongoing support. However, participants also seek out other sponsors and stakeholders about issues with which their individual sponsor may be less familiar, and they may change sponsors if they find someone else with whom they are more comfortable, although this is uncommon. Community sponsors are often responsible for supporting multiple participants. While some only sponsor a single participant, the most involved sponsors have as many as seven to eight participants and others sponsor four or five.

Sponsors offer support with anything participants may need assistance with, from supplying referrals to low-income housing programs to listening to personal issues and providing emotional support. Some sponsors practice more intrusive counseling techniques and will contact the participant on a semi-daily basis to get updates on their employment, human service needs, and personal life. Others are more demand-responsive, though their participants understand that they are available at any time if needed.

Although the distinction is blurry, in addition to community sponsors are community supporters who also bring resources and connections to the table, and may attend the weekly meetings, but do not have specific participants to whom they must be constantly available.

Many sponsors and other stakeholders indicated that housing is a major barrier for many participants that greatly impedes their ability to become and remain employed. Many low-income and rental housing options are closed to individuals with criminal backgrounds or the locations of available housing do not make sense for the participant's job, or their financial history does not allow them to take out loans. Some sponsors and staff have attempted to address housing issues by helping participants negotiate with potential landlords. Others have referred participants to organizations that assist with housing, but these organizations generally have the ability to assist only a limited numbers of clients each month.

In addition to housing, Career Bridge stakeholders attempt to assist participants with transportation challenges. Many participants rely on public transit to make job interviews, go to work, and take their children to school or appointments, but they cannot afford monthly bus passes without assistance. In addition, many participants' driver's licenses have become suspended due to legal financial obligations from a variety of sources such as parking tickets and child support. Some higher-wage jobs require employees to have valid driver's licenses but participants do not have the funds to become relicensed. Career Bridge has been working to address this barrier by referring participants to relicensing programs, focusing on survival job placements to pay off the legal financial obligations, or helping negotiate with collections, but this barrier remains for many participants.

While child care is a less common barrier among participants, some sponsors use their professional backgrounds (e.g., social workers) to assist participants in navigating available resources.

HSD allocates funds to directly assist participants in addressing barriers; this Career Investment Fund is capped at \$200 per participant. Career Bridge has a labor-intensive process in place for participants to access these funds. Participants first must attempt to resolve their barrier

independently and with their sponsor. If they are unable to resolve the issue, they fill out a needs request form and meet with the Solutions Team. The team is made up of Career Bridge members who are in attendance at the Tuesday or Saturday meeting when a Solutions Team is held. Participants must present their plans, goals, the barrier in question, and what they and their sponsor have done to solve the issue. The Team brainstorms possible solutions and then must reach a consensus on which strategies a participant should adopt. One of these solutions may be to use some of their \$200 allocation from the Career Investment Fund. The participant must submit a form to HSD staff summarizing the session with signatures from at least three members of the Solutions Team before they can access these funds.

2. Employment Services

SJI staff have primary responsibility for delivering employment-based services to Career Bridge participants. This includes both the job readiness training and subsequent job development services.

Job Readiness Training. The weeklong, 20-hour job readiness training is the central formal component of Career Bridge. The training involves a week of daily, four-hour sessions at South Seattle Community College. The curriculum and schedule for the week is the same for every cohort. SJI staff adapted the content from a job readiness workshop that SJI provides to other clients. The regular SJI workshop covers topics such as workplace culture and expectations, writing resumes and cover letters, job search, and customer service. For Career Bridge, staff tailored these topics to the target population and developed several new segments, including content on understanding labor market options and understanding one's digital footprint. By the end of the five days, participants have an updated resume, a general cover letter, and professional email addresses and voicemail messages. The week ends with a graduation and a networking lunch where participants can meet potential employers and learn what skills are needed for available jobs. The class is taught by two instructors, one who has worked for SJI for over 15 years, and another with whom SJI contracts, who also teaches soft skills at a local Community College and serves as a stress counselor for SJI. The two instructors have been working together for twelve years and team-teach this class.

The instructors regularly integrate contextualized examples and encourage a high degree of participation and sharing of personal experiences. Participants spoke highly of the training, emphasizing that the backgrounds of the instructors made it easy for participants to connect and relate to. However, several individuals expressed that the training was too short for them to be fully prepared for their job search and that they would have benefited highly from more time and instruction, particularly in the computer lab and mock interviewing.

Job placement. SJI subcontracted with TRAC Associates, a for-profit community-based organization that provides an array of employment services in the greater Seattle area, to provide a Career Bridge job developer. The job developer, who works full time on Career Bridge, has a long history of providing employment services to formerly incarcerated individuals and other hard-to-place populations in the Seattle area and has built up a large potential employer pool. For Career Bridge, before each day of the weeklong training, she meets with the cohort informally for about half an hour to start learning about the participants' barriers and short- and long-term goals in order to begin her job development early. After the training week is over, the participants schedule individual meetings with her to work on job search.

According to the job developer and several participants, employers are willing to interview and hire Career Bridge participants because of their connection to her; they trust her to send reliable workers. For participants with criminal backgrounds or gaps in their employment history, getting an interview constitutes an improvement: “I was sending my resume out, but I wasn’t getting interviews, so one of the beautiful things about Career Bridge is I went out on a lot of interviews and I didn’t necessarily get the job but at least I was getting in the door.” Participants’ criminal backgrounds make them ineligible for some industries, so many of the employers the job developer uses for Career Bridge are in manufacturing and are smaller, local businesses who are willing to be more flexible on hiring individuals with criminal backgrounds. Participants still need to interview with employers for a job and it can take anywhere from one to six interviews before a participant is placed. The job developer checks in with placed participants at least weekly and with employers for updates and to identify any issues that need to be resolved. She reported contacting participants who are having trouble being placed on a near daily basis.

The job developer also occasionally serves as de facto case manager in addition to her explicit employment-related work. This is an informal role – as participants encounter barriers to the job opportunities she supplies, she attempts to address the issues. However, this also is a labor-intensive process and does limit her job development capacity.

For many of the participants, the job developer indicated that she emphasizes finding short-term “survival” jobs while they search for more stable employment. In some cases, this means multiple part-time or on-call positions, often involving manual labor, to help participants build their resumes and get habituated to working daily. However, this has caused some tension with participants and especially with Career Bridge community members. Some community members indicated that they expected participants to be able to more quickly access jobs leading to their longer-term career goals through Career Bridge, and that they find the short-term survival job as an inappropriate job placement for the participants. The view of participants varied based on their employment history – some participants who had had little to no job history were highly enthusiastic about working even survival jobs, but one participant who had had a long but outdated job history working higher-wage jobs shared that he initially felt that the survival job leads that the job developer sent to him did not match his interests or experience. For some participants, the job developer noted that it takes time to convince them to take survival jobs; they do not immediately grasp the reality that their inexperience or gaps in formal job history make the pathway to achieving their desired careers much longer as there is limited availability of employment aside from survival jobs. In general, there is a strong positive view of the job developer among the participants with whom we spoke.

Although the service delivery flow can include enrollment in an educational or training program, the time commitment of a job makes getting education difficult. The job developer has placed two participants in Pioneer Human Services’ paid five-week training despite its very limited cohort sizes; successful participants are offered a spot in PHS’s paid nine-week Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship. For most participants, the job developer recommends they obtain certifications while in survival jobs through trainings such as forklift or machining trainings that run on weekends.

3. Ongoing, Group-Based Participant Interaction

Aside from the job readiness training and several mandatory Saturday and Tuesday meetings, all other Career Bridge activities are informal and the level of engagement and commitment to the

program that participants demonstrate varies. Some participants are highly engaged even after they are placed in a job and regularly take leadership roles at the weekly meetings, while others do not consistently attend the group Career Bridge events or at all. However, participants are encouraged by sponsors, staff, and other participants to take ownership of the program by contributing to the decision-making process, taking leadership roles, and serving as mentors for newer participants. For example, participants volunteer for tasks such as contacting other participants about events, leading group discussions, and sharing ideas on the Solutions Team. Participants support each other through a peer support network. One participant explained, “There’s more of a family value type thing that we’re helping our community... like I missed one Tuesday after I graduated, and this brother called me and ‘well, hey man, where you at?’ Like, he thought I got lost. You know what I’m saying? But he showed some care for me there.” Some individuals in past cohorts consistently attend the weekly meetings and not only get support to work through their own barriers but also share experiences and suggestions to others who are struggling through issues they may also have faced. They also provide an environment of peers that incoming participants can relate to and feel comfortable in. One participant shared about the environment of Career Bridge that “there’s been times when I’ve had to borrow from this man or the next, out of somebody’s wallet... but even to feel comfortable enough to even do that... that’s what I’m talking about.” Some sponsors and staff expressed that they would like Career Bridge to be an empowerment mechanism for the participants and the community and for the participants to eventually have full ownership of the program.

4. Administrative Support and Case Management by City Staff

In advance of the job readiness training participants must attend several Tuesday and Saturday meetings where they complete intake and enrollment, go through orientation, and attend their cohort’s launch celebration. Career Bridge stakeholders encourage participants to make connections with each other, sponsors, staff and past participants. These meetings, as well as the non-mandatory weekly meetings between cohorts, are generally organized and facilitated by HSD staff. HSD staff have taken on the responsibility to secure the meeting space, produce meeting materials such as agendas and schedules, provide food, and lead the meetings. The OED/HSD leadership also attend the mandatory meetings; the former director of HSD had a very strong leadership presence at these meetings and had developed relationships with many of the stakeholders and participants. While still at HSD, the director considered herself as the project manager and was spending as much as 20 hours a week on Career Bridge, including attending weekly meetings with HSD staff to discuss the progress and situation of each participant and weekly Friday Working Committee meetings with a representative of the community sponsors, SJI, and OED to work on infrastructure issues and set agendas for the Saturday and Tuesday meetings.

City staff are a source of ongoing support for participants. In particular, staff from HSD have informally taken on the role of case manager for many of the participants. This involves identifying a participant’s barriers, navigating existing support service networks and coordinating available resources. This informal process is very labor-intensive and currently, one person has taken on these case managing responsibilities for a large number of the participants. Participants noted the many responsibilities HSD staff had undertaken for Career Bridge, “we need to give [HSD staff member] some help, because [she]’s wearing five different hats, she’s sometimes wearing [the job developer]’s hat, she’s sometimes wearing [SJI instructor]’s hat... and she’s trying to do her own job at the same time.” The HSD staff member explained that she

now acts as the case manager for Career Bridge because of her background, as many of the community sponsors do not have the amount of case management experience that she does. Several of the HSD staff members indicated that a reason for their extensive commitment to Career Bridge was that they were interested in being a part of the program not only as city staff, but as interested community members.

IV. Participant Characteristics and Outcomes

In this section we present baseline participant characteristics and employment outcomes. As a function of the short time period between the program launch and this evaluation, we examine employment outcomes only for the first cohort of participants. Our analysis reflects a program in its infancy and is based on de-identified individual-level participant data housed in SJI’s JobStat database program. The participant data we received on May 30th, 2013 cover the period from when the first cohort was enrolled on October 29th, 2012, to May 29th, 2013, when Cohort 4 was ongoing. The baseline information comes from self-reported responses on the Career Bridge intake form completed by participants roughly two weeks before the start of the job readiness training. The job placement data are reported by the job developer and cover the period from when the first cohort was enrolled, through May 30th, 2013, when the data were provided to us.

A. Baseline Participant Characteristics

The baseline data show that the 42 Career Bridge participants share many characteristics in demographics, the barriers they face, employment history and what they hoped to achieve through participating in the program. The participant characteristics align with the description of the target population in the initial program design. The data also support what we heard in our conversations with participants, sponsors and program staff.

Program status. As **Table 1** shows, as of May 29th, 2013, there were 42 participants enrolled in Career Bridge across four cohorts. Eighteen participants are from Cohort One, 10 participants are from Cohort Two, four participants are from Cohort Three, and 10 participants are from Cohort Four. Of the 42 participants, one from Cohort One terminated his participation with Career Bridge and eight from Cohort One are inactive, although all completed the job readiness training.

Table 1: Program Status

Program Status	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Total
	October, 2012	February, 2013	March, 2013	May, 2013	
Enrolled	9	10	4	0	23
Inactive	8	0	0	0	8
Preliminary	0	0	0	10	10
Terminated	1	0	0	0	1
Total	18	10	4	10	42

Demographic characteristics. All 42 participants are male and, aside from two participants who identified as being of two or more races, participants identified as black/African American. Only three participants identified as being Hispanic/Latino, though some chose not to specify ethnicity. Fourteen participants had children with whom they were living, the majority of whom were under the age of four (41 percent). Sixteen participants had children with whom they were not living.

Barriers – criminal history. Participants self-reported barriers they were facing at the point of enrollment. The intake form allows participants to select multiple responses from the list and participants self-reported an average of three and one-half barriers. As **Table 2** shows, the most common issue was criminal history, with 62 percent (26 of 42) participants indicating that their criminal history was a barrier, something that was reinforced in interviews with stakeholders and during program observation. Career Bridge targets formerly incarcerated individuals, but this is not a prerequisite for participation. Although only 26 participants indicated that criminal history was a barrier, 36 of the 42 participants did report a criminal background: eight participants reported only misdemeanors, 21 reported only felonies, and seven reported both misdemeanors and felonies.

Table 2: Barriers at Enrollment

Barriers	Participants identifying barrier as issue (%)
Basic Skills	1
Childcare	12
Criminal History	62
Debt/Financial History	26
Housing	43
Physical/Mental Health	17
Substance Abuse	21
Transportation	43

Barriers – housing and transportation. **Table 2** also shows that the second most common barriers at enrollment were housing and transportation: both of these were reported as barriers by 43 percent of participants each. **Table 3** below shows participants’ housing situation at the point of enrollment; a majority were in unstable situations or homeless.

Table 3: Housing Situation at Enrollment

Type of Housing	Participants (%)
Family/Partner Owns Own Home	14
Rent House or Apartment	24
Living with Someone Temporary	33
Transitional Housing	10
Homeless	19
Total	100

Education. The highest level of schooling participants have attained at the point of enrollment ranges widely from “Some High School” to “Master’s Degree.” While 33 percent have received some college education, only 16 percent of participants have achieved a degree or certification past a high school diploma or GED.

Work history. As **Table 4** shows, almost all participants had worked for pay at least once before enrolling in Career Bridge, and 88 percent of participants had worked a full time job at some point before enrollment. At the time they began the program, 88 percent of participants had not worked in the previous week, although 64 percent had worked at some point in the 12 months

prior to starting Career Bridge. Participants provided most recent employment history, indicating a mean hourly wage of \$15.19 and a median hourly wage of \$11.75 at their last job. Except for six participants, these positions had been in the last four years. Four participants reported being employed at the time of enrollment, although none were in full time positions.

Table 4: Employment History

		Cohort 1 (%)	Cohort 2 (%)	Cohort 3 (%)	Cohort 4 (%)	Total (%)
Ever Worked for Pay	No	6	0	0	0	2
	Yes	94	100	100	100	98
Ever Worked Full Time	No	11	0	50	10	12
	Yes	89	100	50	90	86
Worked in Last 12 Months	No	39	40	50	20	36
	Yes	61	60	50	80	64
Worked Last Week	No	78	100	100	90	88
	Yes	22	0	0	10	12

Public assistance receipt. Participants also reported on their public assistance reciprocity at the time of enrollment. Fifty percent of the participants were receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, but few participants reported receiving cash benefits through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, General Assistance - Unemployable, Unemployment Insurance, Social Security Disability Insurance, or Supplemental Security Income. Some participants provided reasons for not collecting Unemployment Insurance despite being unemployed and most of those who answered said that they had not applied, while two responded that they had applied but were turned down.

Program expectations. The intake form asks participants to select one or more items from a list to indicate what they expect to learn or gain from participating in the Career Bridge program. Unsurprisingly, the most common response was “job placement,” with 88 percent of participants listing it as a program expectation. The staff, community sponsors and participants we spoke to indicated that employment was a “hook” to get participants interested in the program. Other common answers were life skills (64 percent), skills assessment (57 percent), and occupational skills (55 percent).

B. Employment Outcomes

As we note in the previous section, we confine our analysis of employment outcomes to the experiences of participants in Cohort One. While we have employment data for the more recent cohorts as well, we felt that the longer exposure to the program offers a more representative description of the employment experiences of Career Bridge participants.

Despite an emphasis on career pathways and enrollment in education and training programs, the outcomes of Cohort One suggest ongoing difficulty in obtaining and remaining in any employment. While participants have had some success in securing employment, retention and advancement appear to be ongoing concerns.

Table 5 describes the frequency and nature of Cohort One participants’ job placements. Of the 18 participants who enrolled in the first cohort of Career Bridge, 13 have been placed in at least one job and in up to four jobs; the median number of jobs per participant is two. Among those

Cohort One participants who became employed, it took an average of 122 days from the start of the job readiness training for them to become employed.¹³

The data also provide information on how and why a placement ended. Many participants cycle through more than one job placement, often for a variety of reasons ranging from finding a better job to working two positions at once to being fired for tardiness/absences. However, of the 14 Career Bridge job placements that have already ended (of 28 total placements), nine ended with the participant being fired, mostly for issues such as inappropriate performance and workplace behavior, four ended because the participant was laid off, and one participant quit.

The duration a participant stays in one position ranges widely; seven participants have retained positions for at least two months while seven participant placements have ended within one week. At the time that the data were compiled at the end of May 2013, 11 of the 18 participants in Cohort One were employed and these participants had been employed in their current position for an average of 61 days (with a median duration of 42).

Job duration, when excluding current placements is much lower. On average, participants spent 21 days in their jobs. Among these jobs, the median duration of nine days reflects a distribution skewed toward the lower end as a result of firings and participants taking temporary positions.¹⁴

Table 5: Cohort 1 Job Placements – Frequency and Nature¹⁵

Participants (N)	# Placements/Participant					Currently Employed (N)	Median duration (days)		Mean Duration (days)	
	0	1	2	3	4		Current Placements	Prior Placements	Current Placements	Prior Placements
	5	4	5	2	2		11	42	9	61

While there is some variation in employment sectors among Cohort One participants who become employed, the plurality of positions (43 percent) have been in the manufacturing sector; job titles include warehouse worker, laborer, and painter. Eighteen percent of positions were with public agencies – two of which were as drivers and the remaining were clerical positions. Another 11 percent of positions have been in the construction sector. The remaining positions were in fields including customer service, IT support, and food processing.

Table 6 describes further the jobs in which Cohort One participants have been placed. The majority of the 28 job placements have been in full time positions. However, the median wage of these full time jobs is lower than the median wages of participants working in part-time, temporary, or contract positions. Almost all participants who had a job placement had the opportunity to work 40 hours a week, though two participants did this by combining two

¹³ The median number of days until first placement is 113. The minimum value is 49 days and the maximum value is 224 days.

¹⁴ A review of placement data for the five Cohort Two participants who have been employed tells a similar story. While the time to initial placement is lower (mean and median of 49 days), the duration numbers are quite similar. For current placements the mean is 43 and the median is 39, for prior placements the median and mean number of days in a job is 12.

¹⁵ We calculated mean and median job duration based on days from job start to job end. For participant with no end date, we calculated duration based on days from job start through May 31, 2013 when job placement data were extracted.

positions together. Nine of the 17 full time job placements are survival jobs, mostly working as warehouse workers or laborers.¹⁶ Eight placements have been made in jobs that pay at least \$20.00 an hour and also present an opportunity for advancement, including positions such as administrative specialist, welder and IT support, although not all participants have retained these positions. Five of the job placements have been with the City of Seattle – these are some of the highest paying jobs that Cohort One participants have obtained.

Table 6: Cohort 1 Job Details

	Total	Full Time	Part Time	Temporary	Contract
Cohort 1 Jobs	28	17	6	4	1
# of people	13	11	5	4	1
Mean Wage	\$15.48	\$14.74	\$15.18	\$19.50	\$14.00
(SD)	(\$5.77)	(\$6.02)	(\$5.29)	(\$4.27)	(NA)
Median Wage	\$13.00	\$12.00	\$14.94	\$20.00	\$14.00
Mean hours/week (SD)	35.9 (8.7)	40 (0)	21.5 (9.2)	40 (0)	35 (NA)
Median hours/week	40	40	20	40	35

The Career Bridge participants come to the program for assistance with employment but face multiple barriers: most prominently, criminal history and housing and transportation issues. Cohort One employment data suggest that while some participants are being placed in full-time jobs, there is variation in wage levels and job retention remains a concern.

V. Program Challenges and Implications for Scalability

The current Career Bridge model is not scalable without fundamental program changes. The facets of the program that differentiate it from other services available to this population – strong, personal relationships and grassroots implementation – are hard to replicate at scale. Moreover, even in its current form, Career Bridge is dealing with ongoing challenges that have the potential to limit the effectiveness of the intervention. In this section we discuss both the near-term program challenges as well as the potential implementation challenges associated with program expansion. We discuss these challenges understanding that Career Bridge is still a relatively new, pilot program. We present them not as a critique, but instead with an eye toward identifying potential areas of program improvement. However, the commitment among Career Bridge stakeholders to an inclusive, group-driven decision-making process makes us wary of being overly prescriptive in any recommendations.

A. Challenges Associated with Current Program

Career Bridge stakeholders are the first to acknowledge that the intervention is a work in progress and that the early cohorts have been a learning experience. Conversations with city staff and others in the community suggest a group that is committed to program improvement and learning from earlier missteps. In this section we discuss some of the early implementation lessons that pose ongoing challenges to the program. In addition to those that were identified by

¹⁶ While survival jobs are not formally documented in the SJI data, we identified these types of jobs based on conversations with the job developer and her characterization of positions with certain employers as fitting into this category.

interviewees, we discuss additional challenges we observed which appear to impact service delivery.

Diffuse leadership model. The nature of Career Bridge is such that it is difficult to identify program leadership. The commitment to a more group-based decision-making model involves a collaborative approach that does not clearly delineate responsibility for program operations. While this appears to have benefits in terms of empowering community members and participants, it results in more limited program accountability and limits the ability for anyone involved in Career Bridge to make quick, decisive decisions. While some stakeholders felt that the collaborative process was a strength, others noted that it was overly burdensome, especially as it related to more basic program functions.

While the HSD Director had provided much of the intellectual and emotional leadership for the intervention, her and her staff have been clear that they see their roles more as facilitators and program advisors. Similarly, OED leadership has been highly supportive of Career Bridge, both in terms of redirecting SJI resources to Career Bridge and in terms of staff time, but OED staff generally defer to the broader Career Bridge group in making decisions about the broader intervention.

The HSD Director worked closely with some of the most active community sponsors to support them in taking on leadership roles, but the exact definition of these roles is unclear.

Inconsistent approaches to case management and supportive services. Career Bridge participants face an array of barriers, and virtually all stakeholders we contacted agreed that they would benefit from improved case management and increased support services. However, the current model for providing these services or directing participants to appropriate resources is hampered by informational and resource constraints.

Case management is under-funded and inconsistent. The primary constant in terms of case management is the SJI job developer. While she is well-equipped to connect participants to suitable positions in the local labor market, she ends up playing a far more active case management role than what is typical for a job developer – including both the intensity with which she provides the services as well as taking on responsibility for assessing barriers to employment and providing the appropriate referrals. While she is heavily invested in participant success and knowledgeable enough about available support services, conversations with stakeholders indicated that the time commitment necessary to fill these roles is not sustainable given her direct job development responsibilities.

Aside from the job developer, the other most consistent case management is being provided by senior staff at HSD. This includes weekly reviews of participant case files and ad hoc provision of referrals to support services. The primary staffer providing these services happens to have both a strong personal commitment to Career Bridge as well as a prior professional background that allows her to take on this role. HSD staff members acknowledge that this is not a long-term solution to the case management needs of this population, but they have taken on this role in the absence of a viable alternative.

In addition to the job developer and HSD staff, individual sponsors provide much of the case management support for participants. While sponsors can capably provide the emotional support participants need, their capacity to support the material needs of participants varies. Sponsors differ in their ability to fully assess participant barriers and map these barriers to available

supports. Some sponsors are relatively familiar with the resources necessary to meet participant needs, whereas others have a more limited awareness of available supports. To some degree, the regular meetings represent an opportunity to collectively discuss participant barriers and to hear suggestions for resolutions. However, the efficacy of this approach is limited by the inconsistent attendance at these meetings and the time it takes to discuss each participant's barriers. Similarly, even if some sponsors or other stakeholders do have information on relevant potential resources for participants, there is no effective mechanism to ensure that this information is distributed to the appropriate individuals.

Limited access to higher-wage jobs and difficulties with job retention. Career Bridge participants have experienced difficulty obtaining and retaining higher-wage jobs. Although participant and stakeholder perceptions of Career Bridge are generally quite positive, several respondents noted ongoing concern with the lack of career-oriented employment options for participants. The data we present in ***Section IV.B*** reinforce the difficulties that Cohort One participants have faced. While 13 out of 18 participants have become employed since enrolling in Career Bridge and 11 were employed at the time we received program data, participants have experienced difficulty with job retention. Additionally, in several cases, Cohort One participants with more stable, higher-wage positions are being employed by HSD, and it is unlikely that there are enough city positions to serve as a viable employment option for the majority of Career Bridge participants.

Conversations with stakeholders and participants yielded a range of perspectives as to the causes of these challenges. Most acknowledged the added barriers faced by individuals with criminal backgrounds along with the difficulty in adjusting to employment among participants with little or no prior work history. In other cases, barriers such as lack of recent job history or suspended driver's licenses came up as obstacles.

While some of these barriers require longer-term, systemic changes, a more thorough and targeted assessment process combined with case management may support improved job outcomes. This may include identifying barriers such as transportation, housing, and child care, but it would also be beneficial to more systematically identify barriers that map specifically to the job skills necessary to succeed in the local labor market. A detailed review of why participants have not succeeded in various positions may provide insight as to what specific barriers have the greatest impact on employment success. It may be that upfront support around literacy or technical skills related to specific job functions would increase both employment prospects and retention rates. For example, the job developer noted cases where she believed literacy was a barrier to employment, yet there was no formal referral process in place to support this need. If participants are lacking basic computer skills, a case manager could be instrumental in directing them to various service offerings in the community. Similarly, there may be permits or credentials that would improve employability (e.g., forklift certification, food handler's permit). The presence of a more formalized case management infrastructure may allow for targeted support around job retention that allows participants to better identify and access the necessary supports to reduce early job loss.

Limited number of sponsors. The Career Bridge model and its emphasis on personal relationships between participants and sponsors relies on a dedicated cadre of community members who are willing to invest substantial time and effort to the program. Community sponsors, especially those who work with multiple participants, must commit to a very high level of involvement. In addition to regular weekly meetings, they supply ongoing (and often

unpredictably timed) emotional and material support to participants. As currently conceived, the model is dependent on these individuals' volunteered time.

While current program experiences to date demonstrate that there are a capable and committed set of community members devoted to the sponsor role, conversations with stakeholders suggested that it has been difficult to identify new sponsors. Already, one of the primary limits on Career Bridge's ability to meet its enrollment goals is the lack of sponsors. While community members and organizations are becoming increasingly aware of Career Bridge and referring potentially qualified participants, the lack of new viable sponsors limits the ability of Career Bridge to enroll these individuals, resulting in Career Bridge currently having a waitlist despite being under enrolled. The added responsibility of sponsors as de facto case managers may also increase the time commitment to the point that they are less willing to act in that capacity for a greater number of participants. Similarly, the substantial time commitment associated with providing social support and mentoring as well as more traditional case management services may deter some potential sponsors.

While it may be that a more concerted recruitment effort, formalization of sponsor responsibilities, and a more circumscribed role would increase the pool of potential sponsors, recent research suggests that it can be especially difficult to recruit mentors for programs serving individuals with criminal backgrounds. An interim report from the evaluation of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program found that, in addition to difficulties in finding potential mentors of the appropriate age and gender, "many potential volunteers had preconceptions about the mentee population that caused them to be unwilling to become involved" (pp. VI-32).¹⁷

Some stakeholders suggested that paying sponsors would help augment current capacity – while also allowing some of the more committed sponsors to take on an even larger role. However, our conversations suggested some disagreement as to the best way to professionalize these positions and the implications for how it would change the participant-sponsor dynamic. An alternative solution is to transition to a model where members of earlier cohorts take on sponsorship roles for new enrollees. While this has the benefit of further empowering participants and matching new enrollees with individuals with shared life experiences, it is dependent on early cohort participants achieving a degree of stability in their own lives that allows them to provide the necessary support to their peers. Moreover, these participants are not likely to be especially well suited to assist other participants in accessing the necessary support services to address employment barriers.

Varied goals and disagreement about target population. As a community-driven, grassroots endeavor, Career Bridge derives much of its strength as a program from the collective decision-making power of a committed group of stakeholders and participants. As with the issues associated with the diffuse leadership models we discuss above, this organizational structure results in an array of perspectives regarding program goals. The difficulty in articulating a cohesive set of program goals results in less efficient service delivery and some degree of confusion as to how to best deploy program resources and time.

¹⁷ Leshnick, Sengsouvanh Sukey, Christian Geckeler, Andrew Wiegand, Brandon Nicholson, and Kimberly Foley. 2012. *Evaluation of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program: Interim Report*. Washington DC: Social Policy Research Associates.

Similarly, we encountered varying perspectives on who is the appropriate target population for Career Bridge. While all respondents were comfortable with Career Bridge's initial focus on African American men with criminal backgrounds or other substantial barriers to employment, disagreement remains as to whether Career Bridge should expand to other populations. At the time of our conversations there were discussions about starting a female cohort, and there were longer-term plans to include cohorts made up of refugee and immigrant populations. While it is clear that there are acute needs within each of these populations, some stakeholders were concerned that expanding the target population would reduce overall program efficacy, particularly in terms of the added time demands associated with program administration.

Limited supports to address key program barriers. As we catalog in previous sections, Career Bridge is serving a population with substantial barriers. Along with direct, employment-related barriers, participants have broader unmet human service needs. Most pronounced is housing instability. In addition to limited incomes and poor credit, prior incarceration often makes it very difficult for Career Bridge participants to access housing. Other prominent barriers that participants face include driver's license revocation, child support obligations, child care, and transportation. As it is currently structured, Career Bridge does not have the dedicated resources to address all of these barriers. This includes insufficient per-participant funds to quickly support barrier removal. To some degree, improved case management infrastructure can facilitate linkages to other community or public supports to address these concerns; however respondents were not optimistic that such an approach would fully address the problem. Many respondents believed that absent more robust services for this population it will be difficult for them to make the transition to stable, career pathways.

The effects of the lack of resources available for this population are compounded by the limitations of the current case management model. The limited formalized processes for identifying appropriate resources and making referrals makes access to potentially beneficial services inconsistent. Additionally, the current process for directly allocating Career Bridge resources to barrier removal is time consuming. Career Bridge uses a deliberative, committee-based process to respond to participant requests for resources. Despite a relatively small amount of available funds that are generally insufficient to meet participant needs, there is a lengthy process for approving use of Career Bridge funds for barrier removal.

Role of city staff. As already discussed, city staff have taken on substantial responsibility for the direct operation of Career Bridge. In addition to management and advisory roles, they have assisted with case management and direct participant support. Additionally, the HSD Director was devoting a substantial amount of her time to Career Bridge before she resigned. In many cases, these staff are volunteering their time and working hours that far exceed the typical workload for city staffers. Much of this effort was focused on program start up, with the idea that an initial time investment would support program sustainability with a reduced role for city staff.

Lack of clear exit policy. Our conversations with city staff and Career Bridge stakeholders indicated that participant engagement with Career Bridge is relatively open ended, and there is little formal guidance on how to exit someone from the program. Program exits can occur for noncompliance or disengagement or due to participant success and transitions to employment or other career pathways programs. The Career Bridge data we received indicated that one individual's program status was "Terminated" and another eight who are listed as "Inactive." However, the data do not indicate the point at which this program status was updated. Both in terms of participant tracking and in terms of budgeting for ongoing case management, the

program would benefit from clearer guidelines here as well as added infrastructure to fully track ongoing program participation.

B. Challenges Associated with Program Expansion

Along with the challenges we list in the previous section that impact current implementation, there are challenges facing Career Bridge that have implications for any scale-up or program expansion. Again, in most cases these are challenges acknowledged by program staff and which staff are working to address as part of ongoing strategic planning.

Time intensive model. One of the central tensions facing Career Bridge is an awareness among all stakeholders that there is a substantial need for additional services in the community along with the belief that any new services must emerge as a result of grassroots efforts. While all acknowledge the substantial need, the proposed response is time intensive and difficult to bring to scale. Career Bridge in its current incarnation – an intentional, community-driven endeavor that uses group deliberation to chart the course of the program – is empowering to participants and community members, but this approach limits the ability of Career Bridge to adapt quickly and serve the more urgent needs of its participants.

Any attempt to expand the model while maintaining the personalized, community feel of the current model will require a substantial change in operations. As the number of participants and sponsors increases, Career Bridge leadership will either need to compromise on their commitment to their current decision-making model or risk further limitations in their ability to quickly respond to participant needs. Some stakeholders suggested that one approach to solve this problem would be to arrange smaller meetings (divided either by cohort or target population), but this would require additional management infrastructure to coordinate across these efforts.

The personalized, time intensive nature of the model also has implications for consistency in service delivery. Even among the early cohorts, our conversations with stakeholders suggested that the nature and level of support that participants receive is highly dependent on who their sponsor is and their level of engagement with Career Bridge. This has implications both for material support – some sponsors are far more knowledgeable about available services in the community – as well as ongoing mentorship and support – respondents varied in the frequency and nature of contact with their sponsors. In the absence of centralized leadership or more formalized service delivery models, this variation in implementation is likely to become more pronounced as the number of participants increases.

Limited number of sponsors. As we detail in the prior section, the current model is dependent on substantial volunteer hours from community sponsors, and many respondents noted that the lack of sponsors is the primary constraint to meeting current enrollment targets. This challenge will become even more pronounced as enrollment targets increase. Any program expansion is contingent on either changing the program model or drastically expanding the pool of sponsors. Financial compensation for sponsors may alleviate this concern, but then the program risks altering the more grassroots approach of the current model.

Lack of formalized eligibility criteria and recruitment plan. As we discuss earlier in the report, our conversations with Career Bridge stakeholders revealed an array of perspectives regarding the goals of the program. We observed similar variation when discussing how to best understand Career Bridge's eligibility criteria. Most stakeholders seemed to intuitively have a sense of who

is best suited from the intervention, but all struggled to fully articulate a set of objective eligibility criteria. While a community-driven recruitment plan relies on the relationships of individual sponsors and supporters to identify those who are most likely to benefit from services, any effort to scale up services will likely require a formalized set of eligibility criteria. This is important both in ensuring an equitable distribution of program resources as well as mapping recruitment to the actual services available in order to maximize the program impact. Moreover, a recruitment strategy that is based primarily on identifying those with pre-existing relationships to program stakeholders or other participants has the potential to exclude other, more isolated segments of the population who may also benefit from participation.

Lack of clarity regarding balance between program navigation and direct service provision.

Career Bridge serves a population with a wide array of barriers and support service needs. Stakeholders consistently emphasized the limitations these needs place on employment outcomes and the lack of readily available resources to address them. Moreover, the current per-participant allocation for direct support services is insufficient to meet these needs. As we discuss above, the current program model includes relatively ad hoc processes for direct provision of support service and referrals to other resources in the community. This approach is likely unsustainable as the number of participants grows. In scaling up program operations, the model would benefit from firmer decisions regarding how (and when) to seek external supports for participants as opposed to Career Bridge funded direct services.

How to support transition to career pathways. One of the central goals of Career Bridge is to increase participants' skills and work experience to support access to higher wage occupations. While some participants have secured positions above minimum wage, few participants are enrolled in formal training programs, and most employment is in survival jobs. These jobs represent an important first step in moving toward self-sufficiency, but a challenge for Career Bridge as it expands is to ensure that mechanisms are in place that support the transition to higher-wage jobs. This includes ensuring participant access to available education and training options as well as the case management support to appropriately assess participant fit with these options.

How to transfer responsibilities from SJI to CBDO. In contrast to many of the components of Career Bridge, which are still evolving, the job readiness training provided by SJI is a relatively stable program feature. It grounds entry into the program and provides participants with an initial framework for their experience as participants. It is an established model that builds on SJI's substantial experience in the field while featuring adaptations with a specific eye to the needs and the experience of low-income African Americans with criminal backgrounds. Similarly, while the SJI job developer has taken on case management responsibilities exceeding what is typical for such a position, she has substantial experience providing job development services and deep connections to prospective employers for this population. With a stated goal of transitioning these functions to a CBDO, Career Bridge runs the risk of losing the institutional knowledge and operational expertise provided by SJI staff.

Ensuring adequate program operations capacity of CBDO. The transition of program operations responsibilities from city staff to a new CBDO represents an opportunity to deliver a more consistent set of services to Career Bridge participants. As noted above, the current model does not provide consistent supports to participants in their transitions from entry-level jobs to higher-wage positions or education and training. Additionally, we observed variation in the degree to which Career Bridge stakeholders connect participants to supportive services. The

addition of a CBDO may allow for increased assistance with career navigation and support in accessing necessary supportive services. However, as with job development, these functions require a specialized skill set. New case managers will have to have a strong working knowledge of the array of supports available to program participants as well as an understanding of the education, training, and workforce development services available within the city.

VI. Program Costs

In this section we attempt to estimate the per participant program costs associated with the operation of Career Bridge. We base our analysis on cost data (a combination of estimates and actual figures) provided collaboratively by OED and HSD. Our analysis should be treated as preliminary and reflects a snapshot of a program in the relatively early stages of development.

Drawing on data from HSD and OED, we attempt to identify the core program functions, the associated costs, and whether these costs are either fixed or will increase proportionate to added participants. In *Table 7* we present costs for two time periods – calendar year 2013 and calendar year 2014. In the case of 2013, the costs represent a combination of actual and estimated costs; for 2014, the costs are estimates. In both cases, the costs represent a combination of direct program outlays as well as the estimated costs associated with time spent on Career Bridge by city staff.

One of the primary challenges in accurately capturing program costs is in understanding and quantifying the role of city staff in program operations. While the formal roles of HSD and OED staff in the context of Career Bridge are limited, key staff from both agencies are heavily invested in program operations and have taken on numerous responsibilities during the early stages of implementation. In many cases these responsibilities extended beyond program oversight and management, with staff involved in direct service provision. In our analysis, we attempt to differentiate the city staff time (and corresponding costs) associated with the ongoing program management and oversight responsibilities from those responsibilities that would be carried out by contracted program staff once Career Bridge exits the pilot stage.

Another challenge in reviewing the data is in deciding how to account for the startup costs associated with Career Bridge. Conversations with city staff suggest that a substantial portion of the time HSD and OED staff have spent on Career Bridge has been in service of building the program and working toward the transition to ongoing operation by a CBDO. For example, the former HSD Director was spending up to 20 hours per week on Career Bridge. She indicated that this work was in service of building community capacity and establishing a foundation for long-term program success. As such, we assume that this level of effort by senior city staff will drastically decrease as the program matures.

Table 7 presents two sets of per participant costs, one that includes costs associated with program start up and one that does not. The former provides insight into the actual costs associated with developing a new intervention and delivering services, while the latter is more instructive when thinking through the likely costs moving forward. In the case of the estimate that is inclusive of startup costs, it is important to recognize that these costs only begin in calendar year 2013, and there was substantial HSD and OED staff time – and many hours of volunteered time by community members – devoted to program planning and operations prior to that point. Additionally, the costs do not reflect the recruitment, enrollment, and training costs for the first cohort, which began in October, 2012.

The calculation is based on HSD and OED estimates that Career Bridge will serve 100 participants in 2013 and 240 in 2014.

Table 7: Estimated per participant Career Bridge costs

Program Function	Estimated cost		Fixed or marginal cost ^a
	Current Model - 2013	Scaled up Model - 2014	
<i>Startup and transition costs</i>			<i>Temporary</i>
HSD	\$ 75,000	\$ 65,000	
OED	\$ 75,480	\$ -	
SJI	\$ 44,100	\$ 20,000	
CBDO	\$ -	\$ 50,000	
<i>Program oversight, management, strategy</i>			<i>Fixed</i>
HSD	\$ 41,000	\$ 65,000	
OED	\$ -	\$ 37,740	
SJI	\$ 34,000	\$ -	
CBDO	\$ -	\$ 90,000	
<i>Job readiness training (incl. ODCs)</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
SJI	\$ 52,660	\$ -	
CBDO	\$ -	\$ 103,120	
<i>Job development</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
SJI	\$ 69,600	\$ -	
CBDO	\$ -	\$ 140,000	
<i>Case management</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
HSD and SJI	\$ 30,000	\$ -	
CBDO	\$ -	\$ 140,000	
<i>Sponsorship</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
Community Sponsors	\$ -	\$ 50,000	
<i>Funding for participant support services</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
HSD	\$ 25,000	\$ 60,000	
<i>Partner meetings food and meeting space</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
HSD	\$ 8,472	\$ 16,944	
<i>Data collection and reporting</i>			<i>Fixed (at higher rate)</i>
SJI	\$ 20,160	\$ 40,000	
<i>Internal evaluation</i>			<i>Fixed</i>
HSD	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	
<i>Program administration overhead costs</i>			<i>Marginal</i>
SJI	\$ 84,618	\$ -	
CBDO	\$ -	\$ 120,000	
<i>Total program costs</i>			
Including startup and transition costs	\$ 580,090	\$ 1,017,804	
Excluding startup and transition costs	\$ 385,510	\$ 882,804	
Estimated number of new enrollments	100	240	
<i>Per participant costs</i>			
Including startup and transition costs	\$ 5,801	\$ 4,241	
Excluding startup and transition costs	\$ 3,855	\$ 3,678	

^a We make a determination for each cost category as to whether the costs are fixed or whether they are marginal, where any increase in participants would result in proportionate cost increases. We also note temporary costs, associated with program startup and transition that we do not expect to continue once operations stabilize.

Based on data provided by HSD and OED, total estimated Career Bridge costs for 2013 are \$580,090. Roughly 34 percent of these costs reflect staff time associated with program startup. This includes the amount of time spent by leadership and senior staff at OED and HSD, along with oversight and planning time by the SJI Executive Director and other senior SJI staff. The remaining costs reflect the labor and direct costs associated with running the program in the first year.

In the upcoming calendar year, estimated costs total \$1,017,804. Of this, \$135,000 represents estimates of continued startup costs and time required to transfer operations to a CBDO.¹⁸

Based on the data provided by HSD and OED and the assumptions we outline, we estimate per participant cost of Career Bridge in 2013, inclusive of startup costs, to be \$5,801. When we exclude startup costs, this number decreases to \$3,855.

In 2014, the startup inclusive costs decrease to \$4,241; the per participant cost excluding startup and transition costs decrease to \$3,678.

Below we provide more details on the specific program functions. Additionally, **Table 8** breaks out estimated cost by program function.

Table 8: Estimated Cost by Program Function

Program Function	Estimated cost	
	Current Model - 2013	Scaled up Model - 2014
Startup and transition costs	\$ 194,580	\$ 135,000
Program oversight, management, strategy	\$ 75,000	\$ 192,740
Job readiness training (incl. ODCs)	\$ 52,660	\$ 103,120
Job development	\$ 69,600	\$ 140,000
Case management	\$ 30,000	\$ 140,000
Sponsorship	\$ -	\$ 50,000
Funding for participant support services	\$ 25,000	\$ 60,000
Partner meetings food and meeting space	\$ 8,472	\$ 16,944
Data collection and reporting	\$ 20,160	\$ 40,000
Internal evaluation	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Program administration overhead costs	\$ 84,618	\$ 120,000
Total	\$ 580,090	\$ 1,017,804

Program oversight, management, and strategy. HSD and OED estimate that program oversight, management, and strategy costs will account for approximately 0.5 FTE worth of time in 2013 – roughly \$75,000 including salary and benefits. While this is primarily HSD staff time, this estimate represents the combined commitment of staff from HSD and SJI. The time allotted for program management increases in 2014 to \$192,740, of which \$90,000 will pay for a senior management position at a CBDO. The remaining costs represent a 0.5 FTE from HSD and a 0.25 FTE from OED in an ongoing monitoring role.

The cost estimates provide some insight as to the anticipated shift in roles of city staff. The estimates show labor costs in 2013 associated with program startup of roughly \$150,000 and \$41,000 in program oversight, management, and strategy. In 2014 the costs associated with city

¹⁸ HSD estimated total program development and startup staff time to cost \$130,000 (or 1 FTE) in calendar year 2014. However, for the purposes of our estimates, we assume that half this time will be spent on ongoing program oversight, management and strategy.

staff time for startup and program transition decrease to \$65,000 while ongoing monitoring and program oversight costs go up to roughly \$100,000. This likely reflects the increased staff time associated with managing the CBDO contract.

We expect that the 2014 program oversight, management, and strategy costs for 2014 are fixed and would not increase further with added program participants.

Job readiness training. The costs associated with SJI delivering the job readiness training are based on expected numbers of participants. In 2013, the total estimated costs are \$52,660,¹⁹ or \$527 per participant. In 2014, OED and HSD estimate these costs to rise to \$103,120, or \$430 per participant. We assume that the costs of adding any additional participants will be proportional to enrollment increases.

Job development and case management. For both job development and case management, OED and HSD estimate the need for two FTEs in 2014, at a cost of \$70,000 per FTE. In the case of the job developer, this roughly doubles current SJI costs (and lowers per participant cost slightly). In the case of case management, the estimate of \$30,000 in 2013 is a combination of SJI and HSD staff time. As we discuss earlier in the report, current case management capacity is limited, so it is not surprising that OED and HSD estimate a substantial increase in 2014 costs. We assume that the case management and job development costs for 2014 will be proportionate to the number of participants.

Sponsorship. Currently, community sponsors do not receive any compensation for their time or the direct support that they provide to participants. OED and HSD estimate small contracts with sponsors totaling \$50,000 in 2014, or just over \$200 per participant. We assume this is a marginal cost, where any increase in participants will result in proportionate cost increases.

Participating support services. HSD currently allocates \$250 per participant in direct support, and this estimate remains the same in 2014.

Partner meetings food and meeting space. HSD currently pays for meeting space and food for weekly partner meetings. HSD reported actual 2013 costs through June 30 of \$8,472. We doubled this number to generate the 2013 estimate, and quadrupled it to estimate 2014 costs. We assume this is a marginal cost, where any increase in participants will result in a proportionate cost increase.

Data collection and reporting. OED estimates that SJI costs associated with data collection and reporting will total \$20,160 in 2013. While these costs are generally not proportionate to the number of participants, OED staff estimate that these costs will increase somewhat in 2014, to \$40,000 to support technology and database enhancement/acquisition, but that further increases in participation will not add to these costs.

Internal Evaluation. HSD staff have been conducting ongoing evaluation of Career Bridge in 2013. HSD estimates that this work costs roughly \$20,000 worth of staff time. HSD indicated that this is a fixed cost and this time commitment will continue at a similar level in 2014.

Program administration overhead costs. In addition to direct costs associated with service provision, the cost estimates provided by OED and HSD include administrative and overhead costs. In the case of SJI, OED estimates that the 2013 costs will be \$84,618. In 2014, OED and HSD estimate payment of \$120,000 in overhead and administration costs. The city calculated

¹⁹ This includes paying for training space, food for attendees, and other direct costs.

these as a percentage of total costs, so we assume any increase in program costs would result in a proportional increase in the amount of overhead dollars paid to the CBDO.

We present this analysis with a focus on the implications of current and projected costs for program expansion. Given that the Career Bridge model continues to evolve, it is important to note that these should be taken as estimates and not precise projections. Even for 2013, the costs are based on a combination of actual costs and HSD and OED estimates for the remainder of the year. These are driven by estimates of enrollment numbers, associated direct costs, as well as staff time. The validity of the estimates is further complicated by the current ad hoc staffing model. There is a relatively small group of city staff acting in a number of capacities as part of Career Bridge, and the numbers we present reflect city staffers' best attempts to allocate their substantial time commitments to Career Bridge across multiple program functions.

There is also substantial uncertainty in the 2014 estimated costs. All involved with Career Bridge acknowledge that the substantial volunteer time associated with the current model is not sustainable as the program expands. As Career Bridge transitions to a model where individuals are compensated for their roles as sponsors and the case management functions are professionalized, it remains to be seen whether the allocated amounts HSD and OED estimate will be sufficient to meet the demand.

The current limitations of the data prevent a more granular analysis of per participant costs. In particular, our estimates do not account for duration of engagement with Career Bridge. Ideally, we would generate an estimate of per month participation rates (i.e., how many participants are enrolled and receiving services in a given month), estimate monthly program costs, and divide the two to generate a per participant monthly cost. Such an approach allows for more a more precise understanding of the level of effort required to provide ongoing services to the caseload.

As it is, we assume that the enrollment numbers increase over the course of the year, and that the costs provided by OED and HSD account for this increase. However, it is less clear what assumptions are built into these estimates regarding active caseload. This can drive per participant costs either higher or lower, depending on the program model and participation rates. For example, if none of the 100 participants expected to be enrolled in 2013 exit the program, the 2014 numbers reflect costs required to serve 340 participants, reducing per participant costs. Conversely, if attrition rates are high or participants are being regularly exited from the program, then per participant costs rise.

Finally, there may be implications for the broader workforce development and human services systems associated with diverting staff time from OED and HSD to Career Bridge and directing resources from SJI's existing contract with OED to Career Bridge. While outside the scope of this report, it may be useful for city staff to further explore how this reprioritization of resources impacts the broader service delivery within these systems.

When thinking through expected program costs, it is helpful to have a basis for comparison. A recent report on results from a random assignment evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) in New York City may provide a useful benchmark for understanding the costs associated with supporting the employment needs of low income individuals with criminal

backgrounds.²⁰ CEO operates a comprehensive employment program targeting former prisoners. It includes a five day pre-employment class, a transitional job on a CEO work crew, and ongoing support from case managers and job developers.

CEO had a different population to Career Bridge, but there are some commonalities. The majority of CEO participants were male, and they were primarily Latino and African American. Roughly half the sample had completed high school or had obtained a GED, and while most had worked in the past, roughly 60 percent had worked for a single employer for six or more consecutive months. Sample members had an average of seven prior convictions and an average of roughly five years in state prison; all were under parole supervision at the point they entered the study. While not identical to Career Bridge – it lacked as explicit of a mentorship component and Career Bridge does not include transitional employment – it serves as a useful comparison, especially given that the evaluation found significant positive impacts on participant recidivism.

The evaluation included a benefit-cost analysis that calculated the costs per program group member.²¹ The total, per participant cost of CEO was \$5,219.²² However, this includes an average stipend to participants for work as part of the transitional job of \$2,890. Excluding these costs, per participant program expenditures were \$2,329. The largest cost was \$1,690 for case management and job search support. The other primary costs were data collection, payroll, and recruitment and outreach.

Compared to Career Bridge, the CEO program costs are lower. This may reflect the efficiencies associated with a more established program. Additionally, our cost estimate of Career Bridge includes the internal evaluation and a substantial amount of time for program management, oversight, and strategy. However, these findings suggest it may be possible to further reduce the program costs associated with Career Bridge.

VII. Evaluation Implications

We will deliver a separate report to the City Auditor in September, 2013 that will present a more detailed work plan for future evaluation. However, in this section we offer some preliminary observations about the implications for a more rigorous evaluation of Career Bridge given the current program model.

There are several challenges posed by the current program model when thinking through a rigorous evaluation strategy. Most prominent among these challenges is the need for added clarity in program goals. In **Section III.B** we present our understanding of the underlying theory of change in a program logic model. This is largely based on conversations with OED leadership, but it does not necessarily reflect the consensus among Career Bridge stakeholders. A logic model can be a useful tool for structuring any evaluation, and we have attempted to identify some key program outputs and outcomes that can help gauge program success. However, in the absence of broader agreement as to the core program model and the associated theory of change, it is difficult to establish firm metrics by which to judge the effectiveness of the intervention.

²⁰ Redcross, Cindy, Megan Millenky, Timothy Rudd, and Valerie Levshin (2012). *More Than a Job: Final Results from the Evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Transitional Job Program*. OPRE Report 2011-18. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

²¹ Given the rigor of the evaluation and the upfront investment in data collection, the CEO benefit-cost analysis has more detailed and precise cost data than what we present in this report.

²² All figures converted to 2013 dollars.

Subsequent conversations among city staff and Career Bridge stakeholders should focus on both the individual-level outcomes of interest as well as the broader community level goals. Given the emphasis placed by some members of city staff and a subset of stakeholders on the latter, it will be important to clarify what these goals are and potential options for measuring core concepts. In particular, added clarity would be beneficial in articulating goals related to relationship building, criminal justice outcomes and recidivism, violence prevention, community capacity building, and policies impacting the target population.

The implied goal of Career Bridge is to provide services that improve outcomes beyond what is feasible within the existing universe of services for the target population. In conversations with stakeholders and OED and HSD staff, they regularly asserted that few alternatives exist which provide the intensity and tailored approach that the current target population requires. Assuming greater clarity in program goals, there are several evaluation options. The simplest approach is to measure outputs and outcomes identified in the logic model. This approach is an effective way to capture fidelity to the program model and documenting program implementation. If there is agreement on the strength of the logic model, this outcomes-based approach may be sufficient.

However, if the city or program stakeholders want to be able to speak to the impact of Career Bridge, then the evaluation requires a comparison to some alternative (either the status quo or an alternative treatment condition). To detect the impact of Career Bridge – that is the added value of the program over the alternative – an evaluation would compare the outcomes of Career Bridge participants to a group with similar characteristics who did not participate in Career Bridge.

The most rigorous method for making this comparison is through a randomized control trial (RCT). A program can randomly assign eligible individuals into one of two groups – a treatment group that receives the services and a control group that is not able to receive program services – comparing the outcomes of the two groups to estimate the impact of the intervention on two otherwise equal (at the aggregate level) groups. Several conditions are required to implement such an approach: a demand for services that exceeds program capacity, a program capacity level that allows sufficient sample enrollment to detect statistically significant effects, a willingness to randomly deny services to eligible applicants in service of research goals, and a data collection infrastructure that allows tracking of both program and non-program study participants. Such an approach can be difficult to implement and we anticipate substantial resistance among stakeholders to any research effort that involves deprivation of services in service of creating a control group.

Absent a RCT, evaluators can attempt to find a similar comparison group and employ advanced statistical models to estimate the impact of the program by comparing outcomes between the groups. While these quasi-experimental models provide potentially compelling data, they lack the ability to speak directly to causality in the way that experimental approaches do. Specifically, they struggle to account for participant motivation and similarly intangible factors that can bias the results. The advantage of the approach is reduced evaluation costs, fewer concerns about deprivation of services and issues around human subjects, and ideally, the ability to leverage existing data for the comparison group.

Both RCT and quasi-experimental approaches require a critical mass of program participants. As they rely on statistics to estimate the probability that a given program outcome is statistically different from outcomes of nonparticipants, low numbers of program participants make it

difficult to detect anything aside from extremely large program impacts. While the proposed participant numbers for 2014 suggest the potential viability of more robust analytic techniques, they represent the very lower bound of sample sizes that would allow for successful implementation of these methods. Moreover, we caution against moving forward with a more rigorous evaluation until Career Bridge exits the pilot stage and is a more fully formed and well defined model. Similarly, the current data collection infrastructure would need to be enhanced to capture the provision of ongoing services (i.e., case management) and program participation information.

Finally, the proposed evaluation techniques largely speak to individual program impacts. Any effort to characterize the impact of Career Bridge on community-level outcomes would likely require a more qualitative approach, as it becomes difficult to identify a viable comparison point to make causal assertions.

VIII. Next Steps

The report provides a preliminary analysis of the implementation of Career Bridge, participant characteristics and outcomes, and the estimated costs associated with operating the program. In addition, we discuss challenges we identified both in the current program operations as well as additional potential challenges should Career Bridge be expanded.

Our conversations with city staff, Career Bridge stakeholders, and Career Bridge participants revealed a clear consensus belief that Career Bridge represents an integral addition to the existing array of programs serving low-income individuals in Seattle. In particular, respondents consistently emphasized that Career Bridge helps fill a particularly glaring gap in services for low-income African American men, especially those with prior criminal convictions. Moreover, all were clear that much of the value of Career Bridge, and what sets it apart from other programs serving a similar population, is that it is a community-driven, bottom-up effort. All of the individuals we spoke with emphasized that a key component of Career Bridge is the involvement of community members and the participants in the development and ongoing operation of the intervention. This role ensures that the intervention honors the needs of this population and empowers them to a degree that the traditional service delivery structure does not allow.

Given that Career Bridge remains a relatively new intervention, many of the concerns we raise should be expected. Indeed, many of the individuals we interviewed were the ones who identified these concerns, as well as suggestions for how to address them. More generally, it is clear that there is a committed group of individuals who, both professionally and personally, are heavily invested in the success of Career Bridge and its participants.

Despite the strong support for Career Bridge among stakeholders and participants, it was evident that there are ongoing challenges that need to be addressed, especially as the city seeks to expand the program. It will be difficult to bring the current program model to scale without added capacity and changes in program design. A key challenge facing HSD, OED, and the broader Career Bridge community is in identifying a CBDO that has the experience and capacity to provide a relatively holistic set of services which meet the needs of a very disadvantaged population. This includes the ability to help participants navigate and obtain the necessary human services supports as well as assistance in moving toward a career pathway. The CBDO will have to take on an array of responsibilities currently being shouldered by city staff as well as being able to maintain the quality and intensity of services currently delivered by SJI. Additionally, any

expansion rooted in the current model is contingent on increasing the pool of available sponsors or reducing the time commitment required by the current sponsorship model to allow existing sponsors to take on more participants.

Following completion of this report, we will increasingly focus our efforts on developing a Work Plan and Evaluation Design to be delivered to the City Auditor in September, 2013. This report will place a clear emphasis on evaluation options for Career Bridge. In particular, we will use the report to better understand alternative program offerings for the Career Bridge target population in Seattle and potential comparison groups that might allow for a more robust evaluation. Given the concerns we express in *Section VII*, it is unlikely that we will identify the necessary circumstances to implement a rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation. However, the added context we can provide in discussing alternative service options (or lack thereof) as well as mapping potential evaluation measures to a more fully articulated theory of change can be valuable as the city examines how to best serve this population moving forward.

In addition, this report will provide recommendations regarding an annual reporting plan for Career Bridge. Our hope is, in conjunction with staff at HSD and OED, we can assist the city in identifying key program outcomes by which the city can judge program success. This plan would place a heavy emphasis on measures that can support ongoing program improvement, serving as diagnostic tools for department leadership and the legislative branch as Career Bridge expands.