



The New York City Human Resources Administration’s Oversight of the Career Pathways Program

What questions did the audit look at?

- ▶ Does the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) effectively oversee the Career Pathways program?
- ▶ How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact Career Pathways?

What changes did the agency commit to make following the audit?

- ▶ HRA agreed to set a one-year employment retention target for cash assistance clients it places in jobs.
- ▶ HRA agreed to review client surveys and pay closer attention to client satisfaction.

Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

HRA is the largest municipal social services agency in the country, providing access to benefits and cash assistance to more than 3 million New Yorkers. The agency provides professional development opportunities through a series of job training and placement programs, collectively called Career Pathways.

The audit found that HRA did not manage Career Pathways effectively. During the pandemic, the agency allowed costs to increase, even as the number of program participants plummeted, with per person expenditures rising from \$870 to \$7,544 between 2020 and 2022. Participation was made voluntary in March 2020, but HRA did not invite new clients to enroll until June 28, 2021—over 15 months later. Between 2020 and 2022, HRA paid its contractors a total of \$146.3 million.

HRA did not meet a key performance goal, which stated that, at the 180-day mark, 80% of clients will still be employed, or will have at least refrained from returning to cash assistance. Although the agency tracks clients who are still employed after one year, it has not set a performance goal based on this metric.

Career Pathways is an important program that provides New Yorkers with vital assistance. However, in its current form, it is not achieving its potential. HRA can improve the program by regulating costs, maximizing opportunities for clients, exercising proper oversight, and rigorously assessing client satisfaction.

AUDIT FINDINGS



HRA appropriately reimbursed Career Pathways contractors for achieving performance milestones.



HRA interacted with providers and monitored services provided to clients.



HRA did not effectively control costs during the COVID-19 pandemic.



HRA did not invite new clients to participate in Career Pathways for 15 months.



HRA did not meet its 180-day employment retention target of 80%.



HRA did not set a one-year employment retention target.



Audit Recommendations	Agency Response
1 HRA should ensure that it maximizes opportunities for all eligible clients to receive employment services.	DISAGREED
2 HRA should develop and formally document strategies for regulating and containing contract costs when emergencies impacting the performance of deliverables occur.	DISAGREED
3 HRA should establish performance targets for clients placed in jobs who stay employed, or at least do not return to cash assistance, within one year of employment.	AGREED
4 HRA should try to assess client satisfaction on a larger scale, review contractors' client satisfaction survey results, and consider the opinions of clients when making changes to the program.	AGREED



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