

Equity, Evidence, & Innovation



NYC
Opportunity

Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity
The City of New York

December 2017

Young Adult Internship
Program (YAIP) participant
from Opportunities
for a Better Tomorrow
at his internship in
Councilmember Robert
Cornegy's office

Photo credit: NYC
Department of Youth and
Community Development

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Using Evidence and Innovation to Address Poverty and Inequality

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Executive Director Matt Klein in conversation with Mayor Bill de Blasio and Ford Foundation President Darren Walker at NYC Opportunity Mayoral Forum in May 2017

Introduction

This is the first annual report issued under the name of the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity. In May 2017, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that two previously distinct units, the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and HHS-Connect, were merging to become the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity — “NYC Opportunity” for short.

This year also marks a decade since the launch of CEO, the nation’s first municipal anti-poverty innovation lab. CEO was created to develop new strategies for tackling poverty by investing in promising programs; assist in their implementation; evaluate their results; and continue support only for those that produce results. Shortly after, in 2008, HHS-Connect was established with the goal of using data and technology to support clients of the City’s health and human services agencies more holistically. Each of these units was formed to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers, one through the use of research and demonstration projects and the other through the use of technology. Both have been committed to building evidence through the use of data, and making evidence-based policy decisions.

CEO and HHS-Connect evolved from focusing primarily on their own pilot programs and individual technical tools to helping support the City’s overall efforts to reduce poverty and achieve more equitable policy results. NYC Opportunity carries this forward, continuing to oversee a portfolio of programs and products directly while also supporting individual agencies and cross-agency initiatives with research, evaluation, service design, digital products, and data integration.

NYC Opportunity's work includes analyzing existing anti-poverty approaches, developing new interventions, facilitating the sharing of data across City agencies, and rigorously assessing the impact of key initiatives.

(Left to right) NYC Opportunity Mayoral Forum; NYC Opportunity Executive Director Matt Klein speaking at a Connections to Care (C2C) event



NYC Opportunity manages a discrete fund and works collaboratively with City agencies to design, test, and oversee new programs and digital products. It also produces research and analysis of poverty and social conditions, including its influential annual NYC Government Poverty Measure, which provides a more accurate and comprehensive picture of poverty in New York City than the federal poverty measure. NYC Opportunity is also active in supporting the de Blasio administration's efforts to make equity a core governing principle across all agencies.

At the 10 year mark, NYC Opportunity has accomplished a great deal to promote opportunity and combat poverty in New York City. The following sections discuss some of the highlights of that decade of work, with an emphasis on the past year.



(Top to bottom) Strategic planning exercise at NYC Opportunity Team Retreat; Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Team Members; the NYC Opportunity team



One:

Reducing Poverty and Increasing Equity

NYC Opportunity is contributing to two important citywide commitments that are core to its mission: creating and tracking the City’s first concrete poverty-reduction goal, and supporting the City’s commitment to conduct agency-focused equity assessments and action plans to reduce disparities based on race, gender, income and sexual orientation.

Mayor de Blasio announced the City’s poverty-reduction goal in 2015 with the release of the City’s long-term plan, “One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City (OneNYC).” A central commitment of that plan is to move 800,000 New Yorkers out of poverty or near poverty by 2025. To date, significant progress has been made. With a higher state minimum wage enacted, as the City called for in OneNYC, and new programs launched by the City, an estimated 281,000 New York residents have moved out of poverty or near poverty from 2013 through 2017. NYC Opportunity has been modeling and tracking progress toward the goal and identifying additional programs and policies that can help to reduce poverty. An update is provided each year when the NYC Government Poverty Measure report is released.



New York City Hall



A street festival in Harlem, a neighborhood with several NYC Opportunity program sites

NYC Opportunity has been housed within the Mayor's Office of Operations (Operations) since 2014, and the two offices complement one another with a shared focus on performance and accountability, and common commitment to equity. This year, the two offices helped shape and are supporting the implementation of new equity-focused legislation. Two of these new equity laws require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Social Services, and the Administration for Children's Services, and other agencies the mayor may designate to: (1) conduct equity assessments, in which they examine their services and programs, employment, contracting, and budgets in relation to any disparities based on race, gender, income, sexual orientation, and other population characteristics; (2) develop and implement action plans to address any such disparities (Int. No 1500-B; Local Law 174); and (3) in the aforementioned three agencies, conduct employee training related to implicit bias based on race and gender (Int. No, 1512-A; Local Law 175). A third law requires the Social Indicators Report, produced by NYC Opportunity, to measure and include race, gender, income, and sexual orientation disparities in a variety of domains. Equity laws of this kind are increasingly being recognized as important tools for ensuring that governments meet the needs of their constituents and promote opportunity for all. Operations and NYC Opportunity will help to coordinate the agencies' equity assessments and equity action plans, drawing on experience leading the City's performance management through their work preparing the **Mayor's Management Report**, the **Social Indicators Report**, and other studies of City government and conditions across the City, while putting a more systematic focus on identifying and addressing disparities in all parts of City government.



New York City College of Technology students meet with their CUNY ASAP peers

Evidence to Support Scale

NYC Opportunity has also taken a leading role in assembling the kind of data necessary to help the City reduce poverty and increase equity.

For the past decade, NYC Opportunity has built robust data and evidence about practices that reduce poverty, and is using these tools to shape the City's investments that bring these effective models to scale. **CUNY ASAP**, for example, which helps students earn associate's degrees, began in 2007 serving just over 1,000 students. In addition to providing funding for the initial demonstration project, NYC Opportunity supported multiple evaluations of the program in partnership with CUNY and the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education at Columbia University's Teachers College. The program has also undergone a privately funded **random assignment evaluation conducted by MDRC**. The success of the program is well established. Between fall 2011 and fall 2012, the overall CUNY college graduation rate for associate and bachelor degrees increased from 16.9 percent to 21.1 percent, the biggest one-year increase in 20 years. Over half of this increase can be attributed to ASAP expansion in those years. Based on its positive results, the de Blasio administration recognized CUNY ASAP's potential to make a difference in the lives of more young people.

Today, the City is expanding CUNY ASAP to serve 25,000 students by academic year 2018/19. This expansion will yield an additional 12,000 graduates, which will increase the overall CUNY three-year associate graduation rate from 12 percent to 34 percent by fiscal year 2022.

NYC Opportunity's commitment to evidence-building has also played a key role in shaping other citywide poverty-reduction strategies. The City's workforce initiative **Career Pathways**, for example, incorporated lessons from NYC Opportunity's evidence-based approaches to building the skills of low-wage workers and promoting career advancement in different high-growth industry sectors.

A longstanding challenge for citywide performance management is that services and programs use different definitions and indicators to describe similar services. To accurately assess performance, information must be standardized across programs and agencies to allow for "apples to apples" comparisons. NYC Opportunity has led the effort to standardize data through its Common Metrics initiative. Beginning with the workforce development system, it is creating an integrated platform to gain insight into relative performance when interventions are delivered across a range of programs and departments. NYC Opportunity has collaborated with the **Mayor's Office of Workforce Development** and the leading City workforce agencies to establish standard definitions and verification methods for key outcomes, including clients served, full-time and part-time employment, median wage, enrollment in industry-based training, training completion, and retention rates. Beginning in 2015, all City Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for workforce development services began to include the standard definitions. Now, NYC Opportunity is creating a data dashboard to pull performance data from reporting agencies and compare outcomes across the system.

(Top to bottom) Participant from Catholic Charities YAIP program site working at his internship placement, Merzouka Café in Astoria, Queens; performers at showcase for NYC Department of Probation NeON Arts program, which is undergoing evaluation coordinated by NYC Opportunity



Digital Products and Data

NYC Opportunity builds and manages an array of digital products that are used to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers.

Some digital products are internal-facing, helping City staff deliver support to residents in a more efficient and holistic way. Others are public-facing, allowing members of the public to identify and access resources. Where standardized administrative data does exist, NYC Opportunity is using technology to access and leverage “big data” to better understand the needs of New Yorkers and better target programs and policies.

NYC Opportunity product team members gaining insight from a parent at a local library for Growing Up NYC





Civic tech community members providing feedback on ACCESS NYC at Civic Hall

Worker Connect is designed to help caseworkers overcome information hurdles that hinder efficient and effective service delivery. It links administrative case data and documents across multiple City agencies, making them accessible through a single online portal. With Worker Connect, a caseworker can search by client to retrieve an integrated view of case information and documents from multiple City agencies in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. In 2017, NYC Opportunity released a new mobile-responsive version of Worker Connect to streamline the user experience and provide first-time access to case workers who deliver services in the field. In addition, access to Worker Connect was expanded to several units across the City whose services include healthcare interventions, homelessness prevention, and integrated case management.



ACCESS NYC was featured on over 800 LinkNYC kiosks in Summer 2017



ACCESS NYC is an online public screening tool that New Yorkers can use to determine their eligibility for city, state, and federal health and human service benefit programs. It was redesigned by NYC Opportunity through an iterative prototyping process that engaged residents, social workers, case managers, and agency staff. The new design and core user experience were created in-house, and information about each benefit was standardized and made available either through the tool or via the **Benefits and Programs API**, a dataset that includes benefit, program, and resource information on health and human services available to New York City residents. ACCESS NYC relaunched in March 2017 with a simplified 10-step screening process, plain-language program information, content in seven languages, a location finder, and an accessible, mobile-responsive design. The website is open source and **the code is available on Github**.

ACCESS NYC was recognized at “The Best of New York 2017” at the New York Digital Government Summit in Albany, NY and received an award for “Best Application Serving the Public.”



Growing Up NYC, in partnership with the City’s **Children’s Cabinet**, brings the City’s family- and child-related resources together in a mobile-responsive, accessible platform to make it easier for parents to raise strong, healthy children and for young people to find helpful information. Initially launched in 2016, Growing Up NYC features easy-to-read age guides with developmental milestones and parenting tips, over 70 city, state, and federally funded benefits and programs (hosted on the **Benefits and Programs API**), and local events and activities. Since its launch, Growing Up NYC has reached over 100,000 New York City families. In October 2017, NYC Opportunity launched a second version, which includes resources for ages 13–24 and is available in Spanish.

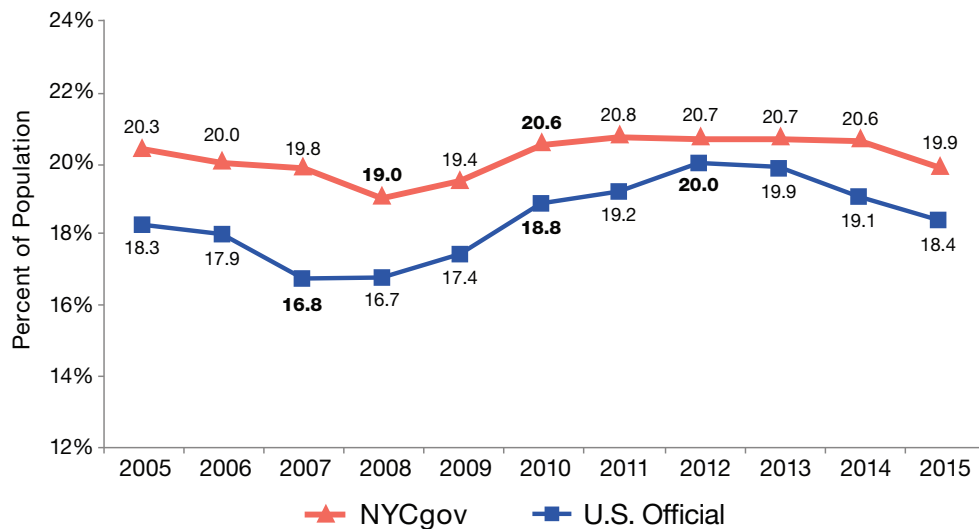
Growing Up NYC was recognized at “The Best of New York City 2017 Awards” at the NYC Technology Forum in Brooklyn, NY and received the award for “Best External Application.”

NYCgov Poverty Measure

NYC Opportunity also generates the alternative poverty measure for New York City, known as the **New York City Government Poverty Measure** (NYCgov Poverty Measure), which is a model of innovative, rigorous data analysis. Based on recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences, the measure defines a poverty threshold that includes the cost of housing in New York City and incorporates estimates of the value of anti-poverty benefits in family income—all factors that are not taken into account by the federal poverty measure. The result is a more accurate and realistic poverty rate, a better understanding of who is in poverty, and a measure of how City programs work to alleviate poverty. This data allows the City to better target anti-poverty initiatives and design more effective metrics for measuring success. The 2017 report, released in May and covering data through 2015, includes these findings:

- For the first time, the report included a measure of the New York City poverty gap—the amount of money needed to bring the income of all families in poverty up to their poverty threshold. For all of New York City this comes to \$6.16 billion dollars in 2015. For families with children under age four, the amount is \$870 million.

U.S. Official and NYCgov Poverty Rates, 2005–2015

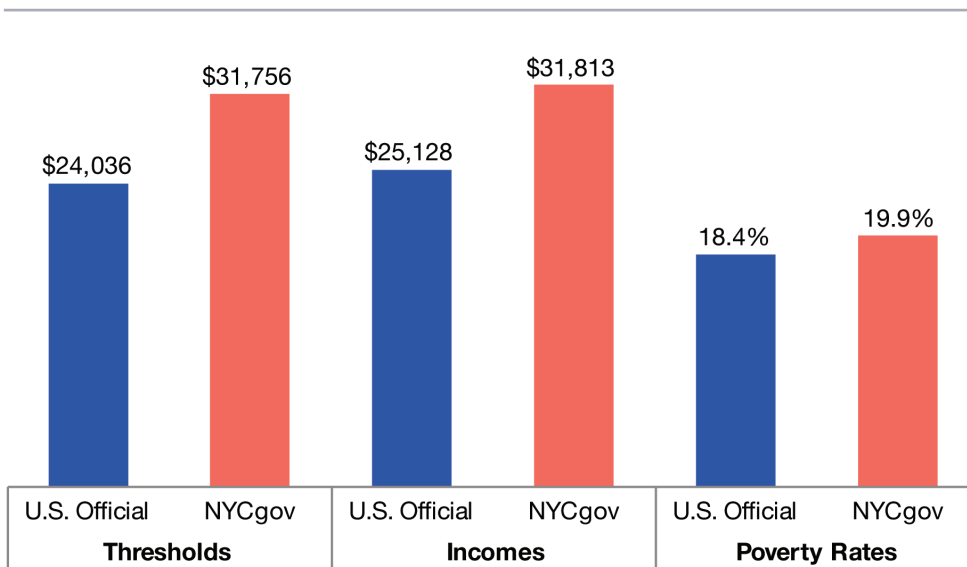


Numbers in bold indicate statistically significant data from prior year.
 Source: American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample as augmented by NYC Opportunity.
 Note: U.S. official poverty rates are based on the NYC Opportunity poverty universe and unit of analysis.

The NYCgov near poverty rate, which reflects the percentage of New Yorkers who are under 150% of their poverty threshold, was significantly lower, falling from 45.1 percent to 44.2 percent. The NYCgov poverty rate fell from 20.6 percent to 19.9 percent.

- As in previous years, the NYCgov income component that had the most impact in alleviating poverty was housing assistance. This assistance can take many forms, from rent regulation to public housing. The net effect of all housing assistance programs was a 5.8 percentage point decline in the poverty rate.
- Medical expenses remained an important factor in moving people below the poverty threshold. In the absence of medical expenses, the NYCgov poverty rate would have been 2.8 percentage points lower.

U.S. Official and NYCgov Thresholds, Incomes, and Poverty Rates, 2015



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample as augmented by NYC Opportunity. Notes: Incomes are measured at the 20th percentile and stated in family size and composition-adjusted dollars. U.S. official poverty rates are based on the NYC Opportunity poverty universe and unit of analysis.

Public-Private Partnerships

NYC Opportunity's work has been bolstered by its participation in public-private partnerships. Private dollars help the City act quickly and build evidence for innovative ideas that promote equity. These partnerships engage private sector experts as thought partners who help think about entrenched problems in new ways.

A powerful example of this model is **Connections to Care (C2C)**, an initiative to integrate evidence-based mental health services in communities with the greatest unmet needs. C2C trains frontline staff at community-based social service organizations to offer non-clinical mental health support, in partnership with local mental health providers. NYC Opportunity has played a key role in this work, helping to manage and rigorously evaluate the model to determine if combining mental health services with other social services can help individuals achieve better outcomes in areas such as employment, housing stability, and financial independence.

First Lady Chirlane McCray speaks with providers at the Connections to Care Spring Convening





Staff at Voces Latinas, a Connections to Care provider, discuss how they are building their skills to address clients' mental health needs with First Lady Chirlane McCray

C2C is funded through private philanthropy and the federal Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service.¹ NYC Opportunity collaborates with the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City (Mayor's Fund) and other partners on SIF. NYC Opportunity and the Mayor's Fund were honored to win one of the inaugural SIF grants in 2010, in partnership with seven other cities. The award was for a project that tested five anti-poverty innovations in eight cities to build evidence on strategies that promote employment, education, and financial empowerment for low-income communities. In 2015, NYC Opportunity received a second SIF award, in partnership with the Mayor's Fund and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, for the C2C initiative.

¹ The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) was a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service that received funding from 2010 to 2016. Using public and private resources to fund and grow community-based nonprofits with evidence of results, SIF intermediaries received funding to award subgrants that focus on overcoming challenges in economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Although CNCS made its last SIF intermediary awards in fiscal year 2016, SIF intermediaries will continue to administer their subgrant programs until their federal funding is exhausted.

The Young Men's Initiative (YMI)—which NYC Opportunity has been a key partner in designing, implementing, and evaluating – is another highly successful public-private partnership. YMI, which was launched in 2011 by the City and major New York-based foundations, is the nation's most comprehensive effort to tackle the broad disparities slowing the advancement of boys and young men of color. YMI has spearheaded broad policy changes, agency reforms, and programs that work to connect boys and men of color to education, employment, and mentoring opportunities; improve their health; and reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system. In 2016, Mayor de Blasio increased the City's investment in YMI and expanded its focus to include greater emphasis on in-school youth while making explicit YMI's geographic priority areas. When YMI initially launched, several existing NYC Opportunity initiatives were expanded, and NYC Opportunity has played an ongoing role in the development and execution of new YMI programs.

Today, NYC Opportunity supports fifteen YMI programs and has completed twelve evaluations related to YMI initiatives, with several additional evaluations underway.



Attendees at Cornerstone Mentoring First Annual Mentoring Service Awards Luncheon, honoring program providers for exceptional community service projects

Two:

Advancing Evidence and Innovation in NYC Government

NYC Opportunity believes more solutions are required to address unmet needs and stubborn problems and that new approaches delivered through government can achieve large-scale impact.

Innovation is fundamentally about getting better results. It demands a commitment to assess outcomes rigorously, capture and respond to lessons, and accept the risk that some efforts will fail. NYC Opportunity serves as a proving ground to influence how government addresses poverty and its related challenges.

Sharing Knowledge

The Managing for Innovation Course (MFIC) is one example of how NYC Opportunity promotes ongoing learning and fosters innovation to better serve New Yorkers. An evaluation of MFIC, conducted by Westat on behalf of NYC Opportunity and in partnership with the CUNY School of Professional Studies, showed the importance of professional development for successful program management. In implementing the course, NYC Opportunity identified a core set of competencies that help program managers at non-profits and city government agencies build the skills they need to effectively administer innovative anti-poverty programs, and it codified them into the “Program Competency Model.” After delivering these core competencies through MFIC, NYC Opportunity received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants. In a survey conducted as part of an evaluation, nearly all respondents reported that they applied the lessons they learned to their jobs and a majority said their programs saw improved outcomes after they participated in the course.

Evaluation

A crucial component of NYC Opportunity has been its evaluation work, which, among its other activities advances evidence-based policy. NYC Opportunity conducts rigorous evaluations of programs to measure their impact and provide objective evidence that can be used to inform decisions about whether programs should be expanded, replicated, redesigned, or eliminated. NYC Opportunity evaluates its own programs and those of the Young Men’s Initiative (YMI), and it supports agency partners in designing and implementing their own evaluations.



(Top left) Mentee and mentor from Cornerstone Mentoring program Bronxworks Classic Community Center program site in Melrose, Bronx
(Top right) NYC Opportunity staff review program performance data
(Bottom) Young Adult Internship Program participant achievements were recognized in Swiss Post Solutions' Leadership Academy graduation ceremony



NYC Opportunity's evaluations are led by an in-house team and conducted by independent firms that are selected through a competitive procurement process.

NYC Opportunity uses evaluation to determine if programs are achieving the desired outcome for New Yorkers and their communities. In the last decade, it has managed and evaluated over 70 demonstration projects, and in recent years its evaluation activities have expanded to include key citywide mayoral initiatives. Programs such as Pre-K for All, the universal pre-kindergarten program; ID NYC, the nation's largest municipal ID program; new workforce initiatives developed by the Jobs for New Yorkers Task Force; and the City's innovative Community Schools initiative have all had evaluations that have been managed by NYC Opportunity. NYC Opportunity also partners with City agencies and offices to explore important research questions not associated with a specific program, as it did with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) on **The Effects of Neighborhood Change on New York City Housing Authority Residents**, a study that looked at the impact of gentrification on residents of public housing developments.

Typically, programs are evaluated after they have been up and running for at least a year and show promising results based on performance-monitoring data. NYC Opportunity develops a customized approach for each program evaluation. Strategies include, but are not limited to, implementation evaluation, qualitative assessment, outcome evaluation, impact evaluation, and cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis. Evaluation strategies vary in cost, time-intensiveness, and the kind of findings they produce.

Initiatives that demonstrate success are often evaluated more than once, typically with multiple sequential evaluations of increasing analytical rigor. The general sequence of evaluations starts with a qualitative implementation study that looks at challenges and successes in delivering a program. Outcome studies may be incorporated into this early work or come afterward depending on the expected timing of results and the availability of data. If the findings are promising, NYC Opportunity may also conduct an impact evaluation, typically by identifying a similar group of participants who did not receive the intervention and then comparing their outcomes with those who did. NYC Opportunity may also decide to conduct a cost/benefit analysis, either as part of an impact evaluation or on its own.

Every evaluation seeks to answer a key programmatic or research question. This question usually goes beyond "Does the program work?" to delve deeper into the nuances. For example, a study might assess best practices among providers that are doing better than their peers operating a specific program model, or analyze data to learn more about who benefits most from a program. Evaluations also typically make recommendations about how services or systems could be improved.

Considerable thought is put into which research questions to include in evaluations. NYC Opportunity is careful to select questions that will provide the most useful information for developing and improving programs. Evaluations draw on the expertise of City agencies and evaluation partners, whose knowledge of particular issue areas and methodologies can help to ensure that the findings will be accurate, informative, and relevant.

Evaluations are tailored to where a program is in its lifecycle. Different kinds of research and methodologies are used depending on the stage of a program’s evolution.

As a general matter, evaluations, which can be expensive, are done when a program is mature. In some cases, multiple evaluations are done over time, with each building on the previous one’s findings.

Evaluations play an important role in determining which programs receive funding going forward. NYC Opportunity terminates some programs that are found to be unsuccessful based on evaluation findings and rigorous performance monitoring, and it expands some that have been found to have a positive impact. It also uses the results of evaluations to modify programs that are promising but need to be improved.



YAIP participants from Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation program site exploring downtown Manhattan after an educational trip to the Federal Reserve Bank and African Burial Ground National Monument

Evaluation Methodologies: Different Programs, Different Strategies

NYC Opportunity and its evaluation partners employ a range of research methodologies and strategies in order to capture the most useful, insightful, and accurate information through their evaluations. The following are a few examples of the variety of programs and research strategies NYC Opportunity evaluations have featured over the years.

Pre-K for All

Six qualitative studies in the first year of the Department of Education’s roll-out of Pre-K for All looked at a range of topics, including curriculum and instruction, family engagement and communication, program supports, and data use for programs and instruction. An additional study looked at a snapshot of student learning in year one. In the second year of the program, the evaluators examined best practices for professional development and serving students with special needs and English Language Learners.



Mayor Bill de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, Queens Borough President Melinda Katz and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with a Pre-K for All class



A New York City College of Technology student meets with his dedicated ASAP academic advisor

CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

CUNY ASAP has undergone several evaluations, including an external random assignment evaluation, an internally conducted quasi-experimental comparison study, a cost study, a cost-benefit analysis, and a long-term student outcomes study. Based on the findings of multiple evaluations, the program is being scaled to 25,000 students by academic year 2018/19.



Participants in the Young Adult Literacy Program

Young Adult Literacy

The Young Adult Literacy (YAL) Program, developed by the Department of Youth and Community Development in partnership with NYC Opportunity, has undergone multiple evaluations, conducted by Westat and MRDC, as the program model has evolved. A 2011 evaluation examined the impact of adding paid internships; another evaluation in 2013 examined outcomes for program participants; and a third evaluation in 2015 documented implementation challenges and best practices for the program. With each set of findings, the program model was improved. YAL is currently undergoing a fourth evaluation. A first phase of this research compared the implementation of the standard program model to a redesigned YAL Bridge Program that integrates contextualized education and next steps to education or career opportunities. Based on this implementation research, NYC Opportunity designed a second phase of this study to assess the overall impact of the program using a comparison group approach.

Sector-Focused Career Centers

A quasi-experimental study conducted by Westat used administrative data and New York State wage data to compare results of the Department of Small Business Service's **Sector-Focused Career Centers** to general career centers. The findings, which showed that the sector-focused approach had higher placement rates for clients and better wages relative to the regular career center approach, received widespread attention. They also helped inform the Career Pathways redesign of the City's workforce system, which relies on sector-based approaches, and led to the creation of several new employment initiatives.



Participants in enhanced Home Health Aide training program site

WorkAdvance

An evaluation of the sector-based employment program **WorkAdvance** conducted by MDRC, supported by the Social Innovation Fund and delivered in three cities, included a randomized control trial, an implementation study, a cost study, and a practitioner’s handbook. Findings show that the program increases training completion and employment in the targeted sector and boosts earnings for low-income individuals. WorkAdvance findings have been shared at conferences across the country and beyond and have helped inform new employment programs in jurisdictions ranging from New York City to Cleveland to Ontario, Canada.



A WorkAdvance student practices her new manufacturing skills at a hands-on training

Family Rewards

Opportunity NYC—Family Rewards, an experimental conditional cash transfer program designed to break the cycle of poverty among low-income New Yorkers, underwent a random-assignment evaluation, which suggested the potential for impact. The program was adapted based on evaluation findings and underwent a second random assignment evaluation, conducted by MDRC and supported by the federal Social Innovation Fund. The findings from the second evaluation were not sufficiently beneficial and the program was discontinued after the expiration of the federal and private dollars that had funded it. Findings from this research have helped inform the development and operation of other incentive-based initiatives, such as New York City’s Children’s Savings Accounts program.



YAIP Deputy Director Horace Harris teaching participants to tie a tie at DYCD Professional Clothing Drive with clothing donated by DYCD employees

Service Design

This year NYC Opportunity launched its **Service Design Studio** to support City agency partners in applying human-centered design to program development and implementation.

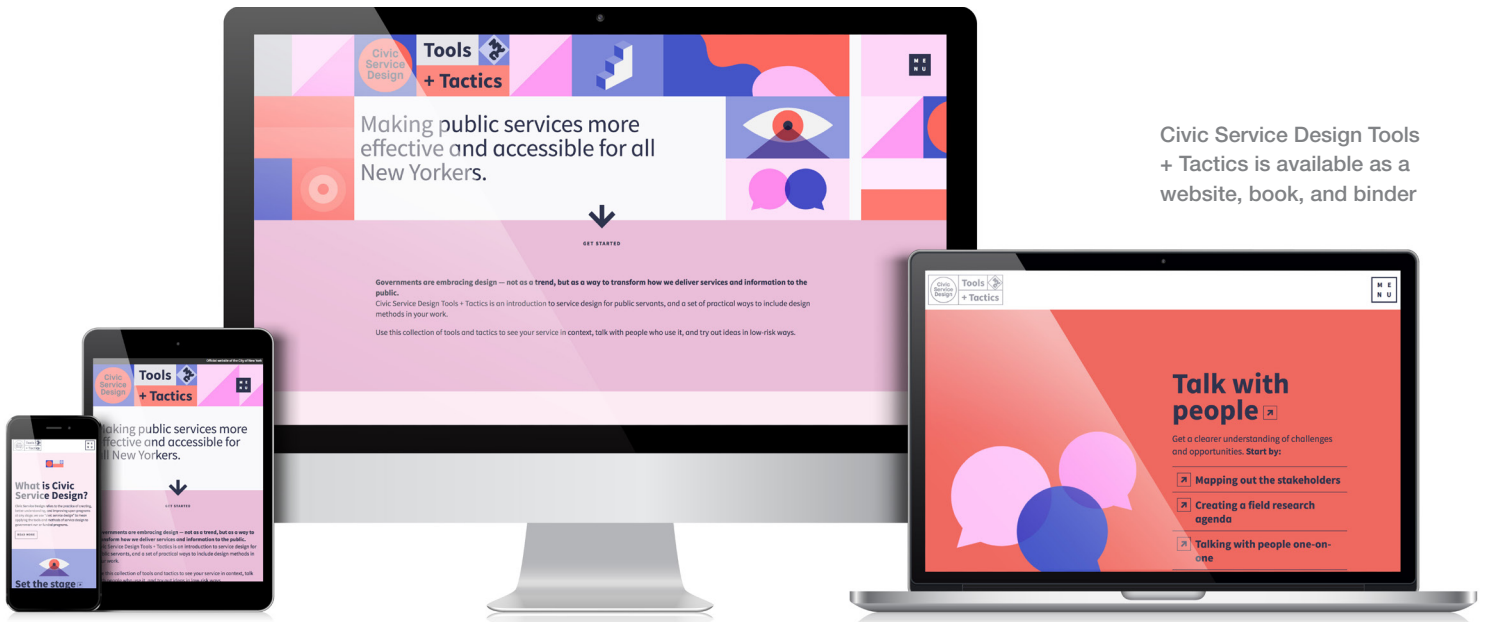
“Service design” refers to the practice of creating, better understanding, and improving programs at any stage by focusing on the actual experiences of those involved. For a program, product, policy, or service to be effective, many factors come into play, including the context in which it operates; the value potential clients perceive to their lives; daily processes and workflows; staff skills and perspectives; clarity of communications; and physical environments.

The Service Design Studio, launched with support from founding partner Citi Community Development and managed in coordination with the Mayor’s Fund, helps spread valuable methodologies that are often under-utilized in government. It serves as a resource, helping the City further engage with residents and those who deliver services so that their insights can shape new and existing programs.

The Studio team is well-versed in design tools, experienced in developing in-person and digital services, and focused on addressing poverty-related challenges. Agencies can participate in office hours for brief project consultations, or propose projects for a larger “open call” to receive a year of services from the Studio. In addition, they can attend workshops and events to increase design capacity.

NYC Opportunity, the Mayor’s Fund, and Citi Community Development hosted the launch of the Service Design Studio at Parsons School of Design in October 2017





Civic Service Design Tools + Tactics is available as a website, book, and binder

Our goal for service design is to make public services as effective and accessible as possible for all New Yorkers.

NYC Opportunity created **Civic Service Design Tools + Tactics**, an introduction to service design for public servants, and a set of practical ways for them to include design methods in their work. This online resource includes templates for implementing design principles for service improvements.





NYC Opportunity engaged Queensbridge residents to guide the online experience for NYCHA Broadband users



NYCHA Broadband

The Service Design Studio worked on the City's \$10 million initiative to bring free broadband service to five New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing developments, starting with Queensbridge Houses. The Studio conducted user research with Queensbridge residents to guide the online experience for the new service. In its user research, the Studio team was able to draw on the NYCHA **Effects of Neighborhood Change on New York City Housing Authority Residents** study that NYC Opportunity had previously conducted, which included in-depth qualitative case studies conducted at Queensbridge Houses. The Studio engaged Queensbridge residents, nonprofit providers, and City agency staff

in the research and prototype testing process to arrive at solutions for connecting and logging in, and other aspects of the service.

NYC Opportunity is now leading an evaluation of the implementation of the free broadband program at Queensbridge, being conducted by Abt Associates, with a specific focus on exploring the role and value of the service design resident engagement component for Queensbridge Connected, which hosts information about local resources and events. This evaluation is building on the findings of the Neighborhood Change study. One of the conclusions of that study was that NYCHA residents often feel disconnected from their wider neighborhoods, including local amenities, a problem that broadband service may help to address. The evaluation of broadband service at Queensbridge uses a participatory research design, in which the evaluation firm is partnering with local community groups and residents of Queensbridge Houses to conduct the study. Resident research partners help inform the study design, gather data in interviews, and interpret and analyze findings. This evaluation will help to inform the rollout of broadband at other NYCHA facilities.



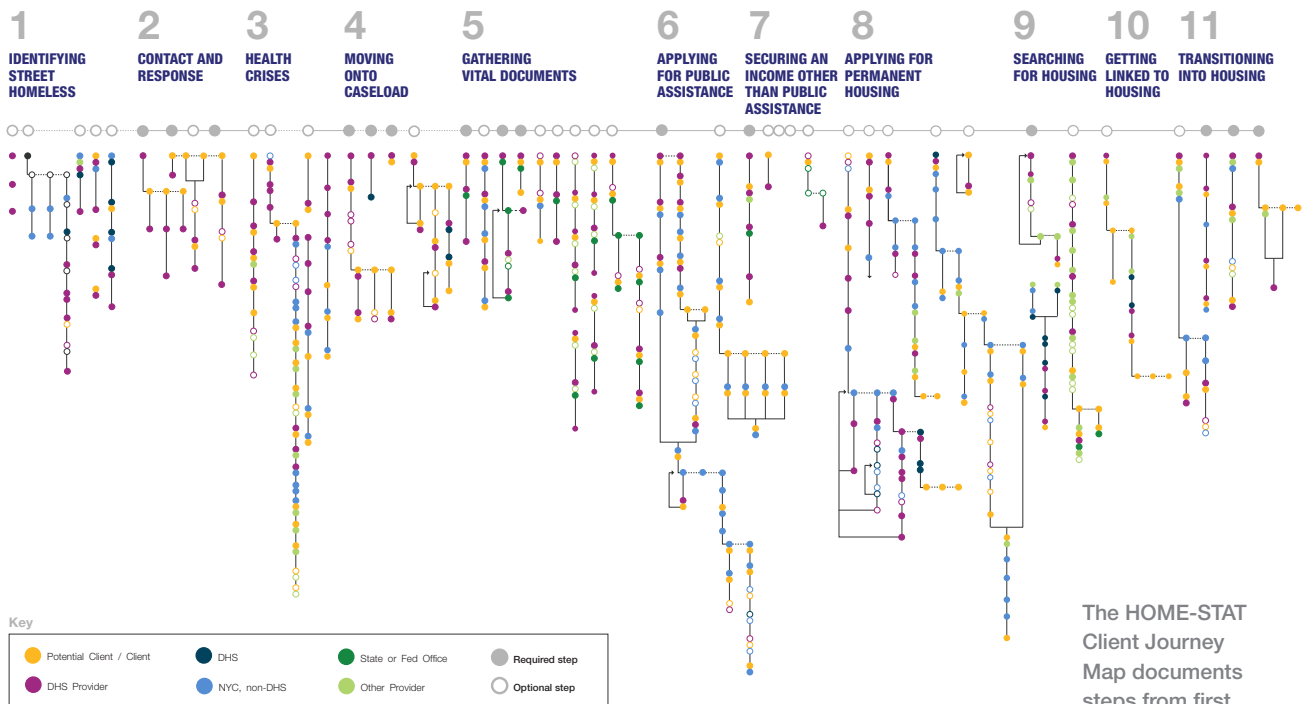
Queensbridge Connected provides a central place for community information and resources



HOME-STAT

The Service Design Studio worked with the Department of Homeless Services and colleagues at the Mayor’s Office of Operations to inform and operationalize **Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams (HOME-STAT)** – the most comprehensive street homelessness outreach effort ever deployed in a major American city. The Studio conducted research with government agencies, contracted providers, and worked with residents to understand the complete

journey from living on the street to being permanently housed, to identify what barriers homeless New Yorkers and service providers face, and to create enhancements to improve end-to-end service delivery. The Studio team wrote a **narrative report** to accompany a detailed journey map, a visual representation of a participant’s experiences in moving from the street to housing, and provide additional details. The report was used to inform cross-agency meetings and give context to specific parts of service delivery and has helped shape ongoing performance and program management. The deep listening by the Studio team created not only a document of record, but strong relationships with stakeholders that have been valuable throughout ongoing implementation.



The HOME-STAT Client Journey Map documents steps from first contact on street to placement in housing

Designing for Financial Empowerment (DFE)

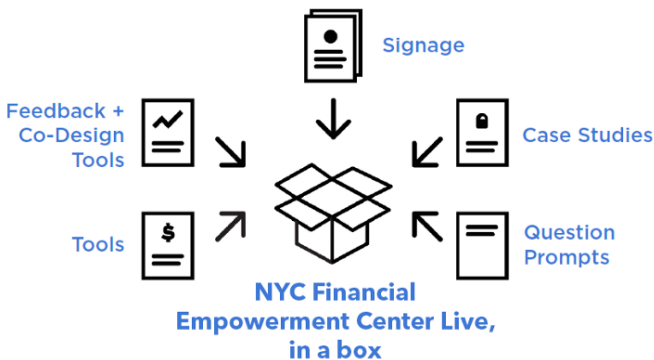
NYC Opportunity supported the collaborative that launched **Design for Financial Empowerment (DFE)**, a cross-sector initiative to explore how service design can be used to make public sector financial empowerment services more effective and accessible, in partnership with the Mayor’s Fund, the Parsons School of Design’s Design for Social Impact and Sustainability (DESIS) Lab, Citi Community Development, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). DFE uses service design to improve the effectiveness of free tax preparation, financial counseling and coaching services, and financial counseling integrated in citizenship assistance.



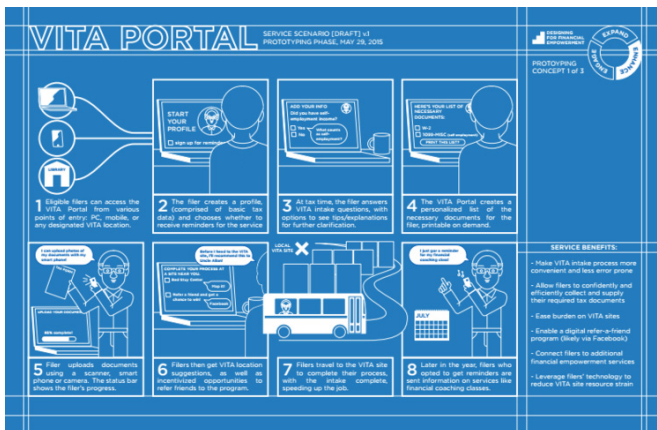
Trusted, Professional Filing

The DFE team worked to increase participation in tax-time services that can significantly improve the finances of low-income families. The DFE Tax Time Team interviewed City agency staff, convened focus groups with individual taxpayers, and conducted other research. It then developed strategies for increasing use of these valuable services by low-income New Yorkers, including new graphics and the **NYC Free Tax Prep Portal**.

The DFE team also worked with NYC Financial Empowerment Centers, operated by DCA’s Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE), which provide free, one-on-one financial counseling and coaching. OFE was one of the Center for Economic Opportunity’s first demonstration projects. The DFE team sought to better understand both the broader financial services ecosystem and the business practices that result in high client retention rates. It then developed a series of small-scale, design-led interventions with the goal of increasing sustained client engagement through a variety of solutions.



The DFE team worked with MOIA to increase participation in its citizenship application assistance program, NYCitizenship, which helps immigrants apply for citizenship and offers free financial counseling. The team conducted desk research, met with experts, researched best practices, and analyzed existing citizenship and financial services. It then developed a variety of concepts for tools to improve outreach and service delivery, including easy-to-use kiosks for new citizens and a deck of cards that structures conversations about financial planning within the citizenship process.



Design artifacts, deliverables, and workshop from the Designing for Financial Empowerment Projects

Three:

Sharing Public Policy Expertise

After a decade of work, NYC Opportunity has developed considerable expertise across a variety of public policy areas, including criminal justice, workforce development, youth development, health, and asset development.

In the area of **criminal justice**, NYC Opportunity, in partnership with the Department of Probation (DOP) and YMI, launched a mentoring program that has proven extraordinarily effective at guiding young New Yorkers on probation toward becoming law-abiding adults. **Arches Transformative Mentoring (Arches)**, began in 2012 and offers group mentoring to young adult probation clients ages 16 to 24. Arches employs mentors, known as “credible messengers,” who have backgrounds similar to their mentees, and uses an evidence-based interactive journaling curriculum that relies on cognitive behavioral principles. A 2017 impact evaluation by the Urban Institute found that Arches participants had a 69 percent lower felony reconviction rate 12 months after beginning probation, and 57 percent lower 24 months after beginning probation compared to a group of similar probationers not in the Arches program. These findings represent a significant and sustained impact on recidivism at rates that are rarely seen among this population.

In **workforce development**, NYC Opportunity programs have demonstrated the promise of subsidized jobs, in particular for young adults. While subsidized jobs programs are strongest when they are a core component of a larger, more comprehensive program (the job itself should not constitute the whole program), subsidized work experiences can be both a hook drawing individuals into programs and a tool to help keep them engaged.

Incorporating subsidized jobs or paid internships into educational interventions has been effective in helping young people gain a foothold in the labor market by developing work readiness and on-the-job skills.

Evaluations have found that paid work experiences can support attendance and retention in other types of programming. An initial evaluation of the NYC Opportunity and Human Resources Administration (HRA) **Work Progress Program** by Branch Associates helped identify how these types of programs can best be implemented, and the range of benefits they can have for participants in getting early work experience, building their skills, and earning income to support their families. A new evaluation underway of the program is using New York State wage data to assess the economic effects on the participants.

Sector-focused training and hard skills occupational training have also proven beneficial to program participants. Evaluations have found that sector-focused training increases the likelihood of employment and leads to higher earnings for participants (compared to non-participants). A 2014 Westat evaluation of Department of Small Business Services' (SBS) **Sector-Focused Career Centers (SFCC)** found that participants in a sector-focused program increased their earnings by an estimated \$5,800 per participant. SFCC participants were 12 percentage points more likely to be employed in the year following the program, 19 percentage points more likely to be employed one year later, and they earned 50 percent more on average than regular career center participants.

In addition, findings from an evaluation of WorkAdvance conducted by MDRC found that sector driven programs that included hard skill training and advancement services were important to improving outcomes for participants, with particularly strong results for those who had been less attached to the labor market when they started the program. The study tracked the long-term impact of the program, finding persistent impacts in the third year after program entry—specifically that **WorkAdvance** increased earnings by about \$3,110, or 20 percent, among those who had been out of work for up to six months at the program's start, and by about \$1,930, or 14 percent, among those unemployed for longer at the program start. These findings have supported moving New York City's system to a greater focus on supporting sector-specific strategies and providing more occupational training, and are informing national evaluations underway such as the U. S. Department of Labor's current evaluation of the TechHire program.

An evaluation is currently underway of **Jobs-Plus**, an evidence-based employment program for public housing residents implemented in New York City by HRA, NYCHA, DCA-OFE, NYC Opportunity and YMI. This evaluation by Urban Institute informed NYC Opportunity's program review required by Local Law 164, which was passed by the New York City Council and signed by the Mayor last year requiring NYC Opportunity to assess potential for expansion of the program. The forthcoming evaluation includes a qualitative component that demonstrates how residents value their Jobs-Plus sites as unique resources and one-stop centers to address a variety of needs. A quantitative analysis that compares Jobs-Plus members enrolled in the program for one-year to newly enrolled members found that members who had been involved with Jobs-Plus for one-year were 72 percent more likely to be employed and earned an additional \$838 per quarter than their peers who had not. The evaluation also confirms the challenges involved with implementing this complex place-based model at the scale required to serve NYC public housing communities.

Cornerstone Mentoring
Flag Football Playoff
Games participant
warm up session, led
by Hospital for Special
Surgery Sports Safety
Program at Brooklyn
Bridge Park





Cornerstone Mentoring
Annual Hoops for
Kindness 3v3 tournament
at Johnson Community
Center

Cornerstone Mentoring, a DYCD program funded by YMI for in-school youth, uses group mentoring, like the Arches model. An evaluation of the program that will be released in early 2018 shows how a low-intensity group mentoring approach can change young people’s attitudes about education and create a positive, supportive environment for students with poor academic performance and low engagement in school. The evaluation also revealed a correlation between more hours of mentoring and lower rates of school absence. These findings add to those of a prior evaluation of the program, which demonstrated improved attitudinal outcomes for Cornerstone participants compared to their peers at Cornerstone after-school programs that did not include a mentoring component.

85 percent of mentoring participants reported it was “very true” that they could succeed in middle school compared to 65 percent of Cornerstone youth who did not participate in mentoring.

In **asset development** for low-income families, a NYC Opportunity-funded project has shown that a simulated expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), called Paycheck Plus, is increasing employment and income among single working people who do not have dependent children. **Paycheck Plus** offers single working adults EITC-like income supplements and examines their impact on participants.

Early results show that Paycheck Plus puts an average of \$1,400 more a year into participants' pockets for two-years – and that the money made a clear difference in the participants' lives.

Participants in Paycheck Plus were found to be more likely to work and, in the case of non-custodial parents, to pay child support. Paycheck Plus also increased the rate at which participants filed taxes, took advantage of free tax preparation services, and applied for the EITC. The project, which is being conducted in partnership with MDRC, HRA, CUNY, and the Robin Hood Foundation, will conclude in 2018 with the release of a final impact report. The project is also partially funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through a Section 1115 waiver coordinated by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and with the assistance of HRA to study noncustodial parent participation and impacts.

Outside of program-specific evaluations, NYC Opportunity has also partnered with several City agencies to conduct research to inform development of City services more broadly. For example, in 2017, three studies were underway responding to priorities from the New York City Council. Two studies sought to better understand the needs of particular populations – unpaid caregivers and young adults in foster care—and helped support City agencies in making these surveys a regular occurrence so that the City can track progress over time. A third evaluation, by MRDC, is assessing the effects of new pilot programs that were launched as part of an expansion of the DYCD's citywide Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) – research that will drive key programmatic and funding decisions for this program that served nearly 70,000 young people this year.

For more information on NYC Opportunity programs and how performance is measured, please visit the NYC Opportunity website: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/opportunity/portfolio/programs.page>.

Four:

Partnering for Impact

NYC Opportunity actively collaborates with national innovators in evidence-based policymaking. It is engaged in projects with a variety of partners who help it to apply cutting-edge tools and methodologies to improve services for vulnerable New Yorkers.

Government Performance Lab

This year the Mayor's Office of Operations (Operations) and NYC Opportunity were selected for partnership by the Government Performance Lab (GPL) at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Since 2011, the GPL has provided pro bono government-side technical assistance to 40 jurisdictions in 24 states and has helped state and local governments develop nine of the 15 launched Pay for Success projects in the country. GPL is working with New York City on two projects: developing a citywide Children's Budget, and establishing priority performance metrics for the new Department of Veterans' Services (DVS). The Children's Budget, a priority of the City's Children's Cabinet, will help policy leaders better understand and drive outcomes for children as measured by 26 indicators of child well-being. The GPL is helping the City analyze citywide spending on services for children, identify gaps in services, and enhance the impact of spending through performance improvement. The GPL will also help DVS set up a performance tracking system to enable real-time monitoring of trends among the veteran population. This information will enable DVS to prioritize and match resources based on need and track progress toward its goals related to housing, health, education, employment, and entrepreneurship.



Harvard Government Performance Lab gathered for training and strategic planning

Behavioral Design Team

Operations and NYC Opportunity also partnered with ideas42—a New York City-based nonprofit behavioral design lab—to launch and manage the NYC Behavioral Design Team (BDT). Ideas42 is a leader in using behavioral science in the public sector, having helped establish the White House’s Social and Behavioral Sciences Team under the Obama administration. The BDT supports City agencies interested in applying behavioral insights to new and existing processes and program interventions. Behavioral design uses scientific insights from psychology and economics to help people make better choices for themselves and for society. Using behavioral science, ideas42 has designed low-cost, scalable solutions in New York City, including ones that have increased renewals of college financial aid to support retention, resulted in faster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recertification, and produced higher flu vaccination rates among City employees.

Code for America
Fellows working at
NYC Opportunity’s
Brooklyn office





Code for America

NYC Opportunity hosted a group of Code for America Fellows in 2016. These fellows helped produce a new design and usability framework for the City’s Worker Connect program. Their technical and design work built on extensive user research. Fellows shadowed case workers in multiple settings, including on overnight shifts with street-homeless outreach workers, and conducted interviews with City agency case managers. The insights from this research translated into a more intuitive design that helps case workers more quickly access previously underutilized features of the software.

Results for America

NYC Opportunity Executive Director Matt Klein is a Results for America Local Government Fellow. Results for America’s Local Government Fellows program was founded in 2014 to provide a select group of local government leaders in diverse and influential cities and counties across the country with the knowledge and support to implement strategies that effectively use data and evidence to drive policy and budget decisions on major policy challenges.

Partnerships of this kind accelerate NYC Opportunity’s ability to learn more about the issues it works on and develop new strategies for carrying out its mission. They also allow NYC Opportunity to share its own successes—as well as lessons from efforts that have not proven effective—with others working on these issues nationwide.

NYC Opportunity staff member Alicia Matthews presents at the 2016 Code for America Summit in Oakland, CA



(Top left) Participant from LaGuardia Community College YAIP program site working at her internship placement, Biscuits and Bath
(Top right) YAIP Graduation at LaGuardia Community College program site



(Middle) NYC Opportunity staff visiting Phipps Neighborhoods in the Bronx
(Lower left) Panelists at the launch of the Service Design Studio
(Lower right) NYC Opportunity Product Manager Darnell Sessoms accepts award for Growing Up NYC at the Best of New York City Awards



NYC Opportunity is building on the strengths of the two organizations out of which it was built.

In the past year, NYC Opportunity has continued to be a leader in using data and evidence in measuring poverty rates and trends in the City; launching new initiatives; facilitating access to critical services; and assessing the effectiveness of City-funded programs. It remains dedicated to the founding mission of the Center for Economic Opportunity, which was launched a decade ago to invest in innovative anti-poverty programs, guide their implementation, evaluate their results, and continue to support the ones that work. At the same time, NYC Opportunity is drawing on the technical capacity of HHS-Connect to deploy data and technology in ways that better serve low-income residents. The merger of these two entities has created a single office that is better positioned to reduce poverty and advance opportunity for all New Yorkers.

(Top left) NYC Opportunity team retreat at Rocking the Boat in the Bronx
(Lower left) NYC Opportunity Product and Design Team Members
(Right) NYC Opportunity Product Manager Song Hia accepting 2017 Best Application for Serving the Public for ACCESS NYC from the New York Digital Government Summit



Acknowledgements

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Awards

2011 Innovations in American Government Award from the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government

2011 Prize for Public Service Innovation from Citizens Budget Commission

2011 Award for Leadership from NYC Employment and Training Coalition

2017 Best External Application for Growing Up NYC by the NYC Technology Forum

2017 Best Application for Serving the Public for ACCESS NYC from the New York Digital Government Summit