

CUNY's Workforce HUB

Executive Summary

Brief 1. CUNY's Workforce HUB: A New Model for College-Based Career-Track Training

Brief 2. CUNY's Workforce HUB: From Promise to Proof



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Overview

A collaboration of Hostos Community College and LaGuardia Community College, the NYC Accelerated Workforce Recovery HUB (the HUB) has quickly emerged as perhaps the most promising workforce development model operating at scale in New York City. The HUB has provided high-quality job training to more than 2,000 participants through June 2025, leading to industry-recognized credentials and jobs that offer career pathways. Its combination of excellent outcomes and significant scale is exceptionally rare within a workforce ecosystem where most programs struggle to deliver either strong performance or large volume, let alone both. The model fuses established national best practices in job training and employment services with the resources and reputations of Hostos and LaGuardia, the two colleges within the City University of New York that co-designed the HUB and secured philanthropic funding to launch in early 2022.



Altior Policy Solutions (APS), a New York-based public policy consultancy, worked with project leaders to develop two policy briefs assessing the HUB: a descriptive case study, and a normative analysis that considers the HUB in the context of similar programs, and offers recommendations to sustain, evolve, and expand the project.

Click [here](#) to view Brief 1 and Brief 2, “CUNY’s Workforce HUB: A New Model for College-Based Career-Track Training,” and “CUNY’s Workforce HUB: From Promise to Proof.”

TABLE 1: HUB OUTCOMES AT A GLANCE (through June 30, 2025)

Total enrollment	2,006
Program completion rate	80%
Number of industry credential earners	1,187
Number of job placements*	910
Average hourly wage**	\$23

* Number refers only to training related employment of program completers.

Note that some number of self-paying participants did not seek employment as an outcome.

** Figure for LaGuardia HUB students only

Origins

The HUB launched in response to the generational economic crisis touched off by the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020, hundreds of thousands of New York City workers lost their jobs within a few weeks. Those losses were concentrated in low-paying, face-to-face industries that disproportionately employed workers from the communities and population groups that Hostos and LaGuardia largely served. This overwhelming need highlighted the limitations of both the community-based model that comprises most of New York City's workforce development capacity, and the norms of workforce programs at continuing education departments within CUNY colleges.

Workforce officials within the Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) divisions at the two community colleges both developed new concepts for service delivery, and joined forces as they realized their ideas substantially overlapped. One major philanthropic funder, the New York Community Trust, showed strong interest in the model for its potential to drive systems change, and made a multimillion-dollar investment to launch the program. Since then, the two colleges have secured additional public and private funding streams to supplement the Trust's investment.

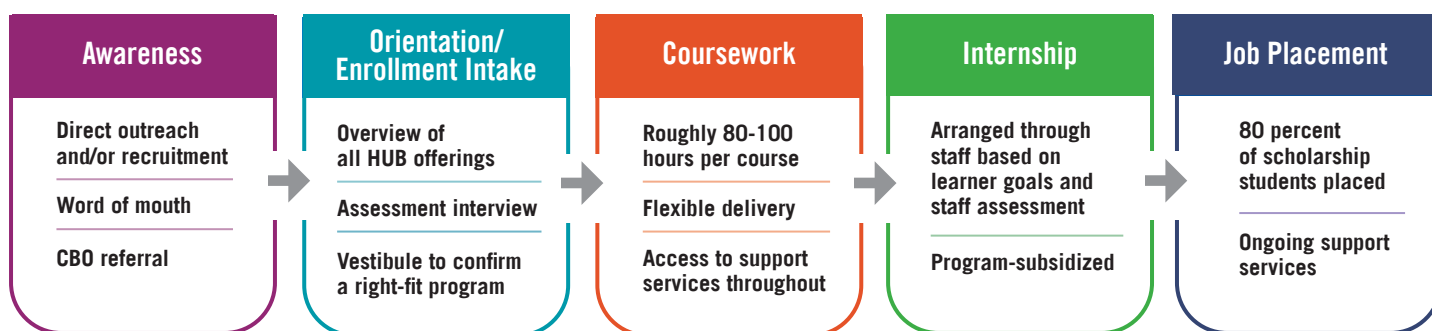
The Model

The basic premise of the HUB is to offer high-quality training that evolves in response to evolving industry demand, while building in comprehensive wraparound services from intake to job placement. The program designers were looking to test the premise that intensive and intentional matching at the point of intake, instruction that incorporated meaningful work experience and led to credentials, comprehensive support services including scholarships and intensive advising, and strong career development and job placement support, would enable students to make successful transitions to jobs that offered career pathways. Two key values were quality and consistency: where previously the set of services available to any learner in a continuing education workforce program depended on whether they were paying tuition or were supported by a grant, the HUB would offer all learners the same menu of support services. The HUB introduced another significant innovation within the CUNY system by establishing a fundraising component at each college, supported by their respective college foundations, to raise scholarship funds for non-credit workforce training programs. This best practice helps enable comprehensive support for participants.

From a learner perspective, the experience of the HUB has five stages, as shown in **Figure 1**. Through each stage, HUB team members keep learners focused on long-term career development.

- 1) Awareness of the program
- 2) Orientation/Enrollment Intake, during which a student matches to and enrolls in a specific course
- 3) Coursework learning, for courses ranging from 60-240 hours
- 4) Internship or other clinical work experience, typically up to 100 hours or more
- 5) Job placement and/or enrollment in a college degree program

FIGURE 1: LEARNER EXPERIENCE OF THE HUB



Innovations

The HUB model features new staff roles such as Education Case Managers (ECMs). These team members have played a key role in the early successes of the HUB, by working to determine students' needs and connect them to support services that will enable them to remain in the program. To fill these roles, administrators at the two colleges turned to a number of longtime CUNY professionals who brought both deep institutional knowledge and a willingness to embrace a different way of doing things.

Intake has been an area of particular focus. The HUB's intake process is designed to accomplish three objectives: confirm that a specific training program represents the best fit for each student's interests and talents, ensure the student is fully aware of the expectations and requirements of the training, and determine what supports will position the student for success in the program, including their eligibility for a full or partial scholarship. To achieve these goals, a variety of team members—including ECMs, industry specialists, and career advisors—participate in interviewing candidates. Scholarship awardees must participate in an orientation experience known as the Vestibule, a six-hour seminar conducted over two days during which students engage in reflections around time management and otherwise prepare for a rigorous learning experience in an occupational training course that culminates in an industry exam.



TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHICS OF HUB LEARNERS*

Category	Percentage
Men	36%
Women	64%
Age 18-29	50
Age 30+	50
HS Diploma/Equivalency	30
Some college/college degree**	53
Unemployed at enrollment***	39
Employed part-time	28
Employed full-time	32

* Figures through June 30, 2025 unless otherwise indicated. Note that not all enrolled students shared demographic information

** Please note that educational attainment refers both to school in the U.S. or in HUB students' country of origin. Limitations of data mean we are unable to offer more detail on shares of all HUB students' educational attainment, though among LaGuardia HUB students only, 22 percent of students enrolled in college but did not earn a degree; 10 percent earned an Associates degree, 25 percent earned a Bachelor's degree, and 11 percent earned a Master's degree.

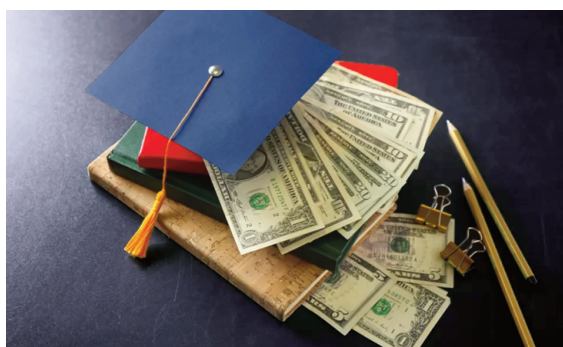
*** Figures through November 30, 2024.

Assessing the HUB: Inputs and Indicators

The HUB's mix of demand-responsive training and intensive support services for participants roughly mirrors the focus of a handful of college systems across the U.S. that have committed to prioritizing workforce development with programs that reflect and respond to local hiring demand. To evaluate the HUB, we looked at a framework developed by the Washington, DC-based research nonprofit New America after an extensive study of best practices in non-degree workforce programs offered at community colleges that names five indicators of high quality programs: labor market outcomes, equity, stackability, affordability, and program completion. The HUB scores highly on two of the five criteria and reasonably well on the other three.

TABLE 3: HUB PERFORMANCE ON NEW AMERICA QUALITY INDICATORS

Indicator	HUB Performance	Notes
Labor market outcomes	IN PROGRESS	910 HUB students placed into training-related employment; wages are well above the average for public workforce system
Equity	IN PROGRESS	Equity is an institutional priority that the HUB advances by providing access to previously underserved groups
Stackability	IN PROGRESS	HUB partners are working with academic counterpart to increase access to Credit for Prior Learning
Affordability	EXCELLENT	This has been a priority for the HUB, which has awarded hundreds of scholarships
Completion	EXCELLENT	80 percent of students have completed all courses, and 75 percent of completers have earned industry credentials



While each of these five indicators reflect cumulative results as a HUB learner completes the program, it is also important to consider them inputs to the program—the factors that potentially determine whether or not the HUB is succeeding in its mission to deliver a high-quality affordable training option to a diverse and high-need student population positioned to greatly benefit from training and credential attainment. After an extensive literature review, APS identified six such factors, set out in **Table 4**.

As the table indicates, the HUB is well positioned on three of these inputs and moderately strong on two others, but at significant risk on one: funding.

TABLE 4: HUB PERFORMANCE ON KEY PROGRAM INPUTS

Input	Standard	HUB Status	Notes
Funding	Funding is reliable and consistent, offering a clear value proposition to learners and employers, with capacity to take advantage of new opportunities as they emerge	AT RISK	Increasingly urgent need to diversify funding sources
Data	Data points are clear and help drive needs and incorporate their input	MODERATE	CUNY system issues are a challenge
Program menu	Programs address employer needs and incorporate their input	MODERATE	Menu limited in part owing to resource challenge
Program design	Programming incorporates best practices related to staffing and facilitates strong partnerships with employers and other stakeholders	STRONG	Staffing is a strength; partnerships are mixed
Job quality/ Wraparound services	Services advance equity goals and support student success	STRONG	Wraparound services are a priority
Leadership support	College and system leaders are actively engaged and fully supportive of the effort	STRONG	Both college presidents are fully committed to the HUB

Insights and Lessons Learned

Over the three years the HUB has operated, learners' outcomes have confirmed a number of the project's initial premises. The emphasis on intake at the outset of the program, making ECMs available to provide a full set of support services for all enrolled students, and ensuring that course completers gain work experience to complement classroom learning all have contributed to the HUB's strong results. Hostos and LaGuardia continue to refine these aspects of the model, convening ECMs across the two colleges for professional development and carefully tracking data to better understand students' experiences and employers' priorities.

Other aspects of the program are evolving through processes of trial and error. In addition to employment, the HUB considers the awarding of academic credit and enrollment in a degree program as a successful outcome for learners. CUNY has a system-wide policy to guide how its colleges award credit for prior learning (CPL), a policy that recognizes the educational value of students' prior knowledge and real-world experience. The number of HUB students pursuing and earning CPL has ticked up over time, as awareness of the opportunity has expanded and academic departments have come to better appreciate the quality of instruction in HUB courses and how it aligns to the learning goals and outcomes of for-credit programs. This strategy significantly reduces both time and cost for degree-seeking students, particularly benefiting working adults, immigrants, and returning learners. For LaGuardia and Hostos, meanwhile, CPL enhances enrollment, improves retention, and fosters a more inclusive, student-centered approach that embraces diverse educational journeys.

Beyond its direct impact, the HUB has begun to change the culture within CUNY's ACE programs focused on job training and employment. One indication of success is a vast increase in the number of learners across Hostos and LaGuardia that have received career services, gotten advice on transitioning to college, and have been awarded scholarships for workforce and continuing education courses. Another is how HUB concepts and practices have begun to spread across the larger CUNY system.

Recommendations

Three years after its launch, the HUB has reached a crossroads. Its early results offer compelling evidence of its value, and in many respects—program structure, partnership support, leadership buy-in, and more—it seems well positioned for sustained success. At the same time, its initial philanthropic support is winding down, and long-term funding has yet to be secured. More than anything else, this will determine whether the HUB can reach its potential for robust growth and system-level impact. APS concludes its assessment of the HUB with three recommendations, as follows.

1) Secure operational funding for the HUB and pursue additional tuition support to enable more learners to take courses, earn credentials, and get on a career path.

- Work with CUNY to thoughtfully reconsider the current policy requiring all ACE Divisions to annually attest to being fully self-sustaining—a mandate that forces HUB staff to choose between increasing tuition for low-income learners and continually pursuing private grants.
- Determine how to more effectively access New York State's Tuition Assistance Program, which now covers workforce offerings that meet certain criteria, and potentially a federal expansion of Pell grants to support shorter-term training.
- Conduct a return on investment analysis to more fully quantify the impact of the HUB.

2) Continue efforts to institutionalize the HUB within CUNY by facilitating transition into degree programs and continuing to build culture and community within the program.

- Pursue college and system level changes that enable college students to more easily move between ACE and degree programs.
- Expand and standardize processes for HUB and other ACE learners to earn CPL, accelerating their progress toward degree requirements.
- Connect, celebrate, and expand the HUB through public-facing events that communicate the value of the program and bolster recruitment and advocacy.

3) Strengthen and formalize relationships with the publicly supported NYC workforce system.

- Build stronger ties between the HUB's training programs and the employer engagement and job placement capacity of the City's Workforce1 Career Centers.
- Work with the Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development (NYC Talent) and NYC Department of Small Business Services to access training funds for either cohorts of learners, or individuals through reforms to the Individual Training Grant eligibility criteria.
- Expand linkages with the City's sector-focused Industry Partnerships, administered by NYC Talent, to more deeply inform HUB programming and open further work experience and job placement opportunities for program completers.



Acknowledgments

This brief was researched and written by David Jason Fischer of Altior Policy Solutions. It was designed by Rachael Cronin of Hostos Community College. The project was supervised by Dr. Evelyn Fernandez-Ketcham of Hostos Community College and Sunil Gupta and Hannah Weinstock of LaGuardia Community College. Special thanks to Dr. Samuel Byrd and Daliz Perez-Cabezas at Hostos Community College, and to all Hostos and LaGuardia staff who contributed their time and insights to this research. Thanks also to our project advisory committee members who offered feedback on research directions and early drafts. This project was supported by New York Community Trust. Additional funding support for the Accelerated Workforce Recovery HUB and related initiatives was provided by the New York State Future of Work Center administered by CUNY, the Mackenzie Scott Adult and Continuing Education Scholarship, the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Foundation, Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, Siegel Family Endowment, TD Charitable Foundation, Amazon, Pinkerton Foundation, and HERE to HERE.



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