

September 12, 2013

To: Economic Resiliency & Regional Relations Committee

From: Peter Harris and Christa Valles, Central Staff

Re: Auditor's Preliminary Report on Career Bridge

## **Introduction**

Next week you will be briefed on the City Auditor's preliminary report on the evaluation of Career Bridge. Here we will briefly recap the context for this report and describe one issue that appears likely to reemerge in the upcoming budget deliberations.

## **Context: SLI and Green Sheet**

Last year the Council passed a Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) and Green Sheet on Career Bridge. The SLI asked the Executive to provide information that would inform the Council's decision about whether to provide ongoing funding for Career Bridge. The Green Sheet added \$100,000 in 2013 and 2014 combined to the Auditor's Performance Evaluation Program "to fund a comprehensive evaluation of Career Bridge's success in moving participants into job training or stable employment."

One of the items called for in the Green Sheet is a preliminary report on early program outcomes based on the first cohorts of Career Bridge participants. This is the report before you now. We will refer to it as the MEF report, because MEF is the consultant hired for the evaluation, and will be the main presenter next week.

## **What are the goals of Career Bridge?**

The SLI and Green Sheet show that the Council believed the overall goal to be to move participants into job training or stable employment, and that this is the purpose for which the Council provided funding. Copies of the SLI and Green Sheet are attached for convenience.

Accordingly, the MEF report includes a logic model identifying "employment at a level that allows for participant self-sufficiency" as the first ultimate goal of the program. The intermediate outcomes in the model all relate directly to this goal.

Based on MEF's understanding of the theory behind Career Bridge, its model also includes "stable and positive relationships with family and community members," "active involvement in the community" and "reduced recidivism" as ultimate goals. Further, MEF discovered that various City staff, non-profit partners, community members and program participants believe the program has one or more of a variety of other goals, including providing human services, educating community leaders, building service capacity in community organizations and encouraging policy change.

Further still, the Executive’s July 25 response to the MEF report proposes a larger set of somewhat overlapping goals, including increasing healthy behavior by the participants, increasing “the scale and reach of the community-based model,” and “broadly shared prosperity and healthy communities.” In addition, the Executive proposes a set of outcomes that would measure program success in part by the number of participants, the amount of services received and “the amount of aligned public investment” – that is, by the size and resources of the program.

### **Why does this matter?**

Goals define success. If we can’t define clear and specific goals, and agree on them, we cannot work effectively toward them, much less tell whether we are achieving them. This is much of the point of Resolution 31425, which set performance measurement standards for new programs.

In particular, if the Council funds a program for one purpose, and the program managers work toward a different purpose, the chances are close to nil that the Council’s purpose will be achieved.

The continuing discussion of Career Bridge suggests this problem is likely to reemerge in the upcoming budget deliberations if, as also seems likely, the Mayor proposes to continue or expand the program.

### **Conclusion**

As you will hear next week, clarity of program goals is one of the issues raised in the MEF report. We emphasize it here because it is the essential starting point for all discussions of the effectiveness of the program.

If you have any questions, please let us know.