

Why the Job Readiness Initiative Must be a part of the City's Workforce and Economic Development Plan

What is the Job Readiness Initiative (JRI) and why is JRI funding important?

JRI stems from a history of community advocacy to improve the lives of low-income communities. The disparity in San Francisco's quality of life indicators, among racial minorities, represents one of the most extreme dichotomies in the nation. These indicators include health, incarceration, education, and financial measures. The majority of these racial minorities are concentrated in "underserved" neighborhoods, including District 10-Bayview Hunters Point and District 6 - the Tenderloin-SOMA communities.

JRI provides funding to community based, nonprofit organization to provide workforce development services to include outreach and recruitment, career counseling, assessment, intensive case management, barrier removal services, and "bridge" job readiness training. The JRI providers rely on these contracts to address barriers to employment that other contracts will not fund, ie. helping clients purchase tools, pay tickets, seal their records, pay union dues, gain licenses and/ or other employment certificates.

There are lots of capital jobs in the pipeline but the target population has major barriers to employment to successfully compete for these jobs.

Ironically, thousands of new jobs in capital projects are becoming available, over the next 20 years, in these communities. Each of these projects includes a project labor agreement that prioritizes hiring local, low-income residents from the surrounding communities. While this appears to be a recipe for transformation and prosperity within these communities, both City government and local residents have recognized that huge barriers exist that prevent local residents from securing even a small percentage of the myriad of employment opportunities in their own neighborhoods. . In recognition of this disconnect, San Francisco's Redevelopment agency conducted interviews with individuals and representatives from community based organizations to determine the root causes preventing some of the most impoverished and disenfranchised residents from accessing jobs in their own neighborhoods. They found that while communities and individuals all express a need and a desire for greater employment opportunities, they often lack the social supports to secure and maintain employment. This phenomena was identified as "Barriers to Employment."

The social cost of NOT funding JRI

The JRI target populations are consumers of the most expensive public benefits and services. JRI clients typically are involved in the criminal justice system or the recipient of public benefits. However, when these clients secure viable employment, recidivism decreases, contact with the criminal justice decreases, and utilization of public benefits decreases.

What are we asking for?

We are extremely appreciative of the Mayor's support for the JRI program. In the Executive Summary of the Mayor's budget he says, "... OEWD will work closely with community-based organizations formerly supported by the SFRA Jobs Readiness Initiative, providing them transitional grant funds and developing a new program in the second half of FY 2012-13." We have learned that his budget includes \$1.8 million over 2 years. However, full funding for 2 years is \$2.45 million. Therefore, we are respectfully requesting an additional **\$645,000** to provide full funding over the next 2 year budget cycle.