



MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

April 2, 2021

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 506
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

Attached please find a report prepared by the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement on the Pathways Program participation in 2020, pursuant to Section 102 of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Amendment Act of 2016, effective June 30, 2016 (D.C. Law 21-125; D.C. Official Code § 7-2411(d)). Specifically, this report details the program's operating status throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; the number of individuals successfully recruited and engaged; the duration of their participation; the status of their progress; and participant demographic data.

The Pathways Program brings forward the office's commitment to community-oriented violence prevention by working with small cohorts of District residents, aged 20-35 years-old who have been identified as being at imminent risk of participating in, or becoming a victim of, violent crime. At its core, the Pathways Program is built on the belief that it is possible to help individuals involved in community violence commit to a new path forward, by giving them a safe space to heal and opportunities for a better life.

While the turbulence of 2020 provided numerous challenges to running a program that relies so heavily on building trust through in-person engagement, the ONSE team worked hard to safely reengage program alumni and engage new participants. We appreciate the strong and continued support we have received from Councilmembers, advocates, residents, and the public in helping make the Pathways Program successful.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Delbert McFadden, Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, at 202-807-0440.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Muriel Bowser".

Muriel Bowser
Enclosures



A REPORT ON THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AND ENGAGEMENT PATHWAYS PROGRAM FOR 2020

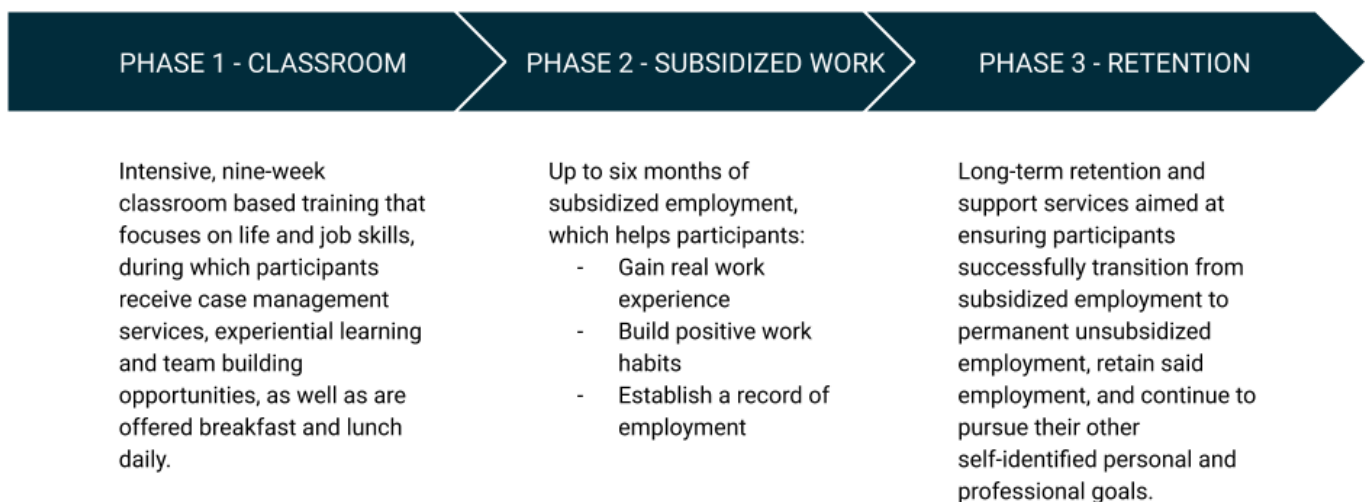
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This report, prepared by the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE), provides a summary of the Pathways Program in 2020. ONSE was launched in October of 2017. Its mission is to foster a community-oriented model to violence prevention and public safety. The strategy is rooted in a public health approach to violence prevention, recognizing that reducing crime is not accomplished solely through law enforcement.

The Pathways Program is a transitional employment program that aims to decrease participants' involvement in the criminal justice system and improve their employment, education, and training outcomes. Individuals referred to this program are ages 20-35 and have been identified as being at risk of participating in, and/or being victims of violent crime. Each Pathways cohort is limited to up to 25 participants, all of whom were District residents.

Review of Pathways Program Model:

As illustrated in the table below, Pathways follows a three-phase model. The first phase is an intensive, nine-week classroom-based training that focuses on life and job skills. Phase two offers six months of subsidized employment, which helps participants gain real work experience, build positive work habits, and establish a record of employment. The third phase offers long-term retention and support services aimed at ensuring participants successfully transition to permanent unsubsidized employment, retain said employment, and continue to pursue their other self-identified personal and professional goals.



Throughout every phase of the program, Pathways participants are offered a host of wraparound services, including: transportation benefits, nutritional services, mental health services, housing assistance referrals, clothing and/or uniform assistance, access to a variety of pro-social extracurricular activities.

The Program does not have open enrollment. Individuals are referred to the program by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, ONSE's violence intervention initiative contractors (Collaborative Solutions for Communities, Training Grounds, and Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative), or by District government agencies or community partners with credible sources.

Overview of Fiscal Year 2020:

At the start of FY20, the Pathways Program anticipated serving three Pathways cohorts, with Cohort 4 starting in October 2019, Cohort 5 starting in March 2020, and Cohort 6 starting in the summer of 2020.

Cohort 4 successfully launched in October 2019. Of the 25 Pathways participants enrolled in this cohort, 22 successfully completed the classroom component. Three participants did not complete the program due to their excessive number of absences. All participants identified as male, the average age of participants was 27 years of age, and participants' ward of residence included Wards 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, with 84% of participants from Wards 6, 7, and 8.

After the Cohort 4 Ambassadors were promoted, ONSE staff and the Pathways team prepared to welcome Cohort 5 on March 20, 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic put that start on an indefinite hold. Despite the delay, the Pathways team remained remotely connected and engaged with the incoming Cohort 5 and the selected group of future Pathways Ambassadors remained committed to the program despite the uncertainty about their start date.

By summertime, we determined that our pre-COVID-19 operating status, which involved having 25 Ambassadors attend classes at ONSE headquarters for 40 hours per week, was not feasible. This determination was largely driven by the fact that many Ambassadors were unable to effectively practice social distancing outside of the program. We also determined that moving the program to an entirely remote status, akin to some educational settings, would not be feasible or effective due to a lack of safe and quiet work environments for Ambassadors and the likelihood of severe attrition because of the less personal engagement method.

Instead of onboarding our new cohort of Ambassadors, the Pathways team reengaged 20 individuals with urgent needs from Cohorts 3 and 4 for an eight-week period. Many of the individuals selected had faced setbacks due to COVID-19's impacts on the city. As a safeguard,

this group was broken up into two sections, each serving ten individuals. During this time, Ambassadors selected for Cohort 5 were continuously engaged by Pathmakers on a weekly basis, including receiving employment referrals.

In November 2020, the Cohort 5 Ambassadors had the opportunity to begin the program in-person, before eventually transitioning to remote status due to the surge in new COVID-19 cases citywide. Throughout the classroom component, members of this cohort connected, engaged, and prepared for the next chapter of their lives. Ambassadors identified personal goals, barriers, and strategies for success through a series of workshops and classes designed to provide them with knowledge and skills to prepare them for sustainable employment. Of the 18 Ambassadors enrolled in this cohort, all 18 successfully completed their classroom component, which was celebrated with a virtual promotion ceremony on January 15, 2021. All participants identified as male, the average age of participants was 25 years of age, and participants' ward of residence included Wards 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8, with 72% of participants from Wards 6, 7, and 8.

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS' PROGRESSION THROUGH PROGRAM PHASES BY COHORT					
Fiscal Year	Cohort	Enrolled	Completed Phase 1 (classroom course)	Completed Phase 2 (placed in subsidized employment)	Completed Phase 3 (secured unsubsidized employment)
18	1	25	18	17	13
19	2	25	24	22	15
19	3	24	18	18	5
20	4	25	22	19	9
21	5	18	18	TBD	TBD
TOTAL		117	100	76	33

All data as of January 5, 2021

The Pathways program also partners with the OSSE ReEngagement Center, the Department of Employment Services, and community providers to connect participants to continuing education and job training services. In FY20, 22 participants completed certifications. Additionally, to date:

- 2 Ambassadors completed their GEDs;
- 9 Ambassadors obtained driver's licenses;
- 15 Ambassadors completed the terms of their CSOSA community supervision;
- 81 Ambassadors received OSHA 10 Certifications;

- 38 Ambassadors received Flaggers Certifications; and
- 42 Ambassadors received CPR and First Aid Certifications.

ONSE’s ultimate goal is to provide supportive services that disrupt cycles of community violence and opportunities for a better life. Helping Pathways Ambassadors transform their lives and disrupt these cycles is not always linear, setbacks are part of the process and relapse can happen at any point. One metric that ONSE closely monitors is arrests for new Category 1 offenses after program enrollment. The following table provides a breakdown of this metric.

BREAKDOWN OF ARRESTS AFTER PROGRAM ENROLLMENT	
COHORT	CATEGORY 1 OFFENSES
1	11
2	5
3	8
4	9
5	0
TOTAL	33

Please note that this table illustrates the number of arrests, not number of individuals arrested. Some individuals were arrested multiple times. Category 1 offenses include: homicide, ADW, robbery, and weapons violations. Not all arrest result in convictions. Some individuals charged with offenses have had their charges dropped or dismissed.

Pathways Participant Demographics:

PATHWAYS PARTICIPANTS WARD OF RESIDENCE								
COHORT	WARD 1	WARD 2	WARD 3	WARD 4	WARD 5	WARD 6	WARD 7	WARD 8
1	3	0	0	1	2	2	5	12
2	0	0	0	1	0	3	6	15
3	0	0	0	1	1	3	7	12
4	1	0	0	1	2	5	7	9
5	2	0	0	0	3	5	2	6

% OF TOTAL	5%	0%	0%	3%	7%	16%	23%	46%
TOTAL	6	0	0	4	8	18	27	54

In FY20, the youngest participant served was 21 years old and the oldest was 33 years old; the average age was 27 years old.

PATHWAYS PARTICIPANTS AGE AT ENROLLMENT	
COHORT	AVERAGE AGE
1	26
2	25
3	26
4	27
5	25
OVERALL AVERAGE AGE	26

Gender:

To date, all participants have identified as male.

Race:

To date, 99% of participants have identified as African American or Black and 1% have identified as Hispanic or Other.

Pathways Participant Testimony:

Participant testimonies – firsthand accounts of participants’ journeys before and during the Pathways Program – offer a unique perspective on the program.

Mr. I - Cohort 4

After returning home from incarceration, Mr. I was looking for opportunities, but faced unemployment and barriers wherever he turned. The lack of opportunities had him “going down that wrong road once again.” When his probation officer told him about the Pathways Program, he was initially skeptical of “yet another program,” but after some convincing he agreed to hear more and eventually enrolled.

Heading into Day 1 of the program, Mr. I recalled thinking it was unlikely he would come back for Day 2. But his first impressions that day changed his mind and he came back the next day, and the day after that, and before he knew it, he had successfully completed all nine weeks of the program's classroom component.

His initial good impressions didn't let him down. "That was the first program I ever went to, where they had the Director and the Chief of Staff come down and speak to you." While enrolled, Mr. I got out of his comfort zone repeatedly – early on, going white water rafting despite his fears, and later setting himself the goal of completing his GED, which he is currently working towards with the support of the OSSE ReEngagement Center.

When asked what he got out of the program, Mr. I said that he walked away "with experience, with the ability to learn how to write a resume and prepare for an interview, with certifications that could help him secure job opportunities, and with new contacts that he could reach out to." But perhaps most importantly of all, Mr. I felt that he left "with peace of mind."

After being promoted from the classroom component, Mr. I spent nine months gaining work experience with the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services. He is now employed with the Mayor's Office on Returning Citizens Affairs and is thankful to have employment that allows him to be able to give back to the residents of the District of Columbia.