

TESTIMONY BY
COMMISSIONER ROBERT W. WALSH
NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES
BEFORE
THE COMMITTEES ON SMALL BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AND FINANCE
OF THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
JUNE 1, 2012

Good morning Chairwoman Reyna, Chairwoman Koslowitz, Chairman Recchia, and members of the Small Business, Economic Development, and Finance Committees. I am Rob Walsh, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS). I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner, Andy Schwartz, and others from SBS who are here to help answer any questions you might have.

This morning I would like to cover a number of major areas where SBS is serving jobseekers, businesses, and neighborhoods while highlighting our accomplishments of the past year as well as our upcoming initiatives.

Serving Job Seekers

The Mayor has made it clear that getting New Yorkers back to work is a top priority. Although New York City's economy is adding jobs at a stronger rate, it is clear that many people are still looking for work and that we have much more to do.

Over the past eight years, we have transformed the City's adult workforce development programs. We built a network of Workforce1 Career Centers, professional spaces where people can get help finding a job or access training and other assistance. SBS is also securing higher wage jobs for our customers.

Under the Mayor's \$13 million Workforce Expansion Initiative, we launched eight new centers in the past year, increasing access points and job placement opportunities. We are partnering with all three public library systems; new centers are open at Brooklyn Public Library branches in Sunset Park and at the Central Library and at the Queens Library branch in Flushing. Later this year, we will be opening a new center at the Francis Martin Library in the Bronx.

We have also made major gains on our online service options for jobseekers. Searchable job postings and registration for services are accessible both from home and at the centers, extending our reach and improving customer service by increasing our offerings while reducing wait times.

The last few months have not been without challenges and disappointments. In March, the Department of Investigation issued a report detailing false job placements reported by Seedco, the former operator of our Bronx and Upper Manhattan Workforce1 Career Centers. In May, the U.S. Attorney's office followed by issuing a civil fraud action against Seedco and several of its former employees under similar allegations. SBS has ended both Workforce1 contracts and is in the process of ending both NYC Business Solutions centers contracts with Seedco.

Over the years, we have taken great pride in our Centers. There is nothing more important to us than the integrity of our services and those who provide them. We are taking all possible measures to ensure that an incident like this never happens again. We have revised our operating procedures, retrained our centers on data entry and reporting practices, and strengthened our placement validation process. We now tie performance reimbursement of contract expenses exclusively to direct placements made with employers and only accept placement validation directly from employer-based sources. New vendors began operating our centers in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx at the end of April. Both centers are ramping up and on their way to full service capacity.

We have been fortunate to have the partnership of the City Council in our joint effort to connect more New Yorkers with jobs. I especially want to thank Council Member Diana Reyna, Council Member Leroy Comrie, and the entire Black, Latino and Asian Caucus for hosting the Employment Opportunity and Small Business Expo at the Washington Heights Armory on May 19. The Expo provided a great introduction for hundreds of people to the career services and job opportunities available through Workforce1 and other resources. SBS has already been able to refer approximately 100 jobseekers from the Expo for Workforce1 Career Center next steps and interviews in sectors including health care, retail, security, transportation, and manufacturing. At the Expo, hundreds of New Yorkers also took advantage of workshops that we had on How to Create a Business, prepare for an interview, and certify as an M/WBE. I look forward to future collaborations like this one.

I am confident that the gains we have made over the past eight years—credible employer relationships, strong partnerships throughout the five boroughs, and a network of professional centers—have given us the foundation to further improve and meet the critical employment needs of New Yorkers.

Serving Businesses

When Mayor Bloomberg came into office ten years ago, he created the Department of Small Business Services—the first agency of its kind dedicated to serving New York City’s roughly 200,000 small businesses. We developed a mission: help businesses start, operate, and expand—and we built a network of seven NYC Business Solutions Centers across the five boroughs to fulfill that mission. Through NYC Business Solutions, customers can take advantage of nine key services: business courses; connections to pro-bono legal assistance; financing assistance; incentives; employee training and recruitment; help navigating government; selling to government; and minority- and women-owned businesses enterprise certification. Over the past year, SBS has focused on helping small, minority, and women-owned firms connect to capital and build capacity to compete for new business in the public and private sectors.

Capital Access. In 2008, NYC Business Solutions connected customers with 177 financing awards worth \$11.5 million. Since then, SBS introduced several new initiatives to improve on this service, including a partnership with Citigroup and the formation of a Bank Advisory Council. Last year, NYC Business Solutions connected customers to 803 awards worth over \$39 million. These financing awards come from institutions ranging from large commercial banks to credit unions to micro-lenders. NYC Business Solutions helps businesses navigate every step that it takes to secure financing.

In October 2010, SBS launched a partnership with Citigroup to grow the number of small businesses that obtain financing in New York City. Citi provided funding to enable NYC Business Solutions to hire additional staff members at our Centers to help more customers in all five boroughs with loan packaging assistance in 2011. Building on the Citi partnership, Deputy Mayor Robert Steel and SBS launched the NYC Bank Advisory Council in January 2011 to address the challenges in lending to small businesses in New York City, identify opportunities to lend to more small businesses, and develop and launch initiatives connecting more small businesses with financing and other services. The Council is comprised of senior leaders from ten regional and national banks: Banco Popular, Bank of America, Capital One, Carver Federal Savings, Chase, Citi, HSBC, Sovereign Bank, TD Bank, and Wells Fargo. Since the inception of the Council, these banks have worked with SBS to launch several initiatives in three categories—education, referrals, and innovation—to better address small business capital access. Over the past few months, SBS has reached out to smaller, regional banks to join the effort. To date,

eleven of these banks have accepted an invitation to join as we connect more small businesses with capital and other services they need to succeed in New York City.

The Council is also working to create greater access to federal programs that facilitate small business lending. In 2011, we completed a thorough review of the steps borrowers and lenders must take when using the Small Business Administration (SBA) loan guarantee programs. Earlier this year, SBS delivered a set of recommendations to the SBA's Offices of Advocacy and Capital Access as well as New York's congressional delegation and small business committee leadership. The SBA will review these recommendations with SBS later this month.

Minority and Women-owned Businesses Enterprise Program. A key part of better serving the City's small businesses is growing our minority- and women-owned business enterprise program. Over the past few years, the pool of certified M/WBEs has significantly increased—and these firms are winning more and larger contracts.

Since Local Law 129 was signed, City agencies have collectively awarded more than 35,000 prime and subcontracts to City-certified M/WBEs, valued at nearly \$2.5 billion. In FY 2011, M/WBEs won \$376 million in prime contracts—the highest level yet—in a year where the City spent less overall with a decline in the procurement budget of 12 percent, including a sharp decline in construction procurement. M/WBEs were awarded over \$200 million in subcontract dollars in FY 11.

In contract amounts under \$100,000 where agencies have more flexibility, M/WBE utilization continues to grow. For small purchases between \$5,000 and \$100,000, M/WBE utilization increased to 25 percent from 19 percent the prior year. M/WBE utilization on micro-purchases—those under \$5,000—rose to 20 percent.

In FY 2011, SBS certified 549 M/WBEs, including 78 recertified firms. There are now more than 3,400 companies that are certified to do business with City agencies. With an increase in the number of certifications that are due to expire, SBS will focus more on recertification than in past years.

SBS is committed to increasing the accountability and transparency of the M/WBE program. Every six months, SBS and the Mayor's Office of Contract Services submit a report to the City Council. This report contains detailed information on all purchasing by City agencies, broken out across four industries as well as by ethnicity and gender.

Finally, it is important to extend the reach of our system by getting the word out to firms that are eligible for certification. Our team has attended hundreds of networking events and workshops, and much of our outreach is accomplished through partnerships with the City Council's M/WBE Leadership Association. This partnership has been instrumental in promoting the program and increasing the number of certified businesses. And at our Annual Citywide Procurement Fair on May 23, nearly 500 certified M/WBE firms and 300 procurement officers from 71 City and State agencies, public authorities and corporations joined Deputy Mayor Holloway and Council Member Diana Reyna for networking, workshops, and special informational sessions on new programs.

Capacity Building Programs. SBS continues to make a substantial investment in building the capacity of smaller businesses to grow and compete for public and private contracts. In 2009, we partnered with the SUNY Levin Institute and the Kauffman Foundation, a nationally-recognized organization that works to advance entrepreneurship, to launch two new business courses. FastTrac NewVenture helps aspiring entrepreneurs launch a new business. Survey results indicate that more than 35 percent of the entrepreneurs who took this course launched a business venture within six months. FastTrac GrowthVenture is an eight-session classroom training for companies that seek to grow or adjust their strategy. More than 60 percent of business owners that took the course grew their businesses within six months of completing the course. In total, more than 1,800 New Yorkers have graduated from FastTrac courses.

We are also leading efforts to build the capacity of the firms certified under our M/WBE program. Most of our certified firms are small—nearly 70 percent have ten or fewer employees—and have been increasingly successful in winning contracts under \$100,000. It is important to help these firms grow so that they can compete for larger City contracts.

In February, we graduated our second class of Strategic Steps for Growth, a nine-month executive management program at the Stern School of Business at NYU for M/WBE firms with growth potential. Since that program began in June 2010, 41 graduates have collectively been awarded \$24 million in public contracts, secured over \$1.6 million in financing and hired more than 100 new employees. The third class has been selected and will begin the program on June 12. In addition, we are now partnering with the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment to expand the program and offer a second class for twenty media and entertainment firms. Applications will be accepted for that class until June 22.

In 2008, we began a partnership with Columbia University to offer a training and mentorship program for M/WBE firms in the construction trades. To date, sixty graduates have won \$44 million in City contracts and \$16 million in Columbia contracts. Another twenty firms are currently enrolled in the fourth year of the program.

In 2011, with the strong support of Deputy Mayor Cas Holloway, we launched "Compete to Win," a \$3.2 million set of new capacity-building programs designed to strengthen certified firms competing for City contracts. The five Compete to Win programs include: Technical Assistance, NYC Teaming, NYC Construction Mentorship, NYC Construction Loan, and Bond Readiness. These new programs and services are all coordinated through NYC Business Solutions.

Technical Assistance provides bidding and proposal support services through workshops, group sessions and one-on-one assistance to firms actively pursuing City projects. Firms gain assistance with submitting competitive bid packages, cost estimating, contract and payment resolution, bid strategy, project labor agreements, prevailing wage issues, and more. Since the launch of the program in February, 69 businesses have attended three workshops and group sessions. A fourth workshop will be held this month. Customers are also now receiving one-on-one assistance on competing for contracts.

NYC Teaming is a joint program offered by SBS and American Express OPEN to help small businesses form teams to bid on larger government and corporate contracts. The program educates business owners on how to create well-orchestrated matches with other businesses and how to market themselves to buyers and potential partners. Since February, three workshops have been held

for more than 130 attendees. A business matchmaking event is scheduled for June 19.

NYC Construction Mentorship provides management classes and on-the-job training to City-certified construction firms looking to bid on contracts as well as exclusive bidding opportunities with three partner agencies: Parks and Recreation; Housing Preservation and Development (HPD); and Environmental Protection (DEP). Agency pre-qualification lists are now in use at HPD and Parks; the list for DEP will be finalized later this year. HPD has awarded five contracts associated with the pre-qualification lists to M/WBEs. An information session for recruitment is scheduled for June 22.

NYC Construction Loan provides loans to cover upfront costs and to mobilize labor and supplies for construction contracts. Specifically, contractors can get pre-approved for funds for up to 30 percent of a contract's value, up to \$150,000, and get referred to credit repair services and other assistance to become loan-ready. They can also avoid the administrative challenges associated with loan repayment because the agency or prime contractor pays the loan back directly to the lender. Since the December launch, 23 firms have entered the loan packaging stage and five firms have been successfully pre-approved for a total of \$508,800. These five pre-approved loans will allow firms to mobilize \$1.3 million in construction projects.

Bond Readiness helps small contractors obtain bonding and increase their bonding capacity through workshops and one-on-one assistance. Courses include accounting and financial management, risk management, insurance requirements, and safety management. Assistance includes credit repair, bookkeeping, application packaging, and referral to surety providers. Bond Readiness was launched at the 6th Annual Citywide Procurement Fair on May 23, where 23 firms applied to participate. The next Bond Readiness workshop is scheduled for June 15.

We still have a great deal of work to do in building out our M/WBE program. These five new initiatives are already making a difference.

Serving Neighborhoods

In addition to providing businesses with direct assistance, SBS works in commercial corridors throughout the five boroughs to strengthen neighborhoods and make them more attractive places to do business.

Business Improvement Districts. New York City's Business Improvement District (BID) program continues to grow. This Administration has overseen the creation of 23 new BIDs, 20 of which are in boroughs outside of Manhattan. Collectively, BIDs contribute over \$100 million in supplemental services to their districts, strengthening and improving commercial corridors across New York City. In 2011, two new BIDs were established along Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn and in Chinatown. In February, Mayor Bloomberg signed the City's newest BID, Westchester Square in the Bronx, into law.

Avenue NYC. Our work in the City's neighborhoods goes beyond BIDs. The Avenue NYC program provides critical support to the community-based groups that work to create vibrant commercial corridors throughout the City. In FY 2012, Avenue NYC invested \$1.7 million in support of the commercial revitalization programs of 48 local economic development organizations.

Neighborhood Leadership. In partnership with the Coro New York Leadership Center, with support from the City Council, SBS manages Neighborhood Leadership, a five-month leadership development program for 20 executives of nonprofit organizations dedicated to supporting and revitalizing their local commercial districts. The program consists of eight, day-long training modules covering topics on leadership development and commercial revitalization strategies. Applications for the third class will be released in the fall. As always, we would appreciate the City Council's assistance spreading the word to get more local leaders to apply.

Conclusion

I want to thank the Council for all of your help in supporting our programs; from partnering on business and workforce development initiatives, building a stronger M/WBE program, and supporting neighborhood-based organizations throughout the City.

We have made significant gains serving small businesses, jobseekers, and neighborhoods throughout the City. We also understand there is still much more work to do. We are continually looking for new ways to improve our services, build partnerships with the community, and expand our reach to serve more New Yorkers. Thank you.

New York City Economic Development Corporation
New York City Council Oversight Hearing:
Fiscal Year 2013 Executive Budget Testimony
Seth W. Pinsky, President
June 1, 2012

Introduction

Good afternoon Chairman Recchia, Chairwoman Koslowitz and members of the Finance and Economic Development Committees. I am Seth Pinsky, President of the New York City Economic Development Corporation ('NYCEDC'), and together with Kyle Kimball, our Chief Financial Officer, I am pleased to provide to you testimony relating to NYCEDC's executive budget for fiscal year 2013. I have a brief presentation relating to our agency's agenda for the coming year, as well as the operating and capital budgets that support this agenda. After the presentation, I will be happy to take questions.

Current Conditions

New York City's economy continues to experience strength relative to the economy in the rest of the country. For example, in 2012 alone, statistics from New York State's Department of Labor put private sector employment growth at approximately sixty thousand jobs. This represents the strongest four-month gain for the City in sixty years. As a result of this robust job growth, as of April 2012, not only had the City recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession, we had actually significantly exceeded our pre-recession private sector employment level – this at the same time that the nation as a whole has only recovered forty percent of lost jobs.

Despite these promising signs, we know that many New Yorkers remain deeply affected by the recent recession. We also note that, while falling in recent months, our city's unemployment rate remains stubbornly high. Over time, it is our expectation that, assuming continued strong growth in private sector jobs, the divergence between job growth and our city's unemployment rate will begin to abate. In the interim, however, we have asked our economists to look more closely at this issue, which we currently believe to reflect a combination of several variables, including the reliability of the household survey used to extrapolate unemployment relative to the reliability of the data used to calculate job growth. We hope to have a more complete explanation of this divergence, though, to share with you and the general public in the next couple of months.

Operating Budget

While we believe there are a number of encouraging signs for our economy, we recognize that we are not yet out of the woods, especially with global uncertainty in the Eurozone and elsewhere. We also recognize that the City's fiscal picture remains challenging. For that reason, we are pleased to do our part to contribute to the City's budget. As you know, these contributions take numerous forms, including annual contract payments that we are required to make to the City, as well as Payments to Eliminate the Gap or PEGs that, in the case of NYCEDC, take the form of additional contributions to the general fund, rather than cuts in tax levy received. Today, the payments being made by NYCEDC to the City are at historic highs, having reached approximately \$49 million in FY12. In FY13, we expect our total payments to the City to reach almost the same level, including PEG payments of \$27 million. In total, from FY07 to FY14, pursuant to current projections, NYCEDC will have made payments to the City totaling more than \$350 million – a sum which excludes tens of millions of dollars per year in payments that we make to the City in connection with our asset management functions.

Capital Budget

Turning now to our capital budget, as you can see from the chart before you, our total capital budget for FY2012 through FY2016 comes to approximately \$2.4 billion. As I discussed with you at our last hearing, of this \$2.4 billion capital budget, six percent, or \$136 million, flows through our budget to the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation and twelve percent, or \$282 million, flows through our budget to the Trust for Governor's Island, both of which manage their own capital budgets. Putting aside these expenditures in addition to the one percent of our capital budget that is managed by other City Agencies, we are left with what we call NYCEDC's "core capital budget". This "core capital budget" totals approximately \$2.0 billion.

As I also mentioned when I spoke to you in March, when we look at our budget, we assign projects to one of the following six categories: Area-Wide Redevelopment; Infrastructure and Transportation; Not-for-Profit and Community Organizations; Open Space; Industrial and Miscellaneous. Though these categories are different from those currently used in our budget as presented in the documents that you receive from the City, we believe them actually to provide a more accurate picture of our budget. For this reason, we are actively

working with the Office of Management and Budget to align future budget documents with our internal categories. Our goal is to have each project so classified in time for the September budget. I am, therefore, going to use these categories for purposes of my testimony today.

As you can see from the chart before you, approximately \$387 million, or twenty percent, of our “core capital budget” is allocated to Area-Wide Redevelopment projects. This category includes a number of NYCEDC’s major projects, including Willets Point, Hunter’s Point South, and Coney Island. The expenditures for these projects encompass a broad array of uses, ranging from infrastructure to site acquisition to strategic planning. The major change in this category since my testimony in March is the addition of approximately \$28 million in funds relating to the new Cornell-Technion Israel Institute of Technology project on Roosevelt Island, which have been accelerated from out-years and now appear in our five-year capital budget.

Meanwhile, approximately \$381 million, or nineteen percent, of our “core budget” is allocated to infrastructure and transportation. This includes expenditures designed to improve the City’s piers, streets, railroads, and water systems. Since March, the funds allocated to this category have increased by \$39 million. This is primarily the result of the receipt of capital from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation, which is to be used for the next phase of the Springfield Gardens drainage project on which we have been working for a number of years. This project will alleviate chronic flooding and enhance the neighborhood around Springfield Boulevard in Queens.

Approximately \$734 million, or thirty-seven percent, of our “core budget” is allocated to investments in the City’s not-for-profit and community organizations. Since I spoke to you last, the percentage of funds allocated to this category has decreased slightly – by less than one percent – and reflects the cumulative impact of a number of small adjustments to several projects

Approximately \$221 million, or eleven percent, of our “core budget” is allocated to investments designed to enhance and increase open space in the City. Since March, the funds allocated to this category have remained essentially unchanged.

Approximately \$160 million, or eight percent, of our “core budget” is allocated to investments in the City’s industrial sector. This includes expenditures in NYCEDC-managed sites such as the Brooklyn Army Terminal

and the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. Since March, the funds in this category have increased by \$26 million, primarily as the result of \$19 million in new mayoral funds as well as the acceleration of \$3 million from out-years into our current five-year capital budget to cover costs relating to the deal currently under negotiation with the Hunts Point Produce Market.

Finally, approximately \$96 million, or five percent, of our “core budget” is allocated to miscellaneous investments. This category includes investments in City-managed public markets and other miscellaneous items. Funding in this category remains essentially unchanged since I spoke to you last.

Physical and Economic Transformation

Our capital and operating budgets support an ambitious slate of projects, each intended to promote the transformation of our City’s physical plant. In just the few months since I spoke to you last, a number of these projects have reached significant milestones. Last week, with Mayor Bloomberg, we celebrated the beginning of the summer season in Coney Island and announced the opening of the Scream Zone’s second phase, which includes a new thrill ride and a Go-Kart track, representing another important step in this incredibly successful collaboration between the Administration and the Council, including Chairman Recchia.

Another project that the Administration continues to advance is the redevelopment of the Seward Park sites on the Lower East Side. Using community-generated guidelines as a framework, this development would accommodate a wide-range of uses, including mixed-income housing – fifty percent of which would be affordable in perpetuity – retail and other commercial space, open space and the potential for a new larger, Essex Street Market. The project certified into ULURP in March and last week, Community Board Three voted unanimously to support the plan. The Administration looks forward to continuing to work closely with the community, local elected officials and the entire Council to bring this much-awaited project to fruition.

At the same time that we work to improve our City’s physical infrastructure, we also recognize that we must keep rethinking the way that we as a City do business. That is why we continue to devote significant time and effort to programs aimed at diversifying and growing the City’s economy. To this end, we are working to help New York’s legacy industries develop twenty-first century business models, attract new growth industries to the City, and spur entrepreneurship more generally, regardless of the industry.

In a major development that we think will have a long-term impact on the competitiveness of our City's economy, last month, Mayor Bloomberg announced the second winner of our NYC Applied Sciences Initiative: the Center for Urban Science and Progress, or CUSP. This project, which is being developed by a consortium of international academic institutions and leading private sector-companies led by New York University, is to be located in the heart of Downtown Brooklyn. There, CUSP will cement Brooklyn's leadership position in the innovation economy, generating nearly eight thousand jobs and more than \$5 billion in economic impact over the next three decades.

Transcending Economic Barriers

Underlying all of our economic development efforts is a belief that unless success is spread throughout the entire population, we will not truly have created a healthy 21st Century economy. This is why we are more focused than ever on supporting traditionally disadvantaged groups, such as minority, women-owned and disadvantaged business owners and immigrant entrepreneurs.

Take, for example, our efforts relating to M/W/DBE businesses. Since the inception of our M/W/DBE program, NYCEDC has awarded over \$111 million in subcontracts and prime contracts to M/W/DBE firms. During the period from the start of FY2011 through the present, we are pleased to report that we have substantially exceeded our internal M/W/DBE goals, with a participation rate of twenty-nine percent for construction projects and sixty-nine percent for professional services projects, versus our targets of twenty-five percent and thirty percent respectively. In addition, thanks to our Blueprint for Success program, we are now offering a number of promising M/W/DBE firms additional opportunities for growth, including the opportunity to receive personalized technical assistance. Meanwhile, through our Kick-Start Loan Program, we now offer M/W/DBE firms working on NYCEDC construction projects with access to capital to finance their mobilization efforts.

With respect to our efforts to assist immigrant entrepreneurs, when I spoke to you in March, I described the suite of pilot initiatives we announced earlier this year to support this important community. Since we launched these programs, we have, working with the Department of Small Business Services, helped more than one hundred and fifty immigrant entrepreneurs take business assistance classes in their native languages. We held

also a competition that encouraged the creation of innovative new programs developed by community-based organizations throughout the City. These new programs included one created by the Queens Economic Development Corporation that assists immigrant contractors to improve their chances for success in the City by ensuring that they are properly licensed and permitted. Finally, later this month, we will announce the four food-manufacturing companies selected to showcase their products at a national food trade show as part of our effort to connect local entrepreneurs to a broader array of buyers and markets. With our successful pilots of these programs now complete, we look forward to sharing more news about our future plans for them in the coming months.

Conclusion

As you can see, NYCEDC is continuing to make tangible progress towards our goal of economic transformation. While the City faces real challenges, with the continued support of, and partnership with, the City Council, I have every confidence that we will successfully achieve the Mayor's goal of transforming the City into a capital of innovation and prosperity for the 21st century. Now, I would be happy to answer your questions.

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