



**Silver Stars Plus
Concept Paper
December 2023**

The NYC Department for the Aging (“NYC Aging”) seeks to expand and reimagine the services it provides to combat ageism and support older adults in the community and foster economic/financial security. NYC Aging prioritizes keeping older New Yorkers in good physical and mental health and with a strong sense of well-being, so they are able to age in place to the fullest extent possible. As such, critical functions of NYC Aging include workforce development and employment services meant to promote independence, dignity, and quality of life. These services assist older adults who are seeking employment and community engagement to remain active, engaged and contribute to their communities while simultaneously achieving greater financial security and finding new purpose.

Currently, NYC Aging funds two programs for retired older New Yorkers looking to return to the workforce: Silver Stars, a program for retired NYC municipal employees; and Civic Engagement Employment Service (ReServe Inc.), a program for all older adults in New York City. In this concept paper, which will inform a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP), NYC Aging presents its plan to combine the administration of the current Civic Engagement Employment Service and Silver Stars programs into one overarching program. It will be housed under one contract mechanism to improve the City’s ability to match older adults within NYC agencies, non-mayoral agencies, and non-profit agencies that have a contract with NYC Aging that have unmet business needs, which will improve program administrative efficiencies and achieve economies of scale. In preparation for this concept paper and the subsequent RFP, NYC Aging held stakeholder engagement sessions and conducted surveys for participant feedback. Reflections from the stakeholder engagement can be found in *Appendix 1* of this document. We invite further stakeholder reflections and input on ways to improve and enhance the services these combined programs will provide.

Purpose and Rationale for the Concept Paper

Currently, there are nearly 1.8 million New Yorkers aged 60 and older, making up about 20% of the City’s residents.¹ In fact, by December 31, 2024, every individual in the baby boomer generation will be at least 60 years old. NYC Aging is committed to supporting older adults in their desire to continue to live at home safely and in circumstances that will allow them to continue to enjoy their lives and contribute to their neighborhoods. As the lead Mayoral agency for the older adult population, and the largest agency in the federal network of Area Agencies on Aging, NYC Aging promotes the development and provision of accessible services for older persons and serves as their advocate on legislative and policy issues.

Many retired older adults are eager to remain in the workforce. In New York City, 790,113 adults 55 years or older are employed (36% of the 55+ population).² Some older adults seek to return to work to fill their time meaningfully, by giving back to their communities, to surround themselves with others, and to use

¹ 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate (Civilian noninstitutional population). Public Use Microdata Custom Tables.

² 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate *ibid*.

their skillsets. Others seek to rejoin out of financial necessity, particularly those older adults without enough savings or assets to provide for their own economic security, as well as those facing financial stressors due to inflation or the COVID-19 pandemic.³ The array of circumstances that led many to retire is one cause of wide disparities among retirees in monthly income and access to savings. For many, retirement was calculated, planned, and welcomed. But for others, retirement was involuntary, stemming from job market contractions due to recessions, lay-offs by individual business, and COVID-19. Increasing reliance on income from work and government assistance programs (e.g., social security) to supplement retirement savings also contributes to the economic insecurity of older adults.⁴

As New York City recovers from the pandemic in tandem with a Citywide qualified workforce shortage, older adults are a valuable yet overlooked potential workforce supply due to their motivation, skillsets, and institutional knowledge.⁵ However, ageism--the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age—often creates and contributes to barriers preventing older adults from achieving gainful and fulfilling employment as they age. In the workplace, ageism may occur when employers erroneously believe (consciously or unconsciously) that older adults lack necessary technical skills, may require additional training, or are simply too old to adequately do the work, resulting in not hiring or discriminating against older adults.⁶ In 2019, employees across the U.S. workforce filed over 15,000 claims of workplace age discrimination, making ageism one of the most frequently filed complaints in the U.S. workforce.⁷ This pervasive phenomenon is harmful to the aging population, the economy, and to potential employers.⁸

Fortunately, employers are beginning to combat ageism and recognize the benefits of including older adults in the workplace.⁹ For example, the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging reports that employers are increasingly trying to hire older workers to reduce labor shortages.¹⁰ Across the country, states are expediting license renewals and creating refresher training courses so that nurses and other medical professionals who have left the healthcare can easily return to fill the vacancies created by the pandemic; other employers in technology and financial fields are engaged in similar efforts.¹¹

NYC Aging's workforce programs aim to bolster mechanisms to employ older adults in temporary project assignments, helping retirees gain more financial stability and combatting ageism.

³ <https://agelessnewyork.cityofnewyork.us/research-impact/>; <https://www.aging.senate.gov/press-releases/senator-braun-more-older-workers-returning-to-workforce-due-to-rising-inflation>

⁴ In New York City specifically, 16% of New Yorkers aged 55 or older currently live at or below the Federal Poverty Line ("FPL") compared to 10% of 55+ adults in the U.S. more generally, and 34% of 50+ New Yorkers live at or below 200% of the FPL (compared to 25% of 55+ in the U.S.) 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate (Civilian noninstitutional population). Public Use Microdata Custom Tables.

⁵ <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-an-aging-population-might-not-doom-the-american-economy/amp/>

⁶ <https://agelessnewyork.cityofnewyork.us/research-impact/>; <https://hbr.org/2020/06/how-the-pandemic-has-created-new-demand-for-older-workers>

⁷ <https://agelessnewyork.cityofnewyork.us/research-impact/>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/desa/world-losing-billions-annually-age-based-prejudice-and-discrimination>;

⁹ <https://hbr.org/2020/06/how-the-pandemic-has-created-new-demand-for-older-workers>;

<https://www.aging.senate.gov/press-releases/senator-braun-more-older-workers-returning-to-workforce-due-to-rising-inflation>

¹⁰ <https://www.aging.senate.gov/press-releases/senator-braun-more-older-workers-returning-to-workforce-due-to-rising-inflation>

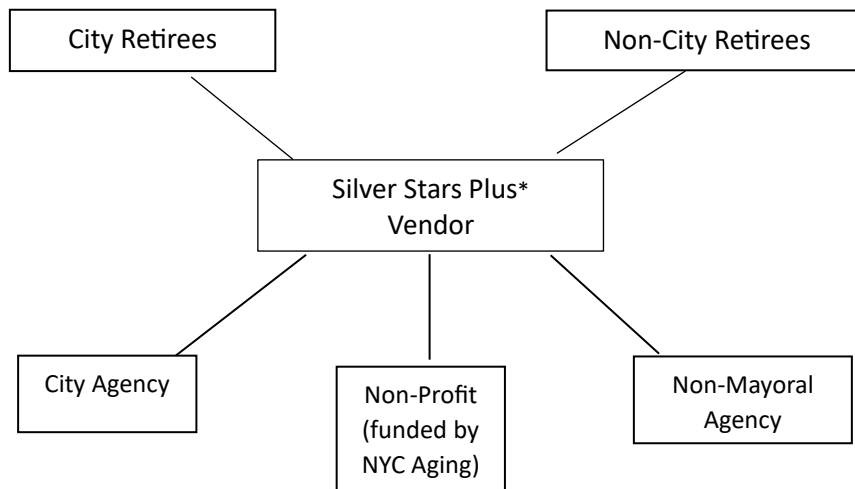
¹¹ <https://hbr.org/2020/06/how-the-pandemic-has-created-new-demand-for-older-workers>

Proposed Program Structure

Through its Older Adult Workforce Programs targeted towards retirees, NYC Aging currently offers City agencies the opportunity to address specific project goals with experienced retired professionals and combat ageism. These programs allow city agencies to fulfill their business needs with an experienced workforce, while also providing retirees with the opportunity to earn an income, make meaningful contributions, and enjoy office social interactions.

The upcoming RFP will combine the management of Silver Stars and the Civic Engagement Employment Services programs under one entity. NYC Aging will be seeking one third-party vendor to oversee this new program serving both City retirees and non-City older adult retirees— essentially integrating Silver Stars and Civic Engagement Employment Service programs. This new structure will ensure a smoother and swifter assignment process for the City’s older adult population, increase the City’s ability to match qualified older retirees with City agencies and broader workforce needs, and reduce administrative onboarding delays for managers.

As part of the new combined program, NYC Aging proposes that both City government retirees and any other retirees of the age 55 or older will be eligible for assignment at a host site, which can be within City agencies, non-mayoral agencies and non-profit agencies that have a contract with NYC Aging. NYC Aging is projecting that the Silver Stars Plus vendor work with 231 retirees annually.



* As NYC Aging moves to manage these two current programs under one cohesive structure, there will be one name for the larger program. NYC Aging is proposing Silver Stars Plus.

To manage the program, facilitation between NYC Aging, the third-party vendor, and employers is crucial. Below is a breakdown of responsibilities of each entity:

NYC Aging	Vendor	Host Sites (NYC agencies, non-Mayoral offices and non-profits)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage MOUs with City Agencies and non-profits who will be host sites • Support coordination and linkages between vendor and host sites as financial intermediary • Support marketing and outreach • Provide contract oversight and technical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit participants¹², including maintaining database of applicants for placement with ability to sort as city/non-city retirees • Conduct screenings, interviews, and assessments • Identify positions and match candidates' skills and interests with positions • Facilitate onboarding process for participant alongside host site (ex. paperwork, finger printing, etc.) • Process payroll and taxation • Report monthly to NYC Aging on data and outcomes (applicant pool, postings, matches, and retiree demographics) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create project-based assignments for retirees • Work with vendor to facilitate matching • Provide funding for position • Following project completion, identify opportunities to onboard older adults in longer term employment opportunities

As the Contractor for the Silver Stars Plus program, the Vendor would be evaluated on performance through monthly narrative progress reports that include performance metrics, including, but not limited to, number of job opportunities developed, number of potential participants interested, number of enrolled participants, number of participants placed and duration of participant placement.

The RFP will provide more details about the proposed program, including number of hours participants can engage in project-based assignments, rate of pay, and more. NYC Aging encourages feedback on our proposed reforms and other suggestions about how to address the above and any additional barriers in the new program structure with the goal of creating work opportunities for older adults and meeting City and non-profit workforce needs.

Seeking Input on Additional Concepts

As we approach an upcoming RFP for the program, we are presenting the following additional areas of focus where we invite stakeholder reflections and input on ways to improve and enhance the services these combined programs will provide.

Payments to Retiree Participants

¹² Although there will be a “no wrong door” approach to accessing this program, the vendor will be the primary party responsible for recruiting participants.

Currently both programs utilize hourly pay attached to each position; however, NYC Aging understands that each host site would like the ability to set its own wages according to the position for which it is recruiting (rather than a set rate), therefore increasing flexibility of pay for participants. The rate of pay should be competitive, tied to the market rate of the assignment in which the participant will be placed, and conform, at least, to minimum wage regulations.¹³

Additionally, we recognize that there are potential concerns for some retired City employees (and other retirees) regarding the number of hours worked impacting pension and other income requirements or other City benefits. It is essential for vendors to assist participants with processes of tracking payment and other mechanisms that flag if/when total pay exceeds allowable pension thresholds.

Training

A strategic goal for NYC Aging around older adult workforce opportunities is to provide reskilling, credentialing, and training for older New Yorkers, so they can maximize participation in the labor force, as well as earn a living wage. To help meet the needs of matching, it would be imperative for the contractor to develop strategies and approaches to address upskilling/reskilling of retirees, such as enhancing interview and technology skills, or updating resumes, as well as to provide workforce labor standards training (e.g., sexual harassment, diversity and inclusion).

Recruitment

Through this new iteration of the program, NYC Aging is looking to identify best practices on recruitment, including employer engagement, that could be applied to those employers/providers who work with older adults. The City is looking to strengthen its commitment to addressing any structural challenges older adults face when returning to employment.

Outreach to Culturally Diverse and Unique Populations

NYC Aging's priorities reflect the diversification of NYC's older adult population that has occurred in the past few decades. As with other recent NYC Aging procurements, the upcoming RFP presents an important opportunity to create more equity by encouraging providers to adopt innovative models for delivering services to key communities, including participants with limited English language proficiency (LEP) and diverse language and cultural needs. Generally, although executive directors, program directors, and current participants themselves feel that the current Silver Stars and Civic Engagement Employment Service programs address cultural competency well, there is always more that can be done to reach underserved and isolated populations.

Conclusion

Through this concept paper, NYC Aging seeks ideas, insights, reactions and stakeholder input from those with expertise and knowledge about the older adult workforce, around how best to enhance the services provided, expand the program's reach, and support better outcomes for older New Yorkers.

¹³ If New York State's minimum wage were to increase, vendors would be required to comply upon the onset of the new wage.

Subcontracting

The new RFP will continue to allow for subcontracting for no more than 49% for meaningful service as part of the program. All subcontractors are subject to NYC Aging approval.

Total Funding/Sources of Funding/Method of Payment

Funding for the Silver Stars Plus Program will be \$6,376,500 annually (\$19,129,500 for the three years). Funding may change at the time of the release of the RFP and/or thereafter, depending on availability of funds. NYC Aging anticipates awarding one contract for the Silver Stars Plus program.

Funding is determined by the host sites (e.g., City agencies and non-for-profit organizations) for each position for which it is recruiting, which is based on the minimum amount of participants. NYC Aging anticipates utilizing a rate-based reimbursement method of payment.

Anticipated Procurement Timeline

NYC Aging is planning to release an RFP in late-February 2024. The expected proposal submission deadline is set for early April 2024, and awards are expected to be announced in late May 2024. The expected contract commencement date is July 1, 2024.

Evaluation of RFP Proposals

Evaluation committees will review and rate each responsive proposal. NYC Aging reserves the right to conduct site visits, interview proposers, and/or request that proposers make presentations and/or demonstrations, as NYC Aging deems applicable and appropriate. However, the Agency reserves the right to award a contract on the basis of initial proposal received without information attained post proposal submission.

If, during the evaluation process or at any subsequent stage, it is determined that the proposer has intentionally provided false or misleading information, NYC Aging reserves the right to reject the proposal and refuse to award a contract. It is anticipated that proposals will be evaluated pursuant to evaluation criteria set out in the RFP. These will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience, demonstrated level of organizational capability, and quality of proposed program approach and design.

Proposed Term of the Contract

It is anticipated that the term of the contract(s) awarded from this forthcoming RFP will be from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2027. NYC Aging reserves the right to renew the contracts for an additional year, up to three (3) times.

Use of PASSPort and Prequalification

To respond to the upcoming RFP and all other Human/Client Services RFPs, organizations must have an account and an Approved HHS Accelerator PQL qualification status in PASSPort. Proposals and Prequalification applications will ONLY be accepted through PASSPort.

If you do not have a PASSPort account or Approved PASSPort HHS Accelerator PQL Application, please visit nyc.gov/passport to get started.

If you have any questions about your HHS Accelerator PQL status or for assistance with creating a PASSPort account, please contact MOCS Service Desk through the contact form nyc.gov/mocshelp.

Contact Information and Deadline for Questions/Comments

Comments on this concept paper are invited by no later than **January 29th, 2024**. Please email Mary Tracy at RFP@aging.nyc.gov and write “Silver Stars Plus Concept Paper” in the subject line.

Appendix 1: Participant and Stakeholder Engagement

To inform the proposed changes described above, NYC Aging conducted stakeholder engagement throughout the Spring and Summer of 2023. This research engaged program participants and agency stakeholders to inquire about satisfaction with the programs.

Participant Feedback

A survey was conducted specifically for Silver Stars participants in May 2023, with a response rate of 278 individuals who had signed up for Silver Stars but did not accept a project assignment. Survey participants were, on average, 65 years old and had retired from a NYC agency within the past 1-4 years. The responding participants indicated that the key job-specific factors impacting their decision not to accept Silver Stars project assignment were:

1. Not feeling their skills and/or work experiences matched the opportunities being offered;
2. Not being interested in any of the opportunities listed;
3. Not having an updated resume and/or cover letter; and
4. Project assignments were only offered in person, and they either preferred remote or lacked affordable, disability-friendly transportation.¹⁴

NYC Aging encourages vendors to address these barriers when conducting outreach, as well as onboarding and training program participants.

Agency Feedback

NYC Aging conducted a survey and two focus groups in Summer 2023 for agencies that had hired Civic Engagement Employment Service and/or Silver Stars participants. Agencies expressed largely positive experiences with both programs. Agencies reported that the primary reasons behind their decision to participate in the programs were staffing shortages, cost savings, specific project needs, mentoring of newer staff and succession planning. Overall, agencies expressed that there was value in the ability to be matched with retirees because of the wealth of knowledge and experience they can bring to the role.

Agencies also noted some challenges:

- Difficulty identifying applicants with the needed skill sets and qualifications for common assignments (HR/Payroll, Finance, Procurement, direct client services/case work);
- Barriers that exist due to city regulations, such as lack of remote work, residency requirements, and salary restrictions; and
- Long onboarding process.

The plan to combine the Silver Stars and Civic Engagement Employment Service programs would help to address the above concerns, as combining the programs will increase and diversify the pool of eligible applicants and positions and would allow agencies to connect with potential participants who have retired from other City agencies or who worked outside NYC government, supporting needed matches.

¹⁴ 58% of the participants indicated the assignment's proximity to their home was very important or extremely important, but only 29% indicated that it was extremely important or very important that the assignment be remote, suggesting participants would be willing to work in person if they could secure proper transportation.