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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG ANNOUNCES NEW “LINK” INITIATIVE TO CONNECT  
LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS WITH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

*Eight New Programs Will Help Low-Income New Yorkers Strengthen Skills and Pursue Higher-Wage Employment Opportunities*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the New York City Economic Development Corporation today announced the LINK – Leveraging Innovations and our Neighborhoods in the Knowledge economy – Initiative, eight new programs designed to connect low-income New Yorkers with opportunities in the city’s knowledge economy. The programs are designed to strengthen the skills and employability of New Yorkers with low incomes and to foster business activity that provides employment opportunities for those with less formal training, helping to alleviate key challenges that prevent many from moving up the economic ladder. The LINK Initiative is designed to increase opportunities for New Yorkers across the five boroughs and is being funded by a partnership between the Economic Development Corporation, the Human Resources Administration and the Center for Economic Opportunity. The Mayor made today’s announcement at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow in Bushwick and was joined by Economic Development Corporation President Seth W. Pinsky, Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar, Small Business Services Deputy Commissioner Greg Bishop, Center for Economic Opportunity Executive Director Kristin Morse, Mayor’s Office of Human Capital Development Executive Director Michelle Light, Council Member Stephen Levin, Council Member Diana Reyna, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow Executive Director Randy Peers.

“Every day we’re working to make sure that our record job growth continues in New York City,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “We’re doing that by investing in skills programs – like the LINK Initiative – that will keep New Yorkers competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge economy.”

“Under Mayor Bloomberg’s leadership, the number of private sector jobs in the city has reached a record high and we’ve diversified our economy to create opportunities in major industries like technology,” said Deputy Mayor Robert K. Steel. “With these new initiatives, we are making a major commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers can participate in the knowledge economy.”

(more)

“The goal here is to make stronger ties for low income New Yorkers to our growing tech economy - ties that would not otherwise emerge naturally but may flourish with the right attention and incentives,” said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs. “This reflects a strong commitment across the city’s employment and economic development sectors to work to ensure all New Yorkers benefit from the fruits of our economic resurgence.”

“The eight pilot programs we are announcing today share a single goal: ensuring that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to succeed in the knowledge economy,” said New York City Economic Development Corporation President Seth W. Pinsky. “The LINK initiative will increase access to employment opportunities and provide training that will enable low-income New Yorkers to secure jobs in growing sectors that are critical to New York City’s 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.”

NYCEDC is working with partners, including the Human Resources Administration, the Center for Economic Opportunity and Small Business Services, who will assist in implementing pilots of eight initiatives that make up LINK. The eight programs serve to better connect the City’s low-income residents with emerging opportunities.

- **LEAP, The “Learn as you Earn” Advancement Program:** Seeks to increase the employability of Associate’s degree and Certificate program candidates in the knowledge economy through paid work experience combined with workplace-relevant classroom learning. The program will focus on in-demand occupations and will seek to improve graduation/completion rates at community colleges. For example: A student working on their Certificate or Associate’s degree in healthcare IT at CUNY’s New York City College of Technology would get a paid internship (by the employer) at a technology company or financial services firm rather than working in a field unrelated to their area of study.
- **Immigrant Bridge Program:** A program to increase the earnings potential of unemployed or underemployed, foreign-trained immigrants with advanced degrees and in-demand skills (e.g., accounting, engineering, medicine), by helping them create individualized career plans, providing them with soft skills training, and assisting with the job search process. Participants also have access to a microloan opportunity to receive \$1,000 – \$10,000 loans for educational and/or general personal expenses incurred while pursuing a higher-paid, technical job. For example: A doctor with a degree from the Dominican Republic working in a service job would be able to complete the program and be employed as a medical researcher or radiologist, potentially earning \$15,000 to \$30,000 more per year.
- **DigitalWork NYC:** Targets young adults ages 16-26 who are neither in school nor working to increase awareness of online work opportunities that allow participants to earn money completing digital tasks (e.g., transcription, image tagging, etc.), build an employment history, and create a pathway to digital employment. For example: A young adult currently not attending school or working could complete the program and develop a resume demonstrating proficiency in Microsoft Office as well as work history in the

field. This now makes it more likely that the individual will find a job or internship in the technology field.

- **Jobs and Economic Mobility Track in NYC BigApps:** Aims to create innovative “apps” to improve the lives of disadvantaged New Yorkers via technology platforms. The program will initially focus on the development of mobile applications relating to workforce opportunities (e.g., job listings) and worker support services (e.g., childcare, healthcare, transit, etc.). For example: This program will create apps that could assist a young adult looking to work in hospitality find a job in the field within a 30 minute subway ride. The program could also lead to an app that would find accommodating daycare facilities for parents looking to begin working.
- **NYC Business Innovation Challenge:** A five-borough, dual-round competition that challenges businesses, service-providers and community groups to unlock the potential in NYC’s workforce and neighborhoods by incentivizing businesses to invest in their employees. For example: A business could submit an idea to train their workers or provide ESL courses to help the workers become managers.
- **Vacant Lot Activation Program:** Will put long-term vacant city-owned land to productive use through a variety of alternative and temporary uses. The pilot will focus on an area in Brownsville and East New York. For example: A long vacant lot in East New York could house a pop-up store in the fall, which would bring jobs to the neighborhood and help a retailer test a new market.
- **PROGRESS Networks:** Develops consortia of small- to medium-sized business enterprises to leverage economies of scale so as to lower the cost of doing business or investing in workers. Lower costs and/or higher revenues will allow firms to provide enhanced worker benefits and services and hire more workers. For example: A Chamber of Commerce or BID could bring its members together and create a purchasing network where they can pool their buying power. These entities could purchase training for their employees or goods and services at a lower cost, thereby investing in their workers, and improving their bottom line by investing those savings into their business, leading to future growth and the hiring of more workers.
- **LIFT Entrepreneurship:** Supports low-income entrepreneurs as they start and grow businesses by providing business incubator space, technical support, access to loans, and partnerships with local anchor institutions. The first of two LIFT sites will be located in the Norwood/Fordham area in the Bronx. For example: the program will work with local residents in the Bronx to expand their existing businesses or help individuals with business plans designed to assist these local businesses.

“HRA is a proud partner in EDC’s LINK initiative especially because we know that employment is the surest path out of poverty,” said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. “That EDC has focused these economic development efforts on the employment needs of low-income New Yorkers greatly increases the benefits for New York City.”

“As the City works to fortify its economic recovery, it is critical that we build human capital in communities that have long suffered with high poverty and high unemployment,” said CEO Executive Director Kristin Morse. “CEO has generated more than 50 innovative antipoverty programs since 2006, and we are proud to work with EDC as we continue to help all New Yorkers prepare for careers in the new economy.”

“Stronger small businesses means more jobs for New Yorkers. Services like technical assistance, loans, and incubator space are key ingredients to helping small businesses start and grow,” said Rob Walsh, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services. “These new initiatives through the Economic Development Corporation will help strengthen entrepreneurs and jobseekers in low-income neighborhoods throughout NYC.”

“By helping low-income New Yorkers acquire new skills we can provide better access to the knowledge economy and its job opportunities while simultaneously strengthening our communities,” said City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn. “I applaud Mayor Bloomberg and EDC for this new and important initiative and look forward to combining it with our relevant Council programs to connect more New Yorkers to job opportunities throughout the five boroughs.”

“Bravo to Mayor Bloomberg and NYC EDC President Seth Pinsky on creating the LINK Initiative, which will offer much-needed employment opportunities for low-income New Yorkers while at the same time improving access to educational and skill-enhancing programs to bolster long-term job prospects,” said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. “The LINK Initiative is exactly the type of innovation we need to ensure that all New Yorkers are able to reach the zenith of their potential.”

“The LINK Initiative will help provide our low-income residents with the tools and skills they need to thrive in the job market,” said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. “This new initiative will help empower Bronxites and residents across the five boroughs to become successful professionals, enhancing their quality of life while at the same time helping strengthen our economy. I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg and the NYCEDC for launching this uplifting initiative that will create stronger communities throughout our City.”

“I am excited by NYC EDC’s work in leveraging the City’s resources to tap into the wealth of potential that exists in our struggling communities,” said Council Member Diana Reyna, Chair of the Committee on Small Business. “The LINK initiatives are a unique and innovative suite of programs that address some of the most entrenched issues facing my constituency. Congratulations to Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow for being selected as one of the communities partners in the LINK DigitalWork NYC program.”

“As a city, we should be relentless in finding ways to open up new opportunities for working people,” said Council Member Levin. “LINK is a step in the right direction for the way we do business in New York City. By implementing the eight programs that make up the LINK Initiative, we can unlock the potential of New Yorkers of all education and skill-levels, as well as grow our economy.”

“The LINK Initiative is a worthwhile endeavor that will go a long way to addressing the economic challenges that this city’s most vulnerable residents face on a daily basis,” said Councilmember Annabel Palma. “I applaud Mayor Bloomberg and the Economic Development Corporation for their work on this initiative.”

“I am excited about the new LINK initiative which will provide critical opportunities for many low income New Yorkers that would otherwise encounter challenges when seeking employment opportunities,” said Council Member Karen Koslowitz, Committee on Economic Development Chair. “I applaud Mayor Bloomberg and the NYC Economic Development Corporation in their efforts to address some of the key obstacles and barriers low income New Yorkers have to face and providing opportunities that would be vital in fostering economic growth”

“The Parks Department is happy to be part of DigitalWork NYC, an opportunity to increase technology awareness for New Yorkers,” said NYC Parks Deputy Commissioner for Management and Budget Robert L. Garafola. “Parks looks forward to providing this needed technology career enrichment training and support at our seven computer resource centers. This program is especially valuable to the young people of our city and their ability to contribute to our global knowledge economy.”

“MobileWorks is excited to support the future of job training through DigitalWorkNYC,” said Anand Kulkarni CEO, MobileWorks. “Programs like DigitalWorkNYC are central to our social mission, strengthening local economies by linking citizens with online work opportunities from a variety of small businesses and enterprises worldwide. DigitalWorkNYC represents a win for New York citizens, for our clients, and for the American economy.”

“CAMBA is delighted to be a part of the LINK Initiative with our Immigrant Bridge Workforce Program (iBridge),” said Joanne M. Oplustil, President and CEO of CAMBA. “Building on our decades of experience connecting high-skilled immigrant professionals to careers in the U.S., iBridge serves people in the STEM and health sectors and helps them re-establish professions in the city’s rapidly growing knowledge industries. iBridge harnesses the skills of immigrant professionals and helps fuel the city’s 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.”

“We are so excited to be a part of the team building this bridge to the future for people who came here in the pursuit of happiness and brought their talents of which our whole society will benefit,” said Luba Makhlin, Assistant Vice President, Refugee & Immigrant Services, Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, Inc.

“Twenty-five years ago I asked my Russian-born taxi driver what he did before he emigrated to New York. ‘I was a cardiologist in Russia,’ he replied, ‘but I have no dream of being a doctor in the U.S.’ Mayor Bloomberg and the EDC have just made that dream a possibility for people like my taxi driver and the physicist, the math teacher and the chemical engineer who studied at our school, as well as so many other immigrants in the STEM professions,” said Leslie Robbins, Executive Director, Riverside Language Program. “The creation of the Immigrant Bridge Program recognizes the expertise of our new New Yorkers. Because this new program not only provides training in the English language, interviewing

skills, and resume preparation but also connects students with mentors, finds internships, and helps create a network that they have not had before, New York City will benefit from a whole new pool of intellectual riches.”

“Next Street is proud to partner with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and NYCEDC on the LINK program to provide all New Yorkers with a path to succeed in today’s knowledge-based economy,” said Ron Walker, Next Street managing partner and President. “By elevating NYC’s workforce, we will drive more business growth in the city and improve economic opportunity for all New Yorkers.”

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