

How to Create a Real Job Training Program for Unemployed San Franciscans in the Welfare-to-Work Transition

Recommendations by the San Francisco Living Wage Coalition on Improving the Community Jobs Program

Authors:

Celine, an international student from Switzerland currently attending City College of San Francisco to complete coursework to transfer to San Francisco State University pursuing track to a Ph. D. in industrial organizational psychology.

Hien Le, an international student from Vietnam currently attending City College of San Francisco, major in Economics and Sociology

Karl Kramer, Campaign Co-director, San Francisco Living Wage Coalition

Background

The Community Jobs Program (CJP) was part of an agreement in 2000 between the San Francisco Living Wage Coalition and the Mayor's office in exchange for compromises to the Minimum Compensation Ordinance. While there were earlier efforts in the Community Jobs Initiative, the first six months of the program were from December, 2001, to June, 2002. The original agreement was for an on-the-job-training program in non-public-sector community service jobs. The original objective was to help providing opportunities for living wage jobs to participants in the welfare-to-work transition, the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP), who face the greatest barriers to steady employment, while providing a monthly income to meet basic survival needs.

CJP is a grant diversion program – the participant's CalWORKs grant is paid out as wages, augmented from the county's general fund. In 2001, state legislative and regulatory obstacles to diverting TANF grants to wage-based supported employment programs were removed. Assembly member Dion Aroner's bill AB 1233 was passed into law allowing counties to provide wage-based community service jobs for people who have been unable to find unsubsidized employment within 24 months of signing their welfare-to-work plan. The CalWORKs grant is diverted to pay wages in a community service job. The worker still remains eligible for childcare assistance, transportation assistance, MediCal and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The state regulatory changes or interpretation permitted CalWORKs participants who have passed the 24-month limit to engage in on-the-job-training activities that include a wage supplement

beyond the CalWORKs grant. At the time, Bob Campbell, attorney for the State Department of Social Services, said that although counties may not use CalWORKs single allocation dollars to supplement wages for CalWORKs participants, counties may use any other funds for the purpose, including county general funds. This was clarified in final regulations for AB 1233 which were released in June, 2001. With the passage of AB 98 effective in 2008, counties also are reimbursed 50 percent of their subsidy up to a level that is 50 percent of the CalWORKs grant for a period of six months. Participants from the County Adult Assistance Program are fully funded by the county's general fund.

Since no controlling legislation was ever passed to guide this program, it has been difficult to uphold standards and track progress and few participants have transitioned to living wage jobs. The purpose of this study is to support legislation to increase the effectiveness of CJP as a training program that fast-tracks participants into available entry-level City jobs, as well as preparing them for job searches in the private sector.

Wages

Current Situation

Participants are paid \$11.03 per hour, the rate in the Minimum Compensation Ordinance for non-profit organizations. For-profit businesses that have City service contracts must pay at least \$12.43 per hour with annual cost-of-living adjustments based on the Bay Area Consumer Price Index. City-funded non-profit organizations can defer cost-of-living adjustments to the minimum rate until either the mayor or Board of Supervisors provides additional funding for the wage increases. If the mayor does not put additional funding in the budget he presents to the Board of Supervisors, he has to issue a letter explaining why he did not and to certify that there are insufficient revenues coming into the City's general fund. The Board of Supervisors then are to hold a public hearing and can choose to add money to the budget.

---Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 96 percent responded that a cost-of-living adjustment was very important to them, and 4 percent reported that it was somewhat important, 1 percent that it was not important and 1 percent did not respond. A CJP participant said "I am a single mother in the CJP supporting myself and two children."

In a survey from May 2010 to July 2010 of 153 CalWORKs and PAES participants, 97 percent responded that a wage increase would be helpful, 1 percent responded that it would not be and 2 percent did not respond.

Proposed legislative solution

The Minimum Compensation Ordinance did not intend that a program of a City department should be treated the same as a city-funded non-profit agency. The legislation would clarify that the community service jobs shall provide the minimum rate that includes the most recent annual cost-of-living adjustment set in the Minimum Compensation Ordinance (currently \$12.43 per hour).

Hours

Current Situation

Participants are required to do 35 hours for the Community Jobs Program, 25 hours of community service work at a non-profit organization and 10 hours of class time. Participants are not paid for the 10 hours of class time. Also, at the beginning, there is an unpaid period of job readiness training. Although participants' six months time limit starts with their initial orientation, however, they are not paid until they are placed in a job in a "host site," a non-profit organization. Some participants have remained in the unpaid job readiness training for an extended period until positions at non-profit organizations are found in which to place them. During this time they are not paid by the hour and only receive their monthly CalWORKs grant.

---Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 96 percent reported that having all of the work hours got paid was very important, 3 percent believed that it was somewhat important and 1 percent said it was not important. Moreover, 95 percent of the participants reported that having a choice of a 40 hour week was very important to them, 2 percent said it was not important and 3% responded that it was somewhat important. One participant stated it was important to "To get more hours and to keep [the job]"

In the survey from May 2010 to July 2010 of 153 CalWORKs and PAES participants, 91 percent responded that they wanted the choice to increase hours to 40 hours per week, 7 percent did not want the option and 7 percent did not respond.

Legislative Solution

CJP participants should be paid for all work-related activities, including the initial job readiness training and any other training and classes. In addition, CJP participants should have the option to work a 40-hour work week if they so choose a longer work week than the federal and state minimum requirements, unless the executive director of the Human Service Agency determines that it would cause a participant to “income out” of CalWORKs eligibility.

Size of the Program

Current Situation

The Human Services Agency has data available to July 1, 2003, recording 2230 enrollments in the program, although this may include counting people who have been in the program more than once. The Agency does not maintain an unduplicated count. Since then, 969 participants (again a duplicated count) have completed six months of the program, and 540 participants have found employment.

From July 2008 to March 2009, enrolled in CJP were 131 CalWORKs participants and 41 participants from Personal Assisted Employment Services (PAES), a county program for childless unemployed adults.

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009, which provided funds to CJP through the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, the number of CalWORKs participants in CJP increased to 879 participants in 2009-2010. The rapid expansion of the program, when there were federal stimulus funds available, shows the huge unmet need for the program among CalWORKs and CAAP participants.

In fiscal year 2010/2011, there had been 73 to 88 participants in the program at any given time. From June 30, 2011, to April, 2013, PAES participants have not been included in CJP.

According to the Human Services Agency, the “Community Job Program is not advertised as it’s for participants who are compliant in HSA supervised job search, but unsuccessful in obtaining unsubsidized employment, Wage Subsidy, or subsidized City Department or non-profit internships.”

CalWORKs parents have reported that they would hear about CJP from friends, but case managers at the HSA would not provide them with information about the program. In addition, CJP information is not easily accessible on the HSA website.

A CJP participant reported that the program needs to “Get more people hired, a lot of us really want to work.”

Legislative Solution

The Human Services Agency should actively recruit willing participants to reach a goal of 850 participants – 600 parents with children from CalWORKs, the state welfare-to-work program, and 250 single adults from the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP). There could be some kind of trigger mechanism like in the Minimum Compensation Ordinance that based on a tripartite report from the Comptroller, Budget Analyst and Mayor’s Budget Office, if there are insufficient revenues coming into the City’s coffers, the Mayor can specify a number of participants in the program for an upcoming fiscal year that is lower than the goal.

Length of Program

Current Situation

There is a six-month time limit in the Community Jobs Program. Previously, after six months, there would be month-to-month extensions up to nine months. As of March 24, 2011, CalWORKs participants are limited to six months because of AB 98, which reimburses counties 50 percent of their subsidy up to a level that is 50 percent of the CalWORKs grant for a period of six months.

Many entry-level City jobs require “minimum qualifications” of one year of related experience.

A longer period of time in CJP is crucial for parents to stabilize their finances and family situation.

----- Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 96 percent believed that increasing the time of the program to 12 to 15 months was very important, 4 percent reported that it was somewhat important, 1 percent thought it was not important and 1 percent did not response.

In the survey from May 2010 to July 2010, or 153 CalWORKs and PAES participants, 94 percent responded that they wanted the time in CJP increased to 12 to 15 months, 1 percent responded that they did not want the time increased and 5 percent did not respond.

A CJP participant stated “I would like to find a job, paid training program, [that] lasts at least a year.” “[We need] more money, and job options, and more time

to be in the program,” said another CJP participant. And another responded “good jobs [are] longer than six months.”

Legislative Solution

The time that participants are in CJP should be extended so that they can meet the minimum qualifications for entry-level city jobs. Most entry-level city jobs require a minimum of one year of related experience. The length of the placements need to be adjusted to meet the equivalent of one year of full-time work.

Supports and Benefits

Current Situation

CalWORKs participants in CJP receive supports for child care, transportation, clothes (although a complaint is that they only receive clothes that are appropriate for job interviews but not comfortable for wearing on the job), and ancillary services, as well as MediCal and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The state cut vision and dental coverage out of MediCal. A major problem among CJP participants is that many need glasses but cannot afford them and many miss work to go to SF General Hospital for abscessed teeth that could have been prevented with dental care.

A welfare-to-work participant reported that she needs “[additional] childcare-assistance payments in order for me to get back to work and be in the job training program. My son has special needs.”

Legislative Solution

CJP Participants currently in CalWORKs shall continue receiving supports for child care, transportation, work clothes (including for everyday work not just job interviews) and ancillary services, as well as MediCal and the Earned Income Tax Credit. In addition, they would receive vision and dental care through the Community Health Network.

CJP Participants currently in the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP) should be afforded health care coverage, along with receiving vision and dental care through the Community Health Network. They also should continue receiving supports for transportation and housing.

Protections

Current Situation

According to the Human Services Agency, fair hearing rights pertain to actions or non actions taken by CalWORKs and PAES programs, and not the CJP program. Participants are informed of Fair Hearing Rights at the CalWORKs or CAAP (for PAES) Orientations and the information is on the back of CalWORKs and PAES Notice of Actions.

CalWORKs and PAES client advocates inform participants of CalWORKs and PAES grievance procedures at CalWORKs and PAES Group Employment Preparation sessions. Each contractor is required to have Program Grievance Procedures which HSA says it reviews when it does contract monitoring. The contractor is supposed to inform participants of grievance procedures at orientation and it is in the Participant Handbook which participants receive at Orientation.

Most participants do not recall being informed of fair hearing rights and grievance procedures, probably because it was lost among all the information they received in their initial orientation.

Legislative Solution

Fair Hearing rights and Grievance procedures should apply to all participants in the Community Jobs Program. All CJP participants should be verbally informed of these rights. A separate brochure on these rights should be handed to participants.

On-the-Job Training

Current Situation

The Human Services Agency has not asked the Department of Human Resources to be involved in making sure that the job descriptions of the community service jobs meet the requirements to be considered relevant experience for City jobs. The Human Services Agency itself is not involved in checking job descriptions and does not provide guidance to the non-profit contractors who administer the program.

The Human Services Agency does not accurately track non-profit host sites. The Human Services Agency provided a list of 70 host sites in July, 2011. When surveyed, organizations that were listed as host sites reported that they did not have CJP participants including the Resource Center-Bay View Renaissance Center, Walden House, Bayview Adult Day Health Center, Dr. George Davis Senior Day Center, Mission Neighborhood Health Center, and Salvation Army. Among the listed host sites, 11 sites were Goodwill Stores offering retail positions. The retail sector is one of the lowest paying sectors of the economy. CJP participants reported that after completing the program in a Goodwill store, they would be offered an on-going job at the same store but would have to take a pay cut down to the city minimum wage. Since then, the contract for administering CJP was changed from Goodwill to Arriba Juntos and Young Community Developers and there appears to be more varied job placements in a variety of organizations. In 2012, the list of host sites provided by the Human Services Agency did not include addresses because they said they were no longer compiling that information.

Legislative Solution

The Human Services Agency should work with the Department of Human Resources to develop a set of criteria so that the jobs in CJP would be designed in order to meet requirements for entry-level city job classifications. The Human Services Agency should work with the Department of Human Resources to match the work experience in non-public-sector community-service jobs with the minimum qualifications for entry-level city jobs. The program should provide participants with an opportunity to acquire relevant experience and references to help meet minimum qualifications for identified employment opportunities with the City. The Human Services Agency should accurately track and monitor the placements and host site of participants.

---- In the survey from May 2010 to July 2010 of 153 CalWORKs and PAES participants, 95 percent reported that they wanted the training to qualify them for an entry-level City job.

Class Training

Current Situation

According to the Human Services Agency, they have four components to the mandatory "Professional Development classroom training" - Creation of Job Portfolio (resume, master application, cover letters), basic job skills (time and anger management), peer support groups to balance family/work issues (from

Westside CalWORKS clinic staff), and an E-Learning opportunity which offers over 200 courses online that are available for participants according to their vocational goal. However, the contractor Arriba Juntos has never heard of the E-learning opportunity. Previously, CJP participants had complained that there was no structure to the computer classes. Currently, the computer classes are using Automatic Office Skills Program which includes training in Word, Excel and Powerpoint. The classes also include the Mavis Becon touch typing program.

-----Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 85 percent responded that that having computer, GED, ESL and other classes was very important, 8 percent thought it was somewhat important and 7 percent responded that it was not important.

The Department of Human Resources is not providing guidance on the initial training nor on-going classes. Participants are not given training that is specific to their job goals. The classes do not satisfy any training required for City positions.

-----Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 87 percent reported that having the training match their career goals was very important, 6 percent responded that it was somewhat important and 7 percent thought it was not important.

Legislative Solution

Department of Human Resources should be involved in developing better standards in the Community Jobs Program for job training to better suit the needs of the City and County of San Francisco as a potential employer. The job training should include training that is specific to the job fields in which participants are interested. The Department of Human Resources should check the training curriculum to ensure that it meets the minimum qualifications for the entry-level City jobs that CJP participants identify as their vocational goals.

----- In the survey from May 2010 to July 2010 of 153 CalWORKS and PAES participants, 95 percent responded that they wanted the Community Jobs Program to qualify them for an entry-level City job and 5 percent did not respond.

Transition to Employment

Current Situation

Upon completion of the program, few CJP participants have found long-term employment that is a career ladder to living wage jobs. There is not a clear path from CJP into entry-level City positions. The Human Services Agency is not involved in identifying the job goals of CJP participants. The Department of Human Resources is not involved in matching these job goals to city positions and identifying the related experience that will lead to these jobs. Participants do not receive any certificate for completing the Community Jobs Program. Participants are pressured to find unsubsidized employment quickly while in the program rather than there being any planned curriculum, achievement goals or an expectation that they complete the entire time in the program.

Legislative Solution

The Human Services Agency and the Department of Human Resources should be involved in identifying the job goals of CJP participants, matching them to targeted civil service positions, and identifying the job experience in CJP and in entry-level City jobs that will lead to these job goals. The Community Jobs Program should make participants eligible to apply for entry-level city jobs, as well as being prepared for job searches in the private sector job market. The City and County should fast-track Community Jobs Program participants into available entry-level city jobs. The City should provide certificates to participants who complete CJP that would qualify them for entry-level City jobs.

-----Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 97 percent responded that having the program fast track them into an entry-level City job was very important, 2 percent thought that it was somewhat important and 1 percent responded that it was not important. One participant stated that "It would be great if after six month period they would have another job ready for you. Especially if you are proved to be a good worker."

Another participant said "It took me ...3 years before I got hired."

---Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 96 percent responded that providing a recognized certificate was very important, 2 percent thought it was somewhat important and 2 percent did not respond.

Entry-level Jobs that are a Career Ladder

Current Situation

The Human Services Agency has a program of training CalWORKS participants for entry-level Public Service Trainee positions in the Department of Human Services. However, there is not a clear path for advancing participants towards civil service positions. Also, there is not direct connection between the Community Jobs Program and the Public Service Trainee positions. The Public Service Trainee positions are a 9910 classification. There is another existing job classification called Public Service Aide positions which are classified as 9914 or 9916.

---Of the 441 CalWORKS and PAES participants surveyed from December 2011 to February 2013, 96 percent responded that it is very important to them that entry-level city job would offer further training in a career ladder to City jobs that pay family-supporting wages with good benefits, 2 percent believed it was somewhat important and 2 percent did not respond.

There are good-paying civil service positions that are unnecessarily out-of-reach of those without college degrees. Many of these jobs have minimum qualifications requiring Bachelor's or Master's degrees although on-the-job experience could be an alternative. City departments often inflate the requirements to tailor them to specific people they have in mind to hire.

Legislative Solution

The Department of Human Resources should identify feeder classifications, with pay grade improvements, that would count as training and experience towards a well-paying civil service position. For these civil service positions, the Department of Human Resources would look at what are the necessary requirements for these jobs and, where appropriate, change minimum qualifications that require a college degree in addition to job experience to include only length of related experience when it solely suffices. Whenever possible, the entry-level and feeder classifications should be permanent civil service positions. Any temporary exempt or provisional entry-level City jobs that would be created would be with the approval of the appropriate unions. Public Service Aide positions would be used instead of Public Service Trainee positions. Public Service Aide classifications would have the protection of a collective bargaining agreement and union representation.

Labor and Community Oversight

Current Situation

Without clear oversight, it has been difficult to uphold standards, track progress and monitor results of CJP and increase its effectiveness. There had been inadequate “meet and confer” with appropriate unions when the Human Services Agency created Public Service Trainee positions. There were complaints that Public Service Trainees in the Human Services Agency were doing work that was previously done by laid off city workers. The Human Services Agency do not keep adequate records on the program, including maintaining a count of unduplicated enrollment in CJP.

Legislative Solution

The Human Services Agency and Department of Human Resources should collaborate with organized labor, community-based organizations and CalWORKs recipients to develop a plan for community service jobs and entry-level City jobs. CJP jobs should never be used to eliminate existing higher paid jobs. The priority for expanding slots in CJP is in non-public sector, non-profit positions. Non-profit services need the additional support of subsidized employment. Appropriate unions should approve the creation of entry-level City jobs so that the positions do not displace family-supporting city jobs, or slow the reinstatement of laid-off city employees. Bonafide community-based organizations that advocate for the rights of CJP participants should have access to worksites where CJP participants would be informed that they can choose to meet with a representative in a non-work area during their break.