

## OPINION

By [Dynishal Gross](#)

**NYC workforce development is transforming lives**

In November, I had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at the graduation for a group of New Yorkers who had trained as nurses in their countries of origin and dreamed of continuing in that profession here in New York City. One of the graduation speakers was Barbara, previously a registered nurse in Venezuela, who came to New York seeking a better life.

Upon learning about the [New York City Department of Small Business Service's \(SBS\) NCLEX-RN Training Program at Lehman College](#), Barbara wasted no time applying. Despite balancing the full-time program with part-time work, Barbara graduated at the top of her class, passed the NCLEX licensing exam in December, and already has a job offer.

Barbara is one of 71,000 New Yorkers connected to jobs and training by SBS workforce development programs since Mayor Adams took office. Our other clients include more than 3,200 veterans and military spouses guided by Priority1 employment specialists. A partnership between SBS and the [Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities](#) has helped more than 1,900 New Yorkers with disabilities find accessible employment.

We're extremely proud to have helped more than 1,000 work-authorized "new" New Yorkers find jobs that move them toward stability and independence. These successes are a testament to what's possible when government invests in people to help them achieve their American dream.

At the heart of the free workforce services offered by SBS are walk-in, Workforce1 Career Centers, located in every borough. Workforce1 staff help New Yorkers identify career goals, describe past experience in compelling resumes, practice interviewing, and match with available jobs and supportive services.

Specialized centers help New Yorkers enter in-demand industries like health care, industrial, and transportation. Others provide counseling to overcome barriers common to people across the city, like young people who have left school but not yet found work and those who were born outside the United States. Workforce1 services benefit not only job seekers but also local businesses, which strengthens neighborhoods.

We're using new approaches to encourage New Yorkers to connect with [Workforce1](#). Since the start of a sprint launched by City Hall last spring, the Jobs NYC initiative has brought hiring halls into the heart of communities experiencing high and persistent unemployment. Local experts, including staff from dozens of city agencies and community-based organizations, have collaborated to design and deliver events that are welcoming and impactful.

Using a high level of outreach to attract residents to events where they can access city jobs, find private sector jobs, and sign up for a range of services has worked. Last year alone, Jobs NYC hiring halls hosted more than 3,300 on-site interviews, resulting in more than 1,200 conditional job offers. Jobseekers, employers, and community partners can register for upcoming hiring halls by visiting [jobs.nyc.gov](#).

Training programs like the NCLEX-RN Training Program are SBS' most intensive workforce interventions. New Yorkers with ambition and aptitude come together to complete these trainings in diverse cohorts led by expert instructors.

We're grateful for employer partners who help to inform the curriculum, which increases success, from licensing to job placement. For example, the NCLEX-RN programs SBS supports have achieved a remarkable 94% pass rate for the NCLEX-RN exam, far above the national average of 70%. Graduates often secure high-paying roles, with salaries exceeding \$100,000, while simultaneously helping address critical nursing shortages in our city's hospitals and clinics.

Our focus on health care as a core and growing sector means that an SBS-supported nurse may build their career in the same health care institution as a graduate from a Healthcare Financial Operations cohort, each contributing to health care in a way they and their families can be proud of.

These high-quality, locally informed workforce services advance equity of opportunity and reduce the risks of training and hiring for businesses and jobseekers alike. This is why the mayor's proposed 2025 budget includes new funding for Jobs NYC and sector-based trainings that will help SBS grow and refine our work. At the same time, we need to retain core federal workforce funding, including the flexibility to balance the mix of services needed for New York City's unique context.

We're laying the foundation for a brighter, more inclusive future for all New Yorkers. From helping immigrant nurses like Barbara re-enter their profession to helping young adults earn their first paychecks, we're transforming lives, one opportunity at a time. This is how SBS contributes to making the greatest city in the world the greatest place to raise a family.

*Gross is the commissioner of the [New York City Department of Small Business Services](#).*