



The Voice of the Human Services Community

**2009 MAYORAL CANDIDATE
QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES**

The not-for-profit human services sector and New York City government have an important partnership in the delivery of social services to the City's most vulnerable citizens. Not-for-profits contract with the City to provide specialized, effective, and cost-efficient care in the communities they serve. The following questionnaire seeks to inform the sector and the public about how, as Mayor, you will strengthen this partnership and support community-based organizations as they aim to provide high-quality care.

HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

1. The ever evolving circumstances and needs of New York City communities demand a fluid approach to the delivery of social services. To ensure these policies are adjusted in a timely and meaningful way, it is imperative that policy makers consult and communicate regularly with the not-for-profit agencies responsible for delivering services on behalf of the City of New York. The Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services fosters this communication and helps elevate social service policy issues within the administration. As Mayor, would you continue to have a Deputy Mayor post focused on Health and Human Services and if so please outline your vision for this position and provide some insight into what qualifications you think are important for a potential appointee to have?

Bloomberg

We created a deputy mayor position for health and human services in order to improve coordination and service delivery, and to better respond to the needs of both clients and social service providers. This coordination enabled the City to undertake groundbreaking work to improve social service delivery. For example, we created HHS-Connect, a system that links more than a dozen City agencies so that caseworkers are able to share client information without compromising confidentiality. Better coordination also enabled the creation of an innovative anti-poverty agenda through the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). The CEO has launched a variety of initiatives, including our Child Care Tax Credit, which has provided roughly \$30 million to over 50,000 households, and the Nurse Career Ladders program, which certifies and trains licensed practical nurses in less than a year.

Innovations such as the CEO and HHS-Connect would not have happened without one deputy mayor to provide leadership and vision across multiple agencies. The ability to work with multiple stakeholders to develop and execute a strategic vision is at the core of this work. This coordination has been especially critical as we work to get New Yorkers through the economic downturn as quickly as possible.

Thompson

Yes. In essence, all City agencies are in the human services business. There are also more than a half-dozen City agencies that have health and human services as their core mission, and these agencies should report to the Deputy Mayor. One of the critical responsibilities of this position should be coordination among and between agencies, including City agencies that report to other Deputy Mayors when a particular issue warrants. For example, employment services are spread over many agencies, including the Department of Small Business Services, HRA, and the Department of Youth and Community Development. Not only do they need to work together to eliminate duplication of effort, they also need to build their programs together with a focus on ease of access for clients. Shared web sites for agencies whose programs overlap is another example.

A potential appointee should have strong experience in the core mission of at least one of the agencies falling under his or her jurisdiction. The experience should include significant work experience with a non-profit agency that has had contracts with City agencies because this will help the Deputy Mayor better understand the challenges not-for-profits encounter when doing business with City government and the realities of service provision. Ideally, the person should also have experience in government and possibly in the private sector as well to understand how these entities operate and the strengths and limitations of each. This combination of experience will help the Deputy Mayor design and develop achievable programs and initiatives. The other key element of designing successful policies is a commitment to including all stakeholders—providers and consumers—in their development, and this will be an essential requirement for any individual appointed to this position. Finally, the person must have the ability to motivate City agencies to work together and in the best interest of the public.

2. Measuring client outcomes is essential to understanding the efficacy of service delivery. Not-for-profits regularly review the treatment plans and progress of their clients to learn best practices and ensure success for those struggling with very serious issues like homelessness, addiction, mental illness, unemployment, and child neglect. While the performance of service providers must be measured, sometimes the goals, such as reducing the length of stay, are not in the best interest of the client. As Mayor how would you work with the human services sector to make sure all performance measures and incentives promote the best outcomes for clients?

Bloomberg

Collecting data, making it publicly accessible, and holding agencies and service providers accountable for outcomes have been central to our administration's approach to human services. We strongly believe that better coordination among agencies when helping advance clients along a continuum of services is critical. The transition from one agency's services to another should be seamless. That's why we've created tools like HHS-Connect that, by sharing information across agencies, make measuring client-focused outcomes far more effective. We will continue to collaborate with partners in the not-for-profit sector to ensure that outcomes are focused on the best interests of both clients receiving services and tax payers who are financing those services.

Thompson

Outcome measurement should be carefully tailored to consider a full range of factors that indicate success and to realistically assess what best defines success. The City should work

more closely with service providers on developing measurements that fairly and more accurately assess progress toward reaching stated objectives. For example, job training and placement contracts have not adequately taken into account various barriers to employment such as educational deficits, mental health issues, and substance abuse.

Outcome measurements should fully reflect, for example, that relapse is endemic in treating addiction and mental illness. Outcomes for workforce development and job training programs should better consider the length of time needed for the most difficult-to-serve clients to achieve their goals and structure payments to minimize “creaming”.

In addition, agencies themselves need to actively monitor provider performance and provide input and assistance during the contract term. Checking in on a regular basis and seeing programs in action can help inform the agencies’ evaluation process.

FUNDING ISSUES

3. Not-for-profits are generally a good public investment as they stretch scarce public dollars by combining them with philanthropic resources; the current economic climate however, has reduced the availability of private resources substantially. A recent survey of New York City not-for-profit human service executive directors found that 80 percent of respondents experienced a decrease in private funding sources over the last year and 66 percent have seen a reduction in public funding. At the same time most report that the number of people in need and the number of issues faced by each client are growing. During this time of great economic distress, what steps will you take, as Mayor, to ensure the social services safety net remains intact and is able to meet increasing service demands?

Bloomberg

Today, with the City dealing with the effects of a global recession, we are moving forward with our Five Borough Economic Opportunity Plan, which will create or save 400,000 jobs. We are implementing the largest capital infrastructure plan in City history, helping small businesses and families get through this crisis, keeping Workforce 1 Centers open on evenings and weekends, and placing New Yorkers into 20,000 jobs this year. And, through our *DiverseCity* initiative, we are putting in place a vision for a more diverse City economy in the future with jobs for all New Yorkers, one that creates thousands of new “green” jobs and attracts new industries like biotech, media and fashion, while preserving core industries like maritime and industrial.

I recognize that the work of the human service sector is as vital to this City’s infrastructure as our bridges and roads, and I am committed to working with the nonprofit sector and our City agencies to ensure the social services safety net remains intact and able to meet increasing service demands. That’s why, as part of the *DiverseCity* initiative, we announced a strategy to help the nonprofit sector weather this economic storm and come out prepared for future growth. This strategy has four key components to help to keep the nonprofit sector strong: reducing nonprofit organizations’ fixed costs, expanding loan programs, enhancing the responsiveness and efficiency of City contracting procedures to speed payments, and building new partnerships to help foster stronger nonprofits.

Since April, we've assisted more than 500 nonprofits through 311 and the non-profit facilitator. We also tailored NYC.gov content to streamline resources for nonprofits, and evaluated energy usage patterns in nearly 400 nonprofits in order to craft cost-saving

measures that benefit the sector and the environment. We've received and reviewed Expression of Interest forms from 149 nonprofits for the Greater NY program, which strategically pairs business executives with nonprofit executive directors in two-year one-on-one partnerships. And finally, we launched our ambitious answer to President Obama's nationwide call, *NYC Service*, which meets my State of the City pledge to lead the way primarily by using volunteerism to address the capacity gap at the local level.

Thompson

With over 40,000 not-for-profits in New York City employing approximately a half-million individuals, these organizations play a critical role in delivering essential services to City residents and fueling our economy. They also are a significant source of employment at a time when unemployment is on the rise.

The City can help not-for-profits reduce their operating costs by assisting with locating affordable space. Specially designated not-for-profit buildings such as 120 Wall Street could be a model. And grouping together not-for-profits in a facility creates opportunities to share expenses for common activities such as group purchasing of office supplies to take advantage of volume discounts. Co-location can also facilitate client access to services.

Costs can also be reduced by providing not-for-profits with assistance in reducing energy expenditures. For not-for-profits that own their buildings, the City might provide a revolving loan fund to help take advantage of federal and State funding for building retro-fits that pay for themselves within ten years.

Other possibilities include: looking for more ways to streamline contracting and payment processes; increasing staff at the EDC not-for-profit industry desk; and providing high-quality technical assistance to build capacity and strengthen management practices.

And of course, the City must also look for ways to lower its own costs in order to free up funding to sustain social services during this period of heightened demand.

Ultimately, during these tough economic times, our City must very proactively lobby the state and federal government, and work closely with our Congressional delegation to secure funding required to maintain and enhance the safety social net.

4. The economic crisis is not only drying up the public and private resources available to support the delivery of critical social services, such as early childhood education, abuse prevention, after school programs, immigration assistance, mental hygiene, health care, adult literacy, job training, and senior services, but has also made it challenging for not-for-profit entities to manage their cash flow and obtain lines of credit. According to a recent survey of New York City not-for-profit human service executive directors, 60 percent of respondents said they were having more difficulty managing their organization's cash flow this year compared to prior years and over ten percent were denied a line of credit. Late payments on government contracts exacerbate this problem with requirements to begin service delivery as many as 8 to 10 months prior to receiving payment. This scenario forces those responsible for helping the growing populations of poor and vulnerable individuals to focus on paying bills and making payroll rather than the implementation of innovative solutions that will help meet the complex needs of clients. As Mayor, what will you do to promote timely payments on government contracts to not-for-profits and ensure the availability of credit to the growing number of not-for-profits operating on a shoe string?

Bloomberg

In April, we announced several initiatives to promote timely payments on City contracts and ensure the availability of credit to the nonprofit sector. We remain committed to holding agencies accountable and registering contracts on-time so payments to service providers are not interrupted – especially during these difficult financial times. We now have up-to-date contract information available online through nyc.gov to increase the accountability of City agencies in the procurement process, enabling nonprofit providers to track the status of their contracts. We've also extended contract terms to reduce administrative time spent managing frequent procurements, and centralized the review of nonprofits' compliance with the New York State Charities Bureau filing requirements, which enables City agencies to focus on the other components of responsibility determinations and register contracts on time.

Despite these efforts, there are still situations when nonprofits have to manage cash flow shortages. In the past, nonprofits could turn to private banks for lines of credit, but this is increasingly difficult during the current credit freeze. To help these struggling nonprofits, this past July we expanded the New York City Returnable Grant Fund by 150%, from \$8 million to \$20 million over the next two fiscal years. Nonprofits who have a funding relationship with the City can use these bridge loans when cash flow is tight or to cover short-term costs. And, unlike in prior years, nonprofits can access these loans even if the delayed funds are from other levels of government or a private funder. \$5 million has already been provided to nonprofits through this fund. Additionally, we expanded the NYC Capital Access Revolving Loan Guaranty Program to include nonprofits. Nonprofits that need help meeting payrolls or other pressing expenses can apply for loans from a City contracted lender that specializes in nonprofit lending. The City has now partnered with five organizations to extend these resources to financially stressed groups, providing bridge loans for short-term stabilization.

If given the honor to serve four more years, we will continue to identify innovative approaches to procurement and develop a system that goes beyond a vendor relationship and moves into a partnership, which would build on the knowledge of the sector to improve outcomes for needy New Yorkers.

Thompson

As Comptroller, I have led the charge to reform the City's procurement process and make it more transparent. In 2003, I unveiled a comprehensive report recommending dramatic reforms to the City's antiquated procurement process. The report followed an extensive examination of the City's contracting system.

I made a series of recommendations for improvement and worked to address payment problems by publishing a monthly agency report card on all contracts submitted to the Comptroller's Office for registration, including retroactive contracts. This allowed vendors and the public to easily access and track information on contracts held with the City.

In 2008, I introduced the Payee Information Portal, which allows vendors to track online the real-time status of their payments from the City. And this year in May, I unveiled ClearView, a new online database of City contracts, which the public can use to search through five years of City contracts.

Today, we absolutely need a system that allows not-for-profits to go online and see exactly where in the pipeline their contract is and for how long it has been at that particular stage, starting with the day they were designated under an RFP. Our City's not-for-profit payment system today is opaque and unpredictable. Knowing where in the process a contract is also makes it easier to intervene and move it along.

For not-for-profits that provide services under both State and City contracts, we should look at how to avoid duplication and cut administrative costs by creating a joint contracting process. There may be ways to streamline the VENDEX system for smaller not-for-profits.

Adequate contracting staffing is needed at agencies and the Mayor's Office of Contract Services; especially now that MOCS has been given additional responsibilities. With additional staff should come guidelines for how quickly the paperwork is to be turned around.

The recent increase in the pool of temporary Returnable Grant Fund loans administered by the Fund for the City of New York is welcome, but we should work to end the need for bridge loans.

The real key to success is leadership at City Hall that is committed to ensuring timely payments to not-for-profits. My work as Deputy Borough President, President of the Board of Education, and Comptroller has taught me just how important this issue is. That's why as Mayor, I will make sure that government payments to our City's nonprofits are prompt and timely.

5. Responsible service delivery starts with an annual assessment of a service plan and the costs associated with it to ensure availability and continuity in the programs clients depend on. Over the last few years this continuity has been threatened as rapidly rising administrative costs eat away at the funds available for service provision. The new MTA payroll tax and sharp increases in health insurance premiums are good examples of the types of uncontrollable overhead expenses not-for-profit providers struggle with. To ensure the continuation of the high quality services needed to produce positive outcomes for clients, the City must begin to adjust payment rates to match the real cost of providing services and allow for the application of a higher percentage of payments toward administrative expenses. As Mayor, will you support and promote policies that allow for the payment of an adequate and fair administrative rate to not-for-profit agencies under contract with the City to provide social services to needy New Yorkers? If so, how would you accomplish this?

Bloomberg

While some increases in overhead are outside the City's control, we have been working closely with the social services sector to bring down costs wherever possible through group purchasing, insurance reforms, changes to City audit procedures, energy savings, and extending contract lengths. These efforts-- started through the Cost of Living Adjustment Taskforce co-chaired by the Human Services Council - will reduce costs for both the City and not-for-profit agencies under contract with the City, and allow a greater percentage of City dollars to be spent providing services. In times of shrinking public and private budgets, we must all continue to find savings wherever possible.

In addition to bringing down costs, I am committed to increasing the transparency of City contract dollars through the creation of a standard health and human services contract with

set administrative rates. For our not-for-profit providers with multiple contracts, this will mean clear and consistent guidelines for administrative spending for all contracts (except of course where state or federal regulation supersedes). By combining administrative cost-savings efforts and the creation of a standard human services contract, we are confident that the sector will continue to be able to provide high quality services needed to produce positive outcomes for clients.

Thompson

In a time of scarce resources, it is important to keep the administrative costs of not-for-profits under contract with the City as low as possible to ensure that limited dollars are flowing to service delivery. The City should be paying its fair share of overhead costs, including some that are currently ineligible. For example, a portion of the cost for replacing a boiler should be allowable. I will welcome the opportunity to work with the Human Services Council to look at the operating expenses of a representative sample of not-for-profits based on such factors as size, length of time since incorporation, and type of services provided. Should the results warrant a new approach, my administration will fully support needed changes.

6. Many of the dollars provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) have been applied to the provision of social services, helping to maintain critical services while also maintaining jobs. And while federal stimulus aid has eased dramatic budget cuts to many human service not-for-profits, saving thousands of jobs and programs, there is concern regarding what will happen when this funding is no longer available in 2-3 years. As Mayor, how will you ensure that the programs and jobs currently supported by ARRA dollars continue once the federal dollars are phased out?

Bloomberg

The stimulus bill includes investments that will allow the City to meet emerging social needs and mitigate the impact of the fiscal crisis. In some cases, the funding offsets all or part of a budget reduction. In other cases, it represents an opportunity for new investment. Because the stimulus funding is temporary, I asked agencies to be thoughtful and strategic in their uses of the funds.

Fundamentally, however, the true key to making sure these jobs and programs remain beyond the stimulus is economic recovery and future growth. While we work hard to strategically dispatch stimulus funds in the most effective areas, our Five Borough Economic Plan is laying the groundwork for future prosperity with long-term infrastructure investments, job training in growing sectors, and a comprehensive economic diversification vision that will strengthen all our competitive industries while simultaneously making us less dependent on any one.

Thompson

I am hopeful that New York City's economy will be stronger in three years, and our City and State will be in a better fiscal position to continue these programs and jobs.

7. Community based social service programs not only constitute a much less expensive approach to service provision compared to institutionalized care settings, but often produce better outcomes for clients. In addition, these programs act as economic engines in local communities where they provide jobs and purchase goods and services. The list of ways community based programs contribute to the economic well-being of our communities is long and includes: helping people become employed, thereby reducing public assistance costs and increasing tax receipts; supporting people's efforts to live independently, thereby reducing public health care costs and limiting needless burdens on an already overwhelmed health care system; educating and training individuals, thereby assisting in the formation of a skilled workforce to ensure future economic stability and growth; providing after-school services to youth, thereby contributing to reductions in juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, and detention costs; and delivering effective and safe family support services, thereby reducing out-of-home child welfare costs, and limiting the occurrence of abuse and/or neglect. Given the significant return on investment achieved through community based human service programs, what will you do as Mayor to move NYC toward the use of more community based services over institutionalized care when appropriate?

Bloomberg

Helping people remain in their communities has been a focus of our administration, and we constantly look to community-based support to assist families in keeping individuals at home, whenever safe and possible. For example, we worked with the Vera Institute for Justice to develop an innovative risk assessment instrument for juvenile delinquency cases that helps judges determine when it is safe for a juvenile to be placed in an alternative to detention programs. Thanks to our focus on community-based service, we've already seen a reduction in the use of residential placements in multiple sectors including, but not limited to, child welfare, criminal and juvenile justice, and health and mental health. We will continue this work if given the opportunity to serve New Yorkers for four more years.

Thompson

Under the current administration, there has been a disturbing preference for reducing the number of smaller, community based providers and favoring fewer, larger providers. This policy will not be continued under my administration. As Comptroller, I successfully advocated to stop a DFTA plan to close up to 89 of our City's 329 senior centers. Without these centers, many seniors would become isolated in their homes and at risk for placement in a nursing home. Together with smaller not-for-profits that provided assistance to difficult-to-serve clients with HIV/AIDS, I also advocated successfully for the removal of certain requirements in the Ryan White Care Coordination RFP. If left unchanged, hospitals would have had an unfair advantage over the community-based organizations that had long-standing ties to their clientele.

I recognize that community-based providers know their clientele and how to best work with them. They build invaluable connections with other related service providers and serve as a trusted resource for those in need. They also provide the services and supports that allows a person with mental illness to live in the community, to keep young people with disabilities living independently with the assistance of home care, and to keep a person with a substance abuse problem in a treatment program and out of prison. Accordingly, I will ask for a review by City agencies of their service delivery systems and require them to fully justify why a given service or program could not be provided in the community.

HUMAN SERVICE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

8. Workers in the not-for-profit social services field are serving fragile populations and work daily with individuals and families overwhelmed by feelings of defeat and abandonment. Building trust with clients takes time and a client's progress can quickly unravel with the change of a caseworker. Because those being served have often experienced a lifetime of instability, staff continuity in this field is critically important. Yet, staff turnover can be fairly high in the not-for-profit social services world. Most believe the lack of career ladders and inadequate pay combined with high caseloads are responsible for the recruitment and retention challenges of this sector. As Mayor, what steps will you take to help the sector attract and keep a highly qualified workforce so that the fragile populations served benefit from continuity and receive high quality services?

Bloomberg

We recognize the challenge that workforce management presents in all sectors. Positions in the not-for-profit sector can often be the first step up the economic ladder for low-income New Yorkers. Just as we work to attract and retain the best and the brightest in City government, we can work to support not-for-profits in their efforts to recruit, retain, and promote high-quality employees.

We are supporting this work through a number of initiatives. We created the Capacity Building and Oversight Unit to ensure that nonprofit directors and executives strengthen effective internal controls, financial oversight and board governance. We've also funded technical assistance programs, launched Greater NY, and implemented Board Connect. The efforts of all of these programs are geared towards helping strong organizations work on internal capacity, which will in turn create more stable work environments with deeper career ladders.

Thompson

I will ask all City managers to look for ways to reduce bureaucracy and help clients resolve their issues as quickly and efficiently as possible. This will reduce the caseloads of non-profit staff and increase job satisfaction. If necessary, I will also ask Albany and the federal government to reconsider requirements that are unduly burdensome and often prevent citizens from getting the services to which they are entitled.

I will also ask non-profit management experts to work with provider agencies to address organizational obstacles that contribute to turnover such as lack of a career path, inadequate training, and unrealistic expectations.

9. The gravity of the work performed by those in the not-for-profit social services field is profound. These workers are responsible for keeping victims of domestic violence safe, providing homebound seniors with daily meals, protecting children from abuse and neglect, finding permanent housing for homeless individuals and families, putting former substance abusers on a path to a new life, and teaching new mothers how to care for their babies. Despite the fact that this work is highly stressful and wrought with challenges, many find it personally rewarding. But because salaries are low and often go unadjusted, staff frequently leave for jobs in other sectors that pay more. It is clear that employers in this field want to reward their staff with regular raises, but struggle to provide salary enhancements because of their reliance on government contracts that are irregularly adjusted. Furthermore, when cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs) to City

contracts are provided, the rigid terms of their provision create obstacles to the fair distribution of raises to the not-for-profit's entire workforce. As Mayor, will you support a policy that demands the regular provision of COLAs to this important workforce and remove obstacles that hinder not-for-profit entities from fairly distributing the COLA to their employees? Please explain.

Bloomberg

In recognition of the importance of not-for-profit social services workers, in May of 2008, our administration committed to three year cost of living adjustment for workers in ACS, HRA, DHS, DFTA and DYCD human service contract agencies where contracts were funded by City Tax Levy-- beginning with a 3% raise in FY 2009. Subsequent raises of 2% and 4% were to be funded by productivity savings identified by the City and nonprofits through a COLA taskforce with workgroups focused on seven areas of administrative reform. In March of 2009, faced with increasing financial pressures, HSC requested (and the City agreed) that the agreement be amended to permit the COLA payments to occur in FY 2011 and 2012, rather than FY 2010 and FY 2011.

I strongly support efforts such as the 2008 Task Force that brought City agencies and not-for-profits together to jointly identify ways to improve business processes. The COLA Taskforce structure presents a superb opportunity to both identify promising new practices, and improve the administration of COLA's to remove obstacles wherever possible.

Thompson

The comparatively low salaries in the not-for-profit social services field are certainly a very serious concern and reflect a long-term tendency to underfund social services. As a Human Services Council survey noted, salaries of direct care workers fall near or even below the federal poverty level. I support the regular provision of COLAs, and will work to ensure that all workers across the human services sector are treated equitably.

ACCESS TO BENEFITS AND SERVICES

10. In many ways New York City's human service delivery system is a fragmented maze that can be difficult to navigate for consumers and service providers alike. Services are administered and regulated by a variety of City, State, and federal agencies under separate rules and implementation guidelines, posing many challenges to interagency coordination efforts. Clients receiving overlapping services often become frustrated by the lack of service coordination, which results in duplicative paperwork requirements and other obvious inefficiencies. NYC is looking to address these issues and improve access to services through two important initiatives – Health and Human Services (HHS) Connect and the expansion of 311 to include social service referrals.

- a. **HHS-Connect, aims to, “break information silos through the use of modernized technology and coordinated agency practices to more efficiently and effectively provide Health and Human Services to New Yorkers.” The Executive Order creates a mandate for HHS-Connect to provide the City with technology that will streamline Health and Human Services, including data sharing between agencies and creating an integrated case folder so that client information can be shared between agencies while confidentiality is maintained.**

- b. 311 is being expanded to allow New Yorkers to use the telephone-based 311 service to access trained specialists, who will help residents identify their human services needs and connect them with appropriate service providers in New York City's not-for-profit community.**

Both of these important and ambitious efforts promise to reshape the future of the social services delivery system in NYC by using technological advances to improve access to services and information sharing. As Mayor what will you do to ensure these efforts continue to be a priority? How will you incorporate the perspective of the not-for-profit sector as these efforts are further developed and rolled out? What is your vision for incorporating not-for-profits into the final versions of these efforts and what steps will you take to ensure not-for-profits are not burdened by efforts to incorporate them into HHS Connect and the expansion of 311?

Bloomberg

Since its launch in January 2008, HHS-Connect has made great strides towards improving access to services and breaking down the information silos across the HHS domain. For example, the ACCESS NYC website, which allows New Yorkers to pre-screen themselves for over 35 Federal, State, and local health and human service programs, has over 25,000 visitors per month. HHS-Connect also already helped to "connect the dots" between clients and agencies through initiatives like the Worker Connect portal, which lets workers across the various HHS agencies view information about their clients to see whether they are receiving Food Stamps, Medicaid, or Cash Assistance, as well as employment and case history information.

Our ultimate goal is for all clients to have one singular case record that conveys pertinent information to service providers across agencies and providers, making New Yorkers' interaction with City government more client-centric. As HHS-Connect evolves, the portal will become a key source of information on clients across agencies. It will make it easier for agency workers to get a full picture of their clients' interactions with other City agencies. The City will continue to deliver innovative solutions in order to improve data sharing among HHS agencies, which will in turn provide a more complete understanding of clients' needs and enable improved service delivery.

The HHS-Connect roadmap has always included plans for the provider community to be able access real-time client information. This initiative, the Provider Connect portal, will feature key tools and functionality based on the representative needs of the provider community. It will provide faster and more comprehensive data about clients in order to serve them better and will automate many manual tasks that occur between the provider community and the City.

We recognize that developing a collaborative process with the not-for-profits is key as HHS-Connect continues to expand its initiatives. We plan to work closely with the provider community to better understand their requirements and carefully review the policy and legal issues arising from data sharing needs between providers and City agencies, in order to determine how best to implement these new technologies.

Through 311, we have added content and information which allows New Yorkers to connect to human service providers who can help them with their social service needs. We will continue to expand this service as appropriate to best meet the needs of clients.

Thompson

HHS Connect is useful primarily because it engenders a systematic dialogue on how agencies can collaborate to achieve broad goals such as reducing recidivism and homelessness. This approach should be ongoing and result in a series of initiatives. As Mayor, I will let every agency Commissioner know that I consider it a priority to work cooperatively with other agency heads and to inculcate this mindset at all staff levels within their own agency.

The ability to share selectively key information among agencies offers the potential to develop performance measurements that hold a group of agencies accountable based on their ability to work together in pursuit of a common outcome. There are many challenging issues to be addressed with regard to the legality of sharing information, such as who should have access to the information, etc. Not-for-profits have an important role to play in helping to assess what are the right pieces of information to share and for what purpose from both the provider perspective and in terms of client needs.

My deputy mayor for health and human services will solicit regular feedback and hold periodic meetings with not-for-profit sector leaders, including the Human Services Council, to ensure that the perspectives of the not-for-profit sector are fully considered and incorporated.

My administration will be on guard to ensure that additional costs to not-for-profits that may result from 311 expansion are recognized and covered and that not-for-profits are held harmless.