



Essex County
Workforce Development Board
Zoom 9AM

Minutes from Meeting: August 22, 2024

Attendees: Mitra Choudhury, Maureen Clifford, Evanthia Corrado, Martinique Costa*, Bob Diehl*, Carol Dorazio, Amir Hashemi*, Everett Kilgo*, Jackie Lue Raia*, Hilary McCarron*, Wendy Melendez*, Jobi Odeneye, Valentina Richardson-Green, Maureen Ritchie*, Janine Schaeffer, Rebecca Shulman, Lynn Sternstein, Willie Tolbert*, Jessica Torres, Margaret Tyson*, Gloria Vrabel*, Howard Weiss, David Weiner*,

***WDB members**

Minutes from the last meeting in June were approved.

The Strategic Plan 2024-26 was approved. It was on county website for 30 days and no comments were received. Bob Diehl abstained from the vote.

Welcome and Introduction

Willie Tolbert welcomed everyone to the meeting and made introductions.

Director's Report

Howard Weiss stated the strategic plan was emailed out a while ago and a vote was taken and the plan passed.

Howard stated that they are working on materials for the certification of the WDB. He added that a few other things came up that had priority, but we anticipate having everything in to the state shortly.

Next is the Memorandum of Understanding, where it is a bit confusing because the meetings were held with many people that are in these meeting, but the people signing the document are not the people in this meeting but someone in Trenton. Also DTE hosted another Back to School Event this past weekend.

Lastly, the budget (See attached) Howard stated that there has been a significant reduction in funding for WIOA this year. He added that the funding received by the State is done so by formula, using census and unemployment data. However, the Workfirst NJ funding is negotiated with the State of New Jersey. Howard stated that even though there is a significant reduction we are helped out by the fact that there is a significant amount of carry over money from the past year PY23. So that money will allow us to continue the kinds of services and activities that we've had in the past. He added that we didn't spend as much money as we would have liked partly due to the fact that there were no sanctions and therefore no consequences. People could start programs and then leave, and it was across the state that areas didn't spend the money. As a result the state is putting out some RFPs for innovation with regard to some of the WFNJ money and we did apply, jointly with Newark, over \$800,000. in funding through June of next year. Howard added that before he presents to the WDB, he needs to discuss with Valentina how much will be available for classroom training programs.

Division Report

Valentina Richardson-Green stated that she had an opportunity to attend a Business Services Conference in Maryland this past week. She added that it was a great networking opportunity but

what resonated with her was their push on incumbent worker training and apprenticeships. She added that there was discussion regarding going out for RFP for additional resources in addition to in house support, perhaps for workshops, work readiness workshops for cultural transitioning as well as job preparedness. Valentina added that Summer Youth Employment Program is coming to an end. There were three (3) individuals that were deemed to be WIOA eligible and they are transitioning to work experience now. There is one (1) that is working with building maintenance, one (1) that is bi-lingual and will be helping out in a variety of different areas, and another with an accounting background that will be helping with fiscal. She added that there were also three (3) people that got offered employment.

The Job Development Unit had a few successful Positive Recruitments, one for UPS had over eight hundred (800) people show up. Valentina added that all of the TANF and GA Employment Specialists are now on the third floor.

Howard added that Valentina has provided him with some policy recommendations, which he will be sending out to everyone shortly.

David Weiner wanted to add that any family service worker who is bilingual is not encumbered to act as an interpreter, as there is a specific variant on the Civil Service test for that. So he added that in order to get employees with that variant Civil Service needs to test for that.

Industry Partnership

Jobi Odeneye stated that the Business and Industry Leadership Team, which is an offshoot of the Industry Partnership hosted a training for residential energy contract on June 20th in conjunction with NJIT Newark campus. Dr Zenon Christodoulou, Commissioner for the NJ Board of Public Utilities, gave the keynote address highlighted global climate change and the responsibility of our generation to promote sustainability, emergence of green jobs and the need and demand for qualified labor force in alignment with technological changes. Also, Stacy Richardson, VPU Deputy Director, gave data regarding energy efficiency, with New Jersey energy growth (7.7%) outpacing the national average (6.4%). She also spoke on issues of hiring, insufficient skills and training programs. He stated that it was also mentioned that there are grant programs by the BPU to help Energy Efficiency Training with customizable curricula and wraparound support services for trainees.

Everett Kilgo stated that the Preapprenticeship Training Program is in it's application period for a class to start in October. The information is on the Carpenters Union website www.nyccarpenterstrainingcenter.org/building-works

Committee Reports:

Small Business Committee Report

Bob Diehl stated that the Small Business Committee is doing an event with the Disability Committee on October 10th. It is an event focused for HR professionals and other individuals in the Business Sector specifically focusing on the legal requirements of employing and interacting with employees who have disabilities or become disabled in the workforce. There will also be a section on the benefits of hiring someone with disability, etiquette and resources available. The start time is 10:00am at Essex County College and a flyer with registration information will be going out shortly. There will be credit available for Human Resource Professionals.

Disability Committee

Rebecca stated that they are very excited regarding the upcoming training with the Small Business Committee. In addition the Disability Committee we be having the annual Disability Employment Awareness Month, Employer Recognition Event, so it will be a busy October. The event will be Monday, October 28th from 8:30-10:30 and we again be held at the Wilshire Grand Hotel. Invitations

should be going out shortly. Rebecca added that if anyone has any employers to nominate to reach out to her. The County Executive should be there and they are finalizing the speakers.

Literacy Committee

Lynn Sternstein stated that the last Literacy Committee was August 12th, the Consortium Summer Classes are in session. The Consortium grant is in the revision state for FY 25 and hopefully it will be wrapped up soon. The CASAS test which is used by ABE and HSC programs as well as the One Stops for WIOA training eligibility, have released an updated math test that they are now required to use. Nisha Howell has informed Lynn that it appears to have a lower pass rate than in the past. Lynn added that for Essex requiring a 9th grade math level with possibly some accommodations on a case by case basis. Newark and Bergen County accept an 8th grade level to get into training. Lynn added that IETs are set for the year but it is an ongoing concern as there appears to be a discrepancy between what is allowed and what the NJ DOL will approve. She added with the levels of ESL that they see, the state doesn't want to approve certain programs for them to use. Lastly, the Literacy Symposium is being postponed until spring, but they are hoping to have another meet & greet in the fall/winter at the Essex County One Stop but no date has been set.

Howard added that the State has withdrawn funding for the Learning Links for this year, after many years of funding them. He added that he is very disappointed that they are not funding them, however they are putting out an RFP, that they promised would be this month, but we are still waiting on the details. It does sound like they are wanting to fund a limited number of them around the state. Mitra stated that maybe the WDB can join one of their grants as a collaborator and get some dollars that way and possibly offset a salary or something. Howard thanked Mitra for the suggestion and stated that they have had a tremendous relationship with the college and appreciate everything they do for us.

Welfare to Work Committee

David Weiner stated the Welfare to Work Committee will have a meeting next week and he is hoping to reengage the Newark folks. David added that one of the main discussions has to be the reinstatement of the work requirement and the effect on the population.

Youth Investment Council (YIC)

Alle Ries was unable to attend.

One Stop Committee

Howard stated that they have been meeting regularly with good participation.

Oversight Committee & Fiscal Committee

Howard stated that David isn't on the call, and that we had to reschedule the last meeting for July.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted by
Janine Schaeffer*

NEXT MEETING DATE: October 17, 2024, 9am