



Essex County
Workforce Development Board
Zoom 9AM

Minutes from Meeting: June 20, 2024

Attendees: Aleksandra Adamczyk, Cristhian Barcelos*, Dr. Boakye*, Mitra Choudhury, Evanthia Corrado, Carol Dorazio, John Ehret, Keisha Flemming, Amir Hashemi*, Sean Hendricks, Vann Holland, Jason Martinez, Hilary McCarron*, Alle Ries*, Maureen Ritchie*, Janine Schaeffer, Rebecca Shulman, Lynn Sternstein, , Willie Tolbert*, Amy Vazquez*, Howard Weiss, David Weiner*

***WDB members**

Minutes from the last meeting in April were approved.

Welcome and Introduction

Willie Tolbert welcomed everyone to the meeting and made introductions.

Director's Report

Howard Weiss stated the Haitian Refugee Symposium was an amazing event and he thanked everyone that was a part of it, adding that Lynn will speak on the details. Also, we just received the funding allocation and have not had a chance to discuss it yet. There was a significant reduction in the funding for WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth. This is formula based that has nothing to do with whether you spend money or didn't. It has to deal with the census data and the current unemployment rates in relation to the rest of the state and rest of the country. After we have a chance to review it we will present a budget to the board. Howard added that the WFNJ programs also received a reduction, but we had discussed that with the State before we received the allocation, so we were prepared for that.

Howard stated that we sent out to everyone a copy of the plan for review. We hired a consultant to draw up the plan and we've spent some time reviewing and making some changes, so hopefully this is the final version of the plan. Another item we are working on is the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) we had talked about some time ago. The state has been a proponent of co-enrolling people that are in one of the partner programs into WIOA. The State was about to launch instructions on it and then they stopped a couple of days before a scheduled meeting on instructions on how it was to be done and we are still waiting for how they propose doing it. There were some complications, which we pointed out to them, regarding the AOSOS systems and information that may be protected like when you talk about DVRS, vocational rehabilitation information and how that might be shared.

Division Report

Valentina Richardson-Green is on vacation.

Industry Partnership

Jobi Odeneye is at another meeting.

Committee Reports:

Small Business Committee Report

Bob Diehl was unable to make the meeting.

Disability Committee

Rebecca stated that one of the things that the committee is working on is an HR Training event with Bob and the Business Committee. She stated that they are looking at a date of October 10th, and are looking at Essex County College, West Caldwell Campus. They are working with Amy's Employer Association of NJ to get this all out to their members as well as all of the workforce partners. The program will be a training on working with individuals with disabilities as well as some technical issues. There will be another planning meeting in the next couple of weeks. Rebecca added that again this year they are planning another Employer Recognition Breakfast, and it possibly could be at the Wilshire Grand, but they are looking at other possible locations as well. She added that they will be reaching out shortly to see if anyone has any employers to nominate, who have hired and retained employees who have disabilities, and the next meeting will be July 23rd. They are also looking into doing additional training for One Stop staff. There was a very successful training, this past April with the Mental Health Association of NJ.

Literacy Committee

Lynn Sternstein stated that we had an excellent Haitian Refugee Symposium, and it was really great to hear from so many speakers representing different government and nonprofit entities that are working with Haitian Refugees in Essex County. She said to kick off the Symposium were words of welcome from Howard Weiss, Patricia McGee and Valentina Richardson-Green. Willie Tolbert was the outstanding MC. Anibal Ramos made opening remarks and she added that we were lucky to have two (2) council people, Charnette Frederick from Irvington and Bergson Leneus of East Orange. Cristhian Barcelos spoke regarding literacy and what he has been seeing at his agency, with the ESL Program, which really mirrors what the rest of the agencies in the Essex County consortium are seeing as well. Ana Jimenez spoke from DFAB regarding welfare programs and eligibility, and Lynn stated that she is someone she has spoken to for years and was finally able to meet her in person. Kelly Ayala from USCIS spoke and gave information about who is a refugee and some of the different programs available to the Haitian Refugees including TPS and what is called the "Biden Parole Program. Lynn added that they were lucky to have Joy Melendez from the Office of New Americans in Trenton come and speak about the influx of Haitian immigrants in New Jersey and what is going on with it. Also, Kiera LoBreglio, who is the director of immigrant and refugee services, spoke regarding both legal and refugee services. Lynn stated that she spoke about JVS refugee services and Marcial Bonhomme of the Lanbi Center and Thecy Faustin from FamiCare. It was a wonderful opportunity to make connections and to see that many agencies are facing similar difficulties around housing, literacy and employment. Howard added a thank you to Jean Maurice and Taieta El-Amin for helping to put the program together. He added that the final count was eighty-one (81) in attendance.

Welfare to Work Committee

David Weiner stated that it is important to get the Newark folks re-involved in this committee. He pointed out that there is a problem in DFAB with a lack of translators. The translating company that they call in is a slow process and it is done out in the open. He added that the bilingual employees that get the designation do not get any monetary differentiation from the non-bilingual, so that's a problem. The good thing that if there are layoffs, they are in a different line so they can get special treatment. David stated that they have to provide greater oversight now that they are lifting the sanction waiver, as it will create more interaction and more work between DEDTE and DFAB. He stated that there are issues with staffing as there are seven hundred seventy-four (774) and they are budgeted for eight hundred thirty-two (832). There was talk of tracking the success of the vendors. Howard added that one of the problems is in the system, the idea is you want to make sure that the

person's working, that they just don't take a job for a day. The problem is if you make payments to vendors based on that now you're not spending the money right away and the state is anxious to spend the money in the program year that you receive the money. The WFNJ money goes from July to June and so if you had a person in a class and they exited you might have a problem if part of the payment is based on retention of 90 days. Added to that is the problem that the state refused to let us extend the allocation beyond June 30th.

Youth Investment Council (YIC)

Alle Ries stated that the committee last met on May 16th and had an update on the Summer Youth Employment Program. She added that Shelton Thurman gave the report where two hundred (200) slots have been filled and the waiting list has three hundred fifty (350) kids on it. There are twenty-six (26) vendors and thirty-six (36) different work sites. There is additional training being provided this year around life skills, financial literacy, teen issues etc. The program runs from June 12th to August 2nd. The survey will be distributed to the kids like it was last year. She added that Jason Martinez reported on the Board of Commissioners approving fourteen (14) programs and they are also looking for a business representative to join, she thinks that it might be her but if there are other people on the board that are interested in joining the Youth Commission to contact Jason. She added that they are also looking for a youth representative for the Juvenile Justice Committee.

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.

Hilary McCarron stated that the Council on Port Performance had a table at the Job Fair, and they were trying to push out information about some of their programs that are hiring. Rebecca added that the Disability Committee with JVS would like to sponsor a Job Fair specifically for individuals with disabilities.

Howard thanked Dr. Boakye for the use of the West Caldwell Campus of Essex County College for the Haitian Refugee Symposium. Dr. Boakye thanked everyone and all members of his team as their goal is to have a vision and create a path to serve the community and provide the academic side. He was pleased with the turnout for the Job Fair and the ability of people to connect with businesses and other partners. He added that any time you need his service or support you can reach out to Elvy Viera or Mitra Choudhury, as we are true partners in everything we do.

Maureen stated that she attended that Newark Workforce Development Board meeting and they asked to do a joint session with the Essex County Workforce Development Board like possibly a breakfast or a meet and greet because they said it has been done in the past and it's been a long time

Mitra added that AI is now scanning all the resumes they receive and rejecting many that are suited for a particular position. She asked if the staff needed training. Hilary stated that if Mitra has experts in this area that maybe they can do a workshop for jobseekers where they talk through strategies on getting through the AI. Mitra stated that her job is to find the experts, but they don't currently have any. Willie suggested involving the employers as well.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted by
Janine Schaeffer*

NEXT MEETING DATE: August 22, 2024, 9am