

WORKFORCE

DEVELOPMENT BOARD

of Morris, Sussex and Warren Counties

Meeting Minutes

Open Meeting

Date: July 28, 2016

Location: Via conference call

IN ATTENDANCE:

Members

Anthony Abrantes (Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters), Marie Betlow (Job Search Central), Anne Marie Brown (Sodexo Senior Services), Donna Buchanan (MSW Employment & Training Services, **One-Stop Operator**), David Hollowell (D&D Associates, **WDB Chair**), Carol Hults (Highlands State Bank), Carl Jablonski (NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development), Rosalie Lamonte (Sussex and Warren Schools), Dianna Morrison (Center for Prevention and Counseling), Frank Petruccelli (National Mortgage Staffing), Antoney Smith (NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services), Marty Telles (The High Tide Group LLC), Susan Zukoski (Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.).

Guests

Maija Amaro (Warren County Community College), Eva Fernandez (NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development), Sean Hendricks (NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development), Megan Hunscher (Morris County Economic Development Corporation), John Lehnert (NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development), Kyersten Rozanski (Project Self-Sufficiency), Jaci Teune (NJ Community College Consortium of Workforce Economic Development), Carol Wilson (Literacy NJ - Sussex County Programs).

Staff

Jane Armstrong (WDB Senior Planner), Sallie Sullivan (Secretary to the WDB Director).

ABSENT:

Members

William Austin, Mark Bocchieri, Paul Boudreau, Jenn Carpinteri, Tammy Case, Kenneth Edwards, David Fiore, Robert Glowacky, George Krevet, Scott Moffitt, Carol Novrit, Steve Sitek, Ed Yaw.

Prior to the July 28, 2016 Open Meeting, the following documents were posted on the WDB website (www.mswwdb.org) for review: Open Meeting minutes (April 28, 2016); Disability Committee minutes (May 4, 2016); Literacy Committee minutes (May 18, 2016); One-Stop Career Center Committee minutes (May 3, 2016); Youth Investment Council minutes (May 23, 2016); draft Executive Committee minutes (July 19, 2016); and the WDB Director and One-Stop Operator Report.

The Oversight Committee electronically reviews budget, performance and monitoring reports monthly.

Meeting Opening Remarks

At 9:00 a.m., WDB Chair David Hollowell called the meeting to order and read the Public Meeting Notice. After asking those present to introduce themselves, Chair Hollowell asked Jane Armstrong to report on Board Business.

WDB Board Business

WDB Senior Planner Jane Armstrong reported on the following:

Workforce Development Board Certification

The New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) has approved the Morris-Sussex-Warren Workforce Development Board for certification for Program Years 2016 and 2017.

North Jersey Regional Planning

Jane attended an all-day North Jersey Partners meeting on North Jersey Regional Planning yesterday. North Jersey Partners (NJP) is an organization primarily comprised of WDB Directors and One-Stop Operators; it is a robust and influential group that reaches out into the northern New Jersey region.

Yesterday's meeting was with consultants of Thomas P. Miller and Associates, which was retained by the State Employment & Training Commission (SETC) to work on the three regional plans in New Jersey. Periodic meetings have been held with the consultants; this was the first one where work was being done on the regional plan draft. The plan, which is due in October, is based on a 2015 report by Rutgers' Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. The contents of that 2015 report, which is a regional strategic plan for northern New Jersey, are being incorporated into the draft being worked on for the North Jersey Regional Plan for the SETC.

Some items that are being included are:

- Development of a One-Stop System of integrated services that's effective for business customers
- Targeted services for out-of-school youth, incumbent workers, and reentry clients
- Strategies to integrate partners for full One-Stop Partner integration
- Development of a shared marketing and branding strategy

Program Year 2015 Report

Jane reported that all performance metrics were exceeded for Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth.

Carol Wilson asked if an RFP (Request for Proposals) was coming out for out-of-school youth. Donna Buchanan said one is in development at the moment and will go out no later than the end of August. She said the allocations for the upcoming year just came out, so they're now in a better position to know what to put into the RFP.

Old Business

Chair Hollowell opened the floor for any old business that was pending. There being no old business, the Chair moved to the next item on the agenda.

New Business

Kyersten Rozanski of Project Self-Sufficiency (PSS) announced that they have received funding for the Youth Corps grant for Sussex County and northern Warren County. She said they are excited to begin operating that program, and also talked about teen work skills. PSS is currently running a summer youth employment program that employs 18 youth who are placed in worksites. Kyersten thinks that soft skills have become a key component for that group, and was pleased to hear in group discussion that new software for soft skills was being tested.

Jane Armstrong added that Edison Job Corps is having an event on August 5 from noon to 5. Jane is attending because the mayor will be meeting with employers and promoting opportunities to be participating in programs in Edison.

Dianna Morrison of Center for Prevention and Counseling (CPC) said that in June they completed the last Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) class for the current group of youth entrepreneurs. Five teen businesses were selected to be funded; they are now partnering with entrepreneurs who will serve as their business mentors as they roll out their business. The next YEP class begins in January; limited transportation is available. They use the Rural Entrepreneurship thru Action Learning (REAL) course, which is a renowned curriculum taught in 43 states. Information about the new class will be going out in the fall.

With regard to Pathway to Prosperity, CPC is partnering with Sussex County Community College (SCCC). They want to have a presence at the College to work with under-resourced students who need to have their educational goals link towards employment. They plan to utilize some of the students at SCCC to provide the services.

Chair Hollowell asked Jane Armstrong to begin the labor market discussion.

Meeting Topics

Labor Market Discussion

Jane Armstrong said that she and Jack Patten discussed labor market information and decided that she would focus on the topics of unemployment and the underutilization of workforce.

Jane reported that the US DOL Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) includes only those who have actively looked for work in the past four weeks. As a result, about 95 million Americans are not included in the workforce count. This has led to much discussion about the accuracy of the workforce data. She shared information on an article in The NY Times regarding which labor market data is more accurate ("[Which Labor Market Data Should You Believe?](#)"). It looks at a comparison of the [BLS](#) numbers (focused on unemployment) and the [Labor Market Conditions Index](#) (which comes from the federal reserve). Statistics such as the Harris Poll say that 59% of those unemployed for two years or more have stopped looking for work (if looking at the unemployment rate, which is only those individuals who are looking for work).

Jane shared:

- Nationally: About 1 million of the jobs now available are in healthcare. There were 1.3 million recent hires (other than healthcare), but they were low-skill and low-wage. The end of April saw the biggest increase in hiring in 15 years.
- New Jersey: The NJ Combined State Plan reports that two thirds of the projected job openings in New Jersey are low-wage jobs that require only a high school diploma.

She has been speaking with companies every Friday, doing a needs assessment with them, and getting together a real-time assessment of what the needs are in the three counties. There are quite a few jobs; unfortunately, they're still at a lower wage rate. The rate is around \$12-\$15 per hour.

In June, Jane attended a Targeted Industry Partnership (TIP) meeting, held by the New Jersey Financial Services Talent Network. Talent Networks work closely with employers, Workforce Development Boards, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to develop high-quality,

employer-driven partnerships known as TIPs. Each Talent Network focuses their efforts on areas of the state that have a concentration of employers in their specific industry.

Jane reported that a number of employers attended the June TIP meeting, and discussions were very beneficial. Among the discussions and comments from the meeting:

- *400 NJ openings for programmers.* SQL, Java, and Oracle software developers.
- *Banks no longer looking for tellers.* They're now looking for "universal associates". They want individuals who have computer skills and are computer savvy, and who are in the social media generation. These skills are most often found in younger people; however, they find that this age group is lacking a customer service background and interpersonal communications skills.
- *Many financial entities hiring consultants instead of full-time individuals.* Because they're hiring consultants, they're using 1099's, which are not included in employment data. They felt the Department of Labor should look into the inclusion of 1099 data.
- *US economic needs.* With regard to US economic needs, about 77,000 new jobs are needed each month to keep the stable unemployment number. There has been great flux recently - around 160,000 jobs in April dropped to about 38,000 in May, then rebounded in June to about 287,000 jobs.
- *Young people without customer service skills.* Employers discussed their thoughts on why younger people are not coming in with customer service skills. Some participants felt it could be due to a policy by many employers starting around 2008 not to bring in teen workers. Programs were cut and the emphasis on teens was lessened. As a result, many of the younger people coming in now have not worked at all and have not had the experiences that would make them stronger candidates. Some statistics from "The 2016 Summer Job Outlook for American Teens" (*Drexel University Center for Labor Markets and Policy*) show that the teen labor market participation was around 50% until the year 2000. As of 2011, the last year for this statistic, teen involvement in the labor market was at 33%. The takeaway was that employers need to consider hiring more young workers to give them the work experience they need for the future workforce.

Finally, the June edition of *Money* magazine had a report on "[The 21 Most Valuable Career Skills](#)". These were predominantly skills that are probably supplemental to a degree program, or primary business degree or other, but they are essential, according to this article, for moving up the career ladder. At the top was strategic planning skill/credential. They felt this was the perfect skill/credential because it brought higher pay to all positions, is widely in demand across multiple industries, and gives a better shot of moving up to executive or management positions. Other skills/credentials that were high up on the list were computer science and business skills.

The following meeting attendees joined the labor market discussion:

Marie Betlow of Job Search Central reported that she was delighted to read in her research that 22,000 jobs were added in the month of June, the best job growth in 20 years. Marie said there has been growth in the following sectors: Construction, Manufacturing, Government, Professional and Business Services. She concurred with Jane that great emphasis is being placed on soft skills, and said the number one soft skill right now is Communications.

Changes and trends in the market include jobs that are now considered highbred jobs, including social media and social media strategist, which are now being combined with HR, Sales and Public Relations.

Marie sees continuing emphasis on:

- Big data and learning software skills around it, such as Hadoop and VMware.
- In the IT market, individuals learning certain software programs online, such as SQL, Java, Python, C, C++, C#, Perl and PHP. The individuals in IT she's spoken to have used sites such as youtube.com, lynda.com and edX.org for their software training.

She shared some jobs that are seeing growth and are in demand, and reported that tractor trailer truck drivers have moved into the number one slot for New Jersey. Other top jobs in demand are: software developers, sales representative, registered nurses, customer service representatives, supervisors in retail, secretaries, administrative staff, accountants, auditors, marketing managers, analytics management, sales managers, medical and health service managers, HR specialists, financial managers and laborers.

Carol Hults of Highlands State Bank reported that she's read many statistics lately that indicate there will always be a need for banks. She said the top three things that people come into a bank for are: 1) problem resolution, 2) opening and closing accounts, and 3) getting advice. This lines up with the fact that customer service will always be needed in the banking industry, and again demonstrates the importance of soft skills.

Rosalie Lamonte of Sussex and Warren Schools reported that this is the prime time for hiring staff in their schools. She said the Sunday Star Ledger has a special career section which has a subsection for education jobs; this past Sunday, there were at least five pages of open positions being advertised. In addition, many school districts advertise on their own websites. There is still a need for School Administrators, Principals, Supervisors, and Business Administrators. There is a variety of open teaching positions, especially in the Special Education area. For those who are not certified as a teacher, there are also many openings for Teacher Aides, Bus Drivers, and Substitute Teachers.

David Hollowell asked Jane how the revamping of our own soft skills offerings was progressing.

Jane reported that she has created an extensive list of options: vendors, programs at cost, free programs provided by federal grants. She has had a series of meetings regarding this, done much outreach, and spoken to individuals on the Board. She particularly thanked Marie Betlow for spending a lot of time with her on this and sharing her area of expertise. Jane also mentioned that she and Donna have been working on it and have spoken with the Bergen County One-Stop about a product they are using called Conover. Jane asked Donna to share additional information on the implementation of the Conover program in Morris-Sussex-Warren One-Stop Career Centers.

Donna said that she's thrilled to be moving forward with this. She said Jane was able to work with Conover and convince them to share a number of licenses with us that can be piloted here. Donna said they felt that, before the program is rolled out, the staff should get a sense of what clients would need to work through in terms of the ease of use, accessibility, and the practice testing. Donna will complete that evaluation by mid-August, and will give Jane those results based on staff feedback.

David Hollowell thanked all for their participation and asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Rosalie Lamonte and seconded by Marie Betlow. It passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 AM.