



***Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee***

Thursday, August 6, 2015

Essex County College-4<sup>th</sup> Floor Multipurpose Room

9:00 am – 11:00 am

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions (Mitch Cahn, Unionwear)
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Continue brainstorming content of content library
4. Review discussions regarding concept of content library, target markets, training, soft skills, and questionnaires
5. Follow up on what is required for workforce system to certify soft skills
6. Examples of how the workforce system can provide placement services (Anthea/Ruth/Evanthia)
7. Highlight federal, state and other hiring incentives, such as OJT funds and customized training grants
8. Examples of how the workforce system can work with local and state authorities to make sure that transportation options are available (Mitch/Joyce)
9. Brainstorm list of success stories in each area of target recipients as well as each area of workforce system services
10. Brainstorm ways marketing package be disseminated
11. Create timeline for completion of this project with goals set for each remaining meeting in 2015



## ***Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee***

Essex County College- Training Inc.

Thursday, August 6, 2015 at 9:00 am

### Meeting Minutes

#### **Attendees:**

Adam Albanese

Addie Bonet

Ronice Bruce

Mitch Cahn

Deborah Collins

Evanthia Corrado

Adrianna Crawford

Joe Epps

Lincoln Farquharson

Barbara George-Johnson

Dexter Hendricks

Davetta Lane

Tolu Lanrewaju

Fred Murphy

John Perry

Ruth Rodriguez

Janine Schaeffer

Farag Seiam

Bhavna Tailor

Willie Tolbert

Anthea Williams

Yuemeng Zhang

---

#### **Meeting Called to Order: Chairperson Mitch Cahn**

Mr. Cahn called the meeting to order. A roundtable roll call was conducted to introduce all meeting attendees.

#### ***Motion, Approve Meeting Minutes***

He asked if anyone had any additions or corrections to the minutes. Mr. Epps added three items to the record. Mr. Rosen spoke about how social impact funds and the Community Reinvestment Act (funds intended to encourage depository institutions to help meet the credit needs of the communities in which they operate, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, consistent with safe and sound operations) were used for employment and training opportunities, citing JP Morgan in Jersey City; Mr. Epps also mentioned that Rosen suggested that Newark could possibly take advantage of these opportunities through the NECDC; Mr. Epps identified a typo on page 4, line 3 (expects should be experts).

Mr. Cahn briefly recapped soft skills training certifications and work readiness as discussed at the previous meeting. He mentioned that the committee would be identifying ways to certify soft skills so that training providers can possibly do a universal training. He added that Apryl

Caldwell, who was unable to attend the meeting, mentioned that there was a way for training providers to certify that someone is work-ready. Some of the areas of focus are professional work attire, financial literacy, human relations, conflict resolution, self-esteem, how to deal with case work issues, the role of healthcare and emotional health. Mr. Cahn mentioned that the committee wants to market the following things: soft skill certification, training and placement, grant incentives and help getting employees to work.

Mr. Cahn introduced Anthea Williams and Evanthia Corrado, Ruth Rodriguez, members of the General Placement Sub-Committee, to present on how the workforce system can assist with placement. Ms. Rodriguez

identified two types of placement; training and employment placement. She added that, both, internal and external databases were in place. AOSOS is an internal case management system for the public workforce system that is used at the One-Stop Center. LOOPS is another internal system that serves as an unemployment insurance database where employers report earnings, payroll wages and taxes. The external database system is J4J (Jobs for Jersey) is accessible to the business community and jobseekers. It allows employers to apply online to Jobs for Jersey. The reports run one quarter behind and generated in Trenton. The database includes full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal and per diem job opportunities. Mr. Epps added that once jobseekers register through the system, matching takes place to identify available positions that meet potential employee qualifications. Ms. Rodriguez stated that an under-employed person could be assisted with placement through the Department of Labor and by conducting a job search on J4J. She communicated that as long as the employer is registered with J for J, they can access jobseeker data. She also explained that although AOSOS has a much larger database of individuals, the only way to obtain access is through the IT person who has access to the Crystal Report. Mr. Cahn asked if we could access all the individuals who were out of work in NJ through AOSOS. Adam Albanese said that J 4 J was a better tool to use because it provides employers with detailed and information about their skillset that is valuable to employers while matching them to jobs, whereas AOSOS doesn't have that feature. Ms. Rodriguez stated that caseworkers assist in registering jobseekers with J 4 J. Anthea added that during the Rapid Response Event data is taken from the jobseeker and entered into the system when there is a mass layoff situations.

Ms. Rodriguez named different OJT Programs that pre-screen candidates and pre-qualify employers for on the job training. These programs service veterans, unemployed individuals, re-entry, and Work First NJ customers. Generally, employers must meet certain criteria to prequalify. They must be registered for UIDI (Unemployment and Disability Insurance), must not have an open liability, they must be registered with the State of NJ Department of Treasury, only 25% of the workforce can be from the OJT Program and new employers must have at least a \$1000 thresh hold in their employer account.

Ms. Rodriguez said that more data can be collected from Career Services at Colleges and universities. One of the committee members asked if there was a connection between OJT and institutions of higher learning. Ms. Rodriguez replied that the schools are seeking placement. Mr. Chan asked if there was a mechanism in place to collect data from the schools. Ms. Rodriguez replied that although it has been done in other counties, it hasn't been done in Newark. The college placement programs don't use J for J and there is no interfacing. Mitch proposed that

upon completion of this program, we look for ways to integrate the college and workforce systems by offering a system that is easy to use.

Mitch asked if individuals looking for work through WIA programs would be in the J for J database. Adam explained that the city relies on training providers and vendors for placement. Ms. Rodriguez added that they also rely on OJT writers. Mitra Choudhury spoke of the Ready to Work Program and specifically mentioned the point of the program was to train and place unemployed individuals in specific fields after six months. She stated that there were only 65 individuals who were identified in Essex County, which did not sound right. She stressed the need for a massive campaign to identify and recruit.

Mitch brings things back into focus on targeting employers and all employers want qualified candidates. J for J was the first way to target employers. The second way was to target training providers and to find out if a system was in place to find out who is coming out of training programs. Members of the committee confirmed that there wasn't a system in place designed to function in that manner. Mitch suggested that that could perhaps be a goal of the committee in the future. The third area is the college placement services. Ms. Rodriguez suggested that employers can go to the Department of Labor to get information from the OJT writers. It was relayed that the Department of Labor can also provide assistance for J for J for employers. In understanding the population that we are targeting, the OJT Program works with criteria, benchmarks, quotas to screen employees. Employers are able to perform searches in J for J to identify candidates for their jobs openings. The system does not provide them with the candidate's name, but instead a number. Once the employer contacts the DOL Business Representative who has access to the candidates' information, the representative contacts the candidate to express the employer's interest. The business service representatives also help staffing agencies. Mitch asked, "If an employer came to you and requested seventy-two IT people, how would you assist them?" Evanthia relayed that she would obtain the job description, put them in the system, call partners (community based organizations, One-Stop Operators, Directors, Managers, Case Managers, Employment Counselors, DOL Interviewers, DOL Placement Unit, WIB Directors, Business Service Representatives, OJT Contract Writers and Job Developers) to begin recruitment. Anthea communicated that one of the problems with recruitments is that feedback and tracking are not done. Often, it is rare that people call back to say that they were hired. One of the committee members asked if someone is hired, is there some way that the government can pull the numbers. Ms. Rodriguez stated that the LOOPS systems reports payrolls to Trenton. Bhavna Tailor suggested that if a person is hired in this quarter, it could possibly take two to three quarters to know that they are employed.

Ms. Rodriguez concluded the presentation by stating that one must go through the systems in order to capture the placement data which spells out more federal dollars. Mitch says we want to work on how the workforce system can help employers and the placement information is a great start. He mentioned that job fairs might be a great way to aggregate employers and asked if anyone had any more ideas. Mrs. Tailor said that the document that identifies grants that the employer might qualify for is a great incentive. She asked if employers are sent the information. Mitch confirmed that employers do get the information. Evanthia shared that she gets numerous phone calls from employers with outrageous comments about the reimbursement programs. They

were under the misconception that they were supposed to get money for each person that they hired. For this reason, these types of documents should communicate that employers should contact business representatives. Ms. Rodriguez explained that businesses who participate in these types of programs must be pre-qualified. One of the committee members asked if there was a way that we streamline some type of quality control to give snapshots to employers so that they aren't deterred from participating in OJT Programs. Mitch felt that the ideas have been great. He said that once there is a soft skills certification, it could close a really big loop if a search for that skill can be found in J for J. He says that part of the solution could be to have a better process to get college placement offices and training programs to use J for J and encourage its applicants to do so. Mrs. Taylor communicated that, in general, she has received some negative feedback from J for J. Ms. Rodriguez agrees that sometimes the system does not work, but we are working with what we have. She stressed that she was putting people to work and relayed that she must show what she does on a monthly basis. She also stated that she must record the Federal Id. number and enter it into the OJT system.

Mitch requested that all committee members who have businesses to use the J for J tool so that we can have some feedback before we begin to promote it. Anthea communicated that despite the imperfections of J for J, there are thousands of registered jobseekers and hundreds of employers who use the site to find employees.

She further expressed that part of her job is to educate employers and to attempt to recruit employees. Bhavna added that maybe the feedback that she got occurred during the beginning stages. Ms. Rodriguez spoke about how she learned the different wards in Newark, she then became familiar with the jobs in the system and began to think about how to connect jobs to the customer who lack the skillsets that employers seek. She shared her experience of looking up Fortune 500 companies and she even researched tips on interviewing with them so that she could use this information for her clients. Ms. Rodriguez communicated how she truly valued the skillsets of Workfirst New Jersey population that overlapped from the unemployment system in to the OJT system. She stressed how all her activity was monitored by her supervisor.

Mitra Choudhury asked if was there a way that a Joint Information Session can be held with employers. One of the committee members suggested that we have a focus group, Mitch agreed. He stated that we have a system that is not perfect, but it might be best to improve the system to get as many people hired as possible. Mitra suggested that we might be able to come up with ways to wiggle inside the box. Ms. Rodriguez said that we must channel our energy in a positive manner. Tolu Lanrewaju expressed that she appreciated all the valuable information that has been put together. She further expressed that the State of New Jersey has put a lot of money into J for J. Like with any other system, it must be developed, believe and then figure out the strengths and weaknesses. Another committee member stressed the importance of using other employment sites to stay abreast so that we can constantly make improvements to encourage usage. Mitch stated that our goal is to help employers by building a content library designed to inform employers of which place is best suited for them to recruit employees.

Mitch discussed grants and incentives for employers and distributed a copy of the list of active grant programs that was put together under a previous administration. He explained that the list contained so much information, making it just as good as no information at all. He charged the committee with coming up with ways to target different industries and condense a handful of the

best incentives by making it employer friendly. Mitch welcomed anyone who is interested to join his sub-committee to help categorize and add to the list. He relayed that there is so much grant money that goes unused because employers are unaware of the opportunities. He further stated that sharing this information can help to connect employers to incentives, making it easier to hire residents. He mentioned that he wants to have a central location for all of this information so that it can be used by anyone. Ronice Bruce mentioned that one of the reasons why everyone's company was asked to do a sponsorship for the fundraiser was so that conversations like this one can be married between employers and funders so that we can bring more opportunities for employment for our residents. Ronice spoke about how having a profile on Linked-In helps to make connections and having a picture helps to change the dynamic of how people actually sell themselves. Mitch expressed that perhaps that in the future there can be conversation with the Department of Labor to make creating a Linked-In profile a component of the process as jobseekers register for J for J. One committee member brought up the idea of conducting a workshop that targets employers to make them aware of the grants and the valuable information available that targets a specific industry. Mitch felt that was a great idea for a future project and mentioned that it had been done in the past with manufacturers and it was very successful.

One of the committee members spoke about the benefit of formulating a committee directory that contains information that can prove to be helpful as we pull resources together. The directory will contain information such as the committee member's name, a brief description of what capacity the member serves in their company and identify the population that they service. This may prove to be very useful for the committee.

Adam updated everyone on the meeting that he was in with Dr. Joyce Harley Wilson, Barbara George Johnson with New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. He relayed that there are grants available and perhaps the group can come to present to the committee. He also mentioned that there is opportunity for transportation to be covered for up to three years. Chrishna Murphy, who is person in charge of this program, is responsible for the Eazy-Ride and WAVE Shuttle. Adam stated that once we are ready to have a deeper conversation about transportation, it would be great to invite Mr. Murphy to a committee meeting. Mitch mentioned that there is a transportation toolkit that refers employers to different transportation options which is something else worth researching and promoting. He brought up the possibility of looking into an organization, similar to Uber that is popular on the West Coast and suggested the possibility of expansion if the interest is here. Bhavna asked if there is a list of transportation providers. A committee member replied that going through the (TMA) Transportation Management System would be the best way to go because they set up carpools and set up van programs to understand the tax credit and benefits. Mitch relayed that employers in Western regions of the county have experienced difficulty in obtaining employees as a result of the transportation barrier. He expressed that it might be beneficial to promote TMA to employers who are in the same position in hope that it will help to remove the transportation barrier.

## **Next Steps**

To begin working on testimonials for companies such as Marriot, Hotel Indigo, Dinosaur Barbeque, Shoprite, 7-11, West Rock, Sonic, Fastbreak, Gateway Security and Chipotle. Adam

mentioned that many of the companies named are on the positive recruitment side, but perhaps something can be sent out to training providers to see if they have testimonials to share.

Mitch stated that at the next meeting, we can discuss who and how we will distribute all of the information that we have collaborated so far. He named possible agencies that would be great networks to spread this information which include the Joint WIBs, the workforce systems, the One-Stop Centers, the State of New Jersey Business Action Center, Jersey First, NECDC, small business service organization, college placement offices, the City of Newark, the County of Essex, elected officials, Chamber of Commerce, Ministers' Associations, training programs, placement agencies and the State Business Portal. Mitch said that we will be looking at who is on each committee and delegate responsibilities so that we can get everything done.

There was no further business with the committee. Mitch thanked everyone for their participation and called motion for adjournment. Motion was seconded and adjourned. Next meeting is as follows:

**Thursday, November 5, 2015  
Essex County College  
(Multi-Purpose Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
9:00 am- 11 am**