



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

Essex County College- Training Inc.  
Thursday, February 2, 2017 at 9:00 am  
Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:**

Kelli Bell-Taylor, Jasmyne Beckford, Mitch Cahn, Apryl Caldwell, Qadr Camillo, Arati Chaudhury, Mitra Choudhury, Evanthia Corrado, Elizabeth Davis, Joseph Epps, Barbara George Johnson, Jerry Prevete on behalf of Todd Hay, Jonathan Kobza, Davetta Lane, Amanze Okere, McKenzie Moran, Angelique Morrison, Kane Pappas, Carmen Pichardo, Janine Schaeffer, John Taggart, Cheryl Tisdale, Willie Tolbert, Raymond Vaccari, Nicole Vazquez-Wise

**Meeting Called to Order:**

Mitch opened up the meeting by introducing himself and spoke of the committee's latest accomplishments, the resource guide and the strategic plan. He stressed the value of teaming up with talent networks in an effort to achieve our committee goals.

He asked everyone to review the minutes from the previous meeting. Willie gave a brief recap of the last committee meeting. After a roundtable roll call was completed. The minutes from the previous committee meeting were accepted.

**Talent Network Overview:**

Talent Networks are strategic partnerships of employers, educators, and workforce development professionals working together to strengthen the workforce for their industries. Their focus is on the state's key industries: Advanced Manufacturing, Financial Services (housed at the African American Chamber of Commerce in Trenton), Health Care, Life Sciences (housed at Bio NJ), Retail, Hospitality & Tourism (Farleigh Dickinson and Stockman College), Technology (housed at NJIT) and Transportation, Logistics & Distribution (Essex County College and NJIT). These networks of industry experts, led by colleges, universities, and business organizations, have collaborated with employers, educational institutions, and workforce organizations to assist jobseekers. They build partnerships in the ways listed below:

- working with employers to identify common skill gaps and workforce needs and identify the skills, abilities, and credentials that are in demand

- facilitating the development of a workforce plan for each TIP (Targeted Industry Partnership) to respond to identified workforce needs and opportunities
- creating a strategy for building and sustaining the partnership through commitments from employers, Workforce Development Boards, educational institutions, and other key stakeholders.

Each region (Northern, Central and Southern) spread throughout the state is required to devise a strategic plan. Each talent network has its own TIPs. The three major TIP sub-committees include needs assessment, educational and career pathways and outreach. They provide industry insight to LWD data analyst in the areas of credentials and certifications. Networks, website access and a calendar of events are resources linked to [Careerconnections.nj.gov](http://Careerconnections.nj.gov).

Any companies that are seeking funds to train incumbent or new workers may do so through the Talent Development Centers at Rutgers University, Union County College and Camden County College. Each center has received \$900,000 for 2017; \$450,000 has been earmarked for incumbent worker training and \$450,000 has been earmarked for dislocated worker training.

### **Committee Business**

Mitch asked each network to give a brief overview of their network, providing its successes or hot spots in the Newark area and to identify employers' needs.

***Retail / Hospitality***- The retail industry is saturated with entry-level positions. Although the Dept. of Labor has a list of industry related credentials, employers are so desperate for workers that the list does not carry much weight. Almost one hundred percent of the time larger organizations and most employers are willing to train their employees based on the needs of the company. There is most certainly a soft skills dilemma because the industry is customer service focused. Skills sought for this industry include scheduling, customer service, CPR, AED certification, communication skills, creativity, organization and physical demand. Some organizations that fall under the umbrella of the Retail and Hospitality Talent Network include hotels, restaurants, tourism organizations, gyms, gas stations, convenient stores, furniture and home stores, clothing companies, merchandise stores and the list goes on. The food services component of the industry deals with both large corporations and any establishment serving food and beverages.

The representative advised that some of the top hiring opportunities in Essex County include fitness and aerobics instructors, housekeepers, fitness and wellness coordinators, retail sales person, first-line supervisors of retail sales, automotive attendants, watercraft service attendants, sales attendants, cashiers and cooks. There are currently about 120 openings throughout Essex County.

Top Essex County organizations who are hiring include Amazon, Century 21, Lowes, Wyndham Corporation, CVS, Sears, Lithium Motors, Family Dollar, Home Depot, 7 Eleven, Whole Foods, Speedway and Blue Apron. Halal Guys is one of Newark's biggest successes because quick service restaurants are replacing sit down establishments. Some of the skills sought for these

companies are physical demand, customer service, retail setting, sales, store management, merchandising, and product knowledge. This industry is re-entry friendly. The New Jersey Restaurant and Hospitality Association has proposed developing an employer based curriculum. They are looking to create a pilot program at one of the correctional facilities called “Learn While You Earn” providing an employer based curriculum to create work ready employees. Smaller, more independent companies are more open to ex-offenders. Halal Guys and Blue Apron fall into this category.

The talent network representative advised that there is a big disconnect between employers’ needs and training school curriculum. They are currently working to encourage potential employees, specifically cooks, to be willing to start at the bottom, attain a credential and work their way to the top. The pool of qualified job seekers has expanded by promoting weekly job postings on social networking sites.

***Advanced Manufacturing-*** This industry suffers from stereotypes that there are not many manufacturers left, that there are few careers in the industry, that the jobs within the field are low paying and that the working environment is unclean and dangerous. The talent representative advised that these stereotypes have changed and proclaimed that the average New Jersey manufacturing salary is \$86,000 compared to the New Jersey average salary at \$63,000. He added that there are 11,000 companies seeking skilled workers. There are many jobs in the industry, but most young people do not seek careers in manufacturing. The talent network representative advised that if high school students could study metal shop and woodworking, it could help to minimize employee shortages and skills gaps within the industry. This would also help to prepare students who are not college bound to obtain employment upon graduation. One of the challenges presented in this solution is that proper training and equipment is about half a million dollars for one school. There is also a short supply of instructors. The talent representative advised that in working with the TIPS, we need older workers to go into teaching.

Mecca Force is a proposed apprenticeship program in which the talent network acts as a sponsor aiming to help remove the tedious program setup, reporting and overhead of the manufacturers. There is another program called Dream and Do It developed by the Manufacturing Institute in Washington, DC. It is a marketing campaign for middle school students to encourage them to go into manufacturing. It helps to tear down the misconceptions about the manufacturing industry. Last year, a team of four to five eighth graders from Louise A. Spencer School won a competition called “What’s So Cool about Manufacturing” in which they recorded a two-minute video featuring Unionwear. The video is on the talent network website.

“The Build it Better Challenge” is an initiative involving ten high schools. The students are broken up into groups of five and given materials to build a rubber band powered racing car. They must go through the complete manufacturing process; they must design the car, build a budget and have it approved, consult with student engineers, race the car and finally sell it. The initiative has proven to be quite successful. It has tremendously helped with getting young people interested in the manufacturing field.

Machine operators, machine mechanics, engineers and designers, welders, technical sales, machine operators, quality validation, accountants, sales people and customer service representatives and food processors are all needed in the industry. The basic skills needed for this industry are soft skills, math skills, safety, quality control, tape measures. The network continues to spread this information out to some of the partnering schools including Thomas Edison State University and Essex County College.

**Healthcare-** this network is one of the largest employment sectors in NJ. The hospitals provide \$1 billion in healthcare across the board employing 500,000 people. The industry has three major sectors: home care, hospital care and ambulatory care. The most growing industry is home care. Physicians' offices, physical therapy and urgent care are among the sectors that continue to grow in spite of the past recession. The focus of the industry is on the quality of the healthcare. Technology has become very important in healthcare through integration of communication within the system.

Nursing remains an extremely important pathway in the healthcare industry. The TDC has put together a plan to create make specialized nursing less scarce by making educators out of the nurses who are moving towards retirement. Specialized nursing such as operating room nurses, neonatal nurses, pediatric intensive care, neonatal intensive care, oncology and cat lab intensive care are becoming scarce. The industry does not produce enough nurses to fill these positions immediately. This helps CNAs and LPNs move into specialized nursing fields. The TDC has also created a plan giving a dual certification for CNN and CNHA's from Thomas Edison University from where they will receive credit. The next step is to move into an Associate Degree with the LPN and the Bachelor Degree with an RN.

Mental health is coming into the forefront of the industry. The TDC is looking to train community health workers to be licensed social workers, licensed clinical social workers and crisis counselors. These specialties have become more important over recent years.

The talent network is also working with University Hospital to move EMT's to paramedics involving both apprenticeship and classroom training. They are proposing this as a pilot program in Newark, Paterson, Jersey City and Camden.

Medical coding and billing is another increasingly important field because of how it relates to the sub-coding in a clinical environment. The TDC has been encouraging customer care, critical thinking, professionalism, time management, multi-tasking, crisis management, and computer skills. The capability of cross training is also growing. The top trends in the industry are rapid increase in home health aide, behavior/ mental healthcare and outpatient facilities aiding in pushing patients healthcare management.

**TLD- Transportation, Logistics and Distribution-** In the State of New Jersey, the TLD is split into two sectors; the transportation component is where you find port jobs, long and short haul trucking companies; the logistics component involves third party production, packaging and distribution.

The concentration of jobs are in North Jersey at Newark Liberty International Airport and at the port. There is also a concentration of jobs in South Jersey at the ports of Gloucester, Camden and Parsippany.

Some of the challenges that this industry face at every level is finding qualified candidates and replenishing the retiring workforce. There are critical areas that employers have identified as deficiency in soft skills. The industry is mainly hiring in entry-level positions such as warehousing packaging, truck loading and transportation. The transportation sector has a shortage of drivers, which may be the result of a policy insurance and training issue. This has been a major hurdle.

Somewhere along the line, the country dropped the ball in apprenticeship and the focus should be back on apprenticeship, mentoring and defining what the opportunities are in logistics. The talent network representative explained the concept of logistics by using an example of 9/11. Logistics was used The analytical process required to get 6000 planes out of the sky within 45 minutes and land them safely around the world is the perfect example of logistics. Careers in logistics requires advanced leadership and critical thinking. The representative shared a personal experience that he used to help a young doctor understand the value and reward in the logistics field. The companies that spent the most on education experienced the most success.

The employment opportunities in transportation logistics include baggage handling, baggage claims, inventory, supplies, maintenance and warehousing distribution.

**Financial-** Financial services is a major field in New Jersey's economy and serves as an important function of every industry. The talent network partners with the following employers: TD Bank, Wells Fargo, Prudential, Columbia Bank and PNC Bank.

Entry-level occupational listings in Essex County include tellers, sales agents and customer service representatives. The skills in greatest demand for these positions are customer service, Microsoft Excel, sales and Microsoft suite. There are some high level experienced financial occupational positions in Essex County for hybrid positions, CFA and CPA designation.

Employers in this industry have relayed that they are seeking a universal pool of qualified skilled candidates, internships, on the job training, industry valued credentials, early entry finance experience exposure to current technologies. Employers are also looking for central repositories for applicants within their industries and sure service models. Tellers were at top of list for in demand positions that do not require a college degree. Entry-level positions make up the majority of open positions in this field. Fintech is a fast growing trend using technology, credit and investment services. Through TIP meetings, it was confirmed that the Retail Talent Network pool of applicants have transferrable skills that prove to be beneficial in the financial industry.

Mitch advised that we want to obtain feedback from the business community, but we do not have a mechanism to do so. We want to educate businesses on all of the workforce systems, grants, incentives and resources that are available and beneficial to them and to eliminate any systemic barriers to job growth/ creation. Last year, the business committee came up with five impactful strategies:

- 1) To develop a content library of training, placement, incentive and transportation resources. A draft of this working document is available at Newarkwdb.org by accessing the Employer Resources Tab. Additional resources may be added by clicking the same tab.
- 2) To make the content library customizable
- 3) To create a Work Readiness Credential
- 4) To analyze Career Connections to determine if we can improve the system by working with employers to identify any disconnects.
- 5) To communicate with employers through the talent networks so that we are able to share resources and helpful information with them.

### **Questions**

Mr. Epps asked how do we identify which internships are paid or unpaid. Apryl advised that city or county program counselors have access to internship information. A talent network representative indicated that opportunities for internships/apprenticeships might vary across fields and businesses based on the size of the business.

Apryl asked the talent network representatives how were they working to address the soft skills dilemma. The Finance Talent Network is recruiting from the pool of candidates from the retail field to train for the finance field. Additionally, some of the training schools across the networks have collaborated with offer soft skill training through the curriculum. TIPS meetings also helps to bring any deficits and gaps in soft skills to the forefront. The Healthcare Talent Network Representative advised that soft skills should be approached in K-12 by starting early in doing problem solving. The Hospitality & Retail Talent Network Representative advised that NJPA brought employers together to identify skills gaps. The Goodwill partnership also assists with building soft skills through their program. The blame seems to be on “Millennials”, which continues to create a stigma when it comes to hiring that population. One of the solutions to this issue is to get from behind the desk and interface with each other.

Mitch advised that we must have employer buy-in to address the soft skill issue. Some of the responsibility is on the employer because the culture must change from within.

### **Next Steps**

- 1) In an effort to add an additional 50 to 100 programs to the committee resource guide, Mitch asked that the talent networks assist in the charge.
- 2) Talent Networks help the committee to understand Career Connections by presenting a demo at next committee meeting.
- 3) Mitch will coordinate a webinar training session to the NJ Talent Networks on March 5, 2017.

**The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 6, 2017 at 9 a.m.**