



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

Essex County College- Training Inc.
Thursday, January 5, 2017 at 9:00 am
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Ben Amos, Kelli Bell-Taylor, Jasmyne Beckford, Amina Bey, Addy Bonet, Joane Branin, Al Bundy, Evanthia Corrado, Chip Hallock, Todd Hay, Jonathan Kobza, Davetta Lane, Amanze Okere, John Perry, Charles Rosen, Janine Schaeffer, Bhavna Tailor, Willie Tolbert, Chike Uzoka

Meeting Called to Order: Amina Bey

Ms. Bey introduced herself and advised that Mitch was unable to attend the meeting. After a roundtable roll call was completed, a motion was made to move and approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Minutes were accepted.

Committee Business

Ms. Bey spoke of the new workforce regulations which mandate the drive and proof of employer engagement. Recently, Newark and Essex County individually submitted their local and regional plans to the State Employment Training Commission (SETC) and the North Jersey Partners. Newark and Essex County are part of 10 local areas that make up the North Jersey Partners, who are responsible for creating regional strategies involving workforce development, employment and training, employer engagement and filling skills gaps. She added that employers in urban areas have claimed that they are not getting the level of skilled development through One-Stop referrals. In response, there have been collaborations between chief elected officials, anchor institutions and large companies to learn what the needs are so that the workforce may be trained effectively. Significant progress has been made in spite of some push back.

Ms. Bey solicited the BEDC committee to aid in expanding our reach to the business community and private sector partners. Business engagement will help build a bridge for our college graduates, creating pathways from college to career into entry level opportunities at businesses in and around the Greater Newark area. We need these companies to let us know what the required skill sets, soft skills and life skills are needed for open positions at their companies.

Through a partnership with Rutgers RU Ready to Work Program, we are looking to have an event Spring 2017 which aims to connect the dots between businesses and college graduates. Over the course of the program,

students gain internship, work and mentorship experiences while being trained in work readiness, financial literacy and leadership training. Ms. Bey expressed that one of the main points of the Match Maker Event is to match vetted students who have successfully completed the program and virtually introduce them to committed employers.

Mr. Uzoka spoke of the benefits of having mentees get coaching tips before being interviewed, as they do in an organization that he is affiliated with. He shared an upcoming event scheduled for January 27, 2017 at Irving Plaza in NY. He elaborated about how this event helps to empower the youth and remove any defense mechanisms.

Mr. Tolbert recommended that the mentoring component can actually be a build up to the Match Maker Event which should be set up like a round robin or speed dating event, matching employers with job candidates. This would set up the youth for success so that students can be better prepared for employment. Mr. Okere stated that mentorship would help play an instrumental role in the success of the initiative.

Mr. Hay added that the event would be a benefit to businesses because it would save them a tremendous amount of money on recruiting costs, which minimizes business' profit. Ms. Bey voiced that although employers may be seeking employees with a particular skill set, they might be willing to train through blind matching to provide opportunities to cultivate, massage, grow and develop recent college graduates. She advised that there is a group of about 25 graduating college student who we want to be able to place into entry level positions at different companies. As details about this event develop and are finalized, more information will be shared.

Newark & Essex County Workforce Development Boards are looking to collaborate with the Talent Networks and the North Jersey Partners to host a massive event targeting employers on May 11, 2017. Ms. Bey advised that she and Sam are going to Trenton to advocate about the need for the Department of Labor and the talent networks to assist. The point of this event is to promote dialogue identifying matters like employers' needs, open positions, sought after skills and to identify in-demand occupations. Amina communicated her hopes in participation from any employers that serve on the BEDC.

Mr. Tolbert expressed his concern about the need for social service assistance among private sector businesses. With the changes in the hourly rates of what must be offered to employees, employers could possibly face collateral obstacles. He suggested a meet and greet with businesses and a session of providing a list of resources that might be available to help offset some of their concerns. It was suggested that as a committee we should find a way to meet the needs of small businesses that offers solutions that don't have negative impacts on business. Ms. Bey spoke of the importance of determining what policies can be changed and finding ways to ensure people are trained in an ever changing economy. She stressed that we must become advocates for the things that we want and we must present long term solutions to those who are campaigning for our votes.

Ms. Bey advised that there are several resources, outside of OJT, that the government provides on the city, county, state and federal level. Mayor Baraka recently enacted an ordinance eliminating the payroll tax for Newark businesses who have a labor force of 50% or more Newark residents. There are also resources being made available by the Newark Community Economic Development Corporation and Essex County Development Corporation. She added that we want businesses to know that we have resources and benefits to offer them as they provide employment opportunities to our workforce. She asked for assistance in coming up with ways to get this information out to the masses. Suggestions included the following:

- 1) To establish relationships with the HR Departments at larger companies, like Macy's. Host an in-house job fair in which all temp agencies throughout the county are invited. This helps to provide a sense of assurance to the quality of the job candidate because they can obtain references from a current employer.
- 2) To establish strong relationships with businesses and expand business engagement through the Chamber of Commerce and college career centers.
- 3) To compile a contact and email listing of companies in the Greater Newark area and send an email blast to them highlighting valuable information about incentives, initiatives and resources available to employers.

Mr. Kobza advised that we can reach at least 100 businesses if each committee member shared the information with five businesses.

- 4) To identify business and trade associations within the public/private sector that have the most need for employees. To have these businesses identify in-demand positions and required qualifications.

Mr. Hallock expressed that the problem with attempting to build relationships with businesses for the benefit of putting people to work has always been a struggle because there usually isn't a direct tie to HR. Because most hiring is not done locally, it might be more effective to focus on one employer at a time. He stated that he may be able to help connect the dots between employers and graduates. By identifying specific industries of study, students can be matched with employers in or connected to that field.

Al Bundy stated that the county has a database of businesses which were obtained through its job fairs. Ms. Bey advised that we can start the process by drafting a communication to businesses, identifying a list of resources available to them. This communication should pinpoint a designated contact from the NWDB, NCEDC, ECWDB and the Essex County Community Development Corporation who will be able to provide information and answer questions. It was agreed that the committee should review the final it before distribution.

Next Steps

To create a timeline for the business email blast, the Match Maker Event and the list of employer incentives.

Mr. Tolbert asked everyone to correspond with Kelli or Davetta to indicate which event that they will be working on, it would be a great start.

The meeting for the Business & Economic Development Committee was concluded. Meeting adjourned.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2017 at 9 a.m.