

Danny D. Gonzales



Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee

Essex County College- Training Inc.
Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 9:00 am
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Kelli Bell-Taylor, Nela Blanco, Joyce Bryant, Alfred Bundy, Mitch Cahn, Mitra Choudhury, Evanthia Corrado, Jerrah Crowder, Joseph Epps, Lincoln Farquharson, Chip Hallock, Vann Holland, Jonathan Kobza, Davetta Lane, Zachary Lipner, John Perry, Janine Schaeffer, Patricia Sermon, Nicole Vazquez-Wise, Anthea Williams

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

Mr. Cahn asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the last meeting. A motion was introduced, seconded and moved. Minutes were approved.

Committee Business

Mr. Cahn reminded the committee of the worker certification proposal that he had been working on. Time constraints didn't allow him to go into depth at the last meeting, but since then he met with Mr. Zac Lipner who advised that Barnabas Healthcare plans to pilot the initiative. The goals of the credential are as follows:

- To enable employers to identify who is work ready
- To assess the ability of existing vocational programs that offer work readiness training
- To assess the National Work Readiness Certification Test
- To isolate the demographic factors that affect scoring
- To complete the above tasks without any money
(possible funding sources include employers and the National Work Readiness Council)

Mr. Cahn suggested that the idea is to get employers and training programs on board to help determine if the work readiness credential is effective. He urged that we want the work readiness credential certification to be smiled upon by Human Resource Departments which ultimately increase employment opportunities. The plan is to:

- Identify companies/ training organizations that don't use the workforce system to hire
- Ask them for a list of recent work-ready hires/ graduates of training programs with the lowest level of work experience and educational attainment; test them.
- Offer the work-readiness remediation program for individuals who don't pass the original test.
- Measure efficiency by retesting them.

Guest Speaker-Zach Lipner, Barnabas Health

Mr. Lipner has been an employee of Newark Beth Israel for twenty-eight years, the Chief Human Resource Officer for sixteen years and member of the NWDB for over ten years. He recalled sitting on a panel at the WIB Retreat and being asked what percentage of hospital employees are Newark residents. Being asked this question prompted him to set a goal for himself and the organization to give preference to Newarkers when it comes to hiring. The Hire Newark College Career Job Fair in November 2015 was organized with this in mind. The fair was exclusive to graduates/ soon to be graduates who could show proof of Newark residency. Thirty businesses and two hundred fifty job seekers participated in this event. He began to examine hiring practices at the hospital and advised his employees to make sure that Newark residents are among the candidates' files that are sent to hiring managers. Mr. Lipner stated that Mayor Baraka requested the hospital to formulate a Center of Hope geared around work readiness.

Job Readiness Boot Camp

This 5 week program targeting fifteen to twenty Newark residents for entry level positions was put together by a private consultant, Vincent Randolph. The goal is to partner the readiness component with actual job openings. Participants selected for this program were those who were close to being hired, but fell short because they had barriers i.e. gaps in employment or didn't interview well. The hospital also recruited from twelve Newark-based churches. Participants are assessed and their assessment results are used to help coach them. Another component of the boot camp includes employer site visits. During the third week of the program, employer interviews are conducted. The next part of the program is the community service project in collaboration with Mayor Baraka's office. The final week of the program is graduation.

Mr. Lipner has hopes that the job readiness initiative will gain traction with larger Newark-based employers by helping to put more Newarkers at the front of the line for job opportunities. He suggested that in the future, one of the local training agencies could perhaps facilitate the pilot and partner with Newark employers. He also communicated that although the positions offered at Barnabas Healthcare are entry level, participants are trained and encouraged to consider career paths and self-investment so that they can grow within the companies that hire them.

Mr. Cahn suggested that there should be a boot camp for employers who are interested in participating in the initiative. They can get insight from the current partnering employers who may be able to assist them with strategies for interviews, on-boarding and retention. Mr. Lipner said that he would like to get Newark employers in the room to challenge them to hire Newark residents.

Scott Lowe, Newark Community Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC)

Mr. Lowe stated that the organization is carrying out the mayor's mission of economic development. They are in the process of revamping their website and looking for new ways to

help businesses avail themselves to new opportunities. NCEDC has been approached by many businesses that want to relocate their manufacturing facilities. They want to know what bundles of benefits are offered to businesses from OJT, loan packages and employee pools. As a result the agency is looking to develop a portal that is available to all employers to help make that type of information readily available.

Mitch advised that the committee's content library will be made available on the NCEDC website.

Lincoln Farquharson, Rutgers University

He is currently serving as Program Coordinator for the Newark College Institute. The program offers career readiness for first time Newark residents going into a four year college/ university anywhere in the world. This year the program aims to service one hundred seventy five students. Twenty-five slots have been allocated to Essex County College, since such a large percentage of Newarkers attend 2 year colleges before transferring to a four year program. This year the program is aiming to partner with fifty host agencies. The students are paid ten dollars hourly for the 2nd year internship, while 1st year interns are paid eight dollars hourly. Students are recruited from high school, college admission counselors, EOF Departments from institutions.

The program recently started obtaining data in 2014. The data revealed that in spite of intellect and ambition, the students weren't career ready. As a result, the organization created a winter retreat designed to get them ready for summer employment, i.e. interviews, resume writing, branding and attitude.

The organization created a Partner's Advisory Council. The council will include experts and hiring managers from Newark/Essex County based companies and agencies. Mr. Farquharson communicated that the council is needed for the various reasons below:

- To communicate skillset essentials, best practices and qualities in potential interns.
- To assist with funding the internship; commit to funding one or two interns at \$1600 each for the summer.
- To provide opportunities for interns to shadow executives.
- To be advocates for the program and recruit more partners.

Mr. Cahn recommends an employer match of \$4 to get more employers to buy-in to the funding component. Mr. Farquharson informs the committee members of an interest meeting on February 18th at noon at Rutgers University in the Chancellor's Conference Hall.

Conclusion

Mr. Cahn thanked everyone for their participation. He advised that next month there won't be a meeting, in lieu of the NWD Board Meeting. The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 7, 2016. Mr. Cahn asked the group to think about what projects that they would like to take on next. By the next meeting, NCEDC should have the content library online. We should also have results from the first round of workforce readiness training at Beth Israel. He called a motion for adjournment. Motion was seconded. Meeting adjourned.