



Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee

Essex County College- Training Inc.
Thursday, December 1, 2016 at 9:00 am
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Ben Amos, Kelli Bell-Taylor, Jasmyne Beckford, Joane Branin, Al Bundy, Mitch Cahn, Apryl Caldwell, Qadr Camillo, Mitra Choudhury, Jerrah Crowder, Elizabeth Davis, Lincoln Farquharson, Arneida Greene, Dexter Hendricks, Jonathan Kobza, Saundra Rogers on behalf of John Perry, Charles Rosen, Janine Schaeffer, Farag Seiam, Gale Spak, Bhavna Tailor, Nicole Vazquez Wise, Anthea Williams, Tanya Wright

Meeting Called to Order: Chairperson Mitch Cahn

Mitch called the meeting to order. A roundtable roll call was conducted to introduce all meeting attendees. A motion was moved and approved for the minutes from the previous meeting.

Mitch opened up meeting reviewing the strategic plan. He expressed that we want to let the business community know the strengths of the workforce and to help them identify those who are work ready. He proudly reviewed the Employer Resource Guide which is a working document. He asked that any organizations not listed, may be added by emailing the contact information to Jasmyne Beckford.

Employer Resource Guide Update

There is a list of incentives, grants, resources, placement, training and transportation programs for employers that may be found on the NWDB website. One of our committee goals is to have a searchable directory using keywords and tabs. Mitch advised that this list should be moved and maintained by someone in-house, but it can be found online. Jasmyne, who oversees the NWDB website communicated that she is able to edit, upload and make minor changes, but someone who has the baseline experience to make the website functional is needed to manage the resource guide. It was suggested that we look into Capstone Programs to interview college interns from NJIT who can serve as webmaster. Mitch asked everyone to review page 10 of the Strategic Plan and clarified that numbers 7 through thirteen can be completed by committee members, while 14 and 15 must be completed by someone with a higher skill of web development.

We are attempting to create a workable, searchable database which will serve as the heart of the Newark and Essex County Workforce Development Boards. Charles Rosen added that as we gather more information, at some point the boards must determine what type of online presence is needed. Mitch advised that in the meantime, we should actively seek interns and get quotes on how much money is needed to fund the project.

Jasmyne, Mitch, Al and Elizabeth agreed to be volunteers for a new sub-committee which will actively review the employer facing forms so that there isn't a bottleneck of emails/ forms and to ensure that each organization's contact information is correct.

Charles suggested that we should also incorporate a list of resources that may be useful to employers in assisting employees that experience obstacles or hardships that may impact employment. Mitch solicited the committee's help in providing a list of wrap-around supportive services that may be an ideal resource for employers.

Mitch recommended that we contact partners from within the workforce community through the boards so that we can build a massive database. Al mentioned that the committee can solicit support from Samuel Okparaeké for the RFQ. Mitch advised that he will send a separate email with instructions on how to properly fill out the forms.

Charles expressed his interest in hosting a breakfast for key employers. He communicated that it would be a great opportunity to launch information that could promote hiring. Whole Foods, Blue Apron, NY Giants, NY Jet and Starbucks were among the companies present at an event that he recently attended. As a result of the breakfast, the companies committed and followed through on their commitment to hire. The initiative was in partnership with the Federal Re-Entry Program.

Talent Network as a Resource

The issue with Career Connections is that the email addresses are not listed. The only way to obtain the email information is by researching each entity. Bhavna suggested that if telephone numbers are on the list, calls can be made to get the email addresses. Gale suggested that each Talent Network probably has the type of list needed in the guide, but they can serve as an intermediary. It was also recommended that Bob Grimmie, Executive Director of the Center for Occupational Employment Information- State of New Jersey, be contacted to find out if he can share the Employer Resource Guide.

Lincoln suggested that the Employer Resource Guide be tested on and presented to a small network of employers at an upcoming event scheduled for February 2017. He advised that he would update the committee of the date.

Directory Project Update

The WDB does not have an employer email list. The NCEDC and a few other organizations have offered to email their database on behalf of the Workforce Development Board. There is a separate list of websites that should link to the NWDB. Hopes are that by the time the RFQ is completed, we will have expanded the list to link more organizations to our site.

Work Readiness Certification

The employer perception is that our workforce aren't work ready. In the past, the issue has been who was going to pay for the credential. Mitch stated that the new focus is to identify and promote a way for employers to distinguish which job applicants possess the employer required work readiness soft skills.

-to certify training programs and list those that provide soft skills training within our resource guide

-to take a look at a credential that is more flexible

-The National Work Readiness Certification Program has changed its business model because it was too hard, too expensive or not portable. Mitch distributed screenshots of what the new model should look like and advised that it would be reintroduced at a later date. The new model enables individuals to take the certification test for work ready soft skills for \$5. Mitch was thinking that the test could be administered at places like the Newark Public Library, the new WDB building and the Essex County Training Room. He suggested that we start with employers who could pay for job applicants to take the test. He added that the alternative could possibly be for the NWDB to pay \$5 for the test and then charge employers \$10 for their applicants to take the test. If the applicant passes, he/she gains a certification. If an applicant doesn't get the job, but passes the test, he/she will have a credential to add to their resume. If the applicant doesn't pass the test, \$30 will cover the cost of training to help pass the test. Unlike before, the test is broken down into grades which include bronze, silver and gold to give employers the option of who they want to employ. Mitch added that there are other resources available with the test such as calculators, accessibility and soft skills judgement. The catch with this system is that you must pre-pay for a set number of test. Apryl advised that if the curriculum is approved by the state, then they will pay for it. Mitch advised that the curriculum is approved for a career pathway, but was uncertain if it was approved by the state. Apryl volunteered to look into whether the state would cover the certification. Mitch mentioned that there was an online demo of the initiative and anyone interested in seeing it may contact him. This model is being used in Florida and a few others states. A successful pilot test for this initiative was done with Beth Israel Hospital and positive results were reported. NJBIA has also been pushing this program.

Homework

All Programs for Employers forms should be sent to Jasmyne at BEDC.Newark.Essex@gmail.com.

Lincoln will assist in obtaining a list of email addresses for employers so that we can send them helpful resources. The objective is to get them excited to hire by presenting benefits, incentives and support through the process.

Bhavna will be working on collaborating a list of stakeholders. These entities help to introduce employers to programs. They include organizations such as the NWDB, ECWDB and the State of New Jersey. If anyone has additions, please contact Bhavna.

There was no further business with the committee. Mitch thanked everyone for their participation and called motion for adjournment. Motion was seconded and adjourned.