



Joint Newark & Essex County Business and Economic Development Committee

Essex County College- Training Inc.

Thursday, May 2, 2019 at 9:00 am

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Kelli Bell-Taylor, Jasmyne Beckford, Joyce Bryant, Apryl Caldwell, Qadr Camillo, Mitra Choudhury, Evanthia Corrado, Jerrah Crowder, Robert Diehl, Joseph Epps, Jr., Keisha Flemming, Dexter Hendricks, Jonathan Kobza, Angelique Morrison, Jobi Odeneeye, Amanze Okere, Sam Okparaeke, Janine Schaeffer, Frank Smallwood, S. Aisha Steplight Johnson, Bhavna Tailor

Meeting Called to Order: Co-Chairperson Bhavna Tailor

Bhavna called the meeting to order. A roundtable roll call was conducted to introduce all meeting attendees. The minutes for the last meeting were approved with amendments to the attendance roster. The plan moving forward will be to connect services to small businesses.

Committee Business

Sam Okparaeke, Director of Small Business of Essex County and Essex County Workforce Development Board advised that small businesses are the engine that run the economy because they are responsible for most of the hiring throughout the state. The Joint Newark & Essex County Development Boards have been trying to figure out a way to connect the dots between small businesses and the workforce by leveraging resources that will benefit both parties. Many businesses haven't seen the workforce as a viable alternative to recruit qualified candidates to work for their company. This event has the potential to change the narrative.

Sam advised that he and Amina have decided to present the idea of hosting a Small Business Expo. The expo is designed to show how business and workforce can benefit from each other by addressing the pain points of small businesses while presenting helpful resources that are linked to incentives like on-the-job training, internships and transitional work programs. One of the major aims is to have enough feedback to create policy and dialogue that focuses on small business needs. The event will use a similar model as the "My Brother's Keeper" event. Banks, financial institutions, economic development corporations will be invited to the expo to set up exhibits of their services that address the challenges and needs of small businesses. Sam expressed the desire to have a keynote speaker and breakout sessions with a panel of workforce professionals and business owners who have successfully utilized the workforce system. The goal is to help other businesses understand that there are resources available to help them grow and sustain their established businesses.

Bhavna communicated that the results of the expo will inform the committee of any essential updates and revisions that should be made to the BEDC Strategic Plan. Sam advised that his team will draft an outline and send it to committee. Upon receipt, committee members will break up into sub-committees to offer whatever

support may be needed. The projected event dates are either October 10th or 17th at the Robert Treat Hotel. Angelique recommended that we consider hosting the expo at NJIT or NJPAC.

Collectively the committee stressed the importance of identifying the companies or agencies that may prove to be beneficial to the overall success of the event. Among them were JP Morgan, the Department of Labor, Rutgers Small Business Development Center, Rising Tide Capital, Bank of America and the CDFI Committee.

strategic marketing and universal target population

Connecting the Dots

In the last year, Essex County's Office of Small Business grew from having about 45 small business vendors to 768 small business vendors. This tremendous growth started in 4 counties through set aside programs that helped to even the scales. Of Essex County's 160 million dollars in contracts in construction, goods and services, minorities received less than 20 million. By registering with the Office of Small Business, each business vendor will have access to compete for a contract in every municipalities within the state. Through workforce, WIOA trains individuals who often struggle to find employment after training. Knowing the needs of employers is extremely crucial in developing training curriculums that will help prepare a qualified workforce for positions within their companies. While training organizations, institutes of higher learning, industry partners and vocational training institutions are crucial in connecting the dots, the focus of this expo will be to focus more so on business needs.

Action Items:

- 1- The outline of the event must be created and sent to the committee; sub-committees will be formed from it.
- 2- The strategic plan will be revisited and revised after the Small Business Expo.
- 3- Identify potential sponsors to cover the expense for food and venue.
- 4- The promotional flyer and Save the Date must be created; marketing will be a collaborative initiative.

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