



Workforce Development Board
County of Middlesex

Quarterly Meeting – January 24, 2017

Present: Gloria Aftanski, Lisa Alexander, Kenneth Armwood, Amy Bellisano, Roseann Bucciarelli, Sergo Corvil, Ingrid Coutinho, Alan Fialka, Dan Frankel, Jason Friedman, Yasmin Hernandez-Manno, Gabriel Lavigne, Melyssa Lewis, Poo Lin, Brian Loughlin, Roxanne Teleck (as designee for Angela Mackaronis,) Elayne McLaine, José Montes, Joseph Picone, Miriam Ruiz, Brian Sant’Angelo, Jill Schiff, Kathy Shaw, Tim Timberlake, Joanne Vogel

Staff: Kevin Kurdziel, Claudia Dorsch, Shamara Gatling-Davila, Nelson Laguer-Crespo, Diane Seavers, Melinda Walton

Guests: Aaron Fichtner, Mackenzie Moran, Anthea Williams

Call to Order with Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

Welcome and Introductions

- The notice of this meeting, pursuant to the “Open Public Meetings Act” NJSA 10:4-10 has been complied with and shall be entered into the minutes of this meeting.
- A motion was made by Kathy Shaw to accept the minutes of the October 25, 2016 as written and forwarded to the members by email ahead of the meeting. It was seconded by Brian Loughlin, a vote was taken, passed and the minutes were accepted.
- New members of the Board were announced and introduced if in attendance: Lisa Alexander, Yasmin Hernandez-Manno, Elayne McLaine, and Brian Sant’Angelo.
- Claudia Dorsch, Senior Fiscal Officer of the Middlesex County Office of Workforce Development was introduced and will be giving a summary of where we are half way through the program year. Mackenzie Moran of the New Jersey Healthcare Talent Network and Sabrina Sullivan, a technical assistant from the Department of Labor were also introduced.

Chairperson’s Report

- A number of items that will have significant impact on our local workforce area are upcoming.
 - Procurement of a One Stop Operator
 - Regional and Local Plans have been approved by the Freeholders and are being submitted to the SETC for approval. Clarifications or revisions may be made at the request of the SETC during a 90 day period.
 - Functional realignments of the Career One Stop Center throughout the state. Kevin Kurdziel and Diane Seavers will explain how that will affect us locally.
 - We are looking to restructure the committees and make them more functional. They should play a larger role in reviewing and setting policies. We are looking at setting up our own Disabilities Committee instead of remaining a part of the JFK Interface Committee.

Director's Report

- Recent statistic showing lower levels of unemployment are reflected in the increase in businesses coming to us looking for employees.
- An employer is partnering with us on Incumbent worker training that will save approximately 100 jobs in Middlesex County.
- We are not sure how the new administration in Washington will affect the economy and Workforce Development in general.

Personnel Update

- Julie Piano, One Stop Manager, is retiring after over 30 years with the County. John Ross will be acting as the interim One Stop Manager until June 30 and either he or someone else will be in place permanently as One Stop Manager by July 1 for Program Year 17. Susan Rauscher has been promoted to Deputy Manager of Operations, New Brunswick.
- Nelson Laguer-Crespo has joined us as the Manager of the Business Solutions and Career Services Unit and LaToya Perry has been promoted to Job Developer as that area undergoes re-organizing.

Regional and Local WDB Plan Approval

- The Regional and Local plans have been approved by the Freeholders and submitted to the SETC.
- We hope to be able to report at the April meeting that the SETC has approved both plans. They will be our road map for the next several years.
- The plans are still on the County website to view.

One Stop Procurement/Review Committee

- WIOA Regulations require that procurement of the One Stop Operator be done every four (4) years, however, New Jersey is currently requiring it to be done every two (2) years.
- It is an extremely complicated process to do this procurement. In the past, New Jersey has had a waiver from this provisions but no waivers were given to anyone this time.
- The SETC has hired a consultant (Maher and Maher, Red Bank, New Jersey) to draw up a template for the counties to use for this procurement.
- The Office of Workforce Development (OWD,) through John Ross as the One Stop Manager, will respond to an RFP put out by the Workforce Development Board (WDB) which will work with the County Purchasing Department. Other public or private interested parties will have to register with the County Portal.
- There will be a firewall in place which will prohibit any contact between the selection committee and the OWD concerning the bidding process once it is open to the public. The WDB Committee will make the selection from the respondents. While we do hope for more than one bidder, if only one is received and acceptable, it can be awarded it to that bidder.
- Two approaches to the procurement could have been taken. We are using the minimalist which procures just the Operator who acts as a sort of liaison between the OWD and WDB. The other would be to procure the entire operation including the manager, staff, counselors, etc.

Freeholder Report

- Kenneth Armwood is the Middlesex County Freeholder who is liaison to the Department of Business Development and Education spoke to the members.
- He introduced himself and thanked everyone for their service on the Board. He told them that it is not about handouts, but empowering people to be better off than when they walked in.
- Mr. Kurdziel congratulated on his recent re-election as a County Freeholder.

Remarks from New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development Commissioner, Aaron Fichtner

- Mr. Fichtner spoke to the members about his background in Workforce Development and also thanked the member for the work they do in charting an innovative course for the programs and services provided by the One Stop Career Centers in helping county residents in obtaining employment.
- He described Career Connections which is a collaboration of One Stop Career Centers, government, non-profit, educational, and faith based organizations both online and in person to help job seekers throughout New Jersey.
- Residents can go to www.careerconnections.nj.gov for access to interactive tools, resources, and advice.
- Mr. Fichtner took questions from many of the members on topics concerning them and agreed to further look into many of them.

Incumbent Worker Training

- At the October 2016 meeting, the Board adopted a policy allowing the OWD to use up to 20% of its Adult/Dislocate Worker funds to offer a program to help train/re-train existing workers at a company in order to avoid layoffs and retain employees. Train, sustain, gain.
- An opportunity has arisen to work with Sunny Delight starting in February on a program like this.
- In addition to avoiding layoffs, they hope to be able to add more shifts and increase the number of employees.
- Some of the details of the program and our involvement were discussed and it was agreed that publicity should be done through the Chambers and news media.

Business Solutions and Career Strategies Team

- Nelson Laguer-Crespo introduced himself and spoke about his background.
- Information about upcoming plans and statistics about recruitments and other unit events were given.
- It is expected that there will be more promotion of the Youth programs with some of the younger clients.

Functional Realignment of the One Stop

- The One Stop Career Centers around the state will be undergoing a functional realignment of how they customers and businesses.
- Bob Grimmie and Joe Dombrowski of the New Jersey Department of Labor are visiting One Stops around the state to discuss this with staff. However, they have indicated that they would consider leaving things the way they are in places where the current set up is working well.
- Board members agree that the One Stops should be locally driven with strong local leadership.
- Jill Schiff brought up the topic of the plethora of acronyms we use and told the members to just ask if anything is not clear.

Committee Restructuring

- Mr. Kurdziel reminded members that each member must be part of at least one committee or they will be assigned to one.
- The WDB should be driven by the committees whose members advise the OWD on policy and goals.

Budget Update (Claudia Dorsch)

- A copy of the budget for the OWD at the half way point of Program Year 2017 was supplied in the meeting packet which updated members on the presentation done in July on the budget as projected.
- Also included was a comparison to the budget from Program Year 2016 at the same half way point and shows that while similar amounts were received this year, we are spending a little less than last year at this time and seeing fewer clients. There are a number of reasons including unemployment being down. We can carry-over

some money into the next year, so the money will not be lost and also accounts for showing less spent because money left from PY 15 was used before using PY 16 funds.

- A large amount of our funds are allocated to cost reimbursement contracts.
- Ms. Dorsch responded to questions posed by Board members about some specific information and how some programs are funded.

Board Committee Reports

Youth Advisory Committee (Gabriel Lavigne)

- Mr. Lavigne said that he hopes to make this committee a true driving force for Board activities related to Youth and welcomes any ideas and suggestions from Board members.
- The ELITE program had 82 young adults enrolled as of December 31 in activities such as Work Experience, HSE preparation, Basic Skills or Occupational Training.
- Participants went on two Industry Tours to the Healthcare Talent Network's Apprenticeship Week at Rutgers and a presentation and tour of the NJ Carpenters Union and Apprenticeship Training Facility in Kenilworth.
- Financial Literacy workshops are continuing and well commended in the program.
- Work-based learning activities have been set up with several businesses in Perth Amboy. We hope to establish partnerships with more businesses and municipalities as a goal for the program.

Literacy (Gloria Aftanski)

- The committee will be working on the following during the upcoming months
 - Update the goals and objectives of the committee
 - Review available Literacy programs in Middlesex and identify viable referral places and programs for our customers
 - Identify literacy service gaps and possible solutions
 - Identify additional areas for collaboration

Economic and Business Development (Kevin Kurdziel/Kathy Shaw)

- We need to do a better job of getting out the word about what we do.
- Our first customer is the business community and we see ourselves as a "supply-chain" manager for them and we can do this by helping them find information when relocated to New Jersey and bringing in municipal, financial and Chamber partners.
- A kind of "One Stop" environment for relocating businesses.
- The County is in the process of re-branding and will be coming out with new designs that will be used on our promotional materials. A video announcing this is available on the County website.

Staff Reports/Ad Hoc Committees

One Stop (Diane Seavers for Julie Piano)

- We have reached 35% of our goal for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for PY 16
- New Jersey's Unemployment Rate for December 2016 is 4.7%, Middlesex County in November is 3/6%. This is about 16,000 unemployed Middlesex County residents.
- We are undergoing two audits currently:
 - American Job Center Review by the NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development covers all our programs and funding streams at the One Stop. We have been told unofficially that the findings are good.
 - Federal Review: USDA Food and Nutrition Service for ABAWD participants.
- Learning Link administrative guidelines have been received outlining some changes regarding serving customers.
- Mr. Kurdziel added that audits by the Department of Labor have always been constructive.

WorkFirst New Jersey (Kevin Kurdziel for John Ross)

- Overall the trend has been for enrollments in TANF and GA to be down and placements in full time employment to be up. SNAP enrollments and placements are both up. It is indicative of a continued improvement in the economic conditions in the county and the availability of opportunities for employment.
- TANF participation rate is between 21% and 25% despite efforts to address clients who are not consistently compliant. The OWD meets monthly with the Board of Social Services to review the reports and examine the practices at both that adversely impact the Participation Rate. A representative from the DOL shares best practices among the regions.
- The ABAWD Program will be monitored by the Federal Government concerning the delivery of services at the One Stops. Our vendors have been doing a better job than anticipated in matching ABAWDs to CWEP sites.
- Mr. Fichtner told members that we have a real responsibility to help the TANF clients and we have to keep trying to do a better job concerning participation.

Youth Incentive Policy (MCWDB 2017-01) * ACTION ITEM

- The proposed policy is in the meeting packet.
- This policy will allow youth enrolled in services to receive incentives for achieving specific goals tied to workforce training activities as allowed by the WIOA of 2014.
- A motion to accept the policy was made by Kathy Shaw, seconded by Gabriel Lavigne and passed unanimously.
- **MCWDB 2017-01 Policy was adopted.**

New Business

- Ms. Schiff announced that Bernice Proctor Venable has retired and has resigned from the WDB.
- The Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce is hosting an Emerging Leaders Summit and Mr. Lavigne will forward information about it to the members.
- The Construction Industry Career Day will be held in May at the NJ Convention & Expo Center, Edison.
- The Reentry/Second Chance Committee will be doing a workshop with the One Stop Youth Staff at the County Building and can make appointments at the One Stop for those interested in our programs.
- Nelson Laguer-Crespo will be a co-chair of the Central New Jersey Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Talent Network.
- Amy Bellisano suggested that a way be developed to share these events via social media so the Board members could also share them on their own websites.

.Public Comment

- There were no public comments.

Adjournment (Jill Schiff)

- A motion was called for and made by Jose Montés to adjourn and seconded by Roseann Bucciarelli.
- The vote was called, the motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Handouts:

- Emailed ahead of the meeting:
 - Minutes from the October 25, 2016 meeting
 - Designee Form
- Emailed ahead of the meeting and in the meeting packets:
 - Agenda
 - WDB Report
 - Placement Report
 - Policy Proposal MCOWD 2017-01
- In Meeting packet:
 - 2017 WDB and Committee Meeting Dates
 - Fiscal Report

The next meeting will be on April 25, 2017 at 9:00 AM.