



Workforce Development Board
County of Middlesex

One Stop Operations/ Work First Collaborative Committee

Thursday, March 30, 2017-1:30PM

Location: New Brunswick One Stop Career Center
Middlesex County Office of Workforce Development
550 Jersey Ave. New Brunswick, NJ 08901
WIOA Conference Room B

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: Tracy Montani, Miriam Ruiz, Lillian Cortes, Luke Miller, Sabrina Sullivan, Sharon Hartman, Ingrid Coutinho, Poo Lin, Jean Zwingli, Roxane Teleck, Baden Almonor, Sandra Panton, Tim Timberlake, Mariana Beshai-Ascander, Silvia Sao, Dawn Lystad, Eric Diamond

Staff: Kevin Kurdziel, John Ross, Sandy Ciccone, Susan Rauscher, Lori Miranda, Barbara Heyward, Diane Seavers, Shamara Gatling-Davila

I) Welcome and Introductions..... John Ross

Everyone present went around the room and introduced themselves. John Ross acknowledged the retirement of Linda Urbach as well as Linda’s interim replacement by Lillian Cortez. Miriam Ruiz was recognized for her promotion to Fiscal Director/Assistant Director of Community Childcare Solutions.

II) Approval of Minutes: December 1, 2016 John Ross

A motion to approve the minutes from the 12/1/2016 One Stop Operations/ Work First Collaborative meeting was offered, seconded, and approved.

III) Update from Middlesex County One Stop

Kevin Kurdziel thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and expressed appreciation for having great partners at the state and local levels.

a) Personnel Changes..... Kevin Kurdziel

- i) Julie Piano retired 1/31/17
- ii) John Ross named Interim One Stop Manager through at least 6/30/2017
- iii) Barbara Heyward will oversee the Business Services Unit. Her new title is Manager of Vendor Administration and Business Services
- iv) Lynn Valenty has been appointed to the position of Career Development Counselor
- v) There are some additional organizational changes pending, and members will be informed as they are implemented.

b) Functional Realignment Kevin Kurdziel

The NJ DOL directed One Stop Centers to make organizational changes that would improve alignment with WIOA regulations. Originally, Catherine Starghill travelled to local areas to give an overview of the expected changes. However, Bob Grimmie has taken over her position and changes to the original plan are being discussed. One Stops will be assessing what is working well and what needs improvement. Changes will not be implemented “for the sake of change” but, rather, to improve efficiency. One change that will be happening at the Middlesex County One Stop is that case management of General Assistance and SNAP customers will be transferred from Employment Services to the Office of Workforce Development. A transition plan is already under way. Any other decisions regarding functional alignment will be discussed at monthly partner and/or Workforce Development Board meetings. New Brunswick and Perth Amboy One Stop Managers were given a chance for further comment and stated that everything had been covered.

c) Procurement Update Kevin Kurdziel

Kevin gave a brief explanation of and update on the One Stop Operator procurement process. The One Stop Manager will continue to manage day-today-operations whereas the One Stop Operator (person/entity) will be responsible for convening meetings such as this and others in the community, developing reports, memoranda of understanding, resource sharing agreements, and other technical issues. The Operator will also serve as the liaison between the Workforce Development Board and the Office of Workforce Development. The Bid Specifications was released earlier this month and is due back next Thursday, (4-6-17). An appointment will not be made until all proposals are reviewed and a recommendation is submitted by WDB Executive Committee. No compensation level was included in the Bid Specifications. Compensation will be determined based on the submissions of responders. This is a competitive contract, so the Contract does not have to be awarded to the lowest bidder. Other counties in the region have had 0-2 responders. Everyone is in the solicitation process currently. This is new for NJ because the State previously had a waiver. The Contract could be awarded to a government entity, and institution of higher education, a non-profit etc. Criteria for whom can respond is wide open. Originally, it was under consideration that the Office of Workforce Development would respond directly, but this plan was dropped due to too many potential conflicts of interest. Freeholders will hopefully approve the selection by their second meeting in May. The plan is for July 1 implementation. The procurement is available on the County Purchasing Portal if anyone is interested in reviewing it.

d) WDB Re-entry Committee Kevin Kurdziel

One year ago a Committee was assembled to look at employment for the reentry population. The County is looking to serve this population through a program called transitional employment. The local area is looking to get approved to use 10% of funding for transitional jobs. The plan is to target the reentry population, as they often have no or spotty work experience. The program can cover 100% of wages for up to 6 months. There is no guarantee of hire. The WDB will authorize and policies and procedures will be developed and implemented. The hope is for a July 1 start, but it could be later in the summer depending on Board approval. This will be a great incentive for employers.

e) Restructure of One Stop Partners Committee..... John Ross

As a result of the need for the One Stop's Partners to work more closely as the implementation of the requirements of WIOA nears, it has been decided to return to the practice of monthly meetings for the One Stop Partners directly involved with the law's requirements. As a result, this Collaborative will cease to operate as scheduled on a quarterly basis. One Stop Partners will meet one the fourth Thursday of each month at 1:30pm in this room. A schedule of these meeting will be distributed to the One Stop Partners next week. Kevin and I will co-chair this meeting until the One Stop Operator is appointed.

There is a combination of representatives from the One Stops' Operations and Community Agencies included in this Collaborative. In order to maintain contact, and in the future, expand our involvement with Agencies in Middlesex County, we will establish Workforce Development Community Forums to meet at a schedule to be developed. The purpose of these forums will be to continue and expand the visibility and utilization of the services by residents of Middlesex County of the One Stop Centers through our Community Partners, collect feedback on our effectiveness and ideas for improvement and promote the programs and events of our Community Partners that have a common reference to the One Stop Centers and their customers.

Helina Wisniewski has served as the point of contact for the Collaborative Partners for several years. Helina has been assigned to new responsibilities in The Office of Workforce Development. We appreciate the services she has provided and wish her well with her new responsibilities.

Carmen Mercado will replace Helina. Unfortunately, Carmen is not able to be with us today, but she will be very accessible. If anyone needs information regarding our meetings or has an event that should be promoted, Carmen can be reached by phone at 732-745-3955 or through e-mail at Carmen.mercado@dol.nj.gov

f) Revised Master AgreementBarbara Heyward

The Master Agreement is being overhauled. It will reflect Middlesex County's new branding and include a table of contents. Details were not shared in this meeting because the document needs to be approved by county counsel. Some notable changes will include benchmark and placement changes. The contractual wages are still under review. A meeting for vendors will be scheduled soon. The intention is for the new Master Agreement to be rolled out in the next fiscal year.

Kevin Kurdziel added a thank you to the team that has been working on the revisions. It will be simplified, easier for vendors, and more aligned with other counties.

g) Incumbent Worker Training..... Diane Seavers

This is a new feature in the WIOA regulations and is for people currently employed by companies. The Board has approved a policy resolution stating that up to 20% of MCOWD funds can be used for this purpose. A contract with Sunny Delight was just approved. 93 employees

will receive Six Sigma training. Everyone will receive white belt training and others will go through more advanced training levels. It is a 6 month contract from April to October 2017. MCOWD will pay a percentage based on the number of employees trained and Sunny D will pay 25%. Local WIB will approve the contract. Stipulations are that the recipient needs to have been employed with company for at least 6 mo. Diane Seavers and Kevin Kurdziel toured the facility and were impressed. The company has a little over 30 people working per shift. One of their machines does 600 bottles/minute. The goal of training is to reduce the changeover time from 45 min to 9-10 min which may allow them to add more employees and shifts.

Anyone with suggestions of additional companies should contact Diane Seavers. There is already a possible grant writing training being discussed for a company in Perth Amboy.

Kevin Kurdziel added that if Sunny Delight could not fund provide this training to their workers that these jobs would have been lost. Instead of losing jobs, additional jobs will be developed. They are already thinking about bringing on 5 additional people. Kevin also thanked Diane for spearheading this process. Contact with Sunny Delight happened immediately after the proposal was approved.

Diane also thanked Sabrina from the State for her assistance.

h) Labor Market Update..... John Ross

Most recent labor market information was presented. In February, the United States UI rate was at, 4.7%, New Jersey was 4.6%, and Middlesex County was 3.5%.

More details can be found on the NJ DOL website:
<http://lwd.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/content/lmiupdate.pdf>

i) Elite (Youth) Program Update.....Sandy Ciccone

The main office for the youth program is in Perth Amboy. Counselors can see students by appointment in New Brunswick. The program caters to 16-24 year old out-of-school youth.

Some programs offered to participants include H.S.E. classes through Middlesex County College, the Work Experience program that affiliates students with local businesses for 3-6 months, and Occupational Training in labor demand occupations. Eligible students receive a stipend and transportation costs. Reach out to Sandy if interested in learning more about eligibility. Sandy provided a handout that indicated the program has 112 participants.

Youth participants have gone on several industry tours including the Rutgers Healthcare Talent Network, Carpenters Union, and Sunny Delight. They also had a series of 4 Financial Literacy workshops. Sandy is working on setting up a tour with Pepsi. They are also looking to recruit at Perth Amboy Family Day, MCTVS for community service days, as they want to spread the word about services. She has connected with the NB director of probation, sits on a 0-21 taskforce committee about services, and will be working to set up orientations in the community. They are planning for H.S.E. graduation in August.

The Request for Proposal is almost finished and will need final approval from the Board. The goal is September 1 implementation. Anyone with interested students should direct them to Sandy and also anyone with worksite connections.

IV) Work First NJ Update..... John Ross/Jean Zwingli

The First half of PY-2016 was reviewed and compared with the same period of PY-2015. The results are as follows:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) referrals and enrollments decreased by approximately 40%. Placements in full time employment (over 30hrs.) decreased by 4%.

General Assistance (GA) referrals decreased by 25%. Enrollments decreased by 42%. Placements in fulltime employment (+30 hrs.) decreased by 15.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) referrals increased by 68%. Enrollments increased by 76%. Placements in fulltime employment (+30hrs.) increased by 122%.

TANF Participation

December '16	22.8%
January '17	25.4%
February '17	25.1%

The Board of Social Services and the Office of Workforce Development meet monthly to review the Denominator Reports. Specific attention is focused on the TANF clients who are not fully participating. Both Agencies conduct internal reviews after the distribution of each monthly Denominator Report by the NJ DFD. The purpose of these meeting is to share the results of these reviews and when necessary, revise practices that are not conducive to an expeditious client flow within and between both Agencies.

The NJ DOLWD and the NJ DHS announced quarterly partnership meetings to address WFNJ issues. It was announced that between the quarterly meetings, teams comprised of staff from both state agencies would visit counties to review specific issues related to the WFNJ Program in each county. As yet, a team has not visited Middlesex County.

Agency Program Reviews

Vine Transportation Inc. was reviewed in January. This company provides transportation to selected TANF clients through a block grant provided by the NJ DFD. The results of that review were positive and reflected improvement in the delivery of services since a meeting with the company in November 2016.

A Program Review of the WFNJ Programs operated by Middlesex County College was concluded in February. Several recommendations were forwarded to the College and receipt of a reply from the College is anticipated very soon.

A Program review of the WFNJ Programs operated by NBALC has recently been concluded and a Report will be issued by this Office next week.

NJ DOLWD will commence a review of the County's WFNJ Program shortly through a review of selected files from our Vendors that provide services through WFNJ Activities and Training Agreements.

The Federal government conducted a review of the ABAWD Program in Middlesex County in January. This review included a review of files at DFD, The County Board of Social Services and a review of practices at both One Stop Centers. It is not known if or when a final report will be received but indications were the County was in substantial compliance.

Block Grant –Transportation

The DFD has announced that Transportation Contracts for FY-2017 will be extended to December 31, 2017. New Contracts will commence January 1, 2018. This will allow for the transfer from budgeting and contracting on a fiscal year basis to a calendar year basis which all or most counties operate.

V) Literacy/ High School Equivalency.....Tim Timberlake

Graduation was moved to June 21 at New Brunswick High School because of snow. Invitations will go out at end of April. Numbers of students passing the H.S.E. exam has decreased because the exam is more difficult. The TASC changed over a 3 year period and is now at the highest level. Numbers are down by 10% and a lot more students are giving up. They have hired a counselor in an attempt to raise reengagement of students. Part of the problem is that people are working so they can't make the hours to attend H.S.E. classes. The classes are a little less than full, and they are projecting 175 graduates this year which is down from 200.

New Adult Basic Education Grant will allow them to offer adult classes that may include computer literacy and a job search component. This would be open to anyone in Middlesex County. The grant would pay for a teacher to start next September.

John Ross added that it may be good to have this program for the ABAWD population so that they could have a choice and not just take people from job search and go into CWEP. The college used to provide a program. This will be discussed further.

VI) Update from Collaborative Members

a) OARS Poo Lin

Orientation & Reemployment Services program is a new initiative that began in March of 2017 with two pilot offices: New Brunswick & Vineland. As of 3/31/2017, the program will be extended to 3 additional offices: Camden, Newark, & Pleasantville. The target population are U.I. recipients who did not receive a profiling score (aka U.I. check) within the initial 35 days of application. According to Labor Planning & Analysis, there are approximately 207 people statewide on any given day who do not receive a profiling score. Individuals are sent a reporting letter from Central Office and asked to report to their Local Office to learn about One-Stop Career Center services. Four sessions were held at the New Brunswick One Stop since 3/3/2017 with approximately 30 customers scheduled per session: 30% Attended, 30% Returned to Work, 30% Did Not Report, and 10% Other.

b) One Stop Protocol for Homeless..... Poo Lin/Baden Almonor

Referrals are being made by Coming Home on a monthly basis to provide individualized assistance to the extreme needy. Referred customers will report every third Wednesday of the month, with their Coming Home Counselor, to meet with Ms. Mary Smith at 1:30 pm. Services provided include Resume Preparation, Career Connections Navigation, Job Referrals, U.I. Application, Occupational Training Information, Understanding NJHELPS.ORG, Local Area

Transit, etc. There were 3 referrals on 12-14-2016, 2 on 1-18-2017, 2 on 2-15-2017, and none for March 2017. There has been one Job Placement after these sessions.

VII) Old/Other Business, Announcements

Kevin Kurdziel shared that in the next few weeks, MCOWD will be working on its first podcast entitled "Workforce Roundtable" which will be hosted by Kevin and available on monthly basis. The content will include speaking to partners, staff, and explaining how people can access services. There are other areas doing this throughout the county. It will be accessible through the guidebycell app.

The 2017 GSETA conference will be Oct 3, 4, 5 in Atlantic City

Kevin thanked John Ross for stepping in as Interim One Stop Manager

VIII) Adjournment

**The next meeting of the Middlesex County One Stop Operations Committee
will take place on April 27, 2017.**