



Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board Meeting
Tuesday, July 30, 2013 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Amy Bellisano, Roseann Bucciarelli, Robert Davis, William Dennison (representing Gloria Aftansk), Kevin Duncan, Janice Fishbein, Todd Flora, Maria Gonzalez, Dan Henrickson, Adrienne Keaton, Tom Lankey, Melyssa Lewis, Brian Loughlin, Maryann Lovas, Joseph Picone, Senovia Robles, Barbara Roos, Jill Schiff, Michelle Suskind, Bernice Proctor-Venable, Joanne Vogel, Earl Wiggley and Henrietta Wilson (representing Angela Mackaronis)

STAFF: Jane Brady, Nina Rios-Rivera, John Ross and Patti Seip

GUESTS: Felix Velez, Perth Amboy Education Center

Prior to the board meeting, a New Member Orientation Session was held, beginning at 8:00 am. In attendance were the following new board members: Kevin Duncan, Todd Flora, Janice Fishbein, Maria Gonzalez, Maryann Lovas and Joanne Vogel

Call to Order:

WIB Chair, Jill Schiff called the meeting to order. Notice of this meeting was made pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-10.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING:

The minutes of the last meeting held on April 30th were submitted for approval. Dr. Bernice Venable made a motion that the minutes be approved as written; Maryann Lovas seconded the motion and the motion carried. Todd Flora abstained from voting.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Jill Schiff introduced and welcomed new board members, Todd Flora and Joanne Vogel. Todd Flora was recently appointed Interim Executive County Superintendent for Middlesex County. He replaces former board member, Samuel Stewart, who recently retired. Joanne Vogel serves as the Human Resources Director for Con-Way Freight in East Brunswick.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

WIB Chair, Jill Schiff, turned the meeting over to Maria Gonzalez for the election of board officers. Maria Gonzalez presented the By-Laws/Membership report on behalf of Committee Chair, Gloria Aftanski, who was unable to make the meeting.

Ms. Gonzalez indicated that the By-Laws/Membership committee met to discuss a potential Slate of WIB officers for the upcoming program year, covering July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. Notice was sent to all WIB members, pursuant to the WIB By-Laws, indicating the proposed Slate of Officers as follows: Jill Schiff, Chairperson; Earl Wiggley, Vice-

Chair; and Amy Bellisano, Secretary. Dr. Venable made a motion to approve the nominations as presented; Brian Loughlin seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Gonzalez asked if there were any other nominations from the floor. As there were none, Dr. Venable made a motion to close the nominations; Tom Lankey seconded and the motion carried.

Dr. Venable then made a motion that the Slate of Officers by acclamation be accepted; Janice Fishbein seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Jill Schiff expressed her appreciation to the board for their vote of confidence and indicated that her job as Chair is made easier due to the hard work and efforts of WIB staff. Jane Brady responded that staff appreciates the board officers and members for volunteering their time and providing leadership.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Jane Brady announced that Abner Garcia, our Youth Program Manager for the past five (5) years, will be retiring July 31st. Jody Bramson, one of our Career Development Counselors, will assume this position effective August 1st. Ms. Bramson served as a youth counselor for our youth program several years ago, and therefore, is very familiar with the program, which will benefit the unit.

Jill Schiff spoke about the recent merger of her office, which is now the Associated Construction Contractors of NJ (previously Building Contractors Association of NJ). Jane Brady expressed appreciation to Ms. Schiff for her company's generosity in allowing the WIB to conduct its board meetings at her site, at no cost.

YEAR END REPORTS:

Operations: Adrienne Keaton, One-Stop Manager, presented a powerpoint presentation recapping the last program year's operations. She provided a summary of the Career Beacon Workshop, which is now available on-line on our County website. Applicants can now access Career Beacon Workshop on line any time, day or night. At the end of the Career Beacon orientation, the client can print a Certificate of Completion indicating they understood the information provided to them and will then be able to have an appointment scheduled with a counselor for their assessment process. It was decided in April to re-institute the Career Beacon on a monthly basis at the One-Stop Center, for those individuals who do not have access to a computer, or are not comfortable with computers.

During the assessment process, the client will select an occupation that is considered to be in-demand by the State of New Jersey. They will be asked to visit at least three (3) training schools, as they should have a working knowledge of where the school is located, hours of class and the school's teaching style. They can then make an educated decision in terms of what school they would like to attend.

It was noted that contracts written cannot exceed \$4,000, with 80% provided towards training and 20% held for placement. Contracts are written with an agreed upon minimum wage that the student must obtain when securing employment after graduation. At the end of the training period, 20% is held to ensure that the training provider is just as interested as staff in securing employment for the student.

Ms. Keaton mentioned that all welfare clients are considered eligible for training due to their income, as well as most individuals collecting UI benefits. She further stated they are finding recently that most people requesting training are eligible because many have been on UI for such an extended time, that their family income is low enough to place them in the lower income category.

Basic skills are offered to clients who test below 8th grade. Once their skills level has increased, they can then be placed in a training program, if interested.

With respect to the large number of people collecting UI benefits, Ms. Keaton informed members that as of the week ending July 6th, any UI claimant on an extension will have their benefits reduced by 22%, and as of the week ending July 13th, another tier will be eliminated. The reduction in benefits has resulted in frustration for these individuals.

Ms. Keaton stated that Additional Benefits During Training (ABT) is available to those clients whose UI benefits are exhausted while they are in training, for a period up to 26 weeks. However, they are not eligible to receive ABT if they voluntarily quit their previous job or were guilty of gross misconduct.

Members were provided a copy of a chart that reflected placement information for clients enrolled in training programs this past program year (top 15 training providers). It was indicated that clients are sometimes so desperate for money that they will accept a job that may or may not be related to the training they received. Amy Bellisano questioned if information could be provided to reflect the training program a client attends and the job they ultimately obtain. Ms. Brady responded this information will be provided to members. This issue must also be addressed in the Strategic Plan which must be submitted to the State in November, as more and more employers are also hiring on a per diem or part-time basis in order to save on health benefits costs.

Ms. Brady indicated there is a Job Developer on staff who works with our graduates that are unsuccessful in obtaining employment upon completion of their training program.

Dr. Venable asked if there is a session provided to clients where attitude and salary expectations are discussed, in addition to the possibility of accepting a position that may require them to be cross-trained, the importance of arriving to work on time and not feeling they are underpaid and overworked and then moving on to another job. Ms. Brady responded that this particular problem was discussed at the New Member Orientation Session held previously that morning. Training providers have been asked to address this issue, as well as workshops covering these issues are held at the One-Stops. She indicated these problems apply to 16 year olds as well as senior citizens.

Work First New Jersey: John Ross, Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) Director, presented his Work First New Jersey year-end report to the board. His powerpoint presentation provided a recap reflecting the difference in referrals, enrollments and placements for program years 2010 - 2012 in the TANF program (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families – a program earmarked for mother/child(ren) or parent/child(ren)). There has been a decline from 3,800 referrals in 2010 to 3,100 referrals over a three year period. He noted that these are the numbers referred from the Board of Social Services. However, the actual show rate is substantially less. The enrollment number is down also, from 1800 in 2010 to 1500 in 2012. Interesting to note is that placements was 301 in 2010 and 302 in 2012, which reflects very little happening in securing jobs for these individuals. It has proven very difficult to recruit employers to hire TANF workers for 30 hour/week positions. The number of clients obtaining part-time jobs has increased, but they still do not reach the 30 hours per week requirement.

For the General Assistance/SNAP clientele, (program for single people without children), there was an increase of over 500 referrals from 2010 to 2012. Mr. Ross indicated that with people now exhausting their UI benefits and not getting jobs, their resources are such that they then are forced to go on General Assistance. Staff are now seeing clients that have a work history, but perhaps with jobs that are no longer around. Unfortunately, some clients are stubborn and do not want to consider employment in another occupation than what they previously had, or in not receiving the same pay they were previously receiving.

He noted that even though enrollment numbers have increased, building space has not, nor has staff, so this has proven to be a very difficult situation for the One-Stop to deal with.

Placement is very difficult for GA clients, as this is a very diverse and sometimes dysfunctional population, with many barriers. Many GA individuals have applied for SSI, but an application can take more than a year for a determination from Social Security. Brian Loughlin asked if a client accepts a job, would their SSI application then be in jeopardy. John Ross responded that it would definitely impact their SSI application.

Mr. Ross noted that the SNAP program will also be cut 20% in October, which will be another major loss for this population.

Youth: Jane Brady presented the year-end report for youth programs for the 2012 Program Year.

A picture was passed around showing ten (10) very happy young people who recently received their GED at a celebration held in their honor at Middlesex County College. Ms. Brady indicated that these events are very heartwarming occasions with family members sharing in the experience and celebrating the occasion with their son or daughter.

The youth program is for any eligible out-of-school youth, 16-21 years old. There are currently two (2) Youth One-Stop Centers, one located in New Brunswick and one in Perth Amboy and also a Middlesex County Workforce Action Group (MCWAG) office. New Brunswick has struggled for the past two years in recruiting youth. It is believed this is due to New Brunswick's high undocumented alien population, which we are unable to serve. However, the Youth Coordinator for New Brunswick has finally started getting referrals. Also, additional space has been acquired at the New Brunswick One-Stop Center which will be specifically earmarked for an official Youth One-Stop Center, rather than the space currently occupied – which is only one office. There will be also be a classroom for them to use. Most youth referrals are from the Middlesex County Detention Center, the Juvenile Justice Commission or local high schools.

The Perth Amboy Youth One-Stop Center has been open for four years and has served 75 youth this past program year. Many of those young people are basic skills deficient. Staff will do whatever they can to bring their levels up to a sufficient level to then place in a training program. Work readiness skills are provided while in the program.

To recruit youth, the Youth program has advertised on several Middlesex County Area Wide Transportation buses. The problem in recruiting youth is that to be considered eligible for the program, the family income must be poverty level. We have asked the federal government to change this requirement, but have failed. This is a very tough population to serve.

Over 184 youth were served last year. Youth staff have done an outstanding job in working with this group.

This past program year, Middlesex County College (MCC) operated a Youth Work Readiness Program at their Edison campus. The program provided basic skills remediation to 22 youth. Sixteen youth completed the program, and the remaining six dropped out.

MCC also operated a Perth Amboy GED Youth Program located at the YMCA. This program provided tutoring for young people who need their GED. Thirty-four youth were served in this program, with 19 passing their GED exams. It was decided to intensify this program this coming program year by increasing the number of tutoring hours, as it was felt the youth needed additional time.

The Carteret GED Youth Program just finished its first year of operation. This program is located in a church classroom building across from Carteret Town Hall. Eighteen youth were served this past year and eight completed the program. It was indicated that several youth have not yet finished the program. This location is very convenient, as it is located two doors away from the library.

The Perth Amboy YMCA was asked if they could provide computers for youth to use for their job search. The YMCA agreed to this request, as they just recently received computers donated by Hess. This is great news.

It was realized that many young people were not getting jobs due to their lack of work experience. Several employers were contacted to see if they would be willing to hire young workers for a three month period to acquire on-the-job training experience. Twenty youth were placed in these types of positions. Only two were actually hired after the three month period. It was indicated that most were not hired permanently due to poor work habits. Even though only two were hired, all of the employers said they would be willing to train another youth. Our MCWAG Coordinator, Hilda Alonso, provides an intensive two (2) week work readiness session before each youth begins their job. She is consistently talking with them and providing encouragement every step of the way, yet the youth are still not making the transition. Ms. Alonso does an exceptional job and is not giving up on them.

Dr. Venable once again remarked on the importance of getting through to youth on the issue of arriving to work on time and not just showing up and not calling in, but also going out to lunch and not returning. She suggested that consideration be given to having some WIB private sector board members meet with these young people and try to

relay to them the issues they need to address in order to obtain and keep their jobs, because in her opinion, their attitudes will prevent them from getting anywhere. She further stated that everyone in the room needs to get involved because if these young people do not get employed, it will affect everyone by our taxes being increased to provide their supportive services. Earl Wiggley responded that the MCWAG Committee will be holding a meeting on August 6th and will discuss this issue.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UNIT: Nina Rios-Rivera, Manager of the Middlesex County Business Development Unit (BDU), presented the program year-end report to the board. Ms. Rios-Rivera stated that the BDU also is responsible for the operation of the Business Resource Center, which was previously operated by the State of New Jersey.

The Business Resource Center (BRC) works with employers to encourage the use of Jobs4Jersey in posting their job orders as well as scheduling recruitments to assist in their search for employees. An email blast is forwarded to all unemployed individuals in the surrounding area, including parts of Mercer, Union, Monmouth and Somerset counties to ensure the employers have a good pool of qualified applicants.

Employers are visited and are provided a copy of the Business Resource Center packet which provides a list of services available to them at the BRC in the One-Stop.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) is also available to employers for a minimum of \$4,000 and maximum up to \$9,000-\$10,000 for wage reimbursement. If an employer is willing to train a person, this is a great opportunity.

Information is also provided to employers on various other New Jersey program incentives they may or may not be aware of..

The BRC also assist employers just starting up their business who may need guidance and counseling, either directly or through referrals, to other community programs.

Recruitments during the past year have primarily been for staffing agencies seeking temporary to permanent workers. Many employers are saving money by not paying full-time wages. Most of these positions are entry level jobs paying from \$7.25 to \$12.00 per hour. .

Ms. Rios-Rivera reported that despite reports that the labor market is improving, it appears that businesses in Middlesex County are still using caution in hiring. It is believed this could be due to a slow economy, a mix-match of what jobseekers wants versus actual job vacancies, uncertainty of the impending Affordable Health Care Act, and employers' opinion that jobseekers lack the skills required for the job. In addition, employers are expecting to hire individuals with college degrees, even for secretarial positions, due to it now being an employer's market.

Placements have become more challenging since many jobseekers have poor skills in resume writing, interviewing and basic job search techniques. Many also do not possess the soft skills that employers seek. This has been a long standing issue which the One-Stop is working on by offering workshops. Also, jobseekers are encouraged to attend the Jersey Job Club in order to help with these issues. The BDU is working with the Jersey Job Club to encourage use of the various tools provided to its members.

Employment trends have been mixed, ranging from part-time, temporary, contract work (contingent), commissioned sales positions, low wages and multiple skill sets or college education requirements. However, most jobseekers are looking for full-time, permanent positions, straight sales (not commission based) and with benefits. Most jobseekers are willing to wait for their ideal job of choice. In many cases, they are not willing to seek new skill sets or choose another career. One positive note is that after educating jobseekers on how some of the temp and part-time jobs are sometimes trial periods for companies to see whether they would like to offer full-time, more jobseekers seem to be accepting that trend. BDU also encourages people to volunteer as an opportunity to gain skills and acquire work experience if they have been unemployed for a long period of time.

There were 250 non-recruitment job orders during the 2011-2012 period and 230 during 2012-2013. For a year-to-year comparison, there were 55 on-site recruitments for 2011-2012 and 91 in 2012-2013; 398 job orders in 2011-

2012 and 382 in 2012-2013; 505 employer contacts in 2011-2012 and 804 in 2012-2013; 198 visits to employers in 2011-2012 and 136 in 2012-2013; 177 profiles created in 2011-2012 and 136 created in 2012-2013; and 10 business seminars in 2011-2012 and 4 held in 2012-2013. It was noted that this decrease is due to the SBDC office now conducting these seminars.

2013-2014 BUDGET:

Members were provided a copy of the 2011-2012 program year budget, which reflected expenditures to date (to June 30, 2013). There are some carry-in monies, as it is allowable to carry-in 20% into next year's budget.

The new budget for program year 2013-2014 was also presented to the board. Jane Brady provided a brief summary of the year's budget. It was noted there has been no word received yet on Workforce Learning Link funding.

A motion was presented by Henrietta Wilson to approve the budget for Program Year 2013-2014; Melyssa Lewis seconded, and the motion carried.

WIB RECERTIFICATION PROCESS STATUS:

Ms. Brady announced there will be Strategic Planning Committee meetings held to begin planning for the WIB Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 which is due to the NJ SETC by November 1st. One meeting has been scheduled for August 8th, two will be held in September and two scheduled for October. Any member that would like to serve on this committee is welcome to attend. The SETC has indicated the maximum number of pages submitted should be twenty. Staff are still waiting for the guidance letter from the state on how they would like the Plan set up.

STATUS OF WIB LETTER TO SETC REGARDING INCOME LEVELS SET BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

Jane Brady reported that the SETC did not have the board's letter on the agenda at their last meeting. They indicated they did not have the letter, so another copy was sent. They have since indicated that it will be discussed at their next board meeting, which is scheduled for October.

However, Jane Brady was at a meeting recently where the Executive Director of the SETC referred to this letter and indicated these were the types of issues the SETC likes to see brought to their attention for discussion. Members will be kept updated on this issue.

INFORMATION INCLUDED IN PACKET:

STATE PERFORMANCE REPORT: Members were provided a copy of the State's preliminary performance report for WIBs for the entire State of New Jersey. It was noted that Middlesex County is meeting or exceeding all its performance measures. Earl Wiggley stated that other WIBs are also doing very well, and suggested this may be an opportunity to learn from other WIBs, to find out what they are doing that is successful and vice-versa.

LEARNING LINK STATS: Learning Link stats for the last four years were provided to the members for comparison purposes.

SCHOOL MATRIX CHARTS: One chart provided reflected the schools and courses clients were trained in this past program year and another chart showed the top training programs and how many clients were enrolled in each program. Business Management and Transportation/Distribution/Logistics were the top training programs chosen.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 2018 CAREER CLUSTERS FORECAST A forecast was provided from the State of New Jersey on what they expect employment to look like for high school through college jobs by 2018.

WIB Report: The WIB report covering the period July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 was provided to members. Ms. Brady remarked on the difference in numbers served in New Brunswick versus Perth Amboy.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY: An updated WIB Membership Directory was provided in members' meeting packets. Anyone with any changes to their listing should contact Patti Seip.

State Business Development Corporation: Elayne McClaine, Regional Director for the NJ Small Business Development Center office in Middlesex County, was introduced to the board and provided a brief presentation on services offered by the SBDC for employers.

HISPANIC CHAMBER NETWORKING EVENT: It was announced that the Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce recently sponsored the 3rd Annual Hispanic Business Expo. This event was a huge success and in fact, has taken over as the primary event for the Chamber, with a 45% increase over last year's turnout. There were 145 exhibitors and over 600 people attended. Nina Rios-Rivera co-chaired this event and was congratulated on her efforts.

JOB FAIRS: Another job fair will be held on September 25th in Old Bridge and another one is scheduled two weeks later, October 9th, at the Rutgers Labor Education Center in New Brunswick. Ms. Brady mentioned that the Perth Amboy Job Fair held on July 16th was also a success with over 360 jobseekers and 38 employers.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

ITEMS INCLUDED IN MEETING PACKET

- WIB Budget for Program Year 2012
- WIB Budget for Program Year 2013
- Copy of Letter to SETC Expressing Board's Concern Over Self-Sufficiency Level
- NJDOLWD – Program Year 2012, 4th Quarter , Performance Matters Report
- Learning Link Program Statistics for Last Four Years
- Participant Placement Information for Program Year 2011-2012
- School Matrix Report for Program Year 2012
- Contracts Written by Aggregate Program Area
- NJDOLWD – Career Cluster Forecasting Demand for High School through College Jobs, 2008 – 2018
- Workforce Development Data Report for Program Year 2012
- WIB Membership Directory
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ITEMS PROVIDED PRIOR TO MEETING

- Agenda
- Minutes of Prior Meeting
- Announcements

NEXT MEETING DATE: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2013