



# Union County Unified Workforce Investment Plan

Union County Workforce Investment Board

**2014-2017**

**Signatures:** The signatures on this page are required by the New Jersey State Employment & Training Commission in order to submit the Unified Workforce Investment Plan.



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**Alfred J. Faella, Union County Manager**  
County of Union  
On Behalf of the Local Chief Elected Officials



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**Glenn Nacion, Chairman**  
Union County Workforce Investment Board

1-28-14

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Date

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Date

## **A. Unified Workforce Investment Plan Values and Strategy - An Introduction**

The Union County Workforce Investment Board developed its three-year unified workforce investment plan within the framework of the Core Values, Talent Development System Priorities and Sector Strategies as outlined in New Jersey's 2012-2017 Unified Workforce Investment Plan. In addition, research conducted by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (2007-2013) has been instrumental in all strategic planning efforts in Union County (attached).

Through this planning effort, the County and the State seek to redefine and transform the public workforce development system into an innovative and dynamic talent development engine. This plan highlights policies that have been developed by the Workforce Investment Board to better serve job seekers and employers in an effort to make strategic investments in workforce development programs and services.

### **Core Values-driving investments based on industry needs**

In this rapidly changing economic environment, the skill sets requirements for jobs are constantly changing. The seven key growth sectors identified in New Jersey's 2012-2017 Unified Workforce Investment Plan have been prioritized in Union County along with available local labor market information and economic data, to drive investments. Moreover, in an effort to provide up-to-date intelligence on local industry needs, the Union County Workforce Investment Board will convene Chamber Roundtables, Employers' Industry Sector Focus Groups, and conduct employer surveys.

Research has shown that employers require job seekers to have basic education and workplace readiness skills to obtain employment. The Workforce Investment Board is exploring how to best encourage and incentivize vendor programs to enhance their industry specific training to include contextualized basic skills, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and workplace readiness skills training.

Current labor market information indicates that the primary growth sectors that provide significant job growth for Union County include Construction; Retail, Hospitality & Tourism; Health Care; and Transportation, Logistics & Distribution. The Workforce Investment Board has implemented a targeted approach to more effectively allocate resources and spur the development of increased employment opportunities.

## **System Priorities and Populations**

Populations that experience higher than average unemployment including individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth and long-term unemployed have been the primary recipients of workforce development services.

The One-Stop Career Center System offers a highly integrated seamless approach to the delivery of workforce development services. Through the numerous One-Stop Partner agencies, clients access a variety of supportive, educational, and training services. Union County continues to work to integrate programs to leverage available resources, e.g., integrating WIA Title II adult basic education into WorkFirst New Jersey approved activities.

## **Sector Strategies – Key Industries**

Union County has taken steps to align workforce and education with employer needs in key industries. In Union County, the following have been identified as primary growth sectors that provide significant job opportunities:

- Construction
- Health Care
- Retail, Hospitality & Tourism
- Transportation, Logistics & Distribution (TLD)

Health care, TLD and Retail industries rank as the three largest industries in Union County (See Table 1). Together, they provided nearly 4 out of 10 jobs in Union County in 2012. The Construction Industry has experienced a recovery from the effects of the Great Recession and is projected to provide 2,300 jobs over the period 2010-2020<sup>1</sup>.

The Financial Services industry sector shows minimal job enhancement opportunity with Union County. As such, it has been classified as a secondary growth sector. Advanced manufacturing, Technology & Entrepreneurship and Life Sciences are classified as tertiary growth sectors that project no significant growth within Union County.

Union County lost over 23,600 jobs during the Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009) with many of the job losses concentrated in manufacturing. The manufacturing industry has lost over half of its jobs in the past decade, dropping from 44,000 jobs at the start of 2002 to 20,300 at the close of 2012.<sup>2</sup> Pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing alone lost over 15,000 jobs

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<sup>1</sup> Source: NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Market and Demographic Research

<sup>2</sup> Source: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development Research Report: Economic competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012: An Update and Look Ahead, December 2013



between 2007 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a). Despite the job loss, manufacturing accounted for nearly 1 in 10 jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a).

Union County plans to improve connections to the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development Talent Networks to better understand employers' skill and workforce needs. By working with talent networks in targeted industries, Union County can leverage connections and resources to improve staff and job seeker knowledge of the skill and hiring needs of key industries in the local economy.

## **B. Local Demographic, Governance and Planning Process**

### **1. Local Area Planning**

Union County has been planning and implementing talent development strategies for many years. In 2007, the Workforce Investment Board commissioned the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University to evaluate the local and regional economy and composition of the workforce and related skill sets. The Union County Economic and Workforce Competitiveness Project was completed in December 2007 and has been updated as recently as December 2013 (*both studies have been included as attachments to the Union County Unified Workforce Investment Plan*). Many of the findings and recommendations mirror the foundational elements of the State's Unified Workforce Investment Plan. Guided by these studies, the Workforce Investment Board has implemented sector-based employment and training strategies based on industry needs.

In 2009, the Workforce Investment Board convened two Employer Roundtables that focused on TLD and Health Care industry needs. The Workforce Investment Board will continue to plan for higher level integration of resources and services to best meet the needs of employers and job seekers.

### **2. Local Workforce System Program Service Area**

Union County is a hub of economic activity for the state located at the crossroads of global trade. The county is home to an array of industries, including pharmaceuticals, transportation and logistics, retail, educational services, health care, and others, that provide more than one-quarter million jobs, or nearly 6% of all jobs in the state. The county is a vibrant, culturally and economically diverse community with nearly one-quarter million workers spanning dozens of industries.

Union County is highly urbanized and densely populated, located in the northeast portion of New Jersey. Comprised of 103.4 square miles, and 21 municipalities, the County is located within the New York Metropolitan Region and along the Boston-Washington Corridor. This area is known for having the heaviest concentration of population and industry in the nation. Union County is bordered by Essex County to the north, Morris and Somerset Counties to the west, Middlesex County to the south, and the Arthur Kill (river) to the east.

Union County is unique in its economic diversification due to its location and excellent infrastructure, including a system of Interstate and State Highways, rail lines, and one of the largest container terminals in the world. Newark Liberty International Airport, located in both Union and Essex Counties, is one of the region's busiest airports.

Union County is home to over one-half million residents, or nearly 6% of the state's population. Median household income averaged \$66,791 during the 2006 -2010 period, approximately \$3,000 less than the median household income statewide (\$69,811) in the same period. In 2010, 9.1% of all residents in both Union County and the State had incomes below the poverty level: up from 6% in Union County in 2006.

There are 543,976 residents of Union County; of that total 405,650 (75%) were 18 years of age or older. The total labor force (in 2012) was 290,255. Citing recent census data (2012), of the 359,658 residents that were 25 years of age or older, 52,219 (15%) lack a high school diploma or GED.<sup>3</sup>

Union County is home to a large immigrant population: 27.3% are foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey). A variety of issues must be addressed for these recent immigrants to fully participate in the economy. Due to this major influx of immigrants over the past decade in Union County there is an overwhelming need for ESL, basic skills, and GED preparation for our foreign-born residents.

Union County is home to diverse populations. Some municipalities have high per capita incomes and educational levels. The older inner cities of Union County have experienced a major influx of immigrants over the last twenty years: Elizabeth, Plainfield, Rahway, Union, and Linden.

### 3. Governance

Union County, incorporated in 1857, operates under a County Manager form of government. The nine members of the Board of Chosen Freeholders are

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<sup>3</sup> Source: U.S. Census 2012

elected to three-year terms, with three seats up for election each year. Day-to-day operations of the county government are administered by the appointed County Manager.

The WIB operates by committee structure. The members of the Workforce Investment Board are appointed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders in accordance with the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. One third of the entire Workforce Investment Board membership constitutes a quorum.

The Board of Chosen Freeholders is the grant recipient for all federal and state allocated public workforce funds. The Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Workforce Investment Board are jointly responsible for the annual budget, sub-grantee funding awards, fiscal expenditures and local program performance.

The Union County WIB and its committees are scheduled to meet quarterly. The standing committees include: Executive Committee, Adult Education & Literacy Committee, Business & Industry Committee, Disabilities Issues Committee and One-Stop Committee. The Executive Committee is comprised of the Officers of the WIB, the Immediate Past Chair, Chairpersons of all standing committees and a Member At-Large.

Recently, Union County government led an effort to rethink its economic development strategies and, indeed, how to best integrate workforce development into economic development. Union County government recently established the Department of Economic Development in order to centralize planning and implementation. As of January 2014, the Workforce Investment Board was administratively moved to the Department of Economic Development as it is recognized as a major resource to support businesses and strengthen the local economy. With varying resources that support business retention and expansion, the Department of Economic Development has embarked on a coherent and coordinated strategy to assist businesses and jobseekers.

The WIB has oversight responsibility for the One-Stop Operator and workforce development system performance. The Department of Human Services Division of One-Stop Operations is the One-Stop Operator for the local workforce system.

#### 4. Business/Stakeholder/Partner Engagement

The Workforce Investment Board will continue to convene Employer Roundtables and Chamber Roundtables to engage employers. The *Union*

*County Means Business* Initiative is ongoing and will continue as a vehicle to engage employers, industry leaders, and public officials.

### **C. Resource Investment Strategies, Programs and Services**

1. Alignment with Key Industries/Sectors, business engagement strategies, employment opportunities, and demand

The Workforce Investment Board was an early adopter of many of the talent development initiatives outlined in New Jersey's Unified Workforce Investment Plan. The WIB organized Employer Roundtables to help determine the workforce needs of area employers. The Employer Roundtables focused on the Transportation/ Logistics/ Distribution and Health Care industry sectors. The County reached out to area employers to begin the process of developing employer networks and to utilize their expertise to determine their workforce needs, both current and long-term. Their input was invaluable in the validation of data specific to job openings, employee turnover, and skill levels of particular occupations that are typically hard to fill or experience high turnover. Many of the private sector participants were involved in human resources for their respective companies. Topics included:

- What are the skill sets required of older youth, adults and dislocated workers to become employed?
- Data to guide decisions for targeted training
- Where to direct funding ?
- How should training be delivered ?
- How to improve job matching and job retention ?

To engage businesses, the County conducted employer surveys and organized networking events. The Workforce Investment Board is a partner in the *Union County Means Business* Initiative that includes networking and informational breakfast meetings with the high level representatives from the private and public sectors. The *Union County Means Business* Initiative provides a forum for employers to provide insight into current and future employment opportunities and feedback regarding occupational training policies. These networking events support Union County's goal of coordinating economic development and workforce development strategies that target effective utilization of resources to support and sustain the local economy.

The *Union County Means Business* business portal has links to programs that Union County and partners offer to business. Information that can be ascertained includes: financing, workforce development, public/private partnerships and doing business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century utilizing social media.

The Union County Means Business Initiative convened the following networking events during 2012-2013:

- **Status of Union County: A Snapshot of the Union County Economy: Opportunities & Obstacles** – March 2012 (*Keynote speakers included James Hughes, Ph.D., Edward Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University and Carl E. Van Horn., John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University*)
- **The Dollars & Sense of Funding Your Business; Financing Opportunities Available to Union County Businesses** – April 2012
- **Your Workforce: Incentives, Training and Resources to Develop Current Employees & to Find Qualified Employees-** June 2012
- **Public/Private Partnerships: Doing Business with Government** – September 2012
- **Expanding Business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Navigation Technology & Social Media** – October 2012
- **Legislative Outlook for Business** – March 2013
- **Business Development Opportunities** – April 2013
- **Health Care** – September 2013
- **Maximizing Your Business with the Internet** – October 2013

In 2009, the Workforce Investment Board implemented a sector-based strategy that targeted training funds to industries with the most projected growth, wages, and projected openings. The County is aligning its workforce development initiatives to support and complement the State's key sector growth strategies.

The Workforce Investment Board issued a Request for Proposal in PY 2013 to provide class-size training that will facilitate the training of multiple individuals in high-demand occupations. The programs are aligned with New Jersey's 2012-2017 Unified Workforce Investment Plan industry sector strategies that provide significant employment, competitive wages and advancement potential. The occupational programs funded include:

- Certified Home Health Aide
- Certified Nurse Aide
- Customer Service
- Solar Panel Installation

In PY 2012, the County of Union awarded funding to Union County College to provide *Union County Choices*, a class size occupational training program for WIA eligible adults and dislocated workers. The training programs are targeted

to the key growth sectors in Union County. The training programs offered include:

- Global Logistics Associate
- Introduction to Logistics
- Medical Office Assistant with Specialties
- Patient Care Technician
- Retail Operations – National Professional Certifications in Customer Service and in Sales

As part of the sector strategies, the One-Stop will guide customers that have interests in careers other than those offered in the class size programs to training targeted to the key growth sectors through the use of Individual Training Accounts.

Regional planning is essential to fully effectuate change in the local economy. Demographic data indicates that only 1/3 of Union County residents are employed in Union County and conversely 2/3 of individuals working in Union County reside outside the County. As such, the Union County Workforce Investment Board was involved in regional planning efforts as a member of the leadership team for the *North Jersey Economic Innovation Alliance* that concentrated its efforts on aligning systems in the sectors of transportation/distribution/logistics and health care/health services. The Workforce Investment Board is exploring the development of sector driven regional partnerships to drive talent development strategies that will create additional employment opportunities and leverage available resources.

Union County has been a leader in sector focused workforce and economic development efforts in New Jersey for many years. The county was a founding participant in the North Jersey Partners collaborative, a sector-focused regional initiative funded by a \$5 million Workforce Innovation Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and later supported through state-funded Innovation Partnership Institute (IPI) and Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) grants. The WIRED, IPI, and REDI grants funded curriculum development and training in TLD, health care, and technology, and supported the development of employer roundtables that allowed partners to obtain regular input from industry employers about their workforce needs. A key accomplishment was Union County College's development of a new entry-level curriculum for warehouse workers in the TLD sector.

The County has partnered with New Jersey's TLD and health care talent networks. In 2011, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce

Development began the talent network initiative, which now includes talent networks covering seven major industries in the state. Talent networks bring employers in the state's key industries together with workforce, education, and economic development staff who can address employers' workforce concerns and help them to stay competitive in today's difficult economic climate. The talent networks have several key goals, including: acting as a single point of contact for employers; gathering intelligence on the emerging workforce needs of the industry; educating job seekers and workforce intermediaries, including One-Stop Career Center staff, WIB staff, colleges, and others, about the workforce needs of the industry; hosting and attending events that enhance connections between workforce, education, and economic development systems and employers; and developing and implementing key strategies to address industry workforce needs. As part of its work on the New Jersey TLD Talent Network, Union County was engaged in sourcing skilled workers for large employers in the region, such as Continental Airlines.

## 2. Job Seeker Service Model; integration of programs and services

Clients gain access to the public workforce development system through various agencies/programs. The extensive network of One-Stop Partners serves as access points for job seekers throughout the County. The network includes Housing Authorities, public libraries, community and faith-based organizations, and Union County College. Veterans are provided services through Workforce New Jersey Offices in the Elizabeth and Plainfield One-Stop Career Centers.

## 3. Development of training programs and curriculum development etc. based on industry intelligence and alignment with employer need

The Workforce Investment Board enjoys a close working relationship with Union County College. The Union County College Industry Business Institute develops training programs for newly employed and incumbent workers. The programs are customized to meet an employer's specific needs.

## **D. Measurement and Evaluation**

### 1. System Oversight Responsibility and Scope

The One-Stop Committee is charged with oversight of the local One-Stop Workforce Service Delivery System including monitoring performance and program enrollments, ensuring Workforce Investment Board Plans are being carried out as they relate to One-Stop System services, and mediating disagreements among the Partners.

Goals and objectives of the One-Stop Committee include:

- Establish standards for the performance of the One-Stop Career Center system.
- Establish annual program enrollment projections.
- Conduct an annual evaluation of the local One-Stop Service Delivery System.
- Monitor system performance through established common measures and/or other State Employment & Training Commission/NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development designated performance metrics.
- Performance should be reviewed at least quarterly.
- Conduct “risk assessments” during the course of the year and at year-end, to review the performance of all training providers that impacted a performance measure falling below 90% of meeting the performance goal.
- Review One-Stop Operator reports (prepared by the One-Stop Operator)

## 2. Evaluation Target Areas and Methodology

Workforce Investment Act Title I Youth activities, Adult & Dislocated Worker Employment & Training occupational training programs and WorkFirst New Jersey employment directed activities were the focus of the evaluation of the One-Stop workforce services delivery system:

- Number of clients provided staff assisted services (intensive services) and occupational training
- The length of time prospective program participants waited to be served including placement in occupational training
- The number of individuals waiting for occupational training
- The length of time participants remain enrolled in the AOSOS system
- The effectiveness of training programs to prepare individuals for employment (placement rate)

The focus of the One-Stop Evaluation effort was to assess the timeliness of training services, the effectiveness of occupational training programs and workforce preparatory services regarding public assistance recipients.

Workforce Investment Board staff developed a quantitative assessment instrument with the goal to create a snapshot capturing program performance. The PY 2012 One-Stop Evaluation process was an internal review of One-Stop services, client referral process and outcomes.

## 3. Locally developed metrics

In addition to the USDOL Common Measures, the One-Stop Evaluation included the following metrics:



- The number of individuals trained – reported by industry sector
- The number of training related employment- reported by industry sector
- Number of employers served
- If applicable – the number of individuals waiting for training

#### 4. Program Year 2013 WIA Common Measures for Union County

<b>Entered Employment</b>	<b>Planned</b>
WIA Adult	82.7%
WIA Dislocated Worker	89.3%
Wagner Peyser	45.0%
<b>Employment Retention</b>	
WIA Adult	83.4%
WIA Dislocated Worker	85.4%
Wagner Peyser	77.0%
<b>Average Earnings</b>	
WIA Adult	\$10,727
WIA Dislocated Worker	\$13,679
Wagner Peyser	\$16,435
<b>WIA Youth</b>	
Placement in Employment or Education	59.0%
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	59.0%
Literacy and Numeracy Gains	45.0%

#### **E. Best Practices**

##### ***Class-Size Sector Training***

The Union County Workforce Investment Board has launched a series of class-size training programs under the Workforce Investment Act and within the identified employment growth sectors so as to increase the velocity of training opportunities.

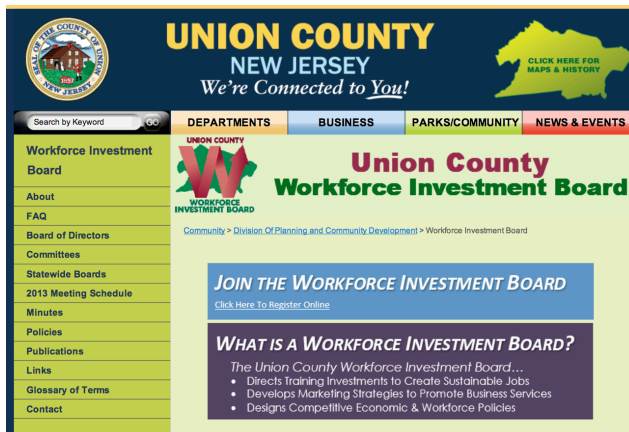
##### ***Chamber Roundtables***

The Union County Workforce Investment Board has engaged in various roundtable discussions with a myriad of chambers of commerce and industry organizations so as to gauge economic vitality and industry needs. This is

imperative in understanding potential pivots by industry in response to the real-time economic circumstances.

### **Private Sector Board Member Recruitment Strategy**

The Union County Workforce Investment Board embarked upon an online private sector member recruitment strategy that combined the energies invested into the chamber roundtables, marketing and social media to achieve 60% private sector board membership composition. Below are screenshots to the website as well as the recruitment flyer employed.



## **Union County Freeholders' Invitation To Businesses: Join the Workforce Investment Board**

### **Use Your Business Expertise To...**

**Direct Training Investments to Create Sustainable Jobs**  
**Develop Marketing Strategies to Promote Business Services**  
**Design Competitive Economic & Workforce Policies**

To Learn More Please Contact:  
Antonio Rivera, Director  
(908) 527-4195  
arivera@ucnj.org  
www.ucnj.org/wib



## **Attachments**

Table 1. Rank and Percentage of Total Employment for Union County's Largest Industries, 2012 Q4 and 2006 Q4

Table 2. Projected Employment Change by Industry, Union County 2010-2020

Chart 1. Total Employment by Industry, Union County 2007 - 2012

Chart 2. Projected Job Growth by Industry Sector (2010-2020)

Chart 3. NJ Key Industry Growth Sectors

Research Reports:

The Union County Economic and Workforce Competitiveness Project (2007)

Strategies for Improving Workforce and Business Competitiveness in Union County (2012)

Economic Competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012: An Update and Look Ahead (2013)

**Table 1. Rank and Percentage of Total Employment for Union County's Largest Industries, 2012 Q4 and 2006 Q4**

Industry	2012 Q4		2006 Q4	
	Rank	% of Total Employment	Rank	% of Total Employment
Health Care	1	14%	2	13%
Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution	2	13%	4	11%
Retail Trade	3	12%	3	12%
Educational Services	4	10%	5	9%
Administration and Support & Waste Management and Remediation Services	5	9%	6	6%
Manufacturing	6	9%	1	15%
All Others	N/A	33%	N/A	34%
Total	N/A	100%	N/A	100%

Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamic s, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

**Table 2. Projected Employment Change by Industry, Union County 2010-2020**

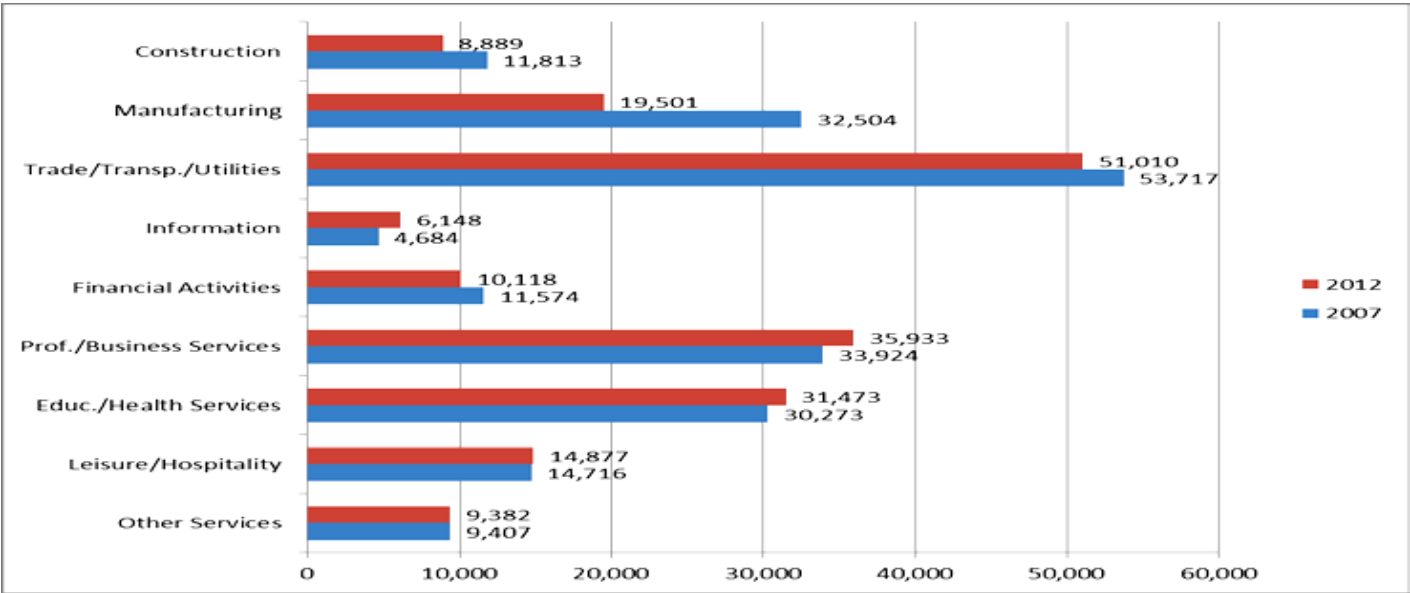
Industry Title (Two-Digit NAICS)	2010 Jobs	2020 Jobs	Change: 2010-2020		
			Number	Percent	
				Total	Annual
Total Nonfarm Employment*	231,350	239,500	8,150	3.5	0.3
Construction	9,350	11,650	2,300	24.6	2.2
Healthcare and Social Services	29,450	31,200	1,750	6.0	0.6
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	16,650	18,250	1,600	9.6	0.9
Administrative and Waste Services	19,150	20,350	1,200	6.4	0.6
Other Services	12,050	13,250	1,200	9.7	0.9
Retail Trade	26,750	27,850	1,100	4.2	0.4
Accommodation and Food Services	12,300	13,250	950	8.1	0.8
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,850	3,250	400	13.8	1.3
Management of Companies and Enterprises	5,900	6,200	300	5.0	0.5
Utilities	1,300	1,550	250	17.7	1.6
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	2,100	2,300	200	10.9	1.0
Educational Services	2,550	650	100	4.1	0.4
Natural Resources and Mining	0	0	0	34.0	3.0
Manufacturing	20,950	20,800	-150	-0.7	-0.1
Wholesale Trade	13,000	12,850	-150	-1.3	-0.1
Finance and Insurance	84,580	8,200	-250	-2.8	-0.3
Information	4,200	3,700	-500	11.6	-1.2
Transportation and Warehousing	11,900	11,250	-650	-5.6	-0.6
Government	32,450	30,900	-1,550	-4.7	-0.5

Note: Total nonfarm employment excludes self-employed and unpaid family members

Source: NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Industry and Occupational Employment Projections 2010-2020

**Chart 1. Total Employment by Industry, Union County 2007 & 2012**

Union County’s private sector employment totaled 187,448 in 2012. Professional and business services added the most jobs between 2007 and 2012 (+2,009)



Source: New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages, Annual Averages

**Chart 2. Projected Job Growth by Industry Sector (2010-2020)**

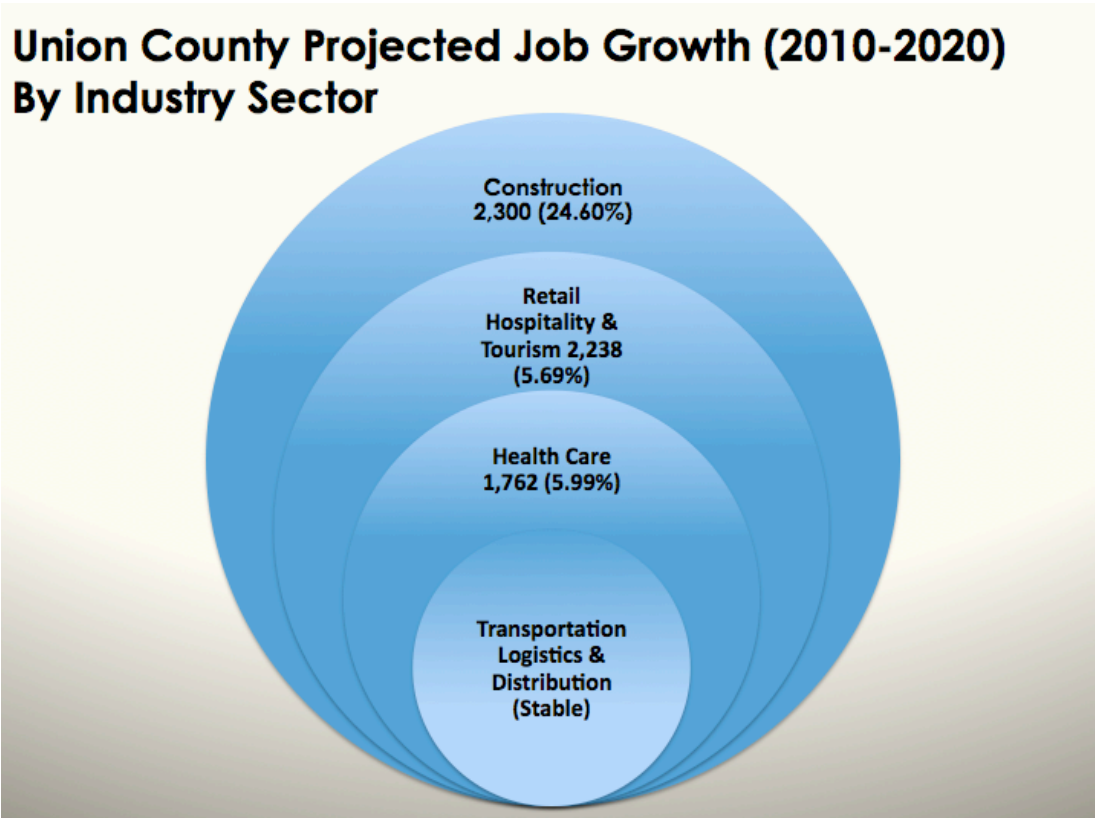
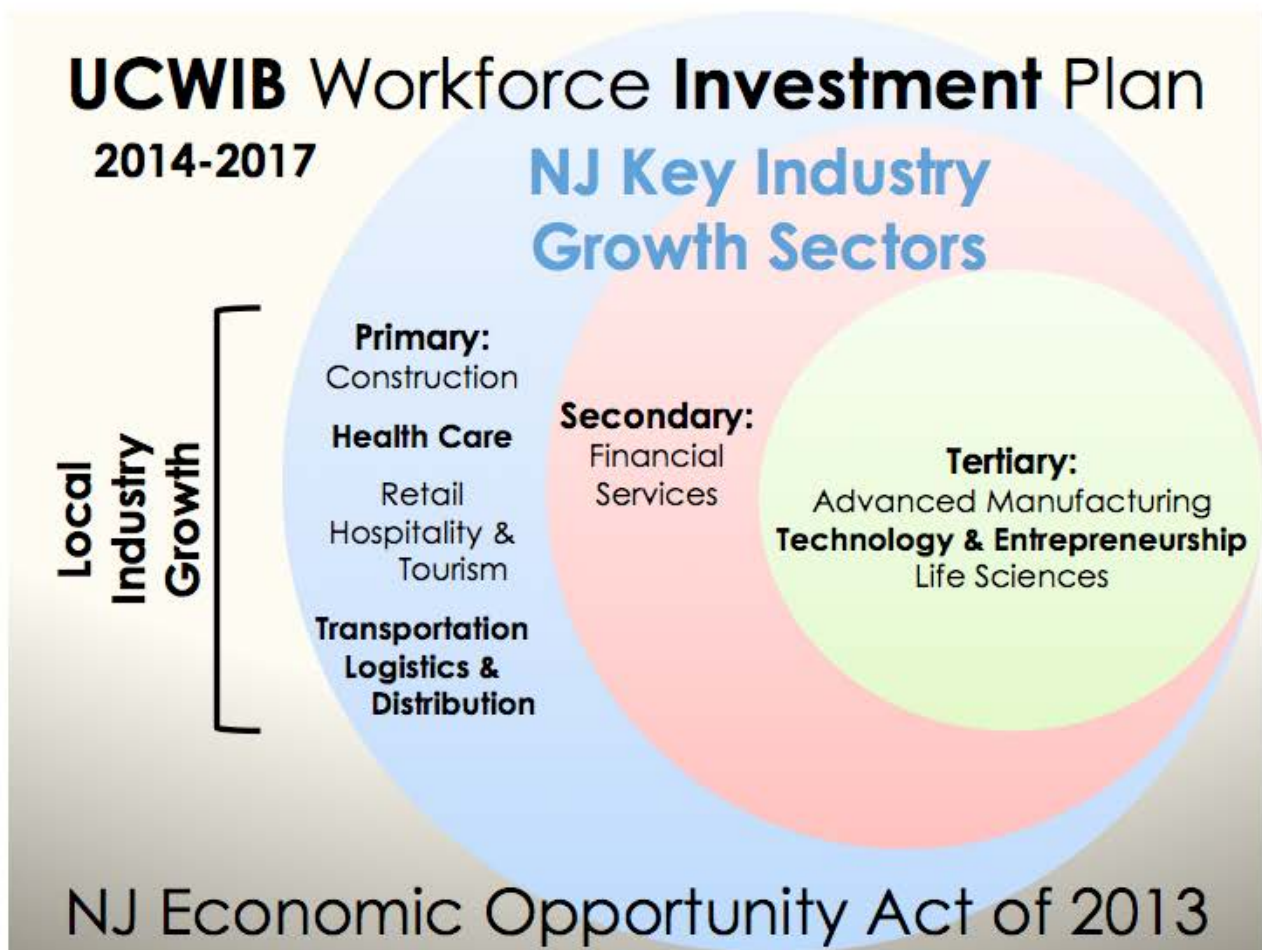


Chart 3. NJ Key Industry Growth Sectors



## The Union County Economic and Workforce Competitiveness Project

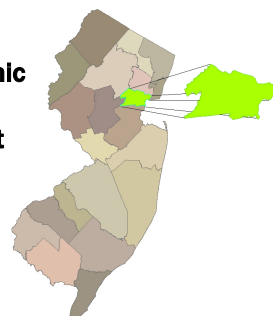
Prepared for

The County of Union, New Jersey

Prepared by

John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

December 2007



### Background and Overview

This report is intended to assist Union County officials and their partners to develop an economic growth and workforce development strategy for the county that is informed by an analysis of available labor market information, input from various experts in the region's economy and future development plans, and other relevant data.

In March 2007, The County of Union contracted with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey to develop a detailed profile of the economic landscape of Union County and to suggest strategies for supporting the growth of the county's key industries and assisting residents to advance within the county's labor market.

Information and recommendations in this report are based on interviews with 22 employers, economic development officials, and others, as well as a review and analysis of available labor market data. See Appendix A (p. 92) for a full list of methods, interview contacts, and sources.

#### Key Objectives

This report will assist Union County to:

1. **Support key industries that provide high-wage jobs in Union County or that offer a diversity of employment and advancement opportunities for Union County residents;**
2. **Build upon existing local, regional, and state policy initiatives to support key industries; and**
3. **Develop strategies to assist all county residents to thrive in the county's economy.**

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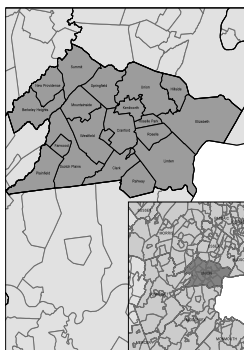


### Union County and Its Municipalities: A Brief Overview

Union County, NJ is a hub of economic activity for the state located at the crossroads of global trade. The county is home to an array of industries, including pharmaceuticals, transportation and logistics, retail, educational services, health care, and others, that provide more than one-quarter million jobs, or nearly 6% of all jobs in the state.

Union County is also home to over one-quarter million residents, or nearly 6% of the state's population. The county encompasses 21 municipalities, as follows:

Berkeley Heights	Plainfield
Clark	Rahway
Cranford	Roselle
Elizabeth	Roselle Park
Fanwood	Scotch Plains
Garwood	Springfield
Hillside	Summit
Kenilworth	Union
Linden	Westfield
Mountainside	Winfield
New Providence	



3.



### Summary of Report Contents

#### I. Key Findings and Recommendations (p. 5)

Presents important findings about Union County's economy, population, and workforce, and outlines the county's strategic advantages and challenges. Identifies industries suitable for policy action and suggests ways to support the growth of these industries and to assist all members of the county's resident workforce to succeed in the local economy.

#### II. Detailed Analysis of Population, Workforce, and Economic Data for Union County (p. 27)

This part of the report contains three sections:

##### Section 1: An Overview of the Union County Workforce and Economy (p. 28)

Presents summaries, charts, and tables that detail key characteristics of Union County's population, workforce, and overall economy.

##### Section 2: Target Industries for Policy Action in Union County (p. 43)

Identifies major industries in Union County that are suitable targets for workforce and economic development policy action. Outlines key criteria used to select target industries and presents detailed data on these indicators. Criteria used to select industries include:

1. *Current economic impact.*
2. *Potential for providing continued future employment.*
3. *Diversity of employment opportunities and education requirements, and*
4. *Potential for action given existing state, regional, county, and local policy efforts.*

##### Section 3: Detailed Information on Target Industries and Sub-Sectors (p. 59)

Provides in-depth analysis of the key sub-sectors driving the targeted industries identified in Section 2. This analysis allows researchers to suggest policy actions that are focused on important segments of the industry that meet key criteria for policy action (see criteria above).

4.

# I. Key Findings and Recommendations

5.



## Executive Summary

### Key Finding #1: Union County has overcome economic challenges, diversified its economy, and created potential for building on new economic strengths.

Relatively stable employment in Union County in the past decade (.09% growth from 1997-2006) compared to modest growth in surrounding counties and the state masks a story of growth and recovery in the face of a major economic obstacle – the loss of over 13,000 “Old Economy” Manufacturing jobs.

- Union County moved from reliance on declining “Old Economy” Manufacturing sectors to a more diverse knowledge-based economy, allowing the county to successfully weather the nationwide decline in Manufacturing jobs.
  - In 1997, Union County had nearly twice as many jobs in Manufacturing as the state (21% of all jobs vs. 12.5% statewide). As a result, the county faced a larger economic challenge than the state or surrounding counties when Manufacturing jobs declined, as they did throughout the national economy.
  - Growth in a diversity of other industries between 1997 and 2006 allowed Union County to overcome job losses in Manufacturing and stabilize its economy. By 2006, 15% of Union County jobs were in Manufacturing compared to 9% statewide.
  - In addition, by 2006, job losses in transportation equipment manufacturing, fabricated metals, machinery manufacturing, and other “Old Economy” production line jobs had been offset by growth in the more knowledge-intensive Chemical Manufacturing sector, which is dominated by Pharmaceutical Manufacturing. According to employers, this sector offers an increasing number of high-wage, “new economy” jobs in management, research and development, and production.
- Union County’s newly diversified economy now provides higher average wages than both the state economy and the county’s older, more manufacturing-intensive economy.
  - Average wages in Union County were over \$2,800 higher than the statewide average in 2006.
  - Wage growth in the county also outpaced the state average between 2002 and 2006, when adjusted for inflation.

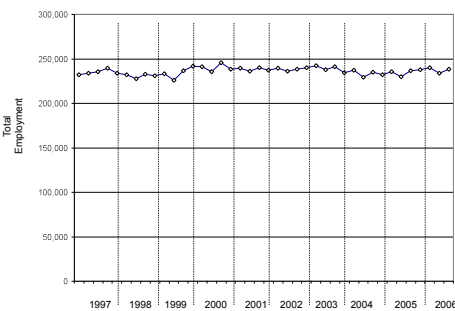
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## Executive Summary

### Key Finding #1 (Continued)

#### Total Employment in Union County, 1997 to 2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.

**10-Year Change**  
Employment in Union County was relatively stable, growing by 0.9% from 1997 to 2006 and adding 2,216 jobs to the economy.

During this period, total employment in New Jersey grew by 8% and total employment in the five counties surrounding Union County increased by 6.7%.

**5-Year Change**  
Since 2002, employment in Union County decreased by 0.2% and the county lost 529 jobs.

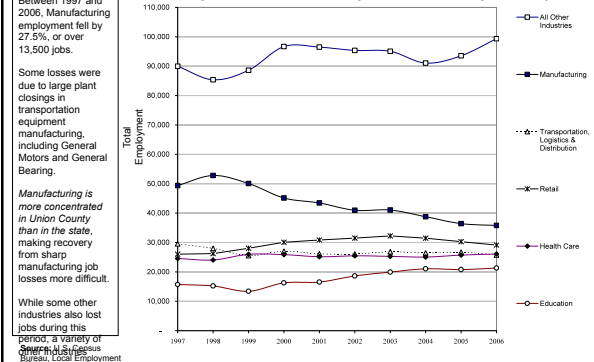
Between 2002 and 2006, total employment in New Jersey grew by 2.5% and total employment in the five counties surrounding Union County increased by 7.0%.



## Executive Summary

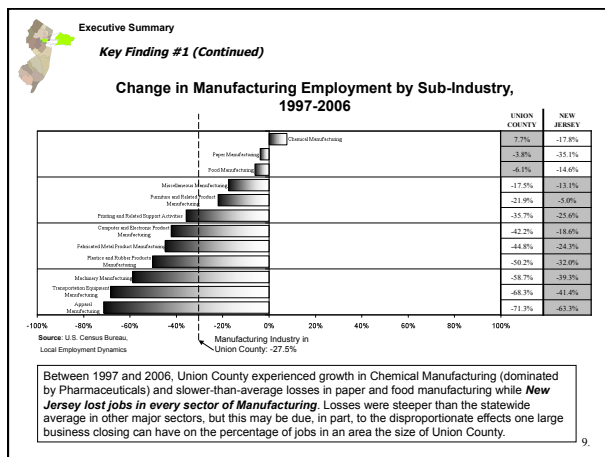
### Key Finding #1 (Continued)

#### Total Employment in Union County, 1997 to 2006, by Industry



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.





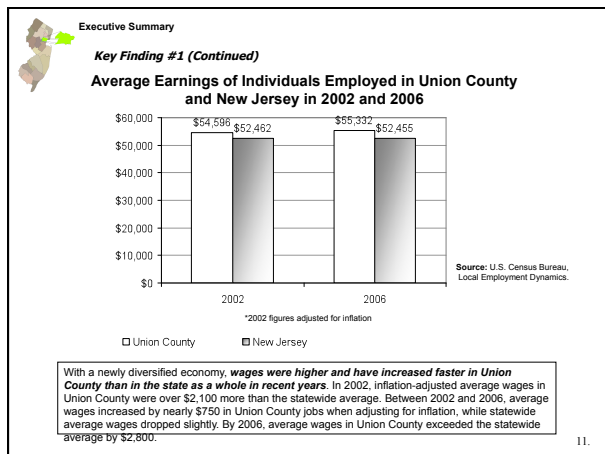
**Executive Summary**  
**Key Finding #1 (Continued)**

**Declining and Growing Industries, 1997 to 2006**

Industries with DECLINING Employment: 1997 to 2006		Industries with INCREASING Employment: 1997 to 2006	
Industry (Number of Employees 2006)	Change in Employment 1997 to 2006	Industry (Number of Employees 2006)	Change in Employment 1997 to 2006
Manufacturing (26,818)	(13,568)	Educational Services (21,337)	5,614
Transportation & Warehousing (10,997)	(4,023)	Retail Trade (29,151)	3,083
Information (3,042)	(1,641)	Administrative & Support Services (13,721)	2,622
Utilities (1,151)	(947)	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (16,402)	2,043
		Public Administration (10,107)	1,877
		Health Care & Social Assistance (26,103)	1,528
		Management of Companies & Enterprises (4,969)	1,526
		Other Services (9,807)	1,063
		Real Estate & Rental & Leasing (2,658)	829
		Accommodation & Food Services (11,333)	828
		Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (2,163)	736
		Construction (10,308)	309
		Wholesale Trade (15,162)	227
		Finance & Insurance (11,539)	142
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(20,178)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,457</b>
Total Employment in the 4 Industries in 2006: 50,608 or 21% of all jobs in Union County		Total Employment in the 14 Industries in 2006: 186,820 or 79% of all jobs in Union County	

Job losses in Manufacturing and other industries in Union County over the past decade were offset by growth in a diverse array of industries, including educational services, retail, and many others.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.



**Executive Summary**  
**Key Finding # 2: Three industry groups are strong economic drivers in Union County and provide the greatest potential for actionable change.**

With a more stable, diversified economy, Union County has the potential to achieve additional economic growth by supporting key sectors of its new economy. Each of the following industries has unique characteristics that make it a suitable target for development efforts and provides opportunities to build on existing state, regional, and local economic and workforce development efforts.

**Target Industry Group #1: Manufacturing, especially Pharmaceutical and Other Chemical Manufacturing**

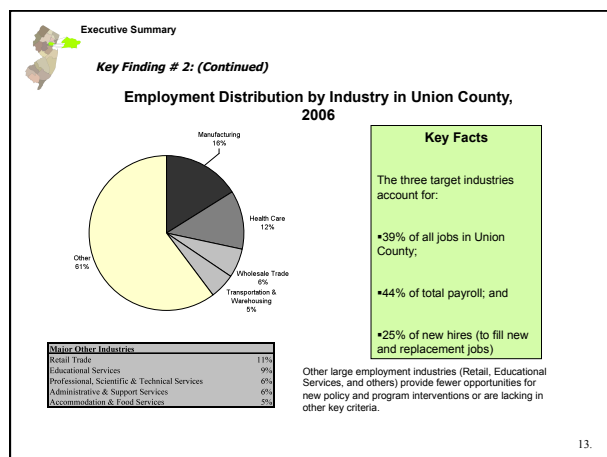
Large and robust, this sector provides a large number of high-wage jobs in Union County. Nearly half of all Manufacturing jobs in the county are in Pharmaceuticals and other Chemical Manufacturing.

**Target Industry Group #2: Health Care**

This large and fast-growing sector offers a multitude of advancement opportunities for Union County's resident workforce.

**Target Industry Group #3: Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution (TLD), including Wholesale Trade, Transportation, and Warehousing**

TLD offers a large number of middle-skill jobs that may be suitable advancement opportunities for low-wage workers in other industries.



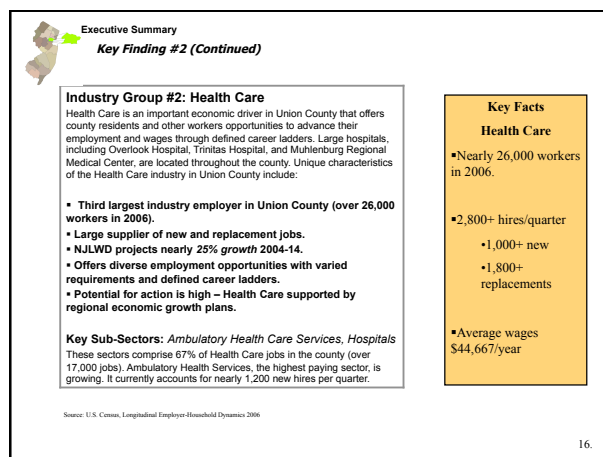
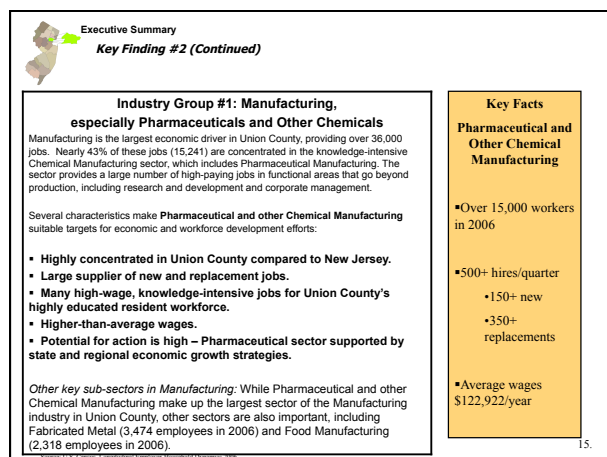
Executive Summary  
Key Finding #2 (Continued)

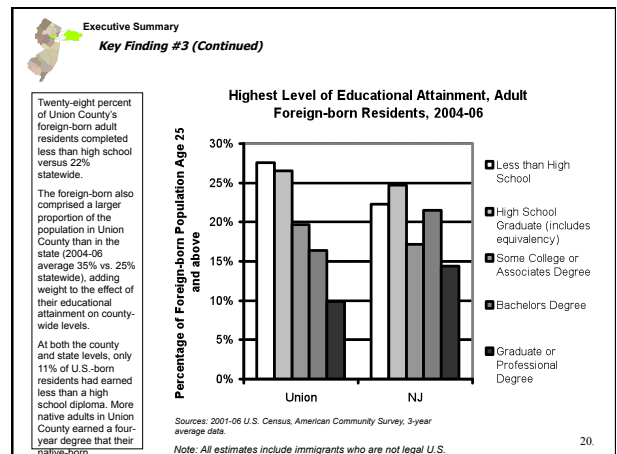
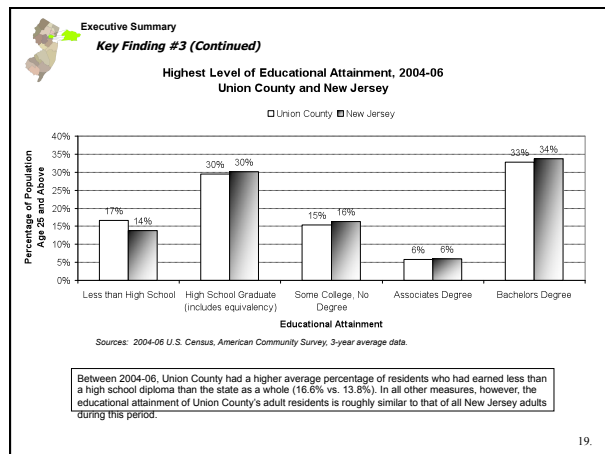
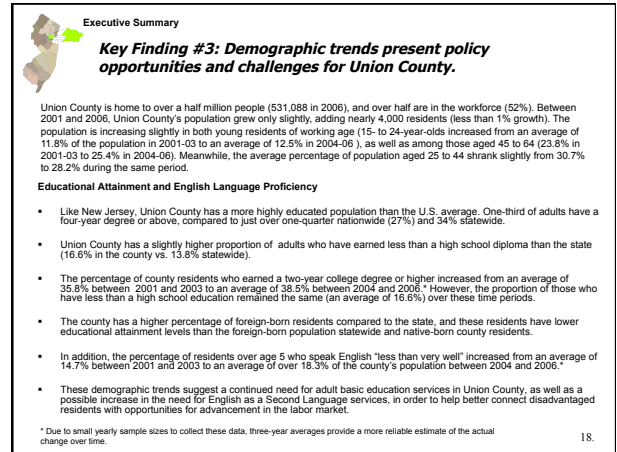
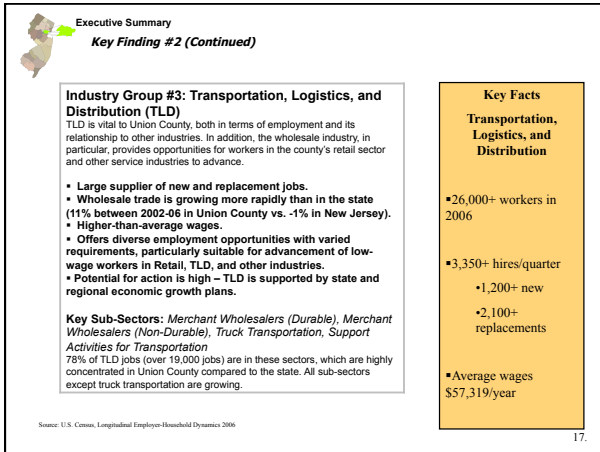
Criteria Used to Select Target Industries

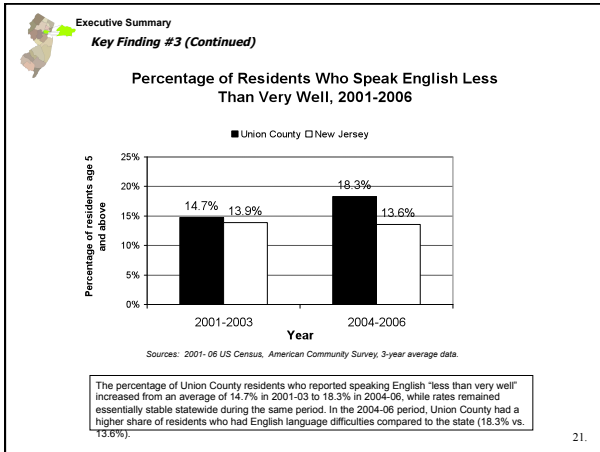
	A. Current Economic Impact			B. Employment Potential			C. Availability of Diverse Employment Opportunities		D. Potential for Action
	Employment (2006)	Average Wages	Total Payroll	Recent Growth	Expected Growth	Employment Concentration	Number of New Hires	Diversity of Educational Requirements	
	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	
Manufacturing	35,818	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail Trade	29,131	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Health Care	26,193	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Educational Services	21,337	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	16,422	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Wholesale Trade	15,162	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Administrative & Support Services	13,721	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Finance and Insurance	11,939	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Accommodation & Food Services	11,333	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Public Administration	10,757	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Transportation & Warehousing	10,597	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Construction	10,308	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Other Services	9,807	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Management of Companies	4,900	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Real Estate	3,658	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Information	3,042	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2,162	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Utilities	1,151	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.

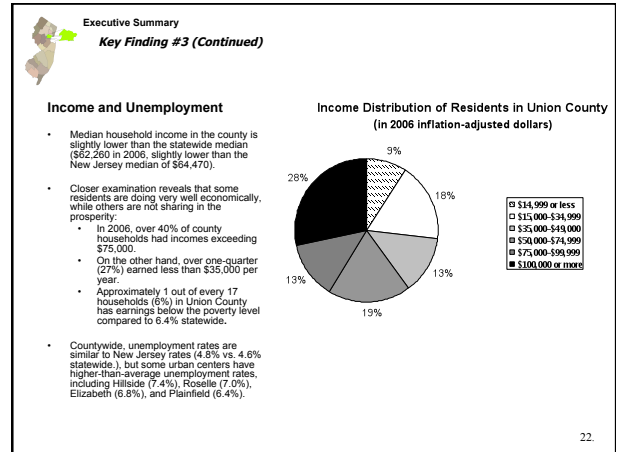
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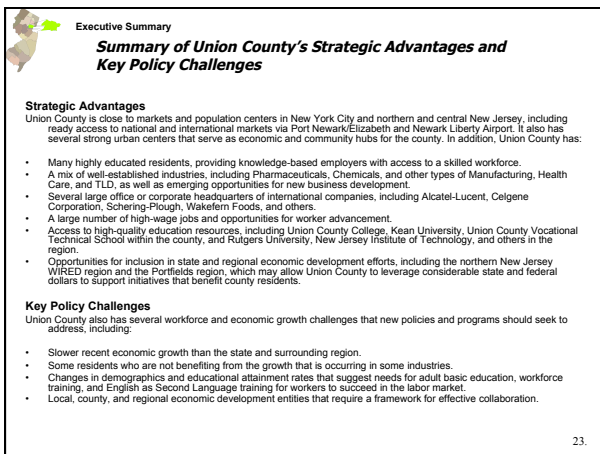




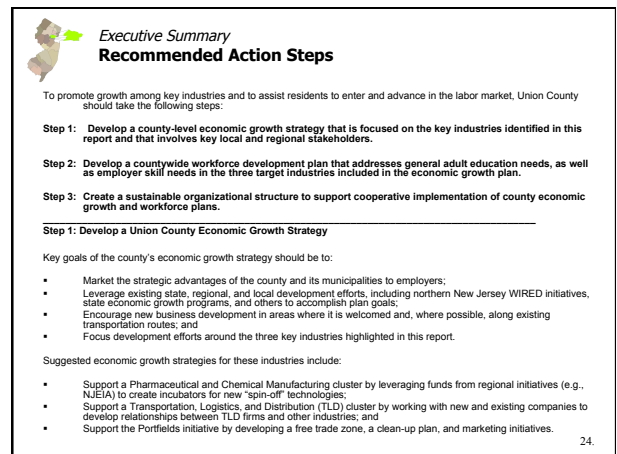
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24.



#### Executive Summary

### Recommended Action Steps (Cont'd)

#### Step 2: Develop a Countywide Workforce Development Plan

Key goals of a county workforce development strategy should be to:

- Ensure that adequate adult education and ESL resources are available in communities that need them most;
- Leverage existing state, regional, and local development efforts, including northern New Jersey WIRED initiatives, state economic growth programs, and others, to accomplish plan goals;
- Develop training and education initiatives that support the development of a skilled workforce in key industries identified in the economic growth strategy.

Suggested workforce development strategies for key industries include:

- Engage the Newark Workforce Investment Board and North Jersey Economic Innovation Alliance to:
  - Connect with the Newark Port One-Stop,
  - Coordinate entrepreneur symposia, and
  - Enhance mentoring and insurance programs designed to meet the demand for truck drivers in TLD.
- Explore a partnership with the Bio-1 WIRED region to expand workforce programs for the Pharmaceutical industry into Union County.
- Establish the Health Career Center (as discussed in the Union County Plan) and offer access to the Newark Workforce Investment Board in exchange for access to Newark's Port One-Stop.
- Use the Retail Skills Center to assist retail, transportation, and other workers to train for sales and customer service positions in the high-wage wholesale trade sector, as well as other customer service and sales leadership positions.
- Support training for Pharmaceutical and TLD repair technician programs.

25.



#### Executive Summary

### Recommended Action Steps (Cont'd)

#### Step 3: Create a Sustainable Organizational Structure to Implement Economic and Workforce Plans

Stakeholders in the business, education, and government sectors generally agree that four basic elements are necessary to coordinate and activate economic and workforce development initiatives in Union County. These elements are:

- A nonpartisan coordinating council to guide all development efforts,
- An economic and workforce development practitioner network,
- Implementation teams that focus on key projects, and
- An entity to handle public awareness and stakeholder consensus-building.

A version of two of these components currently exists in Union County. The Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC) currently sponsors a quarterly networking and information exchange for economic and workforce development professional practitioners. The Union County Alliance is a strong bipartisan forum for consensus building, stakeholder recruitment, and public awareness. These entities are a logical point of departure for integrating their functions into a broad countywide action agenda.

Stakeholders interviewed strongly recommended individual project-based teams of multi-jurisdictional and sectoral stakeholders to address specific development objectives ranging from multi-county led efforts to maximize benefits from expanding Port activities to contiguous community downtown development strategies that require county-level infrastructure support. Other areas recommended include a Workforce Investment Board-led effort to connect county education resources with the evolving skill and occupational clusters in allied health, and the preservation of pharmaceutical employment levels.

Finally, a neutral, county-level entity with broad community representation is needed to coordinate and facilitate the efforts of the groups mentioned above. This entity will also need to guide implementation efforts among other stakeholders, including the Workforce Investment Board, local, county, regional, and statewide economic development organizations; secondary and postsecondary educational institutions; businesses; transportation; and permitting. While Union County stakeholders must determine how this coordination body is organized, it may be possible to build upon the efforts of an existing entity by expanding membership to ensure adequate representation from all areas and interest groups within Union County.

26.

## II. Detailed Analysis of Population, Workforce, and Economic Data for Union County

### Section 1: An Overview of the Union County Workforce and Economy

28.



## I. Overview of the Workforce and Economic Landscape of Union County

### Introduction

This section of the report provides an overview of the key characteristics of Union County residents and working-age adults, including important demographic changes that may affect economic and workforce development planning. It also provides a broad picture of the Union County economy and ways that employment has changed over the past 10 years.

This area of the report is presented in two parts:

- A. Population and Workforce, and
- B. Economy.

29.



## I. Overview of the Workforce and Economic Landscape of Union County

### A. Population and Workforce: Overview

Over a half million people (531,088 individuals, or 6.1% of the population of New Jersey) live in Union County, and more than one-quarter million (273,493 people, or 52% of the population) are in the labor force (employed or unemployed and looking for work).

Between 2001 and 2006, Union County's population grew by 4,000 residents (less than 1% growth). The population is increasing slightly in both young residents of working age (15- to 24-year-olds increased from an average of 11.8% of the population in 2001-03 to an average of 12.5% in 2004-06), as well as among those aged 45 to 64 (23.8% in 2001-03 to 25.4% in 2004-06). Meanwhile, the average percentage of the population aged 25-44 shrank slightly from 30.7% to 28.2% during the same period.

#### Educational Attainment and Occupation of Residents

Like the state as a whole, Union County has a higher percentage of college-educated adults than the nation. Over one-third of adults in Union County have earned a four-year college degree or higher compared to 27.5% nationwide. In addition, the percentage of Union County's population that attained both two- and four-year college degrees increased slightly between 2001 and 2006.\*

However, Union County has a slightly higher percentage of adults who have not earned a high school diploma or equivalent compared to New Jersey (16.6% vs. 13.8%). The county also has both a higher percentage of foreign-born residents compared to the state, and these residents have lower educational attainment levels, on average, than the foreign-born population statewide and native-born county residents. The percentage of the population over age 5 in Union County that reports that they speak English "less than very well" has risen from an average of 14.7% between 2001 and 2003 to an average of 16.3% between 2004 and 2006.

Reflecting the county's diversity of educational attainment levels, the largest job categories Union County residents reported holding jobs in include Management, Professional and Related Occupations, Sales and Office Occupations, and Service Occupations.

#### Income, Unemployment, and Poverty

Median household income in Union County was \$62,250 in 2006, slightly lower than the New Jersey median of \$64,470. Some residents, however, are not sharing in the prosperity. In 2006, 4.8% of Union County residents were unemployed,

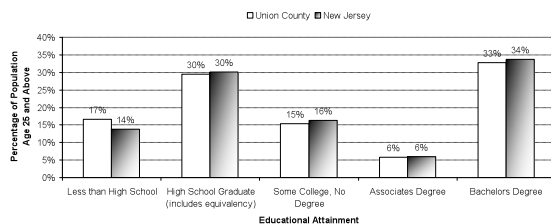
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## I. Overview of the Workforce and Economic Landscape of Union County

### A. Population and Workforce: Educational Attainment

Highest Level of Educational Attainment, 2004-06  
Union County and New Jersey



Sources: 2004-06 US Census, American Community Survey, 3-year average data

Overall, educational attainment levels in Union County are similar to New Jersey levels. However, the average percentage of Union County residents who completed less than a high school degree (17%) was slightly higher than the state average (14%) in the 2004-06 period.

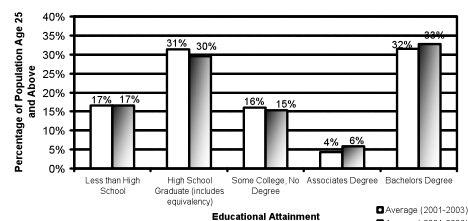
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## I. Overview of the Workforce and Economic Landscape of Union County

### A. Population and Workforce: Educational Attainment (continued)

Highest Educational Attainment Level  
of Union County Residents, 2001-06

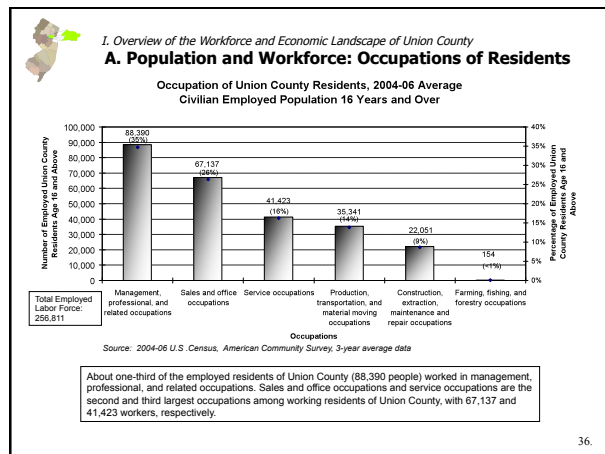
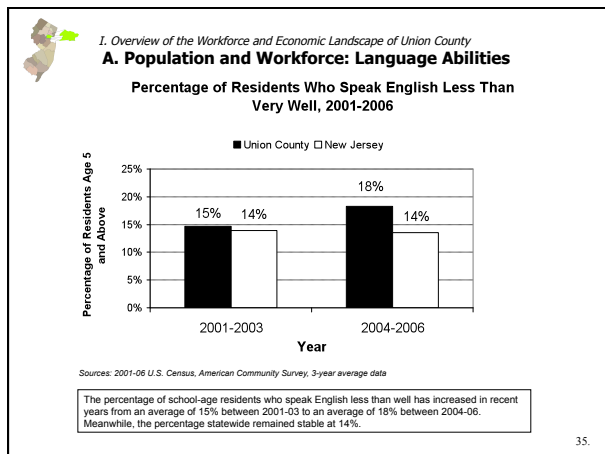
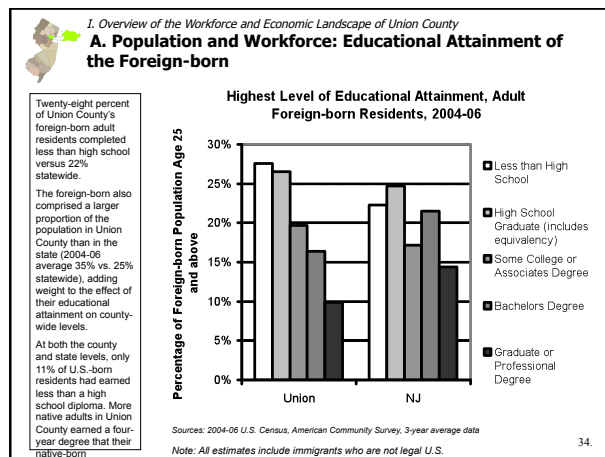
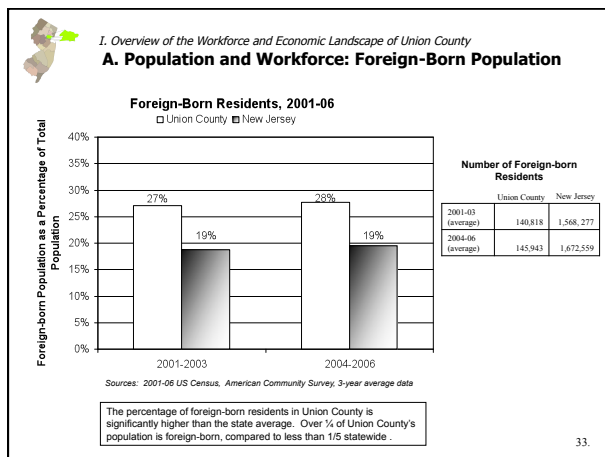


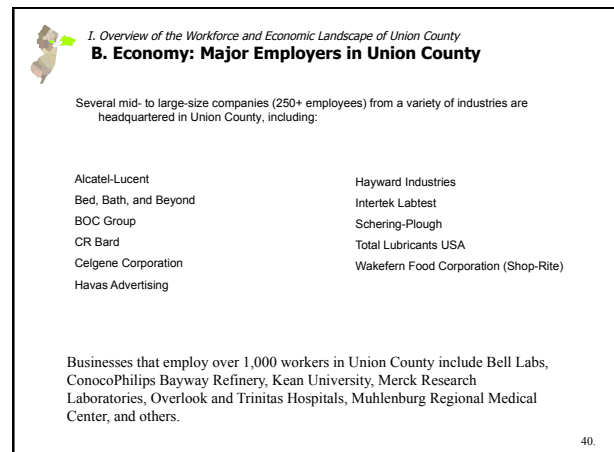
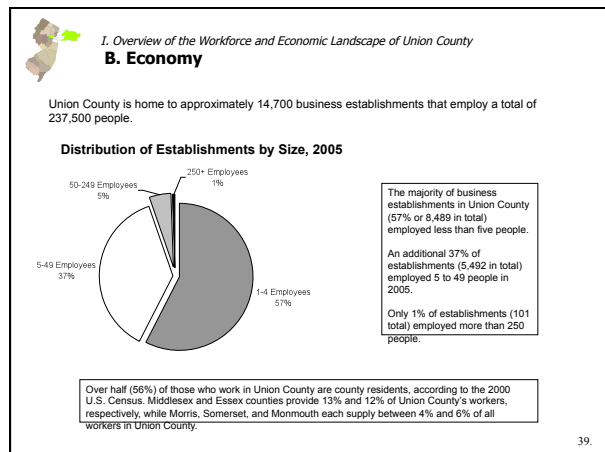
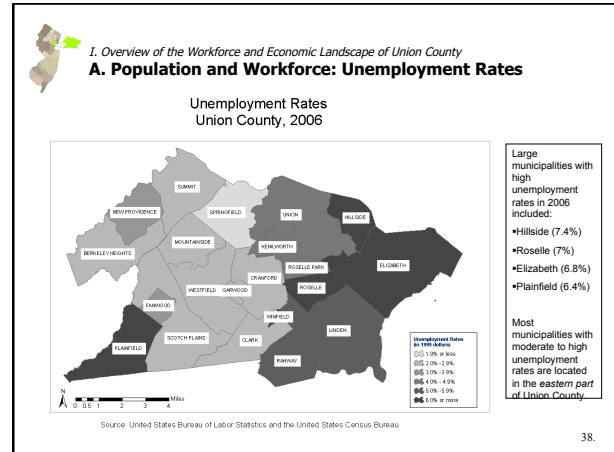
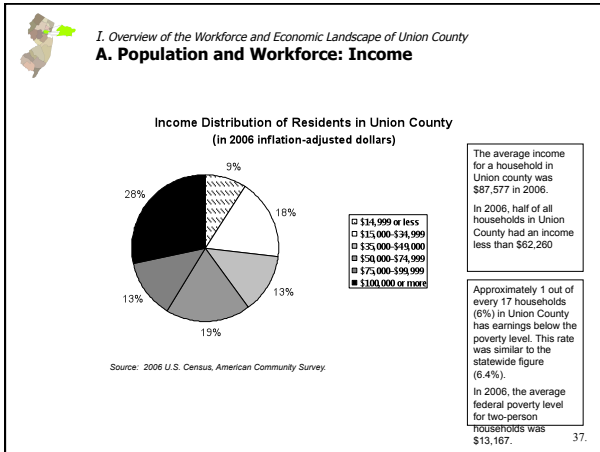
Sources: 2001-06 US Census, American Community Survey, 3-year average data

Educational attainment levels in Union County have remained relatively stable over the last five years, with a slight increase in the percentage of people who earned a 2- or 4-year college degree.

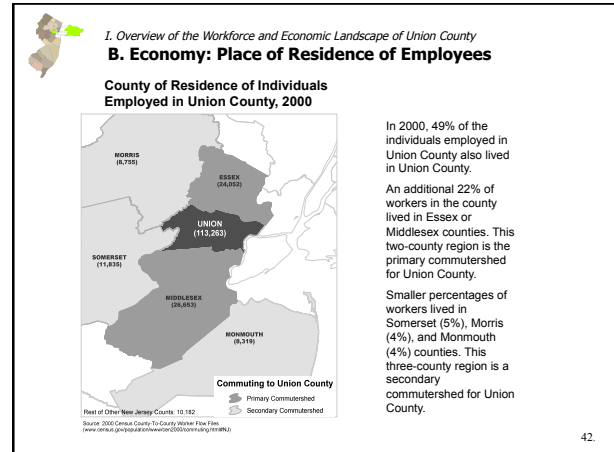
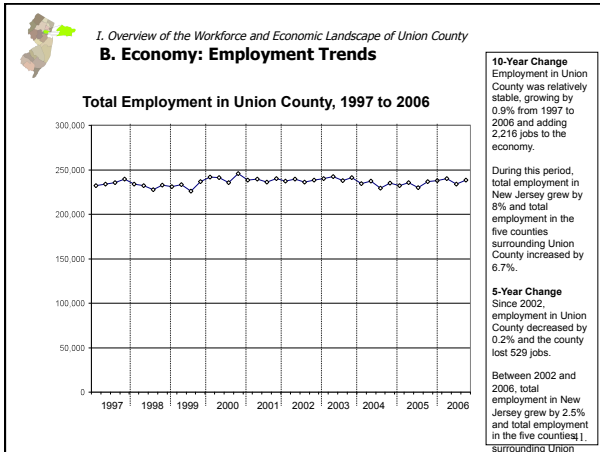
Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of the county's adult population that completed a college degree rose by one percentage point. The proportion of adults who earned less than a college degree remained stable or fell slightly.

32.









## Section 2: Target Industries for Policy Action in Union County

**II. Key Industries in Union County**  
**Findings and Selection Criteria**

**FINDINGS:** Union County should focus future economic development and workforce development efforts on the following industry sectors:

- Pharmaceutical and Other Chemical Manufacturing
- Health Care
- Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution

**CRITERIA:** The Heldrich Center applied the following criteria to select these target industries for Union County's economic and workforce development efforts:

**A. Current Economic Impact:** The county's future economic and workforce development efforts should focus on those industries that currently have a significant impact on the county's economy by providing a large number of jobs and income to individuals.  
Key indicators: 1. Employment, 2. Average Wages, 3. Total Payroll

**B. Employment Potential:** Future efforts should also focus on industries that have the potential to grow in the near future, as identified by recent growth, projected growth by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and current concentration in Union County.  
Key indicators: 1. Recent Growth, 2. Projected Growth, 3. Concentration of Employment

**C. Diversity of Employment Opportunities:** Workforce development efforts should be focused on those industries that hire large numbers of individuals and on those industries that provide employment opportunities to individuals with different levels of formal education and training.  
Key indicators: 1. Number of New Hires, 2. Educational Requirements of Jobs

**D. Potential for Action:** Finally, workforce and economic development efforts in the county, where possible, should be coordinated with state and federal resources in order to leverage additional resources.

**II. Key Industries in Union County**  
**Summary of Criteria**

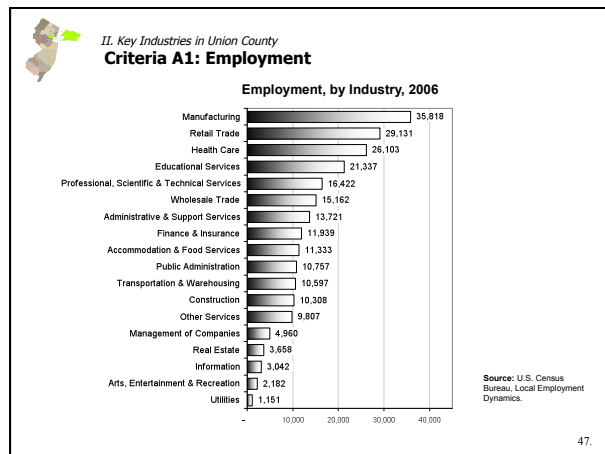
	A. Current Economic Impact			B. Employment Potential			C. Availability of Diverse Employment Opportunities		D. Potential for Action
	Employment (2006) A1	Average Wages A2	Total Payroll A3	Recent Growth B1	Expected Growth B2	Employment Concentration B3	Number of New Hires C1	Diversity of Educational Requirements C2	
Manufacturing	35,818	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retail Trade	29,131	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Health Care	26,103	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Educational Services	21,337	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	16,422	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Wholesale Trade	15,162	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Administrative & Support Services	13,721	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Finance and Insurance	11,939	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Accommodation & Food Services	11,333	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Public Administration	10,757	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Transportation & Warehousing	10,597	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Construction	10,308	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Other Services	9,807	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Management of Companies	4,960	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Real Estate	3,658	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Information	3,042	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2,182	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Utilities	1,151	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

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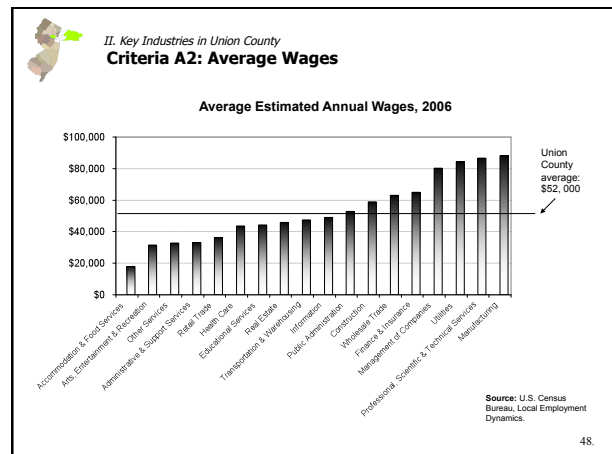
**II. Key Industries in Union County**  
**Criteria A: Current Economic Impact - Summary**

<p><b>A1. EMPLOYMENT</b></p> <p>Four industries in Union County have over 20,000 workers, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manufacturing</li> <li>2. Retail Trade</li> <li>3. Health Care</li> <li>4. Educational Services</li> </ol> <p>The manufacturing industry provides more than 35,000 jobs (15% of the jobs in the county).</p>	<p><b>A2. AVERAGE WAGES</b></p> <p>Union County has seven industries that supply <b>above-average wages</b>. These industries, which have average wages that are greater than the county average of \$52,000 per year, are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manufacturing</li> <li>2. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</li> <li>3. Utilities</li> <li>4. Management of Companies</li> <li>5. Finance and Insurance</li> <li>6. Wholesale Trade</li> <li>7. Construction</li> </ol>	<p><b>A3. TOTAL PAYROLL</b></p> <p>In Union County, the industries with the highest <b>total payroll</b> represent the key economic drivers in the county. Total payroll is a function of high industry employment, high average wages, or both.</p> <p>Together, the following six industries account for 2/3 (66%) of total payroll in the county. Alone, each of these industries accounts for more than 6% of total payroll in the county:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manufacturing (24%)</li> <li>2. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (11%)</li> <li>3. Health Care (9%)</li> <li>4. Retail Trade (8%)</li> <li>5. Wholesale Trade (7%)</li> <li>6. Educational Services (7%)</li> </ol>
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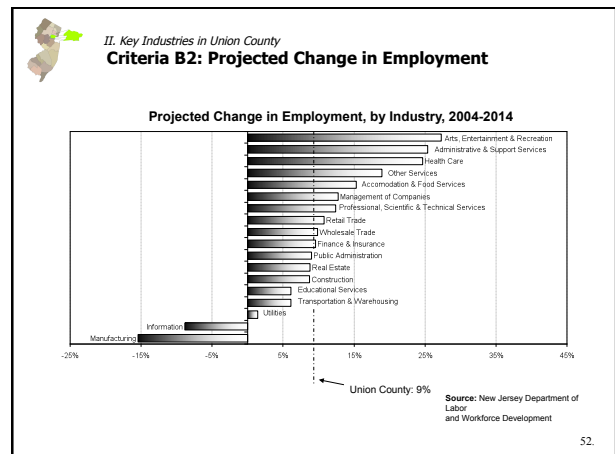
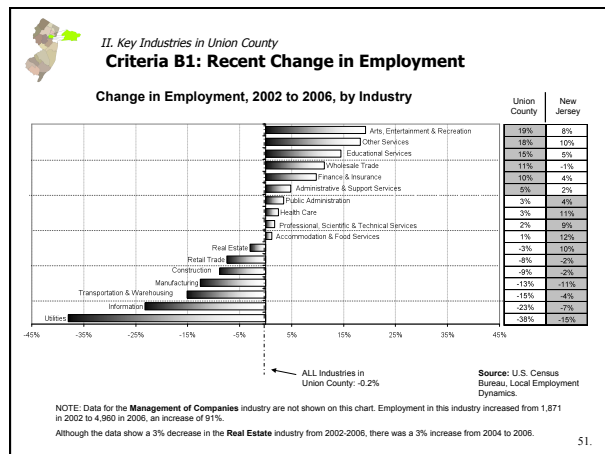
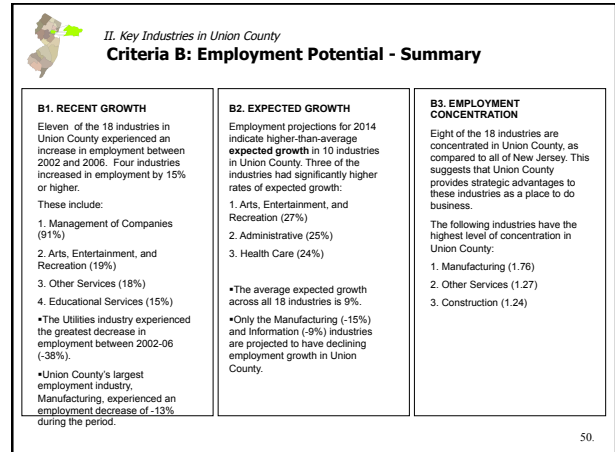
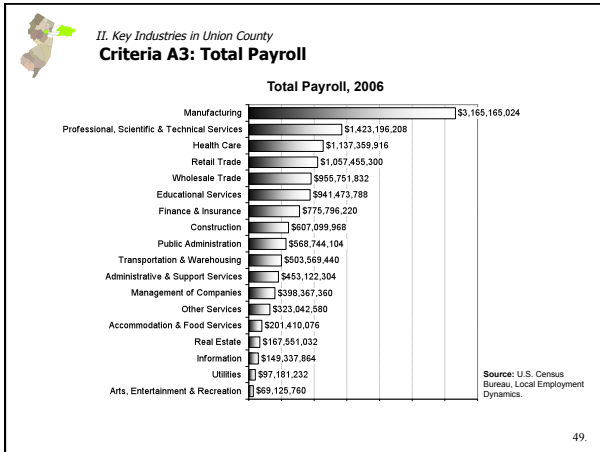
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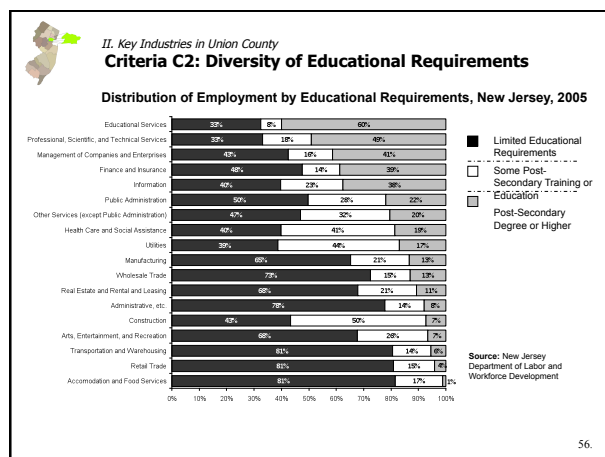
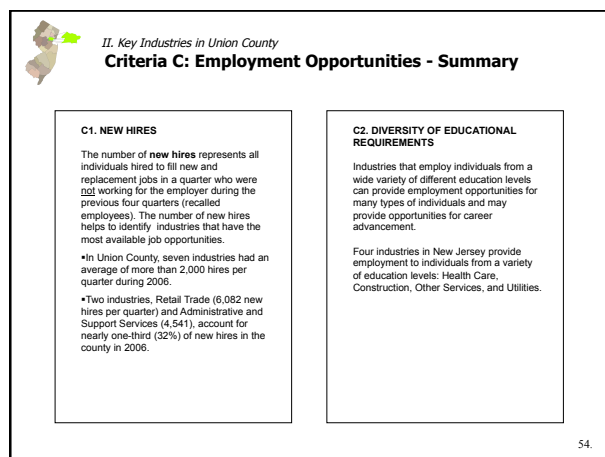
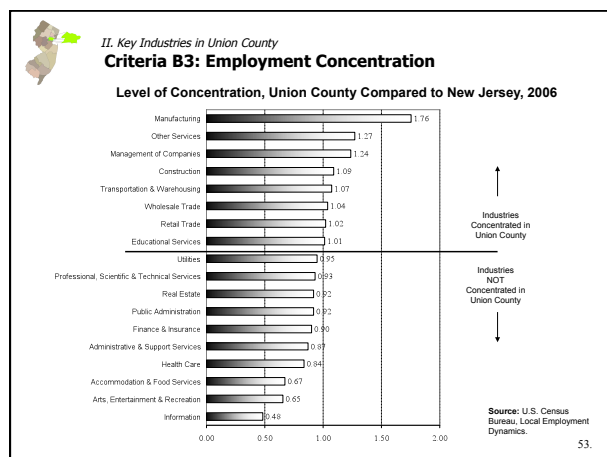



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## II. Key Industries in Union County

### Criteria D: Potential for Action

#### Key Workforce Initiatives of the Economic Growth Strategy for the State of New Jersey, 2007


**Innovation Partnership Institute (IPI):** The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD) and the Commission on Higher Education awarded \$150,000 grants to consortia of companies and educational institutions to develop and implement curricula tied to the skill needs of the state's key industries. These curricula, which will be developed at the high school, two- and four-year college level, and above, will be shared with other educational institutions in the state. IPIs are under way in **Pharmaceuticals/Life Sciences**, Communications/Information Technology, and Financial Services.

**Customized Training:** To assist companies to upgrade the skills of their employees, NJLWD is awarding grants to companies in key industries in the state. The grants, which are awarded on a competitive basis, leverage employer resources and are matched with state funds. Grant applications in **Advanced Manufacturing (including Pharmaceutical Manufacturing); Health Care; Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution (TLD);** Financial Services; and Communications/Information Technology are given priority in the application process.

**U.S. Department of Labor WIRED Grants** - The U.S. Department of Labor awarded \$5 million grants to fund the development of regional workforce and economic development efforts. Two regional efforts with significance for Union County are:

**North Jersey Economic Innovation Alliance:** This region includes Union County and other counties in northern New Jersey. Efforts will focus programs on the region's **Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics; Health Care;** and Finance industries, as well as other high-tech industries, including **Pharmaceutical Manufacturing**.

**Bio-1:** This region, located in central New Jersey, will focus all of its efforts on the **Pharmaceutical industry**. While this region does not include Union County, county officials may wish to explore



## II. Key Industries in Union County


### Criteria D: Potential for Action

Six industries that are relevant in Union County have been targeted by state and federal initiatives and therefore provide an opportunity for Union County to leverage additional resources in support of workforce and economic development efforts.

Industry	Governor Corzine's Economic Growth Strategy for New Jersey (2007)	Federal Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Grants	
		North Jersey Economic Innovation Alliance	Bio-1
Pharmaceutical manufacturing	X		X
Healthcare	X	X	
Information/Communications	X		
Finance & Insurance	X	X	
Transportation & Warehousing	X	X	
Wholesale Trade		X	

## Section 3:

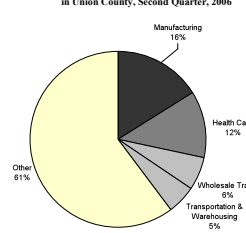
### Detailed Information on Target Industries and Sub-Sectors



## III. Detailed Information on Key Industries in Union County

### Summary

**Employment Distribution by Industry in Union County, Second Quarter, 2006**



Industry	Percentage
Other	61%
Manufacturing	16%
Health Care	12%
Wholesale Trade	6%
Transportation & Warehousing	5%
Major Other Industries	11%

**Manufacturing**

- High employment, Largest economic driver in the county by total payroll. Significantly higher-than-average wages. High level of employment concentration compared to the state. Significant number of new hires each quarter. Aligned with state and regional economic development efforts

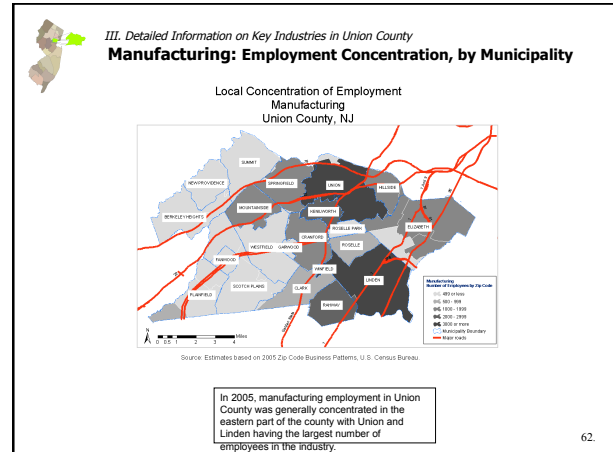
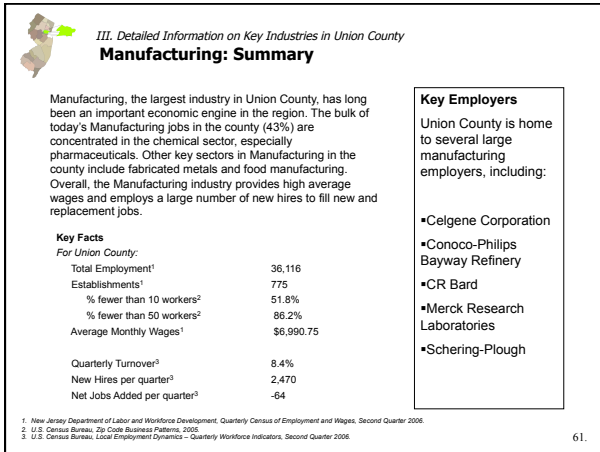
**Health Care**

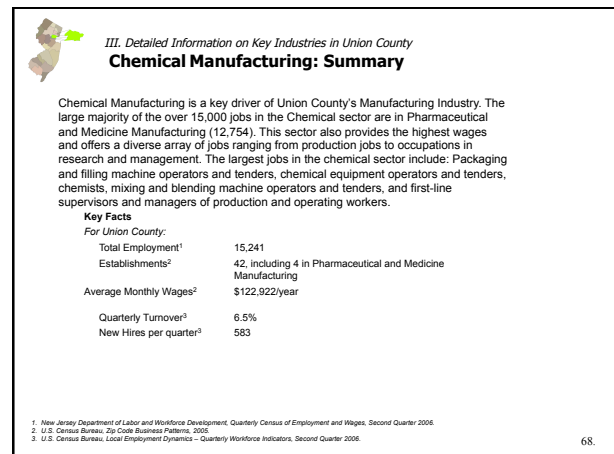
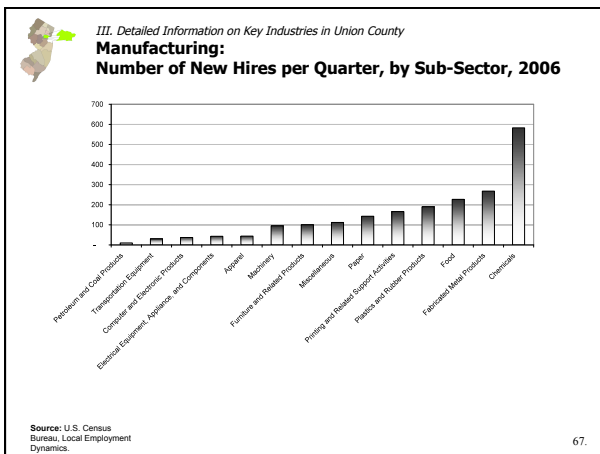
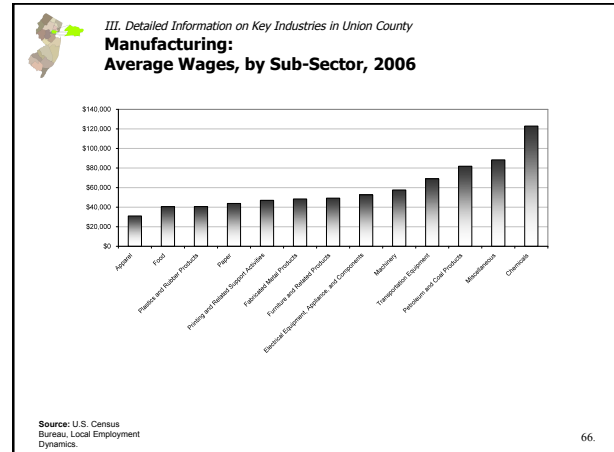
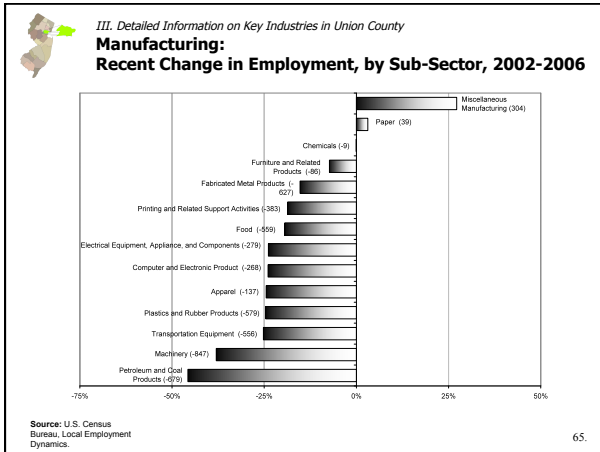
- Significant employment, Second largest economic driver in the county by total payroll. High employment levels. Expected future growth. Diverse and numerous employment opportunities. Aligned with state and regional economic development efforts

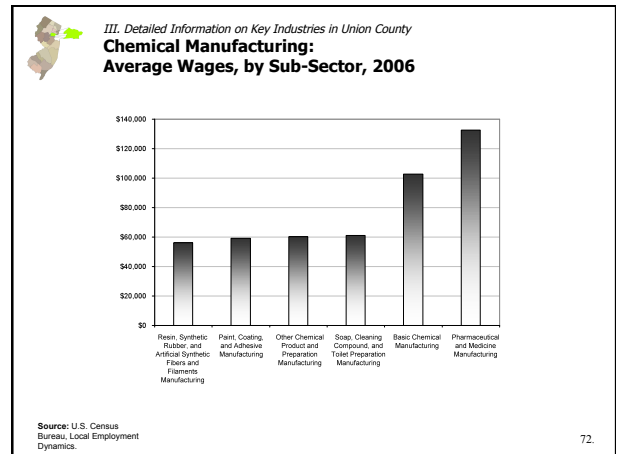
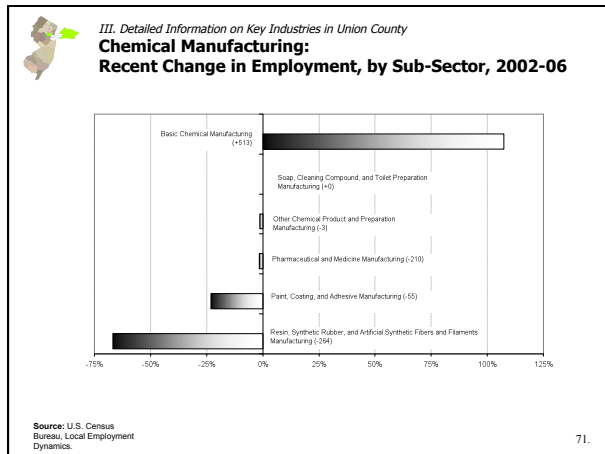
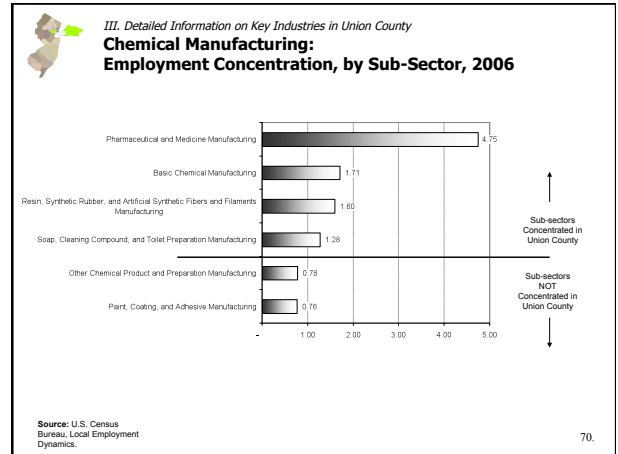
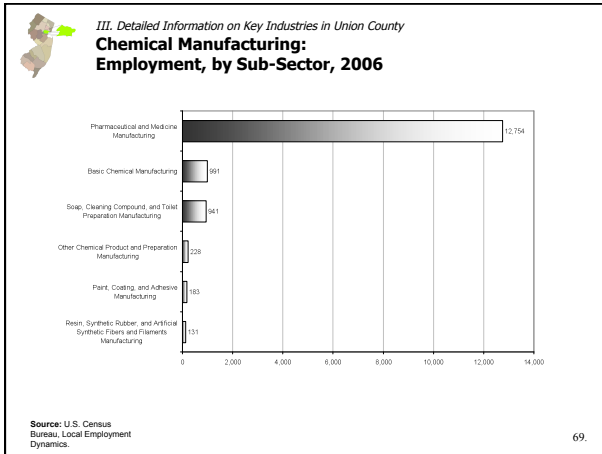
**Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD) (Wholesale Trade/Transportation and Warehousing)**

- High employment (two industries combined). Higher-than-average wages. Significant payroll (combined). Recent growth (wholesale trade). Expected growth (wholesale trade). Employment concentration (both). Aligned with state and regional economic development efforts

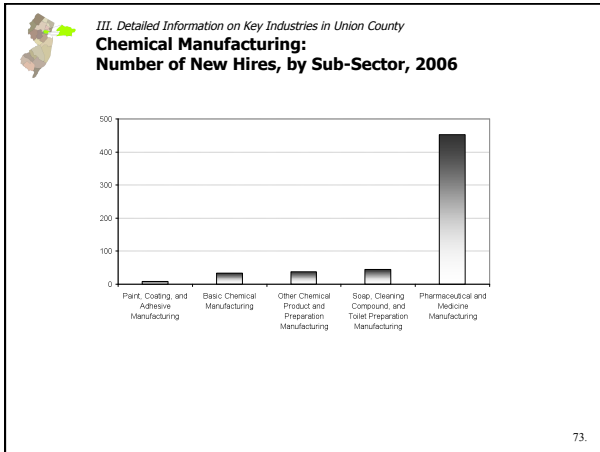
Source: New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.











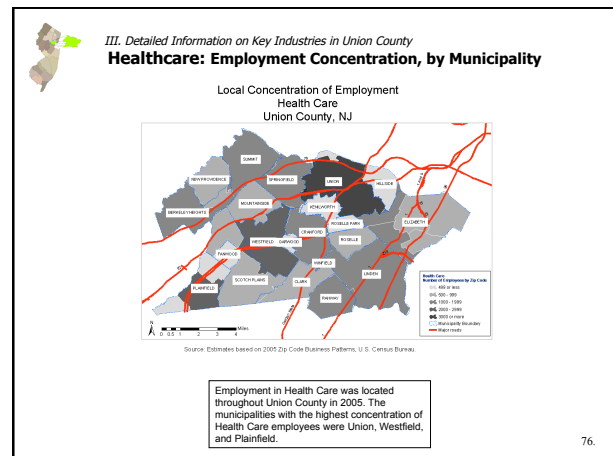
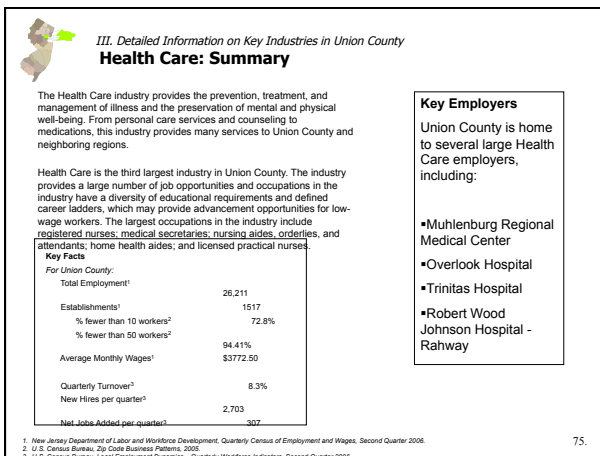
III. Detailed Information on Key Industries in Union County

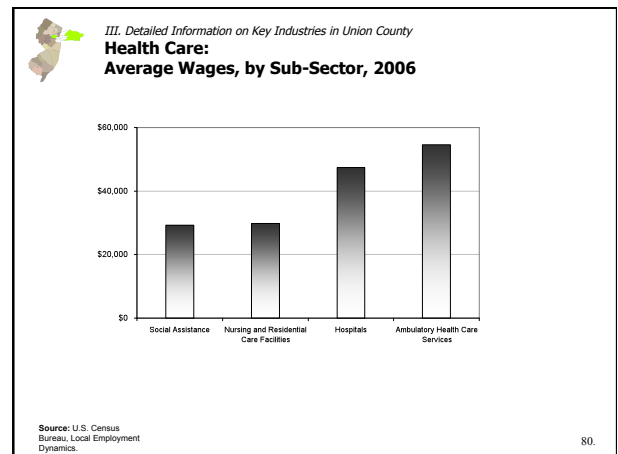
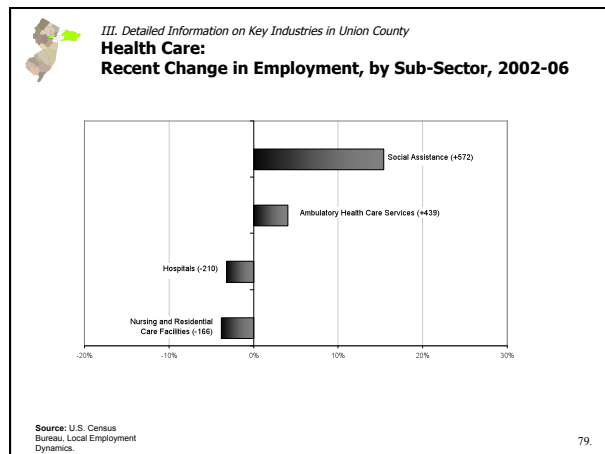
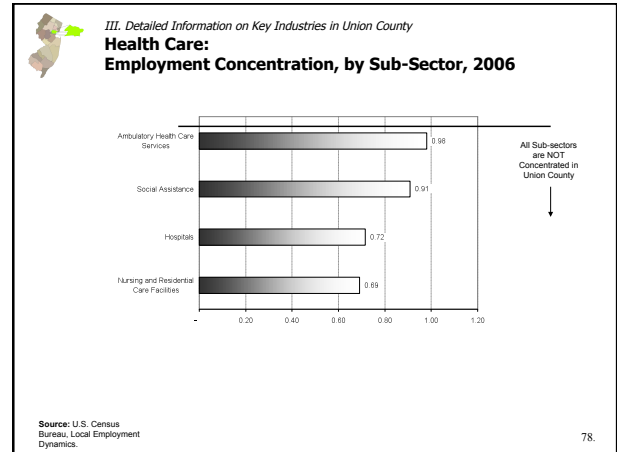
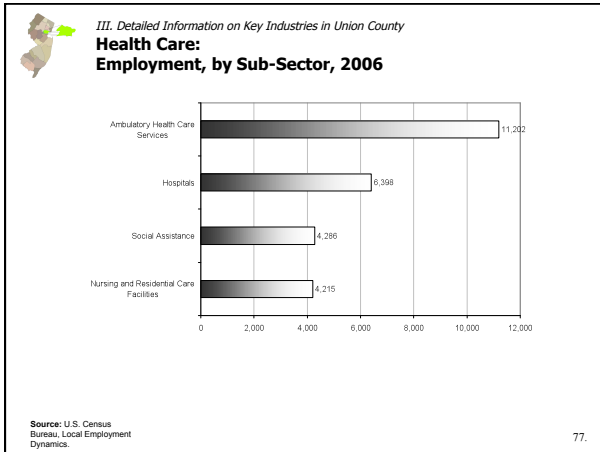
### Chemical Manufacturing: Key Occupations in Chemical Manufacturing

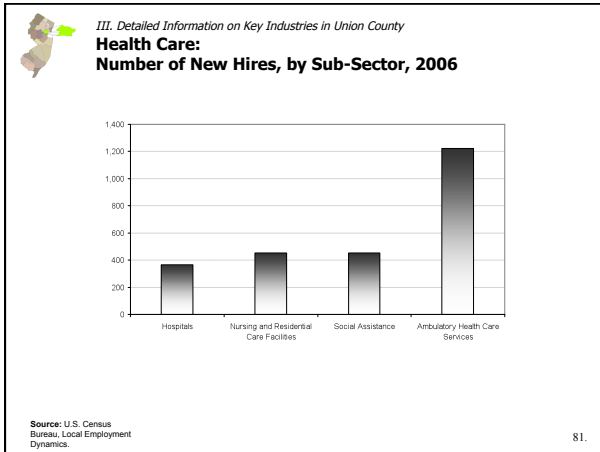
Ranked by prevalence in the Chemical Manufacturing industry

Occupations	Union County			Average Wage in the Union County Region <sup>1</sup>
	Estimated Employment: 2004 (All Industries)	Estimated Employment: 2014 (All Industries)	Annual Average Job Openings (All Industries)	
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	1,850	1,600	40	\$21,480
Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	250	200	10	\$38,990
Chemicals	750	750	30	\$25,170
Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	650	600	10	\$29,810
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Production and Operating Workers	1,400	1,250	30	\$52,440
Chemical Technicians	750	700	20	\$38,330
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,200	5,100	170	\$21,420
Chemical Plant and System Operators	250	150	10	\$35,250
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	1,650	2,050	70	\$60,710
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	950	800	20	\$32,780
Packers and Packagers, Hand	2,500	2,650	60	\$16,980
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	1,500	1,600	50	
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,850	2,050	50	\$36,150
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	5,600	5,250	110	\$24,770
General and Operations Managers	3,400	3,750	100	\$125,880
Biological Technicians	250	300	10	\$41,990
Production Workers, All Other	350	200	10	\$32,860
Helpers—Production Workers	500	450	10	\$21,270
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	1,450	1,400	30	\$23,050
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	500	400	10	\$44,080

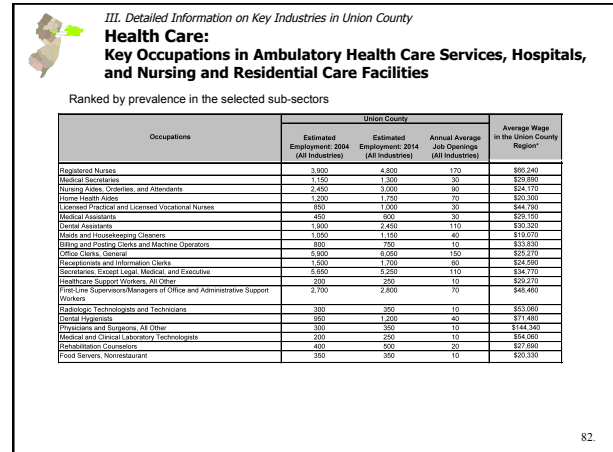
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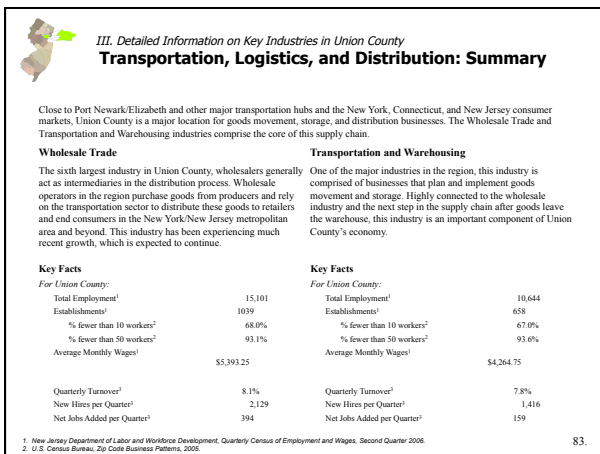




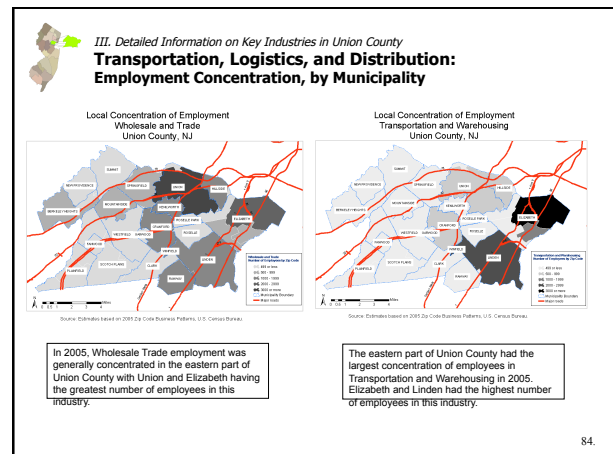
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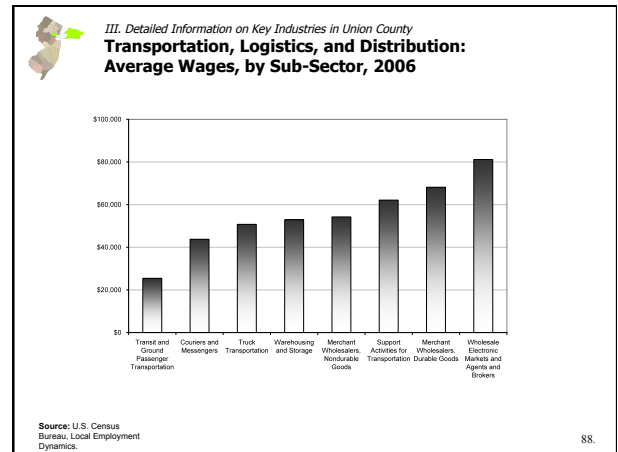
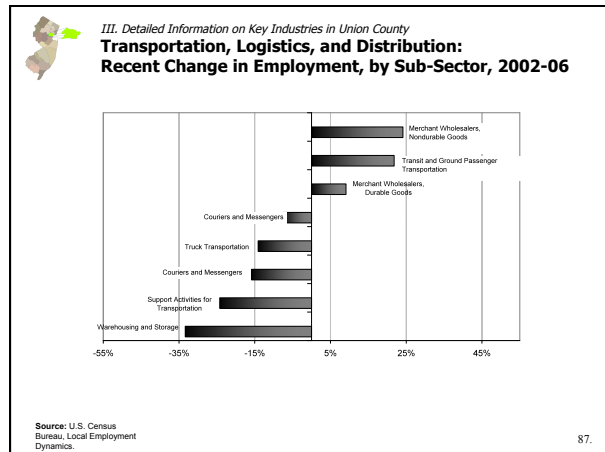
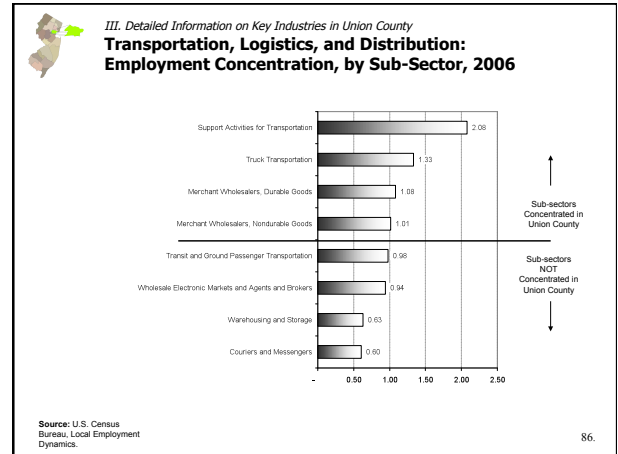
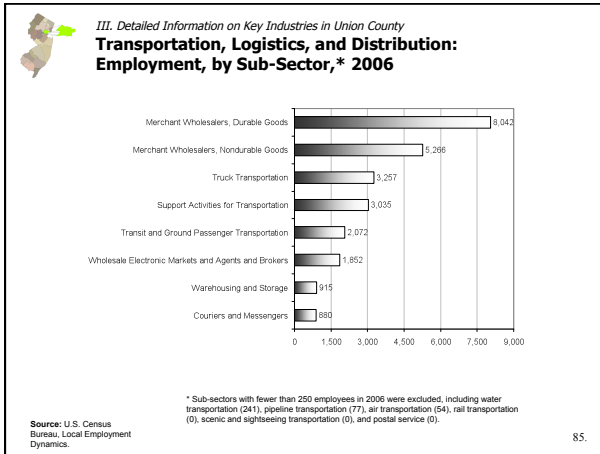
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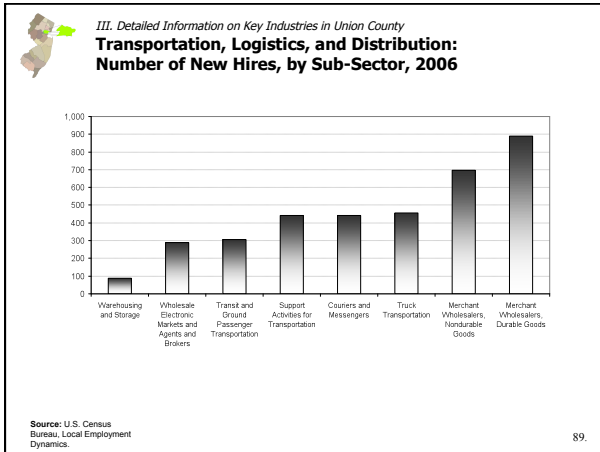


83.



84.





III. Detailed Information on Key Industries in Union County

**Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution:  
Key Occupations in Support Activities for Transportation,  
Truck Transportation, and Warehousing and Storage**

Ranked by prevalence in the selected sub-sectors

Occupation	Union County			Average Wage in the Union County Region*
	Estimated Employment: 2004 (All Industries)	Estimated Employment: 2014 (All Industries)	Annual Average Job Openings (All Industries)	
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	3,000	3,200	70	\$37,800
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	5,200	5,100	170	\$21,420
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	1,400	1,600	20	\$27,640
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services	2,500	3,350	80	\$28,200
Office Clerks, General	3,000	6,000	180	\$25,770
Drivers and Passengers, Hand	2,500	2,850	80	\$16,960
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	3,000	3,250	130	\$21,070
General and Operations Managers	3,400	3,750	120	\$125,800
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Transportation and Material Moving Machine and Vehicle Operators	900	1,050	30	\$52,780
Customer Service Representatives	3,400	4,000	120	\$32,250
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	1,450	1,400	30	\$28,050
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	4,500	4,800	80	\$35,100
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	900	950	20	\$44,350
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Helpers, Laborers, and Material Movers, Hand	650	700	20	\$46,540
Cargo and Freight Agents	400	400	10	\$35,510
Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, and Ambulance	600	550	10	\$35,200
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	2,700	2,800	70	\$48,450
Driver/Sales Workers	850	1,000	30	\$22,900
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	300	300	10	\$41,070
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,050	2,000	50	\$35,100

90.

**Acknowledgements**

The findings and recommendations in this report, *The Union County Economic and Workforce Competitiveness Project*, were produced under a contract between the County of Union and the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

The principal authors of this report were Dr. Aaron Fichtner and Jennifer Cleary. William Tracy and Richard Kinney conducted numerous interviews and were instrumental in completing this project, as was Neil Ridley. Additional analysis and writing for this report was provided by Paimann Lodhi, Stephanie Luk, and Kyeong-Su Kim. Robb C. Sewell edited the report.

Special appreciation is due to the following individuals for their guidance and assistance throughout the project: Al Faella, Economic Development Director; Frank Guzzo, Human Services Director; William Ingfield, Special Assistant to the Director of Human Services; and Bette Jane Kowalski, Union County Freeholder Chairwoman.

A variety of other individuals and organizations provided vital information for this report through interviews with Heldrich Center researchers. See Appendix A for a full list of organizations included in interviews.

91.

**Appendix A  
Interview Contacts**

<b>Government and Planning</b> Township of Cranford, Downtown Management Corporation Kathleen Prunty	<b>Education</b> Kean University Dahwood Farahi	<b>Employers and other Stakeholders (cont'd)</b> Muhlenburg Regional Medical Center Nancy A. Flamingo
<b>Elizabeth Department of Planning and Community Development</b> Oscar Ocasio	<b>Union County College</b> Paul Jurno Dr. Farrell	<b>Norfolk Southern Railroad</b> Rich Crawford
<b>North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority</b> Cliff Sobel	<b>Union County Superintendent of Schools</b> Carmen Centuolo	<b>Overlook Hospital</b> Grant Kinaggs
<b>The Union County Alliance</b> Michael Murray	<b>Union County Vocational-Technical Schools</b> Dr. Thomas Bistocchi	<b>Schering-Plough Corporation</b> Joseph Starkey
<b>Union County Economic Development Corporation</b> Maureen Tinen, Dan Devaney, Bill O'Dea	<b>Employers and other Stakeholders</b> <b>Call Futures</b> Brant Call	<b>Suburban Chamber of Commerce</b> Maureen Kelly Joe Steiner
<b>Union County Department of Economic Development and Division of Planning and Community Development</b> Al Faella, Kamel Saleh, Liza Betz, Stephen Meckham	<b>Celegene</b> Sol Barrer	<b>Trinitas Hospital</b> Glen Nacion
<b>Union County Department of Human Services</b> Frank Guzzo	<b>Conoco Phillips</b> Mike Karlovich	<b>Wakefern Corporation</b> Robert Gal
<b>Union County Workforce Investment Board</b> Margaret Neafsey, Joseph Keenan (Also Councilman, City of Elizabeth, and Union County	<b>Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce</b> Gordon Haas	

92.

## Economic Overview

James W. Hughes, Dean

2012

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Edward J. Bloustein School  
of Planning and Public Policy



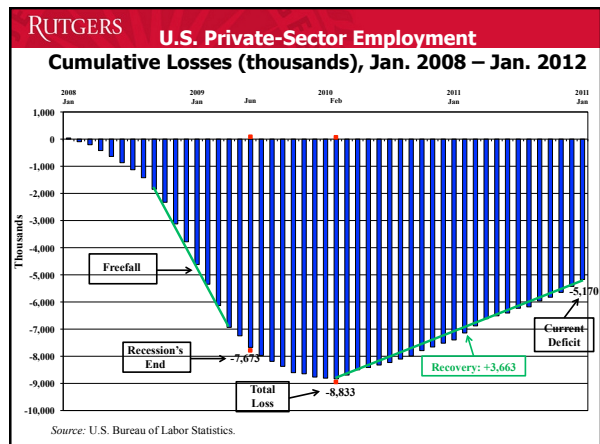


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**Planetizen's Top 15 Graduate Planning Programs, 2012**

Rank	School
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2	Cornell University
3	<b>Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey</b>
4	University of California, Berkeley
5	University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana
6	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
7	University of Southern California
8	Georgia Institute of Technology
9	University of California, Los Angeles
10	University of Pennsylvania
11	Harvard University
12	University of Michigan
13	University of California, Irvine
14	University of Illinois at Chicago
15	University of Texas at Austin

Source: Planetizen.



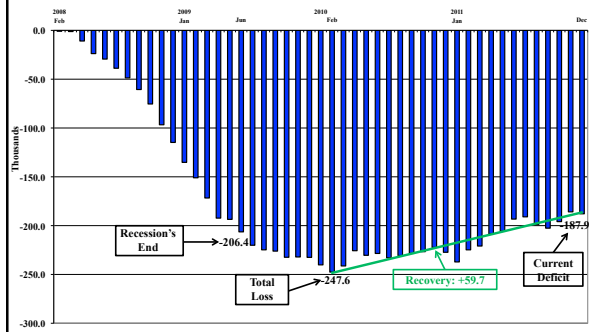


### U.S. Private-Sector Employment Deficit

Period	Employment Change
January 2008 – February 2010	-8,874,000
February 2010 – February 2012	+3,663,000
Current Deficit	-5,211,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### New Jersey Private Sector Employment Cumulative Losses: Feb. 2008 – Dec. 2011



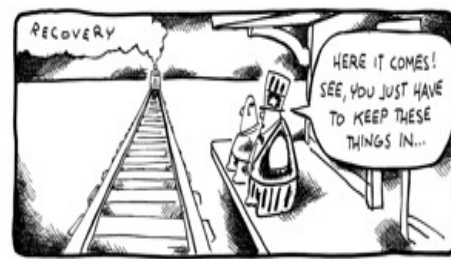
Source: New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

### New Jersey Private-Sector Employment Deficit

Period	Employment Change
January 2008 – February 2010	-247,600
February 2010 – December 2011	+59,700
Current Deficit	-187,900

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

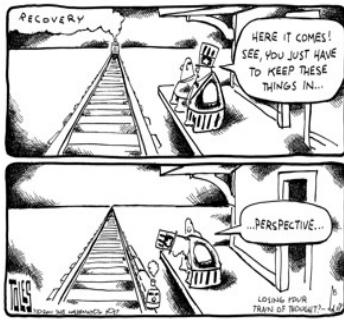
### The Recovery is on track...



Source: Tom Toles, Washington Post.

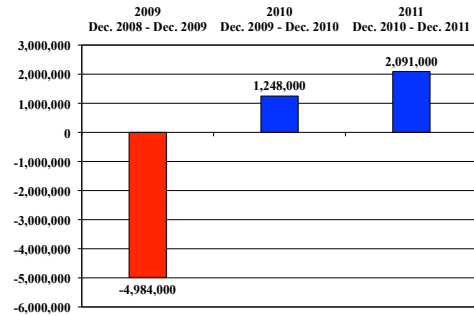


But it's narrow gauge



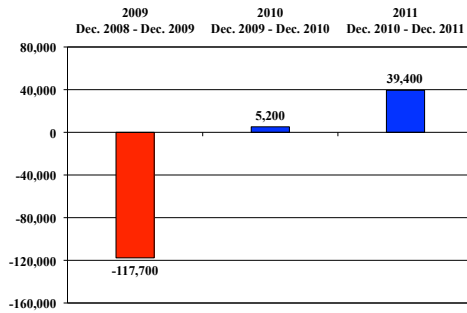
Source: Tom Toles, Washington Post.

U.S. Private-Sector Employment Change  
2009, 2010, 2011



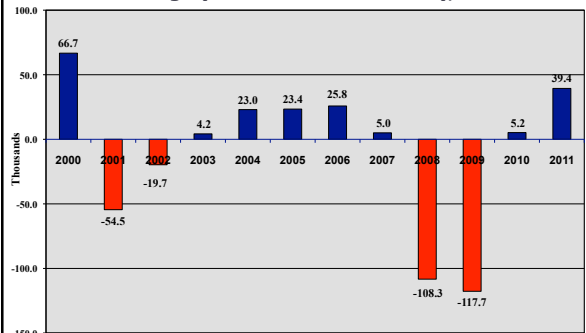
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

New Jersey Private-Sector Employment Change  
2009, 2010, 2011

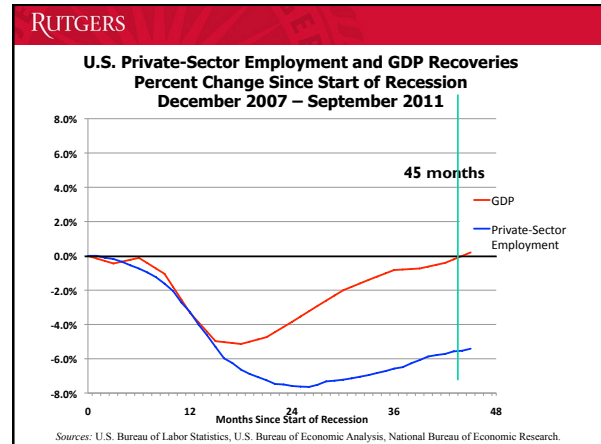
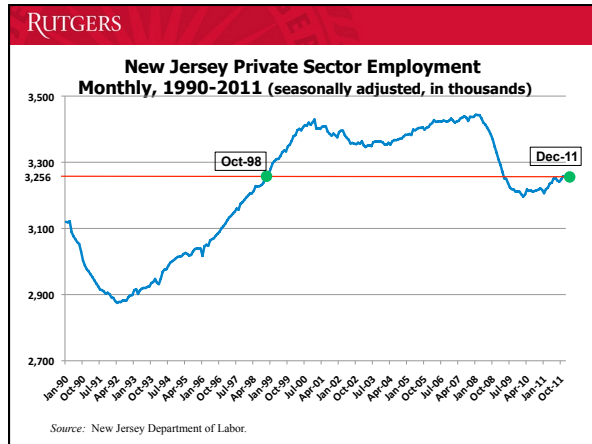


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

New Jersey Private Sector Employment Change  
Annual Change (December to December), 2000-2011



Source: New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.



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## Rising to the Challenge:

### Strategies for Improving Workforce and Business Competitiveness in Union County

Prepared for  
The County of Union, New Jersey

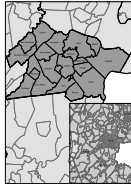
Prepared by  
John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development  
Edward J. Bloustein School for Planning and Public  
Policy  
Rutgers, The State University Of New Jersey

March 2012

### Background

- In 2007, under a project sponsored by the Board of Chosen Freeholders, Union County contracted with the Heldrich Center to analyze the local economy, to identify "Target Industries" for workforce and economic development policy, and to assist with initial implementation. The report identified three key industries:

- Transportation, Logistics, Distribution (TLD)
- Health Care
- Pharma Manufacturing

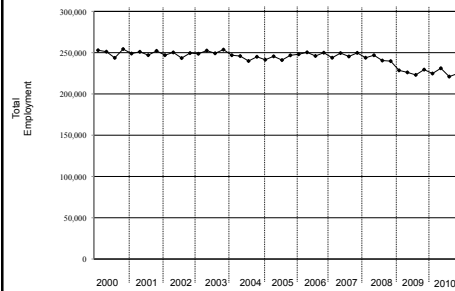


#### Sector Highlights:

- 1) Large economic drivers
- 2) Higher than average wages
- 3) Opportunities to support business growth and advancement for residents

### Time For Action: Union County Faces a Jobs Recession Challenge

Total Employment in Union County, 2000-2010



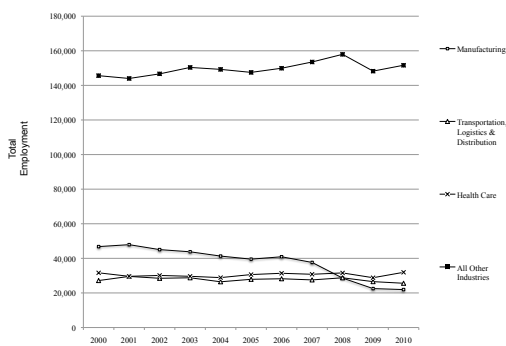
#### Union County in Context

% Change 2007-10:  
  
Union: 10%  
NJ: 5.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.

22.

Total Employment in Union County, 2000-2010, by Industry

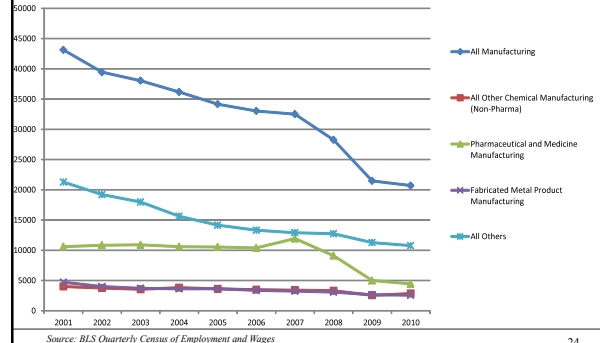


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment

23.

### Pharma Manufacturing in Decline, But Stabilizing

Manufacturing Employment in Union County, 2001-2010

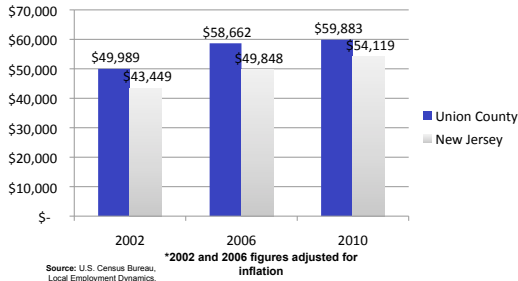


Source: BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

24.

## Union County Workers Still Earn High Wages

Average Earnings of Individuals Employed in Union County and New Jersey in 2002, 2006 and 2010



25.

## However, Potential Skills Mismatches Exist Between County's Workforce and Business Needs

### Many residents and businesses would benefit from improved access to adult and postsecondary education

- Compared to NJ, fewer residents have bachelor's degrees (31% vs. 35%)
- 16% of all residents have less than a HS diploma or GED (13% in NJ)
  - Over ¼ of foreign-born residents
- People who have limited English skills make up a growing share of the County's population, comprising nearly twice the share of residents compared to NJ (21.3% vs. 12.3%).



26.

## Charting the Way Forward: Sector-Focused Strategies

- TLD and Health Care** remain important **workforce** and **economic development** targets
  - Key economic drivers
  - Growth expected
  - Opportunities for low income workers to advance
  - Good wages

- Pharma and Other Advanced Mfg.** still important for **economic development**
  - Historic presence
  - High wages
  - National focus on Advanced Mfg.
- Green Jobs** offer new area for **workforce re-training**
  - Re-training may increase business competitiveness

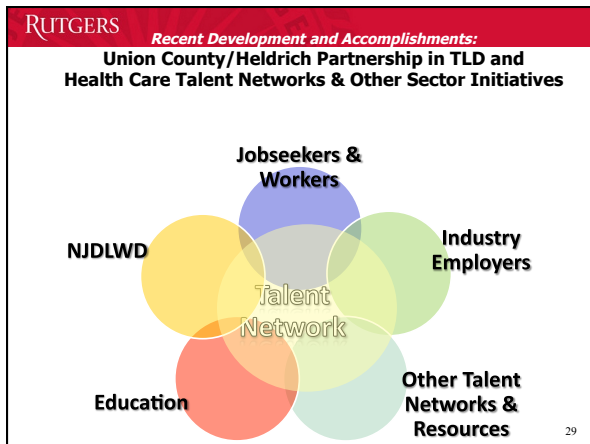
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## Accomplishments in Target Industries

- County economic development officials educated on industry trends and encouraged to focus efforts on **Pharma Mfg., TLD, and Health Care**.
- County Workforce Investment Board (**WIB**) forms official focus on **TLD and Health Care** industries to align with economic development priorities.
- Union County, Heldrich, and others partner on **Federal WIRED** grant, **NJLWD's Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI)** and **Talent Networks**
  - Employer Advisory Councils** and **Employer/Education/Workforce Roundtable events**
  - Informed stakeholders of **industry skill needs and trends**
- Union County College developed new **TLD curriculum**



28.



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**Recommended Strategies**

- **Continue TLD and Health Care Talent Network Partnership with Heldrich Center**
  - Improve UCC industry curricula (ESL, Leadership)
  - “Stackable” credentials
  - Enhance knowledge of workforce and education staff
  - Improve industry guidance to jobseekers/students
  - Explore regional training partnership ideas
- **Expand Economic Development Efforts in Advanced Manufacturing, including Pharma, through participation in Other Talent Network Initiatives**
  - Advanced Manufacturing and BioNJ Talent Networks can supplement local economic and workforce development plans for Pharma/other Mfg.

30.

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**Recommended Strategies**

- **Focus Green Training efforts on incumbent workers and “greening” of existing curricula in key sectors**
  - \$400,000 Congressional grant for green courses
  - NJ Utilities Workers Union partnership with other states to “green” training programs for utilities, including Elizabethtown Gas
- **Explore braiding of funding streams to expand/improve workforce services**
  - Other states co-locate One Stops on CC campuses

**Seek Federal Funding to Improve Community College and Workforce Responsiveness to Target Industries**

31.

# John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

## **Economic Competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012: An Update and Look Ahead**

**by Jennifer Cleary**

**December 2013**

**research report**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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This report was written by Jennifer Cleary, senior project manager at the Heldrich Center at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Assistance with data analysis was provided by Qianqi Shen. Heldrich Center senior writer/editor Robb C. Sewell edited and formatted the report, while communications/media assistant Jade McClain edited the manuscript.



## Executive Summary

In 2006, the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders launched the **Union County Economic and Workforce Competitiveness Project** to support economic growth in the region. The county contracted the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey to analyze economic data and recommend workforce strategies to support growth in key industry sectors. The first report to result from this effort encouraged that the county target workforce strategies toward three of its largest high-wage, job-producing industries: **transportation, logistics, and distribution (TLD); health care; and pharmaceuticals manufacturing** (John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2008).

In response to that report, Union County launched strategies and partnerships to advance workforce and economic development in these and other key sectors, including **retail**. This report is designed to inform these policy efforts by providing an updated look at Union County's economy. It offers new recommendations for targeting workforce efforts and dis-

cusses promising program models used in other states to align workforce development efforts in support of economic growth.

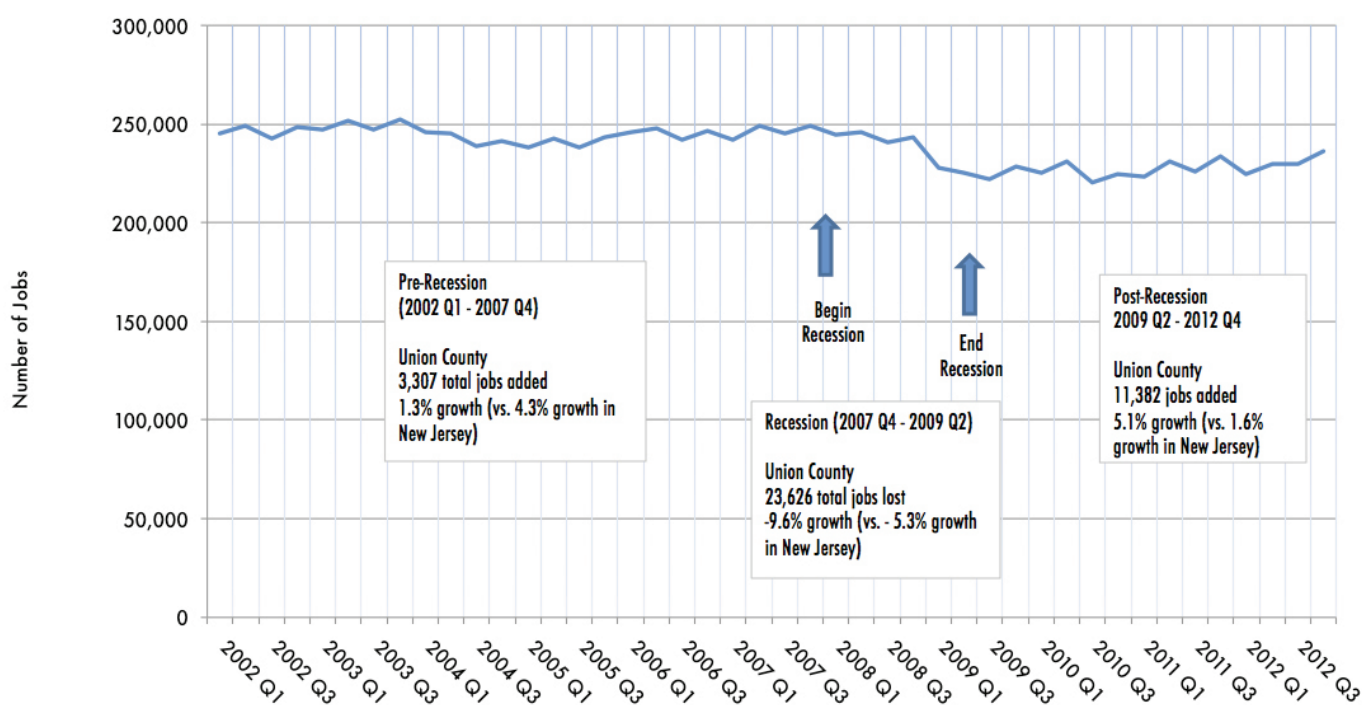
## Key Findings

The Heldrich Center identified several key findings, as described below:

**Finding #1. Union County's manufacturing-based economy was hard hit by the recession. Recovery is slow, but is outpacing recovery statewide and wages remain higher than average.**

Union County lost over 23,600 jobs, nearly 10% of its total employment, during the Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009). This was nearly twice the percentage of jobs lost statewide. By the end of 2012, Union County had recovered over 11,000 jobs, a growth rate of 5.1% since June 2009. (See Figure 1.) While more growth is needed, the economy is recovering faster in Union County than statewide, where employment levels have grown only 1.6% since the end of the recession.

**Figure 1. Total Employment, Union County, 2002 Q1 to 2012 Q4**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

## Economic Competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012

Many of Union County's job losses were concentrated in manufacturing, which lost 6,700 jobs during the recession, a drop of over 18%. Taking a wider view, the county's manufacturing industry shed over half of its jobs in the past decade, dropping from 44,000 jobs at the start of 2002 to just over 20,300 jobs at the close of 2012. Pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing alone lost over 15,000 jobs between 2007 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a).

Despite the restructuring of jobs in Union County over the past several years, average monthly wages in Union County in 2012 were \$5,150, slightly more than the statewide average of \$4,948. Average wages for new hires also remained somewhat higher in Union County (\$3,736) compared to New Jersey (\$3,042) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a).

### **Finding #2. Health care, TLD, retail, and other industries now dominate the local economy, but manufacturing still accounts for nearly 1 in 10 jobs.**

The health care and social assistance, TLD, and retail industries now rank as the three largest industries in Union County. (See Table 1.) Together, they provided nearly 4 out of 10 jobs in Union County in 2012. Manufacturing,

while much leaner than in the past, accounted for nearly 1 in 10 jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a). Statements from local company representatives indicate that the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry is still committed to providing new jobs in the county, though primarily in areas outside of manufacturing, including management, administrative, and research & development jobs. This shift may be partially reflected in the growth witnessed in the administrative and support and waste management industry, which moved from the sixth to the fifth largest industry in the county between 2006 and 2012. Educational services employment also grew over this period, moving the industry from the fifth largest to the fourth largest.

### **Finding #3. Many county residents lack skills needed for high-skill, high-wage employment.**

Compared to New Jersey, fewer residents in Union County have Bachelor's degrees (31% vs. 35%) and more residents have not attained a high school diploma or GED (16% vs. 13%). Among the foreign born in Union County, 25% have not attained a high school diploma or GED. Adults who have limited English skills comprise nearly twice the share of residents in the county as compared to the state (21.3% in Union County vs. 12.3% in New Jersey) (U.S.

**Table 1. Rank and Percentage of Total Employment for Union County's Largest Industries, 2012 Q4 and 2006 Q4**

Industry	2012 Q4		2006 Q4	
	Rank	% of Total Employment	Rank	% of Total Employment
Health Care	1	14%	2	13%
Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution	2	13%	4	11%
Retail Trade	3	12%	3	12%
Educational Services	4	10%	5	9%
Administration and Support & Waste Management and Remediation Services	5	9%	6	6%
Manufacturing	6	9%	1	15%
All Others	NA	33%	NA	34%
Total	NA	100%	NA	100%

Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

Census Bureau, 2012b). Together, these trends suggest that more residents may need additional education and training to gain the skills needed to attract high-skill, high-wage jobs.

**Finding #4. Union County supports sector initiatives to speed growth in key industries.**

Union County has taken steps to align workforce and education with employer needs in key industries. Efforts include having the Workforce Investment Board establish supportive policies, including a resolution to focus workforce efforts and training funds on supporting employers and workers in TLD, health care, and other key industries identified as economic growth targets; partnering with regional and statewide groups, such as the New Jersey talent networks, North Jersey Partners, and Together North Jersey, which use federal and state grant funds to improve workforce responsiveness to industry needs; developing new curricula to support the workforce needs of employers in key industries; and restructuring workforce services to increase support for job seekers with barriers to employment.

**Finding #5. Research on sector strategies supports Union County's activities and suggests additional strategies to benefit employers and workers.**

Participants in well-managed, sector-focused education and training were employed more steadily and earned nearly \$4,500 more over two years than those in other programs, according to the first experimental national study of sector strategies (Maguire, Freeley, Clymer, Schwartz, & Conway, 2010). A John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (2007) study of a sector-focused construction training program in Essex County also demonstrated positive earnings results for many participants. Other studies show that employers report satisfaction, increased productivity and profits, and an overall strong return on investment for supporting sector strategies (Conway, Blair, & Helmer, 2012).

Characteristics of promising sector-focused programs include: developing supportive policies; establishing strong links with employers; convening employers and partners and/or connecting with existing collaborative efforts; sharing up-to-date industry information with employers and job seekers; providing sector-specific training aligned with employer skill needs, including industry-contextualized basic skills and English as a Second Language (ESL) training, if needed; providing the supports needed to promote successful completion and job placement; building training that leads to career advancement; and recruiting and screening participants based on employer needs (Maguire et al., 2010; National Association of Workforce Boards and National Network of Sector Partners, 2012). Providing stipends to hard-to-serve job seekers and encouraging employment stability — not necessarily job stability — may also help to improve outcomes for participants and businesses (Hamilton & Scrivener, 2012).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Union County's economy has moved from being based on manufacturing to one with jobs requiring a wider range of skills and education levels. The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Workforce Investment Board, and other county offices have taken important steps toward supporting growth in key industries important to economic growth. However, changing industry needs and demographic characteristics of residents suggest that Union County needs to do more to prepare all residents to succeed in its new economy and to continue to attract high-wage jobs. Promising practices from public systems in other states suggest the following additional strategies to consider:

**Recommendation #1. Continue to support the growth of the health care and TLD sectors and expand efforts in other target industries.**

Given the evidence for the effectiveness of sector-focused strategies, county officials should consider continued support for sector-focused employment and training initiatives in **health**

care and TLD, the county's largest industries. County officials should also consider efforts in other industries targeted for economic development, including **retail and hospitality**, which is now the county's third largest industry, as well as **advanced manufacturing, biopharma, and green jobs**, which are important targets for stimulating new, high-wage job growth in Union County.

### **Recommendation #2. Improve connections with New Jersey's talent networks.**

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development established talent networks to improve connections among job seekers, employers, and workforce and education systems in seven key industries<sup>1</sup> — TLD, health care, advanced manufacturing, biopharma, technology, financial services, and retail and hospitality. By working with talent networks in targeted industries, Union County can leverage talent network connections and resources to improve staff and job seeker knowledge of the skill and hiring needs of key industries in the local economy, engage employers in local efforts, provide resources and host events that benefit local employers and job seekers, and help local officials identify new funding.

### **Recommendation #3. Dedicate staff to support sector-focused efforts and targeted job seekers.**

While connecting with the state's talent networks will enhance local efforts, it cannot replace them. To be successful, Union County should dedicate several staff to focus on and ensure the success of sector initiatives. Roles for dedicated staff may include: establishing metrics and measurement techniques to track the success of key initiatives, acting as local "sector experts" at One-Stop Career Centers to advise job seekers and local employers about industry trends, providing or arranging for supportive services that allow persons with barriers to employment to succeed in sector-focused training and employment, and implementing sector-specific recruitment and screening practices.

### **Recommendation #4. Ensure sector training provides contextualized basic skills and ESL training for workers who need these skills.**

Many residents and businesses in Union County would benefit from improved access to adult and postsecondary education, including ESL and basic skills training. A number of studies have shown, however, that contextualized education — teaching these skills using work-relevant examples — is most effective for employers and workers. Union County should consider enhancing its existing TLD, health care, and other industry-specific training to include basic skills and ESL instruction to the greatest extent possible. To reach additional residents who may not come to the One-Stop Career Centers for services, county officials should consider partnering with local nonprofit providers to offer training.

### **Recommendation #5. Establish long-term goals for industry-focused economic and workforce development.**

To align local programming with best practices and enhance outcomes for job seekers and employers, Union County officials should consider convening appropriate stakeholders to set long-term goals for its industry-focused strategy. Key efforts that align with best practices, but that may take significant time and coalition building to support and build, include enhancing the county's "stackable" non-credit credentials model by linking it to for-credit degree programs and offering credit based on proven competencies, establishing regional partnerships with other counties and municipalities that share common economic interests, and seeking new sources of federal and nonprofit funding to support key initiatives.



## Introduction

Union County is an important hub of economic and trade activity in New Jersey. Home to many transportation assets, including Newark Liberty International Airport, Elizabeth Marine Terminal, and a number of major rail lines and highways, Union County serves local, regional, national, and international markets. The county is a vibrant, culturally and economically diverse community with nearly one-quarter million workers spanning dozens of industries.

To implement sound policies that ensure prosperity for Union County, policymakers need up-to-date information on economic and demographic trends and information on what policies have worked in similar areas. This information can be used to develop strategic economic development plans and workforce strategies that support economic growth by providing current and prospective employers in the area with the skilled and productive workforce they need to be competitive in a challenging global economy.

As part of an initiative of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders to develop such a strategic growth plan, the county contracted the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development in 2007 to analyze the local economy and workforce, to identify promising target industries and strategies for workforce and economic development, and to provide technical assistance for early start-up activities.

## 2008 Report: A Brief Summary

From 1997 to 2007, Union County's economy steadily supported nearly a quarter million jobs and wages remained higher than the state average (John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, 2008). While the county shed jobs in equipment and other manufacturing during this period, it added jobs in pharmaceuticals; transportation, logistics, and distribution (TLD); health care; and several other industries, resulting in a stable employment picture. Lower-than-average educational attainment among residents and a growing number of indi-

viduals who reported having difficulty speaking English, however, demonstrated that county officials needed to support development of a skilled workforce for its key industries to promote continued economic growth and to ensure prosperity for employers and residents.

The research resulted in a report, completed in 2008, that recommended that county policymakers develop an economic and workforce competitiveness strategy focused on three industries — **pharmaceuticals, TLD, and health care**. The pharmaceutical industry, which is highly concentrated in Union County, has a historical presence in the area, provides high-wage jobs, and attracts highly skilled residents to the area. TLD and health care offer large numbers of jobs and have numerous entry-level and middle-skill job opportunities to help county residents at all levels of education to advance and become prosperous.

## An Updated Look at Union County and Key Strategies for Supporting Economic and Workforce Development

Following the release of the Heldrich Center's 2008 report, the Great Recession and ensuing economic crisis challenged economies around the globe. This report examines the effects that the recession and recovery have had on jobs in Union County and provides an updated look at the county's economy, residents, and recent steps toward securing a prosperous economic future for residents and businesses.

This report provides an update on the county's economic and resident profile, examines the implications for existing industry-focused workforce efforts, and recommends new sector workforce practices based on promising and successful efforts launched in other states.

The Heldrich Center analyzed recent labor market and demographic data and conducted web-based research to identify effective and promising workforce practices that support economic development. The practices identified the role that One-Stop Career Centers and

**Table 2. One-Stop Career Centers Investigated for this Study**

Location	One-Stop	Population Served	Management Type
Los Angeles, CA	Logistics/Transportation Academy	Urban	Nonprofit
Santa Rosa, CA	Sonoma County JobLink	Urban	Nonprofit
Greenwood Village, CO	Arapahoe/Douglas Works!	Urban/Suburban, Denver/ Aurora Metro Area	Government
Chicago, IL	Chicago ServiceWorks & ManufacturingWorks	Urban	Nonprofit
Salem, MA	North Shore Career Center	Suburban (Boston)	Government
Six Locations in Southeastern Minnesota	Workforce Development Inc.	Rural	Nonprofit
New York, NY	Workforce 1	Urban/New York City	Nonprofit
Portland, OR	Worksystems Inc.	Urban/Portland Metro Area	Nonprofit
Lancaster, PA	CareerLink	Urban	Government

Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) can play in the implementation of “sector strategies,” the most commonly used approach to support economic growth through workforce development.

Heldrich Center staff consulted numerous research reports to gather information on effective and promising practices. In addition, staff conducted in-depth, web-based research on a number of individual programs (see Table 2).

Sector strategies, which align workforce preparation with the needs of employers in industries identified as economic growth targets, are a relatively new approach to workforce development, especially when implemented at the local level by WIBs and publicly run One-Stop Career Centers. As a result, some examples of promising practices presented in this report focus on the efforts of nonprofit One-Stop Career Centers. However, efforts were made to find the most transferable options to profile when identifying particular practices.

## Union County Today: An Update

The economy and demographics of Union County have changed significantly in recent years, presenting new challenges and opportunities for policymakers. The following sections provide an overview of the changes that occurred recently in jobs, wages, and demographics. In addition, this report provides an update on the policy developments and programs developed by county officials since the 2008 report.

### Jobs

The number of jobs in Union County remained relatively stable between 2002 and 2007, hovering at or near 250,000 jobs. Union County was home to nearly 246,400 jobs at the end of 2006, a figure that rose to nearly 249,000 just prior to the Great Recession, which struck in the fourth quarter of 2007. The economic recession that began in December 2007 and ended in June 2009 had a particularly damaging effect on county employment, as it did elsewhere around the globe. During the Great Recession, Union County shed 23,626 jobs, nearly 10% of its total employment. By contrast, New Jersey shed just over 5% of its total

jobs over the recession period. (See Figure 1 on page 1.)

While Union County has not rebounded to pre-recession job levels, the recovery has been somewhat more robust in the county than it has been statewide. From the end of the recession in June 2009 through the end of 2012, jobs in Union County grew by 5.1% (11,382 jobs). By contrast, jobs have grown by only 1.6% over the same period throughout the state. **This represents a significant change in direction for Union County compared to the state, as prior to the recession, the county was growing jobs at a slower rate than the state (1.3% vs. 4.3%), and the county lost nearly twice the percentage of jobs as the rest of the state during the recession (9.6% vs. 5.3%).** (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a).

## Industry Highlights

The Heldrich Center's 2008 report recommended that Union County officials consider aligning economic and workforce development efforts around the **manufacturing (especially chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing), health care, and TLD** industries due to their vital contributions to the local economy and their ability to provide good jobs for county residents. This section explores job growth trends in these industries in recent years and identifies other industries influencing the county's economy since the release of the 2008 report.

In 2006, manufacturing, health care, TLD, and retail trade were the four largest industries in Union County in terms of total employment. As noted in Table 1 on page 2, together, they accounted for half of all jobs in 2006. While manufacturing employment had been in decline for at least a decade prior to 2006, it was still Union County's largest industry, providing 15% of all jobs in the county in 2006. Many of those jobs were concentrated in chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing, which led to the recommendation in the 2008 report that pharmaceutical manufacturing be a target for workforce and economic development.

Health care, TLD, and retail trade continue to be strong forces in Union County's economy. Together these three industries accounted for one-third of all jobs in the county in 2012. Health care provided 14% of county jobs in 2012, compared to 13% in 2006. TLD increased from 11% to 13% of all jobs and retail trade remained stable at 12%. By 2012, however, manufacturing's share of employment had dropped from 15% to just 9% of all jobs in Union County, moving it from the largest industry in the county to the sixth largest industry.

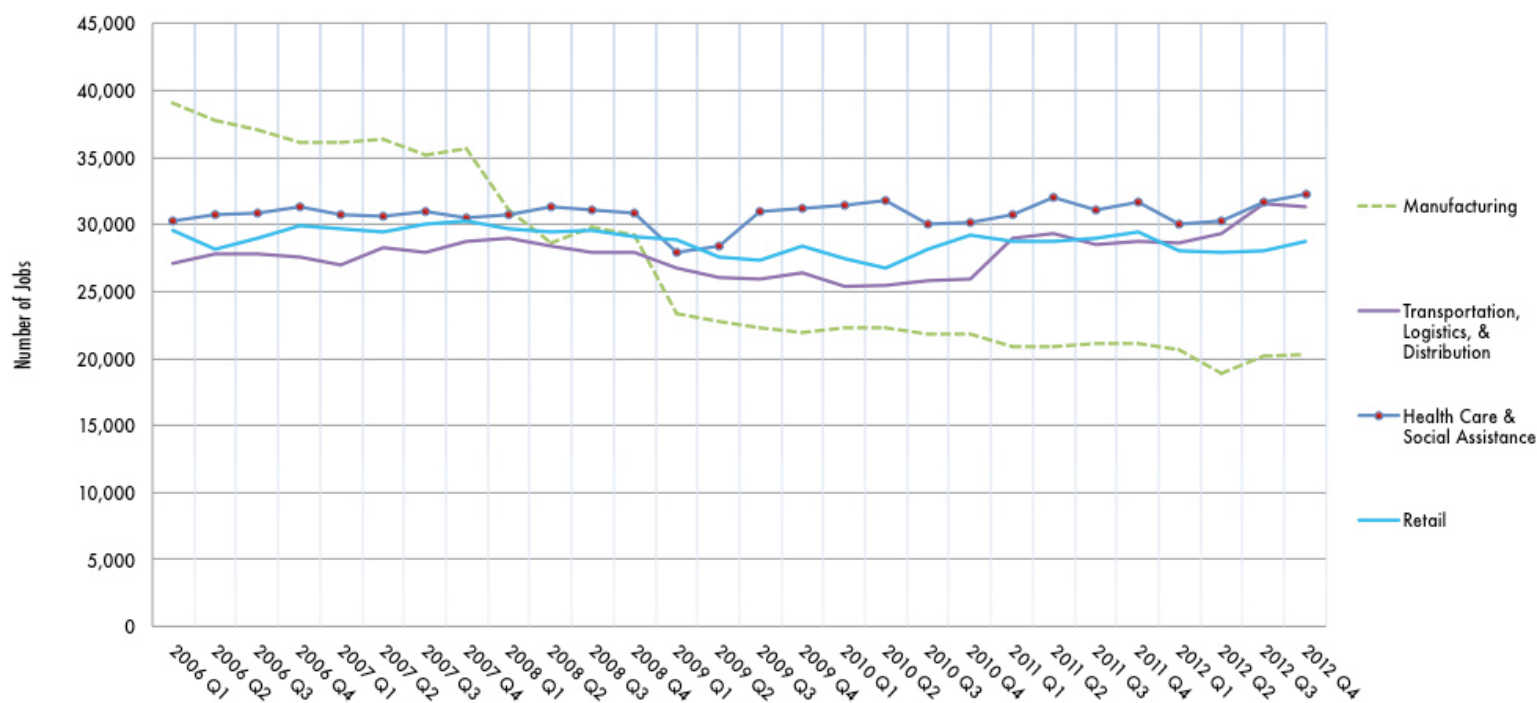
As indicated in Figure 2, the recession had a particularly negative effect on the manufacturing industry in Union County. The industry shed over 6,700 jobs during the recession, and has continued to lose jobs since then, though at a slower pace. Overall, as shown in Figure 3, the industry lost over 15,000 jobs between 2006 and 2012.

Health care and social assistance, TLD, and retail, on the other hand, all fared relatively well between 2006 and 2012. While some recession effects are apparent in all of these industries, health care and TLD both recovered well. TLD jobs grew exceptionally well, especially in 2012. In fact, TLD added over 3,700 jobs between 2006 and 2012, making it the county's second fastest growing industry next to administrative and support and waste management and remediation services (see Figure 3). Health care has returned to pre-recession employment levels, adding nearly 900 jobs between 2006 and 2012. The retail industry has not yet experienced a full recovery from the recession-era job losses. The county's retail industry had nearly 1,200 fewer jobs at the end of 2012 compared to the end of 2007. However, the retail industry added jobs throughout much of 2012, putting it on a track to full recovery.

Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services added over 8,100 jobs between 2006 and 2012 (see Figure 3), making it the county's fastest growing and fifth largest industry by 2012. In addition, several other major industries added jobs over the period, including accommodation and food

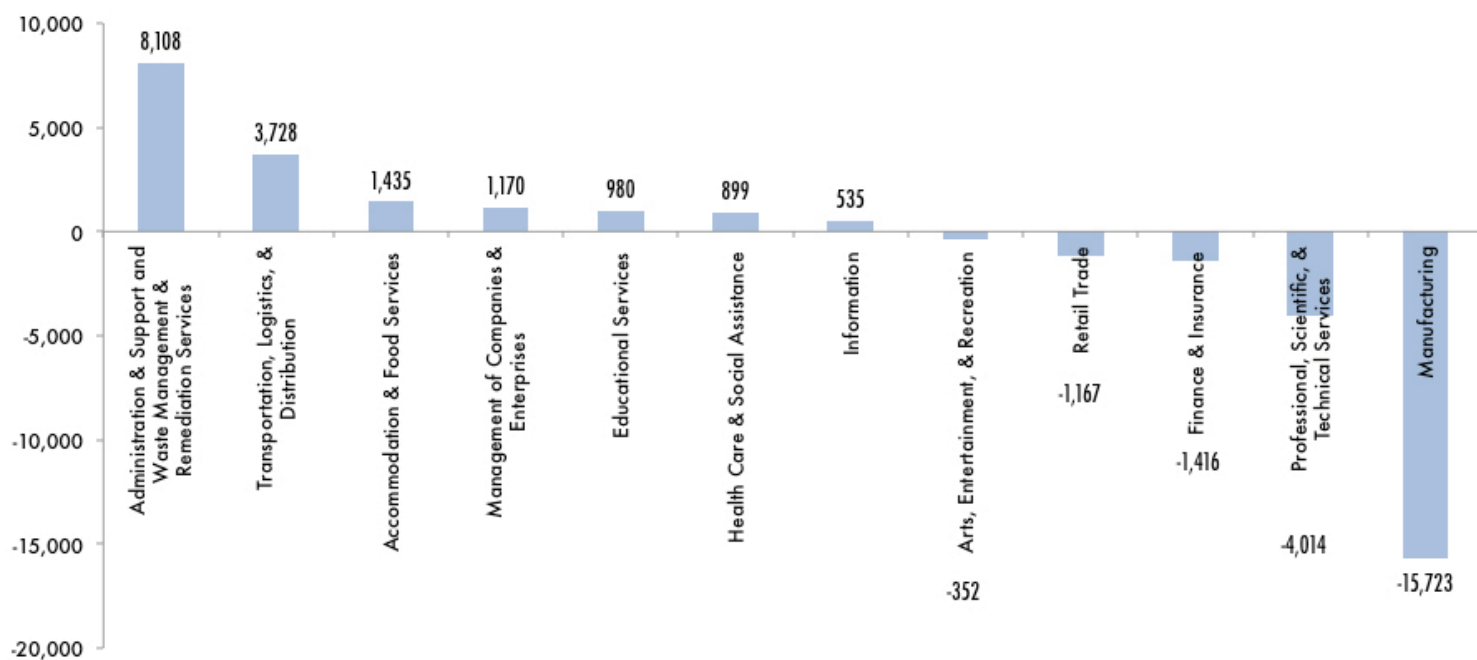
## Economic Competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012

**Figure 2. Employment in Key Union County Industries, 2006 to 2012**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

**Figure 3. Job Gains and Losses in Union County Industries with Over 5,000 Workers, 2006 to 2012**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012



services, management of companies and enterprises, educational services, and information.

## Key Industries: A Look Ahead

As the state and national economies continue to emerge from the effects of the recession, however, recovery may not occur on a steady upward trajectory for all industries, so some caution on the part of policy stakeholders is warranted.

There is reason to hope for the future growth prospects of key industries in Union County, however. The future for TLD looks bright. In early 2012, the New York Shipping Association reported record levels of cargo coming into Port Newark and Elizabeth Terminal, the world economy is picking up gradually, and a major expansion of the port's capacity is scheduled over the next few years and will likely lead to growth in transportation, warehousing, and other parts of the industry. Most experts also project the health care industry to grow as people age and Baby Boomers require additional care and social assistance.

Despite the large and precipitous loss of manufacturing jobs, Union County also maintains important links to the pharmaceutical industry, which has historically been a large presence in the county. However, the nature of the business in Union County is changing. Merck Pharmaceuticals reported at a 2012 Union County Means Business! meeting that the pharmaceutical industry is still quite strong in Union County, but the make-up of industry jobs is shifting from a manufacturing focus to global corporate management and research & development.

## Wages

Following a peak just prior to the Great Recession, wages for all workers in Union County have been on a downward trend. (See Figure 4.) Recessionary job losses in Union County, many of which were in the high-wage manu-

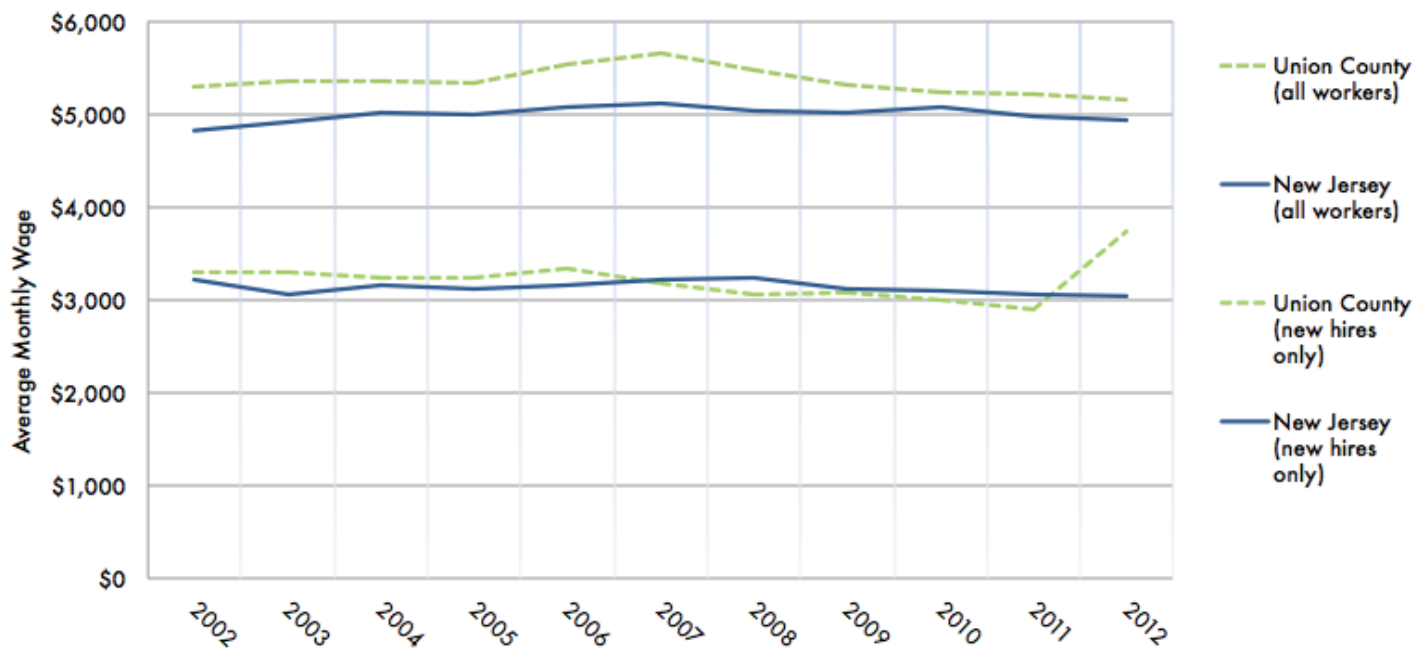
facturing sector, are likely responsible for this trend. Despite this, Union County still maintains a slight advantage over the state with regard to average monthly wages for all workers and for new hires. As indicated in Figure 4, average monthly wages for all workers in Union County peaked in 2007 at \$5,652,<sup>2</sup> nearly 11% higher than the statewide average wage of \$5,115. By 2012, the average monthly wage in Union County had dropped by nearly 8% to \$5,150. Statewide, average monthly wages dropped less than 3% over the same period. However, despite the sharper drop, Union County's average monthly wages still remained higher than the statewide average in 2012 (U.S. Census, 2012a).

As seen in Figure 4, Union County maintained a slight advantage over the state with regard to wages for new hires prior to 2007. Following the recession and continuing through 2011, however, wages for new hires dipped slightly below the state average wage for new hires. Figures for 2012 are more promising, but given the dramatic uptick since 2011, it is possible that these figures will be revised downward in future estimates. Given that Union County has a higher cost of living than several other counties in New Jersey, a downward or even a stable trend in new hire wages compared to the state could make it more difficult for newly hired workers to thrive in Union County.

Several of Union County's key industries paid above \$5,150, the average wage for all workers in 2012 (see Figure 5). Manufacturing had the highest monthly average wage among the county's top industries, paying workers an average of \$7,486 per month, over \$2,300 more per month than the average worker in Union County. Wholesale trade, a major component of the county's TLD industry, had a monthly average wage of \$7,076 in 2012, over \$1,900 more than the average for all industries. Transportation and warehousing and health care and social assistance paid wages slightly below the county average for all workers in 2012, paying workers \$5,009 and \$4,152, respectively. Retail had the lowest average monthly wage (\$2,809).

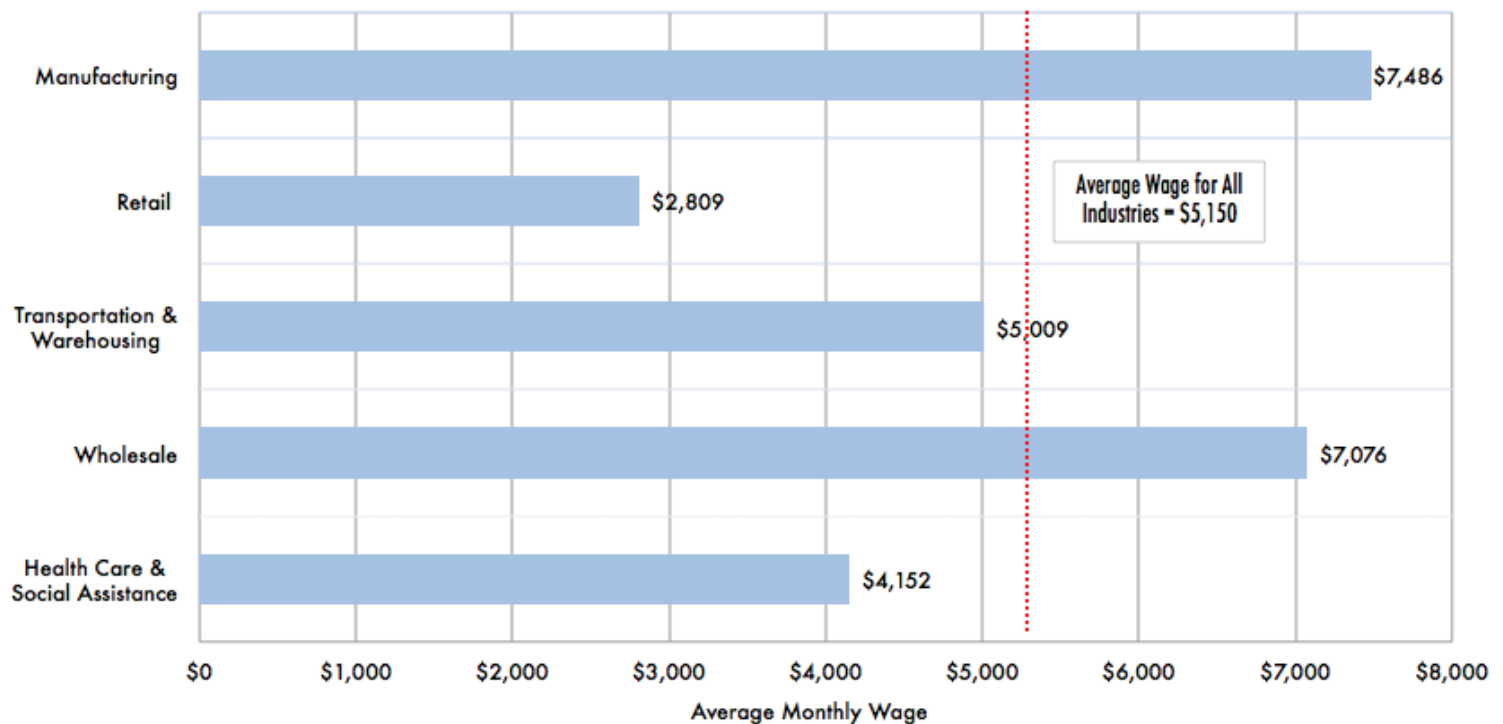
## Economic Competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012

**Figure 4. Average Monthly Wages for All Workers and New Hires in Union County and New Jersey**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

**Figure 5. Average Monthly Wages for Key Industries in Union County, All Workers, 2012**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

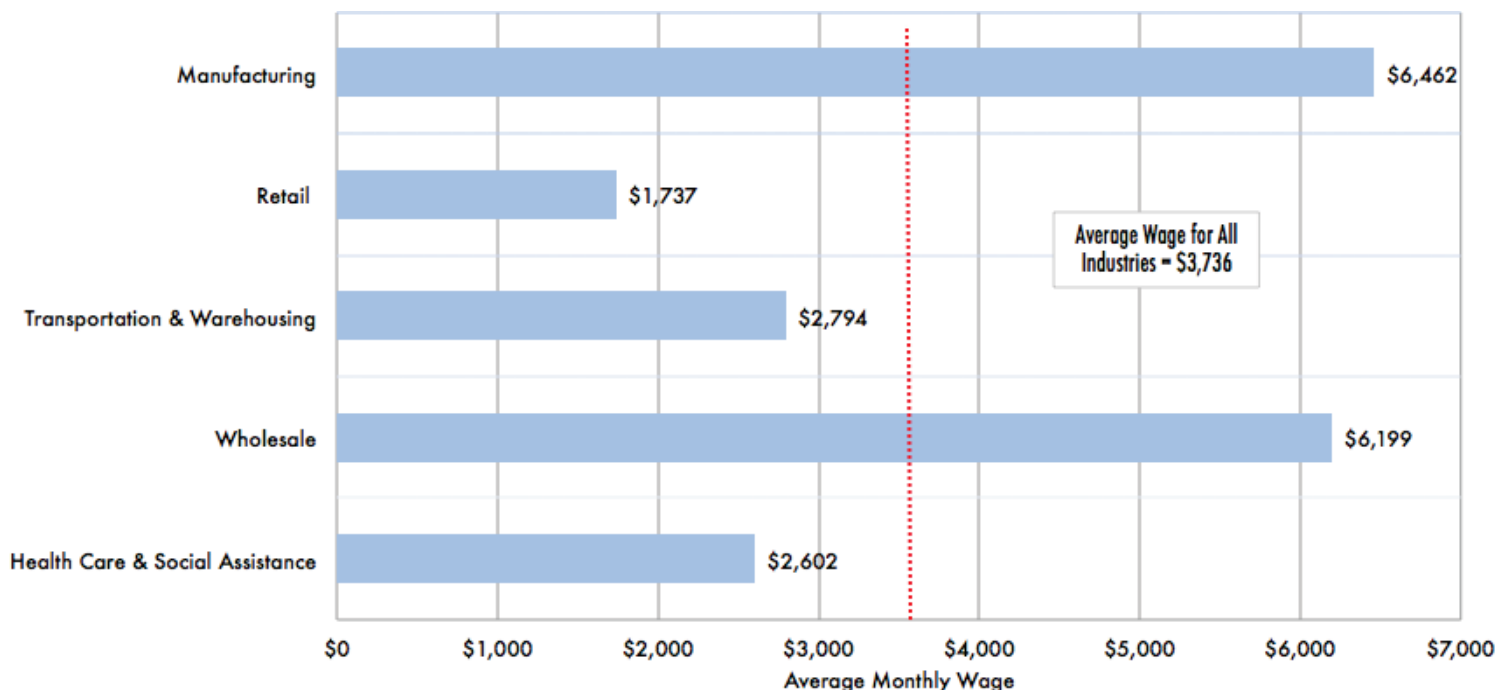
Patterns are similar when looking at average monthly wages for new hires (see Figure 6). The average new hire's monthly earnings for 2012 were \$3,736. Manufacturing jobs paid new hires \$6,462, which is more than \$2,700 higher than the average monthly wage for all new hires. Wholesale trade paid an average \$6,199 to new hires, also significantly above the average. Transportation and warehousing and health care and social assistance paid \$2,794 and \$2,602, respectively, or nearly \$1,000 less than the average for new hires across all industries. Retail had the lowest average monthly wage for new hires at \$1,737 — nearly \$2,000 less than the average. It should be noted, however, that the average wage for new hires in 2012 was approximately \$1,000 higher than it had been in 2011. It is difficult to tell whether this is due to a change in the jobs structure in the county during that time, or whether this may be a data error. When accessing the most recent data through the U.S. Census, initial figures are subject to later revision.

## Demographic Characteristics

In 2010, the most recent year for which comparative demographic data are available, Union County was home to 536,499 residents, or 6% of the state's population. The population in Union County grew by 2.7% between 2000 and 2010, compared to a growth rate of 4.5% throughout the state.

Union County households are slightly less well off than households in other parts of the state, but other measures of wealth and poverty are nearly equal. Median household income averaged \$66,791 during the 2006 to 2010 period, approximately \$3,000 less than the median household income statewide (\$69,811) in the same period. At the time of the Heldrich Center's 2008 report, the median household income in Union County was approximately \$2,200 less than the figure for the state as a whole. However, per capita annual income (in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$34,096

**Figure 6. Average Monthly Wages for Key Industries in Union County, New Hires Only, 2012**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

## Economic Competitiveness in Union County, 2006-2012

between 2006 and 2010, roughly the same as the statewide figure (\$34,858). Also, 9.1% of all residents in both Union County and the state had incomes below the poverty level in 2010, up from 6% in Union County in 2006.

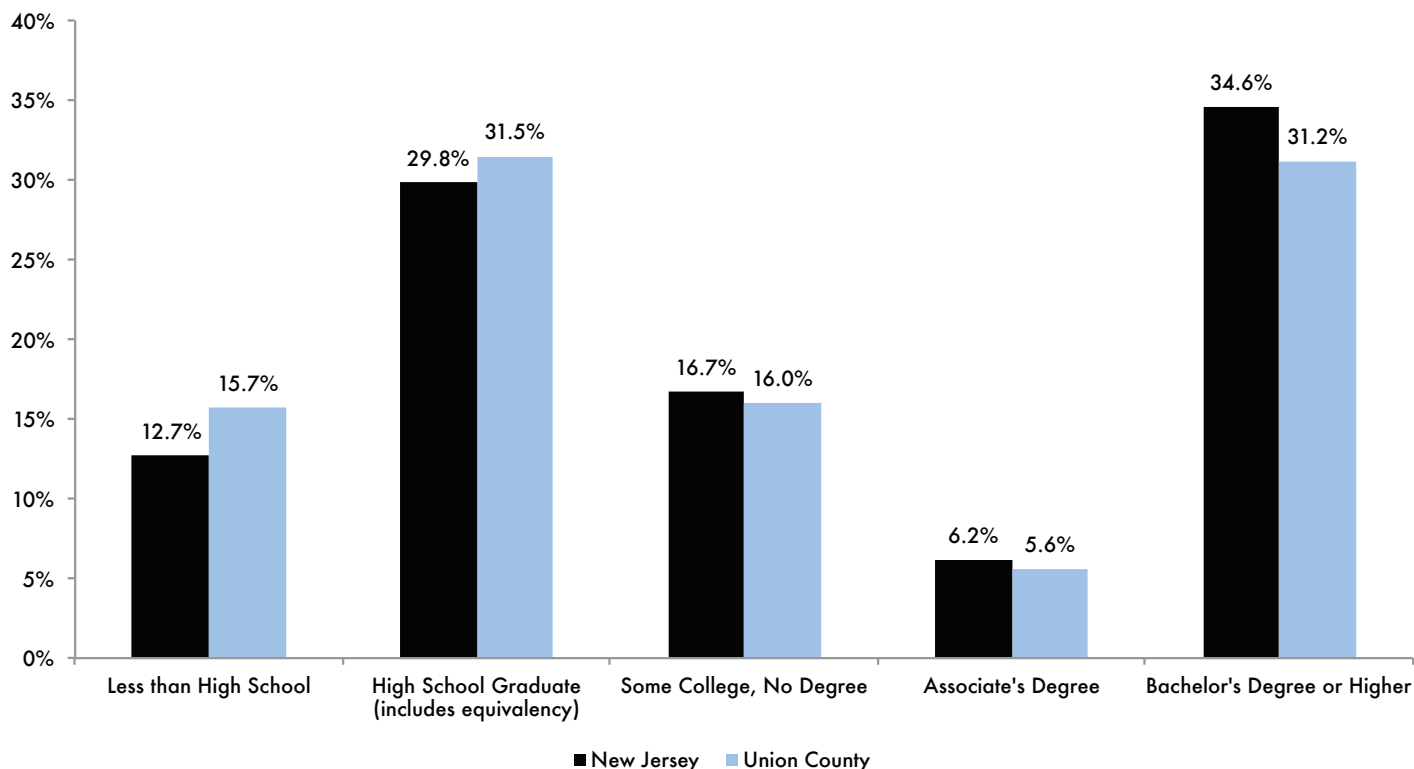
As shown in Figure 7, compared to the statewide average, residents in Union County have attained less formal education. Nearly half (47.2%) of those age 25 or above in Union County have earned a high school diploma/equivalent or less, compared to just 42.5% statewide. The rate of adults completing at least some college or an Associate's degree is roughly the same (22.9% statewide compared to 21.6% in Union County), but Union County has fewer adults who have completed a Bachelor's degree or above (31.2% in Union County vs. 34.6% statewide). These figures and trends are roughly the same as those examined in the Heldrich Center's 2008 report.

With nearly 3 in 10 residents born outside of the United States, Union County is second only to Hudson and Middlesex Counties in

terms of its share of immigrants (2006 to 2010). Statewide, just over 2 in 10 residents indicated that they were foreign-born during this period. The percentage of foreign-born residents has risen by approximately one percentage point in Union County and in the state since the Heldrich Center published the 2008 report.

Not only does Union County have a large share of immigrants, the profile of this immigrant population is quite different than the profile of the foreign-born statewide. As illustrated in Figure 8, nearly 60% of foreign-born adults in Union County have earned only a high school diploma/equivalent or less, compared to 46% statewide. Foreign-born adults in Union County are slightly more likely to have completed some college or an Associate's degree (19.2% vs. 17.8% statewide), but only 22% of immigrants in Union County have earned a Bachelor's degree or above, compared to 36.2% statewide. Also, residents who reported difficulty speaking English make up a growing share of the county's population. The percentage of residents who reported difficulty speak-

**Figure 7. Highest Level of Educational Attainment, New Jersey vs. Union County, 2010**



Source: Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Local Employment Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

ing English rose from 14.7% in 2001-2003 to 21.3% in 2008-2010. Currently, Union County has nearly twice the share of residents who reported difficulty speaking English compared to the state (21.3% in Union County vs. 12.3% statewide). (See Figure 9.)

## Economic and Workforce Policy Developments in Union County

Since the release of the 2008 report, Union County has implemented a number of important initiatives to support economic and workforce development in key industries, including TLD, health care, and pharmaceuticals, the three industries recommended as targets based on economic analysis, and green jobs, an emerging job area in Union County. This section outlines Union County's key accomplishments in these areas.

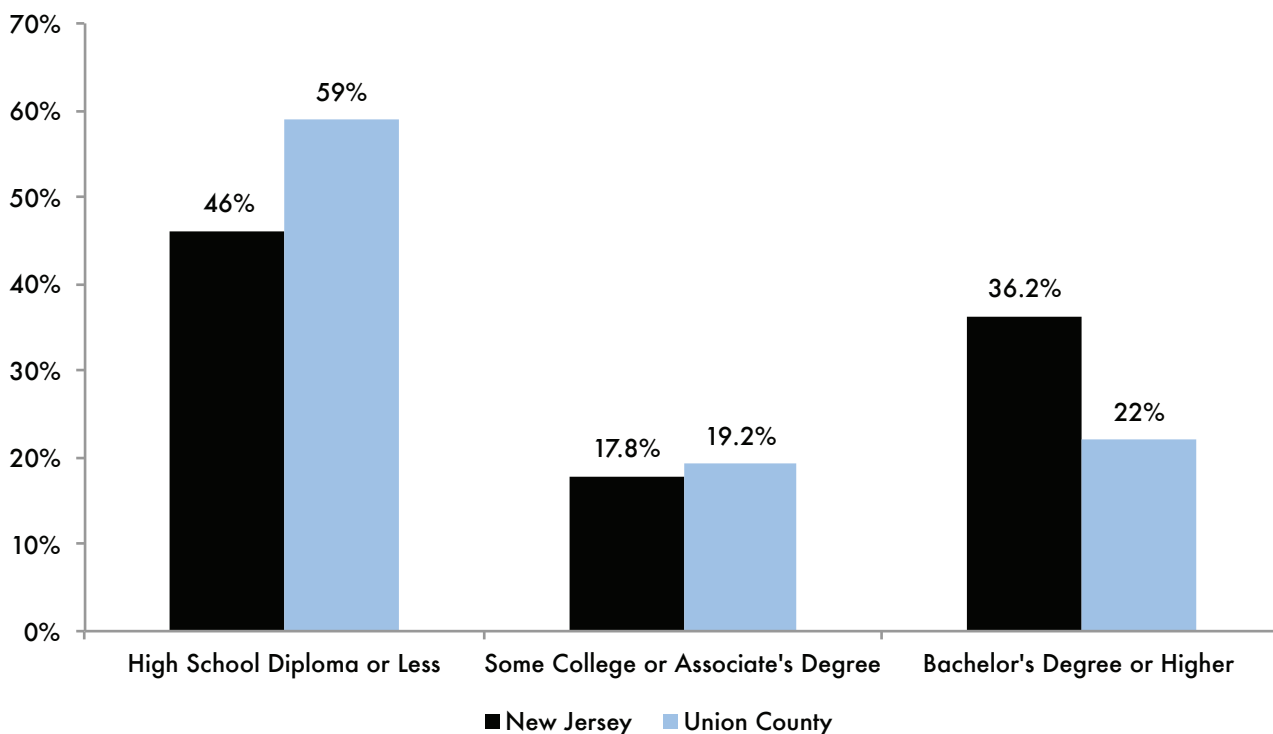
### Strategy #1. Developed a formal agreement to align workforce development activities with economic development goals.

In 2008, the Union County WIB passed a resolution to focus WIB efforts on TLD and health care, two industries that provide large numbers of entry-level and middle-skill jobs. WIB officials pledged to support economic growth in these industries by participating in local and regional efforts to develop a pipeline of skilled workers for the industry. The resolution passed by the WIB represented a formal pledge to align workforce development activities with economic development goals.

### Strategy #2. Built key partnerships in regional and state sector-focused workforce and economic development strategies.

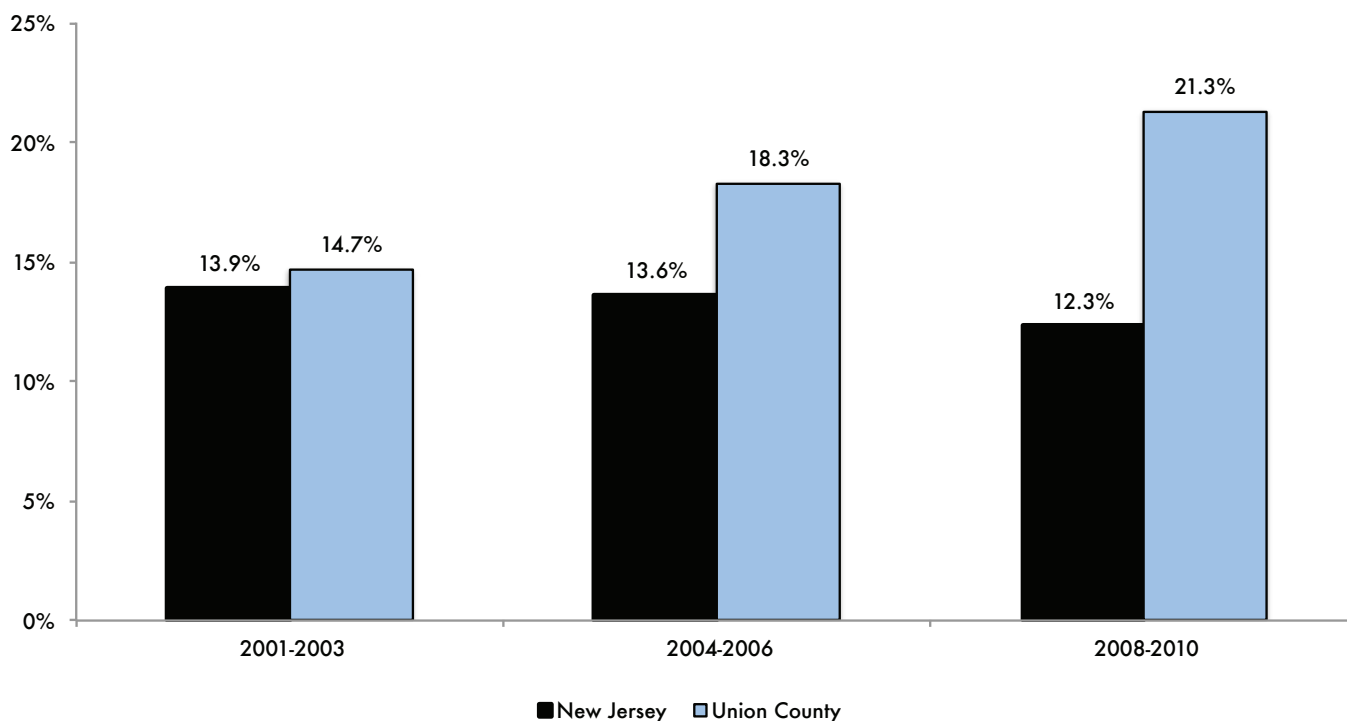
Union County has been a leader in sector-focused workforce and economic development efforts in New Jersey for many years. The county was a founding participant in the North Jersey Partners collaborative, a sector-focused

**Figure 8. Educational Attainment of Foreign-born Residents Age 25 and Above, Union County vs. New Jersey, 2010**



Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

**Figure 9. Percentage of Residents Who Speak English Less than Very Well, 2001-2010, New Jersey and Union County**



Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012

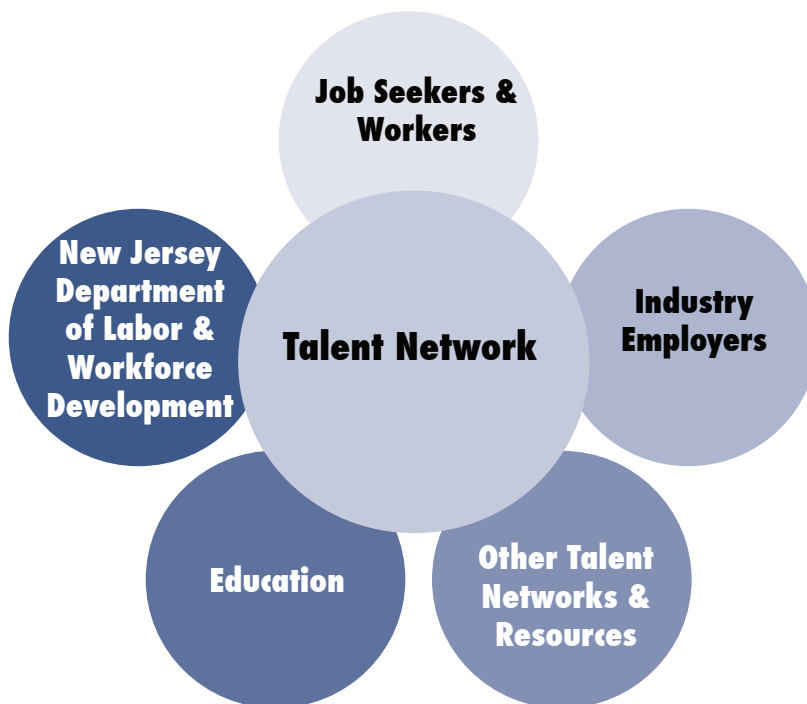
regional initiative funded by a \$5 million Workforce Innovation Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and later supported through state-funded Innovation Partnership Institute (IPI) and Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) grants. The WIRED, IPI, and REDI grants funded curriculum development and training in TLD, health care, and technology, and supported the development of employer roundtables that allowed partners to obtain regular input from industry employers about their workforce needs. A key accomplishment was Union County College's development of a new entry-level curriculum for warehouse workers in the TLD sector.

More recently, Union County has partnered with New Jersey's TLD and health care talent networks. In 2011, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development began the talent network initiative, which now includes talent networks covering seven major industries in the state, as well as an eighth talent network designed to assist businesses affected by Superstorm Sandy. Talent networks

bring employers in the state's key industries together with workforce, education, and economic development staff who can address employers' workforce concerns and help them to stay competitive in today's difficult economic climate. Figure 10 illustrates the key relationships that the talent networks were established to maintain and enhance. The talent networks have several key goals, including: acting as a single point of contact for employers; gathering intelligence on the emerging workforce needs of the industry; educating job seekers and workforce intermediaries, including One-Stop Career Center staff, WIB staff, colleges, and others, about the workforce needs of the industry; hosting and attending events that enhance connections between workforce, education, and economic development systems and employers; and developing and implementing key strategies to address industry workforce needs.

As part of its work on the New Jersey TLD Talent Network, Union County was engaged in sourcing skilled workers for large employers in the region, such as Continental Airlines, and has been participating in discussions regard-



**Figure 10. The Systems and Stakeholders Connected through New Jersey's Talent Networks**

ing how to improve connections among One-Stop Career Centers, employers, community colleges, and other partners. One-Stop Career Center and college staff in Union County assisted in recruiting job seekers and employers for job fairs and career awareness events in the region. Union County College also hosted several events in partnership with the talent networks that attracted key TLD employers and job seekers.

### **Strategy #3. Supported business growth in key industries through training.**

The Union County WIB has allocated much of its federal training vouchers toward key industries. According to officials, 50% of Workforce Investment Act training vouchers must support training in TLD or health care, while an additional 30% can go toward training in one of five other industries designated for economic development in New Jersey by the Governor's Office.

Union County College and county officials have also been active in creating new curricula to support the emerging skill needs of employers in the county's key industries.

As many businesses transform their operations to include green products, services, and/or processes, Union County has developed new training programs to aid businesses and job seekers in "going green." Businesses are transforming their product lines and business processes in many industries, including TLD, health care, and pharmaceuticals; this transformation may require new and existing workers to learn new skills. With a \$400,000 grant from the U.S. Congress, Union County College and other partners have come together to develop "green" courses. A partnership between the utility workers' unions in New Jersey and other states is also working to "green" training programs for utilities, including Elizabethtown Gas.

More recently, Union County workforce officials have been working with administrators at Union County College to develop the Union County Directions and Choices program. The "choices" portion consists of introductory courses designed to prepare middle-skill workers for jobs in TLD, health care, and other key industries (the "directions" portion is discussed below). In health care, non-credit credentials will "stack" together to allow students multiple points of entry and exit. Currently, the

programs are designed to meet the demands of employers for middle-skill workers with at least a high school diploma. In the future, additional steps will be taken to integrate more entry-level and basic skills and ESL courses.

### **Strategy #4. Provided specialized supports for job seekers who face barriers to employment.**

Union County has moved several of its public workforce system staff to offices that serve individuals in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and other intensive social assistance programs. These staff are able to provide more one-on-one support for job seekers and workers who face barriers to employment, as well as more easily link them to needed supportive services, including transportation, housing, and basic skills training or ESL assistance.

In addition, the “directions” portion of Union County College’s new Directions and Choices program (see above) will allow workforce staff to leverage technology more effectively to serve workers who face fewer barriers to employment. From help with skills assessment and job search techniques to résumé development, job seekers will be able to access a robust set of online tools, and staff will be organized to support job seekers effectively, while freeing up additional time to assist those who need more intensive support.

## **A National Perspective: Strategies for Aligning Public Workforce Systems to Support Economic Development in Key Industries**

Access to a skilled workforce is often the primary factor businesses consider when choosing a location. In today’s fast-paced, skills-intensive economy, workforce development is economic development. However, many states and localities are struggling to understand what works and to effectively align the activities of their

publicly funded workforce systems to support the economic growth of important industries.

Sector-focused employment and training strategies may offer the most promising approaches for connecting unemployed workers to jobs and assisting employers to address their critical skill needs. While numerous national studies of traditional workforce training approaches have revealed minimal gains in employment and wages among participants over time, some sector-based strategies are producing better outcomes for participants and, presumably, for employers as well.

The National Network of Sector Partners (2002), a leading national group dedicated to advancing the practice of sector-based initiatives, defines these efforts as having four characteristics:

- “(1) they target and focus deeply on the needs in a single industry, building partnerships between multiple employers and community players to build an effective bridge to the jobs in the industry;
- (2) they target low income or low wage workers to improve their relationships to the industry and create pathways to skilled employment;
- (3) they are led by strategic intermediaries, whose role is to build and sustain the partnerships needed and to achieve a ‘win/win’ for the industry, workers, and community; and
- (4) they achieve changes in the industry — whether in improved human resource policies, improved competitiveness, or expanded career ladders — along with skill and support service gains for workers.”

This section explores recent evidence on the success of sector-focused employment and training strategies and identifies recent efforts that One-Stops and WIBs are taking in other areas of the United States to better support economic prosperity for workers and employers through sector-focused initiatives.



## The Evidence for Sector-based Employment and Training Strategies

In 2010, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) released a summary report of an experimental design study — the gold standard of research — of three mature sector-focused employment and training programs. The project was the first rigorous study of such programs to be conducted on a national scale (Maguire et al., 2010).

The findings from the P/PV report revealed that participants in sector-focused training initiatives earned approximately \$4,500 more, on average, than control group members over a two-year period. Participants were also employed more steadily, especially in the second year following the program. Over half of the participants, compared to just 41% in the control group, were employed during all 12 months of the second year following program completion. Despite working more hours, earnings gains resulted from participants working in higher-wage jobs than the controls, not just from working more hours. Participants were much more likely than controls to work more hours in jobs that paid at least \$11 per hour. They were also more likely to work in jobs with benefits. Finally, earnings gains for participants were higher for every subgroup examined. So, people of every gender, race, and background benefitted to some degree from the sector program (Maguire et al., 2010).

By contrast, a recent national study of non-sector-specific workforce services provided to individuals receiving TANF found far less to highlight in terms of results. In 2012, MDRC released the results of an experimental design study of 12 programs across the United States using different models to assist TANF recipients to retain and advance employment. Only three of the programs had any positive results compared to the control group. All three programs produced annual earnings gains that ranged from \$500 to \$640 above the earnings of control groups. Two of the three programs also showed some improvement over controls in the rate of employment, but these gains were very

modest (Hamilton & Scrivener, 2012). These results are similar to the results of other large evaluations of publicly funded employment and training programs.

While no systematic research is available on the effects of sector-focused employment and training initiatives on regional economic growth or employer profits, the positive gains for workers suggest that employers are finding enough value in these programs to hire and retain these workers. Better employment outcomes for participants, therefore, may equal gains not only for job seekers and workers, but also for employers in key industries.

The following programs were included in the P/PV study: the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, an effort among unions and employers that develops two- to eight-week training programs in construction, manufacturing, and health care, which was developed in response to employer requests and clear market demand; Jewish Vocational Services in Boston, a community-based nonprofit that operates One-Stop Career Centers in the Boston area offering training in medical billing and accounting; and Per Scholas, a social venture in New York City that trains computer and other electronic repair technicians through a computer refurbishment and recycling program.

Maguire et al. (2010) and Hamilton and Scrivener (2012) do reveal some important information about the types of sector-focused strategies that contribute to success for job seekers and workers. All of the programs in the P/PV study were run by non-governmental organizations, though it is not clear if this was a major factor in their success. Researchers did note a number of common program elements that appeared to be important factors, including:

### **Element #1. Strong and adaptive program organization aided by a mix of public and private funding.**

All of the programs demonstrated a strong ability to understand the skill and workforce needs of employers, to source candidates who fit those needs, and to obtain the fund-

ing and resources needed to build appropriate responses. To do so successfully, the organizations displayed an ability to understand and adapt quickly to change. If local labor markets changed, staff had that knowledge right away and made immediate changes to enrollments and curricula. If funding changed, they made staff changes to ensure quality service delivery.

Researchers note that having access to resources and support from public and private sources appeared to assist organizations in adapting to new information and changes in any one source of revenue. Mixing private funding with public resources also allowed programs to experiment with new approaches that may be more constrained under public spending rules.

### **Element #2. Strong links to local employers.**

All of the organizations included in the study have a long history of building effective relationships with employers. Each leveraged these relationships and built new ties in their target sector. They brought together employers and sometimes workers to understand the skill needs of employers in targeted sectors. Several organizations also hired staff from the target sector and organized internal activities around key aspects of the industry. Employers were also involved in not only identifying skill needs, but monitoring and shaping the training provided to job seekers.

By building strong, focused linkages with employers and unions (where relevant), program providers understood the specific skills and credentials local employers preferred, and job counselors had an in-depth understanding of the application and hiring process. Staff were able to provide detailed guidance to job seekers on how to navigate union processes in the construction industry to ensure they were included on hiring lists, for example. Staff were also knowledgeable about relevant industry certification tests and training, and job conditions and requirements that may not be listed in job descriptions.

Programs used several strategies to improve and deepen their relationships with sector employers, including developing internships as part of their training delivery strategies. Many trainees gained hands-on experience with sector employers during training and were able to show employers their skills first hand. Another strategy used was to focus on job development with small- and medium-sized employers, such as local doctors' offices. Participants were also encouraged to target smaller employers in their job searches as a way of practicing the networking skills learned in job readiness courses.

### **Element #3. Contextualized basic skills and technical training.**

Many workforce and community college programs offer generic basic skills, ESL, and job readiness skills courses that are prerequisites for entering occupational training programs. The programs included in the study, however, integrated all of this instruction into an occupationally focused program that taught all of these skills within the context of the targeted occupation. For example, an 80-hour construction training program provided participants with basic math instruction using industry-based tools and examples, and taught these concepts alongside more advanced technical training. Real-world examples of common problems encountered on the job were used in some programs to encourage participants to transfer classroom knowledge to applied situations. All programs included components on job readiness. Foundation courses that discuss expected behaviors, work conditions, and workplace norms for the sector are required for all participants. Contextualized life skills training was also offered, including résumé assistance, listening and speaking skills, and other modules. Instructors for these courses were often workers who had the in-depth knowledge of the target job and the credibility needed to relate effectively to participants. Often, staff with industry experience and staff more experienced with general job preparation would teach courses together.

#### **Element #4. Targeted recruitment and screening of applicants based on employer skill needs.**

Successful programs profiled in the P/PV report did an excellent job of identifying, screening, and training candidates who met the skill and job readiness requirements employers specified. Staff developed checklists that helped them to determine whether individuals would benefit from the program and whether they would be likely to succeed in the job after training. Entrance requirements reflected the basic skills needed to complete training and the industry's key job requirements. No specific tools were used, but staff interviewed each candidate at least once after basic skills testing and group orientation sessions to determine appropriateness. Orientation sessions and interviews also allowed candidates to determine whether they were truly interested in the training and the targeted career path (Maguire et al., 2010).

#### **Element #5. Services to support training completion and placement.**

All of the programs provided a range of individualized support services to help participants complete training and obtain and retain a job in the target sector. From childcare to transportation to assistance with housing, immigration, or other legal issues, all programs had some way to ensure participants had access to needed services. Internal or external case managers or employment specialists were generally responsible for assessing participants' needs during intake, and handling referrals from other program staff throughout the program. Some agencies provided services directly or had formal agreements with support agencies, while others worked effectively with TANF case managers and other public agencies to address participants' support needs.

#### **Element #6. Financial incentives in addition to other employment services.**

All of the programs that were found to be successful in the MDRC study provided financial stipends to TANF recipients in addition to

workforce services. These stipends, typically several hundred dollars per month, tended to increase employment and earnings among participants. No effects were observed on job advancement, however, and some of the earnings effects disappeared over time, but that may have been reflected by the economic downturn (Hamilton & Scrivener, 2012).

#### **Element #7. Encourage employment stability, not job stability.**

Programs that encouraged workers to stay in the same job did not have promising results, but those that encouraged stable employment, regardless of employer, were more successful. Low-wage workers may do better in the labor market by switching employers rather than staying with one employer and hoping to move up a career ladder. Wage and job advancements were more likely for those who changed jobs, but who maintained a steady record of employment.

The P/PV study provides evidence that, under the right conditions, sector-focused employment and training programs can improve outcomes for job seekers, employees, and businesses. It should be noted, however, that the employment outcomes observed in the study were achieved prior to the economic recession. In today's challenging environment, sector-focused efforts still have the potential to outperform other methods, but results may not be as dramatically positive as those observed by researchers.

## **Other Promising Sector Practices from Publicly Run Workforce Systems**

One-Stop Career Centers are designed to act as workforce intermediaries between job seekers and employers. A workforce intermediary is "an organization with a deep understanding of worker and employer issues in a specific industry" (National Network of Sector Partners, 2013). WIB and One-Stop Career Center staff

have important roles to play in sector initiatives. Across the nation, local WIBs are engaging in sector strategies in a variety of ways. Key roles the public workforce system is playing in sector initiatives in other states include:

- > Developing policies that support sector initiatives;
- > Convening partners and/or joining existing collaboratives to understand local demand, design sector approaches, and integrate funding streams;
- > Acting as a sector-focused labor market intermediary;
- > Gathering, using, and sharing data on job demand and workforce/education supply;
- > Developing sector-specific jobs; and
- > Building career pathways through industry-specific job search assistance, training, and other support services to job seekers.

### **Promising Practice #1. Developing policies that support sector initiatives.**

A key way that WIBs and local policymakers can contribute to the development and success of sector initiatives is to create supportive policies that promote their implementation in the community.

The workforce investment system is built around the concept of consumer choice. To make responsible and informed choices, however, job seekers often need guidance, information, and support. Several states and local areas have taken steps to guide consumers toward training choices that provide them with the best opportunities for finding a job that fits their skills and that helps to develop a pipeline of skilled workers for targeted industries.

**The DC Workforce Investment Council** in Washington, D.C. sets policies that established its commitment to support key sectors. In addition, the Council dedicated funding to support training for occupations in demand in these key industries. The Council established such policies in health care, which resulted in a strong partnership with the D.C. Hospital Association and its member affiliates. Illinois and Washington State have also established similar policies and have aligned funding priorities with the skill needs of targeted sectors (National Association of Workforce Boards and National Network of Sector Partners, 2012).

**Minnesota - Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI)** provides workforce services on a sliding scale according to its list of hot jobs. If the employment assistance relates to a listed hot job, WDI will fund the training for up to two years. If the job is not on the list but is growing, WDI will fund the training for up to one year. Declining jobs are not eligible for training support. Reimbursement for other allowable expenses also depends on this sliding scale.

**Pennsylvania - CareerLink** identified seven industry clusters as priorities for its services, based on their growth, competitiveness, and ability to provide family-sustaining jobs. For job seekers who are considering longer-term training, the CareerLink Web site (n.d.) expresses that “the training that the customer wishes to pursue must provide them with skills that are in demand.”

### **Promising Practice #2. Convening partners and/or joining existing collaboratives to understand local demand, design sector approaches, and integrate funding streams.**

WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers organize meetings of local industry employers or engage in wider efforts designed by others to bring employers together to discuss their workforce needs. Employers can provide insight into occupations experiencing skills shortages, pro-



vide valuable feedback on the skills or credentials that many candidates lack, and help to guide the development and implementation of education and training efforts.

To be successful, sector initiatives require coordination among:

- > WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers;
- > Nonprofits that provide support services to job seekers;
- > Education and training providers; and
- > Other key stakeholders, including economic development officials (National Association of Workforce Boards and National Network of Sector Partners, 2012).

Convening partners is time consuming, so WIBs should look to join regional and state-wide initiatives designed to accomplish similar goals. Coordinating local and regional or state outreach efforts will also help to ensure that employers are not overburdened by requests

**The Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network**, a collaboration of four local WIBs, employers, and other stakeholders from Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio, had employers take the lead in planning education and training initiatives to address skill gaps in three key industries — health care, advanced manufacturing, and construction. Employers identified skills shortages and training needs, recruited incumbent workers for training, and provided financial support for training.

WIBs also play an important role in convening local partners to ensure that sector-specific approaches to addressing industry workforce needs are planned and accomplished effectively. Convening partners can also help to identify complementary funding sources than can be woven together to support initiatives.

### California - Partnerships Instrumental for the Logistics/Transportation Academy

Community Career Development (CCD), a workforce development nonprofit, operates a One-Stop WorkSource Center in Los Angeles. In response to an RFP from Los Angeles' WIB for a One-Stop to explore a training program on logistics, CCD partnered with community colleges to form a logistics training program and was awarded the funds. CCD has since convened a logistics working group to provide training programs for entry-level and incumbent workers to meet employer needs in the transportation/logistics industry. CCD partnered with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority to form a highly regarded bus operator bridge program, through which it offers on-site training.

from various entities for similar information. These wider efforts can provide a regional perspective and strengthen the connections local WIBs can build with industry leaders and other stakeholders interested in addressing industry skill needs. Participation in such efforts, however, should not replace local outreach efforts to employers, as these employers need to be familiar with local workforce and education staff in order to engage with them on the sometimes difficult work of building new curricula and designing other complex approaches to building a skilled pipeline of workers.

Together, partners can help to identify potential revenue streams to support sector-specific education, training, and job search assistance, as well as wraparound supports for workers. Some funds other programs have used to support WIB-led sector initiatives include:

- > Workforce Investment Act (WIA) discretionary funds
- > State appropriations/general revenue
- > Incumbent worker training

- > Adult education
- > WIA incentive funds
- > WIRED grants
- > Postsecondary education
- > TANF
- > Community-based job training grants
- > Other federal government funds
- > Philanthropic foundations
- > Partnership contributions
- > Unemployment Insurance surplus
- > Fund pool from nursing home assessment
- > Wagner Peyser ([www.sectorstrategies.org](http://www.sectorstrategies.org), n.d.).

### **Promising Practice #3. Acting as a sector-focused labor market intermediary.**

One-Stop Career Centers can provide sector-specific services and information to job seekers and employers to facilitate meaningful employment connections that help employers to grow and job seekers to succeed economically. The most common approaches are to disseminate information on industry job demand and supply to workers and to dedicate staff to provide specialized support and counseling for job seekers interested in industry jobs and training. These services can be integrated into the operations of a generalized One-Stop Career Center or carried out through the establishment of sector-specific One-Stops.

### **Promising Practice #4. Gathering, using, and sharing data on job demand and workforce/education supply.**

To meet the workforce needs of industries targeted for economic development, WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers need to understand the local economic landscape, including recent employment trends and emerging demand for jobs. Knowledge of existing education assets and the skill sets of job seekers are also necessary for identifying and addressing education and skill gaps in key industries. Finally, workforce systems need to share data and information on industry and job trends with job seekers, employers, and others to facilitate informed decision-making.

**The Workforce Boards of Chicago** conducted employer surveys and analyzed education and labor market information in target industries, including transportation and health care, to inform the development of employer panels and key strategies to address employer workforce needs in key industries. Using quantitative and qualitative information from employers and educators, they developed detailed industry reports and strategies to address industry skill needs.

**In Colorado, Arapahoe/Douglas Works!** conducted a study from July 2008 to June 2009 to determine the effect of its sectoral programs on job placements, business earnings, and sales in its service area. While the results are not publicly available, the study measured the center's effectiveness in keeping key industries competitive. The center will use the study to partner with business leaders in key industries, other workforce centers, and education systems to supply a steady stream of labor to support the local economy.

**Minnesota - Workforce Development, Inc.** undertook a labor market analysis to identify jobs with the greatest demand in health care, manufacturing, high technology and bio-science, and services and trades.

In some states, WIB and One-Stop staff are directly engaged in collecting and analyzing labor market information and other data to improve decision-making and response to industry skill needs. While convening employers is important, such meetings do not allow WIBs and One-Stops to observe broader patterns in the local industry labor market that may be important. Labor market information can also help program planners to identify areas of the industry with large employment, which can help them to develop strategic plans for recruiting employers for more in-depth discussions on skill needs.

Local area staff can often work with state officials or existing statewide sector strategy groups to obtain and analyze labor market data and degree completion data to better understand what education exists and where potential skill gaps may be emerging. Some WIBs also conduct surveys with local employers. This data, **when coupled with hands-on knowledge of the industry based on relationships with employers**, can help local areas to identify jobs that are in high demand, potential gaps in the education pipeline, and other information. New data from online job postings are now available to many state labor market information analysts. These data contain specific information about the skill needs of local employers and may be helpful to local areas.

WIBs and One-Stops around the United States are also packaging and sharing labor market information with job seekers and other stakeholders to assist job seekers to connect with in-demand jobs in industries targeted for economic growth. Ideally, this information should reflect trends in the local economy and give job seekers access to data and information that is helpful for making decisions about which jobs, education, and training to pursue based on employer demand.

In **Oregon, Worksystems Inc.** publishes a monthly newsletter to inform job seekers of Oregon labor market trends. It also develops special publications on job vacancies to alert job seekers about industries that are experiencing labor shortages

The Web site for **Arapahoe/Douglas Works! Workforce Center** lists the top 10 industries for growth and the top 10 industries with projected job losses. The content is provided by the One-Stop Career Center's workforce economist. The site also features information to educate job seekers, including industry profiles, occupational saturation tables, and a job-creating industries report.

WIBs can also connect to state-level resources that provide local information. Examples include:

**Pennsylvania's CareerLink** system has identified seven industry clusters as priorities for its services, based on their growth, competitiveness, and ability to provide family-sustaining jobs. For job seekers to learn more, the Web site features reports on each industry cluster, occupations within that cluster, and the industries that comprise the cluster. The CareerLink site also highlights high-priority occupations and a list of 100 hot jobs for job seekers to consider.

**Virginia** created [virginiaview.org](http://virginiaview.org), which links data from multiple sources and provides an easy way for job seekers, employment counselors, and others to access the data. The site can help employment counselors work with clients to determine if job and training targets offer "good bets" in terms of employment and training.

### Promising Practice #5. Creating sector-focused job development efforts.

Some One-Stop Career Centers are hiring or designating staff to become experts in industries targeted for economic and workforce development. These staff are tasked with keeping up with industry trends via labor market information and through building ties with industry employers, and providing industry-specific job search advice and assistance to interested job seekers.

**Colorado - Arapahoe/Douglas Works!** dedicated One-Stop staff to opening an on-site health care recruiting center to match workers with employment and training opportunities in response to a local nursing labor shortage. The center trained 209 registered nurses to offset a 7% local vacancy rate.

**Massachusetts** - Modeled on an earlier experience in sector strategy, the North Shore Career Center became involved in the Jobs in Aerospace Manufacturing Project (JAM) in Massachusetts. The center appointed staff in its business services unit to attend JAM meetings to establish relationships and gain expertise on the industry. A JAM case manager is based at the center, as well. Career center staff attend JAM program events and provide JAM students with assessment, job preparation, and job development services.

**California** - Sonoma County Job Link staff cover certain industries to better address local labor shortages. When Santa Rosa's tourism industry was experiencing a shortage, Job Link staff addressed the gap by working with a local community college to connect job seekers to certification courses in hotel management and the culinary arts.

**Oregon** has two One-Stop Career Centers for the health care industry. The Oregon Health Care Career Center helps young people identify opportunities and connect with appropriate training for in-demand skills in the field. The Oregon Center for Nursing is a nonprofit career center launched in 2002 to address a nursing shortage. It offers nursing workforce analysis and research, nursing workforce diversity, nursing leadership development, long-term care leadership development, and support of nursing education initiatives and innovations.

**New York, NY - Workforce1** has three sector-based career centers for health care, transportation, and manufacturing. Each has an industry advisory council to provide in-depth knowledge of the industry and employer needs. Each center has a different operator. A for-profit contractor runs the transportation center, LaGuardia Community College runs the health care center, and a nonprofit will run the manufacturing center. The Workforce1 Transportation Center was launched in June 2008, and offers job preparation, occupational training, and job placement assistance tailored to the transportation industry for both unemployed and incumbent workers. According to its Web site, the center has achieved 1,300 job placements, enrolled more than 340 individuals in occupational training, and provided over 80 employers with recruitment and training services. The Workforce1 Healthcare Career Center is located on LaGuardia Community College's campus, and provides training and placement in health care careers. It was opened in October 2009 in response to employer demand for skills in the health care industry. According to its Web site, the center expects to help over 750 workers receive job placements or promotions in its first two years. LaGuardia Community College offered eight stimulus-funded training programs geared toward the health care field. Over 200 students were expected to enroll in the programs.



Other areas are dedicating entire One-Stop Career Center sites to servicing the workforce needs of particular industries. Such an approach provides a single point of contact for employers and job seekers, but may be more vulnerable if economic changes force quick employment shifts in a particular industry. Such centers can dedicate all of their staff and other resources to addressing the skill and workforce needs of a particular industry. Sometimes, satellite offices of One-Stop Career Centers are created to focus on the needs of a targeted sector and to provide services in a location that is convenient for job seekers and employers.

**Promising Practice #6. Building career pathways through industry-specific job search assistance, training, and other support services to job seekers.**

Public workforce systems are taking two key steps to build career pathways for job seekers that include industry-specific job search assistance, targeted and stackable training for key industry jobs, and supportive services for job seekers.

***Step #1, Create stackable credential models for training that address industry skill shortages and use contextualized approaches to teaching basic skills.***

Working with partners such as employers and community colleges, WIBs and One-Stop staff around the United States are working to design **accelerated, contextualized, industry training programs** to allow job seekers to earn smaller credentials that “stack” together to comprise a more substantial credential. For example, a job seeker may take a course that results in an industry certification and credits that can be used toward an Associate’s degree. These programs allow job seekers to enter and exit training based on their schedules and resources.

Such stackable credentials training, sometimes referred to as career pathways training, also links a range of technical, basic, job readiness, and, where needed, ESL skills that are needed

**Minnesota – Ramsey County WIB** has partnered with several hospitals, adult education staff, and local colleges to develop a stackable credential model in health care that allows job seekers to earn a medical records clerk certificate for credit. This credential, in addition to counting toward an Associate’s degree, also counts toward the receipt of a medical records certificate, thus allowing access to a wider range of jobs.

Students who need basic skills training attend Adult Basic Education (ABE) and/or ESL courses that are co-taught by ABE/ESL instructors and industry training instructors.

for an occupation. Unlike traditional training models, basic, ESL, and job readiness skills are often taught alongside technical skills and are taught within an industry context rather than in a generic format. In addition, various training tracks that lead to related careers are often developed together, allowing job seekers to access credentials for a range of related jobs that lead to higher wages. For example, an introductory course for warehouse workers may include an overview of warehouse operations and safety requirements, an introduction to job readiness requirements in the warehousing sector, ESL instruction on warehouse-related vocabulary, and the technical skills needed to earn a forklift operator’s certificate. Career pathways training may also provide job seekers with a broad overview of careers in the industry to allow them to plan future career and education moves. Finally, courses are generally accelerated to accommodate the scheduling needs of job seekers and employers. Courses do not follow a traditional semester schedule, but meet more often and at times that are convenient for students.

***Step #2, Ensure job seekers have access to the supports needed to succeed at training and work.***

To increase the likelihood of successful training completion and successful job placement and retention, WIBs and One-Stop Career Centers can assist job seekers to access the

support services they need. Through partnerships with nonprofits, TANF, Food Stamps, and other government programs, WIBs can devise ways to assess job seekers' circumstances and support needs. Referrals to local partners can often be sufficient to help job seekers access needed housing, transportation, or other types of assistance.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Union County's economy and demographic profile are changing rapidly. There are fewer high-paying manufacturing jobs, more goods movement and service occupations in industries such as health care and retail, and a rising percentage of residents who lack key skills and credentials needed to succeed in high-wage employment. These trends present both challenges and opportunities for Union County.

Sector-focused workforce and economic development efforts undertaken in Union County in recent years have provided valuable support for employers and workers. Union County's economy, while hurt worse than New Jersey during and after the recession, is also recovering faster and average monthly wages in the county remain higher than the state average.

Union County has taken a number of important policy steps in recent years that align with current best practices in other areas. Recent evidence of the economic benefits of sector-focused employment and training strategies and examples of promising models from One-Stop Career Centers around the nation offer additional guides for Union County. Building upon existing local and statewide sector initiatives, Union County officials can improve their current efforts by considering the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation #1. Continue to support the growth of the health care and TLD sectors and expand efforts in other target industries.**

Given the evidence for the effectiveness of sector-focused strategies, Union County officials should consider continued support for education and workforce initiatives in **health care and TLD** as a key means to support economic development. County officials should also consider efforts in other industries targeted for economic development, including **retail and hospitality**, which is now the county's third largest industry, as well as **advanced manufacturing, biopharma, technology, and green jobs**. All of these industries are important targets for stimulating new, high-wage job growth in the county.

To ensure that education programs align well with both the demand for workers and the skill needs of targeted occupations, it is important to ensure that education and training institutions engage multiple employers in the curriculum development process. Employers need to have input at every stage of the process and engagement with employers can be greatly improved if they have multiple, ongoing points of contact with the program through job shadowing, internship/co-operative education projects, and structured feedback sessions. This engagement is often the most difficult part of the process for educational and workforce institutions to maintain, but is critical to success. The Systematic Curriculum and Instructional Development process can be helpful in this regard. More information can be found at: <http://www.dacumohiostate.com/SCID.htm>.

### **Recommendation #2. Improve connections with New Jersey's talent networks.**

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development established talent networks to improve connections among job seekers, employers, and workforce and education systems in seven key industries — TLD, health care, advanced manufacturing, biophar-

ma, technology, financial services, and retail and hospitality. Recently, another talent network was formed to focus on recovery efforts from Superstorm Sandy. The talent networks work closely with industry employers to understand employers' skill and workforce needs. By working with talent networks in targeted industries, Union County can leverage connections and resources to improve staff and job seeker knowledge of the skill and hiring needs of key industries in the local economy, engage employers in local efforts, provide resources and host events that benefit local employers and job seekers, and help local officials identify new funding. Talent networks are already assisting local areas to develop and implement sector-focused workforce and economic development solutions.

**Recommendation #3. Dedicate staff to support sector-focused efforts and targeted job seekers.**

While connecting with the state's talent networks will enhance local efforts, it cannot replace them. To be successful, Union County should dedicate several staff members to focus on and ensure the success of sector initiatives. Roles for dedicated staff may include: establishing metrics and measurement techniques to track the success of key initiatives, acting as local "sector experts" at One-Stops to advise job seekers and local employers about industry trends, providing or arranging for supportive services that allow persons with barriers to employment to succeed in sector-focused training and employment, and implementing sector-specific recruitment and screening practices.

**Recommendation #4. Ensure sector training provides contextualized basic skills and ESL training for workers who need these skills.**

Employers who offer high-wage jobs need ready access to workers who have the skills and education needed to perform well. Many residents in Union County lack important skills and credentials that many employers require. These residents would benefit from improved

access to adult and postsecondary education, including ESL and basic skills training. Many studies have shown, however, that contextualized education — teaching these skills using work-relevant examples — is most effective for employers and workers. Union County should consider enhancing its existing TLD, health care, and other industry-specific training to include basic skills and ESL instruction to the greatest extent possible. To reach additional residents who may not come to the One-Stop for services, county officials should consider partnering with local nonprofit providers to offer training.

**Recommendation #5. Establish long-term goals for industry-focused economic and workforce development.**

To align local programming with best practices and enhance outcomes for job seekers and employers, Union County officials should consider convening appropriate stakeholders to set long-term goals for its industry-focused strategy. Key efforts that align with best practices, but that may take significant time and coalition building to support and build, include enhancing the county's "stackable" non-credit credentials model by linking it to for-credit degree programs and offering credit based on proven competencies, establishing regional partnerships with other counties and municipalities that share common economic interests, and seeking new sources of federal and nonprofit funding to support key initiatives.

## Endnotes

1. Another talent network was recently established to focus on recovery efforts from Superstorm Sandy.
2. All wages are expressed in 2012 dollars to adjust for inflation.

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