

SECTION - IV. EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT & AGENCY LINKAGES

As stated earlier, the Union County Workforce Development Board of Directors and the County of Union, through its Department of Human Services, have worked collaboratively to address the needs of their dual clientele: employers on the market's demand side and incumbent or prospective employees on the supply side. Through this partnership, they have strived to engage on three fronts:

- Make strategic investments in workforce training programs aimed at bridging the hiring chasm that exists between job seekers and in-demand industries and sectors.
- Engage employers in meaningful dialogues leading to job opportunities for Union County residents.
- Forge fruitful relationships with local as well as regional economic development initiatives.
- Expand the leveraging resources in an effort to expand Training to Non-English speaking job seekers while providing career pathways in occupations that are credential based.

For each of these areas, what follows is a description of strategies and services that will be implemented to: (a) strengthen the engagement of employers, build stronger connections with them, and meet their evolving needs; (b) enhance coordination between economic policy and training programs; and (c) improve linkages during service and training between individual employees and employers, and facilitate their transition following training.

Employer Engagement Systems/Linkages

A. Workforce Innovation Business Center

Description

The Workforce Innovation Business Center is a full-service Learning Center located on the Union County College campus. This Center is administered by Union County College. This serves both the business community and residents of Union County.

The Workforce Innovation Business Center provides the "Soft-Skills" program, a mini-job training that prepares jobseekers for training. This is a two-week training that has proven to be helpful to jobseekers across all levels.

The Workforce Innovation Business Center will continue to manage a continuum of services including business services, foundational soft skills training, career exploration and assessment, résumé building and job search, class size occupational training, ITA training, On the Job Training (OJT), job placement and career coaching, basic skills education, English as a Second Language (ESL), GED programs, college readiness programs, and tuition-based credit programs.

Core services will be operated at the Center with most occupational training and basic skills programs offered on Union's campuses throughout the county. All occupational training programs will be within sectors aligned with the NJ Department of Labor &

Workforce Development's Talent Networks which provide the greatest opportunities for employment in the Union County area. Targeted sectors included in our talent network are Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution (TLD); HealthCare; Technology and Entrepreneurship, Hospitality, Tourism, and Retail; Advanced Manufacturing; Financial services; and Life-Sciences. The Construction industry is included as a targeted industry sector offering competitive wages and increased employment opportunities. According to the Bloustein Study, however, there are seven industry clusters that will figure strongly in Union County's economic future are:

- (1) Construction Industries,
- (2) Medical and Scientific Equipment Manufacturing,
- (3) Transportation and Warehousing Services,
- (4) Wholesaling,
- (5) Financial and Insurance Services,
- (6) Hospitals and Health Services, and
- (7) Employment and Business Services.

Employer and Jobseeker Outreach. The Center will use multiple outreach methods including social media, print, and electronic communication vehicles, as well as in-person networking through business events and community programs. Chief among outreach tools is the Union County College Job Connection, which is produced by the Center for Economic and Workforce Development.

Assessment & Career Coaching. Union County residents seeking employment assistance will receive individualized job counseling services. Those looking for immediate employment will be guided on résumé development and connected with recruitment events and job search tools. Those who qualify for more intensive services will be referred to career coaches who will assist them in accessing the extensive array of leveraged educational and occupational training programs provided through the College.

The Center will provide three types of career-related services:

- Basic career services include access to computers and guidance for job search, invitations to career information sessions related to career pathways in-demand sectors, and recruitment events, career exploration and skills assessment and résumé building. Staff members assess an individual's needs and eligibility for services and connect them with the appropriate job search, assessment and skill-building activities, training programs, job fairs and other recruitment events based on their interests and skills.
- Individualized Employability Plans are developed with the career coach and referrals made to grant-funded and fee-based training programs depending on the individual's education level, skills, and interests. Students who qualify are referred to a Career Coach for enhanced guidance on career exploration, assessment, and access to training programs. Depending upon student need, eligibility for services and interest, more intense career coaching is provided as the student enrolls in and completes skill building and occupational training programs.

- Follow-up Outreach is done by the Career Coach and Outreach Specialist with placed individuals every ninety days for up one year. Job placement and retention rates are reported through AOSOS and tracked internally.

Career Pathways. Career Pathways have become the foundation for all occupational training programs offered at the College. Clients and students are provided with career exploration guidance and access to skills and aptitude assessment tools and interest inventories. The Workforce Innovation Business Center staff and Career Coach will work with the trainee to develop an education and employability plan that aligns with a career pathway starting from today and continuing with a long-term plan.

Union County College's career pathways and guidance materials are well constructed in the Allied Health Sciences as a result of its participation, alongside the Workforce System, in the U.S. Department of Human Services/ACF-funded Health Profession Opportunity Grant. More recent work includes expansion of efforts on both ends of the pathway. Some examples:

- Low-skilled individuals are being provided with basic skills contextualized within an orientation to health careers through a program called "Smart Start." Completion of the Smart Start program then leads to entry into an occupational training program. Individuals completing a Patient Care Technician credential (and some others) are now eligible to test out of portions of the LPN and AS in Allied Health Sciences curriculum, creating a link from non-credit to an associate degree and beyond.
- The USDOL-funded LINGS curriculum is designed as an entry to the TLD career pathway. The New Jersey Department Labor & Workforce Development, Talent Development Center, will continue to provide opportunities in the TLD pathway once the LINGS grant expires next year.
- The creation of a new associate degree in Supply Chain Management this year allows students who start in non-credit to continue their studies along the TLD career pathway toward an associate degree that is articulated with four-year programs. The entry-level credentials and associates degree allow individuals to gain a solid foundation in the industry that is articulated with higher paying management or specialist roles offering promising family-sustaining wages.

Also, the Center will purchase a cloud-based software product called Career Coach to aid individuals in researching potential jobs and identifying the training requirements of each. The system will be well versed in all of the funded and non-funded training programs available in the area and will guide the resident toward selection and entrance into the best program, and will follow up as they complete the program and are placed in employment.

Soft Skills. The Center will continue the prioritization of foundational skills training for all appropriate participants. The County of Union contracted with Union County College Industry Business Institute to develop a soft skills curriculum geared to employers' requirements. It is anticipated that this customized 40-hour soft skills training program will be offered once a month for eight months.

Occupational Class-Size Training. The occupational training programs will prepare participants for career paths in the targeted industry sectors. The appropriate training course will be determined based on the participant's goals, academic proficiency, and skill levels. The training programs include course materials for all participants, certificates of training completion, test fees, and the use of Union County College Career Services Center for participant job search and interview preparation. The occupational training courses offered by the Union County College Industry Business Institute may include, but will not be limited to the following:

- Patient Care Technician
- Retail Operations
- Medical Billing and Coding
- Administrative Assistant
- Computerized Accounting
- Computer Software Specialist

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). ITAs will be utilized to expand the occupational training opportunities offered through the Workforce Innovation Business Center. All programs registered on the NJ PIN will be eligible for funding and placement will be determined by the Center's Director, the College Dean of CEWD, and Career Coach based on an assessment of the individual's readiness, goals, need for wraparound supports, class schedule, etc. The CEWD ITA programs represent key areas of high demand and provide open entrance and exit scheduling which makes them highly desirable for individuals seeking employment in a short period. However, the College offers a variety of additional occupational programs that are eligible for ITA funding, and students will be placed based on the program that best fits their need and offers a good chance for success. (More details about ITA appear in Section XX; and training curricula for TLD, Healthcare, and Retail are presented in Appendix IV-1.)

Job seekers will be provided labor market counseling that presents the value of credential attainment and communicates the labor market growth sectors identified in the Bloustein Study, as stated earlier:

- (1) Construction Industries,
- (2) Medical and Scientific Equipment Manufacturing,
- (3) Transportation and Warehousing Services,
- (4) Wholesaling,
- (5) Financial and Insurance Services,
- (6) Hospitals and Health Services,
- (7) Employment and Business Services.

On-the-Job Training. On-the-Job Training funds are allocated in anticipation of identifying employers willing to provide individuals the chance to gain paid work experience, where they might not have been hired otherwise due to various barriers. The Workforce Innovation Business Center is the key contact for Union County College in administering the On-the-Job Training program for employers. On-the-Job Training is a wage reimbursement. This initiative is designed to assist eligible Union County workers in finding employment. Employers are provided a wage subsidy of up to 50 percent during the first six months on the job to help defray the cost of training new employees. The three major partners that

will collaborate on the OJT initiative include Union County College, Union County Workforce Development Board, and the Union County American Job Center (AJC/One Stop).

The Center will also be working closely with staff from the American Job Center to obtain all necessary documents, letters, and certifications for county residents eligible for the OJT program. If the employer hires an eligible worker and agrees to train her/him, the employer may be eligible to receive reimbursement of up to 50% of gross wages for a period of 4-24 weeks depending on the complexity of the job. The job must pay a minimum of \$10.00 per hour and should be full-time, and year-round. The Center will obtain copies of all Individual Employment Plans and certifications from the AJC for all Adult and dislocated workers taking the Soft Skills training course and those who are eligible for OJT.

Job Development. The Outreach Coordinator serves as the main job developer for the Workforce Innovation Business Center. However, the work of the Director also supports job development through outreach/direct personal contact, job fairs, participation in Chamber of Commerce events and email blasts.

Employers look to the Workforce Innovation Business Center for pre-screening of potential employees. They expressed appreciation for such efforts, which helped them find qualified candidates in the past.

B. American Jobs Centers

Details and strategies relevant to the Centers in Elizabeth and Plainfield, which are now consolidated as one operation with two sites, appears in Section S 5 above.

C. Business Services Specialists Team

The multiple responsibilities of Business Services Specialists, under the direction of the Office of the Workforce Development Board, are to conduct day-to-day employer outreach, develop job leads, identify at-risk businesses, document, maintain an employer account management system, interact with the One-Stop Career Centers, gauge employer satisfaction, and help One-Stop Career Centers better respond to the needs of Union County's employers and its labor force.

They act as experts in the field to offer businesses resources that can facilitate recruitment, assist in retention, and minimize layoffs. They will be the face of the Workforce Development Board's clearinghouse and will have a direct link with the One-Stop Operator to facilitate job postings, mass recruitment as needed, and help direct training opportunities related to employment opportunities.

The Business Services Specialists will have their hands on the pulse of the local businesses and can identify potential layoffs and, consequently, advise and connect with the Rapid Response team. While Rapid Response services have been part of the service delivery system for some time, there has not been a systemically integrated system at the state and local levels that provide a comprehensive and focused approach to business support and development, specifically in the workforce development arena.

Business Services Specialists, individually and as a team, will:

- Identify employers within the above-targeted growth industries and sectors.
- Promote the Board's Business Services, the American Jobs Centers, and the Workforce Innovation Business Center to employers in the area and educate them regarding services available.
- Develop and maintain meaningful employer contacts that result in quality employment opportunities and economic growth.
- Assist employers with various levels of employee recruitment services.
- Assist businesses with identifying solutions for their general business needs, including preparing job descriptions and helping with referrals to appropriate resources.
- Provide assistance to area businesses in accessing and using Talent Development Networks.
- Work closely with economic development and education entities to assist and coordinate services.
- Maintain awareness of potential closings in the business community to provide maximum lead-time for Dislocated Worker services.
- Maintain current knowledge of employment law.
- Visit employers with representatives of state and local economic development organizations.
- Routinely meet with business-focused community organizations to promote the services of One-Stop Career Centers and the Workforce Innovation Business Center.
- Attend business and economic development events.
- Maintain timely communication Union County training providers and employers to ensure quality assurance in labor exchange, worker recruitment, and assessment services.
- Provide oversight of job opening placement services to ensure employer needs are met.
- Coordinate talent tours by working with local school districts and businesses.
- Provide timely Research and Labor Market Information.
- Serve as liaisons with local and regional Chambers of Commerce.

D. Business-2-Business Networking Events

The Union County Workforce Development Board has been proactive in developing sector strategies to support local business and industry, particularly in the employment growth sectors.

One of the most effective strategies to engage small and large businesses—as employed by the Union County Workforce Development Board and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders—is the development of Business-2-Business Networking Forums. The primary objective of the Business-2-Business Networking Forums is to create an environment for businesses to connect with another, thereby affording them the opportunity to find new business prospects for their companies.

The Business-2-Business Networking Forums present the Union County Workforce Development Board and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders with the opportunity to engage with local and regional employers in a marketplace of mutual

benefit. Managers from the Workforce System listen to employers who, in turn, get introduced to the Workforce Development Board share its services, and the services of the One-Stop Careers Centers, the Workforce Innovation Business Center, as well as the following programs designed on their behalf:

- Recruitment Services for Employers
- Job Fairs
- Literacy Skills Training
- Short-Term Occupational Training
- Career Counseling
- On the Job Training with Employers.

E. Relevant Talent Network Curricula

TRANSPORTATION, LOGISTICS, AND DISTRIBUTION

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

320 Hours

The Supply Chain Management program consists of eight modules of training that prepare individuals for positions in customer service, warehouse, and transportation operations, logistics, manufacturing and service operations, demand planning, inventory management, procurement and supply management. Each module is 40 hours long and includes an exam by the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals. Successful students earn a Council of Supply Chain Professionals SCPro Fundamentals certification at the end of each module.

HEALTH CARE

MEDICAL OFFICE ASSISTANT WITH SPECIALTIES

237 Hours

The Medical Office Assistant plays a key role in any allied health care facility. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of medical assistants is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations, and the increase in the aging population will continue to increase demand for preventive medical services. Multi-skilled medical office assistants administer standard office procedures in addition to providing quality care as an EKG Technician and/or Phlebotomist.

PATIENT CARE TECHNICIAN

312 Hours

The Patient Care Technician Assistant plays a key role in any allied health care facility. Patient Care Technicians are authorized to administer basic medical care to patients. Multi-skilled Patient Care Technicians will provide quality care to patients by assisting with ADLs (activities of daily living), taking vital signs, assisting with medical examinations and treatment. Additional responsibilities of the PCT may include EKG and phlebotomy. Workplaces include physician's offices, clinics, nursing homes, medical centers, and hospitals. Students will learn collaboration and patient management processes, body mechanics, vital signs, ambulatory care and patient positioning for treatment and rehabilitation. At the conclusion of the "Patient Care Technician Certificate Program," the student will have the opportunity to take exams to obtain the following certifications:

RETAIL INDUSTRY

RETAIL OPERATIONS

60 Hours

Developed by the National Retail Foundation, Retail Operations is for recently hired associates, students, and interested retail associates and employees who will master the skill and knowledge they need to be successful in a frontline retail position. This five-part course offers content in the following areas: Retail Industry Overview, Customer Service, Selling and Service, Store Operations, and Getting the Job.

This 60-hour interactive instructor-led course is aligned with the Professional Certifications in Customer Service and Sales. Students will be prepared to sit for the Customer Service and Sales certification.

CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR THE RETAIL INDUSTRY

90 Hours

National Professional Certification in Customer Service is an industry driven and endorsed credential that helps employers to distinguish and recognize qualified customer service professionals. The course helps define career advancement opportunities for candidates. By earning the Professional Certification in Customer Service, candidates acquire the knowledge and skills that employers value and exhibit a commitment to professional growth.

This is a 90-hour program designed to prepare entry level individuals for their new career in the retail industry. Through a series of presentations, in-class exercises, and role-playing, this will prepare students to earn certification as professionals for this dynamic industry. Upon completion of this course, students are prepared to take the National Retail Federation Exam which, upon passing, qualifies the student for employment in the retail industry.

See full Curricula - APPENDIX IV-2 - Talent Network CURRICULA

S-17. Consistent with these directions, the Workforce System in the County will adopt a set of interconnected strategies that will build on a number of efforts already underway, namely:

The fortification of the Union County Workforce Innovation Business Center, a recent self-contained workforce training hub located on the Union County College campus. (Aligned with Goal 5-Employer Engagement)

The improvement of the quality of service and training at the American Job Centers in Elizabeth and Plainfield. (Aligned with Goal 2-One Stop Integration aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

The expansion of a Business Services Representatives team to facilitate the connections between employers and the One-Stop Career Center and the Workforce Innovation Business Center. (Aligned with Goal 2-One Stop Integration with Goal 5-Employer Engagement)

The planning and development of regional Business 2 Business networking events that will afford small and large employers the opportunity to connect with one another and to learn about the services available through the Workforce Development Board's clearinghouse of service providers and funding streams. (Aligned with Goal 5-Employer Engagement)

Progress Update

In addition to the five (5) business centered elements described above (1. American Job Centers, 2. Business Service Representatives, 3. WIB Center, 4. Business to Business Networks, 5. Relevant Curricula), the Union County Workforce Development Board is furthering its efforts to expand and strengthen business-related activities in the community.

S-11b. Advance apprenticeships throughout the region - Many businesses can become Registered Apprenticeship Sites and/or participate in pre-apprenticeship programs. There are currently 56 Registered Apprenticeship Companies registered in Union County. Job seekers will best benefit from bridging their unemployment onto an apprenticeship pathway.

S-11c. [As presented earlier] Create a new WDB subcommittee, "Employer Activities Committee." This new committee will serve as the WDB's arm to provide policy guidance and oversight over employer-related partner activities. Guided by the WDB Executive Director, the initial focus for this Committee will be to conduct strategic planning aimed at expanding the use of (a) On-the-Job Training; (b) Employer-based Internships/Work-Experience; (c) Pre-Apprenticeship Training; (d) Apprenticeship Training; and (e) Customized Training. This new Committee will complement the work of three other key committees (Youth Committee, Literacy Committee, and AJC Partner Committee) in shepherding our workforce system forward.