



# PUBLIC NOTICE

As required by the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Union County Workforce Development Board Local Plan will be available for Public Comment for thirty (30) days effective **May 17, 2019**. The Union County Workforce Development Board Local Plan may be obtained online at [www.ucnj.org/wdb](http://www.ucnj.org/wdb). All Public Comments must be made in writing and directed to Elizabeth Paskewich at: [epaskewich@ucnj.org](mailto:epaskewich@ucnj.org). All Public Comments will be considered. At the end of the Public Comment period, all public comments will be posted on [www.ucnj.org/wdb](http://www.ucnj.org/wdb) with a public comment summary report.

## UNION COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN MODIFICATION TWO-YEAR UPDATE

### PREAMBLE

The Union County 2016 Local Strategic Plan presented a comprehensive set of 32 action steps aimed at addressing workforce needs and opportunities across the county. Such action steps were identified and approved by the Workforce Development Board following an extensive, independent examination of the Workforce System as a whole. As summarized below, significant progress has been made in relation to the Plan's strategic priorities, here is a sample of achieved output and realized outcomes:

#### Enhanced Professional Development for Staff & Partners

- A series of client-focused workshops for Career Coach staff was completed
- Several four-hour workshops were facilitated, bringing AJC staff and workforce partners together to explore how to strengthen their existing collaboration and increase the effectiveness of common processes

#### Greater Focus on Performance Outcomes

- AJC Staff and managers were engaged in deeper dives around data analysis
- Many conversations were held among managers to consider explicitly how program choices impact the attainment of goals

#### Successful implementation of Key WIOA Transition Elements

- Increased focus on credential attainment was heightened
- Career Coaches have become better prepared to expand their job seeker engagement to include the introduction of career pathway planning due to training and management encouragement.
- Co-enrollment was encouraged as a vehicle for optimizing resources
- Staff at the AJC were transitioned from their role of Case Managers to new roles as Career Coaches

#### Enhancements to System Infrastructure and Management Practices

- Data collection was much improved, in terms of the data-gathering process and examination of the timeline, and the communication system upgraded
- Management Team training was initiated (AJC, WDB, Partners)

After review of the progress during the first two years of plan's implementation, the following 6 workforce strategies are being prioritized within the expanded 57 sub-strategies of our four-year strategic plan.

## 1. INCREASE EMPLOYER-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Union County Workforce System will prioritize several WIOA-embraced employer-related activities, which need further development or expansion. This strategic plan modification presents specific steps to increase the use of such vehicles as (a) On-the-Job Training; (b) Employer-Based Internships/Work Experience; (c) Pre-Apprenticeship Training; (d) Apprenticeship Training; and (e) Customized Training.

Our plan calls for the formation of a new Board Subcommittee charged with providing guidance and oversight to the area of employer-related activities. This new committee will complement the work of three other key committees (Youth Committee, Literacy Committee, and AJC Partner Committee) in strengthening the impact of our workforce system.

## 2. ESTABLISH AN “AFFILIATE PARTNER” INITIATIVE

Deepening our reach into the community has always been a stated objective of our Board. Expanding our “AJC” brand out to organizations that are currently serving potentially eligible customers will, we believe, greatly increase our customer base. There are certain groups, even in the highly dense neighborhoods where our core services are offered, whose members are **not actively engaged** in, nor benefiting from, workforce services.

By advancing the notion of AFFILIATE partner status, bestowed upon partners sharing the values and mission of AJC, job seekers and employers will recognize the important role that the American Job Center plays in the County.

Through this arrangement, they participate in the American Job Center system through partner agencies with which they may be more familiar and, in turn, more comfortable. Affiliate Partners will join the AJC through a memorandum of understanding that details specific AJC activities or processes that were offered, in the past, only at two AJC locales—in Plainfield and Elizabeth. The Board realizes that training would be required to effectively bridge services with affiliate partners and is fully supportive of providing resources necessary for success.

## 3. INCREASE COORDINATION WITH TRADE ADJUSTMENT ACT

Much has been accomplished in breaking down silos of workforce service offerings; however, we acknowledge the need to work more closely with TAA/TRA. Procedures will be established to coordinate Title I and Title II activities at the very beginning of a participant's journey of unemployment. Our system, now more than ever, needs to coordinate our services more effectively, avoiding duplication and taking advantage of resources across the system.

#### **4. CONTINUE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (STAFF/PARTNERS)**

As stated earlier, AJC Staff and AJC Partners have participated in numerous Board-sponsored workshops in the past 18 months around themes that include Case-Manager-to-Career-Coach Transition, Active Partner Engagement, Motivational Interviewing, Empathetic Counseling, WIOA 101, Comprehensive Individual Service Strategy Development, Customer Service Training, Follow-up Systems, etc. By promoting the continuation of ongoing professional development activities for both AJC staff and partners, this modification of the strategic plan will affirm the significance of continuous learning and growth among staff and emphasize the critical nature of collaborative engagement.

#### **5. CONTINUE TO ENERGIZE SUBCOMMITTEES**

Owing to specific challenges raised in the Workforce Strategic Plan, all three subcommittees have to be energized to continue to invest their collective expertise to further improve workforce systems throughout Union County. Throughout this modification, new challenges and opportunities will be earmarked for committee guidance, input, and oversight.

#### **6. ADOPT A NEW EVIDENCE-BASED DATA EVALUATION MODEL**

Over decades of redefining exactly what success looks like in job training, we now aspire to look even closer at how we define system effectiveness. Going back to the '60s, Labor programs measured the number of individuals served and dollars spent along target population tracts. While these programs strived to have program completers and employment attainment, numerical data was not a primary focus. Come the 70's and '80s, and Labor began setting real-time completion and placement goals across target population tracts. This was a big step thought, at the time, to be a major breakthrough—and so it was. In the last 20 years, we have introduced qualitative measures placing even more consideration toward examining which program strategies yielded best qualitative outcomes, including an increase in earnings among served individuals, employment retention, and the attainment of industry-recognized credentials to name a few.

Union County now wishes to raise our criteria for measuring success up a few more notches. We will begin to adopt/promote job training approaches that are based on evidence of effectiveness and continue to expand the evidence base that works. We need to know what works for whom: for adults, youth, dislocated workers, reentry job seekers, and others.

To achieve this goal, we will develop specific strategies within our workforce plan that will, as introduced Department of Labor Publication [What works In Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence](#), by July 22, 2014:

- Expand analysis of long-term impacts of training approaches that have strong short-term outcomes and appear to be the most job-driven, including attainment of industry certificates.
- Disaggregate subgroup impacts to better understand how promising approaches can help particular groups of workers.
- Expand analysis of program components to examine the effect of key components and untangle which strategies are most effective.
- Replicate and evaluate promising models and approaches in different settings to provide more useful information about how communities and agencies can adopt or adapt proven strategies;
- Measure and evaluate outcomes of employer engagement efforts and existing public/private training partnerships.