

Section II. CURRENT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

- I. **Describe the workforce development system in the local area, including identifying the programs that are included in that system and how the local board will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs** to support alignment to provide services. Identify any areas of weakness in service delivery or resources and discuss [the](#) regional or local solutions that are most appropriate.

The local area should include in this **description plans for services delivered by WIOA Core and Partner programs**, and other programs, including:

- WIOA Title I Adult
- WIOA Title I Dislocated
- WIOA Title I Youth
- Title II Adult Education/Literacy
- Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program**
- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program
- Ex-Offender Programs
- Carl T. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Unemployment Insurance
- WorkFirst New Jersey (TANF) Employment and Training Program
- SNAP Employment and Training Programs
- New Jersey Workforce Development Partnership Program
- New Jersey Supplemental Workforce Fund for Basic Skills
- And other local public or other programs with which the local workforce system collaborates.

Through true partnership and innovation, the Union County Workforce Board along with the American Jobs Center has been effective in delivering comprehensive services to both employers and job seekers in Union County.

The following section provides a snapshot of each critical delivery component with a brief description presenting system strengths, weaknesses, and next steps.

We will be describing the local **range of current activities** within the local area delivered by WIOA Core and Partner programs, and other programs, including:

- WIOA Title I Adult

- WIOA Title I Dislocated
- WIOA Title I Youth
- Title II Adult Education/Literacy
- Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation
- [Trade Adjustment Assistance \(TAA\) Program](#)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program
- Ex-Offender Programs
- Carl T. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
- Unemployment Insurance
- WorkFirst New Jersey (TANF) Employment and Training Program
- SNAP Employment and Training Programs
- New Jersey Workforce Development Partnership Program
- New Jersey Supplemental Workforce Fund for Basic Skills
- [Apprenticeship / Pre-Apprenticeship Programs](#)
- And other local public or other programs with which the local workforce system collaborates.

WIOA Title I Adult/Dislocated Workers

A job seeker that comes into the American Job Center is scheduled first for orientation, so they are aware of the career services available to them. If they wish to use the Center for more than self-service career activities, they are assigned to a counselor who further assists them on an individualized basis. Orientation is held at the AMERICAN JOB CENTERS, and these sessions last approximately two hours. Translators may be available for assistance at the orientation.

Customer Help Desk is one of the career service items offered by the AMERICAN JOB CENTERS as part of WIOA compliance. Vocational counselors are assigned to be of assistance at this help desk for all questions and concerns. If the customer receives SNAP only, they are seen by Case Managers so they can be placed in a mandatory work activity such as a Job Search or a CWEP (Community Work Experience Program). This is needed for SNAP only customers to receive benefits.

Each Case Manager has a walk-in day when customers can see their assigned case manager. If a customer comes in on a day that is not a walk-in day for their Case Manager, then a problem-solving sheet needs to be filled out, and a Case Manager in charge follows up on the customer. Customers can also request and receive a one-on-one session.

The same services offered to WIOA Title 1 Adult customers are available to Dislocated Worker customers. Help Desk counselors are there all day to answer questions/concerns. Customers collecting unemployment or customers who have self-enrolled in school or want to self-fund their training can see a Case Manager for help with unemployment paperwork. **Customers who need ABT changes or updates** can also see a Case Manager at the time their counselor is at the help desk.

The American Job Center Delivery System engages the input of the community through its regular partner meetings held at the Plainfield American Job Center.

Strengths

- Union County has exceeded Local Performance Measures serving this target population.
- Job Seekers now have access to SoftSkill Training to enhance placement prospects.

Challenges

- There continues to be a need for additional support services for this population.
- Transportation between Plainfield and Elizabeth for various training opportunities is very costly and often prohibitive.
- Many workers lack adequate technology skills to easily acclimate to a modern classroom environment, often needing computer refresher opportunities prior to entry into the classroom.
- There is an insufficient number of employers participating in our workforce system making placement much more difficult.

Action Item for Consideration

- S-3 Consider the adoption of computer refresher courses for not only older workers but all customers below sufficient proficiency.** (Aligned with Goal 1- Career Pathways / Credential Attainment) and (aligned with Goal 3- Broaden Use of Technology)

Progress Update

- We have seen improved coordination between partner agencies and increased use and coordination of supportive service resources.
- Literacy, Youth and AJC Partner Committees have addressed the issue of computer refresher courses and agreed on a computer literacy pre-program assessment approach.

WIOA Title I Youth

Recent statistics indicate that there are approximately 69,800 individuals between the ages of 15-24 countywide, of which 15.8% of those 18-24 years have the educational attainment of less than a high school degree. Focusing on Union County's two largest cities, Elizabeth and Plainfield, the educational attainment of less than a high school degree for ages 18-24 is an alarming 36.3% in Plainfield and 19% in Elizabeth. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Eligible youth are seen by dedicated Youth Career Coaches and are referred to services through the Youth Consortium. The majority of youth-targeted for services are residents of communities with high levels of poverty and lower educational success rates. These include Elizabeth, Hillside, Linden, Plainfield, Roselle, and Rahway. The past Consortium was led by United Way. Currently, there are sub-contracted services that take care of all youth programs in the County.

One youth program that is available in the AMERICAN JOB CENTERS is Job Corp. Job Corps representatives are available weekly on scheduled appointments to meet with interested youth. The representative does an intake/assessment/orientation of the interested client and follows through. The City of Elizabeth provided a Business Collaboration Program for youth ages 16-21. While developing strong partnerships with local employers, Elizabeth provided its students with paid work experience.

The City of Plainfield partnered with local businesses to provide various employability skills and basic skills workshops. Paid work experience with job shadowing was provided with work sites across Plainfield Public Schools. Career exposure to Custodial work and Clerical Administration was provided.

- United Way of Greater Union County (lead agency)
- Urban League of Union County
- PROCEED, Inc.
- Jefferson Park Ministries
- Community Access Unlimited
- Rahway Community Action Organization
- Union County Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Brand New Day
- Plainfield Action Services
- NJ Chamber of Commerce

Strengths

- Union County has all exceed all YOUTH Local Performance Measures serving this target population.
- The program has been able to offer mandated essential elements.

- Union County has been successful in exceeding the 20% Work Experience requirement and the 75% Out of School resource requirement.

Challenges

- There continues to be a need for additional support services for this population.
- Fully integrating the implementing of career pathway planning and utilization for all youth.

Action Item for Consideration

- S-4 Consider more incentives like increased level of wages and/or stipends.**
(Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Progress Update

- There has been increased use of supportive service funding and improved coordination between partner agencies, which has fostered better understanding of available supportive service resources
- All front-line career coach staff from AJC and AJC Partners have participated in skill-development workshops, including developing effective IEP's/ISS's, designing career pathways, co-enrollment, motivational interviewing, and empathic approach in career coaching.

Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Service

This program includes the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment Program for those currently collecting UI benefits and least likely to exhaust those benefits.

Participants are introduced to American Job Center reemployment services, develop an individual reemployment plan, receive specific Labor Market Information, and formulate a plan to eliminate employment barriers with the assistance of a counselor. Orientations are held twice weekly, and follow-up in person can be done by appointment. The American Job Center Coaches complete and submit the paperwork for ABT (Additional Benefits During Training) and administer the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Skills) if needed.

NJ State Department of Labor mails letters approximately three weeks before the scheduled appointment. Customers are also called the Friday before their scheduled appointment.

Strengths

- Joint orientation
- Good cross communication of available services
- We are getting people in the system early in the process

Challenges

- Older Worker UI claimant/Job Seeker
- Transportation
- Backlog on Soft Skills training

Action Item for Consideration

S-5 Look into expanding Soft Skills Training into the Plainfield area.

(Aligned with Goal 5-Employer Engagement)

Progress Update

- The Literacy Committee has taken on the task of evaluating how students can flow expeditiously from soft-skill training into their primary/core activity. Additionally, there have been initial discussions about standardizing the soft-skill curriculum used by the Union County College in order for this best practice to be expanded.
- The AJC Partners Committee has recommended running a “Train the Trainer” option to expand and standardize the existing soft skill curriculum.

Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

This program serves any person with a disability (both mental and physical) which results in a substantial impediment to employment. It offers assistance to persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and/or maintain employment consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities, and capabilities. Services include vocational assessment, counseling and guidance, job placement assistance, education and vocational training, and other services as required to assist the individual in achieving employment.

Non-DVR staff may not make unnecessary inquiries into the existence of a disability. Referrals are made to appropriate DVRS staff if the customer needs this assistance. American Job Center Career Coaches contact DVRS to schedule appointments. Transportation is available to the Union County American Job Center Career Center in the City of Elizabeth if the customer is in Plainfield.

Strengths

- Great Relationship with OS Partners
- American Job Center WIOA staff now tests for Vocational Rehabilitation Customers
- Complete and Submit ABT paperwork/TABE

Challenges

- Outreach and participation levels of DVR customers attributed, in part, to customer fear of stereotyping

Action Item for Consideration

S-6 Expand Staff Cross Training to increase full understanding of processes and services. Develop a strategy around community awareness opportunities.

(Aligned with Goal 2- American Job Center Integration)

Progress Update

- AJC Partner meetings have been held on a monthly basis beginning December 2018. Participation of all AJC partners has been strong including attendance from DVR.
- A resource guide has been designed for the County Workforce Community fully describing workforce programs, activities, and services.
- Ten Staff/Partner/AJC Committee workshops have been held in the past year designed to improve communications, fine-tune operational systems, transition case managers to become effective career coaches, and improve our staff's customer-service skills.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

The SCSEP (Senior Community Service Employment Program) is a program that provides job training and employment services for eligible individuals age 55 and older by placing them in community service positions and unsubsidized employment. Currently, Easter Seals is the administrator of the program.

They help seniors gain the skills necessary to obtain jobs, achieve economic independence and an improved lifestyle. They may also host agencies that support seniors in reaching their training and employment goals. Seniors receive counseling and other supportive services, along with an individualized employability plan. They receive a stipend while they train as part of their roadmap to employment. Interested individuals work with the SCSEP staff housed in the American Job Center to determine eligibility and get placement.

Strengths

- 55+ Program/Easter Seals Programs have been very successful
- Senior Programs included in Monthly Calendar to reserve COMPUTER LABS
- Success in using internships (paid wages) running in both sites.

Challenges

- Customers seem to lack the motivation to want or attain permanent jobs

Action Item for Consideration

S-7 Expand staff cross-training to increase full understanding of processes and services.

(Aligned with Goal 2- American Job Center Integration)

Progress Update

- Efforts continue to expand representation from various county programs on our

committees. As one example, a representative from the Easter Seals program attended the AJC Partner meeting.

- A resource guide including a description of 55+ services has been completed.
- Easter Seals was present in a few of the many workshops held in the past year designed to improve communications, fine-tune operational systems, transition case managers to becoming effective career coaches, and improving our customer service skills.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant

Currently, eligible Veterans and their spouses are served at the American Job Center through NJ Employment Services staff.

Veterans and spouses receive first priority to all services that include referrals to job postings and training opportunities for which they are qualified. In the American Job Center Career Center, staff help Veterans find the jobs and opportunities for which they qualify. In addition to priority referrals to jobs, Veterans can enroll in free job search workshops, find help to develop a resume, learn about career training programs, and get help understanding the network of Veterans' benefits available through the Veterans Administration, state and local governments.

At intake, the customer is asked if they are a Veteran, which is then noted on the Referral slip. At that point, the Veteran is given priority and sent to an American Job Center staff member to determine if they are eligible to see the Veteran Representative. The staff makes the determination that the Veteran is an "eligible Veteran" and has at least one significant "barrier to employment" (see attachments); if so, they are referred to DVOP (Disabled Veteran Outreach Program) and otherwise, they are served by staff.

Strengths

- Good information exchange with Veteran Resource Centers

Challenges

- Job seeking Veterans typically have extensive medical issues

Action Item for Consideration

S-8 Increase coordination of services with Veterans Service Centers.

(Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Ex-Offender Programs (RECONNECTIONS)

Reconnections is a prisoner Re-Entry initiative developed through a partnership between United Way of Greater Union County, Union County Department of

Human Services, Union County College and the Nicholson Foundation. Reconnections was developed to assist formerly incarcerated individuals to gain access to services to provide them with productive skills that can be used to better their lives. The project also provides essential support services to address the individual's immediate needs to ensure successful re-integration into the community.

Individuals that qualify for the Reconnections program must be recently released from prison or halfway house (within 90 days of release), be between the ages of 18-34 years old, be under parole or probation supervision, and be a Union County Resident.

Each client receives one on one support through a case manager and an individual service plan tailored to their specific needs. The client will also meet with a Union County Division of Social Services Case Manager to determine eligibility for welfare, housing medical assistance, food stamps, and transportation assistance. Other services include but are not limited to: Education assessment and assistance, Employment readiness workshops, job search and placement, Mentoring Support, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Counseling, Identification, Family Reunification, Interview Clothes, and Community Resources.

The process varies for Elizabeth or Plainfield AMERICAN JOB CENTERS. From Monday through Thursday, a Case Manager, Case Manager Assistant, or Intern will meet with any individual that is interested. Friday is paperwork day for staff; however if there is an emergency situation the RECONNECTIONS staff can meet with the customer. At any time, Reconnections staff is not available; a Reconnections Referral is filled out and provided to the Reconnections Program Manager to contact the customer.

In Plainfield, on Mondays and Tuesdays a Case Manager, Case Manager Assistant, or Intern will meet with any individual who is interested. On Wednesday through Friday, the customer completes a Reconnections Referral, and this is provided to the Reconnections Program Manager to contact the customer.

Strengths

- Urban League/CBO administers the program, and there is good coordination with this partner

Challenges

- Housing is a major challenge
- Insufficient Employment Opportunities
- Career Counselor Training

Action Item for Consideration

S-9 Issue voucher program directly to the location.

(Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment Compensation is an insurance benefit paid to workers who meet all the requirements of the New Jersey Unemployment Compensation Law. Unemployment claims can be applied for via the internet. Courtesy phones are available for UI customers. One key program within the American Job Center is the **Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program**, funded by the US Department of Labor to help Unemployment Insurance claimants return to work faster. Note that claimants profiled to most likely exhaust their UI Benefits are required to participate in the RESEA program.

Strengths

- Exceptional success of RESEA Program
- All staff have been cross-trained with American Job Center WIOA and other American Job Center Partner Organizations
- Claimants are getting into activities earlier
- Sufficient resources for increased short term Soft Skill/Employability Skill offerings.

Challenges

- Long-term unemployed have difficult placement prospects and lack marketable credentials

Action Item for Consideration

S-10 Begin strategy to increase Soft Skill Training to this population.

(Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Progress Update

- As stated above, the Literacy Committee has taken on the tasks of evaluating program flow for students and examining soft-skills standards and best practices and the AJC Partners Committee is exploring a "Train the Trainer" option.

WorkFirst New Jersey Employment and Training Program

The WorkFirst New Jersey program:

- Works to end welfare dependency by limiting assistance to 60 months and offering the tools to find a job.
- Works to help children by assisting the guardian to receive child support payments to care for dependent children.
- Works toward self-sufficiency by allowing participants to keep more of their paycheck when they get a job or to close their case and receive a work

supplement.

- Works to keep participants on the job by helping with child care, health care, transportation, and other support services, if needed.

The state's welfare reform program, WorkFirst NJ, emphasizes work as the first step toward building a new life and a brighter future. Our goal is to help people get off welfare, secure employment and become self-sufficient, through job training, education, and work activities.

This program provides public assistance to eligible individuals and their families. Assistance can be cash assistance or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) formerly recognized as the Food Stamp Program. Medical assistance may also be available as NJ Family Care or Medicaid. Other services such as housing and transportation may be available. Customers who are receiving this grant are required to engage in 40-hour work activities in compliance with the program. The GA 28-Day Orientation and Follow-up is a mandatory program for people applying for General Assistance (GA). Customers are referred from Social Services to an orientation at the American Job Center.

Cinderella's Closet provides free gently used professional attire, shoes, and accessories for men and women job seekers and is run by the American Job Center in partnership with the community. Donations are accepted from the community. Job seekers who come to the AMERICAN JOB CENTERS are encouraged to shop in the Closet if they needed outfits for employment-related activities.

Strengths

- Union County has consistently performed well on the Customer Participation Rate Indicator scale.
- Close coordination with partner services through monthly operational meetings with staff of the American Job Center, Division of Social Services, vendors and other service providers and community-based groups

Challenges

- Development of adequate CWEP (Community Work Experience) Program worksites

Action Item for Consideration

S-11 Increase outreach to community organizations to develop new sites.

(Aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Progress Update

- o Regarding WFNJ/CWEP, The County Human Services Director has initiated steps that will move select WFNJ workers into the AJC Centers to foster greater coordination between WIOA and WFNJ.
- o Representatives from WFNJ have attended ALL AJC partner meetings and have attended staff development workshops as well.

Employer Engagement

• Business Resource Centers

The mission of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development is to build a stronger workforce that meets the demands and needs of New Jersey business-supports economic development.

To achieve this mission, Business Resource Centers are located throughout the state in our American Job Centers. Business Resource Centers provide a single point of contact to assist New Jersey-based businesses. Whether you are already in business, just starting, or expanding your business, Business Resource Centers staff can help businesses to recruit qualified workers. Businesses tell the staff of their needs and assistance finding qualified applicants is provided. In addition, business representatives can offer customized recruitment programs to screen and refer suitable applicants and offer access to BRC facilities (for interviews and meetings).

Other services available to businesses include training employees (OJT programs, Training Grants), marketing job openings thru state job bank (www.careerconnections.nj.gov) and assistance navigating state programs and services.)

• Workforce Innovation Business Center

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 and serves both the business community and residents of Union County.

The Workforce Innovation Business Center provides an innovative two-week, 40-hour "Soft-Skills" program, created by Union County College, to provide

jobseekers with personal development and professional skills training. The "Soft-Skills" curriculum is designed to assist jobseekers across all levels. The curriculum includes such topics as job search strategies, resume writing, conflict management, time management, and communication skill building.

In line with New Jersey's commitment to economic growth, the Union County Workforce Development Board utilizes the Workforce Innovation Business Center to further employer outreach and job development by conducting job recruitment and training for regional employers.

Employer Engagement partners, BRC's, Employment Service staff and the WIB Center, will assist in furthering efforts to expand the use of business involvement with apprenticeships, be it becoming a Registered Apprenticeship Site and/or participating in pre-apprenticeship programs. There are currently 56 Registered Apprenticeship Companies registered in Union County. The Job Seekers will best benefit from bridging their unemployment onto an apprenticeship pathway.

Action Item for Consideration

S-11b Begin to expand job-seeker options for skill attainment to not only include traditional classroom education but also to encourage apprenticeship participation. Including front-line training and the institution of apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship options.

S-11c Create a new WDB subcommittee, "Employer Activities Committee." This new committee will serve as the WDB's arm to fulfill 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

Tuition-Waiver Program

This program allows certain unemployed individuals to attend NJ public colleges and universities without paying tuition; however, they must pay fees and books. Customers should not register or enroll in classes before a determination is made, or a tuition waiver is issued. This is NOT for vocational, technical, private, or proprietary schools. Career Coaches at the American Job Centers give this assistance to job seekers.

Strengths

- Customers have secured college degrees, both bachelor and associate.

Challenges

- The window of opportunity continues to present a significant challenge, as customers have to be on hold right up to the point of the first day of class, waiting to determine availability due to unfilled tuition paying seats.
- There lacks a system that provides the American Job Center with degree attainment or other post-enrollment information.

Action Item for Consideration

S-12 Develop a Post Enrollment Follow-up system between Higher Ed and the American Job Center. (Aligned with Goal 6-Evaluation / Oversight)

Trade Readjustment Act

This program provides income support payments to individuals who exhausted their Unemployment Compensation and whose jobs were affected by imports, as determined by a certification of Group Coverage issued by the NJ Department of Labor.

Clearly, TAA programs and WIOA Title I and Title II programs require more effective coordination. This has become a newly focused goal for our Board. We understand that the coordination needs to begin early on in a participant's journey of unemployment.

Both TAA and WIOA local operators will begin understanding each other's service offerings and services in order to determine effective collaboration and integration to best serve the TAA customer.

TAA has initially identified two areas for coordination/cooperation:

- **After the Layoff:** Before TAA can assist participants with re-training, they need to update their resume and look for work to demonstrate that they do indeed have an issue with marketability.
- **After Receiving a Credential:** After TAA participants have received a credential, they need to be referred back to the One-Stop again for "wrap around" services to assist them in obtaining employment.

Action Item for Consideration

S-13 Expand Staff Cross Training in include TAA managers and front-line workers. (Aligned with Goal 2- American Job Center Integration)