

Section - III. WDB AND CORE PROGRAMS

a. Expansion of Access to Disadvantaged Youth

The Union County Workforce Board understands well the new responsibility to expand the level of services to out-of-school youth to a minimum of 75%. It intends to expand the System's reach to serving disadvantaged OS youth by taking advantage of six significant changes in WIOA legislation, as compared to WIA.

1. WIOA raises the out-of-school youth eligibility age from 16 to 21 to 16 to 24. These same youth could be serviced through the adult workforce system; however, specific developmental needs often go unmet. Raising the eligibility age will help us better target their programming for this population.

2. Out-of-school youth in high-risk categories do not have to prove low-income status to receive services. This includes individuals who have dropped out of high school, have not attended school for at least one calendar quarter of the most recent school year, or are subject to the juvenile or adult justice systems.

3. The group to be served includes homeless individuals, runaways, current or former foster care youth, and individuals who or are pregnant or parenting. Youth who are not attending school, hold a secondary credential and are either basic skills deficient or an English language learner must be "low-income."

4. In-school youth eligibility is expanded to include low-income individuals ages 14 to 21 who are English language learners, as well as individuals with disabilities.

5. Youth "living in a high-poverty area" is added to the low-income criterion for youth activities funding and services.

These actions, in conjunction with additional changes in minimum funding set aside for youth wages, suggest the need to consider expanding wages and/or stipends to eligible youth.

b. Elimination of "Sequence of Service" Practice

WIOA formally eliminates the WIA prescribed sequence-of-service provision in the Title I adult program. This provision, which previously required participants to receive career services prior to training services has caused confusion and sent mixed signals to individuals trying to access training.

The Workforce System will adjust its service delivery to ensure that WIOA

participants not be required to pass through multiple layers of services before entering into training. It will further adopt the “career services” model, consistent with the law combining core and intensive services. This change gives the staff at the One-Stop centers the flexibility to provide participants access to training based and focused on assessed need.

c. Funds for Transitional Jobs for Individuals with Barriers

The Union County Workforce Board will review the option to allow up to 10 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to be used for transitional jobs for individuals with barriers to employment. Transitional jobs are defined as time-limited subsidized work experiences that help individuals who are chronically unemployed and have barriers to employment establish a work history and develop skills to access unsubsidized employment and progress in the workplace.

To ensure a smooth transition of the full operation to the WIOA environment, the following strategy will be adopted:

S-13 - Planning

Provide local planning and policy guidance, followed by staff training, to OS Career Coaches in order to comply with necessary system adaptations required to expanded services using WIOA provisions for core programs. (Aligned with Goal 2-One Stop Integration) and (aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

Progress Update

- AJC Partner meetings have been held on a monthly basis beginning December 2018. Participation of all AJC partners has been strong and included attendance from DVR.
- The YOUTH committee has been meeting on a regular basis and has participated in all “Partner Engagement” workshops.
- Youth Front-line workers from the AJC and all Youth Providers attended professional-development workshops covering:
 - Co-enrollment Options
 - Effective ISS Development
 - Case Manager to Career Coach Transition
 - Motivational Interviewing
 - Empathetic Counseling
 - Career Pathway Development
 - Improving my Customer Service Skills
 - A resource guide has been designed for the County Workforce Community fully describing workforce programs, activities, services.

d. Development of Career Pathways

In the Union County Unified Workforce Investment Plan 2014-2017 (**Attachment D**), it was noted that five primary growth sectors are providing significant job growth for Union County:

- Construction
- Retail
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Health Care
- Transportation, Logistics & Distribution.

The Workforce Development Board had implemented a targeted approach to more effectively allocate resources and spur the development of increased employment opportunities. Union County has begun and will continue to expand, two key steps to building career pathways for job seekers: (a) industry-specific job search assistance; and (b) targeted and stackable training for key industry jobs as well as supportive services for job seekers.

One Pathway Example. Working with its partners (employers, community stakeholders, college, and One-Stop staff), WDB is 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, as described in further detail in Section IV.

For example, a job seeker may take a course that results in an industry certification and credits that can be applied toward an associate's degree. Such programs allow job seekers to enter and exit training based on their schedules and resources.

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.

As such, WDB will:

S-14a Endeavor to strengthen the career pathways approach by further engaging industry, literacy, and experiential learning solutions to fill talent needs, and results-driven partnerships focused on high-quality,

employer-centered collaborations. (Aligned with Goal 1- Career Pathways / Credential Attainment and with Goal 5- Employer Engagement)

S-14b Support and expand, more broadly, the State's Talent Development Strategy by aligning resources through planning and service coordination, and development of community alliances and employment networks linking One-Stop Centers, community partners, and job seekers. (Aligned with Goal 1- Career Pathways / Credential Attainment)

Progress Update

- The Workforce Development Board authorized Career Pathway training during 2018 and 2019. Career coach staff and managers practiced putting together Individualized Service Strategies including career-pathway counseling and service recommendations and the attainment of recognized industry credentials. Workshops included instruction and, role-playing using scripted examples of various WIOA customers.
- Front-line worker workshops held in the past 12 months included identifying opportunities for co-enrollment. Co-enrollment was also supported by AJC Partners during a cross-training session held in September 2018.
- Additional career pathways training will be continued in 2019.
- The AJC has distributed training handouts and training materials to career coaches.
- The AJC designed a resource guide describing all County Training and Services.
- Staff received a copy of acceptable industry credentials aligned with key industries.

e. Improvement of Access to Activities Leading to an Industry-Valued Credential

“One of the primary goals of New Jersey’s 2016 Combined State Plan for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is to increase the number of adults in New Jersey who have earned an industry-valued post-secondary credential or degree. New Jersey’s ability to compete in the 21st Century’s global economy depends on giving 35% of its workforce (1.4 million employees) more opportunities to acquire valuable work credentials beyond high school.”
New Jersey Industry-Valued Credential List Guide, October 2016 (See

Attachment G)

The Jersey Industry-Valued Credential List Guide will act as a consumer protection measure for those in search of high-quality training. This listing provides job seekers assurance that their credential is valid and highly recommended by knowledgeable employers, educators, and workforce professionals.

Union County recognizes that competing effectively in the 21st Century's global economy depends on giving the workforce more opportunities to acquire valuable work credentials beyond high school.

National experts estimate that by 2020, **65%** of U.S. jobs will require some form of post-secondary credential. If current trends continue, the nationwide supply of workers with relevant degrees and credentials in 2025 will be **23 million** short of the 62 million high-quality job openings employers in the U.S. must fill.

Leading job seekers to positions that recognize and, in most cases, require Industry credentials will require an investment of training to the Union County career coaches at our centers.

Union County supports the statewide goal to dedicate, by 2021, at least 80% of all federal and state funds spent on occupational training to programs that result in an industry valued credential or degree. The five-year plan will proceed incrementally from 50% (Fiscal Year 2017) to 80%, (Fiscal Year 2021).

The Competitive Procurement process for Class-sized Training as well as the use of ITA's must prioritize training that prepares students to train for and obtain industry-recognized credentials.

A **credential** is defined as "a recognized degree, diploma, certificate or certification awarded for an occupation." Industry-valued credentials have the following characteristics; they are:

- Valued and demanded by employers
- Portable – skills learned are transferable and provide broad opportunities
- Stackable – skills learned may lead to opportunities for continuous or advanced training and education

Within this framework, the Workforce System will adopt the following strategies in order to prepare job seekers for positions that recognize and, in most cases, require industry credentials:

f. Recognized-Industry Credentials

The State has come up with a preliminary listing of suitable, recognized industry credentials (next table), which informs the portfolio of training programs that the Union County Workforce System will encompass. (Complete Listing appears in Attachment III-1: NJ Industry-Valued Credential List-OCTOBER.)

A Sample of NJ Industry-Valued Credentials (October 2016)

Advanced

- Certified Automation Professional
- Certified Hazard Analysis Critical Control
- Certified Internal Auditor

Architecture and Construction

- Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Professional Certification
- Building Analyst Professional
- EPA Lead-Safe Certification

Education

- Child Development Associate
- Substitute Teacher Certification

Finance

- Certified Application Professional
- QuickBooks Certification

Health Care and Social Services

- Academy of Certified Social Workers
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support
- Alzheimer's and Dementia Certification

Human Resources

- Associate Professional in Human Resources
- Fundamental Payroll Certification
- Global Professional in Human Resources

Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism

- Certified Food and Beverage Executive
- Certified Front Desk Representative
- Certified Hospitality Supervisor

Technology

- Adobe Certified Associate Photoshop
- Amazon Web Services Certified Solutions Architect
- Android Certified Application Developer

Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution

- Automotive Service Excellence
- Certificate in Production and Inventory Management
- Certified in Transportation and Logistics

g. Integrating Value of Credentials into the Initial Job Seeker Assessment / Individual Service Strategy

Counselors now assist job seekers in their career search by probing deeply into their interests, their skills, their likes and dislikes, their work history and their academic achievements. We have an assortment of tools including interest inventories. The Union County American Job Centers will now add the Industry Valued Credential Listing as yet one more tool.

Helping job-seekers expand their focus from the immediate benefit of Salary, Hours and Benefits to elevate longer-term commitment in "INDUSTRY VALUED CREDENTIAL" will require an artful approach.

Staff training is planned around the topic of Job Seeker Assessment and development of Individual Service Strategies for the fall of 2017. Staff will learn how to distinguish types of industry credentials:

- Core
- Advanced
- Specialty
- Skills
- Product/Equipment.

h. Stackable Credentials

The Union County WDB will work with its educational partners, training providers, and employers along with One-Stop staff 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 for an occupation. Unlike traditional training

models, basic skills, ESL skills, 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.

On September 19, 2016, the Union County Workforce Development Board of Directors adopted a resolution calling for the Workforce Development Board to, with the support of both the County Manager and the Board of Chosen Freeholders of Union County, align its workforce development strategy to mirror the core values outlined in New Jersey's Unified Workforce Investment Plan. This resolution would place in motion the process of synchronizing investment efforts in the development of a strong, talented and globally competitive labor force. The desired outcome of these strategic investments is to help Union County residents find employment within the seven key growth sectors in New Jersey.

S-15 Continue to invest in advanced training for career coaches at the One-Stop Centers to be better equipped to help job seekers with information to select career training that provides industry-recognized credentials.
(Aligned with Goal 2-One Stop Integration and with Goal 3- Broaden Use of Technology)

Progress Update

- The Workforce Development Board authorized front-line career coach training during 2018 and 2019. Career coach staff and managers practiced putting together Individualized Service Strategies and Employability Development Plans including strategies to guide job seekers into programs that provide recognized industry credentials.
- Workshops included walking through job-seeker scenarios including co-enrollment. Career Coaches participated in role-playing exercises using scripted examples of various WIOA customers.
- Staff received a copy of acceptable industry credentials aligned with key industries.

i. Coordination with Trade Adjustment 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.

As stated earlier, 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 seek to understand each other's service offerings and services in order to ensure better 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 a participant 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.