

Section VI. AMERICAN JOB CENTERS – SYSTEM FEATURES

The Union County 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. As stated earlier, service areas are located in Elizabeth and Plainfield, as well as at The Workforce Innovation Center at the Jersey Gardens Mall.

Consistent with its commitment to enhance the coordination and quality of services and training, Union County will adopt an overarching strategy to continue with its current effort to integrate its programs and implement a series of measures for continuous improvement.

a. Continuous Improvement

S-24 The One-Stop System will pursue a model for continuous improvement throughout its internal operations and customer-facing processes, guided by a new certification and recertification program. (Aligned with Goal 6-Evaluation / Oversight)

American Job Center Certification: The Workforce Development Board certification and recertification process will include the stipulation that the One Stop Center adopt a process for continuous improvement, including, specified criteria as stated in the Operator Agreement. The Board, while developing the Certification Process, will establish criteria and measures of overall system performance, which shall include:

- *Meeting or Exceeding Local Performance Standards.* The Union County One-Stop delivery system will continue under WIOA, as was the case under WIA, to formally review local performance indicators and overall customer outcomes, and address in a timely and thoughtful manner areas in which indicators fall below established goals. Specifically, additional continuous improvement criteria may include measures of how the system is:
 - Performing for different customer groups
 - Meeting differing employment objectives, such as employers versus job seekers; and youth versus new labor market entrants versus experienced workers.
- *Increasing Overall Customer Satisfaction.* American Job Centers will solicit customer input through a series of customer satisfaction surveys at various stages of customer involvement to gather and analyze continuous feedback from employers, training providers, and job seekers with an eye toward greater efficiency and responsiveness.
- *Accessibility-* as part of their Oversight Responsibility, the Workforce Development Board will request system reviews pertaining to customer access and system accommodations for individuals requiring special assistance. In addition to

random system monitoring, statistical reporting will demonstrate service levels and service offerings to ESL customers.

- *Addressing Other Important Criteria*, tentative among them: Service utilization rates, the extent to which potential employer and job-seeker customers are aware of and use the One-Stop system; and overall.
- *Monthly Self-Reporting*. The One Stop Operator will provide an annual report to the Board detailing the progress toward reaching higher standards set forth in the certification criteria.

Qualitative & Quantitative Performance Measures. At a minimum, the One-Stop Operator selected through competitive procurement shall present raw quantitative performance figures during public meetings to the WDB as per WDB Resolution 3-2015 Performance Reporting (**Attachment I**).

Provider Selection Process (RFP's)

As per Policy Resolution WDB 2016-5, *Procurement Policies & Procedures* (**Attachment J**), the Union County Workforce Board and the American Job Centers of Union County require that all requests for proposals be submitted for award consideration with the same procedures. The following are key steps in the process the full Procurement Policies are attached to this Plan, Appendix VI-1):

- Public notice is posted.
- Technical Assistance conferences are held to provide guidance to potential sub-recipients.
- During proposal review, the methodology adopted for awarding of competitive contracts is based on an evaluation and ranking that include technical, management and cost related criteria.
- County Authorization is published on the County's Website.

Individual Training Provider List

Since the adoption of WIOA, the Workforce Board has abided by its established eligible training provider process as part of the overall strategy to ensure informed customer choice, performance accountability, and continuous improvement. Criteria are being developed to ensure that programs on the ETPL meet the minimum quality standards and deliver industry-recognized skills and credentials that provide individuals with the opportunity for career progression.

It recognizes and accepts its responsibility for receiving, reviewing, and approving training providers and their programs. It further endeavors to ensure that data elements related to initial applications, continued eligibility and performance information regarding approved providers and programs are entered accurately and in a timely manner into the supported state system.

Union County does and always has, reviewed class size occupational training as per WIOA law. All programs are to appear on the Eligible Training Provider list. However, the use of programs for training on an Individual Training Account (ITA) basis, does not yet go through the same local review process as in the case of class-size-based awards.

S-24b. Relevant to the process of engaging training providers, the Board will work with the One-Stop to ensure full compliance with WIOA and better alignment between customer needs, selected training opportunities and preferred career pathways. (Aligned with Goal 2-One Stop Integration) and (aligned with Goal 4-Expanded Access)

In particular, the Workforce System will:

- Define criteria, beyond compliance with ETPL approval, which will help job seekers be better informed in choosing a particular provider and course offering which may include:
 - Alignment with Career Pathways
 - Attainment of necessary prerequisite experience
 - Program Retention and Placement outcomes
 - Wage Expectation
- Provide guidance and training to the appropriate staff responsible for managing the client through the selection process thereby affording excellent career coaching.

Progress Update

The Workforce Development Board authorized 10 training sessions including training to front-line career coaches, partner staff and subcommittee members.

Training topics included: how to design career pathways for job seekers, expanded role of career coaches, effective follow-up techniques, motivational interviewing skill building, constructing and effective EDP/ISS, and co-enrollment. Staff received training on promoting credential attainment. In addition to professional-development sessions, the subcommittees (Literacy, Youth and AJC Partners) have begun working on each Strategic Plan Element relevant to their area of responsibility.

Monitoring and Compliance

There is an Independent Monitoring Unit which makes recommendations to appropriate staff for corrective action whenever it identifies noncompliance with any federal or state rules or regulations for all funding sources.

The Independent Monitoring Unit's goals and objectives ensure efficiency and compliance with regulations and contract stipulations.

Independent Monitoring Unit GOALS

- To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all funded programs through assessment of Sub-grantee systems and operations.
- To produce timely and meaningful reports to assist in the management of all funded programs.
- To ensure compliance with all funding guidelines and requirements.

OBJECTIVES

- To monitor the appropriate management systems of Service Providers annually.
- To monitor the operations of the Service Providers' systems on a regular basis.
- To identify problem areas and deficiencies as early as possible.
- To recommend corrective action to resolve the problems or deficiencies.
- To follow-up on corrective action and resolution of problem areas.

On-site visitations/reviews are planned on a regular basis. These reviews consist of a desk audit for preparation, an on-site visit, and a narrative report. During the on-site visit, information is gathered about levels of services provided and types of services provided as listed in the next table.

Levels of Service	Types of Services
Attendance	Recordkeeping
Facility	Staffing
Client Eligibility	Personal Policies
Administrative Procedures	Fiscal Systems
Board of Directors	Contract Compliance
Time Frames	Target Groups
Group Characteristics	By-Laws
Geographic Service Area	Report Submissions
Other Funding Sources	Fee Schedules
Budgeting Procedures	Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures

Corrective Action Responses are required to be sent to the Independent Monitoring Unit from the appropriate staff indicating what corrective steps will be taken for any problems that were identified in the reports. These are usually due to Independent Monitoring Unit within three weeks of the receipt of the report. Follow-up on any minor problem areas occurs on the next regularly scheduled visit. Major problems are followed up sooner to be addressed in a timely fashion.

S-24c In order to ensure full compliance and a higher level of review, the Workforce Development Board will provide necessary internal monitoring and oversight to ensure that center operator(s) meet certification standards (either at the time of certification or during monitoring). In reaction to findings, the Board will be empowered to require the operator to make improvements. (Aligned with Goal 6-Evaluation / Oversight)

b. Access to Services

Current Situation. The One-Stop System has endeavored to provide ready access to its services at the various centers by offering free transportation service. Currently, the service, which runs once a day in either direction and appears to meet customer needs, is provided between centers in Elizabeth and Plainfield by appointment only.

As discussed in more detail under Section XXII, the System has not yet instituted technology-enabled service or training platforms beyond its computerized learning setups at its two lead centers for literacy training. While distance learning has been considered at different junctions, it has not been embraced as a method to train or serve customers.

In addressing access, it should be noted that in comparison to the state, Union County has a higher share of workers lacking English fluency (21.1% Union County vs. 13% New Jersey). This lack of English fluency or lower educational attainment can limit a resident's job opportunities. Moreover, continued net positive in-migration of foreign nationals and permanent residents will likely maintain the fluency gap. Adult language learning centers and workforce training are crucial components for integrating immigrants into the local economy. Additionally, the most effective workforce training implementation involves structuring the programs around the industrial needs and competitive advantages of the County.

The type of language centers mentioned above has become served over 2,000 individuals annually over the past ten years. The Consortium is sustained by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II, which enables partnerships among the federal, state, and local governments. Currently, Union County College is the lead agency for the WIOA Title II Consortium.

In addition to ESL being offered through the Title II Consortium, ESL is also offered at both the Elizabeth and Plainfield American Job Centers and the Workforce Innovation Business Center. The WIB Center has transcribed and will offer the SoftSkills Curriculum in Spanish. Providing workplace readiness training in Spanish will provide those lacking English fluency an overall workforce advantage.

The Union County American Job Centers have also made a conscientious effort to hire multi-lingual case managers. Languages spoken by Union County American Job Center Case Managers include Portuguese, Spanish, French,

Creole, Polish, Hindi, Bengali, and Tagalog.

The American Job Centers also offer most Calendars, worksheets, and handouts in Spanish.

The Union County WDB provides oversight by ensuring universal access and equal opportunity officer; assurances; notice and communication; data collection; monitoring and continuous improvement; complaint resolution; and corrective action.

Strategic Directions. In line with the technology strategy (Section XXII), the One-Stop Centers will re-examine the applicability and feasibility of a distance-learning program in certain service areas and identify ways to implement it and allocate resources for its implementation progressively over the next three years.

c. Non-discrimination / Customer Bill of Rights

Union County fully complies with a range of nondiscrimination regulations, giving access to its physical facilities, services, and materials to individuals with disabilities. Procedurally, the One-Stop Centers have assembled checklists to describe guidelines for staff training, service accessibility, accommodation services, and key equipment that customers need to access One-Stop resources. Collectively, the checklists ensure that they:

- Comply with the law (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions of the Workforce Investment Act)
- Create an environment that makes people with disabilities feel welcome; and
- Design services so that people with disabilities can fully benefit.

Training has been conducted to build staff knowledge about provisions of the laws and regulations, underscore the need for confidentiality and proper parameters for of disclosure, and set the expectations that reasonable accommodations during orientations and service delivery must be made for individuals with disabilities. In addition, adequate equipment for individuals with visual and hearing impairment is available at its sites. Informational and outreach materials are also produced in media accessible by these individuals. In addition, nondiscrimination-related policies are announced and posted in various venues at all sites. (Full checklists are provided in Appendix VI.)

Bill of Rights

The Union County One-Stop System has developed a Customer Bill of Rights, according to which its staff operates.

Customers' Bill of Rights

One-Stop Customers are Guaranteed that:

- Each visit to a One Stop will add value to a customer's career development efforts.
- Appropriate, quality information will be delivered in a professional and courteous manner to all participants:
 - Ease of access to services and a pleasant atmosphere
 - Accuracy and timeliness of the information
 - Personal contact with and advocacy for customers
 - Cooperation and equal enthusiasm from all partners
- Staff are knowledgeable, caring, sensitive, and possess good communication skills and professional demeanor
- All staff are equally able to explain all available services, including the Internet and computer-based programs
- Facilities are well-maintained, handicap-accessible and that equipment functions well
- Access to services is simple:
 - Access comes without "eligibility" requirements
 - Customer application processes are uncomplicated and unduplicated
 - Customer information is fully accessible to all partnering agencies so that customers are not unduly inconvenienced
 - Information on all services and agencies is available and user-friendly
- Staff are available, accessible and multi-lingual to assist customers in revolving problems and accessing services
- Customers will be assisted in scheduling appointments for services
- Customers will be empowered to make well-informed decisions
- Customers will be asked for their feedback regularly, and the measures of satisfaction will be uncomplicated and user-friendly

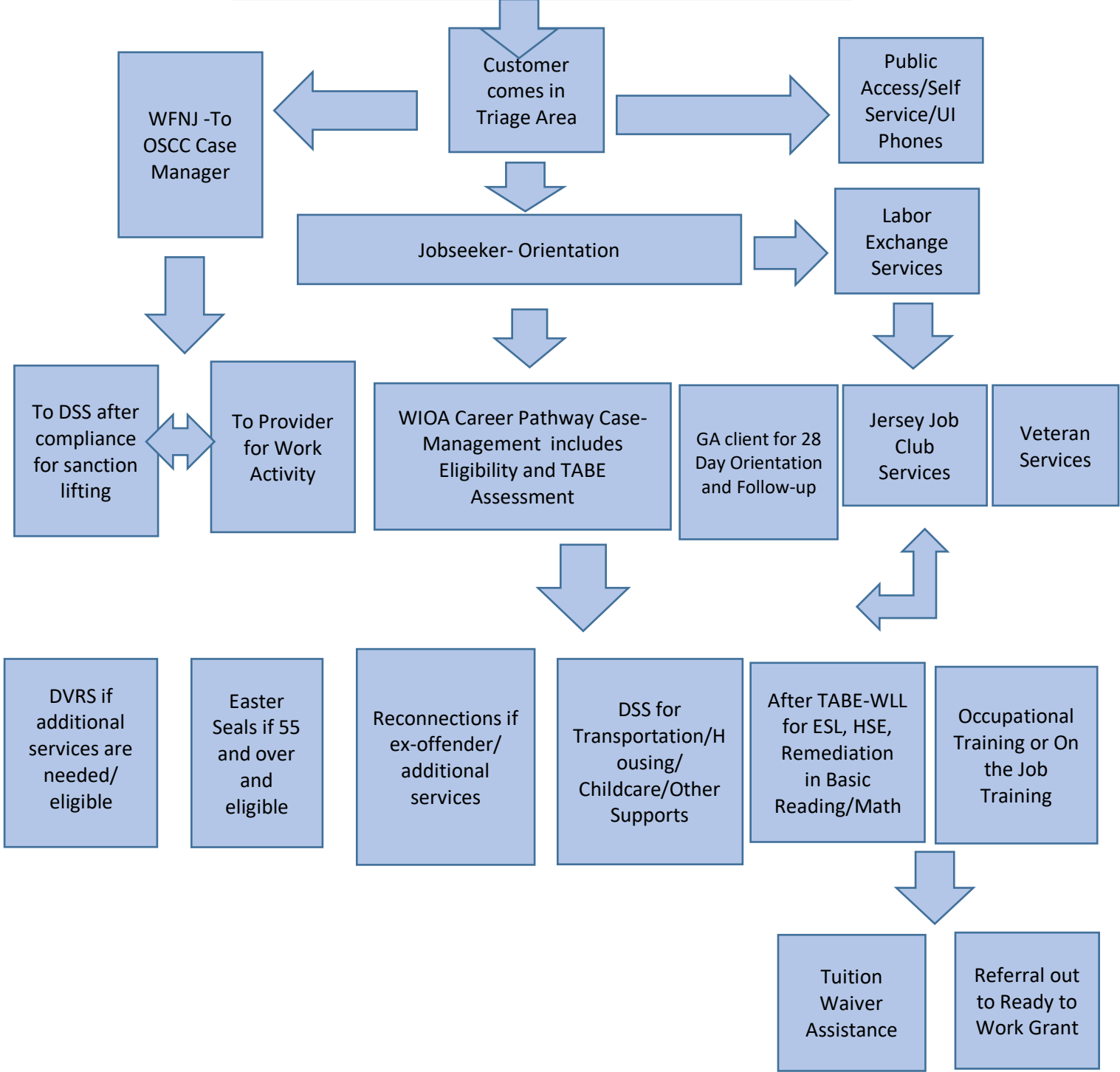
d. Flow of Services

Customers entering the Union County One-Stop enter reception being greeted by our Greeter. Initial paperwork is completed followed by Orientation. Customers in most cases go through the eligibility determination. The eligibility determination process is considered basic career services but is explained in detail in this section, as it is a critical function of the One-Stop provider. Customers receiving individualized career services must be eligible and registered into WIOA. Resource Rooms are available to all customers with computers with Internet access; tutorials for career exploration, job searching and resume writing; job postings; periodicals, information on Unemployment Insurance eligibility, services and financial aid for local non-WIOA training, labor market reports, educational programs and information on partner programs.

Customers receive self-service or informational activities without an eligibility determination. Self-service or informational activities include, but are not limited to, access to the Resource Room, on-line materials, reference documentation,

workshops, employer screenings, and job fairs. Workshops are available at both One-Stops. These workshops include a wide range of topics as part of their career services offerings. These workshops focus on job search and soft skills, such as interviewing techniques, resume preparation, networking, effective communications skills, conflict resolution, and computer literacy.

Union County American Jobs Center Customer Flow



e. Roles & Resource Contributions of One-Stop Partners

The Workforce Development Board and One-Stop Centers have been operating based on an arrangement with the One-Stop/American Job Center Operator defined by a 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between WDB (signed by its Chair) and the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders (signed by the County Manager representing the Local Chief Elected Officers). The MOU brings explicitly into focus the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and seeks full alignment with its regulations (**Attachment K**).

f. Nondiscrimination Compliance

Union County follows an equal opportunity employment policy and employs personnel without regard to race, creed, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, physical or mental ability, veteran status, military obligations, and marital status.

This policy also applies to internal promotions, training, opportunities for advancement, terminations, outside vendors, members and customers, service clients, use of contractors and consultants, and dealings with the general public.

See Full APPENDIX VI - Nondiscrimination Checklists