

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
LITERACY COMMITTEE
JULIO SABATER CHAIRMAN
MEETING MINUTES: TUESDAY, August 24th 2021 10:00am

Committee Members

Julio Sabater- Committee Chair, Workforce Advantage
Nancy Bekenfeld, Elizabeth Public Library
Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
Marlene Moreira Loff, Union County College
Dr. Lisa Hiscano, Union County College
Dr. Lyle Mosley, Elizabeth Board of Education
Perle Almeida, Union County American Job Center
Susana Mateo, Union County American Job Center

UCWDB Staff

Meredith Barracato
Antonio Rivera

Meeting Summary

- I. **Welcome and Introductions:** Chairman Sabater welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining the August meeting.

- II. **Review and Approval of The May 18th, 2021 Meeting Minutes:**
Marlene Loff made a motion to approve the May 18th, 2021, and Dr. Mosley seconded the meeting minutes. Motion carried.

III. Webinar Discussion “Movement Along Career Pathways Towards Family Sustaining Wages”:

Chairman Sabater began to discuss an SETC webinar he attended regarding the Title II population and ways providers are asked to explore avenues for career pathways and a path to self-sufficiency. One of the areas that came up was for local levels can create a seamless process from Title II to Title I Occupational training that will lead to an employer recognizable credentials that will provide jobs. There is a call to action to create a seamless WIOA co-enrollment process. Chairman Sabater added that a way to do this is to integrate and develop a seamless process between Title II to Title I via co-enrollment. There needs to be a way to attend to a client's literacy needs while developing occupational skills that lead to a career pathway.

Dr. Lisa Hiscano added that it was a good presentation, but more discussion needs to be held on how to move clients from Title II to Title I programs.

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Chairman Sabater mentioned there was diversity with the population of the individuals enrolled in Title II, and it's essential to be cognizant of the various skills and proficiency levels clients have.

IV. Review of PY 2020 Strategic Planning: Chairman Sabater review a slide regarding the PY 2020 sub-strategies. The three sub-strategies reviewed were the following;

- **SS-3** Consider the adoption of computer refresher courses of not only older workers but all customers below sufficient proficiency.
- **SS-39** Enhance educational coordination to better address individuals in obtaining new skills and employment. We will continue to stretch our funding and leverage the
- **SS-42** Strengthen connections between adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce will be strengthened, including expanded access to stackable credentials with co-enrollment between WIOA Title I and II Programs.

Chairman Sabater mentioned that the sub-strategies were somewhat completed, and it took a long time to complete them, but there was still more work to do since more than half of the sub-strategies have been completed. Chairman Sabater mentioned the expansion of the IC3 program with the Plainfield Public Library and other institutions. He added the success in securing laptops for individuals within his program with the help of the Department of Human Services. A referral procedure is established from the AJC to the Title II providers, but there needs to be better assessments and coordination for employment opportunities. The SS-42 is the sub-strategy that needs more movement and requires more discussion because the two systems need to collide. The goal is to have an individual participate in both programs seamlessly.

Dr. Lyle Mosley asked how he can obtain more information on the laptop loaner program. Chairman Sabater asked Perle Almeida to provide more insight on who is eligible for the laptop loaner program. Perle Almeida asked to have an offline conversation regarding the laptop loaner program. Chairman Sabater mentioned that since it's a loaner program, everyone has to be cognizant of implementing it because they have a limited quantity. He added that it's vital to ensure it goes directly to the individuals who need it. Marlene Loff mentioned that since there are about 1000 Title II participants, providers can focus their efforts on providing laptops to those in an IET program and most in need of the technology. Meredith Barracato mentioned that the Department of Labor is

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initiating a new statewide laptop loaner program. As the information comes in, Meredith Barracato offered to share it with the group.

V. New Program Year, New Commitment: Meredith Barracato reviewed slides that discuss the goals and objectives of the program year, the current strategic plan goals, and the sub-strategies feedback activity.

Chairman Sabater asked if the items asked to be reviewed by the Literacy Committee go beyond assigned sub-strategies. He verified that it is possible to add feedback to the overall sub-strategies aside from the ones assigned to the Literacy Committee.

Director Rivera mentioned that the objective is to start with the committee goals and objectives assigned to the committee but are welcomed to provide feedback on the other sub-strategies. Director Rivera added that he is concerned with the language of stating that a sub-strategy is completed. It has been brought up that individuals who do not have access to laptops would not support such a statement. Director Rivera mentioned that the state is looking at Union County as a model for the statewide laptop loaner program initiative. Director Rivera asked for committee members to think about what can be done differently in terms of the strategies, what the economy will look like in the future, those barriers to employment, and the supportive service needs. A review of the sub-strategies is the opportunity to see if they will allow for individuals who move forward in this new economy.

VI. Partner Program Updates

UCC: Marlene Loff shared a presentation on the WIOA Title II Update. (See attached presentation). Marlene Loff mentioned that the Title II consortium includes UCC, Elizabeth Board of Ed, Literacy NJ, and Urban Workforce Advantage. Due to COVID19, they were required to provide services to 1166 individuals, but they could only provide services to about 1000 individuals. Marlene Loff mentioned that considering the effects of COVID19, they were still able to meet the performance measures for their ESL population but found difficulties among the GED and Basic Skills clients who have a higher dropout rate and are the hardest to retain. The consortium did well with skills gained and retaining employment. She mentioned that UCC maintained its IET classes even with the challenges.

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Workforce Advantage had to postpone their nurse's aid program due to the restrictions but replaced it with IC3 certification. PY 21 goals are very similar to last year, and the medium goal is still being required. The citizenship program benchmarks because of public offices being closed for fingerprinting. The current level of service is 952, and there is an emphasis on quality over quantity.

Director Rivera asked committee members to review the sub-strategies that were initially developed in 2016. Director Rivera recommended that the SS 42 be reviewed and have complex discussions on how to eliminate the silos and have a seamless co-enrollment process. He specifically asked for the partners to identify what are the barriers that are facing the clients and what are the pathways available to the client.

Chairman Sabater mentioned some preliminary opportunities with the IET program. Some of the ideas mentioned are the following;

For the consortium, they need to identify career opportunities for the client's vocational exploration.

They are expanding assessments that focus on career pathways. An individual might have professional skills but doesn't have the language. How can the Title I provider fast-track the Title II clients and create a sustainable intake/eligibility process?

AJC inconsistency of funding needs to be explored, such as class size contract would help alleviate the funding concerns.

Director Rivera asked that the topics mentioned above be added to the next Literacy Committee meeting agenda to give people the time to think of more ideas. In addition, Director Rivera mentioned creating questions within the SS-42 that could lead to additional sub-strategy and have input from all the partners.

Marlene Loff mentioned it's a great idea to explore the process of the individuals in the Title II and Title I programs. She mentioned that the \$1500 cost does not cover the expenses for an IET program, so it would be necessary to discuss if the AJC can cover the cost to understand how to get supportive services. Director Rivera asked that Meredith Barracato share the supportive Service policy with the committee. Chairman Sabater asked for the committee to map out the available services and how to access them.

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Workforce Advantage: Chairman Sabater mentioned that Workforce Advantage had great success with the laptop loaner program with the help of Tina Lopez from the Division of Social Services.

Literacy of New Jersey: Not in attendance

Plainfield Public Library: Scott Kuchinsky said they had around 54 certifications and are recruiting for the fall. The state library uses ARPA funds to duplicate the program developed between the Plainfield Public Library and the Workforce Development Board. Scott Kuchinsky said they are in the review process as to how to franchise these library programs.

Elizabeth Public Library: Had technical issues could not stay on the call.

Union Public Library: Not in Attendance

Elizabeth Board of Education: The Burlington English and the Aztec program was well received by the student. The BOE could get them working outside of classroom hours which is vital to make level gains. Their challenges were testing, retaining, and retention of Students. Director Rivera asked Dr. Mosley if the Elizabeth Board of Education students were integrated with the AJC. Dr. Mosley said they are integrated, but some of the challenges are that the students are working, so they cannot fully participate with the AJC.

Marlene Loff mentioned she wanted to look at the data and see how many of the 900 plus students evening students are. She will like to present this at the next meeting. Marlene added that it's essential to look at whom they are servicing, considering 700 of the 900 students were women.

Chairman Sabater said he could guesstimate that most of the students attend in the evening due to other commitments. In addition, he added that aside from the lack of evening AJC access, there is also a need for language access to address this population. Chairman Sabater asked Marlene if there was a way to identify the language needed. He added a growing Arabic population and the potential to get more individuals from various Arabic countries. Chairman Sabater recommended UCC request from the consortium the various languages spoken by the clients. Marlene Loff mentioned she would have to see if she can pull a report from Laces regarding individual language and nationality.

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VII. Next Meeting

- a. Tuesday October 19th 10:00am
- b. Tuesday November 16th 10:00am

VIII. COMMITTEE ADJOURNMENT