

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTHCOMMITTEE
SCOTT KUCHINSKY, CHAIRMAN
MEETING MINUTES: Wednesday, November 17th, 2021 10:00AM

Committee Members

1. Scott Kuchinsky - Committee Chair, Plainfield Public Library
2. Susana Mateo, Elizabeth Board of Education
3. Perle Almeida, American Job Center
4. Crystal A'Hearn CTE Elizabeth Board of Education
5. Juanita Vargas, United Way of Greater Union County
6. LaChelle Thomas HACE (Elizabeth Housing Authority)
7. Nasrene Mondol, American Job Center
8. Jasmine Lee, Simon Youth Academy
9. Syreeta McClain, Simon Youth Academy
10. Kim Best-Parris, Youth Forward
11. Latoya Bennet, Youth Forward
12. Elizabeth Ramos Union County College
13. Brianna Thomas, Plainfield Board of Education
14. Nicole Soto, Job Corps

UCWDB Staff

Meredith Barracato

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome and Introductions:

Chairman Kuchinsky welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the new committee members from Union County College and Plainfield Board of Education for joining. The new members introduced themselves. The Chairman mentioned that the goal was to review the sub-strategies discussed and focus on how to proceed with the goals. He asked the group to enter all attendees' names in the meeting chatbox.

II. Review and approval of the October 6th 2021 Minutes Committee Meeting minutes:

A motion was made by Crystal A'Hearn and seconded by Juanita Vargas. Motion carried.

III. Youth Voice:

Meredith Barracato reviewed a slide that focused on the SETC initiative in which local Workforce Development Boards should consider incorporating into their committee's youth voices. Meredith explained that this could be in the form of having youth serve on the committees, conducting youth surveys and focus groups, or having youth present to the committee their concerns. Meredith asked if community members are currently conducting surveys or have youth on

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTH COMMITTEE

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their committees. Crystal A'Hearn mentioned she would look into sharing the feedback they received from their program. Juanita Vargas also mentioned that she would ask the youth members the questions on the slide. The Chairman mentioned it would be essential to reach out to the individuals who have dropped out of the program and find out why. Juanita Vargas mentioned that the students they currently have would be honest and give effective feedback. Juanita suggested using Survey Monkey to send out the survey and analyze the feedback. The Chairman asked for everyone to follow up with questions to be included on Survey Monkey. Meredith mentioned she would create a document on Google and share it with the committee members.

IV. Review of Sub-Strategy Recommendations:

Chairman Kuchinsky opened the discussion about the various sub-strategies discussed in the October meeting and asked committee members to provide feedback on the current list in the upcoming slides.

Crystal A'Hearn mentioned that school guidance counselors, workplace learning advisors, social workers, and directors would be the best individuals to get information out to the students. She added that there was a need to train school staff; there are other programs available if the student cannot graduate. The Chairman suggested creating a pitch and piloting the program in one school district. The committee agreed there needs to be a high-level engagement and commitment for students. Juanita Vargas mentioned there needs to be clarity regarding slots, funding, and what programs are being offered.

Latoya Bennet mentioned that Youth Forward assist with transportation and transportation voucher. Juanita Vargas mentioned that she is working with Youth Forward on streamlining the enrollment process. She is hoping to have something that can be shared with committee members to minimize the paperwork. Meredith Barracato shared that NJDOL allows for some flexibility in intake documentation. Meredith Barracato suggested that Latoya Bennet follow up with NJDOL liaison Oswaldo Arango.

Jasmine Lee mentioned how challenging it is to find support for students with language barriers. The Chairman mentioned there is a lack of resources, especially for workforce programs and the literacy programs they are overwhelmed with a great demand.

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTH COMMITTEE

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MEETING MINUTES: Wednesday, November 17th, 2021 10:00AM

The Chairman asked if there is any data on youth with ESL needs. Crystal A'Hearn mentioned that make the Road NJ help undocumented students and keep statistics on the current ESL needs.

Susana Mateo mentioned UCC and prevention links, has the ESL program, and can provide more information for individuals with language barriers. The committee agreed that funding ESL is a high priority for the youth in Union County.

The committee agreed it's crucial to have information on alternative schools for the youth to attend, and that information should be shared with all school districts. Meredith Barracato mentioned she would follow up with a committee member who was not present at the meeting. Juanita Vargas also mentioned the importance of having more on-the-job training opportunities and apprenticeship programs for the youth. Meredith mentioned she would follow up with the youth team to see if they can also begin to work with the youth clients on these initiatives.

The following were the sub-strategies that the committee mentioned were high priority:

- **Identify school staff that will be trained on WIOA programs and eligibility requirements.**
 - Create a pitch for district/high level staff to sell the objectives of the programs available.
 - Verify the WIOA resources that are available.
 - Show the difference between the Youth and Adult services.
- **Establish what the co-enrollment process looks like for youth clients?**
 - Produce visuals for co-enrollment process.
 - Streamline an enrollment process.
- **Identify additional ESL providers within the county to address the language barriers for out-of-school.**
 - Identify ESL funding sources
 - Make the road NJ- ESL data
 - UCC ESL program

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTHCOMMITTEE
SCOTT KUCHINSKY, CHAIRMAN
MEETING MINUTES: Wednesday, November 17th, 2021 10:00AM

- **Creation of a list of alternative schools/programs available to students who are at risk of not graduating.**
 - **Collections of alternative school information**
 - **disbursement among school districts in particular school counselors**

- **Identify apprenticeships and on-the-job training opportunities for the youth.**
 - **Business team will be invited to attend youth committee meetings**
 - **Business team will begin to collect information on OJT and apprenticeship opportunities.**

V. Meeting Schedule 2022:

To be determined.

VI. COMMITTEE ADJOURNMENT