

Union County Workforce Development Board
Adult Education & Literacy Committee
Zoom Meeting- 11/10/2020

Committee Members Present:

Julio Sabater, Committee Chair, Workforce Advantage
Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
Barbara Bagger, NJ Literacy
Meredith Barracato, UC American Job Center

Staff Present:

Lisa Bonanno, UC Workforce Development Board
Elizabeth Paskewich, UC Workforce Development Board

Meeting Summary:

I. STRATEGIC PLANNING SUB-STRATEGIES DISCUSSION

- a. Committee reviewed Union County Workforce Development Board Strategic Plan Goals:
 - 1. Increase Emphasis on Career Pathways/Credential Attainment
 - 2. One-Stop Integration
 - 3. Broaden Use of Technology
 - 4. Expand Access
 - 5. Employer Activities
 - 6. Expanded Use of Evaluation Metrics
- b. Committee reviewed the following Sub-Strategies from the Union County Workforce Development Board Strategic Plan relating to Adult Education and Literacy to determine next steps for the Committee.

II.	CURRENT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS
sS-3	Consider the adoption of computer refresher courses of not only older workers but all customers below sufficient proficiency.
X.	EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
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 funding of our Educational Partners.
XIII.	COORDINATION OF ADULT EDUCATION / LITERACY

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SS-42	Strengthen connections between adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce will be strengthened including expanded use of stackable credentials with co-enrollment with WIOA Title I programs.
SS-43	Continue providing literature, guidance, and training to the Literacy Consortium staff and Committee to further progress in integrating all workforce programs, especially Title I and Title II.
SS-44	The WDB will look to establishing specific policies regarding the sharing of testing resources and the implementation of system-wide assessment.
SS-45	To accelerate the achievement of diplomas and credentials through increasing capacity and coordination.

From the Sub-Strategies listed above the three in which it was decided to approach first include:

- SS-3: Computer skills more important now than before. Accessing any service requires basic computer skills. Digital Divide- many clients are digitally illiterate. A concern is funding: When doing digital skills you are not training for any one occupation. How can we maneuver within regulations to train for basic computers?
 - Accessibility to computers-Some communities have made base level access to computers and internet. Now one computer is not enough and basic internet is sometimes not enough.
- SS-: Develop formalized communication/referral system so clients do not get lost. Develop coordination of literacy in Title I and Title II.
- SS-44: Testing issue to be addressed next meeting- Union County College. Not many facilities are open for testing, very limited options. AJC currently testing remotely.

II. CLIENT SERVICES - ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Union County Workforce Development Board
Adult Education & Literacy Committee
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- a. Workforce Advantage, Julio Sabater- Title II program totally transitioned to virtual. We have now become completely digital as an organization. Greatest challenge has been digital divide. Most students can handle social media, but digital proficiency is lacking. At times students need the one-on-one in person training, over the computer training does not work. We are working to best maneuver the situation. We did lose students initially, but once we got going we have seen an increased retention. Recruitment and retention are much better with our virtual programs.
- b. Plainfield Public Library, Scott Kuchinsky- Trying to scale metrics for just what the situation is. GED in-person testing is available, and full. Majority ESL and GED prep staff is voluntary and have not adapted well to virtual platform so those services are down. We now have an increase of people testing due to lack of work/laid off due to COVID. Also GED passing scores have been lowered, which has helped some. Will still have about 80 certification for computer program coordination with AJC. Teacher to pupil ratio has to be increased online as compared to in-person. We have to re-evaluate what we expect of our clients. More time, more staffing, less results. There is also an increase in paperwork. We are still finding our clients are having an issue attending classes due to childcare issues with the schools being closed.
- c. American Job Center, Meredith Barracato- We are experiencing lower enrollment. Some reasons for this include: childcare, unemployment benefits, and current job market. Unemployment benefits have provided an income that has provided a temporary cushion to some clients. Clients are also seemingly waiting for higher paying jobs due to this. In terms of the Digital Divide, we have more people comfortable using their Cell phone than a computer. This is an issue when programs/assessments are not mobile-friendly. Clients need additional training on an actual laptop/computer.

The Committee discussed the possibility of providing a Laptop to customers in need through Supportive Services or possibility build

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fee within Tuition Cost. There is also discussion on a Laptop Loaner program. WiFi is also an area to look at. It is possible to get a computer bundled with independent provider internet services or HotSpots.

III. LITERACY & DISABILITIES - ISSUES AND CONCERNS

- a. Testing with accommodations can be difficult. With clients who might have an IEP or 504 (youth) now that we are remote any of the accommodations required might require some troubleshooting to comply. It is also harder to provide individual support for clients who require it. All facilities are ADA compliant.

IV. MEETING SCHEDULE 2020 – 2021

Nov 10, 2020 11:00 AM
Dec 8, 2020 11:00 AM
Jan 12, 2021 11:00 AM
Feb 9, 2021 11:00 AM
Mar 9, 2021 11:00 AM
Apr 13, 2021 11:00 AM
May 11, 2021 11:00 AM

V. COMMITTEE ADJOURNMENT 12:30pm