

Union County Workforce Development Board
Minutes Of American Job Center Partners Committee
Large Conference Room, 4th Floor
July 14, 2017 At 10:00am

PRESENT:

Glen Nacion, Chairman, Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Juan Carlos Dominguez, JJJ Distributors
Stan Robinson, Jr., SHR Marketing, LLC
Charles Gillon, Division of Social Services
Susan Eagle, Division of Social Services
Jean Koszulinski, Director, Workforce Operations
Antonio Rivera, Workforce Development Board

COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY:

The American Job Center Partners Committee met to discuss an innovation approach to working with the WorkFirst New Jersey clients managed through the partners. Charles Gillon, Director of the Division of Social Services, briefed the committee on the vision.

Below is a summary of the discussion:

For nearly two decades we have been very good at helping our clients navigate the system through the services we provide. What we have not been successful at is creating and including the right ingredients to engage our clients in becoming self-sufficient and sustainable.

Today this missing ingredient has surfaced in New Jersey, impacting 3,000 individuals who are aging out of Work First New Jersey public assistance services. It is estimated that approximately 200 families in Union County will be aging out, which can impact the standard of living for about 400 children and youth. This aging out process of Work First public assistance services for our clients will continue to impact families in our county at a high cost.

At this stage we have an opportunity to add components that can create an infrastructure with a system. This will engage our clients in Experiential and Reflective Learning to become self-directed taking the initiative in preparing themselves for sustainable self-sufficiency.

Why it matters to expand our clients' developmental growth

Given today's economic climate and the business environment of continuous restructuring to compete, the only thing that is certain for our clients is "change".

Why adding ingredients with a system in the western end of the county is critical:

- Demographic changes in clients coming into our system to receive services are prime age, mid-career and older workers. (See Attachment I)
- Clients are coming from both public and private sectors because their jobs have been phased out. Most of the clients are in need of transitional development to switch to different work fields and industries.

- These clients have lost their work-identity; their skills have become less in demand due to long-term unemployment.
- The long term unemployment has placed them into a "provisional existence state". Whereby, he or she cannot truly plan or establish objectives with goals to aim for a future.
- They have lost a level of emotional self-reliance to meet the problems of life demands they face on a daily basis.
- Currently our clients' initiative to become self-sufficient is tied to performing to what's expected from them to receive the benefits we provide. Today when you ask our clients what they are engaging in doing in the Work First New Jersey program, they will tell you, "I am attempting to find a job so I can get off of welfare".
- As you can see our structured policies dictate how our clients must participate and perform. This means our clients wake up five (5) days per week with pre-determined performance expectations by the services we offer.

Services We Are Currently Providing

I. Levels of Clients coming into our System

Types of Clients

- Prime Age Workers
- Mid Career Workers
- Older Workers

Our clients' primary services focus

- Preparation to Gain Unsubsidized Employment
- Community Work Experience (CWEP)
- Education-to-work — GED / ESL / Training
- Support Services
- Child Care
- SNAP, Cash Assistance & Rental Assistance
- Medical Insurance Benefits
- Transportation — Bus Passes
- Rent subsidy
- Counseling

II. What our Clients are facing coming in for Services

Loss of Self Sufficiency

- Provisional existence / Financial resources depleted
- Diminishing living standards

Personal and emotional barrier deficits

- Experience stress in family relationships
- Loss of self worth
- Loss of trust in self
- Disengaged / detached

- Social change — loss of friends

Barriers / deficits to gain employment

- Long-term unemployment
- Mismatch between skills and attributes demanded by employers
- Change of work fields because of job phase out
- Lack of education

III. Our Client's System to Gain Unsubsidized Employment

- Four (4) weeks of Job Readiness / Life Skills — Job Search
- Resumes
- Interviewing techniques
- Cover letters
- Dress for success
- Work readiness assessment
- Personal image
- Workplace behaviors

Types of Jobs

- Medical / Home Health Aide, Certified Nurses Assistants
- Hospitality / Reservationists
- Call Centers / Customer Services
- Retail / Customer Service, Commission Sales Rep
- (Part time, Contingency, "just in time", seasonal, and temporary work)

IV. Our Clients Preparation for up-skilling at Public Sector Nonprofit worksites

Clients job categories for work experience

- Clerical, Receptionist / Office work
- Maintenance / janitorial services
- Childcare / Teacher's aid, teacher assistant

Worksites

- Salvation Army
- Municipal offices
- Child care centers
- Churches
- Community Based Organizations

V. Our Clients Preparation for transition to Private Sector Employment

Currently we need a system that would enable the clients to switch their mindset from the public to private sector demands because workers are coming out of both (i.e. private sector demands are projects, non-routine work, high level of productivity, contingency work)

What Our Clients Face to Stay Employed

The Changing Nature of Business, Work, and Workplace

In today's world, the structure, content, and process of work has changed:

- more cognitively complex
- more team-based and collaborative
- more dependent on social skills
- more dependent on technological competence
- more time pressured
- more mobile and less dependent on geography

Organizations today are:

- leaner and more agile
- more focused on identifying value from the customer perspective
- more tuned to dynamic competitive requirements and strategy
- less hierarchical in structure and decision authority
- less likely to provide lifelong careers and job security

What's driving The Change

Automation and technology continue to erode the prime-age workers job base, the advancement in global competition; the growth in innovative ways business/industry is using technology continuous to change the nature of how they produce products and provide their services to stay competitive.

The Change in the Nature of Work

The businesses have to restructure to stay agile in order to compete and be able to produce in four areas: thinker, builder, improver or producer.

- Most of the businesses have to have talented, creative, and innovative workers to produce in those four areas.
- Employers have changed the definition of "qualified", requiring workers to come with creative innovation and much more.
- Employers are looking for a core of talented traditional, just in time, and independent contracted workers

Continuous Restructuring Impact on Workers

As a result of these innovative changes many prime-age workers capabilities are being destroyed, reducing their opportunities to make a quality standard of living because they are unable to stay prepared to meet these changes.

- Companies aren't offering stability and security
- People are less likely to remain in one job or area of specialization
- People are less likely to remain employed by the same company.
- Workers have to know the new definition of "qualified" because that's the only way they can insure that they measure up.
- It's no longer enough for the worker to have a special skill or a college degree, work experience or job tenure - now it's more about what you can do with what you have; there is a short life cycle for skills.
- Employer - sponsored benefits disappear. Many companies are no longer taking responsibility for their employees' benefits and work life advancement or mobility
- Employers are not looking for manual labor but for the knowledgeable worker to do knowledgeable work.

Highlighted Top Skills and Values Employers Seek from Job-Seekers

What Do Employers Really Want? Top Skills and Values Employers Seek from Job-Seekers

A recent report by Hansen and Hansen, Ph.D. states that "every employer is looking for a specific set of skills from job-seekers that match the skills necessary to perform a particular job. But beyond these job specific technical skills, certain skills are nearly universally sought by employers.

Numerous studies have identified critical employability skills. We've highlighted some of the skills from these many studies into this list of skills.

Skills Most Sought After by Employers

Communications Skills (listening, verbal, written). - Exceptional listener and communicator who effectively conveys information verbally and in writing.

Analytical/Research Skills. - Highly analytical thinking with demonstrated talent for identifying, scrutinizing, improving, and streamlining complex work processes.

Computer / Technical Literacy. - Computer-literate performer with extensive software proficiency covering wide variety of applications.

Flexibility/Adaptability/Managing Multiple Priorities. - Flexible team player who thrives in environments requiring ability to effectively prioritize and juggle multiple concurrent projects.

Planning/Organizing. - Results-driven achiever with exemplary planning and organizational skills, along with a high degree of detail orientation.

Problem-Solving/Reasoning/Creativity. - Innovative problem-solver who can generate workable solutions and resolve complaints. - Resourceful team player who excels at building trusting relationships with customers and colleagues.

Here is the highlighted list of important categories of values.

Honesty/Integrity/Morality. Employers probably respect personal integrity more than any other value, especially in light of the many recent corporate scandals. - Seasoned professional whose honesty and integrity provide for effective leadership and optimal business relationships.

Dedication/Hard-Working/Work Ethic/Tenacity. Employers seek job-seekers who love what they do and will keep at it until they solve the problem and get the job done. - Productive worker with solid work ethic who exerts optimal effort in successfully completing tasks.

Positive Attitude/Motivation/Energy/Passion. The job-seekers who get hired and the employees who get promoted are the ones with drive and passion -- and who demonstrate this enthusiasm through their words and actions. - Energetic performer consistently cited for unbridled passion for work, sunny disposition, and upbeat, positive attitude.

Self-Motivated/Ability to Work With Little or No Supervision. While teamwork is always mentioned as an important skill, so is the ability to work independently, with minimal supervision. Highly motivated self-starter who takes initiative with minimal supervision.

Willingness to Learn. No matter what your age, no matter how much experience you have, you should always be willing to learn a new skill or technique. Jobs are constantly changing and evolving, and you must show an openness to grow and learn with that change. - Enthusiastic, knowledge-hungry [earner, eager to meet challenges and quickly assimilate new concepts.

Why Engage Our Clients to take the Lead in Developing Themselves to meet Change

The reduction in resources has continued to increase demands on creating innovative ways to prepare our clients with capabilities to return to making a living and a quality life as quickly as possible.

Our county, like so many other counties, cities, and municipalities, are forced to do more with less due to the changing economy and reduction in resources.

Why add ingredients in the western end of the county

Because of the impact changes in the economy are continuing to have on so many families and individuals' well-being today in the western end of the county, and, as well as the shift in the demand for human capital talent performance capabilities. The increasing shift from lifetime employment to lifetime employability is continuing to shorten job tenure affecting prime-age, mid-career, and older workers.

Most of us including our clients have not learned enough about what causes change and what we need to do to stay prepared to meet change.

Business/industry spends time each day figuring out why and how to prepare to meet change. They must do this because of business life cycles of change; their period of growth and recession, keeping in mind these cycles seem to happen every few years.

Keep in mind that our clients' self-sufficiency and sustainability depends on their preparation, similar to businesses. Yet few if any of them have had one day of training or development in order to have a working knowledge of business enterprise systems, business risk operations, profits, changes in the economy, type of jobs, work-career life mobility, government spending and deficits.

What our clients want and are seeking is stability. And, the only way they can achieve stability is by staying prepared to meet the rapid demands of change to sustain self-sufficiency.

The ingredients we need to provide for our clients to develop self-sufficiency

Our client's provisional existence created our "why" we need to add Experiential Learning to our service delivery system in the Western end of the County. This addition will create the ingredients to engage our clients to develop "why", "how" and "what" to seek ways to become self-sufficient. The clients "why" means giving self a reason, a target to shoot. The "how" they can set objectives, develop strategies, and tactics with goals to hit the target. The "what" is the knowledge, skills, abilities, talent and resources needed to continue to hit the target to remain in a self-sufficient mode.

Why "Experiential and Reflective Learning" to Engage our Clients in Developing Themselves.

Because it will mean our clients' engaging in participation, interaction connected to their daily environment, making their learning and development compatible with the real world of changes. Our clients will be driving their own development for themselves, through relevant experience, beyond work related skills. They can expand their knowledge and development processes.

They will derive meaning from direct experience through contact within their environment to anticipated uncertain changes in the work place and the economy.

Their reflective learning will enable our clients to activate prior knowledge and construct, deconstruct and reconstruct to continue to engineer their knowledge into human capital assets.

Behavior Screening System

A screening system can engage them in transacting with themselves, creating their picture of their perception of what they think and feel, about what "I have lost and gained in living my life up to this point."

Our clients can re-center their lives; change their mindset and old programming

This focus can result in clients customizing a plan with a system for their individualized development. The value it can produce is getting them to think that they have to engage themselves as individuals. Because one size does not fit all and they are each different folks with different strokes and they have to ask and answer questions to self: such as:

- Am I in this life to do something? Or
- Am I in this life for something to do?
- What is this something in this life I want to do?

Knowledge Acquisition

Our clients need a component with ingredients that will engage them in knowledge acquisition to have a working knowledge of business enterprise systems, business operations, profits, changes in the economy, type of jobs, work-career life mobility, government spending and deficits.

Knowledge Creation

This component would develop our clients' abilities to engage people with different expertise to target ways to expand and manage new knowledge for multiple usages. This missing link would enable our clients to organize and use knowledge as they acquire it.

Knowledge Sharing

Our clients can develop mobility through learning about other jobs, other work environments, knowing how to increase their knowledge base, getting to know about new places and people, experiencing different lifestyles and expanding their capacity to deal with change; learning how to build relationships, keeping friends, maintaining initiative to consistently rise to new challenges for opportunities.

Skills Acquisition

It is critical that our clients continue to acquire the necessary "skill sets" in order to have the capacity to move between employers in different work fields. Our clients need to have the capacity to develop expertise that makes them attractive to other employers to pursue work-life mobility through internal or external moves because:

- The cream of the crop have already moved into employment. What we are left with are potential employees with multiple barriers to employment. At best, they are average workers but with limited ability. The need or desire for an average worker is over.

- New realities. Knowledge work and knowledge workers are rapidly becoming the majority of the workforce. Jobs are no longer secure —income is no longer predictable. Because "know what" and "know how" knowledge has a short shelf life. Tenure — for the private sector is 4.6 years — for public sector is 7.8 years — (Continues to shorten).
- In today's world, learning is an integral part of earning a living for our clients. Profit in life is made with knowledge, skills, innovation, creativity, adaptability, self motivation, self direction and self leadership.
- Business continues to restructure to remain viable — individuals must do the same. Laid —off workers in their 40s and 50s, whose jobs have been phased out are finding that the skills they developed over many years are not as much in demand as they once were.
- Education for what? ..Retraining for what? Today's individuals cannot be developed in masses; they have to turn to self to search for sources of knowledge and skills, in order to remain a "valuable human capital talent asset".

Self-sufficiency

Every day some individual steps into their boss's office in the morning or afternoon to hear-"I am sorry to have to tell you this but..." The clients we deal with don't get to hear this because they are stuck in programs designed to earn them their cash assistance and their benefits but NOT to prepare them for work or to make them self-sufficient.

Self-sufficient today means develop the whole person not just skills and knowledge. We need a system that our clients can use to learn ways to access resources and develop people interdependency helping working relationships that create ties in and outside their community; so when change continues to come calling they have circles of partners and associates to draw upon if they need a new job, access to resources, help or a means to make a move in a new direction for a better quality of living.

System for our Clients Mobility

We need an entity on the Western end of the County that can customize or pilot a system that will engage our clients to build trust in self and others, as well as enable them to learn how to use Engineering performance tools to manage self for personal growth to develop, and produce results within the daily environment for economic growth, work-life career mobility, family advancement, education-training, social helping relationship and self-renewing capacity building.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00am.