

**Union County Workforce Development Board
Adult Education and Literacy Committee
Union County Administration Building
Large Conference Room, 4th Floor
November 11, 2016 AT 9:00AM**

PRESENT

Julio Sabater, Chairman, Adult Education and Literacy Committee,
Workforce Advantage
Shirley Hollie-Davis, Union County College
Jean Koszulinski, Union County Workforce Operations
Roberto Camacho, Investors Bank
Gloria Durham, Genesis Solutions
Elizabeth Paskewich, Workforce Development Board

MEETING SUMMARY

The Adult Education and Literacy Committee met to discuss and review the adult education and literacy program elements of the Local Area Strategic Plan: 2016-2020. Such adult education and literacy elements include literacy needs, targeted growth sectors, career pathway goals and objectives, stackable credentials, and soft skills. Below is a brief summary of the discussion points.

Literacy Needs

- ***Deepening Educational & Literacy Needs.*** One third of Union residents 25 years of age or older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher and 14.6% have not completed a high school diploma—a rate that varies significantly in both directions among certain municipalities. Across the ten-county Northern region, that rate stands at 12.2%, with fewer than half of the population having received some form of college degree (2010-2014 ACS data).

- Supplementing the significant need for higher education to support a high-tech-based service industry, the need for

basic and technical language proficiency is pressing. In Union County, 44.2% of residents speak a language other than English at home and 20.6% of residents speak English "less than very well" (2015 ACS data). Across the Northern region, the latter percentage drops to 17% (or nearly 794,650), which is still higher than the State's average of 12%.

- The County has within its boundaries many educational resources, with which the Workforce System has developed strong relations over time: A vibrant state university that has been on a steady path of expansion operates within the County, a nationally recognized county college, and dozens of technical training and vocational institutes. In addition to these local resources, four large universities, including two Rutgers campuses, and five county colleges are within a short drive from various parts of the County—not to mention that residents of the County have virtual access to a variety of online training programs.

- Union County identified five primary growth sectors providing significant job growth for the local area:
 - Construction
 - Retail
 - Hospitality & Tourism
 - Health Care
 - Transportation, Logistics & Distribution

- The Workforce Development Board had implemented a targeted approach to more effectively allocate resources and spur the development of increased employment opportunities. Union

County has begun, and will continue to expand two key steps to build career pathways for job seekers: (a) industry-specific job search assistance; and (b) targeted and stackable training for key industry jobs as well as supportive services for job seekers.

- Career pathways training may also provide job seekers with a broad overview of careers in the industry to allow them to plan future career and education moves. Finally, courses are generally accelerated to accommodate the scheduling needs of job seekers and employers. Courses do not follow a traditional semester schedule, but meet more often and at times that are convenient for students.

- S-14a Endeavor to strengthen the career pathways approach by further engaging industry, literacy, and experiential learning solutions to fill talent needs; and results-driven partnerships focused on high-quality, employer-centered collaborations.

- S-14b Support and Expand, more broadly, the State's Talent Development Strategy by aligning resources through planning and service coordination; development of community alliances and employment networks linking One Stop Centers, community partners, and job seekers.

Stackable Credentials

- The Union County WDB will work with its educational partners, training providers, and employers along with One-Stop staff to design **accelerated, contextualized, industry training programs** to allow job seekers to earn smaller

credentials that "stack" together to comprise a more substantial credential. For example, a job seeker may take a course that results in an industry certification and credits that can be used toward an Associate's degree. These programs allow job seekers to enter and exit

- Such stackable credentials training, sometimes referred to as career pathways training, also links a range of technical, basic, job-readiness, and, where needed, ESL skills that are needed for an occupation. Unlike traditional training models, basic skills, ESL skills, and job-readiness skills are often taught alongside technical skills and are taught within an industry context rather than in a generic format. In addition, various training tracks that lead to related careers are often developed together, allowing job-seekers to access credentials for a range of related jobs that lead to higher wages.

- **Career Pathways.** Career Pathways have become the foundation for all occupational training programs offered at the College. Clients and students are provided with career exploration guidance and access to skills and aptitude assessment tools and interest inventories. The Workforce Innovation Business Center staff and Career Coach will work with the trainee to develop an education and employability plan that aligns with a career pathway starting from today and continuing with a long term plan.

- Union County College's career pathways and guidance materials are well constructed in the Allied Health Sciences as a result of its participation, alongside the Workforce System, in the U.S. Department of Human

Services/ACF-funded Health Profession Opportunity Grant. More recent work includes expansion of efforts on both ends of the pathway. Some examples:

- Low-skilled individuals are being provided with basic skills contextualized within an orientation to health careers through a program called "Smart Start". Completion of the Smart Start program then leads to entry into an occupational training program. Individuals completing a Patient Care Technician credential (and some others) are now eligible to test out of portions of the LPN and AS in Allied Health Sciences curriculum, creating a link from non-credit to an associate degree and beyond.
 - The USDOL funded LINGS curriculum is designed as an entry to the TLD career pathway. The New Jersey Department Labor & Workforce Development, Talent Development Center, will continue to provide opportunities in the TLD pathway once the LINGS grant expires next year.
 - The creation of a new associate degree in Supply Chain Management this year allows students who start in non-credit to continue their studies along the TLD career pathway toward an associate degree that is articulated with 4-year programs. The entry-level credentials and associate's degree allows individuals to gain a solid foundation in the industry that is clearly articulated with higher paying management or specialist roles offering promising family-sustaining wages.
- In addition, the Center will purchase a cloud-based software product called Career Coach to aid individuals in researching potential jobs and identifying the training requirements of each. The system will be well versed in all

of the funded and non-funded training programs available in the area and will guide the resident toward selection and entrance into the best program, and will follow up as they complete the program and are placed in employment.

- **Soft Skills.** The Center will continue the prioritization of foundational skills training for all appropriate participants. The County of Union contracted with Union County College Industry Business Institute to develop a soft skills curriculum geared to employers' requirements. It is anticipated that this customized 40-hour soft skills training program will be offered once a month for eight months. Each class will serve a minimum of 10 WIA eligible Adults and Dislocated Workers. The cost per participant is \$800 for the forty-hour program. A new "Soft Skills in Spanish program will be developed this year, to be introduced mid-year.

Integrating education training for bilingual clients became a major point where the committee achieved consensus and requested additional research on the subject.

Further, credentials for Spanish-speaking educated foreigners, all of whom may have achieved a license and/ or credential in their respective country of origin but are not living and working in the United States but do not have a license and/ or credential to work within their respective profession.

These two items require further attention, particularly with the large number of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries arriving in Union County.

Julio Sabater, Chairman of the Adult Education and Literacy Committee, thanked all the committee members and guests and adjourned the meeting at 10:15am.