

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AMERICAN JOB CENTER PARTNER COMMITTEE
KRYSTAL CANADY, CHAIRWOMAN
MEETING MINUTES: WEDNESDAY, April 27th 2022 10:00AM via Zoom

Committee Members

1. Krystal Canady - Committee Chairwoman, The Gateway Family YMCA
2. Colleen Clayton, The Gateway Family YMCA
3. Robert Croom, American Job Center
4. Cathy Waters, Urban League
5. Gino Elmarassy, American Job Center
6. Herb Caesar, NJSBDC
7. Juanita Vargas, Union Way of Greater Union County
8. Michael McLean, NJDOL WFNJ & SNAP
9. Pamela Mata, American Job Center
10. Ed Faver, Division of Rehabilitation Services
11. Jasmine Lee, Simon Youth Academy
12. Hawa Bonds, Youth Forward
13. Nasrene Mondol, Union County American Job Center
14. Perle Almeida, Union County American Job Center
15. Nicole Soto, Job Corps
16. Diah Teiah, Job Corps
17. Jasmine Sowah, Youth Forward
18. Latoya Bennet, Youth Forward
19. LaChelle Thompson, Housing Authority of Elizabeth
20. Catherine Hart, Housing Authority of Elizabeth
21. Diana Calle, Union County Office of Special Needs
22. Marlene Loff, Union County College
23. Tina Lopez, Division of Social Services
24. Veronicah Mwaniki, International Rescue Committee
25. Yunia Labaut, Workforce Advantage
26. Alicia Roman, Elizabeth Public Library

UCWDB Staff

Meredith Barracato
Antonio Rivera
Carolina Marin

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions:

Chairwoman Canady welcomed everyone.

Review and Approval of February 23rd, 2022 Minutes:

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Motion was made by Colleen Clayton to approve the **February 23rd, 2022** Committee Meeting Minutes. Lachelle Thompson provided the second motion. Motion was carried.

Labor Market Trends:

Meredith Barracato reviewed slides regarding the following topics;

- **The Great Resignation Didn't Start with the Pandemic**– Joseph Fuller and William Kerr 3/23/22 Harvard Business Review. Meredith Barracato mentioned there were five major reasons for labor shortages during the pandemic.
- **Top HR Trends and Priorities for HR Leaders in 2022**- Gartner 2022 Meredith Barracato discussed the top 2022 trends Human Resource managers mentioned were their priority for the year.
- **Entry-Level Work as a Stepping Stone, Not an End Point**-The Burning Glass January 2021. Meredith Barracato discussed a report that focused on entry level jobs and youth.
- **Community College Enrollment is down, but skilled-trades programs are booming**- Anya Steinberg and Elissa Nadworny 3/28/22 NPR Meredith Barracato reviewed an article that focused on individuals enrolling in certification programs in trades versus college.

Meredith Barracato then showed a video clip from the Job Doctor Tessa White who discussed company's talent war and the need to shift recruitment, hiring, and retaining practices to meet the needs of a newer general in the workforce. Meredith Barracato reminded committee members all the information presented in the meeting would be uploaded to the Good drive file under Partner Resources. She asked committee members to share with her any information about their program. Chairwoman Canady shared that the information shared made her take a step back and think about the future of employment in her company and ways they can support the new generation of workers. She added COVID has made her team think differently in recruitment and retaining especially since it's been a challenge finding employees.

Cathy Hart said it's been different from when she started at the Housing Authority years ago because it's a change in people's mindset. She added she is concern about housing and affordability for people because there is an affordable housing shortage. Pam Mata added that employers are using recruitment firms to hire their staff and offering employees high salary with no benefits which is a challenge.

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American Job Center Presentation:

Robert Croom shared a presentation of the American Job Center service delivery, performance, and initiatives. Presentation uploaded to google drive for review. Robert mentioned the American Job Center was looking to hire new staff but have had a challenge on attaching them and they hope to have more opportunities in the future.

Cathy Hart asked what was one of the positions in the Walgreens job fair slide. Pam Mata explained the designated hitter position was a person who opens and closes the store. Robert Croom also introduced Nasrene Mondol as the new Program Administrator of the American Job Center. Chairwoman Canady said she was looking forward to hearing more about the progress and changes at the AJC.

Youth Forward Presentation:

Jasmine Sowah and Latoya Bennet did a presentation on Youth Forward services and the Youth Summer Employment Program. Presentation was included in the meeting folder.

Chairwoman Canady informed Latoya someone will get in touch with her to participate as a worksite for the youth. The Chairman shared prior to COVID her program participated in the program which had been successful.

Cathy Hart mentioned her program was awarded by the NJ Department of Labor a Youth Build grant and will be reaching out to the partners to work on developing services. The target group is youth between the age of 16-24. Antonio Rivera mentioned that Robert Croom and Hawa Bonds will need to develop a plan to leverage the adult funding for the youth along side the youth build program.

On the Job Training Policy:

Meredith Barracato reviewed the slides on the new Workforce Development Board On the Job Training Policy. One the Job training OJT provides reimbursements to employers up to 50% of wages (not to exceed \$10,000 over six months) to help compensate for the costs associated with skills upgrade training for newly hired employees. Chairwoman mentioned the OJT program sounds like a great opportunity for many employers to take advantage especially those employers who have had some challenges during COVID.

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Disabilities Committee Update

Meredith Barracato informed committee members Cyndy Walsh Rintzler was not available to attend the meeting and offered feedback regarding the new committee. Meredith Barracato reviewed the following objections for the Disabilities Committee:

- Enhance existing partnerships with educational entities to address the frequent soft skills development for individuals with disabilities.
- Engage employers and industry leaders to broaden the training and service alignment with additional regional Key Industries/Sectors.
- Employer Training to increase full understanding of individual needs of population.
- Reconsider traditional job interviews, educate employers on different ways to hire someone, video, preparing questions, reasonable interview accommodations.

Youth Committee Update

Scott Kuchinsky was not able to attend the meeting but Meredith Barracato gave an update on the progress of the youth committee. Meredith Barracato mentioned the need for the youth program to have more organizations partner with the Youth Forward team on delivering the 14 elements. Meredith Barracato review a slide and discussed each element and asked

Literacy Committee Update

Julio Sabater mentioned that the Literacy Committee is focusing on a few initiatives to ensure Title II clients understand career options once they overcome their literacy and language barriers. Julio Sabater reference all the initiatives that include the following sub strategies;

- Enhancement of career exploration for Title II clients by partner agency. Sharing of tools-Career/interest Inventory/ IEP/ISS
- Procurement of digital tools, such as laptops and Wi-Fi, for clients to use while in training and job search.
- Distribution of AJC orientation for Title II partners to share with their clients.

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- Creation of an AJC WIOA eligibility kit for partners.

Partner Updates

Meredith Barracato mentioned as a follow up to the committee meetings it's important to continue the discussions, to create sub strategies, and action steps and to formal a plan once the guidance is shared with the SETC.

1. Division of Social Service-Tina Lopez mentioned they are open for business and they have restructured the client flow process. She mentioned there is a team member working at the door trying to expedite the client questions immediately. SNAP numbers have increased 40% and TANF/GA have 1200 cases open. Tina Lopez discussed the collaboration between the AJC and CWA to develop a touchpoint system. They are currently hiring.

2. NJ Department of Labor Employment Services (ES)- NA

3. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)- Ed Faver mentioned his program is open by appointment only. They have hired more staff and they are going back to a hybrid system of working from home and will be happening as of July 1st.

4. Simon Youth Academy- Jasmine Lee mentioned their enrollment is 31 students and will have a large number of students graduating. They have resumed some activities throughout the community.

5. Job Corp- NA

6. Youth Corp (United Way of Greater Union County)- Juanita Vargas mentioned they are launching their 3rd cohort of youth and half of the youth have already passed 2 out 4 GED exams and 7 have secured high school diplomas. She added she is looking for referrals.

7. Union County College- Marlene Loff mentioned they are operating in person.

8. America's Small Business Development Center-Herb Caesar mentioned he has a couple of workshops going on virtually and he will pass along the information.

9. Workforce Advantage- Yunia Labaut mentioned their program is working remotely.

10. The Family Resource Network- NA

11. The Gateway Family YMCA- Colleen Clayton are still providing housing, afterschool care, senior care, financial assistance to community. They are open for in person services. They are working with Union Township school district and they are continuing to hire. They have a couple of community events national

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senior and health day, free virtual seminar and all information on their website and events calendar.

12. Plainfield Public Library (PPL)- NA

13. Union Public Library- NA

14. Bridgeway Career Services- NA

15. Literacy of NJ-NA

16. Easter Seals- NA

17. Workforce 55+ Program- NA

18. Urban League-Reconnections- Cathy Waters put an update in the chat box.

19. NJ Reentry Corp- NA

20. Community Services Block Grant- Meredith Barracato mentioned there will be a food drive and will upload flyers in the Google Drive and they will have additional events.

21. Housing Authority of City of Elizabeth- LaChelle Thompson mentioned they are focused on the new Youth Build grant they have been recently awarded. They have been serving 140 clients as part of their program. They also have a summer youth employment program. They are looking to get a mobile market foodbank back started in May. In June they will be hosting an event and asked if any partners wanted to participate in the event. They are going to host a pop up shop for those residents who have small businesses.

22. International Rescue Committee- Veronicah mentioned they are doing a hybrid program and have virtual ESL classes. They are trying to expand their employment program. They have a huge influx of Cuba/Haitian clients that they have been working with.

23. NJ Department of Labor Coordination & Support- Michael McLean mentioned CWA is still doing voluntary services and if anything changes he will let everyone know.

24. Elizabeth Development Company-NA

25. Elizabeth Public Library- Alicia Roman discussed the various programs that are being offered at the Elizabeth Public Library which include basic computer classes, ESL, laptop loaner, public speaking program, girls and STEM program.

Meeting Schedule 2022

Wednesday April 27 th	10:00am
Wednesday June 22 nd	10:00am
Wednesday August 3 rd	10:00am
Wednesday October 19 th	10:00am

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Optional Meeting

Wednesday December 14th 10:00am

COMMITTEE ADJOURMENT