

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AMERICAN JOB CENTER PARTNER COMMITTEE
James Brady, Chairman
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2023, 10:00AM Warinanco Sports Arena
MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members

1. Anthea Williams, New Jersey Department of Labor
2. Carolina Marin, Union County American Job Center
3. Colleen Clayton, The Gateway Family YMCA
4. Crystal Orr, Urban League of Union County
5. Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, Inroads to Opportunities
6. Diana Calle, Division of Family Services
7. Elaine Sandars, Community Food Bank of NJ
8. Hawa Bonds, Youth Forward
9. Ilesha Amour, NJ Department of Labor
10. Jasmine Sowah, Youth Forward
11. Jim Brady, Chairman
12. LaChelle Thompson, Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth
13. Lillian Roman, Union County American Job Center
14. Lily Piatt-Valente, Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth
15. Marissa Caponera, Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth
16. Marlene Loff, Union College
17. Nasrene Mondol, Union County American Job Center
18. Patricia Banks, Plainfield Public Library
19. Perle Almeida, Union County American Job Center
20. Robert Croom, Union County American Job Center
21. Scott DiNardo, Union County Division of Social Service
22. Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
23. Veronicah Mwaniki, International Rescue Committee

UCWDB Staff

Meredith Barracato

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman James Brady welcomed everyone to the American Job Center partners meeting. The Chairman discussed the need to work together and understand what other programs do. He asked everyone who was sitting at a table with two or more colleagues to stand up and go to another table to introduce themselves and discuss their programs. The Chairman gave everyone 20 minutes to talk and then asked everyone to introduce themselves and talk about someone new they met. Committee members went over who they met, what each program does, and how can they work together more. Chairman

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Brady stressed the importance of working collaboratively and how he hopes to help everyone move their programs forward and keep up with the changes.

Partners Snapshot: Meredith Barracato discuss the need for all partners to know what services are available to their clients. Meredith Barracato mentioned that the Workforce Development Board will conduct inventory of partner services. This will be a quick view of information for each partner program. The one sheet document will then be uploaded to the Google Drive and shared with all partners.

Review and Approval of October 19, 2022 Minutes:

Motion was made by Marlene Loff to approve the **October 19, 2022** Committee Meeting Minutes. LaChelle Thompson provided the second motion. Motion was carried.

Strategic Plan

Meredith Barracato provided everyone an update of the strategic plan. She mentioned the plan was published March 13, 2023 and was in the thirty-day public comment phase. The plan can be located on the Union County Workforce Development Board website and will need Board approval on April 12, 2023 meeting. The Union County Workforce Development Board will submit the plan to the State Employment and Training Commission with any public comments. Meredith Barracato mentioned the Union County Workforce Development Board is actively working with its regional partners to complete the Regional Plan by the end of March. Meredith Barracato moved the conversation to the following topics which relate to the strategic plan.

Survey Results: Meredith Barracato reviewed slides which provided everyone with a snapshot of the Employer, American Job Center program participant, program partners, and Department of Human Service Community Needs assessment survey results. Meredith Barracato highlighted some of the common themes such as barriers to employment, supportive service needs, and career service needs. The Workforce Development Board will continuously meet with program participants to ensure their voice is incorporated into the workforce system by conducting periodic surveys, focus groups, and invite clients to participate in committee meetings. Anthea Williams, New Jersey Department of Labor, asked if the Workforce Development Board plan

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is to conduct training to meet the needs for employers in demand occupations. She asked if there is a plan to do a mass training especially for those industries that are always looking for skilled workers. Meredith Barracato mentioned the various strategies that have taken place over the past few years regarding employer engagement, employer assessments, as well as projecting what the needs are for the next five years. Meredith Barracato asked Robert Croom to discuss the American Job Center's business unit strategies. Robert Croom mentioned they are looking at many companies that are in Union County and they are trying to convince the customers what industries are in demand and where can they get hired. Anthea Williams mentioned that in her experience the manufacturing field has a high turnover rate and are in desperate need of workers. She added that there are machinist positions that can not be filled and they know that they will always need to be filled. Robert Croom mentioned that the American Job Center is explaining to customers about the in-demand industries and the opportunities available but it's still the customers choice. Robert Croom discussed the American Job Center's plan on meeting the needs of employers and connecting with new employers such as Coach USA and presenting these opportunities to clients. Anthea Williams discussed the Port Authority event which provide job seekers with the opportunity to learn more about employment at the port and representatives from the Unions were promoting the benefits of working at the Port. Anthea Williams mentioned the need for the youth to participate in those events so they understand the possibilities with different industries. Meredith Barracato discussed that strategic plan's focus on career exploration for the youth. Hawa Bonds discussed the initiatives taken place by the Youth Forward team to present youth with various career options that still focus on the youth's desires such as becoming influencers. Hawa Bonds continued to discuss the youth's challenges and her teams' approach with introducing individuals who work in different occupation such as a Harley Davidson Dealership and the various careers within that organization.

Veronicah Mwaniki asked how can she get her clients from the International Rescue Committee into programs because many of their clients come to the United States with advance degrees. Meredith Barracato mentioned that all partners should be working with the

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American Job Center since they are the primary hub for all career services.

Scott Kuchinsky, discussed employers need to upskill their staff but are not willing to provide their staff the time to take the courses. Employers need to be educated on providing their staff the time to be properly trained. Scott Kuchinsky, also mentioned the troubles with transportation and getting the youth and adults to their testing sites. Meredith Barracato mentioned that supportive services is available to ease the transportation barrier. Scott Kuchinsky, mentioned it's still a challenge when one client needs to take six buses to get somewhere. LaChelle Thompson mentioned that Rutgers University has a transportation independence program. LaChelle Thompson mentioned that her program works with many youth and adults who get overwhelmed with the training program and never move beyond certain steps. LaChelle added that clients have a mindset that focuses on instant gratification and they are not interested in the long-term steps and do not understand you have to complete AB and C to get to XYZ. Marissa Caponera, mentioned that her program can issue all the bus passes to the youth and they will not use them because they would prefer to take Uber and not have to deal with public transportation. She added that her program does not have the resources to provide Uber to all their youth clients. Meredith Barracato shared with the committee feedback from the youth participant focus group which identified that youth did not feel safe taking public transportation especially in some areas and at certain times and that is why they would prefer Uber. LaChelle Thompson agreed that some of their clients have shared that concern. Crystal Orr mentioned that Urban League has worked with a program through Lyft that will allow for clients to get credits if they want to go to job interviews. Nasrene Mondol mentioned the American Job Center has had to adapt the way they sell the programs because many participants now are looking for different career pathway. Scott Kuchinsky, mentioned that he feels like as a whole the committee should not discount this generation as not wanting to do this or that because every generation says it about the previous generation. LaChelle Thompson said that people need to take into consideration the fact that this generation has gone through a lot of situations that has raise mental health concerns among them so she considers them needing a different approach because they are forced to be different.

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Oversight and Monitoring: Meredith Barracato noted the strategic plan asked questions regarding how the Union County Workforce Development Board would conduct oversight and monitoring. Meredith Barracato gave some examples which include:

- Quantitative and Qualitative methods
- Evaluations of Program and Services
- Training and Professional Development
- Implementation of Best Practices and Evidence Base Practices
- Engage in Open and Transparent Communication with Stakeholders

Performance Measures and Accountability: Meredith Barracato then reviewed the program year 2021 and 2022 budget for participant career services. Meredith Barracato noted there were over one million dollars in unexpended funds that would be returned by June 30, 2023. Meredith Barracato mentioned the need to work with partners to be creative and hold each other accountable to ensure funding is being spent. Meredith Barracato added that the Union County Workforce Development Board will be releasing request for proposals to see if partners can work on using funds for client's services. Hawa Bonds noted that for program year 2021 the Youth Forward team was able to spend down all their funding. Meredith Barracato noted that with the support of the Commissioner Sergio Granados, the Youth Forward team were able to have a successful summer youth employment program. Meredith Barracato added that the Youth Forward team will be kicking off the 2022 summer youth employment program and if partners are available to take youth for a summer employment opportunity please contact Jasmine Sowah and Hawa Bonds.

Crystal Orr asked how can her clients tap into the supportive service funding that is available because she did not know this funding was available. Robert Croom mentioned that clients can contact their career counselors to get a referral for supportive services. Meredith Barracato mentioned that the Workforce Development Board will be releasing request for proposals for supportive and career services and encourages all partners to apply. Meredith Barracato added that the

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more partners the Workforce Development Board has at the table the likelihood of the funding being spent. Meredith Barracato mentioned the need for to focus on the clients and needing the American Job Center and the Youth Forward team to report on the characteristics, the client's needs, and opportunities that relate to clients. Hawa Bonds asked where is the information regarding the clients being recorded because all the information on the slide is being captured in AOSOS. Meredith Barracato mentioned that the New Jersey Department of Labor has found inconsistency in the reports from AOSOS. Hawa Bonds mentioned there were some issues in inputting data into AOSOS and how can her team ensure that information is being captured correctly. Meredith Barracato mentioned that the New Jersey Department of Labor has created a number of trainings, policies, and manuals that the Workforce Development Board has included in the strategic plan to ensure the information is being captured in AOSOS correctly. Perle Almeida mentioned that she has looked into FutureWorks and there have been updates and they are now meeting the performance standard. Meredith Barracato mentioned that there should be a focus to increase the numbers of clients in the performance measure because the current number of 18 is not representing the need in the community. Lillian Roman mentioned that they are working with lots of clients and the 18 youth are the only ones that have been exited and are counted in the programs.

Nasrene Mondol mentioned that the American Job Center has become better at keeping track of the clients who have exited because AOSOS is designed to kick individuals off the system when they have not received activities from the American Job Center. Nasrene Mondol also mentioned that partners will have access to Union County Works which allow for all the partners to see how their clients are being served. Scott Kuchinsky, asked Nasrene Mondol if there is a timeline of when the partners will have access to the system because he is excited to use it. Nasrene Mondol mentioned they have been working with Title II providers on how to get started. Carolina Marin mentioned the American Job Center is working on updating the Union County Works website and uploading the on the job training application. Marlene Loff mentioned they had the Union County Works training and it has been helpful but they still do not have access on finding out where the client is in the process and would like to set that up.

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American Job Center Presentation:

Perle Almeida shared a presentation of the American Job Center service delivery, performance, and initiatives. The presentation is located in the meeting folder. Perle Almeida discussed the shift to class size contracts that streamline the process for clients to enroll in a training program. Perle Almeida mentioned that most of the clients are interested in enrolling in a transportation career. Meredith Barracato mentioned that the numbers that are being presented will be considered the old standard and the new standard will now need to include more details on the clients which consist of but not limited to the following items:

- Demographics
- Supportive service need
- Occupation/industry sectors
- Barriers to employment
- Employment outcomes
- Referral sources workshops
- Co-enrollment opportunities

Hawa Bonds mentioned she agrees there is a need to capture the demographics because currently the way the budget is set up there is money for one thing but not the other and this information will allow for there to be a shift at the board level to see where they really need the funding. Is there a way to discuss if funding is in the right place? Robert Croom mentioned for youth the funding can be shifted in the youth budget but can not be shifted from adult to youth. Hawa Bonds mentioned their program faces problems in the summer time when all their money gets used up on work experience and supportive services but then they have out of school youth that they do not have money for because most of their money is in the in school youth funding. Meredith Barracato mentioned the youth program has been working with program year 2021 and 2022 funding and will received program year 2023 funding after July 2023. Hawa Bonds mentioned that program year 2022 funds was just provided to her in March and is already earmarked to be spent. Perle Almeida mentioned that there are new bills being passed which focus on changing the 70/30 percentages that have been placed for in school youth and out of school youth. Carolina Marin discussed the Ikea youth initiative which exposed youth to employment opportunities with different companies. Marlene Loff asked what types of jobs were employers in need of at the health care job fair. Carolina

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Marin listed the various job opportunities. Marlene Loff mentioned medical billing and coding was taken off the New Jersey Demand list and there should be a way to tell the New Jersey Department of Labor that this is a demand in Union County based on the number of hospitals and medical offices. Perle Almeida mentioned there is a waiver that can be requested by Union County but it's a lengthy process and there needs to be supporting documentation showing that there are employers that are willing to hire the individuals. Carolina Marin mentioned they have been looking at those issues as well as the clients who come to the job fairs from other counties. Jasmine Sowah discussed the mentoring program that is run by the Youth Forward program in collaboration with Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. Perle Almeida presented a slide on race and ethnicity. Marlene Loff asked if someone can be a dislocated worker and adult? Perle Almeida mentioned for Dislocated Worker you have to show you are on or have collected unemployment benefits. Perle Almeida mentioned Adult category is based on poverty level and clients need to show proof of income.

Diana Calle, Division of Family Services, mentioned there were a few questions that came to mind as she has sat through the meeting. Diana Calle asked if we know how many of the youth program participants have a disability and if there are any job coaching opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Diana Calle mentioned she gets a lot of phone calls from parents who are asking about services to youth who are aging out of high school. Diana Calle discussed the Inclusive hiring event which had over 190 participants attend but there were 0.04% individuals hired. Diana asked the committee if they thought they were doing enough for individuals with special needs and how can we make sure we are thinking about individuals with special needs when we are doing programing. Meredith Barracato discussed the American Job Center Certification and the accessibility assessment has been completed to ensure services at the one stop is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Cyndy Walsh Rintzler discussed some of the initiatives that have come from the Disabilities Committees and the efforts many of the members have been making to push forward the agenda. Hawa Bonds mentioned that there needs to be more communication on what was done over the past year. She added that the Youth Forward program works with Community Access Unlimited who directly works with individuals with disabilities and does the job readiness activities. Hawa Bonds mentioned they are not the specialist in that area and when they get calls from parents about their children, they will refer those calls to the office of disabilities in the county and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services because they do not want to say the wrong thing and is a sensitive topic. Hawa

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Bonds said they can be doing more and will communicate more of these efforts with Diana Calles program moving forward.

Meeting Schedule 2023

Wednesday, May 17, 2023 9:00am	Warinanco Sports Center 1 Park Drive, Roselle, NJ
Optional Meeting Date Wednesday, June 21, 2023 9:00am	Warinanco Sports Center 1 Park Drive, Roselle, NJ
Wednesday, July 19, 2023 9:00am	Warinanco Sports Center 1 Park Drive, Roselle, NJ
Wednesday, October 18, 2023 9:00am	Warinanco Sports Center 1 Park Drive, Roselle, NJ

COMMITTEE ADJOURMENT