

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
DISABILITIES COMMITTEE – Sub Committee Meeting
Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, CHAIRWOMAN
MINUTES: June 26, 2023 10:00AM via Zoom

Committee Members

1. Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, Inroads for Opportunities
2. Carolina Marin, Union County American Job Center
3. Manny Ramirez, Union County ADA Compliance
4. Melissa Lomax, Family Resource Network
5. Josh Bornstein, UCESC
6. Colleen Collick, Arc of New Jersey
7. Patricia Acosta, Community Access Unlimited

Union County Workforce Development Staff

Meredith Barracato, Policy and Strategic Planning Advisor

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Chairwoman Cyndy Walsh Rintzler begins by expressing gratitude to everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting, acknowledging that everyone is busy with various commitments such as graduations. She emphasizes the importance of the meeting and hopes to proceed efficiently to move on to the next steps. She then invites everyone to introduce themselves.

Westat: Survey of Employer Policies on the employment of People with Disabilities

Meredith Barracato presented a report from Westat, which focuses on a 2018 survey conducted with over 2,000 executives from the top 12 industries in the United States. The survey explored recruitment, hiring, and retention practices for individuals with disabilities. Meredith shared some key findings from the report, including how companies typically recruit through college and university career centers, workforce employment centers like the American Job Center, and advocacy organizations. The report also highlights the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and discusses concerns and reasons why companies might be hesitant to hire them. Meredith notes that these findings align with discussions from the previous meeting, where it was mentioned that many companies are unsure about integrating individuals with disabilities into their organizations. She further mentioned specific concerns raised in the report, such as job safety and task performance. Meredith highlights that the report contains a series of questions (on page 128) that were part of a 20-minute telephone survey.

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Employer Engagement Discussion

Chairwoman Cyndy Walsh Rintzler reflected on the productivity of the previous meeting, highlighting the identified action steps. The next step is to conduct a survey that focuses on understanding what is important to employers and what they need to know to improve the hiring process for individuals with disabilities. The goal is to engage employers and raise awareness about accessing a pool of available workers. Meredith Barracato mentioned that she has received sample surveys from other counties and the New Jersey Department of Labor. She shared her screen to view the sample surveys.

Manny Ramirez and Carolina Marin submitted a series of questions in the chat box which the committee members expanded on and suggested additional questions. Below is a list of questions that were up for consideration based on the four topics: Demographics, Accessibility, Awareness, and Pull In.

1. Please select Industry that best represents your company
2. How many employees work at your company?
3. In which of the following cities is your company located?
4. Where do you look for new hires?
5. Is your company accessible workplace?
6. Is your company accessible to public transportation?
7. What concerns do you have about hiring a person with a disability?
8. Are you interested in diversifying your workforce by employing people with disabilities?
9. Does your business have a process to actively recruit and hire individuals with disabilities?
10. Does your business already employ people with disabilities?
11. Do you know what a job coach is?
12. Are you aware of the various incentives?
13. Please rate your level of awareness on the hiring a qualified candidate with a disability?
14. Do you know what resources are available to hire potential candidates with a disabilities and/or support employee with disabilities?
15. Would You be open to us contacting you about potential candidates?
16. Would you like to participate in job fair?
17. Would you like any additional resources regarding hiring or retaining individuals with Disabilities?
18. Are you familiar with ADA Laws and incentives that support the rights of people with disabilities as well as tax incentives? Yes or No
19. Please check off which of the following resources you are familiar with? List items

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20. Would you like to participate in Disabilities Committee? More specifics. Would you be interested in participating in the Union County Workforce Development Board's Disabilities Sub-Committee whose mission is XXX?
21. Are you familiar with disability employment laws and regulations, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
22. Have you actively sought to recruit individuals with disabilities for job openings within your organization?
23. What challenges or barriers, if any, do you perceive in hiring individuals with disabilities?
24. Are you aware of the benefits and advantages of hiring people with disabilities, such as diverse perspectives and increased workplace inclusivity?
25. Have you made accommodations or modifications to your workplace to accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities?
26. Do you offer training or awareness programs for your staff to promote disability inclusion and foster an inclusive work environment?
27. Have you collaborated with disability organizations, vocational rehabilitation services, or other disability-related entities to recruit or support employees with disabilities?
28. How do you assess the qualifications and skills of applicants with disabilities during the hiring process?
29. Are you aware of any disability-specific resources, incentives, or support available to employers who hire individuals with disabilities? Combine
30. What strategies or best practices have you found effective in integrating employees with disabilities into your workforce and promoting their success?
31. Do you have a designated point of contact or department responsible for addressing disability-related inquiries, concerns, or accommodation requests?
32. Have you encountered any misconceptions or stereotypes about hiring individuals with disabilities, and how have you addressed them within your organization?

Josh raises a question regarding the inclusion of a specific question in the survey aimed at engaging employers. He suggests asking employers if they would be interested in participating in the county's subcommittee focused on supporting increased employment for people with disabilities. Additionally, he proposes

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including a question about their openness to being contacted about potential candidates. Josh believes that obtaining a positive response to either or both of these questions would serve as a green light for further engagement and follow-up, which could be highly valuable.

Chairwoman Walsh Rintzler suggests breaking down question number 11 into more specific and concrete questions. She mentions that in the previous meeting, it became apparent that not everyone is familiar with the concept of a job coach and its availability. Instead of solely asking about the level of awareness regarding hiring a qualified candidate with a disability, she proposes including questions such as: "Do you know what resources are available for hiring a candidate with a disability?", "Are you familiar with job coaches?", or "Would you be open to having a job coach work with a candidate in your facility?" Her suggestions aim to gather more targeted information about employers' knowledge and willingness to engage with specific resources and support systems for hiring individuals with disabilities.

Colleen Collick suggests including a simple question in the survey that asks employers if they know what a job coach is. She emphasizes the importance of educating employers about the concept of a job coach. Colleen highlights that knowing about the support provided by a job coach during the interview process could bring a sense of reassurance and comfort to employers. Colleen believes that this understanding is crucial for employers when considering hiring individuals with disabilities.

Patricia Acosta from Community Access Unlimited suggests including a question in the survey about employers' familiarity with the ADA laws (Americans with Disabilities Act). She believes it is important to assess employers' knowledge of these laws and their implications.

Melissa Lomax proposes expanding on Patricia's suggestion by incorporating other laws such as the Rehabilitation Act and the significance of the ADA in general. She suggests phrasing the question as whether employers are familiar with laws that support the rights of individuals with disabilities. Melissa also suggests including aspects related to job coaches and learning about reasonable accommodations. She acknowledges the challenge of phrasing the question but believes it is an opportunity to condense multiple questions into one. Additionally, she suggests broadening the question to cover employers' familiarity with both laws and incentives, as some jobs offer incentives that support the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Chairwoman Walsh Rintzler wants to ensure that the ADA question does not make employers feel defensive

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but also highlights the existence of incentives and rights for hiring individuals with disabilities.

Melissa Lomax mentioned that out of the original 16 questions, there was a discussion about combining some of them. She suggests merging that question with another especially the one about ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Melissa expresses enthusiasm for some of the new questions introduced by Carolina, particularly those related to training and disability awareness. She believes these questions could provide valuable insights and opportunities for the organization to become more involved. Melissa proposes incorporating these questions into the existing question about awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, possibly streamlining the survey to make it easier for employers to respond. She suggests collaborating separately to refine and choose their favorite questions, as there are currently too many questions (32) that need simplification.

Josh Bornstein expressed concern about the survey becoming too burdensome and potentially affecting people's willingness to participate. He suggested being cautious about the length of the survey and proposes a solution for addressing a specific question about awareness of resources. If participants answer negatively, he suggested sending them an email with the relevant information. He added that this approach aims to avoid adding more questions and potentially making the survey longer, considering the difficulty of getting people to complete surveys, especially if they take more than a few minutes.

Committee members identified three to four questions will be presented under each category. Meredith Barracato will be responsible for creating a draft Google Form survey and sharing it with the committee members to review. Committee members suggested combining a few questions regarding the ADA and incentives not to overwhelm the employers answering the survey. The questions that were selected were highlighted in the presentation located in the Google Drive meeting folder.

The conversation moved on to gathering employer list discussion points. Josh suggested targeting the top 15 largest employers in Union County as a baseline for identifying potential participants for the survey. He suggests expanding the list to include other businesses that committee members may have relationships with, even if they don't fall under the largest employer's category. Josh proposes identifying the appropriate contact persons within these organizations, likely individuals in human resources, diversity and inclusion, or community relations. He suggested that much of this information can be found by researching the

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company's website or using platforms like LinkedIn if the information is not already known to the committee. Mellissa mentioned the need to target more employers in the event they don't get a lot of responses. Josh Bornstein added to the chat box the link to the major employers in Union County. <https://ucedc.com/wpcontent/uploads/2022/10/Major-Employers.pdf> that could be used to target employers. Carolina Marin mentioned she will look at the list of employers she has worked with in the past that have participated in the Inclusive Hiring event that was held last year.

Meredith Barracato mentioned that at the last meeting, Chairwoman Walsh Rintzler suggested releasing the survey in July to align with Disability Pride Month. She also shared that Diana Calle, a committee member and the Director for the Union County Disability and Special Needs department, mentioned that the county is planning to celebrate Disability Pride Month, although the specific details are not known yet. Meredith suggested that more information could be obtained and asked if Manny knew of previous initiatives related to Disability Pride Month. Manny Ramirez mentioned that he is currently working with the Chair (Commissioner Sergio Granados) for the next month's activities. He mentioned an initiative to introduce communication boards in playgrounds across Union County, which are similar to vision boards. Manny offered to share the survey initiative with the chair, if Chairwoman Walsh Rintzler and Meredith think it would be appropriate. Meredith Barracato asked Manny to loop the Workforce Development Board Director, Antonio Rivera into the conversation.

The committee members agreed the survey should be open for 30 days and based on the responses that was received they will create a Frequently Asked Question packet and will do more outreach to employers. Manny Ramirez will follow up with the committee regarding the involvement of the Commissioner Sergio Granados.

Committee Adjournment