

UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PROGRAM YEAR 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Union County Workforce Development Board (UCWDB) proudly presents the Program Year 2023 Annual Report, a reflection of our continued efforts to foster a resilient, dynamic workforce ready to meet the evolving demands of Union County's economy. Guided by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the New Jersey Combined State Plan, our initiatives this year have focused on expanding access to quality employment services, driving innovation in training, and cultivating robust employer partnerships to empower both job seekers and businesses in our community.

This report highlights key achievements, including strategic investments in youth employment, digital literacy, and the enhancement of our American Job Center system. Each accomplishment stands as a testament to our commitment to creating a workforce ecosystem where opportunities are accessible, skill development is prioritized, and economic mobility is a reality for all Union County residents. We invite you to explore the programs and outcomes that define our progress and shape the future of workforce development in Union County.

STRATEGIC PLAN VISION

The Union County Workforce Development Board developed a four-year strategic plan for 2022-2026 in alignment with the New Jersey Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan. This plan was created in response to requirements from the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission under WIOA, which mandated each local workforce board to submit a comprehensive strategic plan every four years.

Our strategic plan focuses on implementing the goals and strategies outlined in the State Plan at the local level. It adheres to the vision, goals, and priorities established by the State for building an effective workforce development system. The plan was developed in partnership with local elected officials and underwent a 30-day public comment period before being approved by both the Union County Workforce Development Board and the Union County Board of County Commissioners.

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Some key elements of our strategic plan include:

- Strategies for engaging employers to identify workforce needs and increase work-based learning opportunities
- Initiatives for supporting career pathways and sector strategies aligned to priority industries
- Enhancing partnerships with education, economic development, and community organizations
- Integrating service delivery and braiding resources across programs
- Expanding access to training, education, and supportive services for youth and individuals with barriers

SETC RECERTIFICATION

On July 1, 2024, the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) approved the certification of the Union County Workforce Development Board (WDB) for the 2024-2026 cycle. This certification highlights the board's dedication to managing workforce development programs in alignment with both state and federal standards.

To achieve certification, the Union County WDB adhered to the guidelines set forth in SETC Policy Resolution #2020-02, which details the procedures and criteria for WDB certification. This policy requires local WDBs to meet specific standards, such as maintaining a membership structure that complies with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 107. Key requirements include ensuring the WDB Chairperson is a business representative and that business members constitute at least 51% of the board.

In addition, the Union County WDB satisfied the requirements outlined in New Jersey Administrative Code N.J.A.C. 12:42-4, which governs the roles and responsibilities of local workforce development boards in New Jersey. The board submitted comprehensive documentation, including strategic plans, performance metrics, and financial audits, to fulfill SETC's certification requirements. By meeting these standards, the Union County

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WDB has secured its certification, empowering it to continue providing critical workforce development services to the community through 2026.

MEMORANUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AGREEMENT

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOLE) has officially approved the Union County Workforce Development Board's (UCWDB) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA), signifying that the UCWDB has met all conditions required by NJDOLE for the 2024-2026 program cycle. This approval confirms the board's compliance with the rigorous state and federal guidelines set forth in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and related NJDOLE policies.

The MOU and IFA are critical components of the UCWDB's operational framework. The MOU establishes a formal collaborative structure among mandated partners—including, but not limited to, Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Title II Adult Education and Literacy; Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services; and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation services. These partnerships ensure that workforce services are integrated and accessible to Union County residents, particularly individuals facing barriers to employment, such as veterans, individuals with disabilities, and long-term unemployed workers. Each partner's roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations are clearly outlined in the MOU, promoting accountability and transparency in service delivery.

The IFA, in turn, delineates the financial commitments of each partner to sustain the shared infrastructure of Union County's workforce system. This agreement specifies how partners will share costs for the American Job Centers (AJCs) and other essential infrastructure, including facilities, technology, and staffing that support seamless service delivery. By securing partner contributions, the IFA helps guarantee that resources are available for the effective operation of AJC locations, maintaining a robust support system for job seekers and employers.

Together, the MOU and IFA lay the foundation for a coordinated and financially sustainable approach to workforce development in Union County. This approval by NJDOLE enables the

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UCWDB to move forward confidently in its mission to provide comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce services to meet the evolving needs of the local economy and community.

CORE VALUES

In Program Year 2022, the Union County Workforce Development Board was committed to aligning its workforce development strategy with the core values outlined in New Jersey Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan. These values, as reflected in the Union County Workforce Development Board Strategic Plan 2022-2026, serve as the guiding principles for driving our workforce development activities. They are as follows:

- **Career Pathways and Industry-Credential Attainment:** We place a strong emphasis on supporting individuals in identifying and pursuing career pathways aligned with their interests and skills. By promoting industry-recognized credential attainment, we enhance their employability and readiness for success in the workforce.
- **Integrated Service Delivery through One-Stop Centers:** We strive to create seamless and comprehensive service delivery by expanding the integration of services within our One-Stop Centers. By bringing together various resources and support systems, we ensure that individuals have easy access to the tools and assistance they need to achieve their career goals.
- **Utilization of Technology:** We recognize the importance of technology in optimizing our operations and enhancing the customer experience. By leveraging technology in our processes, both internally and externally, we improve efficiency, accessibility, and the overall quality of our services.
- **Increased Access to Services:** We are dedicated to expanding access to our services, ensuring that all individuals in our community have equal opportunities to benefit from workforce development programs. We strive to remove barriers and provide inclusive and equitable access for underrepresented populations, promoting greater economic mobility and social equality.

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- **Strong Employer Engagement:** We actively engage with employers to understand their workforce needs and foster mutually beneficial partnerships. By collaborating closely with businesses, we can align our programs and services with industry demands, facilitating job placements and cultivating a skilled workforce that meets the needs of our local economy.
- **Comprehensive Evaluation and Systematic Oversight:** We go beyond national performance standards by implementing robust evaluation metrics and ensuring systematic oversight. By continuously monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of our programs, we can adapt and improve our strategies to better meet the evolving needs of our community.

HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY RESOLUTIONS

In 2023 and 2024, the Union County Workforce Development Board (UCWDB) made substantial strides in strengthening the workforce system through strategic planning, resource allocation, and program expansion. These efforts reflect the Board's dedication to enhancing service delivery, maintaining compliance with federal and state standards, and adapting to the evolving needs of Union County's residents.

Program Funding and Resource Allocation

In Program Year 2023, UCWDB managed a comprehensive \$5.97 million budget, strategically directed toward core workforce initiatives. Funding allocations included \$1.25 million for Adult services, \$1.28 million for Dislocated Worker programs, and \$1.37 million for Youth services. Additionally, \$1.05 million was designated for Work First New Jersey-TANF programs, with \$798,013 supporting General Assistance and SNAP initiatives. This funding structure allowed the Board to sustain critical employment services for a diverse range of jobseekers.

Enhancing the American Job Center System

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A priority this year was strengthening the American Job Center (AJC) network to ensure accessible and high-quality career services across the county. UCWDB appointed the Union County Department of Human Services as the One-Stop Operator, initiating a two-year agreement that promotes operational excellence and service coordination. This partnership, underpinned by an annual investment of up to \$100,000, facilitates career counseling, job search assistance, and training for both job seekers and employers.

An important achievement was the AJC's certification, which affirmed its operational standards in leadership, strategic planning, customer service, and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This milestone reinforces the center's commitment to delivering top-tier workforce services in a manner that prioritizes inclusivity and process efficiency.

Expanding Youth Employment Programs

Recognizing the importance of youth workforce development, UCWDB introduced two targeted programs to support youth employment and education. In partnership with Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, the Out-of-School Youth program has successfully provided education and training to young people who have exited traditional schooling. With a \$375,000 investment, this initiative has helped 75 youth earn high school diplomas and gain vocational skills since 2019.

To complement this, a new partnership with the United Way of Greater Union County addresses in-school youth in high-need districts. With a budget of \$200,000, this program offers an intensive eight-week curriculum that blends educational support with career planning, aiming to support 60 youth annually. This initiative targets students in areas with high absenteeism and low graduation rates, providing vital academic and career readiness resources.

Digital Literacy and Workforce Readiness

Understanding the critical role of digital literacy in today's economy, UCWDB allocated \$84,000 to the Plainfield Public Library to offer digital literacy programs leading to IC3 and Microsoft Office certifications. These programs cater to unemployed and underemployed

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residents in the Plainfield and Elizabeth areas, helping bridge digital skills gaps and improve employability.

Additional investments were made through the Workforce Learning Link program, with \$120,000 allocated to Workforce Advantage and Union College of Union County. These partnerships enhance access to digital skills training and certification, ensuring that residents across Union County can develop essential technology competencies needed in the modern workforce.

Support Services for Career Advancement

To address barriers beyond skill training, the Board implemented a comprehensive support services framework. This approach provides vital assistance with transportation, childcare, housing, and other essential needs, helping jobseekers remain focused on career advancement. The Board also dedicated nearly \$39,000 toward professional development for staff, ensuring workforce service providers are up-to-date with best practices and emerging trends.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance

UCWDB prioritized performance management by implementing the FutureWorks BI platform, enabling data-driven decision-making and enhancing accountability. This investment supports the monitoring of program outcomes, allowing the Board to make informed adjustments that align services with community needs.

Strategic Planning for Operational Continuity

In anticipation of potential funding delays, UCWDB authorized a temporary budget for mid-2024 to ensure continuity of services while awaiting the PY2024 budget finalization. This proactive measure underscores the Board's commitment to maintaining service delivery stability for Union County residents.

Looking Forward

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As UCWDB continues to drive workforce development in Union County, it remains committed to fostering partnerships, expanding access to digital literacy, and delivering high-quality services. The initiatives undertaken this year reflect a comprehensive, responsive approach to workforce development that prioritizes the diverse needs of the community. Moving forward, the Board will continue to support economic growth and career advancement, empowering both job seekers and employers in the region.

This year's initiatives underscore the UCWDB's dedication to building a skilled, adaptable workforce, aligned with the Board's mission to deliver impactful, measurable workforce solutions that foster long-term success.

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

The Union County Workforce Development Board (UCWDB) oversees a range of committees, each dedicated to advancing workforce development services across diverse populations in Union County. Each committee's work aligns with the principles of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), focusing on tailored support, resource management, collaborative partnerships, and accessible opportunities. The following sections detail the contributions and impact of each committee in promoting economic self-sufficiency, skill development, and inclusive workforce engagement.

American Job Center Committee

The American Job Center Committee, under the guidance of the UCWDB, is committed to optimizing workforce services for adults, dislocated workers, youth, and recipients of TANF, GA, and SNAP benefits. This committee plays a crucial role in evaluating and enhancing service delivery across career development programs, ensuring resources are directed toward initiatives with the greatest impact on employment outcomes. Regular assessments help maintain program quality and accessibility while identifying specific barriers faced by vulnerable populations.

By prioritizing collaboration among government agencies, nonprofits, educational institutions, and employers, the committee promotes efficient, coordinated services.

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Performance metrics guide the committee's approach to program accountability and improvement, with targeted outreach and education initiatives ensuring community awareness of available training and support services. Emphasizing inclusivity, the committee also monitors labor market trends to identify emerging job sectors and address skill gaps. These efforts are central to UCWDB's mission to build a capable, resilient workforce in Union County.

Adult Education and Literacy Committee

The Adult Education and Literacy Committee leads efforts to advance literacy and educational programs, fostering economic self-sufficiency through comprehensive educational pathways. This committee develops and oversees programs that address the diverse needs of Union County's workforce, with a focus on credential attainment, skills development, and career advancement opportunities.

Resource allocation is strategically managed to maximize funding for programs that yield meaningful outcomes, particularly those related to credentialing and skill-building for employment. The committee's partnerships with educational institutions, community colleges, and nonprofits ensure a holistic approach to workforce learning, while outreach initiatives strengthen community engagement and access to services. Through rigorous quality assurance and advocacy for equitable policies, the committee ensures that all Union County residents have the support they need to succeed in their educational and professional journeys.

Disabilities Committee

The Disabilities Committee is dedicated to creating an inclusive workforce system that supports individuals with disabilities. This committee works to ensure that all programs meet accessibility standards and provide accommodations as needed, fostering a supportive environment for adults, youth, and those receiving TANF, GA, and SNAP benefits. The committee's work involves designing specialized workforce programs and services that improve employment outcomes and align with the accessibility needs of this population.

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In collaboration with disability service providers and community-based organizations, the committee builds a comprehensive network that offers career guidance, counseling, and other tailored services. Through targeted outreach, resource prioritization, and performance monitoring, the Disabilities Committee promotes equitable access and continuously evaluates program effectiveness. Their strategic goals focus on accessibility, empowerment, and equity, helping individuals with disabilities gain essential skills and secure fulfilling career paths.

Youth Committee

The Youth Committee advances workforce development opportunities tailored to young people, aiming to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed for future success. This committee supports the educational and employment needs of Union County youth, including those engaged with TANF, GA, and SNAP programs, through focused program development and quality standards. By partnering with schools, local businesses, and community organizations, the Youth Committee fosters a supportive network that facilitates career readiness.

With an emphasis on mentorship, career services, and outreach, the committee works to guide young individuals in exploring career paths, gaining hands-on experience, and building professional networks. Regular evaluation of program effectiveness and performance metrics allows the committee to ensure that resources are allocated effectively and that services remain impactful. Committed to empowerment, inclusion, and career preparation, the Youth Committee is instrumental in shaping a workforce ready to contribute to Union County's growth.

Collective Impact

Each committee within the UCWDB is integral to creating a responsive, inclusive, and effective workforce development system. Through their respective missions, committees address specific needs while collectively advancing the board's goal of fostering a workforce that is adaptable, skilled, and prepared for the evolving economic landscape. Their combined efforts drive the success of Union County's workforce initiatives,

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supporting individuals from diverse backgrounds and laying a strong foundation for sustainable career opportunities and economic prosperity in the community.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

The "Program Year 2022 Evaluation of Out of School Youth Program" report for the Union County Workforce Development Board (UCWDB) assesses the performance of the Simon Youth Academy, an alternative high school designed to support out-of-school youth aged 16-24. Operated by the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools, the Academy is located within the Mills at Jersey Gardens Mall and provides all 14 required Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program elements, aiming to prepare students for high school completion, career readiness, and post-secondary pathways.

The evaluation covers program aspects including outreach, enrollment, and delivery of services aligned with WIOA mandates. Highlights include successful tutoring and dropout prevention, leadership opportunities, supportive services (e.g., transportation and utility assistance), and partnerships with businesses for work experience. The Academy also emphasizes comprehensive guidance, adult mentoring, mental health support, financial literacy, and labor market information.

However, the report identifies areas for improvement, notably in the coordination of follow-up services and transition support to post-secondary education or employment. There were noted gaps in data sharing with the Union County American Job Center and insufficient tracking of long-term participant outcomes, making it difficult to assess effectiveness post-graduation.

Recommendations include establishing standardized documentation, enhancing occupational training referrals, creating personalized transition plans, implementing follow-up services, and fostering stronger partnerships for seamless transitions. These actions aim to boost the Academy's impact on at-risk youth by ensuring comprehensive, sustained support through structured communication and improved data practices. The UCWDB also pledges technical assistance to help the Academy and its partners optimize service delivery and compliance.

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The "Program Year 2023 Evaluation of the WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) Program" by the Union County Workforce Development Board (UCWDB) examines the performance of the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) component. This evaluation seeks to address operational gaps, improve Work Participation Rates (WPR), and enhance service delivery in line with federal requirements under TANF and the new metrics established by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, which focus on achieving meaningful employment outcomes for recipients.

The report highlights several critical areas needing improvement. Data reporting issues across various management systems, such as OMEGA and the Family Assistance Management Information System, have resulted in inconsistencies that undermine the reliability of WPR and participant tracking. These data challenges complicate compliance efforts and hinder informed decision-making. Additionally, the report finds that the limited range of employment-directed activities within the program is a significant barrier to fulfilling WFNJ's mission of transitioning recipients to sustainable employment.

The referral process, particularly for linking participants with job readiness resources at partners like Union College and Workforce Advantage, was found to be unclear and inefficient. This ambiguity leads to missed opportunities for clients who might otherwise benefit from these services. Staffing challenges, exacerbated by retirements and operational shifts following the COVID-19 pandemic, have also created gaps in institutional knowledge, impacting the quality and continuity of services. Regulatory changes removing sanctions for non-compliance during the pandemic have led to lower client engagement, further affecting WPR. Additionally, the limited number of Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) sites restricts participants' opportunities for work experience critical to their transition to unsubsidized employment.

To address these issues, the UCWDB has proposed a corrective action plan. The plan emphasizes the need for standardized data collection and reporting tools and provides mandatory training for staff to improve data accuracy. Streamlining the referral process through clearer guidelines, comprehensive communication, and improved collaboration with partners is expected to reduce service inefficiencies. Enhancing employment-directed activities is also a key focus, with proposed partnerships and program expansions to create

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diverse training opportunities. Addressing staffing shortages and knowledge gaps through recruitment, retention strategies, and ongoing training is deemed essential for program stability.

Re-engagement strategies to boost client participation include the use of digital tools, virtual participation options, and additional support services such as childcare and transportation assistance. Additionally, the UCWDB plans to expand CWEP opportunities by recruiting new community partners and establishing a dedicated coordination team to support program effectiveness and provide meaningful work experience for participants.

The report concludes that these targeted improvements, supported by continuous monitoring and evaluation, will enhance program performance, raise Work Participation Rates, and enable TANF clients to move toward lasting self-sufficiency. This comprehensive approach aims to align the WFNJ program with the broader goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, emphasizing accountability, continuous improvement, and data-driven decision-making.

NJDOL POLICY BRIEFS

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) has implemented a comprehensive suite of policies designed to enhance service delivery, streamline processes, and ensure compliance within New Jersey's workforce development system. These policies address key areas, including eligibility guidelines for WIOA-funded programs, co-enrollment and service integration, infrastructure funding agreements, budget guidance, complaint resolution procedures, and more. Each policy underscores NJDOL's commitment to accessibility, equity, and efficiency by setting clear standards that Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and American Job Centers (AJCs) must follow.

By establishing uniform processes, NJDOL's policies ensure that individuals from diverse backgrounds, including underserved and priority populations, can seamlessly access career and training services. This framework aligns with federal and state regulations, supports cross-program collaboration, and provides mechanisms for ongoing technical assistance,

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monitoring, and accountability. Through these policies, NJDOL continues to promote a responsive workforce development environment that adapts to local economic needs and effectively supports jobseekers, workers, and employers across New Jersey.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-1 provides a summary of updated and current workforce development policies effective July 1, 2023. Key updates in Program Year 2022 (PY22) include the Eligible Training Provider List Requirement and Monitoring Procedures, which ensure compliance in work-based learning contracts, and the PY22 Budget Policy, outlining funding allocations for workforce programs. The One-Stop Career Center Partners policy defines roles for effective service delivery, while the MOU and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) clarifies partner funding responsibilities.

The Competitive Procurement Policy establishes transparent processes for selecting service providers, and the American Job Centers Requirements set service quality standards. Updated Poverty Guidelines support eligibility assessments, and the Tuition Waiver Program facilitates access to training for eligible individuals. The Unified Complaint Procedure standardizes grievance processes, and the Data Validation Policy ensures accuracy in workforce records. The Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program supports veterans' transition to employment, while USDOL Resources provide compliance guides. Lastly, the WIOA Transfer and Additional Funding Requests policy defines procedures for reallocating funds across WIOA programs. These updates improve service delivery, transparency, and federal alignment across New Jersey's workforce system.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-2 outlines guidance for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English Language Acquisition (ELA) testing and intake procedures at One-Stop Career Centers. Effective July 1, 2023, it details intake staff roles in quick assessments, routing clients to appropriate services, and ensuring clients are registered in the case management system. The policy mandates the use of National Reporting System (NRS)-approved testing instruments, allowing local areas to select tests that best suit their populations and coordinate training with Title II partners.

Local areas must follow procedures for student intake, including administering CASAS assessments, recording scores in the Literacy Adult and Community Education System (LACES), and developing individualized career plans based on assessment results. The

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document also lists specific approved assessment tools for ABE and ELA, including TABE, CASAS, and BEST, each with designated expiration dates for use. These procedures aim to improve assessment accuracy and support targeted instructional strategies for clients.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-3 outlines the policy for functional alignment within American Job Centers (AJCs) to enhance efficiency and prevent service duplication. This guidance, effective September 19, 2023, provides a framework for the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and One-Stop Operators to establish a seamless statewide service delivery system. The policy promotes formal and functional alignment, where formal supervisors oversee employment conditions, while functional leaders coordinate cross-functional teamwork and service integration across funding streams.

Key functional teams are recommended, including Welcome and Intake, Comprehensive Assessment, Career Planning and Coaching, Skills Development, Transition Success, and Processes and Recordkeeping. Each function addresses specific customer needs, from intake and orientation to skills training, job placement, and supportive services. Functional alignment supports collaborative operations and shared accountability, with team leads coordinating resources and cross-training. This alignment is reinforced by co-enrollment, referrals, and a structured Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among partners, aiming to create a cohesive service network across New Jersey's AJCs.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-4 provides guidance on establishing Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) within the One-Stop system for Program Year 2023 (PY23). Effective September 19, 2023, the policy outlines steps for creating and negotiating IFAs, which support shared costs among partners at One-Stop centers. These costs include physical infrastructure (rent, equipment, security) and virtual services, cross-training, and outreach activities.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) lead the IFA negotiations, beginning with a comprehensive One-Stop budget that identifies costs, services, and space allocation. The policy advises using "proportionate use" and "relative benefit" as bases for partner contributions, which may vary depending on factors such as square footage, customers served, or in-kind services. Reconciliation of the IFA occurs semiannually and annually to

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ensure equitable cost-sharing and alignment with usage. This policy ensures that each partner contributes to the One-Stop infrastructure, supporting seamless service delivery and effective resource allocation across New Jersey's workforce system.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-5 introduces guidelines for service integration and co-enrollment across workforce programs, aiming to streamline resources and maximize support for jobseekers, workers, and employers. Effective September 26, 2023, this policy emphasizes that Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) play a leadership role in coordinating services and negotiating Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) to formalize shared responsibilities among partners.

The policy promotes mandatory co-enrollment across several programs by 2024 to provide participants with broader access to services. Through co-enrollment, multiple programs can contribute to an individual's career and training plans, sharing resources and performance outcomes. The policy also encourages using common intake and assessment forms and cross-training staff to improve coordination and reduce service duplication. Enhanced data-sharing and joint case management processes are essential to this integration, ensuring efficient tracking of participant progress across funding streams. This collaborative approach is intended to create a more effective workforce support network across New Jersey's public workforce system.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-6 summarizes key points from Training and Employment Notice 8-23, issued by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. This notice mandates the display of updated complaint system posters at all one-stop centers by April 1, 2024, with posters available in English and Spanish.

The posters, which outline the Employment Service (ES) and Employment-Related Law Complaint System, must include contact information for each center's Complaint System Representative and the State Monitor Advocate, Allyson Carvajal. Additionally, the posters should provide details for accessing interpretation and translation services. State Workforce Agencies (SWAs) must also ensure the posters are published on their ES

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website's main page by the deadline. The goal is to enhance transparency and accessibility of complaint resolution resources for workforce system participants.

The Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 3-23, issued by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, provides guidance for workforce boards on using federal funds for outreach to underserved populations. It emphasizes affirmative outreach under WIOA, requiring grantees to promote access to services for all protected groups. Allowable outreach methods include advertising in targeted media, collaborating with community groups, and engaging in social media, print, and digital outreach.

Unallowable costs include promotional items and unrelated event expenses. TEGL 3-23 also outlines requirements under the Stevens Amendment, mandating transparency in federal spending disclosures. Additional recommendations cover using QR codes, influencers, podcasts, and mobile job centers to reach broader audiences. Accessibility and multilingual outreach are highlighted to ensure all potential participants can access services. The guidance underscores creating a coordinated, inclusive outreach approach that aligns with WIOA's equity objectives.

The U.S. Department of Labor's TEGL 9-22 provides updated guidance for WIOA Youth Programs, emphasizing eligibility determinations, mental health assessments, virtual work experiences, supportive services, and proper reporting. The guidance allows self-attestation for most eligibility criteria and highlights the importance of removing barriers for youth participants, recommending assistance with document acquisition.

Local boards are encouraged to integrate mental health assessments and provide professional development, including mental health training. TEGL 9-22 permits using WIOA funds for devices and broadband for virtual experiences and suggests aligning with the Affordable Connectivity Program. Additionally, supportive services like food are allowed if essential for participation, provided local boards have relevant policies.

For pre-apprenticeship programs, both work experience and occupational training elements can be reported. Clear reporting distinctions for counseling services, follow-up

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services, and mentoring are also outlined to improve data accuracy and participant support.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY23-7.1 provides guidelines for access to America's One Stop Operating System (AOSOS) for partners and vendors within the state's American Job Centers. Effective immediately, this policy ensures secure data entry, confidentiality, and cybersecurity compliance for all users, including contracted Title I service providers.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are responsible for managing access requests, tracking users, and monitoring compliance with confidentiality and cybersecurity requirements. All AOSOS users must complete a confidentiality agreement, cybersecurity training, and annual certification. Procedures for initial access requests include submitting forms for background checks and adhering to data protection protocols. LWDBs must also enforce policies for transmitting Personally Identifiable Information (PII) securely and maintain oversight of data accuracy in AOSOS, contributing to comprehensive state and federal reporting.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY24-1 outlines sanctions procedures for Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to address non-compliance with state and federal workforce program requirements. Effective immediately, the policy specifies corrective actions, penalties, and an appeals process to ensure accountability across New Jersey's workforce system.

NJDOL and the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) administer sanctions through a phased approach: initial technical assistance, formal follow-up, corrective action plans, and potential penalties if issues remain unresolved. Corrective actions may involve technical training, documentation submissions, and operational adjustments, while penalties could include budget modifications, provider restrictions, and restructuring LWDBs. An appeal process allows LWDAs to challenge sanctions by submitting documentation to the NJDOL Commissioner, with further appeal options available at the federal level. This structured approach promotes compliance and performance standards in New Jersey's workforce development system.

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The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY24-2 provides budget guidelines for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) funds, detailing requirements for Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) financial planning. Effective July 1, 2024, the guidance specifies the roles of LWDBs in managing state allocations, reporting budgets, and tracking expenditures.

Key budget elements include administrative cost limits, direct service expenditure recommendations, and reporting obligations via the IGX grants platform. NJDOL requires adherence to expenditure guidelines for program activities, workforce training, and support services. For compliance, LWDBs must notify NJDOL of any line-item changes exceeding 10% and meet monthly reporting deadlines. NJDOL emphasizes budget planning resources and oversight processes, ensuring alignment with both WIOA and WFNJ program objectives.

The New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice WD-PY24-11 consolidates eligibility guidelines for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Effective immediately, this policy aligns with One Stop partner programs to ensure accessibility without unnecessary barriers. It highlights flexibility in documentation, permitting self-attestation for most eligibility elements and deferring work authorization verification for non-employment services. Priority of Service is reinforced for targeted groups, especially under the Adult program, emphasizing a streamlined intake process to support co-enrollment and comprehensive service access for eligible participants across multiple programs.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

In Union County, New Jersey, the unemployment rate from July 2023 to June 2024 reflected both local economic shifts and broader state and national trends. Beginning at 5.10% in July 2023, Union County's rate remained steady through August before experiencing a slight decline to 4.90% in September 2023. This was in line with a similar stability at the national level, where the unemployment rate held at around 3.5%, and at the state level, where New Jersey's rate hovered near 4.70% to 4.80%.

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The winter months brought a modest increase, with Union County reaching 5.40% by January and February 2024, while New Jersey’s unemployment rate stabilized around 4.80%. The national rate, more insulated from regional industry-specific fluctuations, maintained its 3.5% average throughout this period. Union County's rate gradually decreased to 4.40% in April, briefly aligning with New Jersey’s modest declines. However, by July 2024, Union County’s rate rose again to 5.90%, indicating local challenges distinct from the national trend.

This trend of fluctuations in Union County may be attributed to several factors, including seasonal employment cycles, shifts in major local industries, and regional economic adjustments, underscoring the complexities influencing local job markets.

Below is a monthly comparison of unemployment rates across Union County, New Jersey, and the United States:

Month	Union County	New Jersey	United States
July 2023	5.1%	4.8%	3.5%
August 2023	5.3%	4.9%	3.8%
September 2023	4.9%	4.5%	3.8%
October 2023	4.8%	4.5%	3.8%
November 2023	4.6%	4.4%	3.7%
December 2023	4.7%	4.5%	3.7%
January 2024	5.4%	5.2%	3.7%
February 2024	5.4%	5.1%	3.9%
March 2024	5.1%	4.8%	3.8%
April 2024	4.4%	4.1%	3.9%
May 2024	4.8%	4.5%	4.0%
June 2024	5.1%	4.8%	4.1%
July 2024	5.9%	5.4%	4.3%

These comparisons emphasize how Union County’s unemployment rates are subject to more pronounced variability than national averages, highlighting the influence of localized economic conditions on employment dynamics.

PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA No. 10-16, Change 1- Operating Guidance for The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (August 23, 2017):

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“Under section I 16(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, there are six primary indicators of performance:

1. EMPLOYMENT RATE - 2ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT:

The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit);

2. EMPLOYMENT RATE - 4TH QUARTER AFTER EXIT:

The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit);

3. MEDIAN EARNINGS - 2ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT:

The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

4. CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT:

The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program;

5. MEASURABLE SKILL GAINS:

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The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment.

6. EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS:

WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) requires the Departments to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. The Departments are piloting three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community.

- Approach 1-Retention with the same employer-addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;
- Approach 2-Repeat Business Customers- addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; and
- Approach 3-Employer Penetration Rate- addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.”

NEGOTIATED PERFORMANCE GOALS

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires states to negotiate performance targets for core programs like Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services. As the Union County Workforce Development Board, we work closely with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development to establish fair and equitable goals for outcomes like employment rate, median earnings, credential attainment rate, and skill gains for our local area based on economic conditions, participant characteristics, and service delivery

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strategies. We utilize past performance data, local area benchmarks, and projections to inform negotiated targets that align with state and regional goals. The negotiated goals drive strategic planning and accountability to optimize services and outcomes for Union County job seekers and employers. We view the negotiation process as critical for continuous improvement and maximizing the impact of our WIOA investments. Chart A outlines the Program Year 2022 and Program Year 2023 negotiated performance goals for adults, dislocated workers, youth, and Wagner-Peyser.

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**CHART A: PROGRAM YEAR 2022 & PROGRAM YEAR 2023
PERFORMANCE GOALS**

ADULT	PY 2022 Targets	PY 2023 Targets
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	59.90%	60.90%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	54.70%	55.70%
Credential Attainment 4th Quarter After Exit	75%	76%
Measurable Skills Gain	61.30%	62.30%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$ 5,400	\$ 5,500
DISLOCATED WORKER	PY 2022 Targets	PY 2023 Targets
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	58.10%	59.10%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	58%	59%
Credential Attainment 4th Quarter After Exit	71%	72%
Measurable Skills Gain	53.10%	54.10%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$ 6,800	\$ 6,900
YOUTH	PY 2022 Targets	PY 2023 Targets
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	61.40%	62.40%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	68.20%	69.20%
Credential Attainment 4th Quarter After Exit	62.70%	63.70%
Measurable Skills Gain	67%	68%
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$ 3,062	\$ 3,162

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CHART B: PROGRAM YEAR 2023 ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
UNION COUNTY WIOA PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES PY 23

ADULT	(A) PY 2023 Targets	(B) PY 2023 Actual	(C) Achieved Target	(D) Exited AJC
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	60.90%	69.01%	49	71
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	55.70%	67.74%	42	62
Credential Attainment 4th Quarter After Exit	76%	82.93%	34	41
Measurable Skills Gain	62.30%	86.36%	19	22
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$ 5,500	\$9,138.48	49	49
DISLOCATED WORKER	(A) PY 2023 Targets	(B) PY 2023 Actual	(C) Achieved Target	(D) Exited AJC
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	59.10%	76.64%	82	107
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	59%	76.11%	86	113
Credential Attainment 4th Quarter After Exit	72%	76.06%	54	71
Measurable Skills Gain	54.10%	96.49%	55	57
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$ 6,900	\$11,466.39	82	82
YOUTH	(A) PY 2023 Targets	(B) PY 2023 Actual	(C) Achieved Target	(D) Exited AJC
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit	62.40%	36.96%	34	92
Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit	69.20%	55%	55	100
Credential Attainment 4th Quarter After Exit	63.70%	14.10%	11	78
Measurable Skills Gain	68%	100%	21	21
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$ 3,162	\$1,892.30	34	34

(A) Performance goals established by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

(B) Actual performance achieved in Program Year 2023 by AJC Column (C) divided by Column (D)

(C) Number of participants that achieved the targeted performance goals.

(D) Total number of participants exited from the program by the Union County American Job Center.

(E) Percent of goals achieved is a measure of the actual percent achieved relative to the target goals Column (B) divided by Column (A).

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CLOSING

In conclusion, the Union County Workforce Development Board's work in Program Year 2023 reflects our unwavering dedication to building a skilled, adaptable workforce aligned with the needs of local employers and the aspirations of Union County's residents. As we look to the future, UCWDB remains committed to enhancing workforce development strategies that promote economic growth, career advancement, and sustainable employment pathways.

Our achievements are made possible by the shared commitment of our partners, stakeholders, and the broader community. Together, we will continue to adapt, innovate, and respond to the evolving landscape, ensuring that Union County remains a place of opportunity and prosperity for all. Thank you for joining us on this journey toward a brighter, more inclusive workforce future.