

Workforce Development Board of Middlesex County Inc.

Quarterly Meeting January 25, 2022 (Held electronically Zoom.)

Members Present:	Gloria Aftanski, Kyle Anderson, Amy Bellisano, Marie Bonamassa, Joanne Coffaro, Robert Davis, Dan Frankel, Sherri Goldberg, Paul Hiler, Thomas Iveson, Melissa Lewis, Poo Lin, Jose Montes, Miriam Ruiz, Jill Schiff, Marc Schweitzer, Thomas Sommers, Timothy Timberlake, Lourdes Valdes,
Designees:	Laura Veron (for Angela Mackaronis)
Excused:	Gabriel Lavigne, Rich Liebler, Chanelle Scott McCullum,
Absent:	Sandy Castor, Elayne McClaine
Staff:	Jasmina Dizdarevic, Claudia Dorsch, Shamara Gatling-Davila, Kevin Kurdziel, Dennis McPartlan, ,Guerol Saintilma, Martin Schamberger, Diane Seavers, Melinda Walton
Guests:	Chrissy Buteas (NJBIA), Savannah Barnett, Elizabeth Conte, Nydia Pacheco, Wes Petteway, Liana Volpe, Anthea Williams, "908-306-6618"

1) Call to Order

- a) Pledge of Allegiance..... Lourdes Valdes
- b) Roll Call..... Paul Hiler

2) Welcome and Introductions

- a) Open Meetings Public Record Act Lourdes Valdes
 - i) *Notice of this meeting pursuant to the "Open Public Meetings Act" NJSA 10:4 has been complied with and shall be entered into the minutes of this meeting. Please be advised that this meeting is being recorded for the purposes of accurately recording the minutes of this meeting.*
- b) Approve of the Minutes from the July 27, 2021 Meeting. Paul Hiler
 - i) A motion to approve the minutes from the October 27, 2021 meeting was called for by Marc Schweitzer and seconded by Marie Bonamassa. The vote was called and was unanimous for approval as written.

3) Chairperson's Report Lourdes Valdes

- a) Covid-19 has had a large impact on all services at the One Stops, bringing case management, job recruitments and many others to our clients virtually. The health and safety of our staff and customers are the main priority of both the Dept. of Labor and the County Administration.
- b) A budget presentation will be made for the half-way point of Program Year 2021. Our services for training and filling vacancies for businesses are still needed.
- c) Unemployment in the County stood at 4.7% (20,600 people) in November and at 4.2% nationally and 6.6% for New Jersey.
- d) WDB will be meeting with John Pulomena, County Administrator to discuss working collaboratively to help us align with Destination 2040.

4) CEO Report Kevin Kurdziel

- a) Funding Opportunities. "NJ Good Jobs Challenge." We will partner with, but not be the lead, with the NJ DOL and US Economic Development Authority on this. Our focus will be on the central area with an emphasis on the Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution sector. The northern region will be focusing on the Healthcare sector and the Southern area on both Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing. Middlesex County is the only Workforce Development Board in the state to be chosen. The proposal is due January 27 and we will be providing budget information letters of support from local businesses to support our endeavor. The decision should be made by March/April. We will bring a Project Lead on board to manage this.
- b) OJT Funding. This work-based learning opportunity is usually done through the NJ DOL but has been shifted to the locals. We are awaiting the Notice of Award for the exact dollar amount and expect to insert the

approximately \$150,000 into the County budget by June. It is part of a statewide strategy with GSETA and EDSI to funnel funds to the local areas which will give us additional resources for us to help businesses.

- c) MOU NJ CCC/GSETA. This will further enhance relationships with the colleges and will help us focus on the needs of industry and business. We already have a good relationship with Middlesex College but in general this will formalize our partnership with the College and give more visibility to local WDBs. One Stop Career Centers must meet the needs of businesses in order to help job seekers with career pathways, etc. and this helps us to leverage the resources of the College and possible additional funding opportunities through the consortium.
- d) SkillUp™ Connection Sites. Agreements have been formalized with two libraries (Sayreville and South Brunswick) and we hope to get more on board soon in order to have a greater presence in the communities. We had started this pre-pandemic and are getting it up and running again. This program was based on suggestions made in the Heldrich study done earlier. We provide technical assistance for the structures already in place to the library staff so they can direct patrons to the proper resources and monthly workshops. It may be possible to partner with community and faith-based organizations also. We have also requested American Rescue Act funds from the County for marketing for this program. Jennifer Gramajo from our staff has been assigned to oversee this project and Dennis McPartlan will continue to reach out to the libraries.
- e) LinkedIn Partnership with WDB. We are looking at two offers available from LinkedIn that might help us with recruiting for our businesses and real-time data for job placement efforts. “Recruiter” which would let us reach out directly to organizations, and “Talent Insights,” a group on LinkedIn which could allow us to see information on where our clients work that they list on their profiles after leaving our services. We are looking into getting help with funding from the state and GSETA and perhaps the County. The County would need to go through the procurement and tech review process, but the County Administrator likes the concept. We will use a six-month pilot program costing \$37,000 to evaluate the usefulness of this for our business/job placement data.
- f) 2020 Annual Report. The Annual Report is almost completed and should be ready for distribution by the end of February.
- g) Committees. The WDB Committees have been reconfigured and are starting their 2022 meetings. Assignments were given at the last WDB meeting.
- h) Additional Topics. Mr. Kurdziel also discussed his request for an additional \$1 million funding from the County from the American Rescue Act fund for development of a “Small Business Academy” to help entrepreneurs start or expand their businesses. It would be run out of an office in Cranbury along with WDB staff. Funds from this grant need to be used by December 2026. Going forward, the One Stop Career Centers will be seeing their footprints reduced as customers are showing a preference for virtual services eliminating the need to travel to our offices. We had planned on starting this prior to the pandemic and it fits in with the County’s Destination 2040 plans. Dan Frankel asked if the Board members could do anything to further the cause with the County, but Mr. Kurdziel said he did not see a need at the moment but would let them know if he thought it could help.

5) **Mid-Year Budget Presentation**.....Claudia Dorsch

- a) The budget spreadsheet was sent by email ahead of the meeting for review.
- b) Information contained is as of December 31, 2021 and shows the amount of funding received, how much has been disbursed or obligated, as well as the percentages involved.
- c) At this point, we have spent or obligated 45% of our funding with 123 ITAs written. Last year, while we received less, we were only at 32% obligated and 28 ITAs written. However, by the end of PY2020 we did spend 95% of our funding and wrote 100 ITAs.
- d) We received more funding this year than last year and are on track to spend most of it. We can carry over up to 20% of Adult, Youth and Dislocated money into the next Program Year. WFNJ money may not be carried over, but must be spent or fully obligated by June 30 and spent by December 31.

6) **Operations Update**

- a) Most of our work is being done virtually, but Federal Funding still requires documentation and we are working on customer comfort with this.

- b) WFNJ programs have been taken in-house as of August 31, 2020. A hard launch occurred in January for TANF/SNAP participants with our curriculum entitled “Empower to Work.” It started as a virtual 4-week job search and will eventually be hybrid. It can be extended beyond the 4 weeks for up to 26 weeks for more extensive help if needed. As of February 1, 2022, WFNJ recipients will be mandated to participate, so we expect numbers to increase.
- c) The Opportunity Partnership Grant, with the Dept. of Labor used for the 911 Dispatcher Training Program with dual certification, is going well. From September to December we had 13 enrollees and hope to increase that to 15 when another session starts in February. Special thanks were given to Martin Schamberger for his work on this project including a short video coordinated with the East Brunswick Police Department about this training.
- d) A need for training for “Supply Chain Management” was identified by Joanne Coffaro and Aileen Vega at the College and a grant funded contract for classroom size training was developed. A number of participants have completed the training and we will be starting another hybrid session in March.
- e) The grant application for Pathways to Recovery was submitted for another partnership with the Mental Health Association of New Jersey.
- f) Our Reentry efforts continue.

7) Business Solutions Update Shamara Gatling-Davila

- a) From July through December they had 23 events, one with Perth Amboy was in-person and the rest virtual. A webinar on Entrepreneurship was presented as well as resume help being given by the Team. We have found that Premier Virtual is helpful since applicants can remain in contact with the employers even after the event, unlike with Zoom. The Good Jobs Challenge letters have been held up because of employers need for approval from their legal advisors. If anyone on the Board is in the TLD sector and would be able to provide a letter, please contact Ms. Gatling-Davila for information on how to do so.
- b) Mr. Kurdziel added that we are now placing a bigger emphasis on small businesses and that we have embraced the new technologies needed. People are not just resigning from the work-force; the trend is more of going into business for themselves, and we can help with that.

8) Old Business. None

9) **New Business.** Melyssa Lewis spoke about County’s Human Services Advisory Committee, which is mandated by the state to advise and plan, and do needs assessments for the Human Services side. It is made up of providers, consumers and consumer advocates and is in particular need of members from the two latter categories. Applications are available. Please contact her if you, or anyone you know, would be interested. They are open public meetings and meet via Teams six times a year.

10) **Public Comment.** None

11) **Adjournment.** A motion to adjourn was made by Amy Bellisano, seconded by Joanne Coffaro, and the meeting was adjourned.

Handouts:

- No physical meeting packet was prepared, all items were emailed ahead of the meeting:
 - Agenda
 - Minutes from October 27, 2021 meeting
 - Designee Form
 - YAC and Literacy Committee Reports
 - SkillUp™ Report
 - Fiscal Report
 - Business Solutions Report
 - WDB & Committee 2022 Meeting Dates
 - Membership Directory

The next meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2022 at 9:00 AM

More information will be sent before the meeting.