



County of Mercer Workforce Development Board

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Virgen Velez
Acting Director

Brian M. Hughes
County Executive

Keith Secrest
Chairperson

WDB General Board Meeting ♦ Chairperson: Keith Secrest

November 1, 2022 ♦ 12:00 pm (Zoom) ♦ Meeting Minutes

Attending:

Keith Secrest (Kinetics), **Anthony Carabelli** (Mercer County Department of Economic Development), **Mary Gay Abbott Young** (Rescue Mission), **Marygrace Billek** (Mercer County Department of Human Services), **Kathy Fiery** (Health Care Association of NJ), **Carmen Gates** (African American Chamber of Commerce), **Peg Gould** (MCCC), **Veronica Jones** (NJ DOL), **Katherine Kish** (Einstein's Alley), **JoAnn Koon-Smith** (PSE&G), **Amanda Modale** (NJ DOL), **Dave Nash** (MCTS), **Scott Needham** (Princeton Air), **Dr. Deborah Preston** (MCCC), **Melissa Tenzer** (Dress for Success), **Pete Tindall** (Homasote), **Latoya Wilson** (Middlesex College)

Staff: Virgen Velez, John Raines, Kassia Bukosky

Welcome

Keith Secrest opened the meeting and welcomed the group. Introductions were made.

Approval of August 26, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Scott Needham made the motion to approve; Melissa Tenzer seconded the motion. There were no oppositions and the motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Executive/Oversight Committee Report

Mercer WDB Policies – DOL requires the creation and Board approval of a series of policies listed below. A summary outline was emailed and shared onscreen. The summary was divided into two components: those policies that are mandated by the Federal and State government as written and those that the Board can discuss and revise prior to voting.

The WDB had previously approved (1/26/2021) the Follow-up and Support Services for Youth. Services are provided based on need and must be documented in the customer's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) plan. The policies outlined below were discussed

Supportive Services – Adult & Dislocated Workers

- Ensure there is a plan to ensure the services outlined are realistic based on government's restraints.
 - Relationships with community partners (i.e. Child Care Connection) and state agencies (NJ Transit) have helped make services attainable; some services are incorporated in the service (i.e. books for *training*)
- List is broad enough to allow the OS to explore possible options for varying cases without needing to seek approval in every instance

ITAs

- Board must create a policy to govern the use of ITAs. A policy has existed operationally where they have always been approved by MCOTES
- The Board has some flexibility in determining the maximum to be allowed for training – traditionally has been \$4,000 statewide plus \$1,500 for related expenses (fees, books, testing)
 - Customers incur no financial costs; the OS contracts directly with vendors to provide training

Selective Service Requirement

- Customers that have not registered are provided with a WIOA applicant statement to state the reasons they are not registered; they may have been unaware – determination is made whether failure to register was willful or not to deem training eligibility

Definition of “Requiring Additional Assistance”

- Previously referred to as the “6th Barrier” identified by the local area
- Will allow more customer to be served if they did not meet the DOL-mandated barriers

*Correction: Family Services will be changed to Division of Child Protection and Permanency

Work Experience, Stipends & Incentive Payments

- Allows the provision of stipends to offset certain expenses for customers while they are in training
- Incentive payments not based on attendance; based on classroom participation; the Provider would provide benchmarks, etc.

Work-Based Learning Opportunities

- New DOL definition – includes transitional jobs and incumbent worker training (not previously provided)
- Similar to a paid internship; will attract employers

AJC Certification & Annual Assessment

- An assessment tool needs to be developed to determine the effectiveness of the OS services provided

Incumbent Worker Training

- Priority will be given to employers located in Mercer County, and those located outside Mercer County whose workforce are primarily from Mercer County
- Employer discussion will be had to determine the type of training that either the employer or its employees need – no other criteria needs to be met

Conflict of Interest & Code of Conduct

- This has been in existence in all aspects of the OS operations and extends to Board members

Out of County Training Services

- WIOA is a national program, but when training funds are limited, priority will be given to Mercer County residents; non-residents will be referred to their local OS for services

Voting for “Requiring Additional Assistance”:

- Motion to Approve made by Peg Gould and 2nd motion made by Marygrace Billek
 - Motion passed with no abstentions

All approved policies will be sent to NJ DOL as approved and posted on the WDB website.

Soft Skills/Work Ethic WDB Statement

- Statement will be shared with employers and vendors
- It was suggested that a “plus/minus” evaluative tool should be utilized when customers are in training
 - The current evaluation tool will be reviewed and incorporate points from this statement
- It was suggested that the statement be shared with customers to assess the achievement potential
 - Staff will follow up with presenting to a focus group of customers from a current vendor for input
- It was stated that we need to make certain that soft skills are explicitly taught in the curriculum if customers are going to be evaluated on their attainment of them
- It was also stated that the foundation of this statement is woven into the core curriculum by NJ DOE Standards
- It was shared that one of our members’ organization provides soft skills training in specific areas to other community-based agencies, and surveys the youth to ensure that they understood the content
- It was stated that all WFNJ contracts will incorporate the Soft Skills Statement; tools have to be explored to gauge how effective the deliverables are

Voting to accept “Soft Skills/Work Ethic WDB Statement”:

- Motion to accept the Soft Skills Statement was made by Melissa Tenzer and seconded by Scott Needham
 - Motion passed with one abstention by Marygrace Billek
- It was suggested that we should form an ad-hoc committee to research additional information and make recommendations to amend statement on an on-going basis as needed

New Member Recruitment

The goal is to have 6-8 additional members from the private business sector join the Board.

- Capital Health, NJ Manufacturers, PSE&G, Princeton Mercer Chamber are some of the companies that are being recruited

New potential members at today’s meeting include: Pete Tindall (Homasote) and JoAnn Koon-Smith (PSE&G)

Scott Needham encouraged current members to refer any possible members to Melissa Tenzer, Anthony Carabelli and himself for follow-up.

Committee Reports

Advanced Manufacturing – Scott Needham

The last meeting was held on September 12th.

- Dr. Laura Sosa provided information regarding a grant for NIMS certification
- NJMEP hosted a Manufacturing Day on October 7th; National Apprenticeship week will be celebrated beginning November 14th – each state will be providing various events highlighting apprenticeships

Disabilities - Virgen Velez (for Scott Elliott)

The last meeting held on October 13th.

- Presentations will be held for employers to help demystify preconceived notions and highlight the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities
- NJBIA hosted some workshops and we will utilize some of their content to assist with our mission

Health Care – Kathy Fiery

The last meeting was held on September 21st.

- The Healthcare Advisory Board is aligning the requirements with the national requirements, making it more feasible for CNAs to become instructors
- MCTS announced that they hired a pre-nursing instructor

Literacy – Peg Gould

The last meeting was held on October 5th.

Update on HSE testing:

- PSI took over for ETS in administering the Hi-Set test
 - The exam is challenging; digital calculator on the test does not function
 - There are many issues – testing on content not taught in schools; documentation to schedule testing, registration snafus, etc.
 - A meeting has been scheduled with PSI, NJ LWD and testing agencies across the State to discuss how to address and remedy the issues that are hindering individuals in obtaining their HSE
- The committee will work on determining some deliverables around the “work ethic” component of the Soft Skills statement

Youth Investment Council

The last meeting was held on October 11th. Report is under One Stop Updates

Local Governance

- Two key areas of local governance:
 - Separation of Board and Operations, and the procurement of career services and OS operations
 - The timeline for implementation is July 2024
 - More information will be provided at the January 2023 meeting
 - Regional plans are due January 31st and the local plan is due March 31st
 - Issues that need to be included in the plan will be brought to the individual committee meetings
 - A public hearing will be held for comment prior to submission of the plan

One Stop Updates

- Discussions are being had with LWD regarding the opening of the OS to the public on a walk-in basis; currently customers are seen by appointment only

Information on the Summer Youth Jobs Connection – Kassia Bukosky

- 60 diverse registered employers; 20 participated in the past
- Camps and daycare centers remain the largest source of positions
- 338 youth applied and 131 were accepted – the majority being high school students
- Power Point presentation with pictures were shared

Job Fair (In-person)

- It was held on October 26th at the Cure Arena from 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- 108 registered employers from all and 91 attended
- 528 customers registered and 300 attended (estimated)

Meeting Adjournment

A motion to adjourn meeting was made by Scott Needham; seconded by Kathy Fiery.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: **January 24, 2023 (12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.)**