



## 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**

**July 25, 2023 ♦ 12:00 pm (Zoom) ♦ Meeting Minutes**

#### **Attending:**

**Keith Secrest** (Kinetics Industries), **Mary Gay Abbott-Young** (Rescue Mission of Trenton), **Anthony Carabelli** (Mercer County Office of Economic Development), **Kathy Fiery** (Health Care Association of NJ), **Carmen Gates** (African American Chamber of Commerce), **Katherine Kish** (Einstein's Alley), **Lesley Jack** (NJ DVRS), **Scott Needham** (Princeton Air), **Dawn Paquette** (NJM Insurance Group), **Dr. Deborah Preston** (MCCC), Latoya **Wilson** (WCR Consultancy)

**Guests:** Daniel Correnti (NJ Industry Partnership), Jill Marcus (MCCC), Jessica Mulkey (MCCC)  
Dr. Gonzalo Perez (MCCC)

**Staff:** Virgen Velez, John Raines, Iliana Ivanov, Chiara Tramo

#### **Welcome**

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

#### **Approval of April 25, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Mary Gay Abbott-Young made the motion to approve; Katherine Kish seconded motion. There were no oppositions and the motion to approve the minutes was approved.

#### **Mercer County Community College Update** – Dr. Preston & Dr. Perez

Dr. Perez is in the new title position of Vice-President of Workforce. He will oversee various workforce initiatives

- Community and Education Program (Trenton Campus)
  - Title II Consortium that will be managed by Jill Marcus
    - Funding received for year 3 out of 5
    - GED/ESI/IET (pre-apprenticeship) components
- Fee-based Division of Lifelong Learning, managed by Jessica Mulkey
  - Partnership with Capital Health to offer Trenton resident students a maximum of \$5,000 toward noncredit tuition to pursue credentials in allied health careers; available to cover supportive services (child care and transportation)
  - Goal is to encourage individuals to stack credentials and work towards degrees in health care

- The Mercer Institute, overseen by Jessica Mulkey
  - Focus is on workforce, corporations and companies
  - Work closely with the companies' HR department to customize and tailor training programs to their specific industry needs – also can include soft skills (emotional intelligence, leadership), budgeting; and hard skills (Word, Excel, etc.)
  - Princeton University, NJBIA and Firmenich are currently participating
    - Employers must have their office in NJ and have a minimum of 10 employees in order to qualify for free services
- All of the workforce development activities are being honed in to provide consistent quality services and allow for collaborations with community partners

MCCC continues to be very involved in the *NJ Colleges Pathways collaborative*.

It was noted that under WIOA, the WDB can set aside up to 20% of funding for incumbent worker training. Employers can select the training entity and the training is paid through WIOA.

### **NJ Industry Partnerships (Manufacturing)** – Daniel Correnti

*The Next Gen Model*: Businesses are at the center of the table; focus is on ensuring that business get what they need either directly or by referral to other entities.

The other two Industry sectors are *Life Sciences*, led by Jim Harris and *TDL* (Transportation, Distribution and Logistics) led by James Gabriel.

Key highlights from Manufacturing Summit held in May:

1. Training, Education and Skills
2. Train the Trainer
3. Marketing and Outreach
  - Flyer is being created that will have the QR code to access the manufacturing video that was developed by the Council of Vocational Schools
  - Flyer will be in sections – jobseeker (career info, CTE school info)

### **Executive/Oversight Committee Report**

Working on reaching the 51% private employer membership mandate. Recruitment will be the focus over the next couple of months.

The State is currently auditing the OS financial records to ensure proper allocation and expenditures for PY 19, PY 20 & PY 21.

### **Committee Reports**

*Advanced Manufacturing* – Scott Needham

The last meeting was held on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

- Manufacturing State event was held at the Trenton War Memorial building on May 4<sup>th</sup>; approximately 600 in attendance; there were great panelists – good networking
- The Central Jersey Industry Partnership Summit was held on May 6<sup>th</sup>
  - Eleven to fifteen companies attended
  - Members still being recruited

Princeton Air has hired their first female service technician. She intends on entering their apprenticeship program.

### *Disabilities Issues - Scott Elliott*

The last meeting held on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

- Kim Fisher (MCCC) made a presentation
- Job Fair on May 24<sup>th</sup> was very successful – 500 jobseekers and 93 employers were in attendance
- Lesley Jack (DVR) provided an update
- Update on Business services was provided
- ADRC update was provided by Reed Thomas (MC Human Services)
- PCIL will be providing driving classes, utilizing a simulator
- A representative from MCSSS Project Adults is being sought

\*\*Mary Gay Abbott-Young suggested drafting a letter for Peg Gould, thanking her for her years of service.

### *Health Care – Kathy Fiery*

The last meeting was held on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

- MCCC representative does a great job with her contributions to the committee
  - Two open houses were held in March at MCCC to renew awareness for the Trenton campus
  - Update was provided on the Trenton Neighborhood Initiative funds from Capital Health System
  - Pharmacy Tech apprenticeship opportunities with Penn Medicine
  - MCCC committed to recruiting students, clinical sites and an instructor for CNA training

May 11<sup>th</sup> marked the end of the public health emergency.

June 5<sup>th</sup> marked the end of the vaccination requirements for long-term care, as well as hospitals.

June 12<sup>th</sup> the Governor rescinded the vaccination requirements for staff that work in long-term care facilities

- All of these changes have resulted in an uptick of jobseekers

The State continues to educate CNA instructors and Skill Evaluators.

The committee is seeking for new members, especially from a hospital.

### *Literacy – Virgen Velez*

#### *Early Mercer Reads*

- Hybrid format was initially planned, but because many child care centers were still not allowing outside visitors, video recordings were submitted by volunteers and available to centers and the general public via a link
- There were 26 uploaded videos which were viewed 296 times through the end of June
- Next year, in-person readings will be revisited; video recordings may be not be feasible because publishers only gave permission during pandemic period

A Literacy Chair needs to be appointed in light of Peg Gould's retirement.

Adult Education Literacy Week is held in September. Literacy services are marketed via flyers.

*Youth Investment Council – Latoya Wilson*

The last meeting was held on June 13<sup>th</sup>.

- In PY22, there were 35 Out-of-school youth served by Isles through a WIOA contract
  - 13 achieved their HSE; 5 obtained employment; 3 received other credentials
- Thirty-five youth enrolled in the Youth Career Connection paid internship program through the OS
  - Twenty youth successfully completed the program
- The SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program) received 446 applications
  - Youth can earn a maximum \$3,000 stipend over 8 weeks at \$15.00/hr.
  - Forty-nine worksites offered 181 positions
  - Metrix Learning provided the soft skills component “Skill-up”
  - The SYEP operates from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>

Latoya participated as a Reviewer in the OS RFP (Request for Proposals) process. It was very informative and worthwhile. Isles was recommended to receive funding to provide services for Out-of-School youth. The proposal is pending approval by the Mercer County Board of Commissioners.

- A Career Awareness event is being planned for August/September
  - Target population will be high school graduates who have no immediate plans to go to college, need career development, training, and/or job assistance
  - Format will be virtual consisting of a general session with breakout session
  - Presentations will focus on labor market information, job search techniques, and training options
  - Careers in advance manufacturing will be highlighted along with other opportunities offered at MCCC
  - Send any suggestions to Virgen

Latoya attended a 2-day Pathways summit in Atlantic City and recommends that other committee members attend. Credentialing was a major focus. “Credentialing as you go” program was suggested as a viable means for youth. Another discussion was how to improve workforce offerings at community colleges. AI needs to also be addressed because it is affecting how job training is taking place.

This committee is also recruiting new members.

*Mercer County Office of Economic Development – Anthony Carabelli*

- A business grant under the Rescue Recovery funding just expired
  - It funded 362 grant awardees for a total of \$3.5 million
- A new funding program will be launched on August 1<sup>st</sup> for businesses that traditionally would not qualify for bank loans
- Another new initiative launching in August will offer business with 30 or less employees an interest rate of 0% on 5-year loans

Katherine Kish inquired what services are available to assist mature workers re-enter the workforce?

What services are available to assist immigrants?

- We will have internal discussions and for potential job fairs; it would be difficult to do direct outreach – maybe utilize social media, churches, senior centers, etc.
- Dawn agreed it was worth exploring; NJM however does not have many part-time positions
- MCCC has met with Interfaith RISE (Refugee and Immigration Self-Empowerment) to discuss educational opportunities
- ESL classes at MCCC are in high demand; more classes are being offered next month to address the waiting list
- Almost a 1/3 of business in NJ are immigrant entrepreneurs; important to meet needs
- The NJ Business Immigration Coalition has approximately 50 members; including Chambers of Commerce, corporations, law firms, unions, etc. Focuses on how business can be an important factor in immigration reform and policy.

### *Local Governance Plan Update - Virgen Velez*

- The Plan submitted to the State emailed to members
- A resolution to have an RFP (for the separation of the WDB and Career Services) has to be approved by the Mercer County Board of Commissioners
  - The RFP has to be released in early 2024 in order for services to be effective 7/1/24

### *One Stop Operator Report – Carmen Gates*

- Monthly Partner meetings continue to be held, with the focus on improving communication, referral process, customer satisfaction, etc.
  - The next meeting is scheduled for August 15<sup>th</sup>
- On-site job readiness workshops are collaborated with NJDOL
- Career coaching and resume writing webinars were hosted in conjunction with the Job Fair held in May
  - DOLWD staff attends the customer orientation to share information about their services
  - New MOUs will have to be drafted; MOU will be effective January 1, 2024

### *PY 2023 Budget – Virgen Velez*

- The WDB will be asked for a conditional approval because the NOA (Notice of Award) has not been received for the PY 23 monies (technically started 7/1/23)
- A comparison in funding allocations for PY 20 thru PY 22 and what is expected for PY 23 was presented
- Monies for TANF and GA will be rescinded by the State; lack of spending was caused by the pandemic as WFNJ recipients were not required to participate in activities

### **Board Vote to give the Executive Committee authority to *conditionally approve* the budget upon receipt from NJDOL**

- The motion was made by Latoya Wilson and seconded by Dawn Paquette
- The motion carried unanimously and was approved

### *PY 22 Common Measures Performance – Virgen Velez*

Common Measures breakdown was shared onscreen

- 11 out of 14 measures were exceeded
- Improvement is needed with *Adult Skill gains, and also Youth Skills gains*
- Great data over all

### *One Stop Updates – Virgen Velez*

\*Review emailed One Stop Services Report for information/data on the following areas:

- Customer Flow
- Jobseeker Services
- Business Services
- Training Services
- Youth Services
- SYEP
- Workfirst NJ Services

- Early Mercer Reads
- 2023 Spring & Fall Job Fairs

Members were encouraged to request any information of interest that is not currently included in the reports provided.

### **Announcements**

Keith encouraged continued full attendance at future meetings, especially in light of so many agenda items.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn meeting was made by Katherine Kish seconded by Scott Needham.

The meeting adjourned at 1:21 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING:            October 31, 2023 (12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.)**