



County of Mercer Workforce Development Board

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Christian Estevez
WDB Director

Dan Benson
County Executive

Keith Secrest
Chairperson

WDB Quarterly Committee ♦ Chairperson: Keith Secrest

October 29, 2024 12:00 p.m. ♦ Zoom Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Keith Secrest, Chair (Kinetics Industries); **Carlos Hendricks** (Outreach); **Melissa Tenzer** (CEO Dress for Success); **Lesley Jack** (DVRS); **Latoya Wilson** (YIC); **Dena Mottola** (NJCA); **Gonzalo Perez** (MCCC); **Damaris Cruz** (NJDOL WIOA); **Anthony Carabelli** (Economic Development); **Pat Shump** (DOL); Scott Needham; **Joseph Claffey** (MCCC); **Patricia Robertson** (DOL); **Terrell McCain** (DOL); **Dawn Paquette** (NJM)

WDB/ MCOTES Staff: Christian Estevez, Chiara Tramo, Jamelette Negron, Eddie Roberts, Susan Rauscher

Welcome & Introductions

Christian Estevez opened the meeting at 11:57 a.m. and welcomed the group.

Melissa makes motion for the approval of minutes, Latoya seconds; all in favor

MCCC

- Updates on the Trenton Neighborhood Initiative, funded by Capital Health, which offers non-credit workforce programming for Trenton residents
- The initiative has supported 37 students in various health professions programs, with \$70,000 spent on tuition and books for FY 24
- For FY 25, 13 students have passed through the program, with \$20,189 spent on tuition and \$1,200 on books
- The college is also working on a coalition with Middlesex and Raritan Valley Community Colleges for aseptic biomanufacturing training, funded by a large donation
- The mobile lab for aseptic training will be placed at the JKC campus, providing pathways to jobs at Johnson & Johnson, Novartis, and other companies
- The college has started a CDL training program, with three students in the first class and plans to expand to class B in the spring
- Partnering with Candlelight, a jazz club in Trenton, to host events and bring jazz to the campus
- The community and education training program have expanded to 17 ESL classes, with a new culinary IET program for advanced students

Economic Development

- The county is moving forward with a 0% interest rate loan program, with approximately six or seven more loans to fund
- A veteran's event is scheduled for November 14 at the Mercer County boathouse, in partnership with the New Jersey Veterans Chamber of Commerce
- The county has allocated \$1 million in ARPA grant funding for economic development, with two categories: signage and facade improvements, and a grant rebate program
- The grant rebate program will offset costs for business owners, such as bookkeeping software and accountant fees, up to \$1,000 annually
- The county is also working on a registered agent program to help fund business-related expenses for the first two years, up to \$10,000 annually

WDB Issues/Updates

- The transition from the previous administration and the focus on closing out audits and evaluations was discussed
- Looking to involve more staff and collaborate with other workforce development boards
- Start setting goals and objectives for the coming year
- Updates on the advanced manufacturing program, with Douglas Cooley as the new instructor
- A summit is planned for February 12 at the Mercer County Conference Center, focusing on the New Jersey manufacturing skills initiative and virtual reality demonstrations
- Empowerment House and WorkWell to support returning citizens in workforce training

Disability & Healthcare

- Discussion on the committee's focus on Project Search and the need for consistent transportation representation
- Good participation within the program and hoping to expand
- Developing apprenticeships in healthcare and pathways for incumbent workers to upgrade to higher-level jobs was discussed
- The healthcare committee is working on strong initiatives with the community college, including CNA programs and pathways

YIC

- The committee is excited about new members and plans to build on the summer program and introduce youth to various training programs
- Involvement with the New Jersey Pathway and a conference in Atlantic City in June 2025
- Focus on collaboration and setting goals for the coming year

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30pm

Next meeting: **January 28, 2025 at 12:00pm-1:30pm**