

# NEW JERSEY MERCER COUNTY

## Local Area Plan for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

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2025 -2027



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## **Introduction:**

The Mercer County Workforce Development Board's (WDB) strategic vision aligns with the vision and goals of the State and regional Central Jersey Partners (CPJ) plans. The Mercer WDB is committed to developing a highly competitive workforce that will allow employers to attract, retain, and grow area businesses. Through the provision of policy development, guidance, planning, and oversight, the Mercer WDB will ensure that the Workforce Development system partners are responsive to the needs of jobseekers and employers in this County through four (4) Core Values.

Core Value 1 – Driving Investments Based on Industry Needs - The WDB, primarily through its committees, will continue to work with the workforce development partners to ensure that the services and activities of the workforce system are meeting the needs of employers.

Core Value 2 – Meeting Jobseekers Where They Are - Addresses the need to identify key industries in the Mercer County region that characterize occupation growth opportunities where county citizens may realize full-time employment.

Core Value 3 - Equipping the Workforce for Employment - Addresses the need to increase and strengthen communication and collaboration regarding employment requirements and prospects between the WDB and local and regional employers. This will be accomplished by the development of a communication plan with a focal message linking local and regional employers to the WDB as the potential primary provider of their workforce for the greater Mercer County area.

Continued collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce and the Industry Partnerships are both essential to equipping the workforce. Strengthening and leveraging relationships with local businesses in growth sectors and our educational institutions shall continue to be a priority.

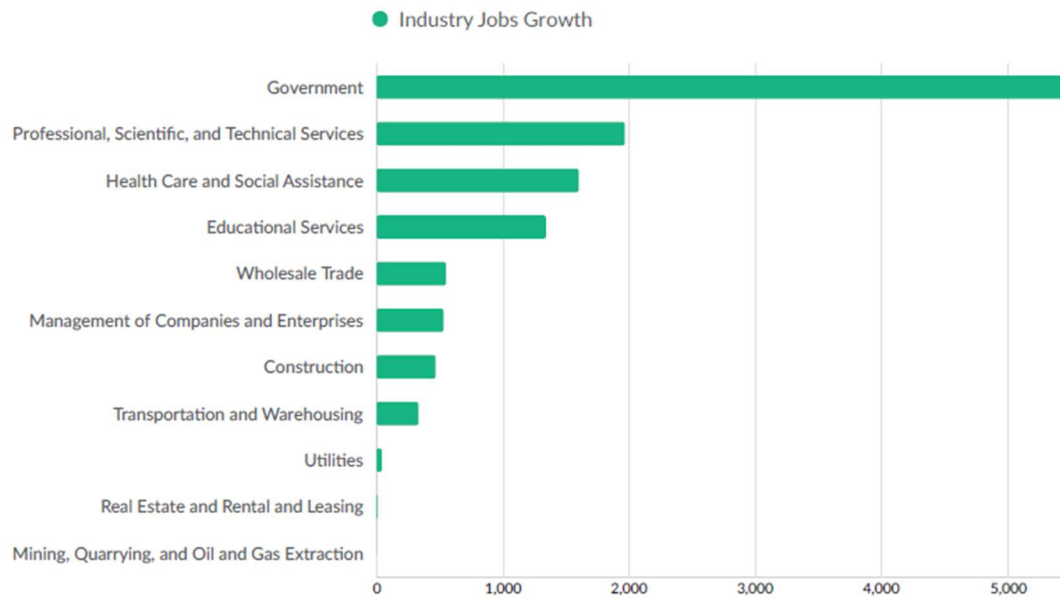
Core Value 4 - Increasing System Accountability - WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs are both held accountable to standards set by Performance Measures. Each local area is bound by standards set by USDOL and the State. The WDB looks beyond the required measures to identify additional measures that may be necessary to evaluate vendor performance.

The WDB Executive/Oversight Committee will continue in its role as a mechanism to assist the One-Stop Career Center in assessing local programs, ensuring their alignment with labor market needs. This committee will continue to meet making certain all resources that support the workforce development system are carried out as expeditiously and efficiently as possible.

# I. Regional and Local Workforce Strategies

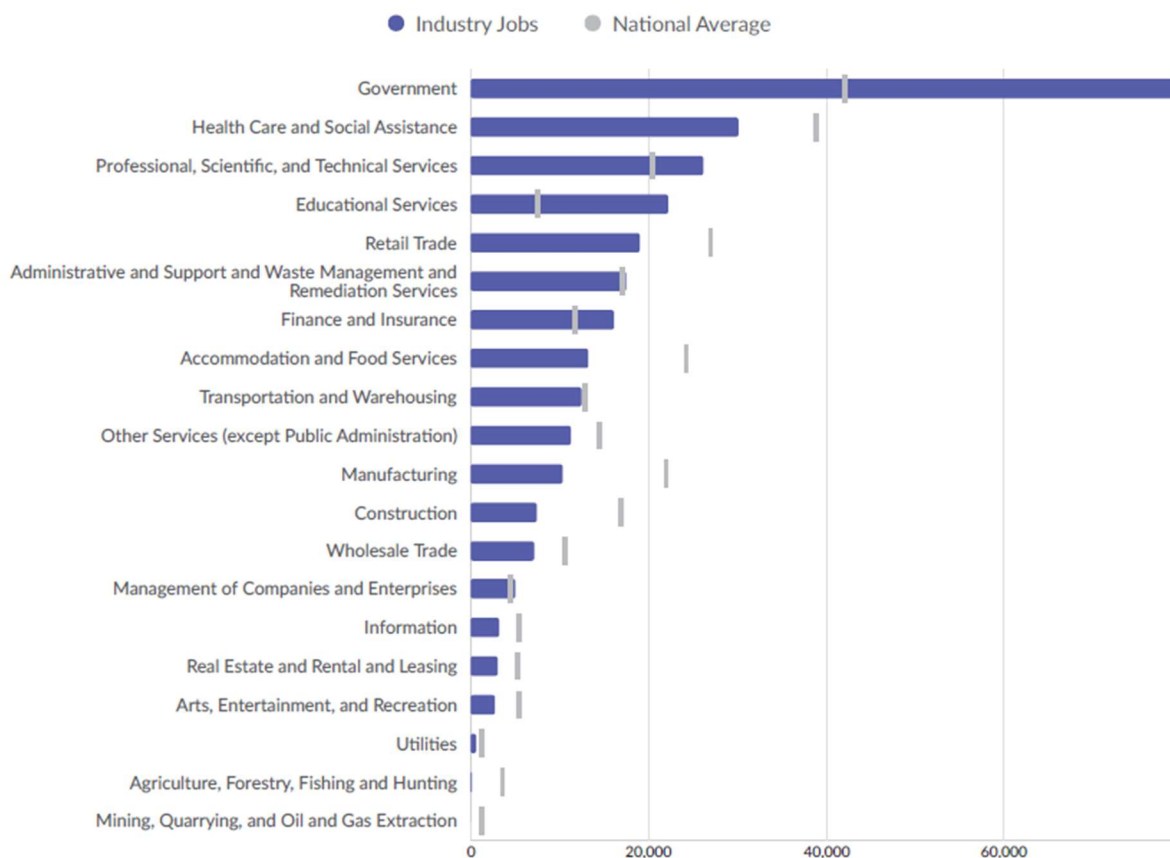
## A. Analysis of Labor Market Information

### Top Growing Industries



In discussions with area employees, Health care continues to be a growing industry in Mercer County.

## Largest Industries

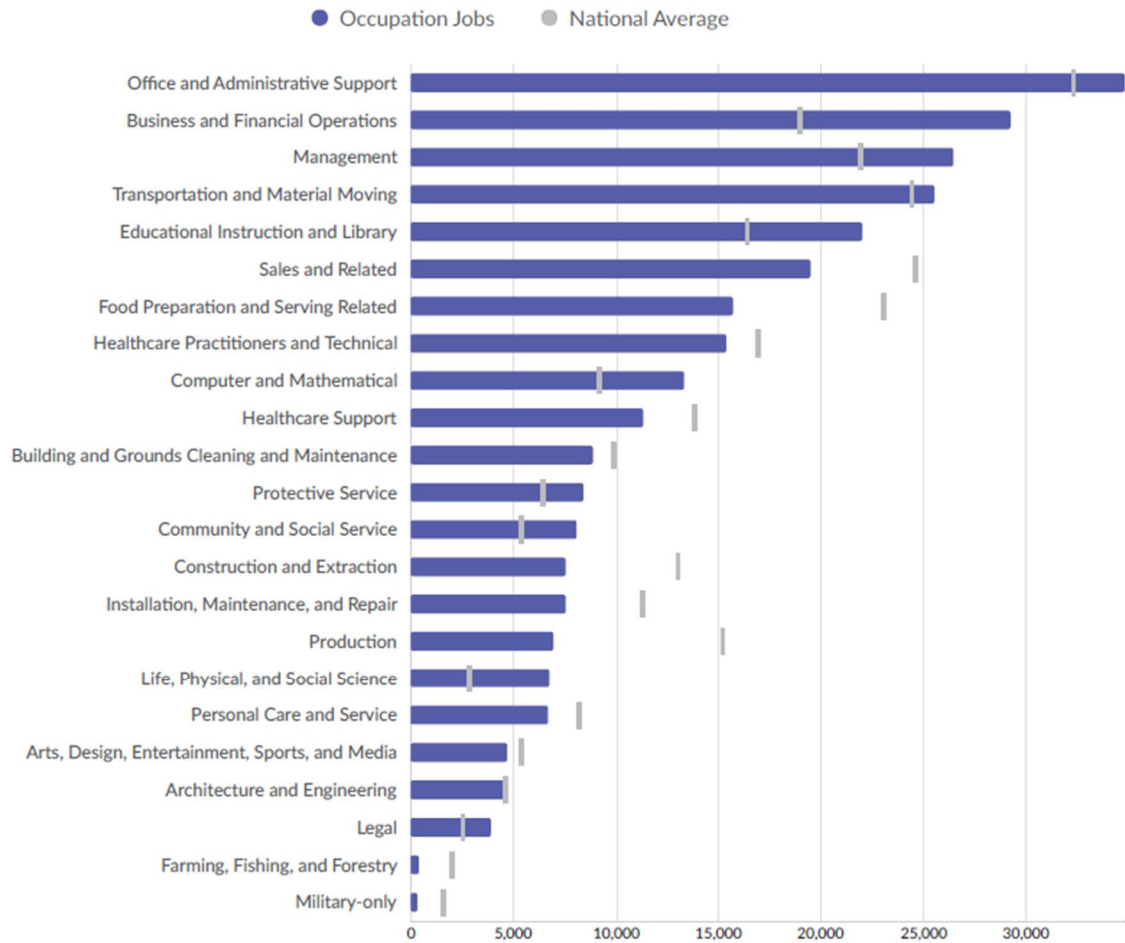


Government and Educational Services are far above the national average for largest industries in the County. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, as well as Finance and Insurance are above the national average for largest industries in the Country.

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Utilities and Agriculture are far below the national average.

# Workforce Characteristics

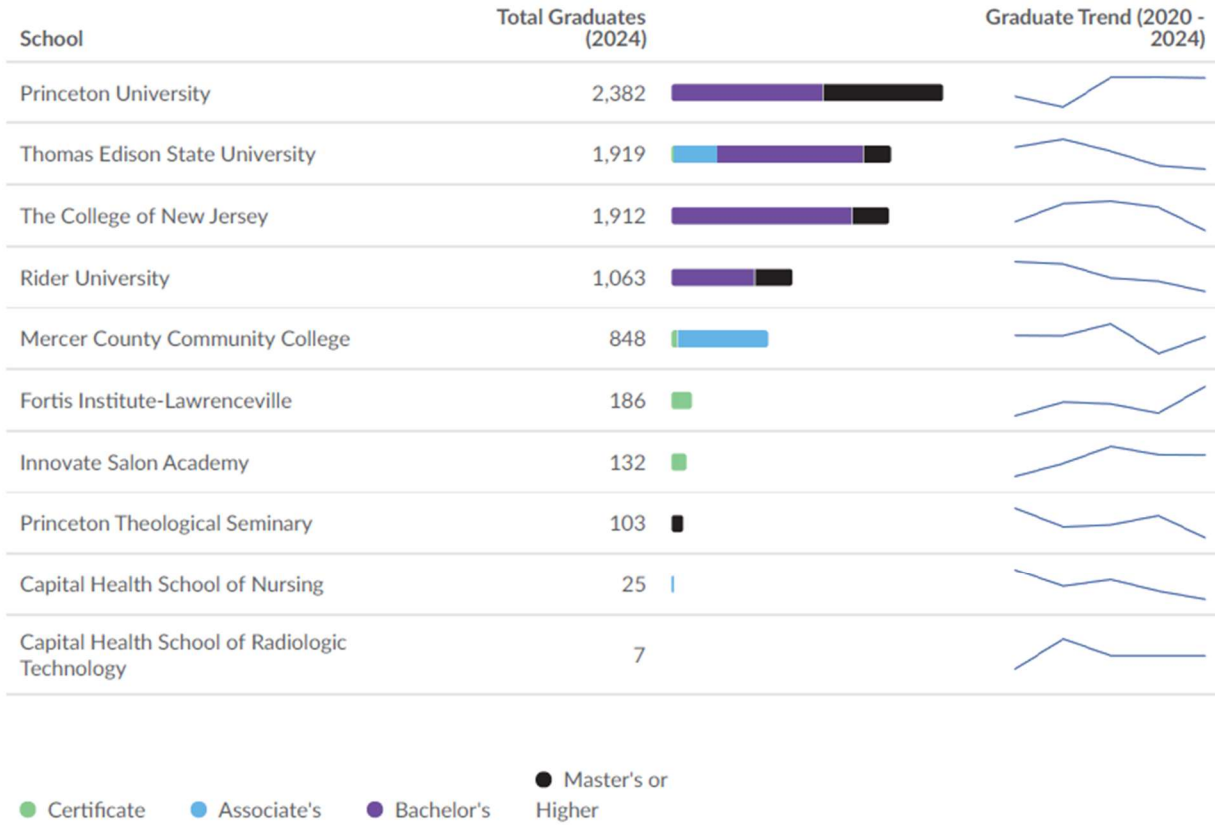
## Largest Occupations



Among the largest occupations, Office and Administrative Support, Business and Financial Operations, Management, Education Instruction, Computers and Mathematics, and Transportation are above the national average.

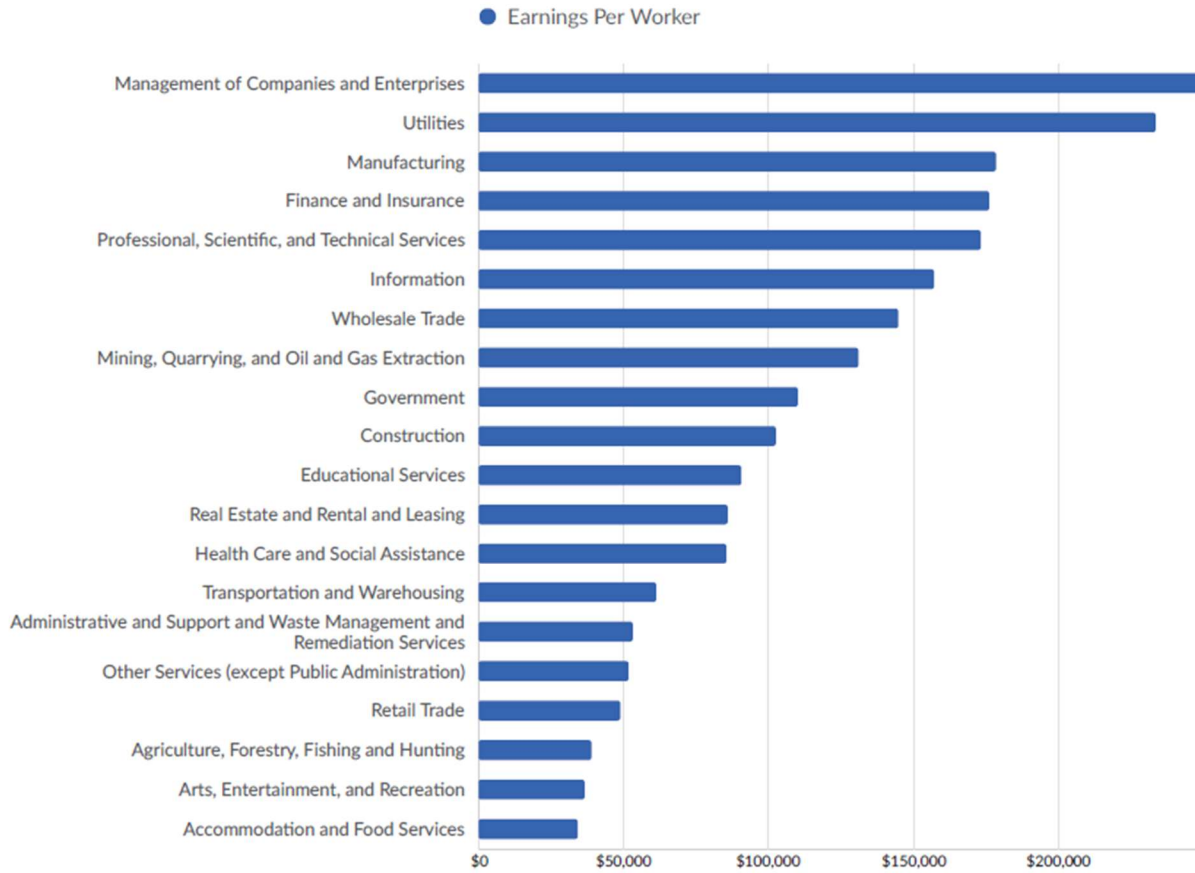
# Educational Pipeline

In 2024, there were 8,577 graduates in Mercer County, NJ. This pipeline has shrunk by 6% over the last 5 years. The highest share of these graduates come from "Business Administration and Management, General" (Bachelor's), "Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, Other" (Bachelor's), and "Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies" (Bachelor's).

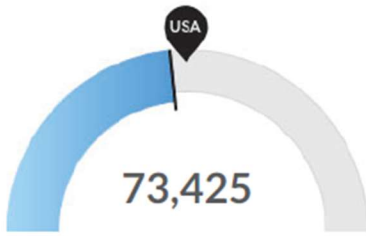


The chart below shows all of the earnings from the different labor marketing jobs within the industry. We will conduct a deeper analysis as this can provide key information to jobseekers and youth.

### Top Industry Earnings

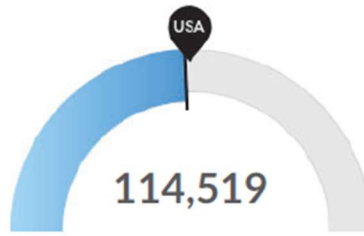


## Population Characteristics



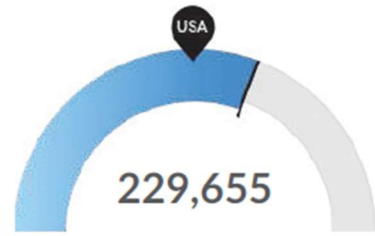
**Millennials**

Mercer County, NJ has 73,425 millennials (ages 25-39). The national average for an area this size is 80,274.



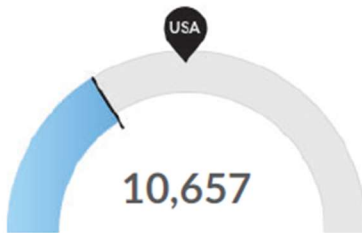
**Retiring Soon**

Retirement risk is about average in Mercer County, NJ. The national average for an area this size is 118,573 people 55 or older, while there are 114,519 here.



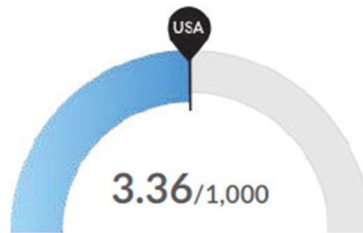
**Racial Diversity**

Racial diversity is high in Mercer County, NJ. The national average for an area this size is 166,809 racially diverse people, while there are 229,655 here.



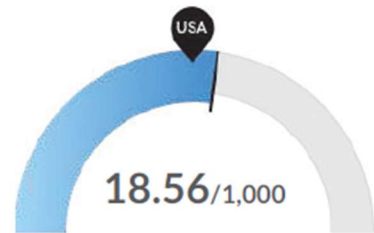
**Veterans**

Mercer County, NJ has 10,657 veterans. The national average for an area this size is 19,004.



**Violent Crime**

Mercer County, NJ has 3.36 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 3.38 per 1,000 people.



**Property Crime**

Mercer County, NJ has 18.56 property crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 16.44 per 1,000 people.

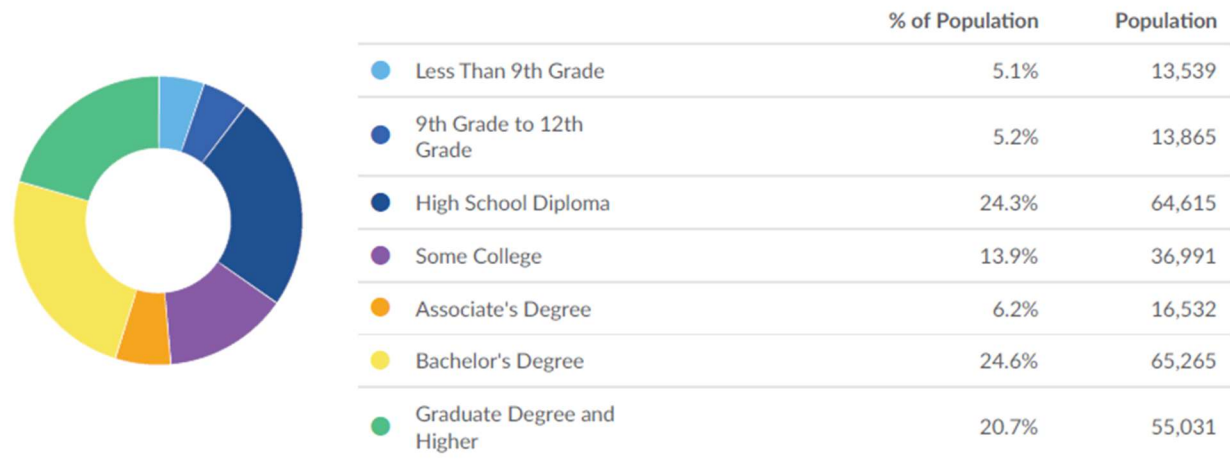
## Aug 2025 Labor Force Breakdown



Individuals that are unemployed or not counted in the labor force are primarily those with barriers to employment and will be targeted in our services strategies.

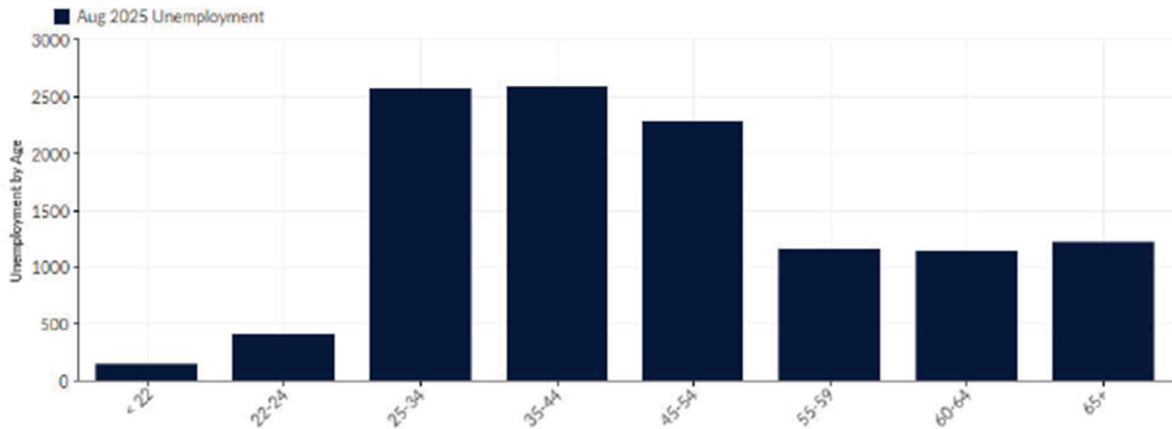
## Educational Attainment

Concerning educational attainment, 24.6% of Mercer County, NJ residents possess a Bachelor's Degree (3.0% above the national average), and 6.2% hold an Associate's Degree (2.6% below the national average).



## Unemployment by Demographics

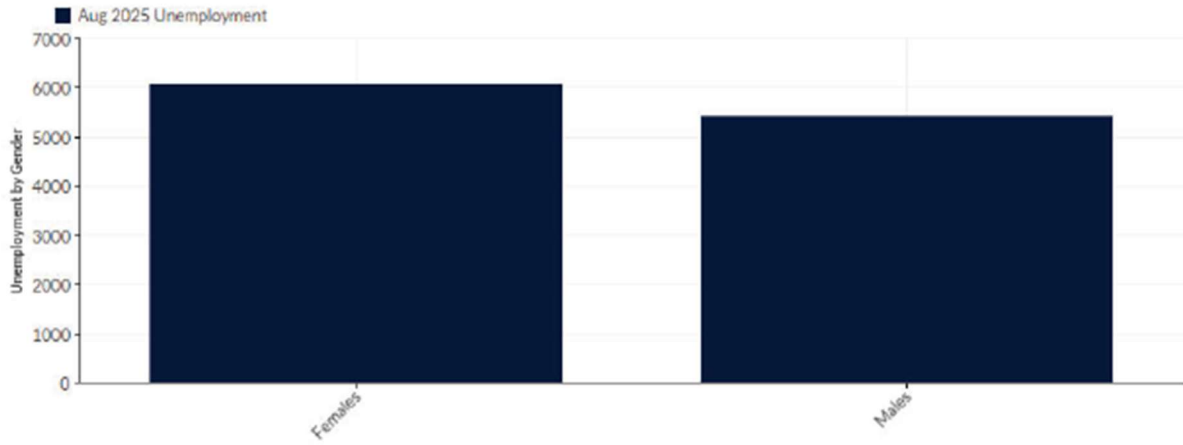
### Unemployment by Age



Age	Unemployment (Aug 2025)	% of Unemployed
< 22	148	1.29%
22-24	397	3.46%
25-34	2,565	22.33%
35-44	2,585	22.51%
45-54	2,280	19.85%
55-59	1,156	10.07%
60-64	1,134	9.87%
65+	1,221	10.63%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,485</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

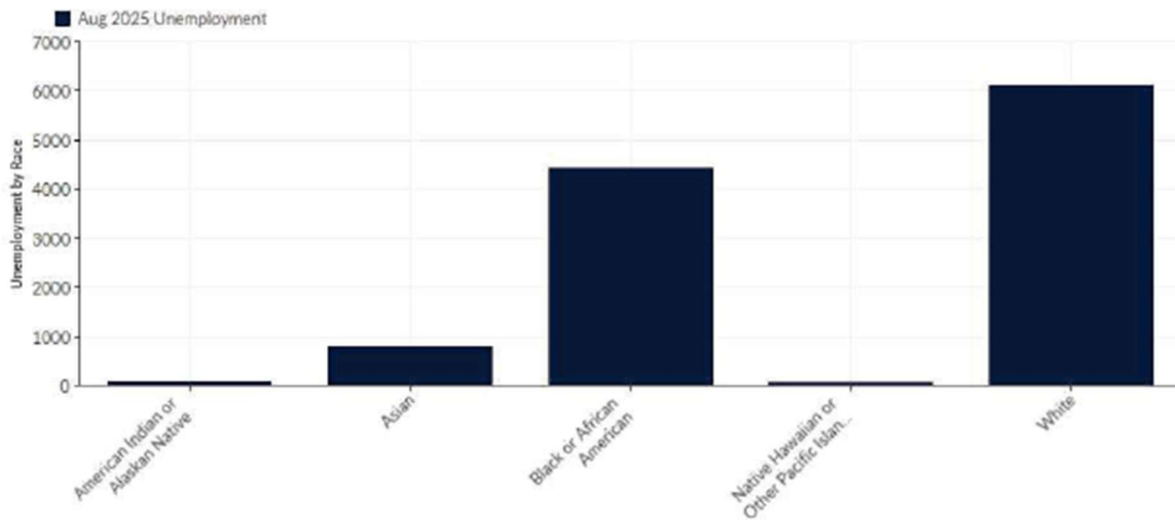
Highest concentration of unemployed individuals are 25-44 years of age (47.41%)

## Unemployment by Gender



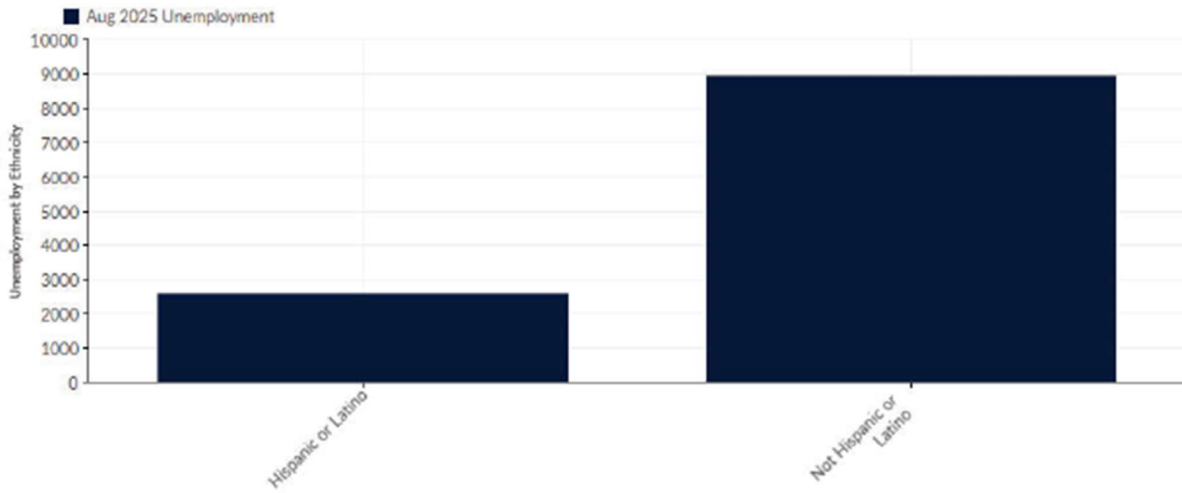
Gender	Unemployment (Aug 2025)	% of Unemployed
Females	6,067	52.83%
Males	5,418	47.17%
Total	11,485	100.00%

## Unemployment by Race



Race	Unemployment (Aug 2025)	% of Unemployed
American Indian or Alaskan Native	83	0.72%
Asian	791	6.89%
Black or African American	4,422	38.50%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	61	0.53%
White	6,128	53.36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,485</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## Unemployment by Ethnicity

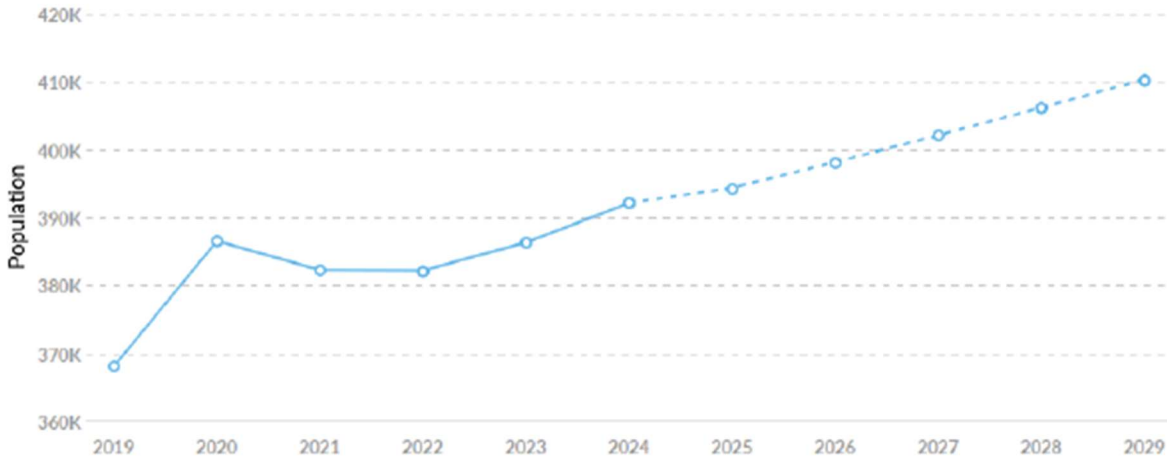


Ethnicity	Unemployment (Aug 2025)	% of Unemployed
Hispanic or Latino	2,575	22.42%
Not Hispanic or Latino	8,910	77.58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,485</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# Historic & Projected Trends

## Population Trends

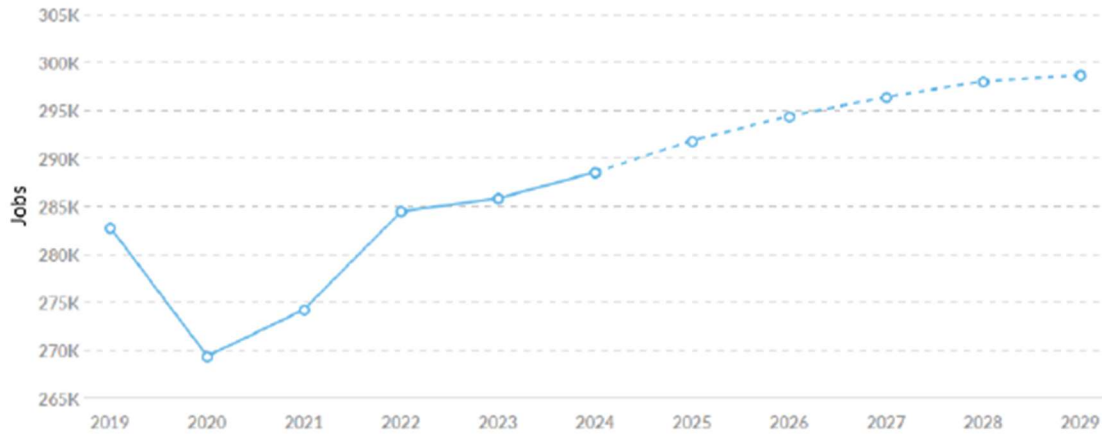
As of 2024 the region's population increased by 6.5% since 2019, growing by 24,091. Population is expected to increase by 4.6% between 2024 and 2029, adding 18,198.



Timeframe	Population
2019	368,047
2020	386,492
2021	382,231
2022	382,165
2023	386,296
2024	392,138
2025	394,353
2026	398,148
2027	402,094
2028	406,202
2029	410,336

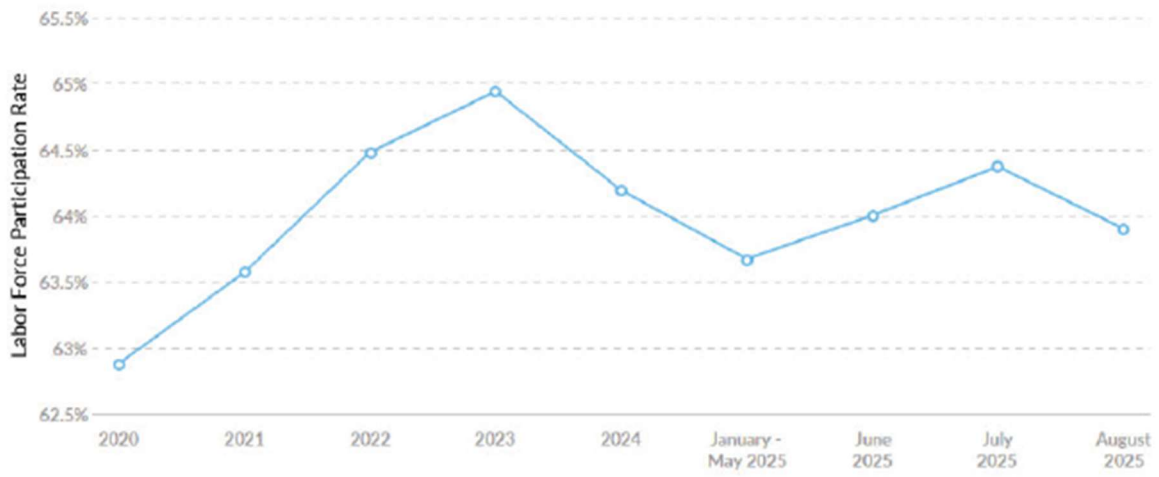
## Job Trends

From 2019 to 2024, jobs increased by 2.0% in Mercer County, NJ from 282,722 to 288,516. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 4.4% by 2.4%.



Timeframe	Jobs
2019	282,722
2020	269,313
2021	274,206
2022	284,413
2023	285,788
2024	288,516
2025	291,812
2026	294,363
2027	296,365
2028	297,989
2029	298,655

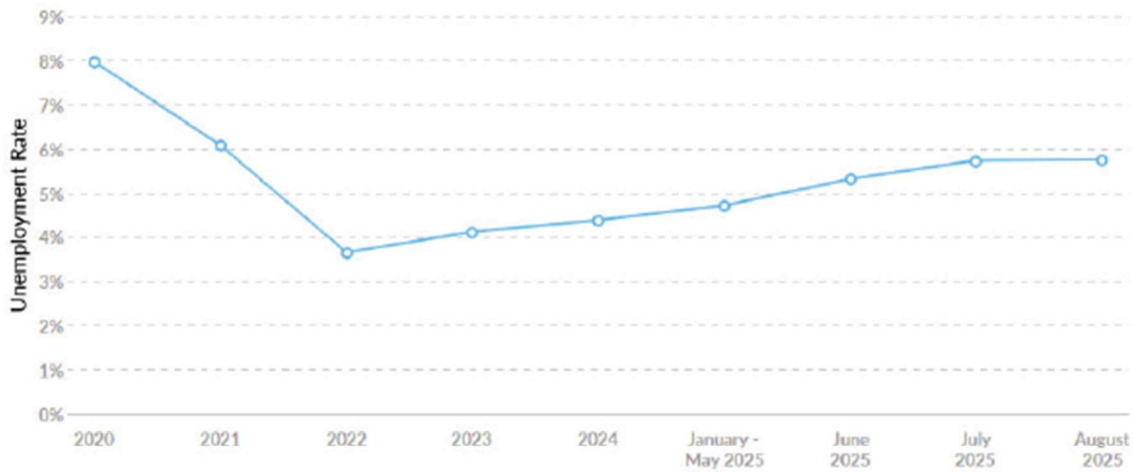
### Labor Force Participation Rate Trends



Timeframe	Labor Force Participation Rate
2020	62.88%
2021	63.57%
2022	64.48%
2023	64.94%
2024	64.19%
January - May 2025	63.67%
June 2025	64.00%
July 2025	64.37%
August 2025	63.90%

## Unemployment Rate Trends

Mercer County, NJ had an August 2025 unemployment rate of 5.75%, decreasing from 7.96% 5 years before.



Timeframe	Unemployment Rate
2020	7.96%
2021	6.07%
2022	3.65%
2023	4.11%
2024	4.38%
January - May 2025	4.71%
June 2025	5.31%
July 2025	5.73%
August 2025	5.75%

## Workforce Development Activities

The One-Stop provides access to employment, training, education and supportive services to eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. The One-Stop Operator will serve in a coordinating capacity to ensure collaboration, cooperation and open communication among One-Stop Partners. The WDB will expect the One-Stop Operator to look for ways to improve the coordination of service delivery of the required One-Stop partners and service providers. The partners collaborate in the creation of a seamless delivery network enhancing access to program services and integrating activities to enable customers and businesses seeking assistance to access the information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes and a well-prepared workforce.

The co-located partners meet to ensure that jobseekers and employers have access to all employment, training, education, and support services available. When new initiatives are presented by NJ DOLWD, the

partners meet to strategize as to the best methods of integrating those initiatives into existing programming. The RESEA and the Career Connection rollout are examples of this collaboration.

The WDB through its oversight role holds the One-Stop Career Center accountable to provide access to employment and training services by continuous review of program performance.

In reviewing the data in the charts above, occupational training and job development efforts will focus on those industries that indicate major growth projections, in particular those that provide a career pathway. Mercer County presents a dichotomy which at times can be challenging in analyzing LMI and making subsequent decisions regarding services. There are several municipalities led by Princeton where the educational and salary levels are at the high end of the County spectrum with other municipalities led by Trenton at the low end.

## Strategic Priorities

The Mercer WDB will work with One Stop partners to strengthen the targeted industry sectors by aligning businesses, education, and economic development with the workforce system. The WDB has established a process of planning, implementation and evaluation primarily through its committees. The WDB has found working through the various committees is an effective method to accomplish this. At the committee level the employer needs, challenges, and potential solutions for the various sectors are explored. The current WDB committees are industry-focused Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing and population-focused; Disabilities Issues, Youth, and Literacy. All committees are represented by the respective industries and populations, community college, technical school, and major community partners. The WDB is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations developed are implemented. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WDB and the One-Stop System Partners details the responsibility of each partner and how those responsibilities will be carried out. The Executive/Oversight Committee reviews and evaluates the actions implemented and reports back to the Board.

## Expanding Access to Employment, Training, Education & Support Services

Local goals and strategies to expand access to services for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment include those listed below.

- ❖ Development of more effective recruitment strategies to better connect & engage potential customers, with special emphasis on those with barriers to employment.
- ❖ Explore the use of upgraded technology in the recruitment process - with less reliance on emails & flyers and more on texting and wider media access, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- ❖ Services for OSY were procured through a competitive RFP in 2023 that targets the attainment of an HSE (High School Equivalency) certificate and the acquisition of work readiness skills development. Added focus is on the specific recruitment strategies proposed.
- ❖ Strengthen One Stop relationship with community & faith-based agencies in an effort to inform potential job and career seekers.
- ❖ Ensure access to technology required to compete in the current job market
- ❖ Ensure easy & understandable access to LMI to help determine current & future needs
- ❖ Build a foundation of workforce services dictated in part by the needs of the community that are adaptable to evolving economic conditions
- ❖ Conduct orientation to our services throughout the community (not limited to the One Stop Center) in an effort to reach individuals “where they are at”
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with County and local libraries to provide services virtually without the need to physically visit the One Stop.
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with agencies providing services to justice-involved youth & adults. The One Stop through MCOTES is participating on the Mercer County Probation Office Gun Violence Prevention Task Force geared to assist those individuals in the probation system to

- be successful by providing services needed to prevent recidivism including housing, mental health services, drug addiction services, and employment, etc.
- ❖ Working collaboratively with the Rescue Mission of Trenton in their New Direction initiative which will serve individuals experiencing homelessness, substance abuse disorder, and those recently incarcerated. It is the intent for them to refer program completers to the One Stop for additional career services.
  - ❖ Through the WDB Disabilities Issues Committee, research the feasibility to bring Project Search to one of our county employers
  - ❖ Expand the use of OJT, paid internships, and initiate the use of Transitional Employment opportunities
  - ❖ Coordinate with the County's new initiative to provide expungement services connecting individuals to One Stop opening up employment opportunities
  - ❖ Expand the promotion & use of federal bonding, WOTC (Work Opportunity Tax Credit), and OJT to encourage employers to hire individuals they would not have considered
  - ❖ WDB has extended the availability of support services to WIOA Adult & Dislocated Workers based on individual needs in an effort to decrease and/or eliminate barriers to successful training and employment. These can include transportation assistance, work attire and/or tools, stipends, etc.

### **Expanding and ensuring access to workforce development services that serve to bring diversity, equity and inclusion to the workforce**

Mercer One Stop partners work collaboratively to ensure that the One Stop Career Center is ADA, PDA, and EEO compliant. As specific regulations and requirements change over time, there will be an emphasis on maintaining and updating infrastructure and embracing accommodations as circumstances dictate in an effort to preempt issues before they become liabilities. This requires the continued regular inspection of facilities to ensure compliance with laws. This will be accomplished by the physical inspection of the Center conducted on a monthly basis by the DOL Employment Services Manager and the annual comprehensive ADA review conducted by the One Stop Operator.

The Mercer One Stop co-located partners work collaboratively to ensure that all individuals receive the services needed. DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) is an integral and active participant in the monthly One Stop Partners meetings as well as in the bi-month WDB Disabilities Issues Committee. As an active One Stop partner, DVR receives ongoing information on all job-related activities, i.e. virtual recruitments and job fairs. MCOTES works closely with DVR and local agencies serving individuals with disabilities in special initiatives. One example is the Summer Youth Employment Program in which we have closely collaborated for the past four years and will continue moving forward.

### **Facilitating the development of Career Pathways and co-enrollment across WIOA and Partner Programs**

Career Pathways are defined as a series of education and training experiences resulting in industry-valued credentials leading to employment, promotion and/or advanced education. Career Pathways are industry focused, have diverse entry and exit points, and include integration of adult basic skills, digital literacy, employability skills and work-based learning, including registered apprenticeships.

One of the recurring themes that surfaced in the WDB Health Care Committee during the Plan preparation meetings is the need for entry level staff who may start at lower paying jobs to have a career pathway defined that will improve their retention in employment and allow for future upward mobility choices. Similar discussions have surfaced in the Advanced Manufacturing Committee as well as the Youth Investment Council. The need for stackable credentials is paramount to increasing the career prospects and long-term earning potential of our customers.

There is a need to educate both the career counseling staff as well as the customers on accessing and understanding of Labor Market Information (LMI), the diversity of career choices and the availability of training through improved communication methods.

The WDB will seek to explore and expand co-enrollment in WIOA and Partner programs. i.e. Wagner Peyser (initially through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment initiative), WorkFirst NJ, Re-entry initiatives, etc.

Efforts will be made to strengthen the collaboration between the WIOA and Wagner-Peyser services with those provided by the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA). The provision of Trade Act services has been centralized. All available services are provided on an as-needed basis by NJDOL staff. All inquiries are referred to a central email [TradeActTraining@dol.nj.gov](mailto:TradeActTraining@dol.nj.gov)

### **Increasing access through partners and programs to a variety of individualized career and training services**

The Mercer One Stop provides access to employment, training, education and supportive services to eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment. The One Stop Operator will serve in a coordinating capacity to ensure collaboration, cooperation and open communication among One Stop Partners. The WDB will expect the One Stop Operator to seek ways to improve the coordination of service delivery of the required One Stop partners and service providers. The partners collaborate in the creation of a seamless delivery network enhancing access to program services, and integration activities to enable customers and businesses seeking assistance to access information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes and a well-prepared workforce.

Strategies to increase access to individualized career and training services include the following:

- ❖ Increased outreach, including exploring the use of social media
- ❖ Continuation of virtual Orientation/Information sessions to include industry representation
- ❖ Continuation of a hybrid model of service provision - both in-person & virtual
- ❖ Provision of comprehensive training to our career counselors in the availability, interpretation, and application of LMI to better equip them to assist customers in making more informed training and subsequent career decisions
- ❖ Focus placed to increase customer awareness and use of current LMI to assist them in making more informed career decisions
- ❖ The Mercer WDB will work with the Industry Partnership representatives and local/regional employers and education partners to develop career pathways in occupational growth areas in the County

In 2022, the Mercer WDB adopted a “Commitment Pledge to Continuous Improvement Soft Skills” that emphasizes the need to incorporate Work Readiness skill development in the services and programs provided by the One Stop. The pledge states “as we work together to build our future workforce, we commit to a unified partnership that acknowledges the vital importance of continuous training of job readiness emphasizing social and interpersonal skills, positive character traits, respect of community and leadership and professional attitudes that all jobs require, commonly referred to as “soft skills”. We make the commitment to ongoing continuous improvement by all stakeholders by engaging in formal and informal training environments that include 10- essential elements of workplace soft skills. These include:

Time management - punctuality and efficient use of time towards a personally valued goal or objective  
Communication - by written, body posture and verbal

Adaptability - to one’s self, co-workers and management

Problem-solving - by identifying, prioritizing and selecting alternatives for a successful solution.

Teamwork - by personal value of effort, endurance, diligence and industriousness

Creativity - by mental engagement

Ability to show leadership and respecting the leadership of others

Interpersonal skills - are traits relied on, such as thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions, present when interacting with others

Work ethic - that builds self-worth through the moral implications of integrity, responsibility, seeking highest quality standards, personal discipline, humility and valuing success in achieving a goal.

Attention to detail and ownership of one's work performance & actions

Many of our current programs place emphasis on work readiness skill development. All the WFNJ employment-directed services are competitively procured by the WDB. A major component of the services required are for work readiness skill development.

A portion of the Out-of-School (OSY) services are also competitively procured - with two main focal points - the preparation for the attainment of an HSE credential and the provision of work readiness skills development.

Similarly work readiness skills development is a key component of our Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYWEP), now entering its 5th year. The WDB will continue to work collaboratively with Skillup to create curriculum appropriate & designed for youth. As part of Work Readiness, the SYWEP requires worksite supervisors to complete evaluations on each youth. We also employ counselors whose responsibilities include to ensure that the evaluations are completed and reviewed with the youth. This tool allows for the measurement to see if what is learned is put into practice and can provide youth with valuable feedback on their performance.

## **Increasing Work-Based Learning Opportunities**

After reviewing LMI data, we will continue to explore training options for sector-specific occupations, working collaboratively with our local community college & technical school and industry partners to identify relevant training programs that address the needs of our employers. This will be accomplished by working with our WDB committees and bringing together specific partners on an Ad-Hoc basis to address employer needs. An example was demonstrated with our Certified Production Technician program that brought together MCCC and local employers in the development and implementation of this initiative.

Strategies to increase work-based learning opportunities include the following:

- ❖ Establishing and maintaining relevant career pathways, seek to engage larger employers through the Incumbent Worker initiative
- ❖ Seek to engage employers in assessing and identifying their training needs for both entry-level and incumbent workers,
- ❖ Engage the WDB business members to participate using a peer to peer model
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with entities providing services to justice-involved youth & adults to expand the use of Transitional Employment
- ❖ Explore successful pre-apprenticeship & Apprenticeship models
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with local economic development entities to increase awareness of our employer-focused services, i.e. paid internships for youth, OJT, Transitional Employment.

## **Supporting multiple pathways for young people aged 16-24 through One-Stop Career Center Services, and additional youth program models**

Following the theme “Building Career Pathways with a focus on Industry-valued Credentials & Expanding High-Quality Employer Driven Partnerships” the following goals have been established:

- ❖ Increase overall awareness of OSY services by conducting more comprehensive outreach to include the use of social media and exploring the use of peer recruitment strategies
- ❖ Review credentials currently available and identify if those credentials are ones that local/regional employers are seeking
- ❖ Improved delivery of labor market information to increase career awareness for youth leading them to make more informed training choices
- ❖ Increase local/regional employer participation in apprenticeship programs
- ❖ Increase awareness of career opportunities in demand
- ❖ Career Fair for graduating seniors who are not college-bound providing information on Certificate programs leading to an industry-recognized credential, opportunities in the Construction Trades, ITA opportunities, current employment openings, and basic job search techniques including networking
- ❖ Provision of LMI to college bound youth focusing on growth areas for the next 5-10 years
- ❖ Career information presentations (virtual & in-person) to 9th graders
- ❖ Basic Career information’s (virtual & in-person) to middle schoolers
- ❖ Strengthen partnerships with Youth Corps, YouthBuild, and Job Corps
- ❖ Strengthen partnership with Trenton Housing Authority
- ❖ Increase enrollment in the One Stop Youth Career Connection (YCC) program which includes job readiness skills training, ITA’s, paid internships, job search assistance

Additional programs and services are described on pages 34-38.

### **MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKERS PROGRAM**

Mercer County does not have a significant Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) population.

## **II. One Stop Career Center Operations**

### **One Stop Service Delivery and Flow**

The Mercer County Workforce Development system is anchored by the Mercer County One-Stop Career Center which is a comprehensive site that offers the services of the major One-Stop System Partners at one location. These entities are the Mercer County Office of Training and Employment Services (MCOTES) who administers the WIOA and WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) funded programs; the-NJ Department of Labor (DOL) Wagner-Peyser funded Employment Services, Unemployment Insurance Compensation, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and WFNJ GA/SNAP case management; the Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS) who provide TANF case management services; Child Care Connection who provides on-site child care referral services for the TANF population; Job Corps staff; and the One-Stop Operator. All agencies are located in the One-Stop Career Center on a full-time basis.

One of strengths of the Mercer County workforce development system is the high level of collaboration, communication, and cooperation not only among the partners located at the One-Stop but it extends to the other major partners in the workforce development system. These other partners include the Mercer County Office of Economic Development, Mercer County Community College, Mercer County Technical School, Trenton Housing Authority, faith and community-based organizations, and local employers.

We are committed to managing a locally-driven One-Stop Career Center that assists individuals who are unemployed or underemployed to obtain new skills and employment. In that vein, the Mercer One-Stop provides universal access to jobseekers and employers. WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and WorkFirst NJ services are readily available to customers in a seamless approach.

The services available at and/or through the Mercer County One-Stop system are detailed below and a listing of the extent of the Workforce Development Activities according to the partner providing them is included in the Addendum.

The services listed below are available in person and/or virtually for the following: Title I WIOA Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth; Title II Adult Education and Literacy; Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Service; Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation; Programs for Justice-involved Individuals; Unemployment Insurance (UI); WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment and Training Program; General Assistance (GA) SNAP Employment and Training Programs, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Jobs for Veterans, Job Corps, YouthBuild, Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, and HUD Employment & Training (Trenton Housing Authority). Connecting to services provided by HHS Employment and Training will be further explored.

- ❖ Orientation for Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Initiative (RESEA)
- ❖ Training Orientation for occupational/vocational training
- ❖ Orientations for WFNJ TANF, GA/SNAP requirements
- ❖ Orientations to Youth Career Connection Services including paid internships
- ❖ Initial assessments, academic basic skills/literacy, English language proficiency, comprehensive career exploration
- ❖ Academic remediation for increased literacy & entry into occupational training (WLL)
- ❖ Brief and comprehensive counseling sessions
- ❖ Group Work Readiness workshops
- ❖ Self-service Labor Market Information
- ❖ Self-service & staff assisted career exploration (NJCAN)
- ❖ Self-service job search (use of Resource area)
- ❖ Staff assisted job search
- ❖ Access to positive recruitments - virtual & in-person
- ❖ Information & Access to bi-annual Job Fairs
- ❖ Information & Access to Youth-focused Career Fairs
- ❖ Information & Access to Support Services & community resources

## WIOA TITLE I – ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, YOUTH

Services for individuals eligible for WIOA Adult and WIOA Dislocated Services include the following:

- ❖ Orientation to Occupational Training Services
- ❖ Specialized assessments i.e. basic skills and literacy, English language proficiency, comprehensive career exploration
- ❖ In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate career goals
- ❖ Development of an Individual Employment Plan to identify career goals, appropriate achievement objectives, appropriate combination of services necessary to achieve goals
- ❖ Information on eligible training providers (utilizing the Eligible Training Providers List)
- ❖ Information on career pathways with specific information on the training necessary to achieve their goals, expected job openings in the area and stateside, average salaries, etc.
- ❖ Individual career counseling - before, throughout, and after training enrollment
- ❖ Skills upgrading and retraining
- ❖ Occupational Skills Training (in demand occupations), including training for nontraditional employment
- ❖ On-the-Job-Training
- ❖ Incumbent Worker Training (to be further explored)

- ❖ Literacy – basic skills instruction for those needing to increase education levels necessary for occupational training and instruction for English language learners

Services to Out-of-School Youth (OSY) also include in addition to the above:

- ❖ Comprehensive work readiness workshops
- ❖ Paid internships opportunities
- ❖ HSE preparation & testing - provided by partner agencies through an RFP process
- ❖ Referrals to Summer Youth Work Experience Program
- ❖ Referrals to other appropriate Youth programs, i.e. Youth Corps, Job Corps, YouthBuild

## TITLE II – ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

It is the goal of the Mercer County Workforce Development system to ensure that all residents of our County have access to the services they need in order to equip them with the tools necessary for success on the job, with family, and in social environments. Our focus is to help individuals improve both their short-term as well as long-term employment outcomes, promote life-long learning opportunities, prepare for occupational training, and connect employers to a well-prepared workforce.

Mercer works in collaboration with the Title II Consortium led by Mercer County Community College Adult Education and continues to develop partnerships and collaborations with educational and community and faith-based organizations that allow our basic skills students to receive the services they need to achieve their goals.

## TITLE III WAGNER-PEYSER EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROGRAM

The Wagner-Peyser program provides in-person & virtual Career Services that include:

- ❖ Orientation to the services available through the one-stop delivery system through the RESEA initiative
- ❖ Resume Writing Assistance
- ❖ Interviewing Preparation
- ❖ Job Search Assistance,
- ❖ Career Counseling
- ❖ Labor Market Information
- ❖ Access to virtual training opportunities, i.e. Skillup
- ❖ Work Readiness Workshops
- ❖ Referrals to Occupational Training
- ❖ Staff assisted & self-service job search
- ❖ Self-service career exploration (NJCAN)
- ❖ Access to on-site & virtual job recruitments
- ❖ Veterans Services - priority job postings, resume assistance, DD214, and additional resources as needed
- ❖ Federal Bonding & Justice-involved - covers employers for a maximum of \$25,000 that results in loss of property or money due to employee wrongdoing. It is particularly helpful for those that are/have been Justice-involved, recovering substance abusers, those with poor personal credit, those who lack work history, and those dishonorably discharged from the military

## TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) provides employment and training services to assist individuals with disabilities find and maintain employment consistent with their needs and limitations. Services and programs include the following:

- ❖ Vocational counseling and guidance

- ❖ Transition programming and support while in school, after graduation from school, and into work programs for youth
- ❖ On-the-Job Training opportunities
- ❖ Job seeking skills training
- ❖ Time limited job placement and job coaching/ Supported Employment services
- ❖ Assistance with providing job accommodations/Advocacy
- ❖ Skills training programs
- ❖ College sponsorship for financially eligible consumers
- ❖ Assistive Technology Devices training and purchase
- ❖ Technological Assistance as required/vehicle modifications/Orthotic prosthetic devices purchase and support, work site evaluation/modification
- ❖ Assistance and services for persons with hearing impairments
- ❖ Dedicated bilingual Vocational Rehabilitation and counseling.

## TITLE V UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Unemployment Insurance (UI) compensation is temporary income for eligible workers who have lost employment through no fault of their own. UI recipients must actively seek employment or be enrolled in an occupational training program during the time benefits are being claimed. Mercer, as one of the larger comprehensive One Stops, has a UI unit that includes onsite agents. UI is integrated into our One Stop delivery system.

## WORKFIRST NEW JERSEY (TANF) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Unique to the Mercer County One-Stop is that the Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS) has a unit of TANF case managers and support staff on site who provide a comprehensive and seamless system delivery of employment directed activities. MCBOSS case managers are responsible for the referral of TANF customers to the competitively selected "To Work" activities, ongoing case management, and referral for sanctions. Other MCBOSS collocated staff are responsible for imposing and managing sanctions (utilizing TANF funds administered by the County). TANF services include:

- ❖ Orientations to TANF work requirements
- ❖ Referrals to competitively contracted employment directed programs that provide the following:
  - Job Search
  - Occupational Skills Training (OCCU) + Jobs Skills Training
  - Community Work Experience Program (CWEP)
  - Education Directly Related to Employment (EDRTE)
  - Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment (JSTDRTTE)
  - English as a Second Language related to Employment
- ❖ All competitively contracted programs include a Job Placement component
- ❖ Referrals to County operated Community Work Experience Programs
- ❖ Onsite child care referral services
- ❖ Referrals to MCOTES for occupational training programs

## MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKERS PROGRAM

Mercer County is not an area designated as a Significant Area of MSFW activity. Should customers visit the One-Stop who fall into this category we will offer them the full range of career and supportive services, benefits and protections, job and training referral services as are provided to non-MSFWs.

## TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PROGRAM

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Act is provided through the DOL Central Office and provides:

- ❖ Orientation to the services available through the One-Stop delivery system

- ❖ Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs
- ❖ Self-service and staff assisted Labor Market Information
- ❖ Self-service and staff assisted career exploration
- ❖ Self-service and staff assisted job search
- ❖ Development of an individual employment plan to identify career goals, appropriate achievement objectives, appropriate combination of services necessary to achieve goals
- ❖ Information on eligible training providers (utilizing the Eligible Training Providers List)
- ❖ Information on career pathways with specific information on the training necessary to achieve their goals, expected job openings in the area and stateside, average salaries, etc.
- ❖ Individual career counseling
- ❖ Skills upgrading and retraining
- ❖ Occupational Skills Training (in demand occupations), including training for nontraditional employment
- ❖ Literacy – basic skills instruction for those needing to increase education levels necessary for occupational training and instruction for English language learners

## SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based job training program for mature workers. The program provides training for low-income, unemployed individuals 55 years of age and older. Participants have access to One-Stop services. Through enrollment in SCSEP, individuals can participate in a variety of community service activities at non-profit and public agencies. Individuals can work a maximum of 15 hours per week and earn the highest of federal, state, local minimum wage. For those that are interested in eventual unsubsidized employment this can serve as a path toward that goal. Currently there is no SCSEP located at the Mercer One-Stop. Occasionally we have participants assigned to the One-Stop as a worksite.

This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants. Eligibility for the SCSEP (55+) program is as follow: participants must be at least 55, unemployed & have a family income of no more than 125% of the federal poverty level

Enrollment priority is given to veterans and qualified spouses, then to individuals who are over 65, have a disability, have low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, reside in a rural area, are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have low employment prospects, or have failed to find employment after using services through the One-Stop system

## JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT

At the One-Stop Career Center priority services are given to Veterans who served in the U.S. military or were activated as a member of a National Guard unit, or were activated as a member of a Reserve Unit. Services include:

- ❖ Priority referrals to jobs
- ❖ Job Search Workshops

## REENTRY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Mercer One Stop through the NJDOL has dedicated staff to provide services to ex-offenders. Although individuals who are/have been involved with the justice system are mainstreamed into One Stop activities and services, the designated staff can provide intensive attention to this vulnerable population.

Orientation and workshops are held to address not only the attainment of general job readiness skills but they also focus on the special needs of this population as they face additional barriers in securing employment. Some of the topics include:

- ❖ Review of the Opportunity to Compete Act
- ❖ Review of the Federal Bonding opportunity'
- ❖ Review Record Expungement Information
- ❖ Driver's license restoration information
- ❖ Access to WIOA & WFNJ services
- ❖ Community Resources

We have recently established a partnership with the Mercer County Probation Office and are participating in their Gun Violence Prevention Task Force designed to assist those who have committed a gun related offense to receive comprehensive services from a variety of community partners in an effort to lessen the recidivism rate for these individuals. Those that are determined to be in need of workforce services are immediately connected to the One Stop. We will also partner with the County of Mercer's recently created Information and Expungement Program.

## JOB CORPS

Job Corps is an onsite partner located at the Mercer County One-Stop. Their programming is designed to assist eligible youth connect to the labor force by providing them with intensive social, academic, career and technical education, and service-learning opportunities primarily in a residential center.

Services include the following:

Weekly orientations provide by Job Corps staff

- ❖ Referral to the Mercer County Youth Career Connection (YCC) for enrollment (if appropriate)
- ❖ Referrals to YCC upon completion of Job Corps for potential internships

## Title I YouthBuild

YouthBuild is locally administered by our OSY contracted partner. It provides assessments training, case management, work-based learning and job placement assistance. Referrals are made between YouthBuild & our Youth Career Connection services as appropriate.

## WIOA OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SERVICES

WIOA Out-of-School Youth (OSY) – A High School Diploma or its equivalent is critical for labor market success and the earning of post-secondary industry valued credentials are necessary for a majority of jobs that would allow the earning of self-supporting wages. MCOTES offers competitively selected programs that provide eligible youth who have not obtained a High School Diploma or its equivalent the opportunity to attain these much-needed credentials. The programs also include job readiness skills and support that will help to prepare the youth for post-secondary education and/or employment. The OSY Program Services provided to eligible individuals include:

- ❖ Orientation to Program Services
- ❖ Comprehensive counseling and assessments i.e. academic, career, job readiness
- ❖ Comprehensive career exploration
- ❖ In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate career goals
- ❖ Development of an individual employment plan to identify career goals, appropriate achievement objectives, appropriate combination of services necessary to achieve goals
- ❖ Information on eligible training providers (utilizing the Eligible Training Providers List)
- ❖ Information on career pathways and with specific information on the training necessary to achieve their goals, expected job openings in the local/regional area, average salaries, etc.
- ❖ Individual career counseling - before, throughout, and after occupational training enrollment
- ❖ Skills upgrading and retraining

- ❖ Occupational Skills Training and Apprenticeship Opportunities (in demand occupations), including training for nontraditional employment
- ❖ On-the-Job-Training
- ❖ HSE preparation and testing – provided by partner agencies through an RFP process
- ❖ Comprehensive job readiness workshops - provided by partner agencies through an RFP process and by One-Stop Youth staff
- ❖ Financial Literacy - provided by partner agencies through an RFP process
- ❖ Paid Internship Opportunities – primarily in the private sector administered by YCC
- ❖ Summer Employment Program – Paid work experience and work readiness
- ❖ Referrals to other appropriate services for OSY i.e. Youth Corps, YouthBuild, Job Corps, etc.
- ❖ Follow-up Services
- ❖ Literacy – basic skills instruction for those needing to increase education levels necessary for occupational training and instruction for English language learners

## **CARL T. PERKINS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACT**

The Carl T. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is designed to provide an increased focus on the academic achievement for Career and Technical Education students, strengthening the connection between secondary and post-secondary education. The WDB should review and sign off on Perkins funding requests from local school districts intending to ensure diversity of in-demand, industry valued career programs. The WDB actively participates in the application process for the community college, Technical School and many of the local high schools.

## **HUD Employment and Training**

The Mercer WDB has strengthened its partnership with the Trenton Housing Authority by working collaboratively on various initiatives. They are part of the Jobseeker Network, partners in our Summer Youth Employment Program as both a worksite & we employ youth from their housing facilities, and are apprised of all employment related activities. In addition, the WDB & One Stop are partners in their Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant, a major grant provided to revitalize an entire North Trenton neighborhood.

## **HHS Employment and Training**

The Mercer WDB will explore ways to work more collaboratively with the local HHS Employment & Training entity (ies).

## **WORKFIRST NEW JERSEY (TANF) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM**

Unique to the Mercer County One-Stop is that the Mercer County Board of Social Services has a unit of TANF case managers and support staff who provide a comprehensive and seamless system delivery of employment directed activities. MCBOSS case managers are responsible for the referral of TANF customers to the competitively selected “To Work” activities, ongoing case management, and referral for sanctions. Other MCBOSS collocated staff are responsible for imposing and managing sanctions (utilizing TANF funds administered by the County). On-site TANF services include:

- ❖ Orientations to TANF work requirements
- ❖ Referrals to competitively contracted employment directed programs
- ❖ Job Search
- ❖ Occupational Skills Training (OCCU) + Jobs Skills Training
- ❖ Occupational Skills Training for OSY TANF
- ❖ Community Work Experience Program (CWEP)
- ❖ Education Directly Related to Employment (EDRTE)
- ❖ Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment (JSTRTE)
- ❖ English as a Second Language related to Employment
- ❖ TANF Out-of-School Youth Services Program

- ❖ All competitively contracted programs include a Job Placement component
- ❖ Referrals to County operated Community Work Experience Programs
- ❖ Onsite child care referral services
- ❖ Referrals to MCOTES for occupational training programs

## **GA/SNAP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS**

The Mercer County One-Stop DOL staff provides GA/SNAP case management services that provides for a comprehensive and seamless system delivery of employment directed activities. DOL case managers are responsible for the referral of GA/SNAP customers into competitively selected “To Work” activities, ongoing case management, and referral for sanctions. Mercer’s GA/SNAP case management unit was one of the first local areas to use the IAR (Inter Agency Referral) system which makes communication with MCBOS more effective and timelier. Services provided include:

- ❖ Orientation to work requirements

Referrals to employment directed activities secured via a Mercer WDB RFP process to include:

- ❖ Job Readiness
- ❖ Supported Work
- ❖ Adult Basic Education (ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE)
- ❖ English as a Second Language related to Employment
- ❖ Referral to County partner for occupational training program

## **B. Operational Priorities**

The local policies implemented by the Mercer WDB reflect the practices that, in most instances, have been operationally followed by the One Stop partners. They reflect the direction provided by US & NJ DOL and include improvements designed to better serve our community. These policies detail priorities and procedures that while following guidelines allow for the flexibility and improved implementation of needed practices.

The WDB works with local entities to strengthen targeted industry needs by aligning business and economic development with the workforce system. The WDB has established a process of planning, implementation and evaluation primarily through its committees. The WDB has found that working through the various committees is an effective way of accomplishing this goal. At the Committee level the employer needs, challenges and potential solutions are explored. The current WDB committees are industry-focused Health Care & Advanced Manufacturing, and population focused Disabilities Issues, Youth Investment Council, and Literacy. All committees are represented by their respective industries and populations, community college, technical school and major community partners. The WDB Acting director is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations developed are followed up on. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WDB and the One Stop system Partners details the responsibilities of each partner and how those responsibilities will be carried out. The Executive/Oversight Committee reviews and evaluates the action implemented. It is the intent of the industry-focused committees to collaborate in a more substantial manner with the Industry Partnership created by NJDOL as is evidenced by the leadership role of our WDB Chair & Vice Chair in the Manufacturing Industry Partnership.

The One Stop Partner Matrix is included in the Addendum and indicates the extent to which each One Stop System partner contributes to the overall services provided. It will be updated as needed. All Services are described in Section II. One Stop Center Operations A. One Stop Delivery & Flow.

The Mercer County Workforce Development system is anchored by the Mercer County One-Stop Career Center which is a comprehensive site that offers the services of the more One-Stop System Partners at one location. These entities are the Mercer County Office of Training and Employment Services

(MCOTES) who administers the WIOA and WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) funded programs; and the-NJ Department of Labor (LWD) Wagner-Peyser funded Employment Services, Unemployment Insurance Compensation, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the WFNJ GA/SNAP case management. In addition, also co-located are the Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS) who provide TANF case management services; Child Care Connection who provides on-site child care referral services for the TANF population; Job Corps staff; and the One-Stop Operator. All agencies with the exception of the One-Stop Operator are located in the One-Stop on a full-time basis. This co-location facilitates the delivery of seamless, effective, and efficient services to our customers.

The One Stop Career Center Partners meet monthly to ensure open communication and timely response to problems identified - from building issues (keeping the work space safe) to the implementation of WDB policies & procedures.

All customers entering the One Stop are greeted by the Triage staff which is composed primarily by MCOTES staff. The customer is then directed to whatever person or activity is needed. Many of the customers visiting the One Stop need UI services. If the customer has an appointment they are seated & seen as soon as the UI agent is available. If they do not have an appointment - they are provided information on how to make an appointment as UI customers continue to be served By Appointment Only. All other One Stop staff - Employment Services, MCOTES (Mercer County Office of Training & Employment Services), MCBOSS (Mercer County Board of Social Services, utilize the Tel - a- Gov scheduling system in order to better coordinate the services provided. This is utilized for the various Orientations- Training, TANF, GA/SNAP, Youth Career Connections; Counseling Appointments - ES, MCOTES, MCBOSS; and for other services i.e. Academic Skills Testing (CASAS), Job Search Assistance, WLL, etc. Customers are also seen on a walk-in basis. Virtual services also continue to be available - MCOTES & MCBOSS orientations, job search assistance, and job recruitments. A customer Flow Chart is included in the Addendum.

## **Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training activities**

WIOA Adult & Dislocated Workers move through the assessment process, eligibility determination, identification of individual needs, career interests, and career counseling. Included is a review of labor market information designed to assist customers in making a more informed career choice. Customers must also visit a minimum of two service providers (virtual or in person) prior to making a final choice. Barriers are identified and an employability plan is created to guide the customer. Referrals to partner agencies are made as needed. If during the counseling process a customer indicates their need for immediate employment - that customer is immediately connected to an Employment Service staff for further assistance. This could lead to an OJT or Transitional Employment position if warranted.

Dislocated Workers can receive UI benefits while attending training. This requires additional coordination with our DOL UI partners to ensure that UI benefits continue during the training time. A Work Search Waiver & Additional Benefits while in Training can be key in an individual's ability to successfully complete training and be better prepared for training-related employment.

## **Training Contracts and Individual Training Accounts (ITA)**

The attainment of an industry-recognized credential is a priority for all customers referred to training. This is discussed with customers during the assessment and determination of training appropriateness phase. As previously stated, potential training customers will be provided with appropriate LMI to assist them in making a more informed occupational training choice. In order to support customers with barriers and increase their likelihood for successful completion and employment the Mercer WDB approved a policy providing support services (similar to the youth support services) for Adults and Dislocated Workers. These include transportation, technology needs, educational testing (i.e. HSE, credential), child care, appropriate work attire, employment-related equipment, stipends, etc. The provision of support services will be determined on an individual basis. The WDB through its Oversight role will review the performance of

providers and indicate approval/non-approval of their continued use. Emphasis will be placed on the number of credential attainment, training-related employment, wages, and employment retention.

### **Priority of Service for Adult Career and Training Services**

The policy approved by the Mercer WDB states that in accordance with WIOA, if Adult funding is limited, priority of service will be applied to public assistance recipients, low-income individuals and those who are basic skills deficient that seek training services. Expenditures are reviewed to ensure that these priority populations receive the needed services should funding become limited.

### **Priority of Service for Veterans**

The Mercer One Stop prioritizes services to Veterans in accordance with US & NJ DOL guidelines. We provide seamless services to Veterans and their eligible spouses who will receive priority referral to all job and career training opportunities for which they qualify. Also, in accordance with guidelines the One Stop will utilize a tiered system when providing Veterans and their eligible spouses who meet the priority of service guidelines. Veterans who meet the eligibility criteria and have one or more of the barriers requirements will have priority in their eligibility cohort i.e. public assistance recipients, low-income, and basic skills deficient

### **Youth Workforce Development Activities and Provision of the 14 Program Elements**

The Mercer WDB Youth Investment Council set the priorities for the youth programs by establishing that 100% of youth funds would be targeted to serve out-of-school youth. The WIOA Youth budget was prepared in accordance with that mandate. The OSY programs solicited were designed to serve youth between the ages of 18-24 to provide preparation for the attainment of a High School Equivalency (HSE) credential, job readiness skill attainment supplemented by life skills development, provision of support services, i.e. transportation assistance, payment for HSE testing fees, stipends, etc. There is currently one entity providing contracted services which is scheduled to end on June 30, 2023. An RFP for PY 2023 (7/1/23 - 6/30/24) has been issued with a submission date of May 24, 2023. Included in the RFP is the provision of the 20% Work Experience requirement. A new contract(s) will be awarded upon the conclusion of the RFP. Services for subsequent years will be determined by the YIC, and a new RFP will be prepared for PY 2024 and beyond. The term of those contracts will be determined by State & local procurement laws.

Services to In-School youth will be primarily focused on the provision of Labor Market information, work readiness workshops, and recruitment for the Summer Youth Employment Program and other youth-focused events.

During the past year increased outreach has been made to connect with agencies who serve youth with disabilities, those who are involved in the juvenile/adult justice systems and low income and foster youth. These agencies and others that serve at-risk youth will be partnering with us in the Summer Youth Jobs Connection initiative. Within the next year we will expand the representation on the Youth Investment Council by including some of the agencies mentioned. We are also planning a forum inviting agencies that serve the at-risk youth population to make them better aware of our services.

We will be executing a marketing strategy to include hosting and attending meetings and events, through email distribution of flyers that focus on improving awareness of the myriad of services we have available, and partnering with agencies to provide a holistic approach to services that our youth so desperately need. We will continue discussions with DVR to further explore the braiding of services.

The overall services for youth programs provide the 14 WIOA elements listed below. The services are provided by the OSY service provider in addition to the YCC Team at the One-Stop.

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that leads to completion of the recognized high school equivalent credential or for a recognized postsecondary credential.
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services.
3. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
4. Leadership development opportunities
5. Supportive services
6. Adult mentoring for the period of participation
7. Mandatory 12-Month Follow-up services
8. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral
9. Financial literacy education
10. Entrepreneurial skills training
11. Labor market information and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area
12. Preparation for transition to the One-Stop Youth Career Connection Program for internships, on-the-job training and/or postsecondary education and training.
13. Summer employment opportunities that are directly linked to academic and occupational learning
14. As appropriate, paid and unpaid work experience, including internships and job shadowing.

The One-Stop requires that OSY providers design their program to include a summer employment component whenever possible with strong linkages between the academic instruction they receive (based on State academic content and student academic achievement standards) and work readiness skills. Throughout the program the provider will work with the youth to identify career preferences and a career pathway so that at program completion the youth will be able to immediately transition into an internship, on-the-job training, or full-time employment, or into a post-secondary school or occupational, vocational or apprenticeship training program.

### OSY Contracted Service Provider Programs

The Out-of-School Youth programs will focus on individuals between the ages of 18 – 24 years old. Through a partnership with the One-Stop Youth Career Connection Program (YCC) (information detailed below) and the providers who have been competitively selected to provide the OSY program.

The intent and purpose of the out-of-school youth programs is to secure the attainment of a High School Equivalency (HSE) credential and to acquire the work readiness skills necessary to prepare the young adults for meaningful employment. Additionally, the youth will be equipped with valuable life skills, career exploration and job readiness skills. The Mercer WDB, in concert with the Youth Investment Council (YIC), and the MCOTES are committed to building a system of high-quality services that will provide needed education, training, and mentoring opportunities to enhance future overall employment prospects for the youth of Mercer County.

Providers target youth who have dropped out of high school and do not possess a High School Diploma or its recognized equivalent and who are not currently attending any school.

The youth targeted have many barriers to education and employment. They will require individualized and intensive long-term services to improve their job and career options in the expectations of supporting the development of a strong regional economy.

All programs are designed to help the youth succeed as adults and to meet the needs of employers and businesses through inclusion of the following:

## Orientation to program services

- ❖ Comprehensive assessment of academic, career and job readiness
- ❖ Labor Market Information
- ❖ Career exploration
- ❖ Career counseling
- ❖ Occupational training programs
- ❖ HSE preparation and testing
- ❖ Paid Internship opportunities
- ❖ Job search assistance
- ❖ Fiscal Literacy
- ❖ Referral to other appropriate services for OSY, i.e. Youth Corps, Job Corps, YouthBuild
- ❖ Preparation for Internships or other employment opportunities
- ❖ Follow-up Services

## Youth Career Connection (YCC)

In addition to the awarded contracts, services to OSY are provided by the One-Stop Career Center's Youth Career Connection (YCC) staff. Services include comprehensive assessments, job readiness and soft skill training workshops, occupational training, case management, paid internships, and job search assistance. The internships are for a 3-6-month period and include the provision of bus passes for the first three months. These are vital components for program success. This programming helps to achieve the 20% work experience expenditure requirements.

Through this initiative YCC partners with businesses, the community and faith-based agencies to prepare young adults to enter the workforce. The YCC provides an orientation, comprehensive assessment, occupational training and case management while participating employers will provide relevant, valuable work experiences through internships. The program is provided by One-Stop YCC staff and our partners and it is outlined in the three (3) phases below:

**Phase I** - is for youth who have an HSD or HSE and are basic skills deficient. It begins with an intensive 3-week Work Readiness component designed to prepare youth for internships. The curricula will include career exploration and goal setting, application and resume development, presentation and interviewing skills, employer expectations, job retention strategies, money management, leadership development and if applicable referrals to supportive services (childcare, transportation assistance, etc.) Referrals to the Workforce Learning Link may be made through their participation.

**Phase II** - provides options for job matching to the youth. They may choose an occupational training track where a credential for an in-demand vocation is obtained. If the profession of choice does not warrant a credential the targeted employer recruitment will begin.

**Phase III** - begins the internship that is paid by the One-Stop. Youth are currently paid \$15.00 an hour to start with the possibility to increase their wages based upon the acquisition of new skills and/or to meet the comparative wage of a similar position. The internships will be for a 6-month period with the expectation that the host employer will continue the youth's employment. If a position is not available an intensive, targeted job development will begin to ensure that all youth secure career building employment.

### Overall Goal:

- ❖ To provide employers with the opportunity to impact a young adults employability and consequently their future
- ❖ To provide job readiness skill training enabling youth adults to acquire knowledge on how to successfully obtain and retain employment
- ❖ To provide exposure to a real-world working environment
- ❖ To provide young adults with relevant and valuable work experience

- ❖ To strengthen partnerships with the private sector as well as community and faith-based organization in Mercer County
- ❖ To strengthen the local economy by providing job opportunities.

#### Benefits to Employers:

- ❖ Train prospective employees their way at no cost to the company
- ❖ Provide a young adult with an opportunity to get started on a career path
- ❖ Work with youth who are motivated and eager to learn
- ❖ Opportunity to influence a young adults future by instilling good work habits
- ❖ Help to mold the future workforce

#### Benefits to Youth:

- ❖ Opportunity to gain hands-on work experience
- ❖ Opportunity to prepare for a future career
- ❖ Earn a paycheck
- ❖ Learn marketable skills
- ❖ Receive valuable feedback on work performance
- ❖ Acquire good work habits

#### Summer Youth Work Experience Program (SYWEP)

The Mercer One-Stop will continue to partner with businesses and with educational institutions, community and faith-based agencies to provide a Summer Youth Work Experience Program – Summer Youth Jobs Connection - for Mercer County youth. The program is designed to provide 16 – 24-year-old youth with 200 hours of combined work experience and work readiness skill development. The target population are youth that are economically disadvantaged and have barriers to employment including lack of education, are/have been justice-involved, pregnant/parenting, experiencing homelessness, lack significant work history, and those requiring additional assistance to complete an education program. Additional youth will be served as funds allow.

This initiative is designed to prepare in-school youth to return to school to complete their high school education, and/or start and/or return to post- secondary education. Out-of-school youth will be assessed to determine their next step i.e. extension of current internship, entry into occupational training, entry into an OJT contract, entry into a post-secondary institution, enrollment into an existing vendor contract for attainment of their HSE, or assistance in securing unsubsidized employment.

Youth will be paid \$17.00 per hour for a 25-hour week - 22 hours of work experience and 3 hours of work readiness instruction for an eight (8) week period. It is anticipated that a minimum of 115 youth will be served this year. This program will continue to be provided as long as funds are available through NJDOL.

The work readiness workshops will include the following:

- ❖ Career exploration, assessment, introduction to high-growth industries
- ❖ Customer Service Skills
- ❖ Financial Literacy – paychecks, budgeting, banking – “Reality Check”
- ❖ Presentation Skills – elevator speeches, social media,
- ❖ Interviewing, resumes, online applications, “Do’s & Don’ts
- ❖ Soft Skills – Teamwork, Leadership, Communication, Problem Solving

- ❖ Job Retention – Motivation, Diversity, Harassment, Time Management, Stress Management, Work ethic
- ❖ Goals, Barriers & Strategies to overcome them
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Resources and Next steps

The majority of the services to youth are provided through the procurement process. The only exceptions are the orientation to program services, assessment, career counseling, work experience, and support services. We will further explore the possibility of leveraging partner resources by pursuing the co-enrollment with WIOA Adult and/or WFNJ programs, DVR services, and other services provided by community & faith-based agencies that can complement the services currently provided.

## **Integration of Technology**

The WDB facilitates access to services by continuously marketing our services through the use of technology. Due to the Pandemic we were forced to quickly adjust to the world of Zoom to continue providing information and services to our customers without the need for in-person interaction. We are currently utilizing the Tel-A-Gov scheduling system that all co-located utilize to keep track of customer activity in the One Stop Center. As we continue to provide orientations, workshops, and recruitments virtually, systems were put in place to allow for registration for these events that allows staff quick and direct access for follow-up. As an example, the application process for SYEP is online streamlining the onboarding process for the youth. We will also explore the use of social media for the provision of information and services.

## **C. Service Expansion and Accessibility**

### **Use of Technology & Physical and Programmatic Accessibility**

The WDB ensures that the Mercer One-Stop is in compliance with Section 188 of the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding non-discrimination and applicable provisions of the Act. The One-Stop Career Center ensures physical accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing their needs. The One Stop offers the necessary accommodations to provide job seekers with disabilities access to all available services. Printed materials advise customers to inform staff if special accommodations are needed.

One of the advantages of the Mercer One-Stop is not only the co-location of the DVR office but the level of collaboration between the agencies. The co-location referrals to and from the DVR office are seamless to the customer. The DVR Manager is an active participant in the One-Stop Partner meetings and plays a major role on the WDB Disabilities Issues committee.

The need for continuous training of non-DVR One Stop staff will be assessed to ensure that all staff are sensitive to the needs of individuals with disabilities in order to ensure improved services. We will also explore integration of programs through braiding of funding initiatives in particular between DVR and WIOA youth programs i.e. participation in Youth Career Connection (YCC) workshops and after students receive their job readiness skills and short-term internships DVR can refer students into WIOA training programs, a longer-term internships or On-the-Job Training programs.

Mercer County ensures that local WIOA staff are compliant with section 188 of the Act regarding non-discrimination and applicable provisions of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42USC 12101 et seq). The One-Stop Career Center is fully accessible and offers the necessary accommodations to provide job seekers with disabilities effective and meaningful participation in all job seeker services. The One-Stop Center completed a comprehensive review in 2021 utilizing the Physical Accessibility Checklist for both facilities and services. All signage, lighting and building accessibility were in compliance. This checklist will

be completed on an annual basis and results shared with co-located partners and the WDB Disabilities Issues Committee.

The printed material produced through the One-Stop Career Center contains language requesting customers to inform staff if assistance is required in the form of onsite accommodations. All presentations also request customers to do the same.

The One-Stop has bilingual staff who can offer language resource assistance in Spanish. The Triage staff has access to a Language List that can be used when needed. This list contains languages coded into a platform hosted by Voidance. When a code is entered the call will route to the interpreter queue for that language. Admittedly we have had little experience utilizing this service but are prepared to utilize it if/when necessary.

Both the Resource Room and the Learning Link are equipped with furniture to accommodate wheelchairs and computers that read text and audio for the hearing-impaired.

A directory of Sign Language Interpreters is available at the Triage Desk. We will reach out to the Division of the Blind & Visually Impaired to ensure that services are adequate and available for that population.

The Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Transportation program, through the Mercer County WDB and NJ Transit for the Route 130 corridor is fully accessible. The Route 130 Bus offers a route-deviation service, where the bus is allowed to deviate from the route served for destinations within ½ mile.

The WDB Disabilities Issues committee is a strong participant in the advocacy for services for this population. The Committee is comprised of representatives from government (One Stop, DVRS) community agencies, and a parent advocate who continuously connect and strive to improve services to individuals with disabilities by forging networking and collaboration.

The following goals have been established by the WDB Disabilities Issues Committee for the next four (4) year period:

- ❖ Educate employers to the advantages of hiring individuals with disabilities
- ❖ Connect with employers to promote and increase employment opportunities
- ❖ Recruit additional members to participate on the Disabilities Committee
- ❖ Encourage employer participation on the Committee by inviting them to a minimum of two meetings per year which would be focused on employer issues
- ❖ Sponsor at minimum one event annually to present employers with information on hiring individuals with disabilities to encourage inclusion of this population in their hiring by educating them on the advantages of hiring from this population
- ❖ Increase collaboration with other entities who contribute daily to the employment and training development of our workforce
- ❖ Strengthen linkages and communicate services for facilitating access to available services and to increase awareness of programs and services available
- ❖ Increase the Committee's knowledge of available programs by inviting presenters with successful programs to meetings
- ❖ Provide additional training to non-DVR One Stop staff to ensure that all staff are sensitive to the needs of individuals with disabilities in order to ensure improved services.
- ❖ Explore integration of programs through braiding of funding initiatives in particular between DVR and WIOA youth programs i.e. participation in Youth Career Connection (YCC) workshops, and after students receive their job readiness skills and short-term internships DVR can refer students into WIOA training programs, a longer-term internships or On-the-Job Training programs.
- ❖ Ensure those agencies that serve youth 16 – 24 are aware of the employment-focused services available for youth under WIOA i.e. Summer Youth Employment Program, YCC internships

- ❖ Increase the collaboration of community agencies in providing additional support to youth with disabilities participating in the SYEP
- ❖ Explore the feasibility of establishing a Project Search initiative in this County.
- ❖ Conduct an annual comprehensive review of the One-Stop Career Center utilizing the Physical Accessibility Checklist for both facilities and services.

To strengthen the linkage between customers and employers the WDB will implement the following:

- Creation of a marketing plan in partnership with the County Department of Economic Development, Industry Partnerships, Mercer County Community College and Mercer County Technical School to increase awareness of LWD, WIOA, WFNJ, and WDP services among local and regional employers. This will include reaching out to local and regional chambers of commerce and other business associations – targeting the Princeton/Mercer Chamber of Commerce, and the NJ African American Chamber of Commerce. The following services will be targeted:
  - Incumbent Worker Training
  - On-the-Job Training programs
  - Customized training
  - Industry & Sector Strategies
  - Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship initiatives
  - Career Pathways Initiatives
  - Utilization of effective business intermediaries
  - Other business services and strategies as needed
- Engaging employers in the development of relevant employability seminars
- Ensuring that employability seminars are relevant to the needs of local and regional employers
- Targeting additional business associations for WDB membership and/or WDB committee participation in an effort to bring the concerns and business needs of their members to the WDB

#### **D. Detailed Partnership and Service Integration:**

The Mercer County One-Stop Career Center is a comprehensive site that offers all services of the major One-Stop system partners at one location. The One-Stop Career Center Partners through the current Memorandum of Understanding have agreed to the following:

**Shared Partner Responsibilities:** Each partner makes available to participants the programs or activities in accordance with the regulatory governmental laws (County, State or Federal), the respective regulations, statutes, eligibility policies, procedures and directives of its grantor agency and funding sources, and all partners function in separateness mandated by Federal or State law, rules and regulations that will not be violated or abridged.

Partners will participate in the continuous development of the One-Stop policies, procedures and operational agreements through a team approach to serving and achieving the non-duplication of services and in meeting all of the performance standards and service goals.

Partners will be responsible for marketing programs of the One-Stop Career Center within the community.

Partners will agree to provide all necessary reports and information and to attend meetings upon request of the WDB and/or its standing and ad hoc committees.

Partners will meet regularly to review and improve workflow, policies, procedures, referrals and delivery of employment and training services.

Partners will support State and regional planning of workforce strategies that provide a pipeline of working with In-Demand Labor skills and drive economic growth and development.

Partners will ensure the delivery of quality labor market and career information that will enable workforce professionals to provide quality career counseling to enable the workforce system's customers to make informed career and service delivery choices.

Partners will agree to respect and comply with each agency's policies regarding confidentiality. Guidelines and protocol for use of the informational release form shall be developed on an on-going basis reviewed and continuously monitored to ensure compliance.

Partners, in order to offer the best possible services, will participate in a regular and on-going process of program review striving for continuous improvement and customer satisfaction seeking opportunities for further integration and expansion of services. Partners will agree to participate in an on-going and comprehensive system review and process mapping in order to alleviate duplication, unnecessary delay, or overlap and identify gaps in services.

Partners will provide or allow cross-informational training of appropriate staff to ensure staff awareness of each agency's mission, terminology and eligible criteria to ensure that customers have access to all workforce programs for which they are eligible.

Partners will agree, subject to confidentiality constraints, to utilize information sharing intake for referral and participant tracking systems. The referral process will be reciprocal and partners will retain the right to accept or reject referrals based upon agency eligibility criteria or financial limitations.

Partners will jointly share technology and information, including testing scores, assessments and progress notes (as appropriate).

Each partner agency will cooperate to ensure that the service plans, placements and termination for mutually served participants are coordinated.

Partners will agree to regularly convene to address the needs of area employers and the business community.

Partners agree to participate in the operation and evolution of the One-Stop system by:

- ❖ Employing customer satisfaction monitoring activities as directed by WDB policy.
- ❖ Guaranteeing to reserve usage of any One-Stop technology exclusively for One-Stop activities.
- ❖ Provision of computers for job-search activities in area(s) accessible to staff and the public.
- ❖ Provision of telephone lines and Internet connections at the agency's expense.
- ❖ Ensuring that all items are insured at replacement value or value depreciation through the partner's office contents insurance policy, supplying all consumables, such as paper, toner and ink cartridges, and after the warranty period ends, providing maintenance of the computers as needed.
- ❖ Agreeing to share all employer job openings within two days of receipt with Employment Services Partner so that all posted jobs are available to all One-Stop customers.
- ❖ Agreeing to participate in a computer-based communication system as they are developed.
- ❖ Committing to participating in the preparation of a document reflective of local unified planning of the One-Stop system.

## **Relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs**

Our secondary and postsecondary education partners include the Mercer County Community College (MCCC) and the Mercer County Technical School (MCTS). These educational institutions have representatives on all WDB committees. WDB staff and One-Stop staff also attend their meetings and advisory boards. The MCTS is currently in the midst of completing their strategic plan and the Mercer WDB Chair is a key participant in that process. These relationships allow for a valuable exchange of information, comprehensive collaboration, all focused on offering our customers the support they need to make informed decisions about their career and employment future and assist employers in identifying their training needs.

## **Supportive Service Partners**

The Mercer WDB has created a policy enabling the provision of support services for Adults & Dislocated Workers and has expanded the support available for youth. These include: assistance with transportation, technology needs, educational testing, child and dependent care, housing, uniforms or other appropriate work attire, i.c. steel tip boots, work related tools, protective gear, etc. and the provision of needs-based payments to offset training expenses. All support services will be provided based on individual need. MCOTES will adopt eligibility, documentation and other requirements consistent with this policy in the issuance of such payments.

In regards to transportation - there are two specific initiatives that continue to be provided with much success. They are JARC & the Z-line - both described below.

JARC - The WDB received funding for several years under the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) initiative. The WDB does this through a partnership with the County Department of Economic Development and NJ Transit. NJ Transit provides funding and the County provides matching funds. This service offers transportation to the Route 130 corridor with the purpose of increasing access to the many employment opportunities along that route for customers in Trenton, Hamilton and East Windsor.

Amazon Z-Line - At the time Amazon decided to build a one million square feet distribution facility in Mercer, the County, the Greater Trenton Transportation Management Association, and Amazon partnered to provide easy transportation to the facility by providing direct access via vans from a central point at the Hamilton Marketplace to the Amazon facility at no cost to the employee. New Jersey Transit adjusted its routes and hours to accommodate the three shifts at Amazon.

This line remains operational. We are now working on duplicating that service to other parts of the County where public transportation to a variety of employers is currently not available. This includes employers along Exit 8A of the NJ Turnpike.

In regards to child care assistance - The Child Care Connection (CCC) is the County's child care referral service. As part of the services under TANF, a CCC staff is available (currently virtually) to assist TANF customers in making informed child care decisions enabling them to participate in their activities. CCC, as the County's referral agency, can also assist non-TANF customers in their child care needs. This includes the provision of information on families being able to access affordable child care based on their ability to pay.

## **State Employment Service under the Wagner-Peyser Act**

The Wagner-Peyser funded staff providing workforce development services represent one of the primary partners co-located at the One-Stop. Services are integrated with those of the WIOA funded staff to provide services in an effective and coordinated manner. The manager actively participates in all One-Stop partner meetings where issues/complaints are addressed and collaborative solutions are implemented

## **Title II Adult Education and Literacy Providers**

The Mercer County One-Stop and the Title II providers are committed to coordinating resources to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of adult basic literacy, high school equivalency, English as a Second Language, and career assessment-development, including integrated education and training in Mercer County. This partnership is dedicated to the continuum of literacy and language services through the provision of coordinated educational programming in the County.

We seek to continue a strong literacy skill network for Mercer County that begins with an integrated skills delivery system to empower potential job seekers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and support to be productive members of Mercer County. We will also work in partnership within the communities and

surrounding areas to remove the literacy barriers and challenges that might otherwise hinder individuals from becoming self-sufficient members of society.

We will continue to establish joint processes and procedures that will enable the Consortium and the One-Stop to provide a delivery system resulting in a seamless and comprehensive array of education, social services, and other workforce development services, including career pathways development to adult participants in Mercer County. One example is the decision to use the CASAS tool as the academic measure for entry into either Consortium or One-Stop based programs and the sharing of results.

As many of the literacy providers in the State are moving away from CASAS and deciding to return to the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) we will have discussions with our Title II Consortium partners prior to making a determination.

Presentations of the One-Stop services are provided on a regular basis at Consortium meetings. Future presentations by One Stop staff including the Business Services Representative will include information on the vast network of employers utilizing the One-Stop through targeted Job Recruitments and also information on Federal Bonding and Re-Entry Services, which can prove vital to some of the Title II population served through the Consortium. All Consortium partners have been added to the Virtual Recruitment and employment opportunities notification list. Future presentations will also include occupational training opportunities, job readiness workshops, job search assistance, and specialized youth services.

The Mercer County Consortium will continue to provide comprehensive, county wide services for Levels I, II, and III in Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education (ABE/ASE), English as a Second Language (ESL) and Civics. Partners will provide instruction in adult education and literacy services, including workplace literacy, preparation for the High School Equivalency (HSE) exam and sector specific contextualized instruction; instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and US history. Program participants will gain the skills and knowledge needed for employment and self-sufficiency and prepare for their roles as workers, family members, and American citizens. The Consortium will provide services that expand the state's adult education programs beyond basic skills literacy and HSE acquisition to a pathway leading to postsecondary education, occupational training, and certified credential attainments that may include but are not limited to: American Red Cross First Aid for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. (CPR), Automated External Defibrillator (AED), National Retail Federation (NRF).

Member agencies will recruit, assess, support, and provide effective, relevant, and engaging instruction in the classroom and through alternative delivery systems such as hybrid or blended learning opportunities. Instructional offerings and support services are designed to help students reach pre-established benchmarks: demonstrated improvement in Education Functioning Levels (EFLs) as set forth in the National Reporting System (NRS); attainment of a secondary school equivalency diploma; attainment of an industry recognized credential or certification; placement in postsecondary education or occupational training; placement in unsubsidized employment or retention of employment; demonstrated improvement in English language proficiency; acquisition of citizenship skills; increased involvement in community activities and voter registration and voting.

The Consortium and the Mercer County Office of Training and Employment Services entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure that the following principles of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, in relation to the WDB be implemented:

- ❖ **Universal and Equitable Eligibility** – all customers, including those with special needs and barriers to employment, shall have access to a core set of services with each provider named herein. Services are designed to provide information so that all customers can make informed career decisions that coincide with the current labor market. Core literacy and language and support services shall be made available through multiple locations throughout Mercer County and at the Mercer County One-Stop Career Center.
- ❖ **One-Stop Approach** – All customers may explore work preparation and career development services and have access to information for a range of employment, training, and adult or

occupational education programs. Services shall be made available through the One-Stop Career Center and/or at the Consortium locations.

- ❖ **Individual Choice** – Customers shall have access to a multitude of literacy, career, skill, employment, and training information to obtain the services and skills they need to enhance their employment opportunities based on their individual needs.

## **Statewide Rapid Response Activities**

NJDLWD assists employers and workers involved in a closing or permanent mass layoff by providing workforce development information and services needed by those employees to be laid off in a prompt, efficient manner at their site. The WDB and One-Stop are notified when WARN notices are sent for a business within Mercer County. Currently the Business Representative assigned to the Mercer One-Stop is on the Rapid Response (RR) team. Oftentimes they meet with the employer's management and union personnel to develop a plan to serve the company's workforce. Resources are made available to the employer and employees to support this difficult transition for both parties.

Additional One-Stop staff may attend sessions to assist or to provide specific information in particular as it relates to training. The RR team assists both the employer and the laid off workers by providing on-site assistance during their business hours and at no cost to the employer or employees. Each Talent Network is relied upon to contribute as needed in their specific industry.

At a minimum the following services are provided during a RR session:

- ❖ UI information – to include an explanation of benefits and eligibility requirements and on-site assistance in filing claims
- ❖ Reemployment Services - One-Stop Registration, One-Stop Services Orientation, and Labor market Information, Occupational Training information.

The WDB director will work closely with the RR team and other entities as required to coordinate the local/regional area RR activities. The current information provided at the sessions will be reviewed to assess if there is a need to add information and/or services to the presentations. These may include support services available through the workforce development system and/or community resources to assist during the employees' transition from this job to the next i.e. assistance with heating/air conditioning bills, local food banks, foreclosure assistance programs, etc.

## **The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired in serving individuals with disabilities**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR) is one of the Partners co-located at the One-Stop. They provide employment and training services that enable individuals with disabilities to find jobs or to keep their existing employment. Some of the services provided are as follows:

- ❖ Vocational counseling and guidance.
- ❖ Transition programming and support while in school, after graduation from school, and into work programs for youth
- ❖ On-the-Job Training opportunities
- ❖ Job seeking skills training
- ❖ Time limited job placement and job coaching/ Supported Employment services.
- ❖ Assistance with providing job accommodations/Advocacy.
- ❖ Skills training programs.
- ❖ College sponsorship for financially eligible consumers
- ❖ Assistive Technology Devices training and purchase.
- ❖ Technological Assistance as required/vehicle modifications/Orthotic prosthetic devices purchase and support, work site evaluation/modification
- ❖ Assistance and services for persons with hearing impairments

- ❖ Dedicated bilingual Vocational Rehabilitation and counseling.

The WDB Disabilities Issues committee is a strong participant in the advocacy for services for this population. The committee identified many of the strategies needed to identify the gaps in services and propose solutions. These include the following:

- ❖ Actively finding ways to connect all of the partners to the myriad of programs available
- ❖ Connecting with Employers to promote and increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities
- ❖ Working on implementing and improving the “It’s All About Work” program with NJDOLWD
- ❖ Actively exploring coordination of transportation opportunities for youth and young adults.
- ❖ Actively exploring coordination for sharing across programs and braiding of WIOA funding to enhance youth training and employment activities
- ❖ Developing presentations to promote Special Education programs for Partners with DVR

The Mercer WDB will work to establish a formal mechanism to work closely with the Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired to ensure that individuals served by the CBVI receive access to all One Stop services.

### **Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) & Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs)**

At the One-Stop Career Center priority services are given to Veterans who served in the U.S. military or were activated as a member of a National Guard unit, or were activated as a member of a Reserve Unit. Services include:

- ❖ Priority referrals to jobs
- ❖ Job Search Workshops
- ❖ Resume Development
- ❖ Career Training Programs
- ❖ Assistance in accessing Veteran’s Benefits
- ❖ Job Search and Training Assistance
- ❖ Referrals to WIOA services
- ❖ Referrals to appropriate support services.

### **Mental or Emotional Health Programs**

The Mercer WDB will seek to become better informed of the mental and emotional health services that may be available to One Stop customers. WFNJ TANF and GA customers have direct access to the Board of Social Services’ Mental Health and Substance Abuse initiatives. The Mercer County Department Director of Human Services serves on the WDB and we will work in partnership to ensure that all One Stop staff are aware of the services available and the referral mechanism.

### **Agreements**

The WDB will review the minutes of the One Stop co-located & system partner meetings and request status reports of the WDB director.

### **E. Employer Engagement:**

#### **Strategies & Services for Employer Engagement**

In accordance with the NJ and the Central Jersey Partners plans for WIOA, the primary goal of the Mercer County WDB is to build a stronger workforce that meets the demands and needs of local and regional

employers. The Mercer Business Team comprised of LWD's Business Service Representative (BSR) and WIOA local area representative work together in relation to employer interactions, business development, and job placement activity. The Business Team addresses workforce development requirements associated with recruitment and training. The experienced BSR is the single point of contact to access State and County programs.

The One-Stop Career Center system offers a variety of business solutions to small and mid-sized employers at no cost to them. Services available to local and regional employers will include labor exchange activities and labor market information. Customized business services may be provided to employers, employer associations, and other such organizations; these services are provided by LWD Business Services staff. These services can be tailored for specific employers, can be offered in person or virtual, and may include the following:

- ❖ Customized screening and referral of qualified jobseekers
- ❖ Customized recruitment events (Positive Recruitment) and targeted job fairs
- ❖ Job Fairs
- ❖ On-the-Job Training Contracts (OJT)
- ❖ Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC) assistance
- ❖ Federal Bonding Assistance
- ❖ Links to NJDOLWD handbook of responsibilities and rights of employer's subject to NJ Unemployment Compensation and Temporary Disability Benefits Law
- ❖ Access to OSHA or wage and hour representative to address Labor Law questions
- ❖ Access to customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries or clusters
- ❖ Developing and implementing industry sector strategies involving industry partnerships, regional skills alliance, industry skill panels and sectoral skill partnerships (as needed)
- ❖ Assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program.

The depth of involvement of the Business Services Team is dictated by the needs of the employer and can range from accepting job orders and making referrals to job openings to pre-screening, testing for basic reading and math skills, preparing jobseekers via a series of work readiness workshops, arranging for On-The-Job (OJT) training, facilitating Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC) applications, providing employee Federal Bonding information, facilitating Job Fairs and Positive Recruitments, etc. Job Fairs can be organized by the Business Services Team according to employer needs.

One of the primary activities is the facilitation of Positive Recruitments which are employer conducted on-site interviews. Recruitments can also be held at the employer's site, or another suitable site, i.e. local college, community agency, etc. The BRS and the One-Stop market these recruitments through its wide network of partners and conduct preliminary pre-screening in an attempt to ensure that the employer will interview the best possible candidates.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic "Positive" (targeted Employer) Recruitments were held at the One Stop with much success. In 2019 a total of 87 recruitments were held - 1,091 jobseekers attended. As stated previously during PY 2020 we were forced to pivot and transferred to virtual recruitments. These also proved fruitful with the following participation: PY 2020 34 recruitments were held - 1,477 jobseekers; PY 2021 59 recruitments - 2,067 jobseekers; and to date in PY 2022 32 recruitments - 2,800 jobseekers. We will continue with the virtual recruitments as they appear to be beneficial and preferred by both employers and jobseekers.

We are confident that many more jobseekers actually were hired, but our challenge remains in obtaining hiring information from employers. We will be implementing additional strategies in an effort to obtain more accurate outcomes.

The One-Stop held its first Job Fair in September 2018. Over 80 employers and almost 1,000 individuals attended. Due to its success it has become a semi-annual event. In PY 20 due to the Pandemic we pivoted

to Drive-thru job fairs - hosting one in October 2021 & in May 2022 serving almost 1,000 vehicles and 100+ employers. In October 2022 we returned to the in-person job fair model. Our most recent Job Fair was held in-person at the CURE Arena in Trenton, New Jersey. Employer participation remained high at 70+ employers and 30 resource organizations. The Job Fair was attended by more than 550 job seekers.

The One-Stop has expanded both locally and regionally in our approach to business services particularly when the business needs are of a large scale. Locally we incorporate in a more substantial way all relevant partners i.e. MCCC, MCTS, Industry Partnerships, WFNJ providers, OSY program providers, and faith-based and community agencies job developers in marketing the Workforce Development System services in a coordinated fashion. Currently all job openings received by the BSR and all Positive Recruitments are shared with our partner and jobseeker network. As the Industry Partnerships are charged with expanding and strengthening new employer-driven partnerships it is hoped that this initiative will assist the WDB in meeting the needs of our employers while building new pathways that can lead our jobseekers to economic opportunity and independence.

It is also our intent to work together with our regional partners in relation to employer interactions, business development and job placement activity. This will be accomplished in part by the following:

- ❖ Sharing ideas and insights on the needs of employers and industries within the region.
- ❖ Sharing a job leads through a single point of contact method. When a BSR/One-Stop brings an employer with a significant hiring or training need to the CJP, that office becomes the single point of contact for that firm. They will disseminate job orders or other information to the regions BSR/ One-Stops in order to maximize the system's ability to serve the employer and link candidates from across the region to that employer. The same process will be followed when a BSR/ One-Stop is having difficulty finding appropriate candidates within their area.
- ❖ Educating employers about One Stop services and the role of the WDB's
- ❖ Work collaboratively with the NJ Business Action Center (BAC) to enhance and not duplicate services
- ❖ Ongoing BSR staff training

The WDB committees particularly Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing assist the One-Stop in the development of workforce initiatives designed to assist both jobseekers and local businesses. Effective and targeted workforce and education programs require understanding of employer needs and the provision of accurate and timely training to address those needs. Employers serving on these committees actively participate in the discussions and provide valuable input to our planning process. The committees continuously focus on the emerging and ongoing needs of the employers in these respective industries. Both committees have representation from their industries keeping us abreast of their needs. The WDB Chair & Vice-Chair also serve as the co-chairs of the Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership.

On a regional level, the Central Jersey Partners (CJP) are building a service delivery strategy for employers and job seekers that will be utilized in each local area. Our regional business strategies include the following:

- ❖ Convene a regional business advisory summit (annual)
- ❖ Convene a Joint Regional WDB Chairs meeting (bi-annual)
- ❖ Convene Regional Business Services Representatives meeting (quarterly)
- ❖ Convene meetings of the WDB committees to share ideas and practices
- ❖ Collaborate with NJDOL's CJP Industry Partnerships

We are seeking to expand WDB committee membership with additional employer representation to better address the needs of the business community. It was through the WDB's Advanced Manufacturing committee that the CPT (Certified Production Technician) initiative was created. This brought together MCCC and three local businesses (one large & two small) who reviewed the curriculum created by MCCC and then hosted the participants in an internship with the intention of hiring them at its conclusion. We were not as successful as we had planned, however, we learned valuable lessons which will be considered when planning our next such initiative.

Mercer WDB will be working with our local and regional partners to engage employers and industry associations to contribute to the development and updating of the industry-valued credential and degree list and to assist in the development of relevant training programs.

Advanced Manufacturing employers have been actively engaged with workforce development in the County. Several serve as facilities for Technical School staff to gain professional insight on trends in this growing industry and as well as sites for students to participate in structured learning experiences, job sampling, job shadowing, and internships and provide mentorship opportunities. These employers also serve as members of the STEM Advisory Group providing input on programming and curriculum for the Technical School. It is our intent to participate with the Advisory Group and connect the employers with the Advanced Manufacturing Committee. The Technical School is currently in the midst of completing a strategic plan & the WDB chair is actively engaged in that process.

This industry continues to face an image problem rooted in decades-old perspectives of “old manufacturing” and finds insufficient numbers of qualified workers. Coupled with many of the experienced, qualified workers reaching retirement age – there are insufficient numbers of new workers prepared to replace them. Some of the strategies to be implemented include:

- ❖ Identify credentials currently available & explore to identify what credentials employers are seeking
- ❖ Marketing of WDB & One Stop Business Services
- ❖ Partnering with employers to identify incumbent worker training needs.
- ❖ Increase Apprenticeship programs by local area employers.
- ❖ Encourage local employer participation in local, regional & statewide events
- ❖ Strengthen collaboration with County Department of Economic Development
- ❖ Strengthen collaboration with NJMEP in the provision of services
- ❖ Increase awareness of career opportunities in the youth & Adult population
- ❖ Career Fair to graduating seniors who are not college-bound
- ❖ Provide Labor Market Information (LMI) to college bound youth focusing on growth areas for the next 5 – 10 years
- ❖ Presentations (virtual & in-person) to 9<sup>th</sup> graders
- ❖ Presentations to middle-school students

## **Workforce Development Programs and Economic Development**

In Mercer County the workforce development system and Economic Development are uniquely linked as the WDB is one of the divisions under the County Department of Economic Development. The Director of Economic Development serves on the WDB and is an active Committee member. The County engages businesses to offer the totality of services available and the WDB and One-Stop are an integral part of that engagement strategy. Through the Economic Development Director’s WDB involvement, County activities and programs initiated by and through this department are shared with the WDB and WDB-related employers

## **Create Linkage During Program Delivery Between Customers and Employers**

To strengthen the linkage between customers and employers the WDB will implement the following:

Creation of a marketing plan in partnership with the County Department of Economic Development, Industry Partnerships, Mercer County Community College and Mercer County Technical School to increase awareness of NJDOL, WIOA, WFNJ, and special grants services among local and regional employers. This will include reaching out to local and regional chambers of commerce and other business associations – targeting the Princeton/Mercer Chamber of Commerce, the NJ African American Chamber of Commerce, the Latino Merchants Association, and the Small Business Development Center. The following services will be targeted:

- Incumbent Worker Training
- On-the-Job Training program
- Paid Internships
- Transitional Employment
- SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program)
- Access to Federal Bonding
- Information on WOTC (Work Opportunity Tax Credit)
- Industry & Sector Strategies

### **Align resources to create a system of services, supports, and solutions for employers**

As stated previously, on a regional level, the Central Jersey Partners (CJP) are building a service delivery strategy for employers and job seekers that will be utilized in each local area. Our regional business strategies include those listed below. We also collaborate and engage the NJBAC & NJBIA.

- ❖ Convene a regional business advisory summit (annual)
- ❖ Convene a Joint Regional WDB Chairs meeting (bi-annual)
- ❖ Convene Regional Business Services Representatives meeting (quarterly)
- ❖ Convene meetings of the WDB committees to share ideas and practices
- ❖ Collaborate with NJDOL's CJP Industry Partnerships

### **Expand implementation of work-based learning opportunities & leverage career pathway initiatives**

The Mercer WDB will continue to explore ways to expand and strengthen linkages with area colleges, employers, local Building & Trades unions and other entities to implement work-based learning opportunities and pre-apprenticeships & apprenticeships. We will explore ways to more closely collaborate with entities that have secured GAINS funding. Through our partnership with the County Department of Economic Development and the various business associations on our Board, we will expand the communication to local and regional employers regarding the myriad of services available to businesses. This will include in-person presentations at Association events and virtual information exchange. The Mercer Business team attends many local job & resource fairs which brings information on our services to both employers and jobseekers.

## **III. WDB Structure and Functions**

### **Workforce Development Structure:**

**Current State:** in Mercer County the CEO and the WDB share responsibility jointly and separately for funding activities and programs made available through the US & NJ Department of labor. They have a Memorandum of Understanding which delineates the specific roles and responsibilities of each entity. The WDB is responsible for the development of the budget and for specific functions including strategic planning, capacity building, ensuring systems alignment and effective operations. The CEO is currently responsible for the daily operations of the County portion of One Stop Career Center through the Mercer County Office of Training & Employment Services. They jointly prepare any required plans, agreements, and other documents required by WIOA and other applicable regulatory entities. The CEO is the grant recipient and Administrative entity and is also designated as the fiscal agent. It is the responsibility of the CEO with the approval of the County Board of Commissioners to appoint WDB members in accordance with Federal & State regulations.

The roles & responsibilities of each entity is clearly outlined in the MOU between the CEO & the WDB. which will be updated.

WIOA requires the local workforce areas to competitively procure the One Stop Operator based on eligibility requirements and criteria outlined in Section 121 (d) (2). Mercer County WDB conducted that competitive process following the policy guidance issued by NJDOL. WIOA defines the minimum role of the One Stop Operator as a convener, coordinator, and manager of the One Stop delivery system in a local workforce area. The CEO and the WDB had determined that the One Stop Operator would have the minimum role of coordinating the service delivery of required One Stop partners and service providers. They further approved the Mercer County Office of Employment & Training Services (MCOTES) to continue to be the primary provider of WIOA and WFNJ workforce development services at the Career Center.

The current One Stop Operator is the Mercer County Office of Employment & Training Services (MCOTES) and will continue in that role until June 30, 2026.

Youth services, excluding those that can be provided by local One Stop staff, i.e. assessment, case management, work readiness, etc. have always been competitively procured. There is one current provider whose contract will end June 30, 2026.

## Current WDB Members & Affiliation

The list of the current WDB membership is included in the Addendum. Some of the top growing industries in the County are Transportation & Warehousing, Government, Finance & Insurance, and Manufacturing while Health Care and Social Assistance are two of the largest industries. Most of these industries are represented on the WDB and efforts are underway to recruit additional members. Although Advanced Manufacturing is not listed - there are numerous manufacturing employers in the County that not only provide entry-level employment opportunities but career pathways.

## Mercer WDB Standing Committees

- *Advanced Manufacturing* - seeks to identify career pathways, employer needs, and training gaps, and coordinates the provision of training in order to adequately prepare the workforce for future opportunities in this continuously growing field. It aims to debunk myths/stereotypes about manufacturing jobs by providing accurate information on this industry and its demand for jobs to schools (students/counselors), parents, and adult jobseekers
- *Disabilities* – seeks to gather information and coordinate the services available to the disabled population by connecting with the local office of the NJ Dept. of Vocational Rehabilitation and community agencies. The goal is to assist service providers deliver the most comprehensive and updated information and services available.
- *Health Care* – seeks to identify career pathways, employer needs, and training gaps, and coordinate the provision of needed training in order to adequately prepare the workforce for future opportunities in this fast and continuously growing field.
- *Literacy* – collaborates with literacy service providers to ensure individuals receive the appropriate instruction to assist them in obtaining their High School Equivalency, learn/improve their English language proficiency, upgrade educational levels necessary for occupational training, and acquire citizenship skills.
- *Executive/Oversight* – reviews the services and activities carried out by the One Stop Center partners primarily those administered by the County. These include individual vendor performance for those entities that provide occupational training and overall workforce development performance. It is composed of the Executive Committee.
- *Youth Investment Council* – reviews/ recommends services and activities provided to the 16-24 youth population.

## Fiscal Agent

The fiscal agent for the County of Mercer is the Director of the Finance Office who is the Chief Operating Officer. In accordance with the MOU between the County and the WDB, the County of Mercer is the administrative entity and fiscal agent for all WIOA, WFNJ, WLL, and any other funds awarded the WDB

and/or County for employment and training programs. The Mercer County Office of Training and Employment Services is the designated county entity responsible for carrying out these activities.

## **WDB Staffing**

The current WDB staff consists of the following:

Director - manages the daily operations of the WDB & WIOA career services. WDB functions include: scheduling of WDB & committee meetings & ensures minutes are completed & distributed; supervises & coordinates the completion of required reports for WDB & NJDOL (local/regional plan development, required MOU's, WDB certification, etc.) supervises daily fiscal operations & ensures completion of fiscal reports, coordinates business services with the BSR

Contracts Specialist - completes RFP's for OSO, OSY, WFNJ TANF & GA services; completes ITA contracts, assists in the development of required plans & other documents as needed

Program Monitor - conducts monitoring as required; responsible for the completion of Board & Committee minutes

Fiscal Manager - handles processing of contracts (ITA's & competitively awarded) & other related payments; completes expenditure reports and cash drawdowns; provides expenditures reports to WDB Executive Committee

Plan Specialist - Assists the Workforce Development Board Director and other staff with activities directly related to the design, oversight, and support of workforce programs and services. Their work includes coordinating and implementing program initiatives, supporting employer engagement efforts, tracking participant outcomes, and assisting with the development of training opportunities and partnerships that strengthen workforce initiatives. Through these efforts, they plays a key role in ensuring that the board's programs effectively meet performance goals and respond to the workforce needs of the community.

## **B. Procurement of One Stop Operator and Career Services**

One Stop Operator - Serves as the One Stop system-builder, supporting coordination of services across required and other partners

### **One Stop Career Service Providers -Youth Service Providers**

In response to guidance by the NJDOL, in addition to the procurement of One Stop Operator services, the competitive procurement of Career Services and Youth Services was conducted. The OSO serves as the One Stop system-builder, supporting coordination of services across required and other partners. One Stop Career Services support the provision of the full range of career services highlighted under WIOA in the local One Stop system, including the provision of work-based learning, supportive services and career coaching. The procurement of Youth Services provides services to support the WIOA specified program elements that fall outside the expertise and services being provided by the One Stop Career Center staff.

The Mercer WDB issued an RFP for the combined One Stop Operator Services and Career Services. The RFP was created and released with appropriate and applicable firewalls and conflict of interest guidelines. The OSO services include the coordination and management of the One Stop delivery system. Career services include the following: comprehensive and specialized assessment of the skill levels and service needs of WIOA Adults & Dislocated Workers, development of an Individualized Employment Plan, individual & group counseling, career planning, short-term pre-vocational services (communication skills,

interviewing, etc. to prepare individuals for training or employment), internships & work experiences, work preparation activities, English language acquisition, etc.

The RFP was open to all eligible entities including the County. MCOTES was the provider selected. The WDB continues to ensure that all guidelines regarding this action will be followed including the following: a waiver was submitted to NJDOL which detailed the documentation of the competitive procurement process and an overview of the firewalls and separations that were put in place. The firewalls and separation include the separate lines of reporting for WDB & Career Center staff, a clear process of ensuring that fiscal and program accountability responsibilities of WDB & the Fiscal Agent in overseeing the Operator and Career Services contract can be carried out; and the ability of WDB members and staff to operate independently of those receiving funds to provide Career Services in order for them to be able to best guide and support this work in compliance with WIOA law.

This RFP was issued in early 2024 in order for the WDB to have sufficient time to review and select the entity(ies) to begin their contract(s) on July 1, 2024. The contract was for a minimum of two years.

An RFP for youth services beyond July 1, 2024 was issued in the first few months of 2024.

The WDB Chair appointed members of the WDB Executive Committee to review the proposal and select the One-Stop Operator and the entity for Career Services. The Executive Committee consists of the chairs of the standing committees and two duly elected at-large members. In accordance with the conflict of interest and firewall guidelines no committee chairs were selected to review if their organization or any organization they are connected to are/would be possible applicants.

All committee members selected signed conflict of interest statements prior to reviewing the proposals. Appropriate firewalls were in place.

#### Timeline PY 2024 RFP Activities

- ❖ Resolution required to allow Competitive Contracting for a One-Stop Operator & Career Services September/October 2023
- ❖ RFP release – January/February 2024
- ❖ RFP Due Date –March/April 2024
- ❖ WDB Proposal committee review and evaluation – mid March/-April
- ❖ Board of Commissioners Approval April/May 2024 for a July 1, 2024 start date

The CEO and the WDB continue to have shared governance of the system by entering into a Local Workforce Development Partnership Agreement which establishes the roles & responsibilities related to setting strategic direction, coordinating programs & partners and providing guidance and oversight. A system of agreements, by-laws and contracts set the structure and roles of the WDB and the relationship of the WDB to the other entities

### **C. Oversight and Monitoring:**

The purpose of monitoring and oversight is to determine if the various aspects of the workforce development system are adhering to federal & state regulations, guidelines, and policies always striving for continuous improvement. It is our goal to ensure that programs and services enable Mercer to not only meet or exceed mandated performance measures but to ensure that our customers - both jobseekers and employers - receive the services they need and deserve.

### **One Stop Career Center Operations, Work-based learning contracts and Systems supporting business practices**

Operations of the One Stop Career Center

Overall monitoring of the One Stop Services is reviewed by the WDB on a quarterly basis via a report to the WDB which includes data on services provided & outcomes on the following individuals & employers served both virtually & in person

- ❖ Total Individuals visiting the Center quarterly & cumulative through the reporting period
- ❖ UI - both those attending with appointments & those making inquiries
- ❖ Individuals served for job search assistance & those receiving RESEA services
- ❖ Training orientation
- ❖ Training customers served through ITA contracts
- ❖ Business Services - # of recruitments, attendance, & hiring (when available)
- ❖ Youth Services - services provided by in YCC & vendors
- ❖ WFNJ TANF & GA services - provided by vendors
- ❖ DVR services

The One Stop Operator completes a monthly report on the activities, issues, challenges & successes of the co-located partners based on their monthly meetings and provides additional information as appropriate

## Procured Contracts

Program Monitoring for competitively contracted programs is conducted by both WDB and MCOTES staff.

WFNJ & Youth - are monitored both by a Desk Review of data submitted and on-site visits.

WorkFirst NJ TANF, GA/SNAP & OSY Providers - The MCOTES WFNJ & Youth team is in continual communication with our providers via phone, e-mail, onsite visits, and regularly scheduled meetings. This communication gives Mercer the opportunity to address any issue on an ongoing basis before they escalate.

A pre-visit Desk Review is conducted to obtain and review the following information:

- Number of customers enrolled
- Current status
- Start dates, expected end date, etc.
- Timely submission of the Monthly Customer Status Report
- Timely & accurate submission of Fiscal Reports

The provider is contacted to schedule an appointment for the monitoring visit.

- The On-site review vendors includes the following:
  - Review of their Monthly Customer Status Reports
  - Review of customer files: review of attendance, status change forms, employment verifications, monthly case notes, customer satisfaction surveys
  - Attendance: observe customers in attendance with sign in sheet review
  - Observation of classroom activities: for adherence to curriculum, activities, timeline, etc.
  - Interviewing and discussion with customers for the purpose of program feedback
  - Discussion with Vendor Program Contact to review the visit, any findings, suggestions for program enhancements and to give immediate feedback

In addition to the onsite visits, TANF & GA are monitored utilizing the following:

- ❖ Vendors are required to attend a monthly "Case Conference" at which time they meet with the various case managers to discuss individual customer issues attendance
- ❖ Financial review by Fiscal Staff to ensure that expenditures have been made against the approved budget cost categories, that they are allowable & reasonable, and that all expenditures are adequately documented

In addition to the onsite visits, Youth Program Providers are monitored utilizing the following:

- ❖ Eligibility certification on site at the Provider's site
- ❖ Review of Program files content which is utilized to ensure that projected goals and outcomes have been met, that appropriate documentation is provided to approve or not approve performance-based payments based on results
- ❖ Documentation of HSE attainment

## **Training (ITA) Contracts**

ITA contracts are monitored via the use of a Desk Review & an onsite review.

A pre-visit Desk Review is conducted to obtain the following information:

- Number of customers enrolled
- Current status
- Start dates, expected end date, etc.
- Timely submission of the Monthly customer Status Report
- Timely submission of Fiscal Reports

The provider is contacted to schedule an appointment for the monitoring visit.

The on-site review of TANF and GA/SNAP vendors includes the following:

- Review of their Monthly Customer Status Reports
- Documentation and customer files: review of attendance, employment verifications, monthly case notes, customer satisfaction surveys
- Attendance: observe customers in attendance using the sign in sheet review
- Observation of classroom activities: for adherence to curriculum, activities, timeline, etc.
- Interviewing and discussion with customers for the purpose of program feedback
- Discussion with Vendor Program Contact to go review the visit, any findings, suggestions for program enhancements and to give immediate feedback

## **Work Based Learning Contracts**

The monitoring of youth in work experience components include those listed below. When Transitional jobs are utilized the same criteria will be followed.

- ❖ Review of the Worksite Agreement during desk review and on the onsite visit ensure adherence to the activities, timelines, job descriptions, skills acquisition, etc. listed in the agreement; and to NJ Child Labor Laws (if applicable)
- ❖ Observation of youth/adult performing their assigned duties (when possible)
- ❖ Review of participant's evaluation
- ❖ Interview participant and worksite contacts i.e. Direct supervisor & agency representative to obtain program feedback

A summary of the comprehensive monitoring reports will be incorporated into the information reviewed by the WDB Executive/Oversight Committee.

## **D. Performance Measures and Accountability:**

### **The One Stop Delivery System**

The Mercer WDB established an Executive Oversight Committee whose primary function is to review the services and activities carried out at the One-Stop Career Center. The Committees focus has been primarily on programs funded by WIOA, WFNJ, WLL, and other funds administered by the County. It is composed

of private sector members of the WDB. MCOTES presents information at a minimum on a quarterly basis. The primary areas of review by the Committee include:

- ❖ Vendor Performance – information is provided on individual ITA vendors that includes the number of customers enrolled; number of terminated, number of placements, number of training-related placements, and average wage. Data is provided for the last three program years. If vendors are not performing in accordance with WDB expectations, these issues will be addressed with the vendors by the MCOTES and a follow-up report is provided to the Committee at their next meeting.
- ❖ Performance Targets – performance regarding the negotiated performance targets are reviewed for the previous quarter. If targets are not being met explanations and/or corrective action is discussed.
- ❖ Expenditures – expenditures as reported to NJ DOL for the preceding quarter are provided.
- ❖ Annual Budget – on a yearly basis the Committee reviews the WIOA, WFNJ, WLL annual budget prior to its presentation for approval to the WDB at their 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Meeting in July.
- ❖ Other relevant WDB, WIOA, WFNJ, and NJ DOL issues and initiatives as appropriate

At each Quarterly WDB Meeting the WDB members are presented with the One-Stop Quarterly Report that incorporates all of the activities and services of the One-Stop. This Report includes:

- ❖ Customer and Employer “Success Stories”
- ❖ Total customer flow – number of all customers visiting the One-Stop on a daily basis, some of whom make multiple visits. These include:
  - WIOA Services – Occupational Training Orientations, testing, career counseling, Workforce Learning Link, Youth Career Connection (YCC) orientations and workshops
  - Labor Exchange Information – resource room use, RESEA Orientation, employability workshops, individual job search assistance, Re-entry orientation/workshops
  - UI Services – claimants with problems meeting with agents or utilizing UI phone
  - WFNJ TANF – customers attending TANF work requirement orientations, and/or requiring TANF case management assistance
  - WFNJ GA/SNAP - customers attending required orientations, and/or requiring case management assistance
- ❖ WIOA Occupational Training - including: number of enrollments, completions/terminations, placements, training-related placements, average wages
- ❖ WFNJ TANF Vendor-provided Services including: Level of Service (LOS), Number of referrals, enrollments, placements
- ❖ WFNJ GA/SNAP/ Vendor-provided Services including: Level of Service (LOS), Number of referrals, enrollments, placements
- ❖ Business Services – Job (Positive) Recruitments including: Number of events, jobseekers served, confirmed hires (when available)
- ❖ Business Services – On-the-Job Training (OJT) including: Number of contracts, customers served, completed, & retained
- ❖ Youth Services - Out-of-School Youth for both YCC & contracted services including: Level of Service (LOS), Number of enrollments, exits, HSE attainment, internships, job placement post-secondary enrollment
- ❖ Special Events/Initiatives

## **The One Stop Operator**

The One Stop Operator completes a monthly report on the activities, issues, challenges & successes of the co-located partners based on their monthly meetings. These are reviewed first by the Executive/Oversight Committee and then presented to the Board

## One Stop Career Service Providers & Youth Providers - this is detailed in the above section: C. Oversight & Monitoring

### Performance Measures

The Executive Oversight Committee and the Board review the negotiated federal & state performance measures on a quarterly basis. If measures are not being met or exceeded, an improvement plan is presented to the WDB. The current measures for PY 25 are listed below.

	Employment Q2	Employment Q4	Credential	Measurable Skill Gains
<b>Adult</b>	0%	131.58%	156.25%	46.69%
<b>DW</b>	137.81%	82.46%	99.21%	68.81%
<b>Youth</b>	49.02%	55.10%	95.53%	0%
<b>WP</b>	109.05%	91.46%	N/A	N/A

### Fiscal Agent

A quarterly expenditure report is reviewed by the WDB Executive/Oversight Committee which summarizes the budget, expenditures, and balances for the current & past year for WIOA and WFNJ funding. Explanations are provided for unusual entries.

### E. Training and Development:

Training priorities - Chief Elected Officials and County Leadership and Staff; Fiscal Agent, WDB Members, WDB Staff, One Stop Operator Staff, One Stop Career Services Staff, One Stop Youth Services Staff, Other System Stakeholders and Partners

The WDB director has participated in training for the development of regional & local plans and for the changes in local governance requirements and policies. In order to have an effective workforce development system, communication must be open and transparent. We will continue to participate in training offered by the NJDOL, GSETA Institute, County government, and other appropriate entities, i.e. Workforce GPS and Workforce 180

WDB, MCOTES, co-located and system partners will participate in multiple trainings to be scheduled in the summer and early Fall focusing on local WDB organization/reorganization, procurement (especially for career services), and monitoring. The SETC and NJDOL have provided various training opportunities which have served as an effective way to understand State priorities and plans, the local governance requirements, and the increased role of the WDB.

A revised local governance system was put in place in July, 2024 with a competitively procured full-time One Stop Operator & Career Services provider. The providers of WFNJ TANF & GA/SNAP services as well as the OSY services provider were competitively procured and will work in partnership to ensure the seamless delivery of services to our customers - jobseekers and employers.

## **F. Regional and Local Plan Development:**

Regional Plan Development - the Central Jersey Partners consisting of Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean Counties held our first meeting in October 2022. Throughout the planning process, stakeholder meetings were held to allow for early strategic guidance and input from representatives of business, labor organizations and education. The CJP regional plan included strategies to establish and meet regional performance measures; convene regional meetings of WDB chairs/leaders, WDB committees, and Business Services teams; launch a continuous improvement initiative by conducting regional surveys and focus groups with all workforce system stakeholders; share resources where appropriate to enhance service delivery and increase efficiency. CJP met continuously through February 2023 and upon mutual agreement released the draft CJP Plan for review & comment.

The status of the CJP plan was and continues to be made available by various means - it was and will continue to be mentioned in open public WDB meetings, which themselves are an avenue by which the public may offer feedback. It was shared with each WDB and posted on each website.

Local Plan Development - Discussion of the requirement for the Local Plan update began in September 2025. At each subsequent meeting the Local Plan was discussed. Throughout the planning process, several stakeholder engagement meetings were held to encourage the participation of employers, higher educational institutions, providers of adult education, providers of OSY services, economic development, and related partners. Detailed discussions were held to develop the strategies for providing services both locally and regionally. Input for this Plan was obtained throughout the year by meeting with Workforce Development system partners and engaging in discussions as to the need for specific services and services to targeted populations. During this comment period a meeting of the system partners will be held to review in depth comments or specific recommendations related to this Plan.

The WDB Committees are well represented by the major stakeholders in the Mercer County workforce development system. Participating stakeholders in the development of the Local Plan included: Educational Partners representing Mercer County Community College (credit, non-credit, certificate programs), Mercer County Technical School, Mercer County Special Services School District; Business Partners representing Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care, and employer associations (local chamber of commerce), entrepreneurs in various sectors; Community and Faith Based Organizations providing services to youth, public assistance recipients, individuals with disabilities, individuals in need of literacy services and Government Partners representing Employment Service & Vocational Rehabilitation.

Health Care is one of the leading areas of growth in Mercer and the committee includes employers from Springpoint Senior Living, Genesis, Healthcare, Maplewood Senior Living and The Health Care Association of NJ. Other committee members are the Community College and the Technical School. Both schools are eager to work with these employers to define what jobs will be needed in the future, committing to developing new curricula, and to work with the employers on incumbent worker training programs.

Advanced Manufacturing is another area of high growth in the County. There is ongoing discussion regarding the need to increase awareness of the numerous jobs available in advanced manufacturing both by the career counseling staff, jobseekers, and youth. This theme is discussed in other committee meetings as well. A major development was the need identified was the need for increased apprenticeships. Employers participating included representatives from Kinetics Industries, Princeton Air, PSE&G & Homasote; NJMEP, and the County Department of Economic Development. Also participating were representatives of the educational entities.

The WDB received participation from the Literacy Committee to identify the needs of individuals requiring adult literacy services. Through the Youth Investment Council (YIC) the committee works to identify activities and needs of local youth.

The WDB is committed to improving services to Mercer County residents with disabilities. The Disabilities Committee is very active in expanding employer contacts and services in an effort to attain the goals and

strategies being set for the future. The committee identifies many of the strategies needed to identify the gaps in services and proposes viable solutions.

It is in the WDB committees that many of the planned services and activities were discussed and recommended. There were common themes and ideas identified. The recurring recommendations were the following: the need for improved communication and coordination amongst partner agencies that provide similar services in order to better serve the customer; the need for workforce staff to be better educated on the vast opportunities available especially in the areas of Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation, Technical professions and the need to increase awareness among customers of the vast opportunities available in high growth/high demand industries previously identified; and to identify the industry-valued credentials associated with these high growth/high demand occupations

It is the intent of the WDB to promote and further explore the following:

- ❖ Connect employers to entities that can instrumentally develop training programs that are needed to encourage the growth of a skilled workforce.
- ❖ Explore the creation of both pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships opportunities in high growth areas particularly in the Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing industries.
- ❖ Partner with existing apprenticeship programs funded by the GAINS initiatives to offer viable occupations and apprenticeship opportunities for jobseekers.
- ❖ Improved delivery of labor market information to increase career awareness for customers leading them to make more informed training choices.
- ❖ Review of the Credentials List to identify if those credentials listed are the ones our local and regional employers are seeking.
- ❖ Vocational Career Information events that provide high school students and young adults the opportunity to learn about career pathways in the targeted areas identified above that do not require college education yet can lead to industry recognized credentials, well-paying jobs, and career pathways.
- ❖ Mechanism to promote and alert the Community College and Technical School of new positions created in local and regional companies in order to create appropriate training curricula to meet the needs of those employers.
- ❖ Partner with employers in collaboration with the Industry Partnerships to identify incumbent worker training needs.
- ❖ Explore the apprenticeship model for new and incumbent workers.
- ❖ Increase local and regional employer participation in apprenticeship programs.

## **Review Period & Plan Availability**

The Local Area Plan will be available for a 30-day review and comment period from December 19, 2025 through January 19, 2026. A notice will be published in the Times of Trenton, The Trentonian, and posted on the County website. The WDB has made the proposed plan readily available and accessible to all stakeholders in the workforce development system. The plan, emailed to all WDB & Committee members, Mercer County Career Center partners, Mercer County Workforce Development system partners, is accessible at the Mercer County One-Stop Career Center, electronically through the County website, and by contacting the WDB Director's office for an electronic copy. Notice of the Plan's availability for review and comments was printed in local newspapers via a public notice. Notice was also emailed to the following:

- ❖ Princeton Mercer Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ NJ African American Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Small Business Development Center
- ❖ Mercer County Economic Development Business Partners
- ❖ Municipal Economic Development Offices
- ❖ Human Services Advisory Council Membership
- ❖ WFNJ & OSY Providers

- ❖ Faith-based and community organizations
- ❖ Individuals and organizations on the One-Stop RFP Notification List
- ❖ Individuals and organizations on the Mercer County Human Services List Serve

The WDB requested that all Public Comments be made in writing and directed to Christian Estevez, Director of the Mercer County Workforce Development Board and sent to the following email address: [cestevez@mercercounty.org](mailto:cestevez@mercercounty.org). The Local Plan is available for view at the Mercer County One-Stop Career Center at 26 Yard Avenue, Trenton NJ 08609; and on the WDB webpage.

## G. Additional Elements/ Appendix

### Appendix

- A. List of WDB members
- B. WDB Committees & Workgroups
- C. WDB PY22 Meeting Schedules
- D. Customer Flow Chart
- E. Partner-Service Matrix

#### A. WDB MEMBERS

Member	Category	Title	Affiliation
Keith Secrest, Chair	Business	President	Kinetics Industries
Scott Needham, Vice Chair	Business	President	Princeton Air Conditioning, Inc.
Liadi Onitiri	Business		K2 Square Recording Studio
Kathy Fiery	Business	Vice President	Healthcare Association of NJ
Ravi Patni	Business		Pfizer Business
Katherine Kish	Business	Executive Director	Einsteins Alley
Lillian Mauro	Business	Executive Director	Small Business Development Center
Peter Tindall	Business		
Pasquale T. (P.T.) Deon, Jr.	Business	Senior Vice President	Jingoli/DCO Energy
William F. Di Stanislao	Business	Vice President	RWJH – Hamilton
Kevin Luis Snyder	Business	Associate Director	Bristol-Myers Squibb
Dawn Paquette	Business	HR Manager	NJM Insurance Group
Lynn Tarantino	Business		Cenlar

Rick Malacrea	Business		Capital Health
Anthony Carabelli, Jr.	Economic Development	Director	Mercer County Office of Economic Development
Scott Elliott	Community/Labor	Executive Director	Progressive Center for Independent Living
Melissa Tenzer	Community/Labor	President	Dressed for Success
Dena Mattola Jaborska	Community/Labor	Executive Director	New Jersey Citizen Action
Scott Senese	Community/Labor	Vice President	Local 5 International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craft Workers NJ Apprentice Program
Matthew Carey	Education	Superintendent	Mercer County Technical School
Rafael Agliata	Education		Mercer County Community College
Joseph Claffey	Education		Mercer County Community College
Terrell McCain	Government	Manager	NJ DOL – ES/Wagner Peyser Representative
Leslie Jack	Government	Manager	DVRS Representative
Carlos Hendricks	Other		Urban Community Representative

## B. WDB COMMITTEES & WORKGROUPS

Anthony Carabelli	Mercer County Economic Development
Darren Stewart	Mercer County Economic Development
Ilene Bannwart	Power Magnetics Inc.
JoAnn Koon-Smith	PSE&G
Keith Secrest	Kinetics Industries, Inc.
Larry Banks	NJMEP
Laura Sosa	MCCC
Lisa Miller	Power Magnetics Inc.
Michael Hanna	MCCC
Peter Tindall	Homasote
Scott Elliott	Progressive Center for Independent Living
Scott Needham	Princeton Air
Susan Conrad	MCTS
Steve Cook	ARC Mercer
Susan Fisher	MCSSSD
Meryl Gill	MCTS
Ryan Haimer	MCTS
Lesley Jack	DOL Div. of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

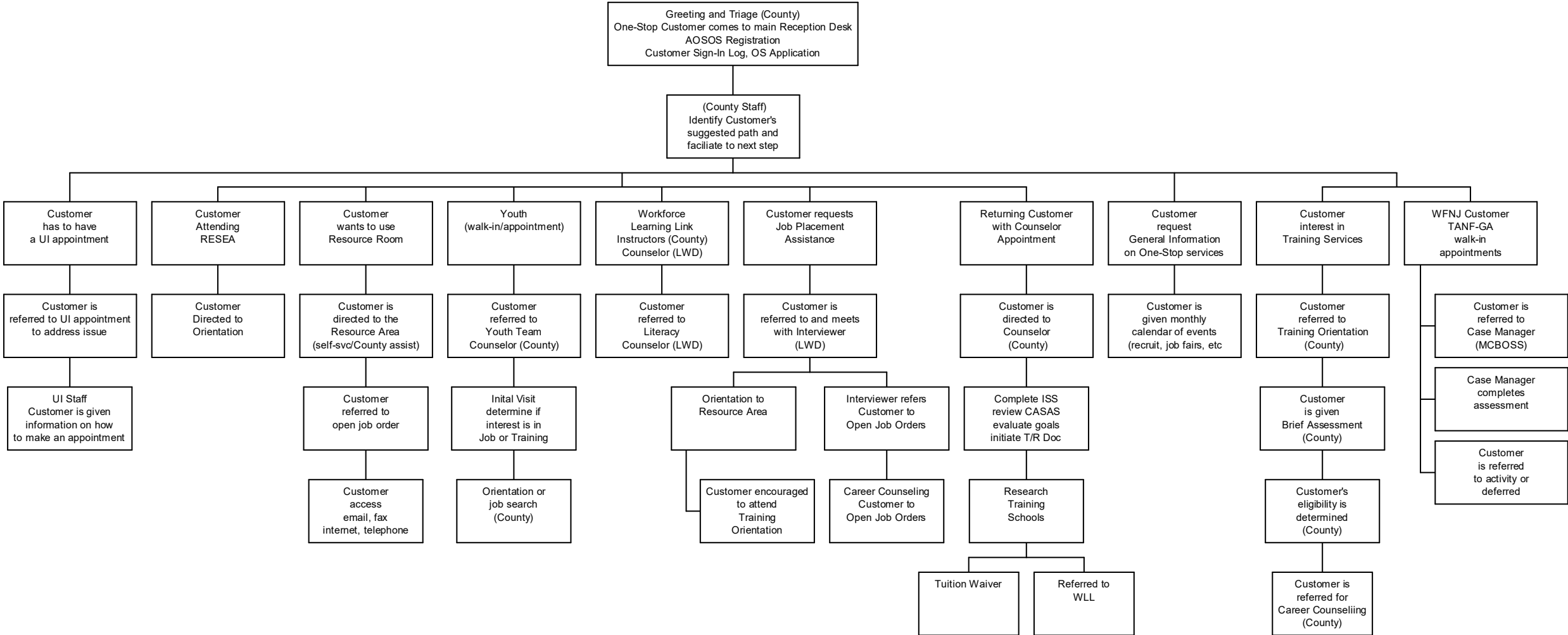
Nantanee Koppstein	Parent Advocate
Tammy Lascar	MCSSSD
Michael Ofre	MCTS
Irene Perez	DVRS
Ann-Marie Salerno	MCSSSD
Reed Thomas	Mercer County Human Services
Kathy Fiery	Health Care Assoc. of NJ
Margaret Gould	MCCC - Title II Adult Education
Mary Gay Abbott-Young	Rescue Mission
Andrea Bash	MCCC
John Brzyski	Meadow Lakes
John Pilek	Genesis HC
Lisa Williams	Maplewood at Princeton
Eboni Love	Trenton Public Library
Christine Crawford	MC Library Ewing
Lori Johansson	TCNJ
Eric Palm	MCTS
Nate Philips	LALDEF
Wanda Webster Stansbury	Center for child and Family Achievement
Mereides Delgado	Anchor House
Dave Nash	MCTS
Renee Pfaff	Progressive Center for Independent Living
Greg Rapport	The Aging-Out Angels Foundation
LaToya Wilson	WCR Consultancy
Dawn Paquette	NJM Insurance Group
Dr. Deborah Preston	MCCC President
Katherine Kish	Einstein's Alley
Lilian Mauro	NJSBDC
Marygrace Billek	MC Human Services
Matthew Carey	MCTS
Melissa Tenzer	Dress for Success
Veronica Jones	DOL Employment Services Manager
Carmen Gates	AACCNJ
Iliana Ivanov	DOL
Dena Mattola Jaborska	New Jersey Citizen Action
Scott Senese	Local 5 – Bricklayers Union
Rick Malacrea	Capital Health
Lynn Tarantino	Centlar FSB
Kevin Luis Snyder	Bristol-Myers Squibb
William F. Di Stanislao	RWJH-Hamilton
Pasquale T. (P.T.) Deon, Jr.	Jingoli/DCO Energy
Rafael Agliata	MCCC
Carlos Hendrics	Community Representative

## B. WDB Committee Meetings Held or Anticipated July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

<b>July 2025</b>		<b>January 2026</b>	
Youth Investment	July 8, 2025	Disability Issues	January 8, 2026
Disability Issues	July 10, 2025	Youth Investment Council	January 13, 2026
Executive/Oversight	July 25, 2025	Executive/Oversight	January 24, 2026
Full WDB General Membership	July 29, 2025	Full WDB General Membership	January 27, 2026
<b>September 2025</b>		<b>March 2026</b>	
Literacy	September 3, 2025	Literacy	March 4, 2026
Advanced Manufacturing	September 8, 2025	Advanced Manufacturing	March 9, 2026
Healthcare	September 17, 2025	Healthcare	March 18, 2026
<b>October 2025</b>		<b>April 2026</b>	
Disability Issues	October 9, 2025	Disability Issues	April 9, 2026
Youth Investment Council	October 14, 2025	Youth Investment Council	April 14, 2026
Executive/Oversight	October 24, 2025	Executive/Oversight	April 25, 2026
Full WDB General Membership	October 28, 2025	Full WDB General Membership	April 28, 2026
<b>December 2025</b>		<b>June 2026</b>	
Literacy	December 3, 2025	Literacy	June 3, 2026
Advanced Manufacturing	December 8, 2025	Advanced Manufacturing	June 8, 2026
Healthcare	December 17, 2025	Healthcare	June 17, 2026

D. FLOW CHART

Mercer County One-Stop Triage and Customer Flow



E. Partner-Service Matrix	New Jersey Local WIOA Planning Guidance: Partner Service Matrix													64
One Stop Partners	Participant Outreach/ Recruitment	Assessment/Plan Development/Career Counseling	Job Preparation, Search, and Placement	Ongoing Case Management	Classroom Training	Work-Based Learning	Supportive Services	Employer Engagement	Staff Cross-Training	Other Services/Supports (Please Specify)				
Title I Adult	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3					
Title I Dislocated Worker	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3					
Title I Youth	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3					
Title II Adult Education/Literacy	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	1					
Title III Wagner-Peyser	3	3	3	2	1	2	1	3	3					
Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3					
Title III Unemployment Compensation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					
WorkFirst New Jersey	1	3	3	3	1	2	3	1	1					
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A					
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program	1	3	3	3	1	2	3	2	1					
Senior Community Service Employment Program	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	1					
Jobs for Veterans State Grant	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	2					
Reentry Employment Opportunities	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	1					
Title I Job Corps	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1					
Title I YouthBuild	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1					
Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	1					
HUD Employment and Training	3	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	1					
HHS Employment and Training														

3= Extensive Involvement

2=Some Involvement

1= Minimal Involvement