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NEWSLETTER

Career Resources & News for Businesses and Job Seekers in Hunterdon and Somerset Counties

New One-Stop Operator makes connections to GRWDB partners



Fernandel Almonor is now part of the the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB) leadership team in the role of One-Stop Operator.

The One-Stop Operator is a key position for the partners in the Greater Raritan Local Area. The individual in this full-time role coordinates the service delivery of the required One-Stop partners and program providers, working to ensure that services are provided uniformly and expansively. Reporting to the GRWDB director, the One-Stop Operator is charged to understand the successes and challenges to service delivery and identify processes to improve customer participation, program accessibility and program outcomes.

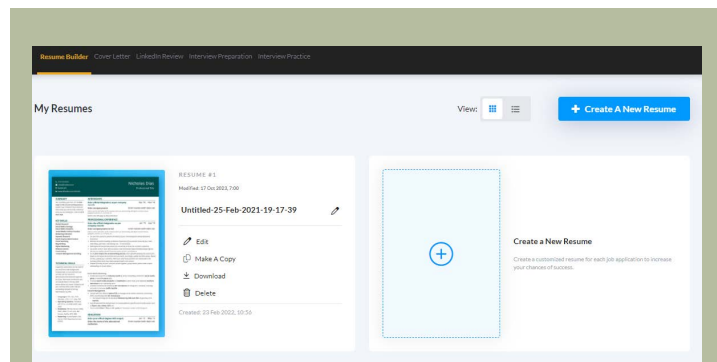
For the new program year, (July 1 to June 30, 2024), the Operator was chosen through a competitive bidding, and the May 24 request for proposals **can be viewed here**. The Somerville-based EmPower Somerset was recommended by a GRWDB RFP Review Committee to be the vendor of Operator services, with the contract period beginning on Aug. 1. The full board approved the selection at the June 22 GRWDB Board Meeting.



Following a competitive interview process, Almonor, pictured at right, was selected to fulfill the One-Stop Operator role; he started in the position in mid-August. Working remotely and on-site in the One-Stop Career Training Center at 27 Warren St. in Somerville, Almonor has spent the past four months getting to know the partners and the services they provide.

He brings more than a decade of workforce development experience to his new role. A native of New Jersey and a graduate of Rutgers University, Almonor worked as a career service advisor, career coach and director of student and career services for four California businesses before serving as a program manager and then area manager for Catholic Charities of Los Angeles. Prior to returning to New Jersey, he

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The GRWDB Resume Portal is under the Resources tab of the website.

Build your career with GRWDB resume platform

New features have been added to Greater Raritan's Resume Portal, powered by Hiration. This platform gives residents of Hunterdon and Somerset counties free access to a powerful tool to build and review targeted resumes and cover letters, improve LinkedIn profiles and get prepared for job interviews.

To get started, just create an account by going to the **Resources - Resume Portal** page of www.thegrwdb.org.

This digital career platform uses an AI-powered resume builder that allows job seekers to customize a resume based upon their accomplishments and goals. Job seekers can use templates to build their resumes section by section and get immediate feedback on what is effective and what could be improved with better descriptions or examples. Job seekers also can upload their existing resumes and use the automated resume reviewer to improve the resume or target the resume to a specific job.

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One-Stop Operator

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was an associate director for Strategic Energy Innovations in San Rafael, California. In that role, he built alliances and partnerships with WIOA organizations throughout California while directing two workforce development programs for the organization.

Since starting in his new position, Almonor has been familiarizing himself with the GRWDB's mission, vision, policies and procedures, while meeting with the vendor partners and other area public and private partners.

"I have found partner leaders to be a dedicated group of seasoned professionals open to new ideas and solution-orientated thinking," he said, adding, "I deeply appreciate working with our board and partners. I also appreciate the challenges and awesome opportunities."

For the past two months, Almonor has devoted his energies to working with partners on drafting the 2024-2026 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between One-Stop Partners. This document, required to be updated every three years by all workforce boards, is means for partners to understand expectations and goals and identify collaboration opportunities to better serve individuals and businesses. A key outcome for the new MOU is to identify program co-enrollment opportunities and procedures. A draft of the document will be completed and posted on the GRWDB website by Dec. 31. Following local and state approvals, the final document will be posted by March 31, 2024.

From these discussions, Almonor has found that "Our partners commitment to improvement is our greatest strength. We have a great opportunity to strengthen system accountability and collaboration."

Almonor also has begun a monthly Team Leader meeting in which partners share successes and challenges, and strategize on system improvement. Minutes from those meetings are posted on the **About - Greater Raritan's One-Stop Partners** page of the website. This is also where current and past One-Stop Operator Reports can be viewed. To contact Almonor, email falmonor@co.somerset.nj.us.

Other GRWDB vendor partners

The GRWDB also selects the area's Career Training Services provider through a competitive process in accordance with federal and state guidelines. For the current program year, the Somerset County Department of Human Services was chosen to be the provider of these services. Details on this process, along with related document links, are in the **GRWDB Procured Services** section of the **About - Greater Raritan's One-Stop Partners** page of the website. This section also details procedures and outcomes for procuring the providers for Youth, Workforce New Jersey and Learning Link services.

Resume Portal

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When building a resume, users can either use preset font size options of Very Small, Small, Medium, and Large, or use the platform's new Custom Font Sizes feature, which allows users to adjust the font size for different text groups such as Headings, Contact Info, Sub-Headings, and more.

In addition, cover letter templates in the system can be paired with the chosen resume template to create a consistent product to the employer. This features also allows users to build their cover letter based upon the description of their targeted job. In addition, users get suggestions for improving the effectiveness of their cover letters.

Summer program a success

The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB) sponsored a Summer Youth Employment Program for the fourth consecutive year. For the 2023 GRWDB program 70 youth worked for 38 different employers – up from the 2022 program's 56 youth and 24 employers. The GRWDB received a state grant of \$193,500 from the Department of Labor & Workforce Development for serving up to 62 participants, and funding from the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners through the American Rescue Plan allowed an additional eight youth to get paid work this summer.

The Program ran from June 5 to Oct. 31. Youth participants were between the ages of 16 and 24 and in school or out of school. Each participant worked 25 hours per week over any eight-week period. Of that weekly total 21 hours were with the employers; the other four hours were spent on specially designed career readiness training using the SkillUp Greater Raritan online learning portal.

Private and public employers in Hunterdon and Somerset counties with available part-time positions provided on-site work opportunities for the youth in a diverse array of occupations and sectors. Somerset County departments welcomed 24 program participants and introduced them to varied opportunities in county government.

The youth participant's tax-free stipend was \$15.00 an hour for 25 hours per week for their eight-week work experience. That means each program participant earned \$3,000 while learning about the world of work. The program offered a valuable introduction to career pathways and good work habits. Program participants provided positive feedback about their on-site and on-line experience (one continues to work at the business) while the employers have already expressed interest in participating in the program in 2024. The GRWDB looks forward to the opportunity to expand the experience to an even greater number of youths in Hunterdon and Somerset Counties in 2024.

–Jeanne Cassano, SYEP Program Coordinator

Another powerful feature of the platform is in AI-powered LinkedIn profile reviewer. This feature allows users to upload their LinkedIn profile and have it reviewed for effectiveness. Like the resume feature, the system offers suggestions for content improvement, including examples of accomplishments and related enhancements.

Finally, the platform includes more than one hundred job interview practice modules, each with dozens of questions. The recently updated modules are designed to help job seekers get prepared for interviews by offering answers to specific questions related to a job. Answers are scored for effectiveness and suggestions for improvement are offered.

Resume Portal users may read through this **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** link to enhance their user experience.

Employers Invited to Learn About Paid Training Services

During the first quarter of 2024, businesses in Somerset and Hunterdon Counties are invited to attend one of a series of webinars to learn how SkillUp Greater Raritan can be used to provide free upskilling training to staff. The sessions will be conducted at 11 a.m. on the second Thursday of the month on Jan. 11, Feb. 8 and March 14, 2024. During each session, examples of how local employers are using the platform for training will be shared.

Any of the Thursday webinars can be joined by going to <https://meet.goto.com/510433933>.

The SkillUp Greater Raritan Metrix Learning® platform is an online learning-management system featuring more than 7,000 courses, which can be done individually or with cohorts. The \$199 per person cost of the employee training program will be covered by Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB) grant dollars.

Employers can choose a preset learning path, or they can customize the employee learning system to fit their needs. Metrix Learning® personnel will collaborate with employers to create a program that fits their learning needs, and show how the system tracks employees' course progress, course completion, and training hours. SkillUp Greater Raritan can be used for the following:

- New Hires – Onboarding standards
- Career Ascendancy – Identify skills for promotion
- Managers/Supervisors – Skill development for managers, new and old
- Technology Training – Ensure staff are familiar with current best practices.

In 2023, four introductory webinars drew representatives from 17 public and private businesses interested in learning more the program. During the sessions, other paid training opportunities from the GRWDB, including On-The-Job Training and Incumbent Worker Training, will be shared.

About the GRWDB and SkillUp

This initiative aims to broaden how SkillUp is used in the two counties. The GRWDB introduced SkillUp Greater Raritan to its menu of services in February of 2020. Over the past three-plus years, more than 4,000 job seekers in the two counties have used the platform to develop their workplace, digital and interpersonal skills. Individuals who sign up get a free six-month, 24/7 account to use to reach their career goals. Residents can get free access by going to www.thegrwdb.org and clicking on the Resources – SkillUp Greater Raritan tab.

To learn more, residents are invited to attend a series of introductory webinars being conducted at 3 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month in 2024. For log-in information, go to the calendar tab of www.thegrwdb.org and click on the webinar date. For questions, email info@thegrwdb.org or call 908-541-5790.

In 2024, learn about FREE Upskilling Online Courses

See how Metrix Learning® supports Employee Development during webinars at 11 a.m. on Jan 11, Feb. 8 and March 14.

Course Topics may cover:

- Entry-Level Skills, including Workplace Skills, Business Etiquette, Communication and Teamwork
- Manager/Supervisor Skills, including Emotional Intelligence, Leadership and Giving Feedback
- Other Skills, including Microsoft Office, Customer Service, Project Management, HR/Compliance and Data Analysis

SkillsUp Greater Raritan using Metrix Learning® is a learning management system with more than 7,000 courses that can be used for internal employee assessment and upskilling. Employers in Hunterdon and Somerset Counties are using the platform for:

- ✓ New Hires – Onboarding standards
- ✓ Career Ascendancy – Identify skills for promotion
- ✓ Manager/Supervisor – Skill development for managers, new and old
- ✓ Technology Training – Ensure staff are familiar with current best practices

Keep track of employee course progress with reports on access, course completion, and training hours.

This service is free to employers through Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board grant programs. Join any of the Thursday webinars at <https://meet.goto.com/510433933>. To get started or more details, email info@thegrwdb.org or call 908-541-5790.

Greater Raritan | DOL | Somerset County | Hunterdon County | Business Partnership | SkillsUp Greater Raritan



Regional Job Fair attracts hundreds

More than 350 job seekers met with representatives of 53 businesses and agencies during the Monday, Oct. 30, Life Sciences and Healthcare Job Fair conducted in the Grand Conference Center at Raritan Valley Community College, Lamington Road, Branchburg.

The 53 businesses and agencies in attendance from Somerset and Hunterdon counties as well as neighboring counties made this a regional event. Participating businesses included Johnson & Johnson, Eli Lilly, Hunterdon Medical Center, Hackensack Meridian Health, Catalent Pharma Solutions, home health care agencies, senior living facilities, staffing agencies and dozens of others. Organizations supporting educational opportunities in STEM and career-advancement information advancement also took part.

While many job seekers were from Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, a total of 10 counties in Northern and Central New Jersey as well New York City and Cape May were represented by attendees. The job seekers came armed with their resumes and a positive attitude to share with recruiters, and as they left, many said they forged connections with possible prospects.

In addition, Jan Goodman, the Community Outreach Specialist and Career Coach for the Greater Raritan One-Stop Career Training Center, presented a workshop to a few dozen job seekers.

*For those unable to attend, here is the list of businesses and agencies with job titles. Weekly job postings for Somerset and Hunterdon Counties are on the **Resources - Job Seekers** tab of www.thegrwdb.org, and listings of future Job Fair events can be found on the **Calendar** tab.*

The event was presented by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Industry Partnerships team and the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board, working with Raritan Valley Community College, Johnson & Johnson, and Ingenus Pharmaceuticals.



Help Strengthen the Workforce System

The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board (GRWDB) is looking for community assistance in supporting committees that help direct the board's work in Hunterdon and Somerset counties.

The three GRWDB staff members work with a variety of federal, state and local partners, including county public sector entities, private businesses and individuals, to ensure that publicly funded services and training programs are part of a workforce system that is flexible, seamless and responsive to the needs of employers and job seekers.

These efforts are guided by a board of private business representatives, labor unions, community-based organizations, educational entities and other partners who set larger policy initiatives based upon metric-based, state-developed data, as well as direct customer and employer feedback. These members are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners in the two counties.

As part of this collaborative effort, the board maintains four committees to help inform decision-making around its priorities. These include a Disabilities Committee, a Literacy Committee, an Operations Committee and a Youth Committee.



2024 Meeting Dates and Times

Full Board – all meetings on Thursdays

February 1 – 12 p.m. (virtual)

April 4 – 12 p.m. (in-person and virtual)

June 27 – 12 p.m. (virtual)

October 10 – 12 p.m. (in-person and virtual)

A board planning retreat also will be conducted in early December.

Disabilities Committee – all meetings at 10 a.m. Tuesdays

February 6 (virtual), May 14 (in-person and virtual), August 13 (virtual), December 3 (virtual)

Literacy Committee – all meetings at 2 p.m. Tuesdays

February 20 (virtual), May 7 (in-person and virtual), July 30 (virtual), November 12 (in-person and virtual)

Operations Committee – all meetings at 3 p.m. Thursdays

February 8 (virtual), 2 p.m. May 9 (in-person and virtual), August 8 (virtual), November 14 (in-person and virtual)

Youth Committee – all meetings at 2:30 p.m. Thursdays

February 15 (virtual), May 23 (in-person and virtual), August 22 (virtual), December 5 (in-person and virtual)

*All virtual meetings use GoToMeeting format – in-person locations will be noted in the GRWDB calendar.

While members of these committees include subject-matter experts from the two counties, membership is open to all employers and residents who may wish to join and offer their personal experiences and ideas to help guide work in the specific areas as well as broader GRWDB strategic initiatives. Each committee meets at least four times a year and discusses issues, suggests solutions and plans events as appropriate, with goals to ensure the time given by volunteers is used efficiently and respectfully.

All Board and Committee meetings are open to the public, and the annual schedule and meeting agendas are posted on www.thegrwdb.org, on the **Events - Meeting Packages** page. Meeting minutes are linked in the agendas as well. Meeting dates are also on the **Events-Calendar** tab.

For more information on how to join a GRWDB committee, call Director Paul Grzella at 908-541-5790 or email grzella@co.somerset.nj.us.

Board Business: Monitoring

As reflected in the 2023-2026 Greater Raritan Local Area Plan, monitoring of procured vendors for clients services is now being done by GRWDB staff working with board members. Leading this effort will be Jeanne Cassano, the GRWDB Contract Compliance and Engagement Specialist. She will be supported by the GRWDB Director and Finance Manager. For the initial monitoring of Career Training Services, Youth, Workfirst New Jersey and Learning Link services, the team will be assisted by Board Members Adriana Bury, Violet Kocsis, and Nichelle Santos. Read the monitoring procedures here; monitoring reports will be at the April 4, 2024, board meeting.

Thanks for reading!

Past issues of the GRWDB newsletter can be found on the **Events - Stay Informed** tab of www.thegrwdb.org. Follow the GRWDB on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and be sure to bookmark the **Events-Calendar** tab. All board and committee meetings are open to the public; go **here** for the schedule and meeting packages. Community members are welcomed to contact us with their questions and ideas. In addition, we are happy to meet with any business, community agency or public body in Hunterdon and Somerset counties to explain how system services work. **Contact Director Paul Grzella to get on a weekly Resources email list, and sign up for Greater Raritan's weekly (and very convenient!) text alert service.** To contact us:



for information on One-Stop services and to receive text message updates on upcoming hiring events and workshops

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