

Greater Raritan One Stop Monthly Leadership Meeting Minutes

*Tuesday December 19, 2023
10:00AM*

Attendees:

1. Paul Grzella, Director (The Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board)
2. Fernandel Almonor, Greater Raritan One-Stop Operator
3. Isabel Jimenez, Workforce New Jersey Tech
4. Poo Lin, Chief Field Operations
5. Monica Mulligan, Director (Greater Raritan One-Stop Career Training Services)
6. Danielle Kwan, Manager (Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services)
7. Fran Leddy, HCESC

➤ **Operator Update (Provided by Fernandel Almonor)**

- Our minutes will be shared externally on the Workforce Board website.
- Preparing for our Feb. 27th Affordable Childcare Brainstorming Sessions
 - Due to limited affordable childcare options for Greater Raritan One-Stop customers, we'll be exploring the following:
 - All affordable childcare options in Somerset and Hunterdon counties.
 - New childcare subsidy options for customers.
 - Funding and logistical support options to establish a childcare center. This center would support client service needs and provide childcare provider training.
 - New effective approaches for case managing customers in need of affordable childcare.
 - (4) Guest Professionals confirmed to participate in the brainstorming session.
 - Patricia Berhau
 - Mary Jane DiPaolo
 - Maria Marnell
 - Liz Bilder

➤ **New Staff introduction:** Isabel Jimenez, Workforce New Jersey Tech

➤ **MOU/IFA Update**

- Partners should receive an IFA/MOU draft by 12/21/23 COB.
- Request partners prepare responses by January 18th meeting.

➤ **Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board Update (Provided by Paul Grzella)**

- Met with Robert Presuto, Superintendent Somerset County Vocational Technical Schools to discuss providing car repairs to low-income WorkFirst clients as part of a NJDOL WFNJ Innovation NGO.
- WorkFirst clients are eligible for a onetime \$500 stipend which can be used for car repairs and part of the grant request may include another \$1,000 per client for repairs if procedures can be worked out.
- Paul requested Fran and Aminah provide a "ballpark budget" to assist with this.

- For the NGO response, Paul is also including the following:
 - A van and driver to provide transportation support for WorkFirst clients in Somerset and Hunteadon.
 - Securing another 45 Chromebooks for WorkFirst NJ clients with 32 loaned out with the WiFi enabled.
 - Hiring a part time social media marketing manager to build up One-Stop social media marketing.
 - Driver's license restoration for clients
 - Incentives (gift cards) to complete the 30-day career program and for job retention after 90 days

The grant period is Feb. 2024– June 2025.

Paul will provide some employment opportunities for clients

➤ **Business Services Update (Jessica Johannesen was absent but provided a written update)**

Update on challenges shared in November meeting.

Same challenges still exist that were shared in November. Our AOSOS is showing new weekly job leads entering the system, however, the number seem lower than seen in months prior.

December performance update.

- Is the department currently operating/serving customers effectively and efficiently? Why or why not? *At this time, we don't have a BR1 for Central, a BR2 for Somerset/Hunterdon and the current OJT Representative is assigned to the Minor Working Papers project.*
- Will staffing/bandwidth challenges be resolved by 2024? *Our Veteran BR, who was assisting with coverage, has left business services and there is a new vacancy. It is my understanding that a new BR2 has been extended an offer and will cover Somerset/Hunterdon. I am not aware of acceptance or start dates.*
 - If not, what support is needed to resolve by year-end? *New VBR & BR2 to support Somerset/Hunterdon, OJT Representative released from MWP project back to OJT unit*

New challenges and support requests. *Current VBR has accepted promotion to a new unit.*

Upcoming events and announcements. *None currently.*

Additional Updates

Paul mentioned a previous meeting with Howard Miller. He discovered someone accepted the Somerset Business Representative position. The veteran support position will be posted after January 1st. Ingrid (last name needed) is the point of contact for state business services.

➤ **Career Training Services Update (Provided by Monica Mulligan)**

Performance Update

- We had a new Career Navigator start on 11/20/23 – Nichole Franklin.

- We have one Career Navigator position vacant and posted. We have been interviewing and hope to have that position filled in early 2024. Several of the candidates that have applied and/or been interviewed have declined to move forward due to the salary. Salary is posted, but applicants believe they can negotiate – but we are constrained by budget.
- In December, all One Stop Career Training Services staff received their Re-Entry Certification after participating training and testing.
- In December, One Stop Career Training Services staff participated in the True Colors teambuilding workshop provided by Rutgers Cooperative Extension.
- In early 2024, staff will be participating in Racial Equity training that will result in a certification.

Challenges:

- Still looking for clarification on how WFNJ customers can work off sanctions. We have a new rep – waiting to hear from her to discuss in more detail and the meeting was set since the rep was in attendance at today’s meeting.
- AOSOS is having many technical issues that complicate things – there is still an old version as well as a new version and staff need to switch between the two depending on what needs to be entered into the system. Makes an onerous system even more cumbersome.
- Training Exploring is still not working and not all programs are showing up in AOSOS – even though the training providers have said they have been approved.

Supports:

- Would like information from local businesses on what they need for staffing now and into the future. We know what the in-demand occupation list from NJDOL and what LMI says, but is that what is needed locally? We want to ensure we are placing jobseekers in training that will address local needs in both the short and long term.
- Uptick in WARN Notices – what specific types of jobs are being laid off? If certain types of positions are trending towards outsourcing or eliminated, we want to make sure we are not placing folks in training in these areas. Knowing what positions are being laid off will also allow us to start working on a specific transferrable skills strategy for the folks that may come in due to layoff.

Upcoming Events:

- Jan Goodman has two virtual upcoming workshops in collaboration with the Somerset County Library System:

1/10/24	How to Thrive During Transition and Change
2/7/24	Defeating Unconscious Bias
- Career Café will start back in in 2024:

4/27/24
5/31/24
6/28/24

➤ **Work First New Jersey Update (Provided by Aminah Reeves and Fran Leddy)**
Performance Updates

Somerset County

CUSTOMER OUTREACH		Contracted LOS	REPORTED COMPLIANT		EMPLOYMENT DATA	
					OBTAINED	RETAINED
TOTAL	192	126	Face to face	23	10	0
TANF	97	76	Virtual	44		
GA/SNAP	95	50	Equitable Access	0		
SNAP Only	0	0	Hybrid	0		

Hunterdon County

CUSTOMER OUTREACH		Contracted LOS	REPORTED COMPLIANT		EMPLOYMENT DATA	
					OBTAINED	RETAINED
TOTAL	88	108	Face to face	5	0	0
TANF	20	65	Virtual	6		
GA/SNAP	67	43	Equitable Access	0		
SNAP only	1	0	Hybrid	0		

Challenges:

- Ongoing need for transportation alternatives
- Need for additional Chromebooks for WFNJ.
- Lack of affordable childcare options.
- Lack of in county emergency housing options.
- Major challenge, getting sanctions back for TANF.

Updates:

- Paul facilitating funding for additional Chromebooks.
- Prior to COVID SCBSS had a childcare drop-in center for new TANF participants. On a part time childcare professional, had to limit to 4 to 5 children. Since pandemic space was reallocated. Exploring new childcare options to fill the support gap.
- Fran assists clients with resources and referrals if they wish to open day care businesses, operating out of their homes.
- December performance updates. Many TANF enrollees and re-enrollees. Numbers are higher since pre-pandemic. Operating effectively and efficiently.
- Working with less staff and more work. Have to lend out staff to satellite office, it's only temporary should resolve by Feb 2024. They're working through challenges.

Upcoming events:

- We will be able to offer in-person GED testing at our Flemington location starting in January. We will forward an informational flier once the dates and times are finalized.

➤ **Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Update (Provided by Danielle Kwan)**

Update on challenges shared in November meeting.

- Working on contacting various individuals in an effort to gain more referrals from Hunterdon high schools.

Is your office currently operating/serving customers effectively and efficiently? Why or why not?

- Yes, we are operating and serving customers effectively and efficiently. We have full staff and caseloads that are manageable.

Will staffing/bandwidth challenges be resolved by 2024?

- Unsure regarding the vacant supervisor

If not, what support is needed to resolve by year-end?

- No support needed, this is in the control of the state

New challenges and support requests.

- Requesting participant referrals.

Upcoming events and announcements.

- Meeting with Aminah's WFNJ group, doing recruitment presentation in January.

Additional Updates:

- In the process of contacting county special education specialists.
- Fran sending transition fair information to Danielle.

➤ **Employment Services/One-Stop Office Update (Written by Terrell McClain and presented by Poo Lin)**

Updates:

- The Department continues to operate and service customers effectively and efficiently. The customers coming into the center are coming in for the following:
 - a. Job Search
 - b. Job Training
 - c. Unemployment
 - d. Federal Bonding
 - e. Military Veterans

Yash Bajaj and Kim Butler are available for customers who have experiences in the justice system and seeking re-entry into society for employment. Yash Bajaj also works out of our satellite office (Flemington) for customers needing support out of Hunterdon County. Also, we have a partner from Kean University. Kean University was awarded the jobs grant via Department of Labor.

On November 27, 2023, Charlyn Lynch works out of Hunterdon County Vocational School (PACE Grant). She stated having 20 customers some with criminal backgrounds. After collaborating with this representative, she has been put in contact with the appropriate individuals who continue to work together to meet the needs of the customer.

Daphne Hilton is the DVOP (Disabled Veterans Outreach Program) who is moving into the second phase for her employment. She has worked with representatives from other one stop offices followed by visiting sites occupied by military Veterans needing support for employment services.

- Interviews have been conducted for the following: ES Counselor Trainee & ES Supervisor 1. Selections have been made by interview panels; however, Employment Services must work with the Civil Service Commission which can take a few months to process posing another challenge. It is hoped this will be remedied in 2024.
- Bringing NJ Job Club back.
- No new announcements so far.

Challenges:

Challenges is making sure all customers are aware of the services available to them in the center. Employment Services are continuing to work with County Partners to ensure customers see the representatives of Employment Services first before coming to the training center. November has experienced success in this area. The challenge is making sure our customers requesting services through the Virtual Service Center are aware of this. All customers requesting services via the Virtual Service Center are sent a letter followed by a phone call. Employment Services continue to be available in the event they have any questions.

➤ **Learning Link (Provided by Fran Leddy)**

Update on challenges shared in November meeting:

- We shared flier advertising bus driver opportunities. The HCESC will apply to become an ETP for CDL certification with P&S endorsement.
- The DOL has identified 4 newer desktop computers to be used in the Flemington
- Workforce Learning Link. We will pick them up from Trenton as soon as they are available.
- Still has an immediate need to hire bus drivers.

Performance update:

Enrollments for Flemington		Exits for Flemington
ABE	0	
HSE	2	1 obtained HSE, 1 stopped attending
ELA	0	
PC	0	
Enrollments for Somerville		Exits for Somerville
ABE	0	
HSE	3	3 obtained employment, 2 obtained HSE
ELA	0	
PC	0	

Upcoming events:

- We will be able to offer in-person GED testing at the HCESC Flemington location starting in January. We will forward an informational flier once the dates and times are finalized.

➤ **Discussion**

- Customer Flow Review

- Customers Initially go to Employment Services.
 - ES evaluates eligibility and completes a needs assessment.
 - ES refers customer to the appropriate partner:
 - ◆ CTS
 - ◆ DVR
 - ◆ YES
 - ◆ WFNJ
 - ◆ CBVI
 - ◆ Etc.
 - WFNJ Customers are the exception. Participants do not go to ES, only work with WFNJ staff.

Next Meetings: Tuesday, January 23rd @ 10am