

***Monmouth County
Workforce Investment Board***



***Three Year Strategic Plan
2014-2017***

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Summary

One of the key documents reviewed to address the condition of our labor market was the Monmouth County Economic Development Strategic Plan. Included in this plan were the findings of over 20 interviews with major businesses in the area. A concluding statement in the report has presented the most critical issue that needs to be addressed within our core value operational goals and strategies. The report concluded:

*“Across the board, the most common issue seen as a challenge to future business growth is the **County’s workforce**. Simply stated, finding and retaining skilled workers, workers with a strong work ethic, and workers with basic skills is a challenge across all industries. Interviews revealed concerns about businesses’ ability to fill needed low- and middle-skilled positions within the County. “*

This systemic observation requires that while we are **“Driving our investments based on industry needs”**, (Core Value 1) we make sure that we prioritize our scrutiny over which courses we approve for which job seeker and that our services prioritize the necessary assessment of a customer’s work readiness. We must not be satisfied solely with investing in job seekers attainment of occupational skills necessary for the job demands of employers, but we help satisfy our employer demands in building and strengthening the work readiness skills (or soft skills) that pose a significant threat to the productivity and viability of employers.

“Meeting customers where they are”, (Core Value II) especially in a county that has somewhat limited transit options, requires that we reach beyond the confines of our One Stop Centers.

Making sure that we broaden our set of “tools in our toolbox” to include sufficient diversity in our “TO WORK” delivery system. **“Equipping the Workforce for Employment”** (Core Value III) will require a dedication to deliver multiple tracks of services, specifically:

1. Fast track re-engagement of recently displaced workers
2. Slower track of fitting experienced workers with outdated skills with new skills and a credential, and
3. The long range track of re-engaging a long term unemployed candidate lacking both basic literacy skills and occupational skills necessary for long term self-sufficiency.

Managing local resources and ensuring optimum outcomes in the most efficient manner requires an ongoing **“Increase in System Accountability”** (Core Value IV). Our WIB has taken numerous steps in enhancing system oversight including the formation of a special sub-committee, the Oversight, Compliance and Quality Assurance Committee. The sole function of this committee includes the review and analysis of our internal and external management controls over resources. The committee reviews our budgets as well as reviews findings of monitoring and oversight activities of the Workforce Investment Board oversight staff.

Development of Three Year Strategic Plan

The Monmouth County Workforce Strategic Plan was constructed through a coordinated effort between WIB sub-committees and WIB staff. The primary focus of the three year strategic plan was to identify several guiding values that will serve as goal posts for policy and operations for workforce activities under the Workforce Investment Board of Monmouth County.

Preliminary committee and staff meetings focused on data sources that would be necessary to draft the plan. Staff reviewed SETC guidelines and began to review several documents including: Monmouth County Workforce Investment Board Operational Priorities Plan; the State of New Jersey Key Industry Clusters Report; State of New Jersey Department of Workforce Development NJ Unified State Plan; focus group information through “World Café” conducted with stakeholders; and the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development Strategic Plan, prepared by Camoin Associates, Saratoga Springs, NY.

Based on the discussions and review of the core values and the system priorities, the planning group sketched out some initial areas for development of goals and objectives for the local system’s strategic plan.

Overview of the Monmouth County Workforce Investment Area

Monmouth County’s unemployment rate (8.9%) has remained slightly below the State unemployment rate of 9.5%.

Monmouth County	
Population	633,600
Population Growth (past 5 years)	1.1%
Average Earnings	\$58,000
Labor Force (2012 annual average)	334,808
Employed Residents (2012 annual average)	304,904
Unemployed Residents (2012 annual average)	29,904
Unemployment Rate (%) (2012 annual average)	8.9%

The two largest industry sectors employ over 40,700 jobs each and include *Government* and *Health Care and Social Assistance*. *Retail Trade* is the third largest, with almost 37,000 jobs available. This is followed by

the *Accommodation and Food Services* industry, which has almost 23,000 jobs in the County.

Rounding out the top five largest industries in the County is *Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services*, which has 21,500 jobs.

The fastest growing industry over the past ten years was *Health Care and Social Assistance*. This industry added over 7,000 jobs in the County, almost a 21% increase. The second, third, and fourth fastest growing industries in the County are all service related industries: *Accommodation and Food Services*; *Arts, Entertainment and Recreation*, and *Other Services*. These industries each added around 2,000 to 3,000 employees in the last ten years.

Efforts in targeting training aligned with in demand sectors has resulted in the WIB to focus in particular to training in the Health Care Sector. Monmouth County is pleased to be a partner in the Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG).

Fast Growing Industries in Momnouth County (2001 – 1012)

Description	2002 Jobs	2012 Jobs	Change	% Change
Health Care and Social Assistance	33,695	40,725	7,030	20.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	19,895	22,931	3,036	15.3%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6,143	8,445	2,302	37.5%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	12,838	14,883	2,045	15.9%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,132	1,992	860	76.0%

The construction industry lost over 4,000 jobs in the County from 2002 to 2012; this significant job loss is primarily related to the national housing market crash and is not a local phenomenon. However, the significant job loss in the information industry (almost 3,000 jobs) was a local hardship experienced by the County related to the loss of significant telecommunications industry employment. Additionally, the loss of over 1,600 jobs in the government industry was directly related to the closure of Fort Monmouth.

Fast Declining Industries in Momnouth County (2001 – 1012)

Description	2002 Jobs	2012 Jobs	Change	% Change
Finance and Insurance	12,440	11,526	(914)	-7.3%
Retail Trade	37,871	36,920	(951)	-2.5%
Unclassified Industry	1,078	18	(1,060)	-98.3%
Government	42,433	40,762	(1,671)	-3.9%
Manufacturing	10,803	8,894	(1,909)	-17.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	23,489	21,500	(1,989)	-8.5%
Information	9,253	6,443	(2,810)	-30.4%
Construction	18,032	13,882	(4,150)	-23.0%
Total	272,119	271,168	(951)	-0.3%

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Specific Occupations within Growth Sectors

Health Care and Social Assistance is expected to be the fastest growing industry in the County employment from 2012 to 2022, adding 6,500 jobs (16% increase) over the next ten years. The second fastest growing industry in the County is expected to be *Other Services*. It is projected that this industry will add over 2,000 jobs (14% increase). The *Other Services* industry includes establishments that provide services and can include equipment and machinery repair, advocacy, providing dry cleaning and laundry services, personal care services, etc. *Accommodation and Food Services* is expected to be the third fastest growing industry, adding over 1,100 jobs (5% increase).

Fastest Growing Occupations (2012-22): Monmouth County						
Description	2012 Jobs	2022 Jobs	Change	% Change	Median Wage	Education Level
Home Health Aides	1,437	2,135	698	48.6%	\$24,482	Short-term on-the-job training
Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	2,129	2,773	644	30.2%	\$28,850	Postsecondary non-degree award
Retail Salespersons	9,122	9,763	641	7.0%	\$20,405	Short-term on-the-job training
Personal Care Aides	1,082	1,657	575	53.1%	\$23,483	Short-term on-the-job training
Registered Nurses	5,168	5,726	558	10.8%	\$77,771	Associate's degree
Receptionists and Information Clerks	4,279	4,816	537	12.5%	\$26,312	Short-term on-the-job training
Waiters and Waitresses	5,584	6,053	469	8.4%	\$19,531	Short-term on-the-job training
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	1,621	2,043	422	26.0%	\$37,835	Postsecondary non-degree award
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	900	1,287	387	43.0%	\$51,626	Postsecondary non-degree award
Office Clerks, General	5,472	5,828	356	6.5%	\$28,018	Short-term on-the-job training
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	2,937	3,284	347	11.8%	\$60,320	Bachelor's degree
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	4,276	4,616	340	8.0%	\$18,387	Short-term on-the-job training
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	3,655	3,991	336	9.2%	\$26,645	Postsecondary non-degree award
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	3,020	3,322	302	10.0%	\$23,109	Short-term on-the-job training

Occupations Within Highest Sectors

The largest occupation in Monmouth County is *Office and Administrative Support Occupations* with 43,724 jobs or 16% of all jobs. This information supports continue emphasis in training job seekers in varied Office Administration positions.

Description	2012 Jobs	%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	43,724	16.1%
Sales and Related Occupations	31,526	11.6%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	23,823	8.8%
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	20,940	7.7%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	15,947	5.9%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	15,549	5.7%
Management Occupations	13,698	5.1%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	13,128	4.8%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	12,564	4.6%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	10,573	3.9%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	10,027	3.7%

Core Value 1 - Driving Investments Based on Industry Needs

We realize that the best investment in our resources is to match job seekers up with higher demand occupations that provide longer term stability and retention. For our labor force to grow and prosper, those sectors suffering from lack of viable candidates have to look elsewhere. Strategies to match job seeker transferable skills into these industries will provide the most efficient use of resources. Likewise, those requiring longer term, more intensive occupational training will be made aware of the industry demands while deciding their course of credential attainment or career retraining.

Several goals in Core Value 1 are as follows:

- ***Provide targeted outreach to local employers on available services.*** Several employers in the focus group were unfamiliar with both the WIB and the One Stop Career Center and were unaware of the services available to them. Employers who had used the One Stop Career Center were not necessarily aware of all services available.
- ***Market business services based on employer needs.*** Focus group participants consistently indicated that it was important that services be presented to them as a way to solve specific problems in their workplace. Because of business and time pressures, they do not have time to figure out how business services would benefit them. They need to see a clear connection between business services and the solving of specific problems that they have in their business.
- ***Focus on connecting with existing employer networks and activities to market services.*** Employers suggested, for example, that Business Services staff connect with local Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) chapters and other organizations such as “Women in Defense” to do presentations and market services.

Core Value 2 - Meeting Customers Where They Are

Repositioning “Training” in the sequence of Job Seeker Services

Our Workforce Investment Board has supported efforts to diversify our delivery system in order to increase customer participation; both job seeker and employer customers. With input from our Job Seeker Committee, our Business Services Committee and our Executive Committee we have and will continue to realign our front end services to open the door even wider to not only those long-term unemployed who have multiple barriers to employment to overcome, but also those who are recently dislocated or under-employed.

Our use of facilities and resources to expand services to “non-WIA certified eligible” customers through CORE service activities including open use of career workshops, attendance at job fairs, use of resource room and even mini-sessions with our business service representative has begun to transform our image as more inclusive to all Monmouth County Job Seekers.

Job Seekers need increased diversity in tools and supports that will lead to employment. This diversity will enable our One-Stops to serve a broader span of job seekers from those with high marketable skills and excellent work histories to those lacking even basic skills with little to no work experience.

Some our re-direction in diversifying our toolbox includes:

- **Increased number of Career Connect workshops**
- **Emphasis on assessment and counseling to recognizable transferable skill sets** that match up with existing high demand occupations, rather than immediately enter a new career track requiring extensive resources and less feasible prospect of job placement.
- **Increased attention and support in FAST TRACK re-employment services** and supports including:
 1. Attainment of additional credentials through short-term courses and or certification exams.
 2. Individual assessment and reconstruction of resumes.
 3. Workshop participation on Job Seeking techniques including use of social media and networking strategies.
- **Focus on expanding mobility of our Program Staff and Business Service Staff to meet customers outside the One-Stop.** Employers receive value when we are face-to-face in their environment, provided that exchange directly responds to their immediate and long-term goals. Establishing a relationship with business that will inevitably result in continuity in using One-Stop services on a long term basis. Likewise, establishing recruitment events, workshops, eligibility sessions at employer or public facilities in close proximity to target customer locations will provide expanded participation
- **Expanded use of technology.** Expand social media, including website, survey monkey, industry specific blogs (chat rooms), LMS w/ library of topic audio and webinar recordings.
- **Expand and optimize available resources to support and develop programs** to meet the increasing demands for services during a period of budget reductions and changes in the employer base of Monmouth County.
- **Conduct active marketing, outreach, and advocacy** to ensure community visibility and knowledge of One-stop Career Center and the WIB’s partners’ services available in the County and the State.

- **Expanded Services to Employer Community.** We know that our area employer community, as evidenced by our own focus groups, was not participating in our public workforce system. Through proactive efforts to build an employer friendly business services department within our One-Stop and under the direction of our Workforce Investment Board, we have experienced tremendous transformation and participation.

We engage employers by offering three core services:

1. **Recruitment Services for New Hires:** includes Job Fairs, Open Houses, email blasts of job openings to our database of job seekers, and use of our in-house recruiter to identify and screen candidates.
2. **Training Incentives for Incumbent Workers:** including literacy training, computer training, Metrix Learning on-line courses, and customized training.
3. **Financial Incentives to Hire New Employees:** include on-the-job training programs (Recovery4Jersey), workforce grants (Sandy National Emergency Grant), targeted grants (Workforce 55+ and Community Work Experience Program), and tax incentives.

Core Value 3. Equipping the Workforce for Employment

Jobseekers must possess basic skills, literacy and workforce readiness skills in order to secure and retain employment. In addition, training programs must be aligned with industry needs to ensure that jobseekers can obtain the skills they need to obtain employment. New Jersey will strengthen basic skills and literacy efforts based upon a statewide Adult Literacy analysis, successes and expert recommendations. The State will establish work readiness credentials as a baseline for basic skills and literacy competencies in specific industry sectors. Finally, New Jersey will use training resources to support the development of stackable credential models that use sector information to develop new curricula for demand occupations in each key industry.

Our Basic Skills and Literacy Committee spends a great deal of time focusing in on how we can improve our programs funded by Federal Job Training Legislation (WIA) and the Carl Perkins Act (Funding to Secondary Career Technical Programs) however, it is clear that the most significant impact to better equipping the workforce begins way before customers reach our doors.

“The barriers to developing a highly skilled workforce begin in our secondary system. Only **34% of U.S. eighth grade students** achieved an assessment of “proficient” or higher in a nationwide math test in 2009. That same year, U.S. high school students taking an international assessment exam ranked 13th behind industrialized nations in science and 17th in math. Despite some recent progress, the U.S. continues to face a dropout crisis. Twenty-five percent of all students – and 60% of non-white students – leave high school before graduation.

It is unsurprising, then, that in the U.S. post-secondary education system:

- **One out of every three college students** in a four-year college or university must enroll in at least one, non-credit remediation class to perform successfully at the college level, while nearly one out of every two community college students (43%) must do so;
- Of those students at four-year colleges enrolled in remedial reading and math classes, only **17% (reading) and 27% (math) will graduate**, while fewer than **one in four community college** students overall will earn a certificate or degree within eight years;
- **Only about half (56%)** of students enrolled in a four-year college earn a bachelor's degree within six years, and fewer than one in three community college students (30%) obtain an associate's degree within three years; and
- College degree attainment numbers only get worse for U.S. minority group students, with only **30% of young African Americans (mid-20s) in the U.S. holding an associate's degree or higher, while less than 20% of Latinos of similar age do.** "McGraw-Hill Research

Foundation

Undoubtedly, with these results, it is no surprise that biggest complaint from employers is the lack of marketable basic skills including: academic, computer and employment (soft skills).

1. **Soft Skill Training** - Doing our part in attempting to transform job seekers into highly productive contributors within the workplace is to at minimum ensure that we concentrate on both occupational skill training as well as basic skill training (which includes academic, computer literacy and employability skills).

Through the Basic Skills and Literacy Committee, Welfare to Work Committee and Youth Investment Council the WIB has mandated the inclusion of Soft Skill / Work Readiness Training within each and every contracted program, with the exception of Individual Referral Contracts. Funding is provided to our vendors to pay for a nationally recognized Work Readiness Credential Exam and all related preparatory training materials.

The Youth programs have gone a step further to promote "WIB Gold Cards" for youth who accomplished a high level of proficiency in their training programs as well as complete their work readiness training. Gold Cards are an indicator to our business community that the youth have additional soft skills training and thereby present a greater likelihood of successful job performance.

2. **GED Training** - We continue to attempt to identify GED training available to both adults and youth, and actively solicit proposals for this critical training area. We are happy to report that we have awarded another GED contract for intensive 30 hour per week youth training program focused on the attainment of a GED.
3. **Workshops** - In the CORE TRAINING area, we have significantly increased our workshops to provide valuable employability skill training for our job seekers.

4. **Credentials** – The WIB has committed to and will continue to fund short-term credential attainment tracks for job seekers requiring stackable credentials to increase their competitiveness in this high supply / low demand job market.
5. **Stackable Credentials / Career Pathways** - There is no way our workforce system has sufficient funding to carry a job seeker from unemployment to their optimum lifelong life sustaining place of optimum employment. We recognize the baby step approach to continuous learning, step-by-step. Assisting job seekers with intermediate gains including employment (part time or full time) through funding to the first rung is a critical achievement. Ensuring the job seeker understands and is engaged in a career path that will lead, through increase investment and education, to long term career security by collecting work experience while gaining additional work related skills and credentials.

Office Administration, one of the largest occupations in Monmouth County, is a perfect example of the need for continued attainment of new skills and credentials. Unemployed job seekers with prior office administration skills and good work histories can become excellent candidates by attaining new credentials in current software titles. Job seekers wishing to enter the Health Industry, for example, with attainment of a recognized credential, can gain employment at a lower rung of the career ladder knowing that there are a number of logical advancement options in health careers. The challenge for the job seeker is to accept the notion of entering at a lower than optimum job title and salary level in the career ladder.

Core Value 4 - Increasing System Accountability

To truly ensure that the workforce development system is responsive to the needs of jobseekers and employers and that it produces results, New Jersey will prioritize the development of an enhanced set of performance metrics and processes that will increase accountability and transparency, and improve customer service. Following a balanced scorecard model, New Jersey will implement a broader set of performance metrics for every workforce development program. The State will develop dashboards to report these metrics on a quarterly basis to the public, to policy makers and to program managers. Finally, New Jersey will commit to conducting rigorous, independent evaluations of workforce programs.

Independent Oversight

Monmouth County has taken rather aggressive steps in increasing system accountability and outcomes. Last year the Executive Committee recommended the formation of an Oversight, Compliance and Quality Assurance Committee whose sole responsibility is to oversee program operations in the following areas:

- Regulatory Compliance
- Subcontractor Monitoring
- Performance Standard Compliance and Improvement
- Improvement of Standard Operating Procedures

- Financial Oversight and Budget Review
- Internal Systems Monitoring and Oversight

Accountability with Expenditures and Service Flow

One of the goals for the next year is to take full advantage of the information available to us from three robust data systems: NJ Performs, OSOS and our Monmouth County Client Database. We now have the tools to drill down into service outcomes filtered by unlimited customer / course fields.

We are now able to conduct effective levels of system oversight from our development of desktop reports generated from data systems as well as reported monthly and quarterly from training providers. This information, to date, has helped improve tracking of expenditure levels as well as customer participation levels.

Monthly Provider Meetings

Approximately 1.1 million dollars is subcontracted to providers who serve our Youth and Work First NJ customers. These providers are responsible for providing services to over 400 customers in various programs. Our providers collaborate with numerous other governmental entities and community based programs. Our monthly provider meetings establish a forum for sharing program successes and challenges. From a management standpoint, this forum allows the County the opportunity to deliver unified directives and problem solve in an effective manner. This group forum helps avoid miscommunication.

Deeper Dive into Service Outcomes

One area which the WIB plans to devote more time is the ongoing analysis of what works best based on actual data. Currently there is very close monitoring of trends and final outcomes for Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth in the areas of Placement, Earnings, Degree Attainment and Literacy Gains, and need to improve looking to factors that contribute to our success and short comings.

While we measure high level performance outcomes in real time on a monthly basis and drill down to the vendor level, we do not, yet, examine and evaluate numerous outcome metrics that would help direct local policy regarding directing funds to specified training areas. This deep dive would help validate or modify entry criteria imposed as customers pursue entrance into training. This information would help refine the listing of top performing schools in regard to completer placement, earning and retention.

Customer Satisfaction

Lastly, regarding system accountability, the WIB has directed staff to re-design and re-institute a customer follow-up system that will provide on-going feedback as to how both job seekers and employers feel about our program services. Under the Job Training Partnership Act, the predecessor of WIA, customer satisfaction ratings were part of the performance measures used to evaluate each Service Delivery Area.

System Successes and Challenges

The **Successes and Challenges** can be summarized in stating that we have made great strides in creating an effective **Business Services Team** consisting of WIB, Local and State One-Stop staff as well as staff from our Community college. In establishing this distinct group, both in function as well as location within the One-Stop, we have seen a significant transition from an employer community barely aware of the local Workforce Investment Board and workforce activities, to a vibrant, healthy growth in business participation.

This team, while making great strides with employers and adult job seekers, broke ground in helping youth attach to the labor market. Under the umbrella of a state funded youth initiative through the Attorney General's Office, the WIB has partnered with Asbury Park Chamber of Commerce, Asbury Park Mayor's Office and a number of Asbury area community based organizations and training programs to launch a "Go for the Gold" program.

Go for the Gold began with a business focus group where employers explained their inability to find qualified local youth for entry level positions in an expanding labor market for entry level workers in the rebirth of Asbury Park business environment. Standards were established in conjunction with the employers who, in return agreed to interview the youth who achieved the GOLD CARD standards (ninety-five percent attendance, satisfactory academic progress, completion of work readiness training and a letter of recommendation).

The second system success implemented was in the **Work First NJ** program area. After observing a high level of attrition at our community work experience sites and receiving similar reactions from site sponsors about the lack of work readiness skills of CWEP customers, the Division of Workforce Development piloted a new approach to the CWEP program. All CWEP candidates are required to go participate in a five (5) day workshop in preparation for their community work assignment. These five days enable staff to deliver interactive workshops designed to improve job retention and increase personal planning and responsibility. In addition, increased time for additional assessment and selection of interest/career related worksite selection is afforded for each candidate.

System Challenges include:

1. Lack of Branding both at the local and state level for the services and programs provided to the employer and job seeker communities. Both job seekers and business can have a very different experience depending on which local workforce area they connect with and many just are not aware of the services available to them.
2. Limited technology at the One-Stop with staff trained on the newest methods in connecting with employment (LinkedIn, Twitter) or for our customers to access in their own job search.
3. Employers have expressed concern regarding soft skills, basic skills and work readiness in the job seekers yet our services and funding in this area have shrunk dramatically. As a "last

chance system” the local workforce area has limited time and funding to address years of gaps in education and skills. We need to partner with the education system to better prepare our workforce and to create the pipeline of job ready individuals to address businesses needs.

4. Limited incumbent worker training funding as was demonstrated during the SESP grant; this funding provided a real benefit to businesses to increase the skills of their employees and helped connect the One-Stop with business.
5. Addressing the silos that still exist between the partners and improving communication of programs and services available. While our business services team has helped in communicating with one voice to employers, we need to improve this communication between our partners and with our job seekers.