

# ATLANTIC COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

## WIOA 2022-2026 LOCAL PLAN

WIOA Local Plan Update 2024-2026



Riaz Rajput- Chairman

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction.....5

**I. LOCAL WORKFORCE STRATEGIES**

1) Analysis of Labor Market Information.....7

    a) Current Labor Force Employment.....8

    b) Existing and Emerging In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.....9

    c) Demographics and Target Populations.....16

    d) Employment and Skill Needs of Employers in Industry Sectors and Occupations.....18

    e) Alignment Between Key Industry Pipelines.....20

    f) Labor Market Trends and Education/Skill Level of the Workforce.....21

    g) Impact of Covid on the Labor Market.....22

2) Strategic Priorities

    a) Expanding Access to Employment, Training, Education and Supportive Services.....23

    b) Ensure and Expand Access to Workforce Development Services that Provide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to the Workforce..... 26

    c) Facilitating the Development of Career Pathways and Co-Enrollment.....28

    d) Increasing Access through Partners and Programs.....30

    e) Increasing Work-Based Learning Opportunities.....32

    f) Supporting Multiple Pathways for Young People.....34

    g) For LWDA's with Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers.....34

**II. ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER OPERATIONS**

1) One-Stop Service Delivery and Flow

    a) Overview and Integration of Partner Services.....36

    b) Development and Integration of Partner Programs and Services.....37

    c) Client Voice.....39

2) Operational Priorities

    a) Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities.....39

b) Use of Training Contracts and Individual Training Accounts.....40

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)**

c) Priority of Service for Adult Career and Training Services.....41  
 d) Policies and Practices for Veterans/Priority of Service.....41  
 e) Youth Workforce Development Activities.....42  
 f) Integration of Technology and Data for Support of Intake and Case Management.....43  
 g) Lessons learned from Covid.....43

3) Service Expansion and Accessibility in One Stop Career Centers

a) Use of Technology.....44  
 b) Physical and Programmatic Accessibility.....45  
 c) Specialized Programs and Services.....45  
 d) Materials for Individuals with Disabilities.....46  
 e) Staff Training and Support.....46  
 f) Provision of Individualized Assessment Services.....47  
 f) Detailed Partnership and Service Integration.....47

4) Employer Engagement

a) Facilitate Employer Engagement.....54  
 b) Develop and Support a Local Workforce Development System that Meets Business Needs...54  
 c) Coordination of Workforce Development and Economic Development.....55  
 d) Connect employers to customers.....55  
 e) Align Resources at State, Regional and Local Level to Create a System of Services for  
 Employers.....56  
 f) Expand Implementation of Work-Based Learning Programs.....56  
 g) Leverage Local Career Pathway Initiative, Business Intermediaries and Others.....57  
 h) Leverage Additional State Programs and Grants through State Units.....57

**III. LOCAL WDB STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION**

1) Local Workforce Development Area Structure

a) Board Membership.....59  
 b) LWDB Standing Committees.....59

c) Fiscal Agent Responsibilities.....62

d) Hired Staff Supporting the Local WDB.....63

2) Procurement of Operator and Services

a) LWDB's process of implementing Competitive Procurement.....64

b) LWDB's Efforts to Avoid Conflict of Interest and Maintain Appropriate Firewalls.....65

c) Impact of Regional Supports on Procurement Activities.....66

3) Oversight and Monitoring

a) Monitoring Operations of One Stop Career Centers.....66

b) Budget of Procured Providers.....67

c) Participation, Service Delivery and Outcomes of Procured Providers.....67

d) Training Contracts (ITA).....67

e) Work-Based Learning (WBL) Contracts and Agreements.....68

f) Systems Supporting Business Practices.....69

g) One Stop Certification.....71

4) Performance Measures and Accountability

a) One Stop Delivery System.....71

b) One Stop Operator and Career Services.....71

c) Youth Providers.....72

5) Local Plan Development

a) Planning Meetings.....72

b) Public Comment and Document Distribution Process.....73

c) Public Comment.....74

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A.....75

Attachment B.....

## Atlantic County Workforce Development Board

### WIOA Local Plan 2022-2026

### WIOA Local Plan Update 2024-2026

#### Introduction

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law in 2014, requires Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and chief elected officials (CEOs) within each of New Jersey's three WIOA workforce planning regions to participate in a local and regional planning process resulting in a comprehensive four-year plan which shall be modified every two years. Each Regional Plan is to incorporate input and coordination from each of the local areas within the workforce planning region. Regional plans must comply with the requirements outlined in WIOA and must align with and support the strategies described in the New Jersey Combined WIOA State Plan.

This four-year plan includes the vision, goals and strategy of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB) in conjunction with the South Jersey Workforce Collaborative (SJWC) regional plan.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each local workforce development board (WDB) and recognized region to develop and submit; in partnership with the county's chief elected official (CEO), a comprehensive four-year plan to the Governor. The local plan shall support the vision, goals and strategy described in the State plan and otherwise be consistent with the State plan. Further, WIOA Section 108 and Title 20 CFR 679.500 requires that the four-year plan be modified after two years.

In an effort to illuminate the primary objectives for Atlantic County over the next four years, the ACWDB will provide an overview of the Vision, Goals and Strategies, using the body of the plan to delve into each area for a more detailed description. **The local plan update will review the first two years of the plan to inform the public on changes that must be addressed prior to the plan's continuation.**

#### VISION

The Atlantic County Workforce Development Board envisions a workforce development system that includes all partner agencies, business relationships, secondary and post-secondary educational partners, community-based organizations, state, county and municipal government entities working toward a single goal of connecting work-ready county residents with employer-based career paths. Recognizing the importance of including the adult, dislocated worker and youth populations who are either harder to serve, under-served and marginalized as part of the valued workforce, the focus for the next four years will also be on ensuring the incorporation of those populations, who reflect a labor pool that is inclusive and embodies equity and diversity. Within the vision, all partners and associates have a clear understanding of the purpose of workforce development and its service array. Workforce development training services can meet the customized needs of local employers, emphasizing the importance of quality job opportunities. Training staff will match customer skill sets with employer needs. Cross-trained professional staff will have a clear understanding of how to best help any customer.

## GOALS

Consistent with the state's combined plan, it is the intent of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board to build strong business relationships, make new connections with secondary schools and improve our relationships with community-based organizations in order to establish a pathway between the community, the customer, (*adult, dislocated worker and youth*), and the employer, using the resources of the One Stop Career Center. The ACWDB is intent on enhancing the agency brand and purpose using the name recognition of the schools and community-based organizations to introduce and increase agency awareness. Both the state's combined plan and the regional plan are in concert with the expectation to:

- 1) Increase educational attainment among under-represented populations.
- 2) Expand the use of work-based based learning, especially registered apprenticeship, to offer an alternate pathway to good-paying, high-demand industry employment with an opportunity to pursue higher education through degree apprenticeship offerings.
- 3) Emphasize the importance of 'life-long learning' as being paramount in creating the new community of skilled, educated workers ready to meet industry need in this new economy.

## STRATEGIES

The strategies associated with the goals stated above involve having the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board engaged in as many business and community relationships as possible. Efforts to be out in the community will be expanded significantly over the next four years. Strategic planning includes targeted efforts in these areas:

1. The board has begun strategic efforts to strengthen the private sector representation to provide more private leadership and involvement in governance and policy development.
2. Efforts are underway to build relationships with community-based organizations who have direct access to the lower income, underserved and marginalized populations within their respective communities.
3. ACWDB continues to build trust, understanding and shared responsibility with its state partners as part of the vision of a unified service for all.
4. ACWDB will continue to build relationships with primary and secondary schools in the county to focus academic efforts on industry need. Using the forum of the Perkins V process, ACWDB has begun building strategic relationships with Career and Technical Education programs within schools to enhance industry relationships with these programs.
5. ACWDB continues to grow community partnerships with state, county and municipal authorities to facilitate helping relationships with their workforce needs.
6. ACWDB is also using the relationships that have been developed over the years to focus on shared resources between Titles I, II, III and IV under WIOA. The board has strong working relationships with all WIOA partners and uses these to create synergistic benefits for employers and customers.

7. ACWDB has worked to build its relationship with the economic development entity, the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, to create a talent pool for industry suitors who are considering locating their businesses within the area. **Recent changes have included the incorporation of workforce development resources as part of the economic development discussion with new and existing employers.**

These strategies have been identified to create a planned pathway for the next four years that will denote industry needs and develop the necessary skills to address that need.

## I. LOCAL WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

### 1) Analysis of Labor Market Information

During the past two-and-a-half years, Atlantic County, its people and its businesses, have experienced an unprecedented fluctuation in unemployment and employment, as a result of the pandemic. Looking at the longitudinal picture of the labor force over the past ten years, the data reflects a seven-and-half percent decrease in the labor force as a result of a number of different factors. For nearly fifty years, the primary industry in Atlantic County has been hospitality, retail and tourism, largely supported by the Atlantic City casinos. While regionally, all areas of South Jersey experienced significant unemployment during the past two years, Atlantic County was unique because of its singular emphasis on one industry sector.

#### CHART 1.

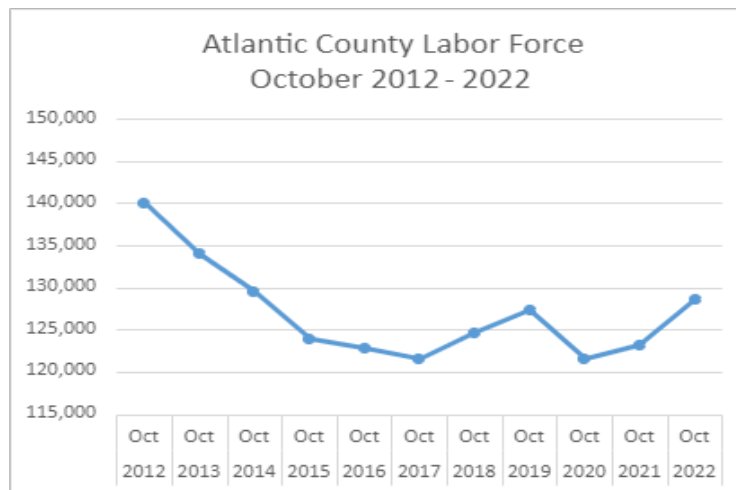
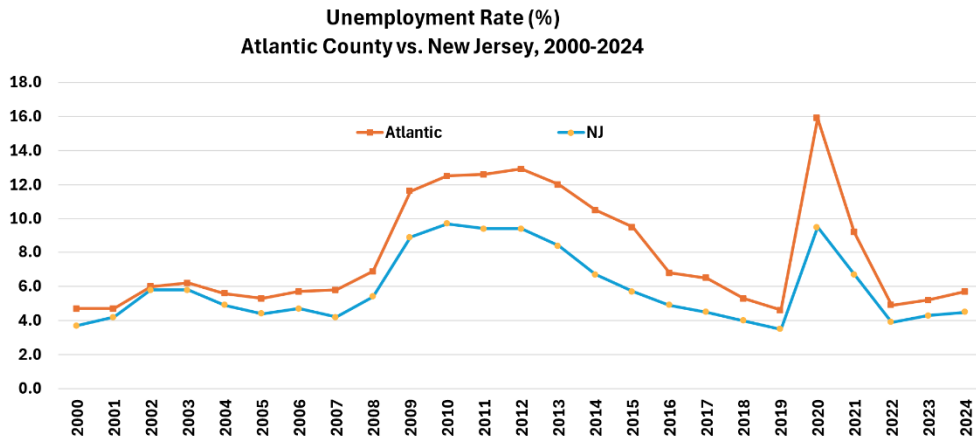


Chart 1A.

Unemployment in Atlantic County follows state trends but stays above the New Jersey average due to its seasonal tourism and agriculture industries.



Source: ORI-EDR, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program, 2024

21

**CHART 2.**

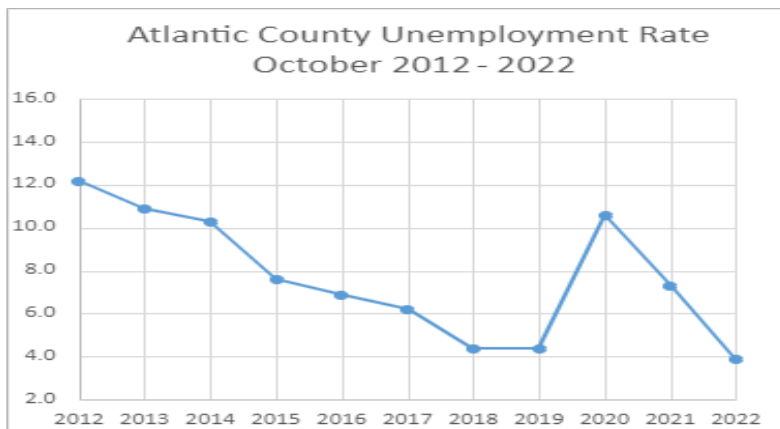
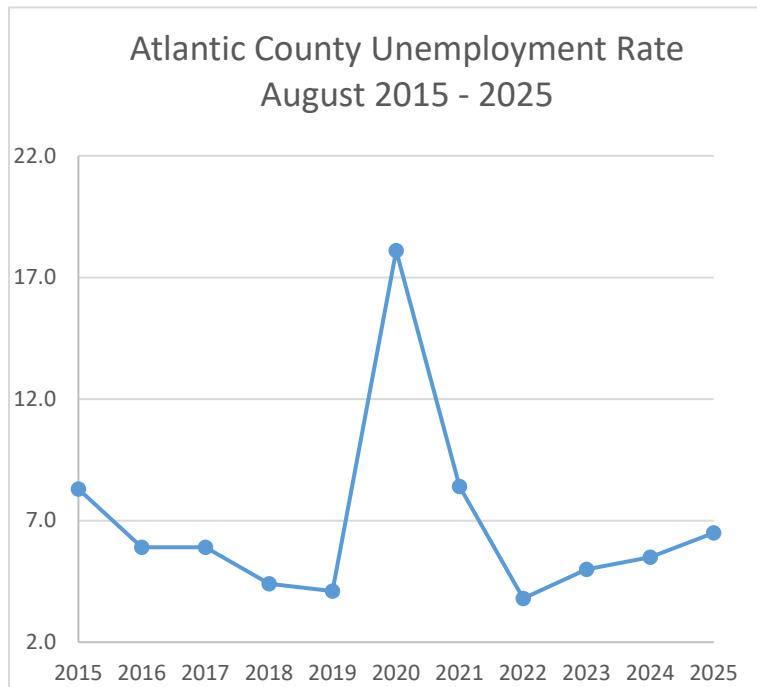


CHART 2A.



### **A. Current Labor Force Employment:**

The labor force in Atlantic County has experienced a number of upheavals as a result of economic conditions over the past fifteen years. At the time of the recession, worker layoffs, largely associated with the casino industry, decreased the county's overall labor force, which at its peak in July of 2006, was 145,700 (NJLWD ORI). In 2012, the labor force was just over 140,000 and the unemployment rate was over 12%. In 2014, as a result of the recession and the opening of a number of casino properties in surrounding states, five casinos closed their doors and laid off thousands of workers. With the closing of the Atlantic Club, Showboat, Trump Plaza, Revel and Trump Taj Mahal, over 11,000 workers lost their jobs over the three-year period following the closures. Since 2018, two new casinos, the Hard Rock and Ocean Resorts, have absorbed some of the deficit.

In March of 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic once again changed the business landscape of Atlantic County when over 28,000 casino workers were laid off from March to July of 2020. According to the Division of Gaming Enforcement, the workforce that has returned is approximately 20% less than pre-pandemic numbers. ( In 2025 – 2024, with the exception of the Caesar's Casino, all Atlantic City casinos have seen a reduction of their total workforce year-over-year. (While the 2025 year reflects a slight increase in the casino labor force, it is still nearly 20% below the staffing level of 2019.)

**Chart 3**

**CHART 3A**

	Year:2020	2019	Year:2025	2024
Bally's	1,976	2,263	1,333	1,527
Borgata	3,128	5,843	4,614	4,850
Caesars	2,420	2,688	2,618	2,560
Golden Nugget	1,799	2,174	1,397	1,416
Hard Rock	3,570	3,946	3,798	3,803
Harrah's	2,905	3,214	2,267	2,373
Ocean Resort	2,093	3,214	3,672	3,720
Resorts	1,712	1,987	1,359	1,455
Tropicana	2,749	3,166	2,096	2,099
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,352</b>	<b>28,585</b>	<b>23,154</b>	<b>23,803</b>

As is listed in the labor force and unemployment charts shown on the previous page, Atlantic County's labor force has grown slightly from its pre-pandemic level in October of 2019. The labor force has, however, experienced a significant reduction since 2012, when the number of workers exceeded 140,000. The current labor force for Atlantic County is estimated at 128,600. At the same time, the unemployment rate has dropped below the pre-pandemic rate of 4.4% and was as low as 3.7% in August of 2022. The speed of the resurgence coupled with the cry from employers that they are still having difficulty finding help, is a primary challenge to the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board in the creation of this plan.

The challenge is further compounded by recent studies that indicate that a significant percentage of the pre-pandemic workforce, perhaps as much as the twenty percent mentioned above, will not be returning to their original employment. Those workers that are not returning may be leaving the workforce altogether as a percentage of this population represents baby-boomers who have elected to retire. Other groups who are part of the mass exodus include individuals looking for a better opportunity with more life/work balance.

**CHART 4.** Labor Force Participation Rate by Age

Atlantic County, New Jersey				
	Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment/Population Ratio	Unemployment rate

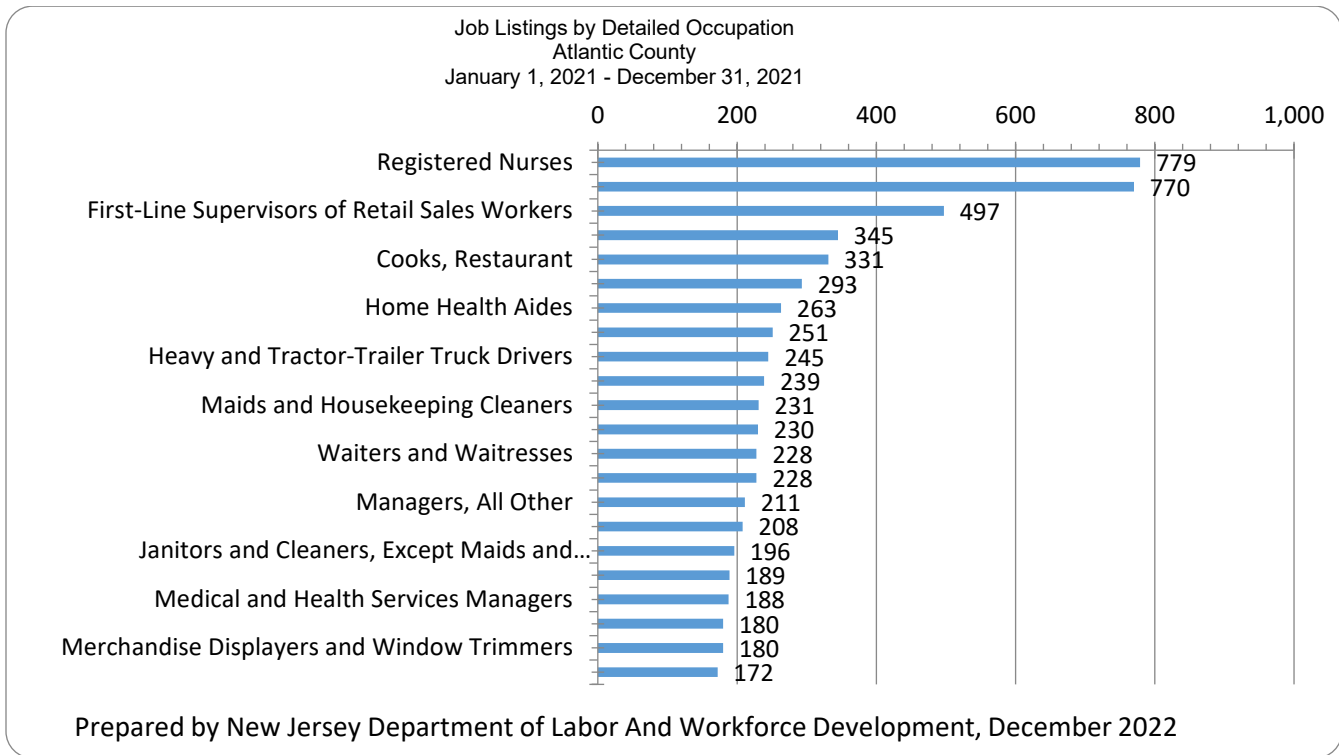
Label	Estimate	Estimate		Estimate	Estimate
Population 16 years and over	215,732	63.8%		58.1%	8.7%
AGE					
16 to 19 years	13,980	40.6%		33.0%	18.5%
20 to 24 years	17,248	77.8%		65.7%	15.5%
25 to 29 years	16,575	86.9%		77.6%	10.4%
30 to 34 years	15,145	86.9%		78.7%	9.0%
35 to 44 years	29,356	85.1%		78.5%	7.5%
45 to 54 years	35,942	82.2%		76.7%	6.5%
55 to 59 years	21,208	72.9%		69.2%	5.1%
60 to 64 years	18,372	63.5%		59.3%	6.6%
65 to 74 years	27,713	28.9%		26.5%	8.2%
75 years & up	20,193	6.3%		5.8%	8.7%

## **B. Existing and Emerging In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations**

### **Existing industry sectors**

In Atlantic County, the industry sectors are relatively limited with the hospitality and retail sectors leading the way and representing the largest percentage of occupational titles at approximately 31% of the labor force. As is indicated in the chart on the next page, only one of the top fifteen job titles exceeds the state's mean salary level. As is also reflected by the chart below, the industry sectors in Atlantic County are limited to lower wage positions in the retail and hospitality industry with the addition of the registered nurse and starting positions in the healthcare field. It should be noted, however, that there have been significant wage increases in many of these positions, moving the hourly wage from \$13-\$15 per hour to \$18 to \$20 per hour for nursing assistant and maid/housekeeping positions. Local 54, the union that represents much of the lower-level hospitality staff associated with the casinos and hotels, recently completed negotiations that produced wage increases for these job titles from a minimum of \$14-\$15 per hour to \$18 per hour at most casinos.

CHART 5.



As is indicated by the chart above showing the current job listings by occupation for Atlantic County, the data reflects that the largest demand is for healthcare-related positions, with an emphasis on the registered nurse position, retail sales and the front-line supervisors for retail sales. With one exception, most other titles reflect hospitality, maintenance and service workers, all who involve minimum or near minimum wage jobs. The one noted exception is the truck drivers within the transportation, distribution and logistics industry sector. Although this occupational title is not listed in the top fifteen below, it is an occupational title that has promise as a career opportunity for individuals with limited education, new to the workforce and those who are changing their careers. The current average annual salary, (as indicated in the chart below), for a heavy and tractor-trailer driver is \$48,340.

CHART 6.

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development									
2021 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Atlantic County									
All Industries Combined									
Source: Division of Economic and Demographic Research, July 2022									
SOC Code	Occupational Title	Estimated Employment *	Mean (Avg.) Hourly	Mean (Avg.) Salary	25th Pctile. Hourly	25th Pctile. Salary	50th Pctile. Salary	75th Pctile. Hourly	75th Pctile. Salary
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	440	\$ 14.40	\$ 29,943	\$ 12.00	\$ 24,960	\$ 24,960	\$ 16.16	\$ 33,614
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	820	\$ 23.24	\$ 48,340	\$ 18.25	\$ 37,957	\$ 48,093	\$ 28.55	\$ 59,385
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	450	\$ 22.90	\$ 47,628	\$ 14.63	\$ 30,423	\$ 44,283	\$ 29.68	\$ 61,736
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	260	\$ 18.94	\$ 39,399	\$ 18.31	\$ 38,084	\$ 38,084	\$ 18.66	\$ 38,813
53-3053	Shuttle Drivers and Chauffeurs	370	\$ 14.94	\$ 31,077	\$ 12.00	\$ 24,960	\$ 29,801	\$ 16.03	\$ 33,343
53-3099	Motor Vehicle Operators, All Other	60	\$ 18.54	\$ 38,553	\$ 13.06	\$ 27,174	\$ 33,845	\$ 23.53	\$ 48,942

Note that these job listings are for 2021 and that wages have increased significantly in most job titles listed below. As is indicated below, of the top fifteen occupations in Atlantic County, only one is above the state average. The majority of the occupations in the top fifteen are located in the service industry sector and nearly all start at a wage below, at or slightly above fifteen dollars per hour for a forty-hour week. (Increases in minimum wage have also increased the

starting wage in many areas to at or slightly above \$16/hour.) As an industry sector, the healthcare industry is the only one that offers career paths that can lead to a sustainable living wage above the state average. In addition, nearly half of the top fifteen occupations listed do not require a high school diploma. Six of the remaining eight occupations require only a high school diploma, or its equivalent.

#### CHART 7.

Atlantic County	Employment	Average Salary	25th Percentile Salary	50th Percentile Salary	75th Percentile Salary	Education
35-3031 Waiters and Waitresses	4,070	\$30,830	\$24,960	\$28,580	\$30,330	No formal educational credential
41-2031 Retail Salespersons	3,850	\$31,740	\$24,960	\$28,140	\$29,680	No formal educational credential
41-2011 Cashiers	3,830	\$27,720	\$24,960	\$27,220	\$28,710	No formal educational credential
39-3011 Gambling Dealers	3,300	\$34,170	\$24,960	\$26,880	\$48,100	High school diploma or equivalent
29-1141 Registered Nurses	2,650	\$84,550	\$75,000	\$79,100	\$94,690	Bachelor's degree
37-2011 Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,650	\$33,200	\$26,050	\$29,990	\$37,270	No formal educational credential
35-3023 Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,310	\$27,350	\$24,960	\$26,160	\$28,360	No formal educational credential
31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides	2,220	\$29,390	\$26,150	\$28,350	\$29,480	High school diploma or equivalent
33-9032 Security Guards	2,070	\$33,920	\$28,830	\$31,000	\$36,360	High school diploma or equivalent
37-2012 Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,860	\$30,180	\$24,960	\$29,980	\$30,440	No formal educational credential
35-2014 Cooks, Restaurant	1,830	\$36,140	\$29,910	\$36,080	\$38,590	No formal educational credential
53-7065 Stockers and Order Fillers	1,740	\$31,270	\$26,830	\$29,000	\$35,840	High school diploma or equivalent
43-9061 Office Clerks, General	1,620	\$38,320	\$29,350	\$36,670	\$46,460	High school diploma or equivalent
43-4171 Receptionists and Information Clerks	1,590	\$33,550	\$28,720	\$30,560	\$36,950	High school diploma or equivalent
31-1131 Nursing Assistants	1,580	\$32,510	\$28,760	\$30,040	\$36,360	Postsecondary non-degree award

Source: NJLWD, Occupational Employment Statistics Survey, May 2021

Atlantic County Workforce Development Board recognizes the importance of continuing education in the development of sustainable career paths, however, recently the school districts have increased their focus and emphasis on STEM curriculum, recognizing the importance of science, technology, engineering and math in the 21st century. As an example, the Atlantic City Boys and Girls Club has created several work experience programs that focus on the information technology, healthcare and aviation industries. Even more important is recognizing that the parents of these youth must be educated as well. In an effort to engage the whole family, the AC Boys and Girls Club has established a program with the focus on a two generational approach to education to allow the parents of the youth to also participate. In other areas, the Atlantic City High School has recently established an agreement with the Atlantic Cape Community College and several local industries to provide curriculum on computer science with a focus on cyber-security.

In Egg Harbor Township High School, with the help of a PACE (Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education) program, students are exposed to practical skills and classroom instruction in healthcare, manufacturing and water and wastewater management. With recent identification of small manufacturers in the area and specialty manufacturers locally, the vision of opportunity for local careers continues to expand, creating a path for more diverse industries in Atlantic County.

#### Emerging Industry Sectors

CHART 8.

Atlantic County					
Industry	2020 Actual	2030 Projected	Increase	Percentage Change	
<b>000000 Total All Industries</b>	<b>118,100</b>	<b>142,050</b>	<b>23,950</b>	<b>20.3%</b>	
720000 Accommodation and Food Services	25,400	39,500	14,100	55.5%	
620000 Health Care and Social Assistance	18,800	22,350	3,550	18.9%	
440000 Retail Trade	13,700	15,250	1,550	11.3%	
230000 Construction	5,200	6,200	1,000	19.2%	
710000 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,850	2,800	950	51.4%	
810000 Other Services (except Government)	3,750	4,700	950	25.3%	
560000 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Service	4,900	5,650	750	15.3%	
610000 Educational Services	11,050	11,650	600	5.4%	
540000 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4,750	5,300	550	11.6%	
310000 Manufacturing	2,400	2,700	300	12.5%	
530000 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,300	1,450	150	11.5%	
480000 Transportation and Warehousing	1,950	2,000	50	2.6%	
550000 Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,050	1,100	50	4.8%	
220000 Utilities	850	850	0	0.0%	
510000 Information	550	450	-100	-18.2%	
420000 Wholesale Trade	2,400	2,300	-100	-4.2%	
520000 Finance and Insurance	2,500	2,350	-150	-6.0%	
900000 Government	9,950	9,250	-700	-7.0%	

Source: Industry and Occupational Employment Projections

Atlantic County is intent on diversifying the industry and economy of the area. As is indicated on the previous page, nearly all of the job titles listed are associated with hospitality, retail and tourism. As has been stated in visions and goals of this plan, the intent to diversify the industry of Atlantic County is paramount. In response to the need for new industry opportunities, ACWDB has several emerging industry sectors that are currently in development. The following industry sectors are consistent with the planned focus to expand, enhance and diversify industry in Atlantic County. This diversification is consistent with many of the emerging industry sectors in South Jersey. Emerging Industry Sectors are as follows:

- AVIATION
- ~~OFFSHORE WIND~~
- CANNABIS
- MANUFACTURING
- UTILITIES
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**AVIATION**

In 2015, Atlantic County engaged the services of Angelou Economics\* to develop a five-year economic development strategy and action plan. As a result of that analysis, aviation became a primary focus as an opportunity for a new industry sector in Atlantic County. Recognizing the existing assets of the William J. Hughes FAA Tech Center and the Atlantic City International Airport, Atlantic County, through the efforts of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance (ACEA) and the National Aerospace Research and Technology Park (NARTP) has placed this industry sector as its most viable and important focus for the foreseeable future. With the completion of the first research and development building in the NARTP and groundbreaking for the second, the increasing emphasis on avionics/aerospace industries, using the FAA Tech Center as a primary asset for business attraction, has established the foundation for the aviation industry.

Colliers Engineering and Design completed a Strategic Economic Alliance Recovery and Resiliency Plan in December of 2022, at the request of ACEA. As part of the 2022 plan recommendations, Collier's states the following:

*It is recommended, therefore, that the focus on aerospace/avionics be maintained and enhanced in order to develop a niche market. Atlantic City International Airport, with its dedicated airspace and low utilization, offers an inexpensive*

*alternative to congested and expensive air cargo and passenger activities along the Eastern Seaboard and may be an important supply chain link in the future.*

Currently, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the premier educational institution for the aviation industry, is working with ACEA and its partners to create the Aviation Academy of the Future. This facility will enable local residents to receive state-of-the-art education in aviation maintenance and repair as well as other aviation-related occupations.

The Atlantic County Institute of Technology currently offers an aviation curriculum located at the NARTP. Within that class the students study aeronautical history, airport systems and unmanned aviation systems as part of the class. In addition, the students are exposed to real work experience, as engineers at Woolpert, a tenant within the NARTP, discuss practical engineering applications that the students can relate to. The students also experience a flight simulator to participate in private pilot simulations as part of their course of studies. ACIT anticipates that this class will continue to develop and expand as the sector grows.

Egg Harbor Township High School has been involved in a number of projects involving the FAA Tech Center's Aviation STEM program. Aviation STEM outreach ambassadors present aviation topics to highlight the research and technical work performed at the Technical Center. Students also have the opportunity to participate in shared discussions with the Aviation STEM ambassadors. Discussion topics include aviation, computer science, mathematics, weather and multiple fields of engineering such as aeronautical, aerospace, civil, mechanical, electrical and computer.

### OFF SHORE WIND

~~Beginning in or around 2025, the continental shelf off the coast of Cape May and Atlantic County will be the location for the first wind farms planned for the eastern coast of New Jersey. With a plan to reach 7.5 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2035, the first two wind energy projects Ocean Wind 1 and Ocean Wind 2 will be managed by Orsted. Ocean Wind 1 is set to be operational in the mid 2020s. Ocean Wind 2 is set to be operational in late 2020s. The third awarded project is Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind Project, which is also set to be operational in late 2020s. Initial job projections for all three projects through the mid 2020s is 4,071. With the job projections through 2035 provided by the New Jersey Offshore Wind Workforce Assessment Report, produced by NJEDA<sup>17</sup> the five largest projected occupations are as follows:~~

~~Production Occupations 40.8%~~

~~Installation, Maintenance and Repair 13.8%~~

~~Transportation and Material Moving 13.6%~~

~~Construction and Extraction 9.7%~~

~~Management Occupations 8.6%~~

~~These occupations listed above appear to focus more extensively on North Jersey, especially as it relates to manufacturing facilities. The installation, maintenance and repair, construction and extraction jobs are largely associated with the trades. Workforce development will continue to dialogue with the trades to determine how best to partner with the union membership as the project moves forward.~~

~~The primary job opportunities for Atlantic County will be limited and center around opportunities to be trained in operations, maintenance and repair. According to the most recent information, those jobs not associated with the trade unions will be targeted to wind turbine maintenance and repair. For Atlantic County, this workforce will offer more than 150 jobs and will provide for a career pathway for those that are trained. Currently, Rowan College of South Jersey is establishing a Wind Turbine Technician training program that will be used for those candidates who are determined eligible.~~

~~The Off-Shore Wind occupation projections are for the state of New Jersey through 2035 and do not provide detail for Atlantic County, however, the regional data does provide an opportunity to discuss the potential for additional jobs for both local and regional residents.~~

Although Off-Shore Wind was anticipated as an industry with career opportunities, lack of community and government support for the program has eliminated this sector as an emerging industry.

**CANNABIS**

With the legalization of cannabis in New Jersey, many interested businesses are expressing an interest in obtaining a license and developing business opportunities. One of several challenges in the establishment of a cannabis business is the qualifications of individuals who would be working. Several areas in South Jersey are beginning to develop plans to support the new industry, however, the limitations applied to the use of WIOA funding will make it more difficult to provide tangible support, until such time as cannabis is legalized nationally. New Jersey has also placed significant restrictions on the number of licenses issued, so the current growth in the industry is somewhat limited. With the primary focus on either grow facilities or dispensaries, the skill qualifications for these two, very different aspects of the industry, vary widely. According to Robert Mejia, Instructor of Cannabis studies at Stockton University, the majority of the job opportunities in adult sales, roughly 60%, will be minimum wage jobs. Within a year, however, if the worker is motivated and capable, there will be opportunities for upward mobility. **During recent conversations with local grow facilities, there has been increasing interest in accessing state funds for On-the-Job Training for new employees. The local state OJT writer has been able to obtain training funds through state grants to employ two OJT employees.**

Overall, a conservative projection for job opportunities in Atlantic County is estimated at approximately 200 jobs for the first year, with projections increasing each year arriving at 900/1,000 jobs by year 4. For 2021, the cannabis-related labor force in New Jersey was stated as 3,147, according to the Leafly Job Report for 2022<sup>2</sup>.

**SPECIALTY MANUFACTURING**

The manufacturing industry in Atlantic County showed growth in 2021, according to the Collier's Strategic Economic Alliance Recovery and Resiliency Plan,<sup>3</sup> as compared to an industry decline in 2015. The emphasis for this industry sector is on specialty manufacturing within relatively small businesses. According to the latest labor market information, there are 125 manufacturers in Atlantic County. There are also 2,756 employees within the industry and the industry comprises 2.8% of all industry in Atlantic County. This job and career opportunity may provide an alternative to the hospitality and casino industry for high school-educated adults interested in pursuing a career path not associated with post-secondary education. As increased demand for trained workers for the manufacturing industry grows, so to, will the need for training and education related to the manufacturing industry. This industry opportunity also lends itself to increased development of work-based learning training.

31 Manufacturing	125	2,756	\$56,698	\$156,260,086	2.8%	3.1%
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NJDOL LMI 2022

Within the past year, the agency has partnered with Egg Harbor Township School District to support a PACE grant (Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education) which included an introduction to the manufacturing industry. The focus of the program targeted marine manufacturing and concluded with the placement of five registered apprentices with Viking Yacht. While those efforts continue, the emphasis for the next four years will be to uncover existing manufacturers in Atlantic County. The employer engagement components of workforce development including the state business services representative, the state employment services manager and the workforce development board's job

development unit are committed to the development and expansion of workforce development as it relates to manufacturing.

Workforce development currently has relationships with three manufacturers within the county. Through the combined effort of all workforce-related components within the county, the intent is to establish and solidify relationships with a minimum of ten manufacturers in the first two years of this plan.

With the recent connection to the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, the economic development arm of the county, the workforce development board has been included in local introductions to new and existing manufacturers. Economic development has recognized the workforce board as the best resource for addressing the employer's workforce needs.

## **UTILITY**

Although the utility industry is not identified as a growth industry in Chart 8, recent trends in the level of involvement of the Atlantic City Electric utility gives evidence of an emerging career opportunity for the residents of Atlantic County. The Atlantic County Workforce Development Board currently partners with the Atlantic City Electric Company to provide training and education for community individuals interested in pursuing careers in the electric utility. Since 2018, the agency has been providing training and education for interested candidates through a grant funded by Atlantic City Electric. Through this grant funding, the agency has provided utility preparation training including a mathematics prep class for the Construction and Skills Trade exam (CAST) which is a preliminary requirement for interview considerations with the utility. Looking forward to the next four years, the agency, in partnership with the electric utility, will also be developing internships for high school juniors and seniors to experience work activities associated with the utility industry through their SPARK program, as well as continuing the adult education for starting jobs in their various divisions. The SPARK program is currently planned for several area high schools including ACIT, Egg Harbor Township and the Greater Egg Harbor School District.

Working in conjunction with this same program and the associated training, the electric utility also established its first hands-on training class for lineman apprentices near the end of 2022. The agency is anticipating that this class will train approximately thirty workers at least once a year for the next two to three years.

This program offers qualified county residents the career opportunity to earn a very strong living wage, >\$30/hr. to start, and create a sustainable career in the utility industry. Additional utilities that are being considered are South Jersey Industries natural gas, the local solid waste, recycling and waste-water management utility authority (sewage, wastewater and recycling) and water authority.

In the most recent training program, 55 candidates successfully completed the electric utility training. The majority of the candidates were from the neighborhoods of Atlantic City. According to the most recent information from representatives of Atlantic City Electric, 90% of all training candidates have received job offers from the utility.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Recent efforts to increase access to specific aspects of Information Technology include pursuit of training and education associated with cybersecurity positions for several local industries. The current need has created an interest in developing career pathways for this job title. In response to three businesses expressed interest in creating a training and education path for the next generation of cybersecurity specialists. In Atlantic City, plans are being developed to have a high school curriculum designed to prepare students for a career in cybersecurity. The high school classes will also transfer credits earned to college credits towards an associate degree in computer science at Atlantic Cape Community College. In addition, plans are underway to create registered apprenticeship work processes for the cyber

1) NJEDA New Jersey's Offshore Wind Workforce Assessment Through 2035  
2) Barcott, Bruce and Witley, Beau, Leafly Job Report 2022

3) Strategic Economic Alliance Recovery and Resiliency Plan - Collier's Engineering and Design

security specialist. Three separate industry-related businesses are committed to be part of the skill development process. Those businesses include Atlanticare, the largest healthcare business in the county, South Jersey Industries, the natural gas utility associated with the county and the Ocean Resorts Casino in Atlantic City.

**C. Demographics and Target Populations-**

**CHART 9.**

Total Population Atlantic County	274,534	
White Only Population-Atlantic County	156,796	57.11%
Black Only Population- Atlantic County	41,519	15.12%
Asian Only Population- Atlantic County	21,784	7.9%
Hispanic or Latino Population- Atlantic County	53,713	19.56%
2 Races- Atlantic County	25,648	

U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Report

According to the latest information from the US Census Bureau, Atlantic County's population totals 274,534. What is reflected in the chart below is that the age distribution of the population has changed significantly since the last census. Between 2010 and 2020 the under 20 population of Atlantic County dropped dramatically, by over 10,000 residents. The 20–44-year-old residents also decreased by over 8,000. Those individuals that were ages 55 to 75 increased as a percentage of the total population by over 6%. While the overall loss of individuals under 45 was largely supplanted by the population over 55, this shift in population distribution by age is a factor that must be recognized as we plan going forward.

**CHART 10. Age Cohort Change in Atlantic County**

Age Cohort	2010		2020		Change in Number	Percentage Change
	Population Number	Population %	Population Number	Population %		
<b>Under 20 years</b>	73,106	26.76%	62,898	23.77%	-10,208	-3.00%
<b>20-44 years</b>	86,414	31.63%	78,324	29.60%	-8,090	-2.04%

<b>55-75 years</b>	52,499	19.22%	67,293	25.43%	+14,794	6.21%
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Source: US Census Bureau, ACS

A key demographic component for residents of Atlantic County is the number of members living in poverty. As is indicated on the following page, the overall poverty rate in Atlantic County in 2022 is 15.9%. The population most at risk to be in poverty is that group under five years of age. More than 20% of all age demographics under the age of majority live in poverty. As is anticipated, the less education an individual has, the more likely it will be that he or she is living below the poverty level. Nearly 30% of all individuals with less than a high school diploma live below the poverty level. Eighteen percent of those individuals with a high school diploma are living below the poverty level. The poverty level drops at each level of education. Therefore a primary effort of workforce development must be to reinforce the importance of high school and post-secondary education for all members of the workforce.

**CHART 11.**

	Atlantic County, New Jersey		
	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
Label	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Population for whom poverty status is determined	269,172	42,716	15.9%
<b>AGE</b>			
Under 18 years	56,210	14,038	25.0%
Under 5 years	13,981	4,028	28.8%
5 to 17 years	42,229	10,010	23.7%
Related children of householder under 18 years	55,700	13,528	24.3%
18 to 64 years	161,188	23,519	14.6%
18 to 34 years	53,075	7,146	13.5%
35 to 64 years	108,113	16,373	15.1%
60 years and over	74,167	6,961	9.4%
65 years and over	51,774	5,159	10.0%

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			
Population 25 years and over	191,428	25,428	13.3%
Less than high school graduate	23,723	7,001	29.5%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	58,938	10,573	17.9%
Some college, associate's degree	46,799	5,238	11.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	61,968	2,616	4.2%

Atlantic City and Pleasantville have the highest poverty rates in Atlantic County. Chart 12 on the next page of the strategic plan illustrates the level of poverty in those cities in comparison to that of New Jersey and the United States. As can be seen, while the state of New Jersey's poverty rate stands at 10.2%, below the national average of 11.6%, the poverty rate for Atlantic County stands at 15.1%. Within Atlantic County, the cities of Pleasantville and Atlantic City present a 24.5% and 37% poverty rate respectively. In examining the per capita income for Atlantic City and Pleasantville, neither rises to the level of \$22,000 for the past twelve

months. Drilling down a bit further into this number, the average hourly wage for an individual working full-time at 35 hours per week is \$12.08. Using the same calculation, Atlantic County, at a per capita income of \$36,143, averages an hourly wage of \$19.86. For the state of New Jersey, using the same calculation, the hourly wage is \$25.65 per hour.

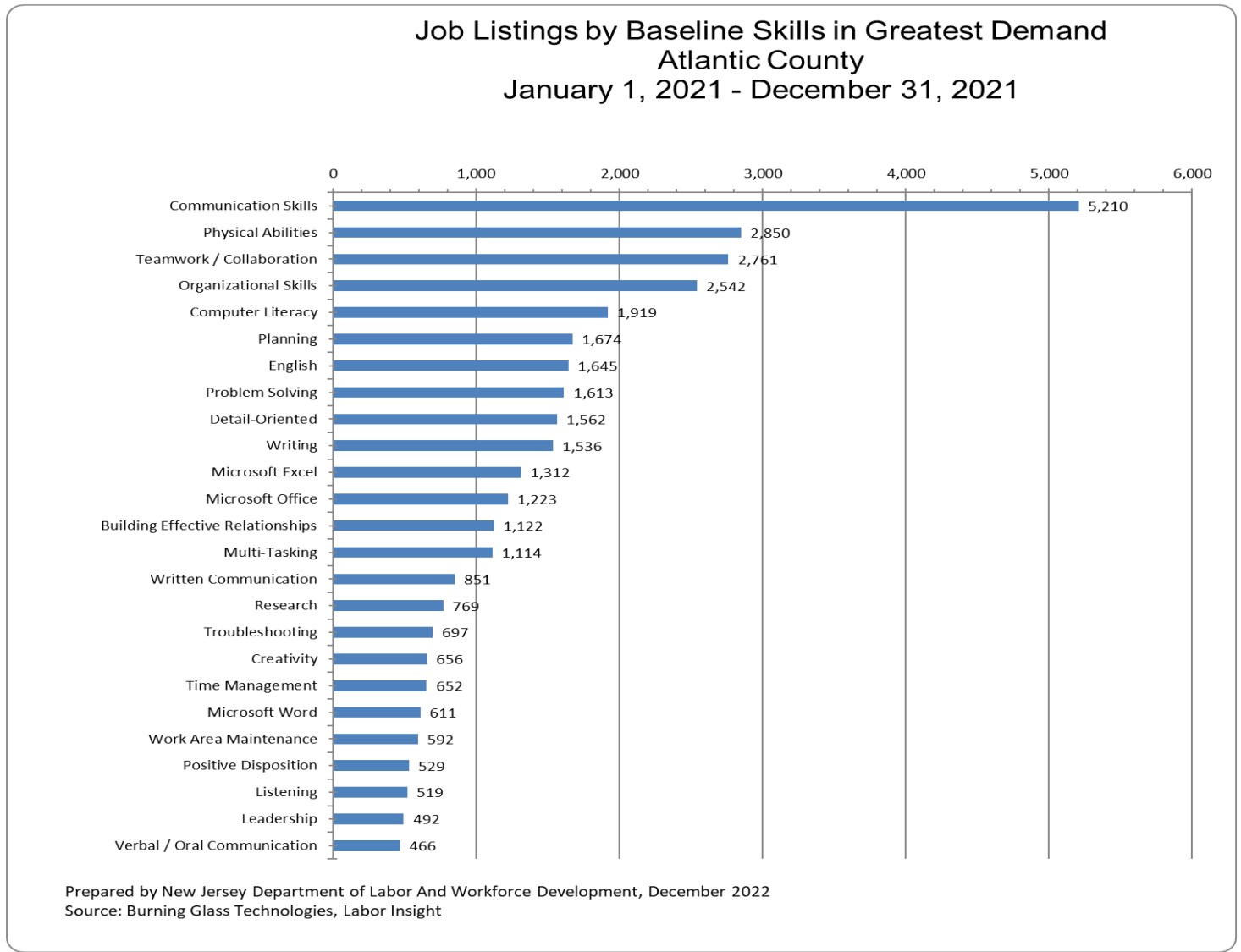
**CHART 12.**

<b>Income &amp; Poverty</b>	<b>Atlantic City</b>	<b>Pleasantville</b>	<b>Atlantic County</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>United States</b>
Median household income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$29,773	\$44,008	\$66,473	\$89,703	\$69,021
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$21,048	\$21,631	\$36,143	\$46,691	\$37,638
Persons in poverty, percent	37.0%	24.5%	15.1%	10.2%	11.6%

ACS one year survey 2021

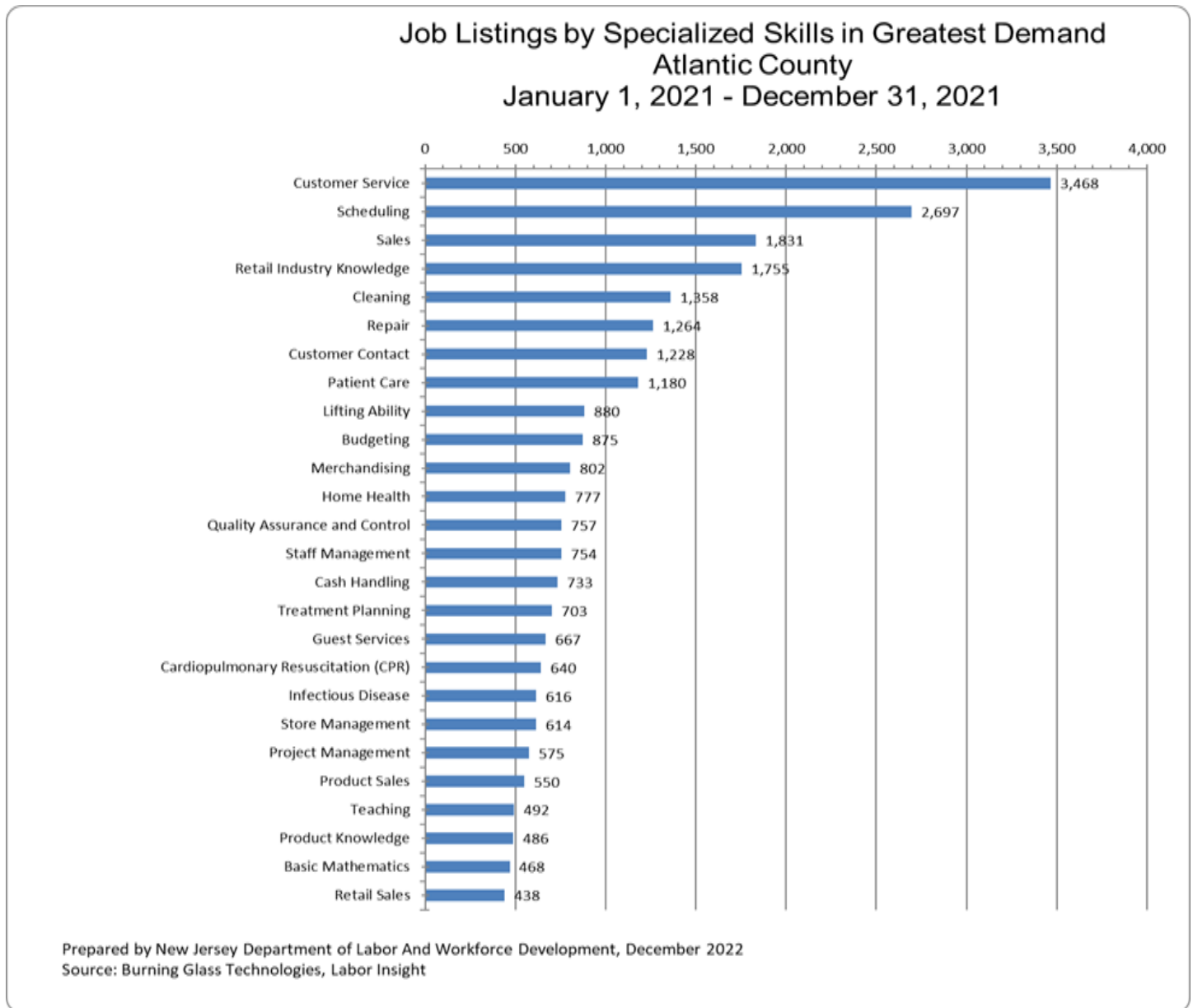
#### **D. Employment and Skill Needs of Employers in Existing Industry Sectors and Occupations.**

**CHART 13.**



The chart on the preceding page identifies communication skills as those basic skills most in demand for employers. These skills are followed by individual physical abilities and teamwork. This is a change from previous assessments listing communication, organizational skills and writing as the three basic skills most in demand.

CHART 14.

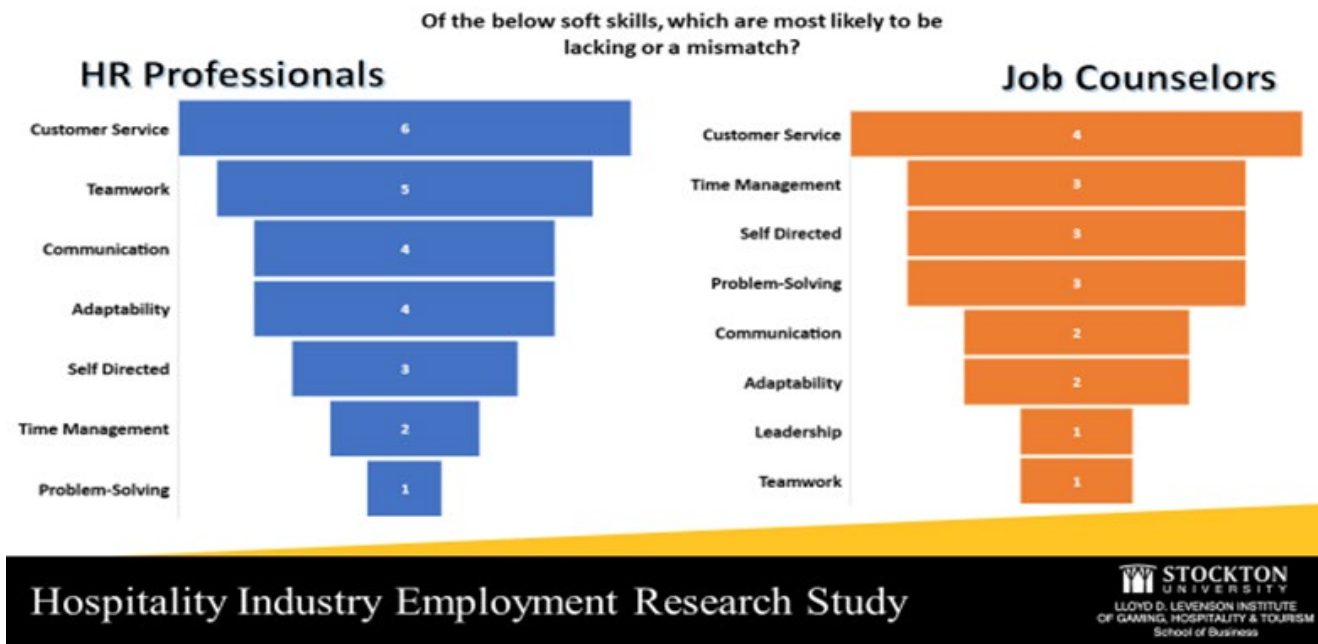


The specialized skills in greatest demand emphasize customer service, scheduling and sales as those skills that are most noted. The first seven skills that are in greatest demand are all related to the hospitality and retail sector. The only notable industry sector skill other than hospitality/retail is healthcare.

### **E. Alignment Between Key Industry Pipelines.**

The two key industry sectors in Atlantic County are hospitality/retail and tourism and Healthcare. Efforts are underway to diversify the industry and economy of the area in order to buffer the impact of a pandemic or economic downturn. The alignment between the two primary industry sectors relates to the two primary

baseline and specialized skills that include communication skills and customer service. Both hospitality and healthcare see these skills as essential to good services. During a recent study of the most important customer skills, completed by Stockton University's Levinson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism, the survey results from employers differed from those of training providers in one significant area. Whereas most training programs focus on the importance of customer service then on work ethic and time management, it appears that employers place greater value on those candidates who can work as part of a team and appear to worry less about their problem-solving ability and time management.



LIGHT Institute, Stockton University 2023

As is readily noticeable, customer service skills are critically important in either industry. Area healthcare employers acknowledge that a good percentage of their hires in recent years have come from the casino industry. It may appear, however, that there needs to be more emphasis on skills related to teamwork, communication and adaptability.

The results of this survey suggest that there should be an increased focus on teamwork and adaptability rather than time management and self-direction. In planning for future contracts, a stronger emphasis will be placed on teamwork.

## **F. Labor Market Trends and Education/Skill Level of the Workforce**

*Regionally*, the population numbers provide a part of the story of labor supply; however, some population groups, especially children and the elderly, may not participate in part or in full within the workforce. Data such as the number of individuals participating in the workforce, the age of the workforce, and the unemployment rate help identify the current and expected future strength of the workforce across the region.

The overall regional civilian labor force is expected to grow by 5.1% (2019-2034) which is less than the growth expected by the state (8.2%). During this timeframe, six of the seven counties are expected to see growth in their labor force. In both population and labor force estimations, Salem County is expected to see declines through the year 2034. During this timeframe, Atlantic, Camden, Burlington and Gloucester counties are expected to see the largest percentage of labor force growth with Cape May County seeing an anticipated decline in the labor force.

One statistic to pay attention to is the number of individuals at or nearing retirement age. Given the large number of the Baby Boomer generation, the upcoming retirement numbers are expected across the nation. The South Jersey Workforce Collaborative is no different. The percentage of the labor force age 55 years or older is expected to decrease by a factor of 8% between 2019 and 2034 (from 26.0% to 24.0% respectively), thereby reflecting a retirement trend among this age cohort. The regional labor force actually declined by approximately 25,000 individuals from 2019 to 2021. This may be due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic and people leaving the workforce or retiring.

Despite the projected decrease in the labor force as a result of the large population of baby boomers who are forecast to leave the workforce, current labor market trends in Atlantic County predict a 20.3% growth in the labor force from 2020 to 2030. The data indicates that hospitality, retail and tourism is still the most prominent industry by far in Atlantic County. As is indicated on CHART 8, Industry projections from 2020 to 2030, the 2030 projections for **accommodation and food services** show a 55% increase in workers, moving from 25,400 in 2020 to 39,500 in 2030. Similarly, the other hospitality, retail and tourism-related industry, **arts, entertainment and recreation**, projects a 51.4% increase from 1,850 to 2,800. **Healthcare and Social Assistance** indicates a 18.9% increase with projections from 2020 to 2030 increasing the workforce from 18,800 to 22,350.

The education associated with many of those positions is limited to no formal education or a high school diploma or its equivalent. The only exception to this education level is for a registered nurse, which requires a bachelor's degree. *Education must be an area of focus over the next four years.* Those occupations associated with science, technology, engineering and math hold the greatest promise for a career that offers a living wage above the state average.

Employers emphasize the importance of strong communication skills and customer service. In nearly any conversation with employers they all emphasize that they are looking for a positive personality who is outgoing, good team-player and a good communicator. They believe that the technical skills can be taught. This practice lends itself well to the use of On-the-Job training as a primary process for developing the needed skills and learning the job.

## **H. Impact of Covid on the Labor Market**

In March of 2020, nearly the entire business world of Atlantic County closed for three months. As is seen in the employment and unemployment charts numbers 1 and 2, on the first pages of this local plan, the pandemic had a devastating effect on the residents of Atlantic County. Although the chart reflects the unemployment rate in October of 2020, the unemployment rate in Atlantic County rose to 34.3% in June of 2020, with the closing of all casinos for the three-month period from March to June.

In 2021 and 2022, the labor market in Atlantic County continued its recovery, but at a slower pace than the industries of its South Jersey neighbors. As is evidenced by the number of first-time unemployment claimants, the initial onslaught of the pandemic had long-lasting effects on primary industries in Atlantic County.

In a report commissioned by the Atlantic County Economic Alliance in May of 2020, assessing the projected economic impact of the pandemic at Atlantic County the Atlantic Cape region, Dr. Richard Perniciaro, Director, *Center for Regional and Business Research* projected the following:

*"The analysis in this study demonstrates that the economic losses will be concentrated in quarters 2 and 3 of 2020, and they will be far more extreme than those of the state and national on a proportional basis as the at-risk industries represent over 50% of GDP in the Atlantic Cape region, 29% at the state level and 18% throughout the nation."\**

Beginning in January of 2022, Atlantic County's unemployment numbers lagged behind other counties beginning the year at 7.5%. Moving into the summer season, however, the workforce continued to grow and showed an unemployment rate below 4.0% for the months of September and October. While this unemployment level was unprecedented, the local businesses continued to express the need for more help.

During the pandemic, the ability to utilize J-1 foreign students was extremely limited due to the new Covid protocols. In 2022, the problems with J-1's continued, but the challenge became finding housing for students from abroad. With the shortage of housing produced by the post-pandemic, many long-time landlords sold rental units to take advantage of the large increase in home values, leaving the casinos and shore businesses without housing for their seasonal staff. The business and education community came together to create housing solutions for some students from Stockton University who agreed to work at the casinos, but the seasonal businesses continued to see staff shortages throughout the 2022 summer season. Moving into the 2023 season, the casinos estimate a continuing need for over 1,000 workers.

**CHART 15**

NEW JERSEY												
LABOR FORCE ESTIMATES* FOR 2022 BY AREA												
* Numbers may not add due to rounding												
COUNTY/LABOR AREA	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC ANN. AV.*
Atlantic City-Hammonton, NJ Metropolitan Statistical Area												
Atlantic County												
Labor Force	124,200	124,200	125,700	128,400	127,700	130,100	130,500	130,900	129,100	130,000	127,900	128,000
Employment	114,800	115,800	118,100	120,000	121,600	123,700	124,000	124,400	124,200	124,900	122,700	122,200
Unemployment	9,400	8,400	7,500	8,400	6,100	6,300	6,500	6,500	4,800	5,100	5,300	5,800
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.5	6.8	6.0	5.1	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.5

**NJDOL Office of Research and Information**

With the increase in minimum wage in New Jersey over the past several years, employers became more competitive in their efforts to recruit talent. In 2021, many employers were offering sign-on and retention bonuses to recruit new workers. Efforts to attract new workers included flexible scheduling and work-at-home opportunities. Businesses have created a greater on-line presence. With the advent of on-line gambling, the casinos have been able to attract a new generation of workers.

With the advent of the Covid crisis, One Stop Career Centers and Workforce Development Boards shifted the bulk of their work to virtual or online services. Outreach, training and interacting was all done online, avoiding any kind of personal interaction.

In Atlantic County, all members of the county labor force returned to office duty, full-time, in mid-June of 2020. All staff were fitted with laptops to interact with customers virtually.

All professional development, case management and contracting was done through downloads, document drop-off and virtual follow-up. While there is a time convenience to holding virtual meetings, a recent University of Washington study reports that analysis of these responses determined that virtual meetings made employees three times less effective at building relationships, because of the lacked opportunity to observe non-verbal cues. Atlantic County is a strong believer in face-to-face communication if at all possible.

Recruiting efforts from the Business Services Representative have also moved to virtual formats, using the online systems for both recruiting and interviewing potential hires.

The healthcare industry in Atlantic County continues to identify staffing needs as a result of turnover and reluctance to become a member of the healthcare talent pool. Identified need for certified nursing assistants, medical assistants, licensed practical nurses and registered nurses continues.

Atlantic County WDB intends to continue to expand its business relationships, focusing its energies, going forward, on the relationships with employers, identifying employer need and creating a talent pipeline, either through OSOS data base analysis, Individual Training Accounts or work-based learning resources. **Going forward, it is Atlantic County's intent to shift half of its WIOA funding to work-based learning contracts.**

## 2) Strategic Priorities

*Atlantic County Workforce Development Board is creating this plan to provide guidance over the next four years for the course and direction of workforce development. Within the priorities will be the planned implementation of policies and procedures for ensuring the goals of this envisioned objective. The focus for these strategies includes targeting 50% of agency resources on employer needs as they relate to job-specific assessment, training and education of qualified employee candidates. Using the accumulated data, area expertise and customer feedback, ACWDB will establish a planning process to address the most noted concerns of the employers and will focus its efforts on addressing identified employer talent needs, emphasizing the development and support of those individuals with barriers to employment.*

### A. Expanding Access to Employment, Training, Education and Supportive Services

ACWDB recognizes the importance of providing training, education and support to One Stop customers and is committed to providing a broad array of services to meet customer interest and need.

\* Perniciaro, Richard, [Assessing the Economic Impact of Covid19 Pandemic on the Economies of Atlantic County, Atlantic City and Cape May County](#), May 2020.

1. Eligibility Assessment- all customers interested in receiving individualized career services must participate in an eligibility assessment, to determine whether or not they can qualify for training services and the associated funding.
2. Academic Assessment- following a determination of eligibility, the customer is then scheduled for an academic evaluation using the CASAS assessment. Depending on the scoring results, the customer will either move forward to training or be referred to academic remediation in order to work to bring up the test scores.

3. **You Science Aptitude Assessment is used to identify the strengths of the individual customer to help them recognize those skills they currently have.**
4. Literacy Services- these services are introduced when there is a need for academic remediation or is interested in pursuing a high school equivalency diploma. These services are provided to customers with scores between 6th and 12th grade level. These services are provided both online and in-person. Literacy services are also provided to customers who score below a sixth-grade level through intergovernmental agreements with Atlantic Cape Community College. The college also provides additional literacy services to ESL and GED preparation through their Title II funding. In addition, ACWDB also provides high-school equivalency testing through the HI Set testing program. Recent indications are that HI Set will be removed as a contractor for high school equivalency and all areas will need to be licenses by Pearson Vue's GED program. ACWDB is in the process of making that transition.
5. Counseling Assessment- upon successful achievement of the required grade level for eligibility for an occupational training account, the employment specialist begins working with the customer to determine how best to assure a successful career opportunity. The employment specialist will discuss current job training opportunities associated with work-based learning as well as occupational training through the private career schools and public education facilities. The employment specialist will evaluate the need for supportive services and provide them as warranted according to local policy.
6. Training Placement - the employment specialist will complete the necessary assessments to justify an occupational training contract or will refer the customer to the job development unit for an OJT or registered apprenticeship placement. Upon award of the ITA grant, the employment specialist will provide support for the customer throughout the duration of training.
7. Follow-up- the employment specialist will continue to follow the customer following the case closure for twelve months making, at a minimum, monthly contacts to support his current career path and offer any additional guidance to assure job continuation.

The WDB is charged with ensuring that universal access to necessary services happens as efficiently and effectively as possible. Using the expertise and resources of the Business Development Subcommittee, the Healthcare Subcommittee and the One-Stop Oversight Committee in conjunction with its One-Stop Partners, the agency will expand and enhance the current workforce system to connect the customers of the One Stop Career Center, including its partners, state employment services, business services, DVR, veteran's services, Job Corps, UI and ex-offender services to identified employer need. It will provide resources to assist the employer, who has an identified talent need, to obtain the necessary skilled workers to address that need.

*In an effort to address customer need, the agency is in the process of proposing to open the offices to later hours during the spring/summer season, offering a larger percentage of the area's population an expanded opportunity to receive services.*

Atlantic County is committed to improving the quality of the area's workforce in order to meet business demand. The WDB will continue its work with business partners to make certain that pre-screened candidates

receive the referrals and access to additional support services they need to be successful. The One-Stop has co-located partners and formal and informal relationships with provider agencies to ensure that the One-Stop customers' needs are addressed. To help build upon current and past successes, the WDB will work to expand existing service delivery strategies focused on:

- Out-of-School Youth- apprenticeships, career pathway guidance, and community learning experiences. Increased emphasis on high school and post-secondary education and pursuit of career pathways that will lead to sustainable, living wage jobs. This expansion will include using funding to develop driver training programs for youth to obtain their driver's license.
- Work in collaboration with partner agencies to develop a comprehensive plan to support public assistance recipients in transitioning from dependence to independence. This will be a strategic plan to create an exit strategy from dependence on public assistance to self-sustaining employment through career opportunities.
- Place an emphasis on the returning citizens to introduce this potential labor force to the employers with identified need.
- Employer-driven training opportunities/collaborations on work-based learning resource offerings and quarterly feedback from employers on program effectiveness.
- Continuing and enhanced communication with other WDB's in the South Jersey Workforce Collaborative Region, including, as is stated in the regional plan, a schedule of quarterly meetings for SJWCR.
- Outreach to neighboring county agencies to collaborate on meeting local and regional business needs.

In addition to these strategies, and to help achieve the mission, vision, and goals identified in this Local Area Plan, the WDB will implement the following strategic priorities over the next four years:

- Expand and refine registered apprentice opportunities for area industry in need of skilled workers
- Market and promote Workforce Development System services appropriately using WIOA funds.
- Expand on the business partners' needs aligned with work-based learning and ITA training
- Increase the number of business relationships using the members of the WDB and partners' business relationships
- Achieve better integration of partnerships with local resources
- Develop and expand working relationships with non-profits and community-based organizations
- Expand working relationships with secondary and post-secondary schools with an emphasis on improving the working relationship with high schools, community college and university.

Working in conjunction with other areas in the region is critical to reaching the full potential of the Atlantic County WDB. Regional coordination of service delivery strategies will allow each area to better prepare the workforce to meet the needs of the region's businesses and will allow each area to better leverage resources through cost sharing strategies. To maximize the positives and help reduce any burdens with regional efforts, Atlantic County will implement formal and Informal cooperative procedures, including:

- Maintain and renew the current MOU with regional partners
- Convene quarterly meetings to keep communication and collaboration ongoing within the region.

- Expand and enhance partnerships with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance and other regional economic partners.
- Continue to grow relationships with regional chambers of commerce as well as the president of the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, to inform and educate chamber members of WDB resources and benefits, as well as benefit from the resources the chamber can offer.
- Review and share Labor Market Information with agency partners including Atlantic County Government, Atlantic County Economic Alliance, Perkins V School Group, Atlantic Cape Community College, Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce and members of the board's business development committee and all members of the WDB

### **B. Ensure and Expand Access to Workforce Development Services that Provide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to the Workforce.**

Atlantic County recognizes the importance of providing services to all populations and has taken numerous steps to engage communities to address diversity, equity and inclusion. Both the local services and the state employment services are cognizant of the importance of providing inclusive services that recognize the diversity of our local population. Employment services has several workers who are bi-lingual and one who is tri-lingual, including the ability to speak Haitian-Creole, a language used frequently by residents of western Atlantic County. The agency recognizes that equity can only be achieved when access barriers are removed, and all customers have similar access to services.

Beginning in the late summer of 2022, the combined resources of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board and career services, in partnership with the state employment services, created a planning strategy to engage community members by going to those communities associated with the Family Success Centers to offer services. In order to address the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, the group conducted a demographic survey at each Family Center to determine what resources would be required to address the cultural, educational, social and language needs of each Family Success Center location. Recognizing that the One Stop Center was still not opened to the public and was inaccessible to many of the community members, the leadership of the One Stop Career Center, in association with the leadership of the Family Success Centers, created a schedule whereby agency representatives, both from the local career services, and the state employment services would schedule times at a total of six different locations in Atlantic County, to meet with customers who were interested in enlisting assistance from workforce development services. The services were provided twice a month in each location, assuring that the required resources identified by the demographic survey, would be available during the scheduled visit time. Since the inception of this program, the One Stop has provided services to 268 customers at these locations. Services range from information and referral to job search, resume building, job matching and training eligibility. The population being served is very diverse. State employment services provided a number of bi-lingual workers to interact with the local population in order to develop relationships and build trust within the communities. Most recently, relationships with Atlantic City communities have strengthened to the point that members of the community are pointing out areas of need to service members.

In early December, two of the communities identified needs for service assistance making a request for classroom training for high school equivalency preparation and English as a Second Language. Through the combined resources and partnership of the Family Success Centers, the local community college, the state

employment services and ACWDB, contracts for these services have been established and are awaiting final authorization. The agencies have established strategies to continue to engage diverse communities within Atlantic City and areas of Atlantic County.

ACWDB recognizes the importance of equity by bringing our services to the local communities using the safe haven of the Family Success Centers. MOUs were created with each of the Family Success Centers to define roles and responsibilities of all parties. The Atlantic County Workforce Development Board holds regular meetings with representatives of the Family Success Centers to evaluate current services and discuss ideas for improving customer access and agency outreach. ACWDB is intent on expanding these efforts over the next four years. In an effort to truly target services to address individualized community need, we will begin developing mechanisms for community feedback so that our services can be guided and directed by voiced community need.

The Pleasantville One-Stop Career Center is comprised of all components of the workforce development system including the WIOA local staff, Wagner-Peyser, DVRS, Adult Education and Literacy, Business Services Center and UI services. During that past two-and-a-half years, many meetings have been held to discuss the building safety and the logistics associated with day-to-day activity. The local manager of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is a member of the workforce development board and regularly attends the WDB disabilities committee meeting. The ACWDB continues discussions to improve the efficiency of service delivery and increase awareness of all partners' actions and responsibilities as they relate to our customers' collective well-being.

The regional plan identified the importance of recognizing the value of the disabled population as part of today's workforce. As is indicated from the regional report, the total population of individuals with a disability in the region is approximately a quarter -million and comprises roughly 13% of the total regional population. This is slightly higher than the statewide total of roughly 11% of the state population identifying as having a disability. Of the prime working-age population (18-64 years of age) approximately 20% have a disability. While disabled persons as a percent of the total regional population has not changed since the 2019 Plan was adopted, the percentage of disabled individuals in the working-aged population has increased. ACWDB is committed to including members with disabilities as part of the expanded workforce that must be considered in the development of the new modern workforce. One of the roles of ACWDB's local employer engagement unit will be to discuss with employers the benefit of utilizing members with disabilities as part of their workforce. In addition, the representatives of the ACWDB Disability Subcommittee will continue to work with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Social Security Administration and members of the ARC to support the continuing placement of workers with disabilities as part of the modern labor pool.

**INDIVIDUALS WITH A DISABILITY POPULATION**

Category	Regional Information			New Jersey		
	Total	With Disability	Percentage	Total	With Disability	Percentage
Under 5 years	99,223	1,362	1.37%	516,200	2,790	0.54%
5 to 17 years	304,586	17,740	5.82%	1,500,779	64,796	4.32%
18 to 34 years	378,504	27,876	7.36%	1,930,460	111,501	5.78%
35 to 64 years	733,470	91,876	12.53%	3,688,990	328,542	8.91%
65 to 74 years	198,450	47,148	23.76%	912,181	180,695	19.81%
75 years and over	127,787	59,618	46.65%	615,030	269,870	43.88%
<b>Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population</b>	<b>1,842,020</b>	<b>245,620</b>	<b>13.33%</b>	<b>9,163,640</b>	<b>958,194</b>	<b>10.46%</b>

*U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey*

**PEOPLE****Health****Atlantic County****New Jersey**

**With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2017-2021**

**9.8%**

**8.7%**

*US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey*

**Assisting Re-Entry Populations**

As is stated in the regional plan, the population of returning citizens offers another resource as part of the labor pool. Within each of the South Jersey Region's localities, there are numerous county, state and federal correctional institutions. Each of the five WDBs will advance communication with these institutions to ensure that individuals re-entering the population have access to job readiness programs, training programs, and other tools to advance their workforce and employment opportunities. These include collaborations with the NJ Department of Corrections "Successful Transition and Re-entry Series," STARS and the various correctional institutions found throughout the region.

In Atlantic County, ACWDB works closely with the New Jersey State Parole Board, Atlantic County Probation, Volunteers of America and the state employment services re-entry specialist to identify and support citizens who are returning from incarceration. ACWDB is intent on providing employment opportunities to those individuals who are interested in pursuing gainful employment. Using NJDOL's weekly on-line job posting report that lists 'justice involved friendly employers' as well as feedback that the agency receives from local employer partners, this organization, in conjunction with its service partners, works diligently to match pre-screened, pre-qualified individuals with interested employers. ACWDB recognizes this labor pool as a valuable resource for employers and is encouraging employers to consider this resource. Additional supports for this customer and the employer include bonding and the use of the Transitional Jobs work-based learning paid work experience for motivated returning citizens.

**In addition, the New Jersey Department of Labor has also provided a justice involved grant for returning citizens that will help them with job preparation and job placement. The grant expectation is for 80% of participants to be placed in employment and 60% to be retained. This program is regionally funded, but Atlantic County has**

recently obtained services from the provider that have been very beneficial to our population. This program has worked in cooperation with the bonding services associated with State Employment Services. This agency has made several requests for service and performance data from NJDOL for this report, but have not received anything at the time of this entry.

### **C. Facilitating the Development of Career Pathways and Co-Enrollment**

Daily internal communication within the One-Stop allows for workforce development service activity to be comprehensive and timely. To access unemployment services, the One-Stop includes either one or two UI clerks, for those customers who are having problems managing their unemployment benefits. Upon scheduling an appointment, customers can have their concerns addressed through a face-to-face conversation with a knowledgeable UI representative. Without the availability of this asset in Pleasantville, the customer would have to travel 60 miles, to Camden County, to meet with a UI clerk. While telephone access is available, many customers have difficulty getting through to a worker.

The ACWD has established relationships with all service components within the One Stop and as a result, has created a working collaboration between all services and resources to address both group and individual needs of the customer, especially as it relates to career pathway development. The One Stop's resources are applied to best suit the individual; beginning the pathway development by conducting a comprehensive assessment of customer need, then evaluating customers' interest and aptitude, and matching it to demand career opportunities. This comprehensive array of services includes:

- Educational Assessment- provided by the local One Stop offices
- High school equivalency testing- provided by the local One Stop Offices
- Tuition Waiver-provided by state employment services
- RESEA- provided by state employment services
- Veteran's Services- provided by state employment services
- Returning Citizen Services- provided by the state employment services
- Services for populations with disabilities- provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Career counseling-provided by both the state employment services and local One Stop offices
- Job Matching- provided by both state employment services and local One Stop offices
- Occupational Training- provided by the local One Stop offices
- Paid and unpaid work experience- provided by the local One Stop offices
- Work-based learning training services- provided by both the local One Stop offices, state employment services, DVR and state business services.

Identified eligible customers are being co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA activities simultaneously. Because of planning discussions and regular joint meetings between state employment services and the local WIOA management staff, the implementation of co-enrollment activities is in place and active. ACWDB will continue to expand its current plans for comprehensive development of career pathways for existing and emerging industries using the combined resources of all agency partners.

The New Jersey Office of WIOA Technical Assistance and Capacity Building provides cross-training to Employment Service and WIOA staff members regarding the services available through the core partner programs include WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, DVRS, and Adult Education, as well as UI and WFNJ. Discussions are underway between state employment services workers and the local One Stop services to provide cross-training

and education to inform and educate all members of the building on the scope of services available within the One Stop/American Job Center location.

Over the past three years, the One-Stop Career Center in Pleasantville has transformed their service delivery model from in-person services to virtual at all sites. Recognizing how important it is to establish and maintain working relationships with customers and partners, ACWDB is committed to a modified service delivery system that will allow for both in-person interaction as well as the opportunity for virtual participation. Since early winter of 2022, the combined staff of the state and local workforce services have worked together to produce a virtual re-employment orientation that is live and interactive. During the early winter months, those customers who had registered through the agency website were presented with a workforce development orientation that outlined the career and training services available at the One Stop Career Center. Attendance at those virtual sessions grew to the point that a second weekly session was needed.

Near the end of January, career services returned to an in-person meeting once a week, while retaining the virtual meeting for a separate session. As a result, the virtual and in-person sessions seem to be consistently attracting between 10 and 12 participants. ACWDB intends to continue this practice while assessing the outcomes of each.

#### **D. Increasing Access through Partners and Programs**

As is reflected in the language of the South Jersey Workforce Development's Regional Plan, the development of strong partner relationships is essential to a robust workforce system. The regional plan focuses on the targets identified below. It is the intent of the ACWDB to use the guidance of the chart on the next page to shape areas of our plan for the next four years. In late 2022, as part of the planned goals and objectives for 2023, the ACWDB established the goal of expanding our industry relationships through targeted strategies to create value in partnering with the workforce development board. Using the outline from the regional plan, ACWDB will evaluate current progress and prioritize next moves.

In reviewing several areas identified in the regional plan, ACWDB has been fortunate in having strong relationships with several providers of pre-apprenticeship programs, both at the high school level and through our private career school partners. The relationships that our partners have with local businesses has enabled the board to develop several apprenticeships with them as well. While apprenticeship discussions with the healthcare industry continue, the agency has established manufacturing apprenticeships with the help of the secondary school's pre-apprenticeship program.

ACWDB continues to work with the Perkins V secondary schools group that is proceeding with identifying applicable curriculum for the Perkins funding. The current plan is to develop student interest in careers related to the area's emerging industries. Examples include information sessions with various school districts through the AvSTEM program offered by the FAA's outreach program and a cybersecurity articulation agreement between the high school in Atlantic City and the Atlantic Cape Community College to prepare students for a career in cybersecurity. ACWDB will offer financial support for the development of cybersecurity apprenticeships in late 2023 or early 2024.

ACWDB maintains strong communication with all workforce partners and has expanded its interactions with many community organizations to establish an integrated system of services for all customers. Beginning with

the relationships maintained with all One Stop partners, ACWDB has created a network of support for all partners to assure maximum customer benefit.

The One Stop Career Center is a self-contained, integrated service provider that combines the services for both state and local recipients. State Employment Services, located on the first floor of the building is continually interacting with the county's career services on the second floor. As new ideas are developed, members of ES staff are engaged and support sharing their talents in service delivery. As an example, career services provides a joint in-person re-employment orientation once a week on the first floor of the building. That joint presentation offers labor exchange services from state ES staff and occupational training from career services staff. In other examples, the state's BSR, the state Employment Services Manager and the ACWDB job development staff combine to form the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team. That team shares employer engagement activities, job orders and job matching resources, in addition to sharing work-based learning resources to the benefit of area employers. They participate as one unit in local business association events sharing the combined resources with all interested employers. This has created good will and trust between the two entities and has benefitted both employers and job candidates.

ACWDB also maintains strong relationships with the membership of the state offices of Unemployment and Vocational Rehabilitation. The strategic plan intends to continue those relationships.

In addition, ACWDB will continue to develop its working relationship with the Egg Harbor Township School District and its pre-apprenticeship program. This program has expanded over the past two years to include additional industry sectors. Most recently, the agency co-sponsored a trade expo with the school district to introduce trade-related career opportunities. It is the intent of the agency to develop relationships with other school districts in Atlantic County in order to create career-focused pathways as an alternative to college. We will establish at least two additional relationships with school districts in the next two years.

ACWDB will also include expansion of its relationships with partners that include the local housing authorities and local veteran's services, connecting the needs of their membership with the needs of local businesses. ACWDB will also expand its outreach to local communities, including members of the Hispanic, Bangladesh and African American communities to create an increased awareness of workforce development resources and target those resources to address community workforce needs.

NJDOL Office of Research and Information



Regional Plan- South Jersey Workforce Collaborative, Triad 2023

ACWDB has placed strategic emphasis in re-constructing the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board to contain committed, decision-making representatives of established and emerging industries within Atlantic County. This partnership will continue in an effort to expand our current industry-sector collaborations and create new relationships between trained and motivated job seekers and talent-starved employers.

Increased emphasis has also been placed on the Out-of-School youth population, using the combined resources of our contracted providers, juvenile justice supports and local non-profit organizations. Recently, ACWDB has begun a working relationship with the Division of Child Permanency and Protection, (DCP&P) to assist the youth that are transitioning out of the foster care system into a supportive environment for career development. The plan is to begin transition planning as part of the foster youth's independent living plan.

**E. Increasing Work-Based Learning Opportunities**

ACWDB is committed to expanding the use of work-based learning as a primary training resource for both training customers and employers. Working to identify specific needs of individual businesses, ACWDB's business engagement unit will meet with employers to assess staffing and talent needs to determine the best

fit of resources and support. Utilizing the combined talents of the state business services representative, the state employment services and the career services employment and training unit, the agency will provide a comprehensive service array designed to respond to industry sector need.

***Over the next four years, ACWDB proposes to move one-half of all WIOA Title I funding for Adult and Dislocated Workers to work-based learning, using the full training repertoire available under work-based learning definitions.***

The relevance of having a direct connection to the employer and employer needs makes the use of work-based learning the most efficient and effective modality to meet both One Stop customer and business needs.

#### On-the-Job Training

With the incorporation of ***On-the-Job Training*** for starting and mid-level skills, ACWDB can offer employers a direct training path to developing new worker talent while on the job. Current expectations for training programs include identifying viable candidates for the training program and establishing interviews with the employer. Workforce development creates the training contracts using the agency OJT contract form prior to the candidate's employment. Once the contract is in place, the trainee begins to work receiving the agreed upon wage. Employment specialist will follow the placement and address any problems that arise. At the conclusion of the contract the employer will continue the trainee's employment with unsubsidized funding.

#### Registered Apprenticeship

ACWDB is currently the only workforce development board in New Jersey that is certified with USDOL as a certified sponsor for registered apprenticeship programming. With the use of ***Registered Apprenticeship*** for advanced level skills, ACWDB offers industry a new and attractive training resource for the employers. It offers the opportunity to provide in-house training, as well as classroom training with credentialing to new and developing talent. With the recent development of pre-apprenticeship programs and the expansion of local business sponsors of registered apprenticeship programs, ACWDB will grow registered apprenticeship programs over the next four years in healthcare, IT, construction, and advanced manufacturing.

#### Incumbent Worker

As employees grow within the business, the owner may see the need to upskill workers in order to stay competitive or to prevent business downsizing and worker layoffs. ***Incumbent Worker Training*** can help offset a percentage of the cost of providing that training. Under current arrangements, the ACWDB is using incumbent worker training to upskills laborers within the business's workforce to CDL drivers. This training program can be offered to employers who are in need of talent in identified skill gaps within their organizations. This work-based learning tool has also been helpful in addressing the healthcare needs for the local hospitals.

#### Transitional Jobs

As employers continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic and struggle to find staff to help with basic services, potential workers with an inconsistent work history or who have been chronically unemployed can now be considered as part of the existing labor pool. In an effort to encourage businesses to consider this component of the workforce, the ***Transitional Jobs*** program allows employers to hire candidates who are chronically unemployed or with an inconsistent work history on a temporary basis. During the time of hire, the

business will receive a 100% wage reimbursement, with the option that at the conclusion of the contracted period, the employer does not have to retain the employee, unless they believe he or she will contribute to the business's bottom line. For the customer, at a minimum, the transitional job experience will provide paid work experience as part of his or her resume.

#### **F. Supporting Multiple Pathways for Young People**

ACWDB has multiple paths for young people, and continues to expand those opportunities. Current pathways for youth and young adults include the following:

- New Jersey Youth Corps-provides a cohort service for youth between the ages of 16 and 25. The primary focus is on attaining the high school diploma, then pursuing vocational training, employment, military or post-secondary education.
- YouthWorks program- this program includes both In-school and Out-of-School youth ages 14 to 24. The youth for these programs are recruited by the contracted providers and are presented with career exploration opportunities and hands-on work experience. Efforts are two-fold. For those who do not have a high school diploma, pursuit of the secondary credential. In-school youth or those who do have a diploma are encouraged to explore possible career pathways and offered support to move forward. Current contracted programs offer services for in-school programming at the Atlantic County Special Services School District; after-school programming for in-school contracted services at the Atlantic City Boys and Girls Club and the Out-of-school youth program with Ideal Institute of Technology.
- Summer Youth Employment- Each summer NJDOL offers the opportunity to compete for funding for paid summer work experience with area employers in a variety of different business and industry locations. In recent years the ACWDB has received funding for these programs and each year the level of participation has increased. In the current year, the agency has been funded to provide services to 200 youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Within the program, ACWDB has also developed relationships with the Leaders in Training (LIT) program, which offers a structured program to 150 at-risk youth, ages 14 to 18, in Atlantic City.
- As has been discussed earlier, ACWDB has established a position within the YouthWorks unit to build relationships with the juvenile court judges for those youth associated with juvenile probation and drug court. We hope to have a similar relationship going into this next four years with family court and DCP&P.

ACWDB recognizes the importance of identifying multiple paths for engaging the youth and young adult populations and is continuing on working to establish relationships with all of them.

#### **G. For LWDAs with Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers**

ACWDB does have a significant population of migrant and seasonal farm workers in Atlantic County, especially on the western edge of the county. Workers in these areas are primarily involved with the fruit growing and harvesting industries, with a primary emphasis on the blueberry crop, but including an extensive collection of crops. During the growing and harvesting season, thousands of migrant and seasonal farm workers occupy the fields of Atlantic County. The Pleasantville One Stop Career Center has a full-time MSFW employee associated

with the state employment services. She is multi-lingual and can speak four languages, including Haitian Creole. This worker is charged with going out to the worksites and providing information on the opportunities offered by the One Stop Career Centers. ACWDB has also developed a close working relationship with the state's contracted MSFW program, Pathstone. The state MSFW worker will work closely with the Pathways program which is currently contracted to provide MSFW services in New Jersey. ACWDB will continue to meet with the state employment services manager to assess MSFW status and other means to improve service delivery to this important population.

The MSFW Outreach Worker will conduct vigorous outreach, in coordination with the ES Manager and other LWD staff, to communicate with the MSFW population, the full range of services available to them (especially those that speak Haitian Creole). Moving forward, the MSFW worker will work closely with Pathstone's contracted services to provide information and services to this population. The MSFW worker recently met with the P.R.A.C and the Hispanic Women's Resource Center who have offices in Hammonton and will be engaging the Spanish-speaking migrant and seasonal farm workers. They have agreed to work with the state's MSFW worker to create 'warm handoffs' for the state services discussions. Once again, the importance of partnering with all groups to the best benefit of all.

Atlantic County's MSFW worker has been a valuable asset to the county's workforce system. While the migrant seasonal farm worker is unique to several counties in New Jersey, the importance of being able to make connections with these workers to inform them of the workforce service opportunities is essential. Although the MSFW worker from 2023 is no longer working with the Pleasantville One Stop, her replacement is meeting the needs of the migrant population.

## II. ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER OPERATIONS

The Atlantic County One Stop Career Center is designed as a single location that provides a full range of workforce development services for its customers. Those services included on the building's first floor are:

- WIOA Title III: Wagner-Peyser
- Business Services
- Job for Veteran's State Grant
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
- WIOA Title IV: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Unemployment Compensation
- Re-entry Employment Opportunities
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program
- Job Corps

Services located on the second floor of the building include:

- Title I: Adult
- Title I: Dislocated Worker
- Title I: Youth
- Work First New Jersey
- New Jersey Youth Corps
- High School Equivalency Testing
- Literacy Services
- ABE Testing (CASAS)
- Job Development
- Monitoring

### **1) One-Stop Service Delivery and Flow**

#### **A. Overview and Integration of Partner Services**

##### *Service Delivery and Referral Processes*

Because of the very close working relationship within the One Stop facility, partnered services are found in multiple aspects of the One Stop Center's service delivery system. The customers who enter the building are provided with immediate guidance from knowledgeable front desk staff who are familiar with the array of services offered at the One Stop Career Center. Customers who begin receiving services on the first floor of the building may be satisfied with the counseling and guidance he or she receives and require no further assistance. If there is an expressed interest in training services, they are referred to the front desk on the second floor, where a worker is standing by to create a scheduled appointment for further discussion with a customer services representative or they will be scheduled for the next planned orientation for re-employment.

Those customers who are participating in RESEA, (Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment) who also express an interest in learning more about training opportunities are referred to the Employment and Training unit on the second floor. (Currently all RESEA sessions are held virtually.) There the assigned customer service representative will conduct a telephone outreach to the individual to ascertain their level of interest in training and explain next steps in the process. Because all registration forms are located on the agency website, [www.learntrainworkac.com](http://www.learntrainworkac.com), customers can go to the website, print out the application and submit it to the One Stop Career Center. A copy of the customer flow chart for the One Stop is found in the attachments.

With the recent award of the Career Services contract to Grant Associates, there has been an increased emphasis on trying to address as many service requirements as possible during the re-employment orientation. This includes having many of the documents completed online, using fillable pdfs for application and submission.

In addition, RESEA has begun co-enrollment of the participating customers, placing them in both Title I and Title III of WIOA.

More recently, the combined resources of the state employment services, and the local one stop staff have established a virtual re-employment orientation to engage customers who have expressed an interest in One Stop services. The customers must first register by going to the agency website, '[learntrainworkac.com](http://learntrainworkac.com)', completing the application and submitting it to the agency. Applicants for the program may also call or send an e-mail making the request. Those individuals will be instructed to complete the online application as soon as possible so that they can participate in the on-line presentation. All invitees must have completed the application and submitted all required documents in order to receive the virtual link for participation. The virtual program is presented live with representation from both state employment services and the local One Stop workers. The live stream allows for customers to interact and raise questions during the presentation. Once the presentation is completed, those customers who are interested will be scheduled for the adult basic education assessment, (CASAS) to determine training readiness. After completion of the CASAS assessment, qualified individuals are referred to an employment specialist for completion of the comprehensive assessment and determination of customer's training interests. Based on customer response, the employment specialist may continue in the preparation for placement in occupational training or, if the candidate expresses an interest in working, he may be referred to an employer, (through the workforce development board's job development unit), who is participating in the agency's work-based learning training program and is looking for additional talent to support his business. Going forward, it will be critical to have the employment and training staff to conduct thorough assessments of the customers to determine how best to help them. Employment and training staff must be cross trained to guide customers to the best path to employment. The targeted intent for the next four years is to identify the skills and aptitudes of workforce customers to match them to the talent needs of local employers as pre-screened, pre-qualified candidates for hire.

While the online orientation continues, the One Stop Career Center staff, workforce development staff and state employment services staff have begun orientations to cross-train workers and increase understanding of the services offered by both state and local One Stop staff.

## **B. Development and Integration of Partner Programs and Services**

The One-Stop Partners have been diligent in bringing together the partners required to facilitate the delivery of a workforce development system of complimentary services. Each partner is asked to participate in professional development trainings held by both local and state agencies to improve operations and coordinate service strategies within the One-Stop System. The partners have realized the commitment of time, personnel and resources they must contribute to the system for its overall success and have willingly done so for more than a decade. Recently, because of very close working relationships, and the impact of the pandemic, ACWDB's workforce partner's relationship has strengthened and the connection to a unified workforce development mission continues to evolve. The mutual needs are identified and addressed on an ongoing basis.

The One-Stop works in conjunction with partner agencies to establish a system where job seekers and employers have access to core services such as labor market data, self-directed services, RESEA, consultation and guidance and individualized services such as job training, customized training grants and literacy services to assist individuals that experience barriers to employment. The recent sharing of labor market information among partners, colleagues and board members will continue to inform and empower the partner programs and services. Most recently, the emphasis on STEM education is a universal focus for educators, businesses and workforce professionals. Leaders within the Atlantic County Economic Alliance have developed working relationships with several of the local school districts, including the Atlantic County Institute of Technology and Egg Harbor Township High School. They have established educational relationships with information and education staff associated with the William F. Hughes FAA Tech Center, to encourage middle school and secondary students to consider the value of STEM education in pursuing these highly technical and challenging career opportunities located in Atlantic County. STEM education is also supported as part of the Atlantic City High School's program to pursue a career in cyber-security.

Universal access to core services is available to any individual that enters the One-Stop System, and there is no eligibility requirement for these services. Core services will be comprised of registration, intake, orientation, disbursement of labor market information and career information, eligibility determination for training services, referral to intensive services, and retention/follow-up services. Self-directed assistance, such as access to public computers and resources is also considered a core service. Universal access is further reinforced by being able to access resources and services online as well as in person. The state employment services offers the re-employment orientation both virtually and in-person, depending on customer preference.

One-Stop training services include: occupational skills training, workplace readiness, adult education, career advancement training, job matching and job placement and retention, and follow-up services. Training is delivered through an individual training account (ITA) and numerous work-based learning modalities, including the four work-based learning training components; on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, registered apprenticeship and transitional jobs. Going forward into the next four years, the agency services will prioritize training that is tied directly to identified employer need.

Customers seeking assistance for career occupational guidance, help with a resume, job search skills, or any other employment assistance may meet with an Employment Counselor for individual assistance. Assessment and employment status are discussed as well as present and future career employment options. Counselors will inform customers of the importance of obtaining an industry-valued credential as part of their training program and emphasize the added benefits that this certification offers. The counselors will encourage customers interested in training to review the list of industry-valued credentials found on the New Jersey Job Source website. Counselors develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) with the customer to outline the customer's path for future employment. With the assistance of state employment services, the agency provides educational help in the form of Tuition Free Waiver for eligible customers seeking additional college courses or a referral to other One-Stop services, such as literacy and job training. There are many specialized programs offered in the One-Stops to improve the likelihood of securing meaningful and sustainable employment.

### C. Client Voice

ACWDB has and will continue to have a variety of survey methods for receiving customer input on the value of One Stop services, customer service, timeliness of service receipt and level of customer satisfaction. With limited access to customers in the past recent months, these surveys have been less frequent, and results have not been reviewed. As we move forward, however, customer satisfaction and input must be a major factor in shaping the career services over the next four years. To that end, ACWDB will re-establish the survey system to receive customer feedback on all aspects of the services they received. In addition, the agency is intent on working to develop bi-annual focus groups using both customers and contracted service providers to gain input and guide future policy decisions.

**With the introduction of contracted career services, the use of customer satisfaction surveys has become a robust part of the career services offerings. Survey include QR codes, emailed flyers and texting services for customer input.**

The Board has recently introduced three youth service recipients to be part of the Youth Investment Council, ACWDB's subcommittee for youth services. Service delivery at the One Stop Career Center can be adjusted based on the customer satisfaction responses. ACWDB is looking forward to the comments of service consumers, including these youth, to help shape and guide service delivery for customers.

**Currently, there are four youth as members of the Youth Investment Council. (A name change to 'YES' Youth Engagement Services, is being suggested, but the change has to be approved by the board.)**

## 2) Operational Priorities

### A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities

The WDB is charged with the main responsibility of ensuring that universal access to necessary services happens as efficiently and effectively as possible. There is cross membership communication between the One-Stop Oversight Committee and One-Stop Partners and WDB so that relevant issues are brought to appropriate venues. With that said, the WDB expects that these communication channels and relationships will continue and strengthen over time. During the most recent review of the One Stop Certification process, which is required every two years, the ACWDB Disability Subcommittee and One Stop Oversight Committee conducted a review of the documents that comprise the One Stop Certification. The approval by the SETC has certified the Pleasantville One Stop Career Center for the next two years. (*One Stop Certification in attachments*)

The WDB has worked hard with its One-Stop System and OS partners to make certain that customers receive the referrals and access to additional support services they need to be successful. Each career center has co-located partners and formal and informal relationships with provider agencies to ensure that the One-Stop customers' needs are addressed. As has been stated, the primary mission is to focus agency efforts on meeting identified industry needs. Once again, the close relationships between state and local services has created a comprehensive network of services that can address most, if not all of the employer's identified needs. Utilizing the training resources of the local workforce development career services and the state employment services' focused assistance, ACWDB has, and will continue to develop a comprehensive workforce services array to meet employer and customer need.

Atlantic County Office of Workforce Development is the government agency responsible for providing training grants for eligible customers who are pursuing career or employment-based occupational training and credentialing. Private Career Schools that wish to perform services on behalf of Atlantic County Government are required to complete the 'pay to play' documentation and acknowledge review of the training provider's manual.

In the current day workforce development environment, adult and dislocated worker customers who are interested in pursuing occupational or work-based learning employment and training opportunities do so by engaging in either a virtual orientation or a face-to-face information session on the first floor of the One Stop Career Center. Once that is completed, they are assessed for program eligibility. If customers are determined to be eligible for WIOA funding for training services, the next step is to assess the ability to be successful in the training curriculum.

## **B. Use of Training Contracts and Individual Training Accounts**

Prior to the 2021 program year, ACWDB placed the priority of training services on the use of Individual Training Accounts, (ITA) for occupational training. The primary objective for many workforce customers, and a primary focus of prior local plans, was to obtain the industry valued credential to make customers more marketable in their chosen career field. The problems associated with the use of Individual Training Accounts was the lack of employment at the conclusion of the training program. Over the years that ACWDB has placed the majority of all training activity with the ITA contract, the average percentage of customers who have been employed, even eighteen months after training completion is less than 50%. Without the direct connection to identified employer need, the likelihood of job placement drops significantly.

In the summer of 2021, ACWDB's use of training contracts shifted to On-the-Job Training contracts, because of the direct connection to identified employer need. With the use of employer engagement, ACWDB has begun to develop working relationships with area industry and will now pursue training based on the needs of business, using either occupational training and ITA contracts or work-based learning and the use of On-the-Job training.

The new objective for ITA contracts is to have the training need defined by the employer, with the subsequent assistance of the employer in finding potential eligible candidates who are interested in pursuing a training grant. Working in this fashion, eligible customers are placed into training that is associated with a specific employer's identified need with the intent of providing specified training and the appropriate credentialing, to meet the employer's identified need. In this fashion, employers are receiving trained individuals who are committed to the employer, and who have the requisite skills to benefit the employer's bottom line.

ACWDB will make efforts to connect private career schools and educational institutions that provide occupational training to employers who have expressed a need for trained individuals. Whether the employer identifies the candidate, or the agency identifies the candidate, all will be evaluated for eligibility and given agency assessments then complete the required documents, prior to receiving a training contract. Because the training need has been identified by an employer, career services processes will be prioritized so that employer needs can be met and the ACWDB can be established as a primary referral source for the employer, rather than having customer interest determine training without the support of an employer.

An additional area of concern and a focused area for the duration of this strategic plan is the examination of agency efficiency in developing Individual Training Accounts for customers. Currently, the average length of time for completion of an ITA is approximately 6 to 8 weeks if the customer is motivated and follows through with all the documentation and activity requirements. ACWDB will be evaluating the process to see how the duration can be improved to move the customer to training more quickly.

Recent additional consideration for training and employment connect the ITAs to the employer through the use of an On-the-Job or other work-based training contract when the employer requires new hires to follow specific training practices.

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

The WDB is mindful of the requirements to follow prioritization policies for those participants that are designated as public assistance recipients, low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Although the WDB has not experienced the need to establish waiting lists for services over the past several years, it is prepared to establish a prioritized list for those identified customers, if and when that time might arrive. With the current unemployment rate at 4.5%, however, ACWDB does not anticipate being overwhelmed by service requests in the next several years. In the event that such a scenario occurs, the ACWDB will consider the relevant needs and characteristics, and the size of the population when determining the number of individuals that should be served through funding.

Priorities reflect demographics of the local area and target occupational areas that encompass employer needs and expectations. ACWDB is committed to achieving its WIOA training goals. Based on those goals and subsequent analysis of individual and employer needs and the current system's capacities to meet those needs, the Board has placed a priority on low-income adults, dislocated workers, Veterans, the long term unemployed and low income, out-of-school youth residing in Atlantic County. In recent times, the Board has also recognized as a priority population, those customers who are working two or more part-time jobs to make ends meet.

Atlantic County follows New Jersey SETC policy and NJDOL procedures on priority of service for veterans and other targeted populations. This Policy was updated in New Jersey Workforce Innovation Notice 11-16(A): Priority of Service under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I programs, dated October 25, 2016.

Atlantic County residents are given priority over Out of County residents, however, ACWDB currently has sufficient funding to provide services for all eligible customers interested in workforce development training services. With the new WIOA focus on work-based learning and employer-driven demand occupational training, we will prioritize our funds in the local employer demand occupational skills and trainings.

#### **D. Policies and Practices for Veterans/Priority of Service**

Priority of Service, as defined in WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E) and associated Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 3-15, is recognized and implemented as part of the One Stop procedure. The Atlantic County WDB has always placed a priority on service provision for veterans and their spouses, through the use of the integrated front desk staff and orientation screening to identify those customers that are designated as priorities. The veteran's customer flow process addresses both those individuals that are job ready and those that have barriers to employment. All customers who identify themselves as a veteran complete the veteran's assessment form as part of the intake and orientation process. The DVOP (Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program) representative works with veterans who are disabled and not currently job ready. The DVOP provides individualized services that assist the customer in removing the barrier and establishing job readiness. Local processes are designed and informed that the 18–24-year-old veteran and the Vietnam era veterans are to be referred to the DVOPs, as is denoted in TEGL 20-13 Change 2. DVOPs are funded under the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). All other veteran's will participate in One Stop services, acknowledging their priority of service status within the workforce development system. The two priority populations are identified during the weekly re-employment orientation sessions, RESEA sessions and individual customer interviews, using the *Barriers to Employment-Self Assessment for Veterans and Eligible Spouses of Veterans*.

The LVER (Local Veteran's Employment Representative) works with designated veterans who are job ready to identify appropriate job placements. The LVER can receive referrals from any employment specialist who has identified a veteran who is job ready. The LVER also is responsible for identifying and supporting employers who have expressed an interest in hiring veterans. In Atlantic County there is a close relationship between the LVER and the local BSR (Business Services Representative). Additional efforts to support veterans in policy and practice include building relationships with the local county veteran's affairs officer and including him in the e-mail blasts for job notifications, especially those notices that are intended to attract veterans first. The local DVOPs have developed strong relationships with the local veteran's services for the disabled, as well as the county veteran's affairs offices. Representatives of the local One Stop Career Center continue to forward the online job posting spreadsheets from NJDOL to the non-profit veterans' affairs organization and the Atlantic County Veterans Affairs organization.

#### **E. Youth Workforce Development Activities**

The Atlantic County Workforce Development Board has made the expansion of youth-centered services a priority for the present and future services provided by the board. Recognizing that the success of Atlantic County is directly tied to how well the next generation is prepared to support the industry and economic changes within the county, is a key factor for a favorable outcome. In an effort to engage county youth the ACWDB has and will continue to enact the following:

- a) Recruit and engage youth to participate in the Youth Investment Council, a mandatory subcommittee of the ACWDB. Efforts are currently underway to include three youth representatives as members of the

subcommittee. It is important to include the youth consumers of services in order to receive customer feedback on service effectiveness, as well as feedback on how to improve the services that are currently offered. The addition of youth customers to this subcommittee will aid membership in how best to support the youthful consumers of agency services. At the same time, it will offer a perspective that heretofore was not available.

- b) Develop relationships with community-based non-profit organizations who serve youth and young adults in Atlantic County. ACWDB has established a working relationship with the Leaders in Training (LIT) program to support activities associated with the Summer Youth Employment Program. This program serves at risk youth in Atlantic City and offers year-round structure for youth between the ages of 14 and 18. They have a very high level of success while the youth are in the program but need some assistance when the youth transition to adulthood and leave the program. ACWDB will partner with them to provide stipends for 100 youth involved with the summer program this year. ~~Going forward, ACWDB will continue working with LIT to provide job matching and occupational training opportunities for those youth who are transitioning out of the program.~~ As of the time of this update, the LIT program is no longer in operation. During the most recent summer youth program, the program engaged Atlantic City Government to provide over 100 youth for the program.
- c) Continue to develop supports and service relationships with the Family Success Centers to connect workforce services with community members by providing services at the Family Success Center location.
- d) Continue to build on present relationships with the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) to educate the staff and leadership of the child protection agency to the services that are available to youth and young adults. Using the adolescent unit case workers to help plan transition services for those youth placed out of the home who will be leaving the foster care system when they turn 18. Working with the adolescent unit to incorporate WIOA youth services into the independent living plan for those youth that are transitioning out of foster care. Developing relationships between the One Stop Employment Specialists associated with adult, dislocated worker and youth services to improve educational awareness of mutual benefit.

## **F. Integration of Technology and Data for Support of Intake and Case Management**

ACWDB is fortunate to have full access to the AOSOS data-base system and its crystal reports so that there is an ongoing analysis of career services for adult, dislocated worker and youth customers. These reports provide detailed records of the customers served by employment specialist, those that have received training contracts and those that have or have not completed the training program and/or received an industry-valued credential. This data analysis is also very helpful when evaluating agency performance as it relates to the state's performance requirements established for each local area. Quarterly reports from the Future Works reporting system provide up-to-date performance reports for all federally mandated performance benchmarks. Using these results with the support of the crystal reports, agency MIS can identify the employment specialist that is specifically tied to the customer or customers in question. Through the use of case management activities, all performance activities can be monitored closely, and errors and omissions can be addressed.

It is a monthly practice of ACWDB to review current performance standing and analyze numerator and denominator outcomes to evaluate current performance and determine the corrective course of action for

bringing performance into compliance when it is not. This practice is planned to continue over the next four years.

With the introduction of the contracted services, Salesforce data systems have been added to our data tracking and performance assessment. In addition, the state has begun to provide data reports on various aspects of workforce development activities. All of these reports are beneficial in monitoring agency performance.

### **G. Lessons learned from Covid-19**

With the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020, the career services component of the ACWDB nearly vanished as a resource for the adult, dislocated worker and youth populations of Atlantic County. With the closing of all casinos and most businesses during the following three months of 2020, most training facilities temporarily closed their doors while they attempted to make the shift to virtual instruction. At the same time, ACWDB began to focus its energy and resources on the development of video conferencing, not only to engage customers, but to continue relationships with partners. By June of 2020, the agency had created a medium to address segments of the population through video conferencing. Simultaneously, the agency's website became the primary resource for information, applications and feedback for current services. Training customers could download and complete the online application, then could either scan it and send it to the agency via employment specialist e-mail or they could bring it to the drop-box in the building. Neither of these methods were ideal.

As time and methodology progressed ACWDB became more experienced in the use of virtual services. The agency began to employ regular use of video calls for customer eligibility assessments and counseling sessions, but the lag time between appointments continued to be a challenge. In the latter part of 2022, the eligibility unit of career services employment and training division began a live virtual re-employment orientation to inform interested customers about the training opportunities offered by the One Stop. These offerings consistently have 10 to 12 attendees, but the follow-up actions from customers to pursue next steps were limited. In January of 2023, ACWDB in cooperation with the state employment services began to deploy an in-person re-employment orientation once a week. This serves to let customers know that the offices are opened and tends to be more effective in building relationships with the customers that result in the customers completing the next steps.

This is not the case, however, for the Work First New Jersey customers. Because many Work First New Jersey Customers have limited access to the computers and internet, ACWDB's efforts to engage this population have been very limited. Further compounding the issue, is the lack of mandates for participation in work activities. Because of these changes, ACWDB is exploring different methods to attract TANF, GA and SNAP recipients.

### **3) Service Expansion and Accessibility in One Stop Career Centers**

*ACWDB is intent on expanding services to all residents of the county. During the past three years, many of the workforce development services have been limited to online services. Even when the offices opened to the public, (ACWDB opened to in-person services on July 7, 2022, state employment services opened to in-person services by appointment in the fall of 2022, then full in-person services in early 2023) there continued to be confusion because unemployment services, while in person, continue to be by appointment only. All services are now available in person currently.*

## A. Use of Technology

ACWDB has shifted much of its services to a virtual platform as a result of the pandemic. All employment specialists and case managers now have access to laptops with video conferencing abilities. The agency has five administrative licenses for the Webex system and these licenses are used daily to schedule appointments online with customers interested in pursuing occupational training contracts. **Newly developed services such as Microsoft TEAMS, adds another system for scheduling virtual meetings.**

The employment and training unit, in collaboration with the state employment services counselors and the employment and service manager, have created a live virtual re-employment orientation for interested customers. This orientation is held once a week and includes customers who have completed the online registration form found on the agency website. This orientation has been valuable in building customer interaction because of the convenience of the process.

ACWDB has also purchased a transcription service that allows the program to transcribe recorded virtual meetings. The transcription process has been very helpful in obtaining accurate records of important meeting information. In addition, those members of the meeting who were unable to attend the meeting can receive a copy of the recording to review the discussion.

ACWDB has also evaluated the use of Docu-sign as an alternative to in person signatures. The agency has yet to subscribe to the program. **In 2024, the workforce development board purchased a texting service from 'Engage By Cell' to provide notifications, additional avenues for applications, survey completion and service reminders for career services, literacy and Work First New Jersey customers.**

Going forward, ACWDB will continue to utilize available technology, but will also need to determine how best to utilize the available and newly developed technology, with an eye on providing services to all members of the community, both those that are technologically competent and those that are not. The agency will continue to support a hybrid platform for service delivery, offering both online and in-person services.

## B. Physical and Programmatic Accessibility

ACWDB recognizes the importance of building workforce development programs that offer a broad array of opportunities to access services. The Pleasantville One Stop Career Center is the physical location of Atlantic County's workforce development services. All of the services described on page 26 can be found in the One Stop Career Center. Services are accessible to all at this location. The One Stop Career has completed the One Stop certification process that includes The One Stop Career Center is located a block and a half from the New Jersey Transit bus stop so there is ready access to public transportation. In addition, for those public assistance recipients that are participating in work activity programs and make the effort to attend scheduled appointments at the One Stop Career Center, the agency will provide bus passes to get them back home.

In an effort to improve accessibility, based on customer response and the inability of certain members of the customer service population to participate in services because of business hours, ACWDB is currently exploring the possibility of extending office hours to 6 pm from April to the end of September, in order to provide more opportunities for customers to engage in literacy testing, high school equivalency testing and training contract development. **This practice was not established.**

ACWDB recognizes the importance of getting services to members of the community. After a great deal of discussion with partners and colleagues, the workforce development board staff worked with the leadership of local Family Success Centers and the AtlantiCare Health plex in Atlantic City, to create satellite locations in six different locations within the county. ACWDB established an MOU with the organizations responsible for the operations of the Family Success Centers in the fall of 2022. The MOU defined the responsibilities of the agency and the Family Success Centers. Using the combined resources of the county welfare administration, the state employment services and the local office of workforce development, agency services have been offered at the Family Success Center locations. The group reviews service progress at the satellite offices on a quarterly basis. ACWDB, in collaboration with its partners, will continue to provide services and build relationships with community members within their communities.

### **C. Specialized Programs and Services**

While the pandemic has limited access to services within the One Stop Career Center, the leadership and staff of the One Stop used the time to develop new and creative avenues to connect to workforce development customers. Using the combined resources of the agencies, the Workforce Development team has created new programs that include community outreach to engage community residents. With the events of the last three years limiting access to the workforce development services. The agency developed a strategic plan to engage community members by going to the community, participating in scheduled appointments established by family success center members. As a team, the members have begun participating in outreach events at numerous community events throughout the county. We intend to continue our presence in the community through outsourcing at the community-based organizations.

As an agency, ACWDB is also intent on creating a structure to address identified industry need through an industry sector approach, positioning workforce development staff who are knowledgeable about the education and training needs of individual industry sectors. In this manner, resources will be more efficient in providing training services to customers who have been identified with attributes affiliated with the industry sector.

### **D. Materials for Individuals with Disabilities**

ACWDB has a cooperative agreement with the local New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NJDVRS) in Atlantic County to administer and carry out services under Title I. NJDVRS defines an individual with a disability as having any physical or mental impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment may qualify an individual for vocational rehabilitation services. The following programs and services are provided under Title I by DVRS to individuals meeting the defined eligibility:

- A. Physical Restoration - Equipment or therapies which improve physical or cognitive functioning so that a person is able to work; examples could be physical, occupational, or speech therapy; cognitive therapy which includes those modalities; prosthetics or orthotics such as artificial limbs, braces, special shoes, hearing aids, and eyeglasses (in some instances)
- B. Supported Employment - Through referral to an SE provider, one-on-one assistance in job searching, interviewing, applying for jobs; followed by coaching on the job to facilitate learning job duties and adjusting to the work environment; followed by periodic follow-up to ensure job retention.
- C. Emotional Restoration Services – Short-term individual, group or other types of counseling to reduce symptoms of mental health problems and improve work-tolerance and the ability to get and keep a job.
- D. Mobility Equipment

- E. Driver Training - Assessment of driving ability and equipment needed to drive safely; assistance in purchasing driver training lessons if needed to reach a specific work goal.
- F. Vehicle Modification
- G. Home Modifications, if needed to reach a specific work goal.

The membership of the ACWDB Disabilities Subcommittee have been working to understand the requirements and earning limitations for customers with disabilities when considering full and part-time employment. Efforts are underway to create an employer-oriented program to guide them on how best to manage the work hours of an employee with disabilities. This program will be operated through the employer engagement unit. Once again recognizing the staffing challenges that businesses currently face, the counsel and encouragement of the employer-engagement unit and the state's business service representative to consider the benefits of more flexible hours to provide employment opportunities for the disabled population will pay significant benefits in employee reliability and loyalty to the employer.

Recent Disability Committee projects involve the development of a video to increase public awareness of the customers with abilities and dispel the myths associated with their ability to work. In addition, the subcommittee has also made its first attempt to hold disability-focused job fairs with several of the casinos.

### **E. Staff Training and Support**

ACWDB is committed to the professional development of all staff and management at the One Stop Career Center. Those trainings, provided by the GSETA Institute and Workforce 180, have included communication skills, dealing with the difficult customer, how to be efficient and manage your time, preventing burn-out, case management skills and an overview of work-based learning. Management staff have access to leadership training provided by NaCo's professional development academy, in addition to leadership skills provided through the county's management programs and the GSETA Institute's management offerings.

During the prior year and most recent program year, nearly all agency staff participated in the virtual GSETA Conference established by the leadership of GSETA.

Staff and supervisors go to a number of regional conferences, attend local training workshops (both multi-day courses and single-session workshops), take online courses, and participate in other continuous improvement and professional development activities. This is supported through the use of the 1% of Adult and Dislocated Worker funding required by the New Jersey Department of Labor.

Staff and management have begun regular attendance at the Garden State Employment and Training Association's Annual Conference in Atlantic City. Staff also have the opportunity to participate in trainings provided by the GSETA Institute.

### **F. Provision of Individualized Assessment Services**

ACWDB currently uses the CASAS educational assessment as a basic academic assessment to approximate the academic aptitude of the training candidate. The CASAS assessment is used to determine whether or not the customer is qualified for specific occupational training contracts. This is an objective assessment of customer abilities, and it is the only objective assessment currently available. All other assessments rely on subjective responses from the customers themselves during the counseling discussions and the development of the comprehensive assessment and the individual employment plan.

The agency is intent on acquiring and applying an assessment tool that not only analyzes areas of interest, but also assesses individual aptitudes for skill matching. For several current competitive contracts, the agency requires use of the Career One Stop Interest Tool, offered by the US Department of Labor, however the resource does not offer an aptitude assessment and relies on the input of the customer for the subjective determination. When the aptitude assessment is added to the academic assessment, ACWDB hopes to obtain a more defined picture of the path to success for the customer.

One of the aptitude assessment tools that the agency is currently evaluating is the YouScience tool which many middle and high schools are currently using around the country. **Workforce Development has implemented the YouScience aptitude assessment in several of aspects of our services. Those include the adult and dislocated worker as well as the Work First New Jersey customer. In addition, YouScience has been employed by both the In School and Out-of-School Youth Programs.**

## **G. Detailed Partnership and Service Integration**

For ACWDB, the next four years will focus on relationship development with service and business partners in an effort to have a universal support to meet the combined workforce needs of the customers and employers of Atlantic County and the South Jersey Workforce Collaborative.

### *1. Relevant Secondary and Postsecondary Programs*

Over the past three years, ACWDB has begun to develop working relationships with the secondary schools of Atlantic County. This is an area that will continue to strengthen over the next four years as the board and its services work to connect students and employers through the opportunities afforded by current and planned secondary programs. Current school district work-based learning programs with industry partners, including Egg Harbor Township School's PACE and Youth Transition to Work grants as well as programs associated with the Atlantic County Institute of Technology, offer career opportunities for secondary students to explore new jobs that they had not considered before. As an example, EHT's PACE program resulted in six apprentices working as marine mechanics at the Viking Boat manufacturer and the South Jersey Yacht boat sales businesses. Two students were involved with the local utility authority and attracted attention because of their computer skills.

The ACWDB has also been involved in Perkins V planning discussions and as a result has begun to connect to other school district key personnel to develop relationships that will continue to inform schools of the value that workforce development can provide for them.

It is the intent of the ACWDB to continue to build on these relationships and mutual understanding of the services and benefits for all.

### *2. Supportive Service Partners*

ACWDB relies on many of its supportive services partners to assist customers who are intent on gainful employment but need a little extra help to be successful. With the help of Rutgers Southern Regional Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (Rutgers Southern Regional CCR&R) many of the customers who are receiving public assistance receive childcare support while they are in work activities or working. This service is essential to the successful transition of the Work First New Jersey population. Housing supports are also essential

partners to the successful transition. With the challenges the current housing market poses for much of the lower income customers, the housing authority offers a vital support to those customers who are planning to transition from dependence to independence.

ACWDB recently created additional support policies for those customers who received occupational training grants. Because of the high cost of gasoline and automobile repair, the agency approved through board policy an additional transportation support up to \$400 per month, providing the trainee can verify they are attending the program (90% attendance) and can document any other income that they are earning. This has enabled grant awardees to consider programs outside of the county for training opportunities.

Going forward, ACWDB realizes that many opportunities to gain new career paths depend on reliable transportation to get to the work location. This is especially true with anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the trade unions. With the advent of the Off-Shore Wind industry, the trades are actively recruiting workforce to meet those labor demands. In an effort to assist interested work candidates, the agency will explore two areas that will support transportation efforts:

- a). Many of the candidates for the trades do not have reliable transportation to get to the work site. Some have had a license but lost it as a result of significant fines. The fines must be paid before the license can be restored. Currently and for the next four years, the agency will develop processes to assist these candidates in paying their fines so that their license can be restored.
- b). The agency is also exploring a driver's training support to prepare candidates for responsible operation of a motor vehicle and the opportunity to obtain a driver's license. This could open other doors to jobs within the trades and the ability to obtain a CDL license, which is a requirement with many of the trades as well.
- c). The agency will also be exploring avenues to assist candidates in obtaining a vehicle that can provide reliable transportation to get them to the work site.

If these objectives can be accomplished, the candidates has a much better chance of obtaining employment and a career opportunity in the trades.

As we proceed into the next four years, ACWDB will continually monitor the need for program supports to assure the best chance of success for all customers.

### 3. *State Employment Services*

State Employment Services is primarily responsible for labor exchange services, provision of the RESEA program, Jersey Job Clubs job readiness training and job matching services. During the pandemic, many of the state workers worked from home. Although activity levels for all were reduced, the employment services manager associated with the Pleasantville Office continued to maintain regular contact with ACWDB either in person or virtually. While many of his colleagues elected to work from home, the local ES manager decided to return to the office, and many of his workers followed him back.

ACWDB is very fortunate to have state partners who have the same mission, vision and commitment to our customers. Whether that customer is the unemployed worker or the business owner looking for assistance with staffing and talent acquisition, state employment services, including the state OJT representative, the Business Services Representative (BSR), the Disabled Veteran's Outreach representative, the ex-offender representative and any of the counselors, all are focused on the same purpose of providing services and resources that will

address the needs of the customer before them. For at least the past four to five years, the state employment services have truly been an essential partner of ACWDB.

Recognizing the value of maintaining close relationships between the state and local workforce systems, state employment services is and will continue to be an effective, vital component of the workforce system. In an effort to describe just how involved employment services is, ACWDB provides the following examples of joint projects that will continue through the next four years and beyond, thanks to the relationship that has been established:

1. Summer of 2020, the local BSR held an in-person recruiting event with the help of the local workforce board, at a location outside of the One Stop Career Center. As a result of that event, forty-two people were interviewed and nearly all of them gained employment. Planned joint recruitment for local employers.
2. From 2020 to present day, the local One Stop Career Center receives training referrals from each virtual RESEA session. Continued training referrals.
3. The employment services manager and the BSR are part of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team. The team participates as a whole in any events or interests that involve employer engagement. **Despite numerous attempts to obtain a new BSR for the Atlantic County office, Atlantic County remains without an employee in that position.**
4. Employment services is involved in the planning and development of all employment and training outreach programs; most recently, the joint efforts of the state employment services and the local One Stop services to provide services to community members within their communities through the Family Success Center, have been a tremendous success. As a result of community engagement and the use of bi-lingual staff from employment services, the community members have begun to trust the staff, expressed interest in other program offerings and have obtained more than 30 jobs for community members. **State Employment Services continues to hold bi-monthly meetings at the Family Success Centers located in Atlantic City, New Jersey.**
5. Employment services also worked with the One Stop employment and training leadership to establish a virtual re-employment orientation, which was held once a week during the late summer and early fall, but then moved to twice a week because of demand. Recently, ACWDB and ES have re-established the in-person re-employment orientation once a week but maintain the virtual orientation.

ACWDB looks forward to continuing this strong working relationship for the next four years and well beyond.

#### *4. Title II, Adult Education and Literacy*

The Atlantic Cape Community College is ACWDB's Title II partner for AEFLA and other literacy services. The agency relies on Atlantic Cape for literacy services for the English Language learners as well as those customers who are pursuing the high school equivalency diploma. Atlantic Cape is a trusted partner of the ACWDB and has maintained close communication with this entity for a very long time. ACWDB not only relies on Atlantic Cape for the ESL and high school equivalency preparation, but we have also established contracted services for the lower-level adult basic education customers who need additional assistance to improve their academic standing. These classes target those customers who have scored below a sixth-grade level on the CASAS assessment and are in need of some small group support for academic remediation. The agency also partners

with Atlantic Cape to provide these services to the Work First New Jersey customers who are interested in improving their job opportunities.

More recently, ACWDB just completed an inter-governmental agreement to provide literacy education for two separate groups associated with two of the Family Success Centers located in Atlantic City. One group will receive assistance in preparing for the high school equivalency diploma and the other will have two classes established for ESL education. ( In earlier conversations with Atlantic Cape, ACWDB had discussed the ability to use Title II funding for these services, but limited funding and rigorous documentation requirements made it unlikely that these efforts would be successful.) The relationship between Atlantic Cape and ACWDB is viewed by members of the NJDOL Title II program as a best practice within the state. ACWDB intend to continue this relationship and build upon it for the next four years. **ACWDB and Atlantic Cape continue to provide literacy services through an intergovernmental agreement targeting those customers who are scoring between and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade level on the CASAS and are eligible either through Title I of WIOA or WFNJ.**

##### *5. Statewide Rapid Response Activities*

The state's Rapid Response Team provides appropriate information, referrals, and counseling to workers who are subject to plant closings or mass layoffs, and, when applicable, will have an initial meeting with employers who are planning a layoff event. The state's Rapid Response Team will present information to the affected workforce that explains Unemployment Insurance, Re-employment Services, Training Assistance, and additional services and resources available.

The *WARN* notices come to the WDB Executive Director. The WDB Executive Director shares the information with the Full Board as well as the outcome of the Rapid Response sessions. The Business Development Committee will help to assist with a plan of action and or employment activities to address the needs of those dislocated by the downsizing or closure of the company. The Rapid Response system is used when the state receives a *WARN* notice that an area business is planning a business layoff or closing. Rapid response engagement usually is enacted if the layoff or closing affects more than 50 employees. Under normal circumstances the business services representative will work with the state.

Recently the resources of the state's Rapid Response system have been activated. A mid-size health-care provider that has been located in Atlantic County for many years has been sold resulting in as many as 300 skilled workers being displaced from current employment. ACWDB worked in collaboration with the state Business Services Representative for Atlantic and the state coordinator of Rapid Response, to assist in re-locating many of the workers and helping to transition other workers who would no longer have a job. Most recently interviews have been held with multiple groups of 25-30 employees to provide them with counseling and information on the choices they have in their current situation. Working closely with the state business services representative and the state employment services manager, ACWDB is well-positioned to assist companies that are downsizing or closing.

##### *6. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired*

DVRS defines an individual with a disability as having any physical or mental impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment may qualify an individual for vocational rehabilitation services. When eligible individuals with disabilities may afford themselves of the following DVRS sponsored services:

- Vocational Counseling & Guidance – Providing assistance to the consumer in handling the job search issues that impact employability, job maintenance strategies, and developing the overall techniques needed to be successful in a work environment
- Placement Services - Development of job leads both with and for the consumer and support during the job search; could include On the Job Training (OJT), Supported Employment (SE) or Time Limited - Placement and Coaching (TLPC)
- Job Seeking Skills - Guidance in work search activities such as resume writing, interviewing skills, job search organizations
- Supported Employment - Through referral to an SE provider, one-on-one assistance in job searching, interviewing, applying for jobs; followed by coaching on the job to facilitate learning job duties and adjusting to the work environment; followed by periodic follow-up to ensure job retention
- Time Limited Placement and Coaching - The first two categories of Supported Employment Services without periodic follow-along
- Job Accommodations - Guidance on changing the worksite's physical environment or adding equipment that will allow an individual to do more work tasks independently, effectively, and safely
- Skills Training - Vocational school, technology or trade School, business school, etc.
- ~~College Training – 2- or 4-year programs leading to a degree~~
- Physical Restoration - Equipment or therapies which improve physical or cognitive functioning so that a person is able to work; examples could be physical, occupational, or speech therapy; cognitive therapy which includes those modalities; prosthetics or orthotics such as artificial limbs, braces, special shoes, hearing aids, and eyeglasses (in some instances)
- Emotional Restoration Services – Short-term individual, group or other types of counseling to reduce symptoms of mental health problems and improve work-tolerance and the ability to get and keep a job.
- Mobility Equipment
- Driver Training - Assessment of driving ability and equipment needed to drive safely; assistance in purchasing driver training lessons if needed to reach a specific work goal
- Vehicle Modification
- Home Modifications, if needed to reach a specific work goal

For those individuals with disabilities that do not wish to utilize DVRS services, the NJLWD operates Employment Services that help individuals find full-time or part-time employment.

ACWDB recognizes the CBVI as an essential partner who is created to meet the workforce needs of those customers who are blind or visually impaired. While this service has received limited use, the importance of knowing that it is available and how to access it if need be is critical to the comprehensive service supports required to address the workforce needs of all customers. Should an individual with visual impairments approach the career center for workforce assistance, the resources of the One Stop, including those of the CBVI must be readily accessible to the customer. As shown below, CBVI offers the following services:

### 7. CBVI Services

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES: CBVI provides educational services from birth through high school years to eligible children and their families. These services are designed to allow students who are visually impaired to participate equally with other students in regular classroom activities.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: The goal of this program is to provide services that will enable people who are blind or visually impaired to develop, acquire or update skills that will help them secure and maintain suitable employment. This may include obtaining jobs in a wide array of competitive career fields like law, education, business, technology, as well as self-employment and other occupations.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS: This program provides training designed to help people of any age who are blind or visually impaired to adjust to their vision loss and gain the skills of daily living they will need to lead a full and productive life.

EYE HEALTH SERVICES: The goal of this program is to save sight and restore vision whenever it is medically possible. CBVI also conducts and sponsors a variety of educational programs and eye health screenings throughout the state to detect vision problems.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES: services for people who are deaf-blind; business and entrepreneurial training; educational materials for visually impaired children; income tax certification letters; referral to community based programs and services; and low and high technical aids and appliances for people that are blind or visually impaired.

ACWDB will develop a procedure for notifying and engaging CBVI when customer needs warrant their support.

#### *8. DVOP and LVER Activities*

ACWDB recognizes that veteran's services must be a top priority for all aspects of career services at the One Stop Career Center. Working in cooperation with the members of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER), to engage business interests and connect disabled veterans to career opportunities must be a continuing emphasis for all career service and employer engagement staff.

The DVOP (Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program) representative works with veterans who are disabled and not currently job ready. The DVOP provides individualized services that assist the customer in removing the barrier and establishing job readiness. Local processes are designed and informed that the 18–24-year-old veteran and the Vietnam era veterans are to be referred to the DVOPs, as is denoted in TEGL 20-13 Change 2. DVOPs are funded under the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG). All other veteran's will participate in One Stop services, acknowledging their priority of service status within the workforce development system. The two priority populations are identified during the weekly re-employment orientation sessions, RESEA sessions and individual customer interviews, using the *Barriers to Employment-Self Assessment for Veterans and Eligible Spouses of Veterans*.

Continuing with the priority of service and acknowledging the importance of WIOA section 134(c)(3)(E), TEGL 10-09, TEGL 3-15 and NJWINS 11-16A, the Atlantic WDB maintains a strong working relationship with the state Wagner-Peyser veteran-related services, including those services offered by the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative Services (LVERS). Veterans' priority is understood as an integral part of all workforce development services and is incorporated into local written policies and procedures promulgated from this guidance.

Local policy and procedure begins with the identification of participants who have been deemed eligible for the priority of service consideration. State employment specialists, including DVOPs and LVERs, customer service representatives and local employment specialists will be instructed to identify those customers prioritized under this section of the WIOA statute. These populations will include qualified veterans and their spouses as first priority; public assistance customers, low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient; WDB local priorities include the populations denoted in section XXIII's first paragraph.

ACWDB works with the state employment services manager who oversees the local DVOPs. The workforce development executive director will work with the employment services manager to coordinate services related to disabled veterans, as well as coordinate other veteran-related services in the county so that there is a network of support for the veteran community and all components of the veteran's services are equally informed and aware of the services and resources available.

### *9. Mental or Emotional Health Programs*

ACWDB does not have any programs that address this situation directly at present, however, it has maintained contracted services with one local mental health provider in the past to provide social-behavioral assessments for youth in the New Jersey Youth Corps program as part of the RISE initiative. That program afforded some group discussion regarding managing life stressors and coping behaviors as an example. Youth Corps members who requested additional services would be assigned to a therapist.

Atlantic County Government does provide employee assistance programs for employees who are having anxiety issues or difficulty coping. The pandemic has created an increased need for support for a percentage of the current workforce as well. Employee assistance is suggested by supervisors when employee behavioral issues continue to escalate, and that behavior is uncharacteristic of the behavioral norm for that employee.

### *10. Other Area Agreements*

ACWDB has engaged in a Memorandum of Understanding with the Family Success Centers to use their physical locations in Atlantic City to provide career services and Wagner-Peyser services to members of the local community. The agreement spells out the date, time and duration of those activities, the services to be provided and the resources that will be used while at the Family Success Center. The MOU is a one-year agreement and will be up for review in the next several months. ACWDB intend to continue this working relationship to provide workforce services at the Family Success Center locations in Atlantic City.

**Under DVRS current services college programs leading to a degree are needed to achieve a vocational goal. DVRS will pay for Masters; paid internships will also be provided as well as pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) provided to students with disabilities (SWD) ages 14-21. Pre-ETS internships available.**

## **5) Employer Engagement**

*As has been indicated repeatedly through the body of this document, ACWDB is focused on building relationships with employers to educate them to the array of resources and services available to them. To create a referral system for talent needs and staffing help that begins with the ACWDB and its partner resources. Using the combined resources of the Employer Engagement's Job developers, the state Department of Labor's Business Services Representative and the State Employment Services Manager, the Atlantic County*

*Workforce Development Team is designed to address employer talent acquisition and talent development needs.*

### **A. Facilitate Employer Engagement**

Within the past year, ACWDB has begun to establish working business relationships with about a half-dozen local businesses. These businesses have identified staffing needs and utilized the virtual recruitment services associated with the state's Business Services Representative, used the AOSOS database to identify unemployed individuals with employer-identified skill sets for hiring consideration and utilized ACWDB OJT and Incumbent Worker training contracts for wage subsidies during the training period.

As part of a structured plan to improve employer engagement as a group, the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team has been sharing all employer-related activity for the past year now. As a result, familiarity with all service aspects, both state and local, related to employer support and engagement has led to an individual response to each employer's need. This created support and endorsements from the employers which we encourage them to share among their business partners and have added to our web page. In addition, the ACWDB has transitioned a number of its private sector board members to be more aligned with the primary industry sectors in Atlantic County. As an example, prior to 2020, the board had one casino representative. Currently the board has three representing five of the nine casinos in Atlantic County. The board has also included a representative of Atlantic City Electric, and a small manufacturer in efforts to demonstrate a diversity of business and anticipated emerging industries.

The Employer Engagement Job Developers have been actively visiting area employers who have heard about the service opportunities, resulting in an additional twelve OJT contracts for businesses in the past two months. Most recently, the President of the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce has joined the board. We anticipate his presence will facilitate an increase in employer engagement through his membership.

Finally as part of the overall strategy, ACWDB has initiated a program to engage local community business groups and SSHRMs to educate them to agency services and begin building relationships to address their need. This will continue through and beyond the next four years.

### **B. Develop and Support a Local Workforce Development System that Meets Business Needs**

As has been indicated above, ACWDB has created its board focused on representatives of the current primary industries and those that are emerging. The presence of the leadership from the five casinos and the leadership of the two primary healthcare providers represents the current industry while members associated with advanced manufacturing and the utilities represents several of those emerging industries that have been targeted for the next four years.

The workforce development system must also include those components that are associated with the next generation of the labor pool, including the systems associated with probation and parole, public assistance, and members with disabilities.

The workforce development system that will support the accompanying business needs will include the secondary and post-secondary educational systems as well as those systems associated with the community-based organizations providing services to the next generation labor pool.

### C. Coordination of Workforce Development and Economic Development

Over the past three years, ACWDB has made significant strides in establishing a coordinated relationship with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, the economic development arm of the county. As a guest of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, the ACWDB has been a regular member of the quarterly meetings and a key partner in the marketing outreach to attract new businesses to the area. In the past two years, ACWDB has been an essential partner for talent development and financial incentives for new and existing businesses who are in need of new talent or additional talent to support business demands. ACWDB has also added a representative of ACEA to the board. The representative is also the chair of the board's Business Development subcommittee.

With the Atlantic County Economic Alliance's focus on developing aviation-related industries and businesses, ACWDB will play an essential role in matching customers' existing and transferable skills to the new industry sector's needs. With the continuing development of diversified industry in Atlantic County, including aviation, advanced manufacturing, utilities and off-shore wind, the relationship between ACWDB and the Economic Alliance will continue to grow-to the mutual benefit of businesses and employers coming to Atlantic County. With the ongoing development of work-based learning training opportunities and the continuation of occupational training to meet business needs, ACWDB is positioning itself to be a valuable partner for economic development.

Most recently, the Executive Director of ACWDB has been asked to chair the Workforce Development Committee of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance. This will provide additional opportunities for networking with private sector businesses to increase awareness of the resources that we can offer to benefit their bottom line.

Currently, ACEA, acting as the representative of economic development for the county has become an integral partner in expanding employer engagement. Using this relationship has enable the board to expand its contacts with local manufacturers and speciality industries. The Executive Director of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board has recently become a board member for the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, further cementing the relationship.

### D. Connect employers to customers

With the unanticipated labor challenges employers are currently experiencing, the importance of connecting business owners to screened, skilled customers has become paramount. Using the combined resources of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team, the relationships with all partner agencies, organizational relationships with community-based organizations, government offices, churches, schools and any other resource in the community, business requests for staffing assistance are circulated through e-mail blasts and group communications, to create the connection. Most recently, employers have been interacting with potential candidates to encourage them to participate in available training services that will be prepare the candidate to meet the employer need. Specifically, casino leadership has identified the need for over three hundred dealers for the 2023 summer season. In response to this request, ACWDB took action to obtain a waiver from NJDOL to make casino games dealer a demand occupation in order to allow WIOA funding to be used for training eligible candidates. Then the casino owners began a recruiting effort to identify potential

candidates for dealer training. Working in conjunction with the One Stop Career Services, ACWDB established a weekly processing of casino dealer candidates for eligibility assessment and ITA contract award. At the same time, ACWDB created a WIOA-funded outreach campaign to encourage Adult and Dislocated Worker candidates to consider becoming a dealer for the casinos.

Using this example as a model for other industry sectors who are identifying workforce needs, ACWDB is intent on creating a training pathway, either through ITA award or a form of work-based learning, to support the eligible WIOA candidates while addressing the skilled labor force needs of the employer.

### **E. Align Resources at State, Regional and Local Level to Create a System of Services for Employers**

As has been described throughout this plan, ACWDB has established the alignment of all available workforce development resources as a central focus for future goals and visions. By engaging the resources of the full compendium of workforce development agencies, we reduce or eliminate potential barriers to the culmination of objective attainment for customers and businesses in Atlantic County, South Jersey Workforce Collaborative and New Jersey. Communicating, building relationships and creating a shared vision of mutual benefit results in positive outcomes for businesses and WIOA customers. ACWDB believes that it is extremely important to clearly understand the relationships and to have the ability, in times of need, to connect state resources to regional resources, regional resources to local resources and state resources to local resources. In that manner, access to the full-service array can be obtained for the employer's benefit.

### **F. Expand Implementation of Work-Based Learning Programs**

For the past three years, ACWDB has established steady growth in the use of work-based learning as a training system for employers with identified needs. Within the next four years, ACWDB intends to establish fiscal plans that place a full half of all Adult and Dislocated Worker training funding under Work-Based Learning. As has been stated throughout this plan, the logic of connecting the identified needs of the employer to the recruiting and training of candidates is consistent with WIOA's philosophy of '*employer-driven*' training services. Using an expanded array of the work-based learning programs, allows employers a number of different choices to meet their talent needs, while at the same time broaden the scope of employee candidates for consideration. Consider the following for each work-based category:

- **On-the-Job Training:** This is an employer-driven training program that allows businesses to bring on trainees that they can shape into members of their workforce, providing specific business-related training to address owner's need. Training program is no longer than six months. For employers with less than 50 employees, ACWDB will reimburse 70% of the wages, up to \$6,000.
- **Registered Apprenticeship:** This is an employer-driven training program usually for mid-to upper-level skilled positions within the business. Because most apprenticeship programs are longer than a year in length, the employer's commitment to the training program requires a higher level of investment in existing staff mentor's time and support. For Registered Apprenticeship programs, the ACWDB provides a \$6,000 wage reimbursement for on the job learning and \$5,000 for the cost of related technical instruction.

- Incumbent Worker Training: Can be used to upskill current employees when there is an identified skill gap that reduces the business's ability to compete or creates the risk of layoff because of reduced productivity. For incumbent worker training, employers can receive a reimbursement of 50% of the training costs for workers who require upskilling training in order to fill the owner's skill gap.
- Transitional Jobs- This work-based learning opportunity provides employers an opportunity to partake of the services of the harder-to-serve populations within the labor pool for mutual benefit. Populations that are eligible to participate in transitional jobs programs are those customers who have a chronic history of unemployment or an inconsistent work history. Employers who agree to contract with members of this population, will receive wage reimbursements up to 100%, up to \$6,000 for the contract duration. At program's conclusion, the employer does not have to continue to employ the individual unless he/she sees value in continuing the unsubsidized employment. The intent of this program is to build work history for the individual's resume, and to give the individual the opportunity to demonstrate to the employer how valuable they can be.

With this array of service options, the employer can benefit from a range of services offered by the ACWDB and the One Stop Career Center, once his/her workforce needs have been identified.

### **G. Leverage Local Career Pathway Initiative, Business Intermediaries and Others**

By partnering with workforce and training partners, private and public sector board members, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions and community-based organizations, ACWDB is able to leverage existing career pathway initiatives for our youth and young adults. Additionally, the agency continues to work to develop pathway initiatives for the adult population that is considering a change in career path or asking for guidance on what path to pursue.

Currently, ACWDB partners with multiple partner agencies to facilitate career opportunities for program participants. As an example, ACWDB works closely with the Egg Harbor School District to support their PACE pre-apprenticeship grant for juniors and seniors, to explore career paths for local industries other than hospitality, retail and tourism. In addition, ACWDB works with Ideal Institute of Technology, a private career school and contractor for our Out-of-School Youth program and our Community Work Experience Program for Work First New Jersey, who also has a PACE pre-apprenticeship program for youth and young adults in advanced manufacturing, IT and construction, working to connect identified employer need to these career-focused candidates.

Utilizing the combined resources of all partners to benefit the workforce needs of local businesses and industry, using strong relationships and resource awareness by all members, offers the best path forward for establishing vibrant career pathways for the current generation and the next.

### **H. Leverage Additional State Programs and Grants through State Units.**

ACWDB recognizes the value of working with grants offered by state programs. In recent years, the agency was one of the first participants in the GAINS grant program. Fueling the interest in developing work-based learning

as a training opportunity. More recently, ACWDB has participated in the Summer Youth Employment programs offered by the youth unit of the NJDOL. ACWDB has also partnered with several agencies to support programs such as the Opioid Pathway to Recovery program and several PACE grants, associated with the apprenticeship units of NJDOL. In addition the agency works closely with the New Jersey Youth Corps program in Atlantic City, providing data entry support required for the program.

By leveraging the additional programming and supporting local partners, ACWDB is able to expand its scope of influence and educate the school's and grantees business partners on the resources and services the board can provide. Having relationships and partnerships with these grant recipients allows them to provide 'warm handoffs' to the employer engagement staff of workforce development and the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team.

Recent grant programs funded through the state Department of Labor include programs for opioid-affected individuals, justice-involved individuals, long-term unemployed, SNAP recipients, youth populations, digital equity and literacy innovation grants to support foundation workforce services. Due to recent changes and reductions in funding categories, the local workforce development board has become more reliant on these competitive grant programs to fill the gaps in services for designated services areas.

Recent requests to NJDOL for outcome-based data to demonstrate the efficacy of these programs over the span of the grant have been unsuccessful. The ACWDB would like to be able to present the outcomes associated with these programs to justify future planning for associated services.

### III. LOCAL WDB STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

#### **1) Local Workforce Development Area Structure**

##### **A. Board Membership**

The Atlantic County Workforce Development Board is comprised of a total of thirty-six members, of which thirty-four (34) chairs are currently filled. All of the disciplines associated with board membership are currently in compliance with requirements. It has been a targeted objective of the board to enhance current membership with private sector representation. Because all of the designated categories have reached their capacity, the board staff have worked cooperatively with the county executive's representative to only accept board applications from private sector applicants who have decision-making power within their business. While the current board makeup does have representatives from major industry sectors important to Atlantic County, including representatives from five casino properties and two hospitals/medical care facilities, it is also intent on diversifying the industry representation. To that end, the board has recently included board representation from the manufacturing, banking and utility sectors. A copy of the membership chart is attached as an addendum to this plan. (Attachment - A)

##### **B. LWDB Standing Committees**

Currently the board has eight (8) standing committees. The five WIOA-mandated committees are as follows:

- a) **The One Stop Oversight Committee** oversees and evaluates the One Stop System services. This includes monitoring performance, program enrollments, service delivery and outcomes for career services. This committee is responsible for ensuring that ACWDB's plans and priorities are carried out as expected. This Committee is comprised of both private and public sector who do not represent One Stop Services providers. Further, the One Stop Committee should:
  - Review reports related to all One Stop Career Center services- including performance reports and service delivery information
  - Monitor the implementation of MOU and IFAs to ensure all partner contribute to operations and service delivery as expected
  - Mediate disagreements among partners
  - Support the procurement of One Stop Career Service providers
- b) **The Disabilities Workforce Committee** goal is to increase access and integrate services within the employment and training delivery system for individuals with disabilities and to ensure that the WDB's policies and program strategies provide employment outcomes for this population. It also ensures that all services, including those at the comprehensive One Stop Career Center, and external training sites, are accessible to persons with disabilities and that outreach efforts effectively reach this population. The Disabilities Committee should:
  - Monitor service provision to individuals with disabilities and the accessibility of all services

- Provide feedback on new services, program designs and plans and/or One Stop processes to ensure accessibility to individuals with disabilities
  - Support the development of appropriate training for staff on providing supports for or accommodations to, and finding employment opportunities for, individuals with disabilities
- c) **The Literacy Workforce Committee** provides direction and oversight of the operations of the literacy system in the county region. The Committee develops strategies to address issues of workplace literacy that impact job readiness and employment. The literacy system includes: Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency Diploma testing (HSE), English as a Second Language (ESL), Workforce Learning Links and Title II, AEFLA programs. This committee helps coordinate local literacy resources, engage community stakeholders around local needs and priorities, and create a system of literacy supports in the LWDA. The Literacy Committee provides strategic direction and works in collaboration with other programs and initiatives in the local community to develop a comprehensive system of supports for developing the basic literacy skills of local residents. The literacy committee in each LWDB must also be structured to meet Title II requirements that expect quarterly meetings of partners.

The Literacy Committee should:

- Identify local and regional literacy needs
  - Identify how available literacy funds can support local and regional needs
  - Build capacity to address literacy needs that serve as barriers to employment or advancement
  - Ensure the integration of the Title II and other literacy services into One Stop Career Center operations
  - Provide fiscal and programmatic oversight of Title II and other literacy funding streams
  - Develop standards and priorities for the professional development of providers and staff regarding literacy services and needs
- d) **The Youth Investment Council** is charged with developing a broad-based plan to address the education, employment and training needs of the youth population. It coordinates area-wide youth services, assists with planning and oversees operational youth programs. Youth Councils can serve as the architect in designing and building comprehensive youth services at the local level. Responsibilities may include specific activities related to the procurement of youth services- specifically the development of RFPs that align with broader youth services strategies.

The Youth Investment Council should:

- Help to identify gaps in services and develop a strategy to use competitive selections of community partnerships to address the unmet needs of youth;
- Coordinate youth policy;
- Ensure quality services;

- Leverage financial and programmatic resources; and
- Recommend eligible youth service providers to the LWDB

The Youth Council must include a member of the LWDB, who chairs the committee, members of community-based organizations with a demonstrated record of success in serving eligible youth and young adults, and other individuals with appropriate expertise and experience who are not members of the LWDB. The committee members may bring their expertise to help address the employment, training, education, human and supportive service needs of eligible youth, especially out-of-school youth, young people who have become disconnected, and those with barriers.

LWDBs should consider members that represent agencies such as education, training, vocational rehabilitation, health, mental health, housing, public assistance, justice, representatives of philanthropic organizations, economic and community development organizations, employers, parents, and participants, and must also include representation of youth. LWDBs must ensure that the existing youth body has the appropriate experience and expertise to carry out the responsibilities highlighted in this policy. **The Youth committee has now included four (4) youth participants.**

- e) **The Executive Committee** consists of the Officers of the WDB, and all subcommittee chairs. The purpose of this Committee is to oversee the operations and administration of the WDB and to make policy recommendations to the full Board. The executive committee directs and coordinates work happening across the WDB's committee structure, and support decision-making between full Board Meetings. The board consists of the WDB chair, the vice-chair, the secretary-treasurer, the WDB executive director and all sub-committee chairs, who must be appointed members of the board.

The Executive Committee should:

- Discuss and develop strategies for cultivating strong relationships with key leaders in the community
- Review periodic monitoring and performance reports
- Develop and annual budget for approval by the CEO and the LWDB
- Review and negotiate with the state on annual performance measures
- Attend local and state meetings that support the work of the Board and enhance the leadership of the WDB

*These committees are not mandated but are included in the by-laws and organizational structure of the board.*

- **The Membership Committee** recruits and retains members. This committee maintains and accepts nominations for membership, develop procedures for nomination and appointment; and creates an orientation guide to provide ongoing professional development. The Committee ensures a diverse membership, when vacancies occur on the Board; the Membership Committee will solicit nominations from partnering agencies, such as the Chambers of Commerce to maintain the composition of the Board.

In early 2024, the board changed the bi-laws to incorporate a fiscal component to the membership committee.

- **The Business and Economic Development Committee** develops a network of private/public sector business to educate the community about the workforce development resources available to help grow businesses and engage local business in the labor exchange system. This committee reviews current unemployment and Labor Market Information to identify skill gaps and possible solutions to meet local business needs. The members interact with both the established and potential business community on a regular basis and provide a regional perspective as most professionally work in all or most of Southern New Jersey. With representatives of the local economic development organization as well as the chamber of commerce and the trades, this committee focuses its energy on evaluating current business needs and exploring avenues to maximize the use of agency and community resources to resolve identified barriers for employers and employees.
- **Healthcare Workforce Sub-Committee**: This Sub-Committee is made up of employers in the Healthcare Industry, technical school, community college, university and workforce development, that plan, coordinate and implement strategies to address labor shortages within the healthcare industry and pursue grant opportunities as well as educational and training programs to fill healthcare staffing gaps.

### **C. Fiscal Agent Responsibilities**

While the CEO has fiscal responsibility and financial oversight of WIOA, WFNJ, Literacy and New Jersey Youth Corps funds, the fiscal agent is responsible for the creation of the workforce development board budget, disbursement and oversight of grant funds. The fiscal officer is also responsible to establish and maintain the financial accounting system, and a purchasing system acceptable to the CEO for operations and expenditures, subject to approval as may be required by County, State or Federal law and regulations. The fiscal agent is also responsible for written quarterly reports on level of services and expenditures, acceptable to the CEO. These reports are presented to both the executive committee of the workforce development board and the full board as an agenda item at their separate meetings.

In general, the fiscal agent is responsible for the following functions:

- Receive funds;
- Ensure sustained fiscal integrity and accountability for expenditures of funds in accordance with Office of Management and Budget circulars, WIOA, and the corresponding Federal regulations and State policies;
- Respond to audit financial findings;
- Maintain proper accounting records and adequate documentation;
- Prepare financial reports;
- Provide technical assistance to sub-recipients regarding fiscal issues. 11

At the direction of the LWDB, the fiscal agent may have the following additional functions:

- Procure contracts or obtain written agreements;
- Conduct financial monitoring of service providers; and
- Ensure independent audit of all employment and training programs

The fiscal agent is also responsible for ensuring fiscal compliance with all funding requirements, including procured contracts, training contracts, personnel and operating expenses. In cooperative negotiations with the fiscal representatives of the CEO, the fiscal agent establishes the structure for infrastructure funding. In Atlantic County, the distribution of those costs is determined via a cost allocation plan (CAP), using time studies for all areas of career and board services.

The LWDB and the fiscal agent develop a budget for the activities of the LWDB, with approval of the CEO, and consistent with the local plan and the duties of the LWDB. The LWDB budget includes all activities of the LWDB including the Title I budget amounts to be allocated for youth and adult and dislocated worker career services. Based on the state allocation, the LWDB determines how much of the budget to allocate for these services and how to procure these services.

#### **D. Hired Staff Supporting the Local WDB**

The staff supporting the local workforce development board will include the following:

- Executive Director (ED)- Acts as the administrative overseer of all workforce development services. A person in the position works closely with the board chairperson and the county executive/county administrator. The ED monitors current statutory and regulatory policy and develops local policy when required to guide and direct agency services. He works closely with the education systems to identify current industry trends, using labor market information in conjunction with the identified workforce needs of local industry and businesses.
- Fiscal Officer- (see the description under fiscal agent responsibilities)
- Contract Administrator- This position is responsible for the creation and maintenance of all inter-local and competitive contracts. This responsibility includes the creation of the Request for Proposals for all competitive contracts as well as the development of all interlocal agreements with the Atlantic Cape Community College. The procurement process includes establishing the review teams for all responses to the RFPs, documenting scoring results for all proposals and providing the summary results for contract awards. The contract administrator also assures compliance with all documentation requirements and the confirmation that there is no conflict of interest with any proposal reviewers.
- Monitoring Unit- provides monitoring oversight of all contracted services. Monitoring includes an annual compliance review as well as monthly compliance reviews of all competitive contract invoices to assure that invoiced expenditures are supported by documented levels of service and benchmarks. The monitoring unit also provides quality control for all private vocational schools, addressing all customer complaints with the associated training administration. They will conduct investigations into any complaints and submit those findings to the board administrative personnel for response and further board action, if warranted.

- **Business Engagement Unit**- the staff within this unit engage local industries and associated businesses to conduct assessment of workforce needs and provide possible workforce solutions based on access to the various labor pool resources connected to workforce development. Business engagement is responsible for the provision of all work-based learning contracts including On-the-Job Training, Registered Apprenticeship training, Incumbent Worker training and Transitional Jobs work experience. In addition, the business engagement unit works closely with the State's Business Services Representative and the State Employment Services Manager to offer a broad array of workforce resources to address local industry needs. Altogether, the joint business engagement services comprise the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team.

## **2) Procurement of Operator and Services**

### **A. LWDB's process of implementing Competitive Procurement.**

In 2017, the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board conducted its first procured competitive bid for the One Stop Operator position. This action was predicated by extensive guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The contract was designed to meet the limited expectations interpreted by New Jersey as a minimal response to the WIOA requirements of TEGL 15-16 and WIOA sec. 108, the agency procured One Stop Operator services to provide oversight of operational services and act in an advisory capacity to manage career services delivery. In 2021, after two years of contract renewals the new RFP resulted in a single response with the award made to the same provider. Shortly after the award was made in early 2021, the worker hired by the contracted provider resigned her position. The contractor was unwilling to consider any other candidates for hire and defaulted on the Operator contract. A subsequent RFP was submitted during the late spring of 2021. There were no responses. NJDOL was notified that a subsequent RFP had produced no results.

As a result of NJWIN WD-PY21-6, entitled Local Governance under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board first became aware of the mandate to procure both the One Stop Operator and the associated Career Services. Following several group discussions regarding this required expectation, the workforce development board took decisive action to initiate a planning process for regulatory and statutory compliance. In order to establish a clearly discernable firewall, the first step in the process was to establish an ad hoc committee of the workforce development board for the planning, creation and implementation of an RFP for both the One Stop Operator and Career Services. This committee is comprised of private sector representatives with no vested interest or connection to workforce development resources or services. At the same time, the executive director conducted an assessment of possible competitors for the RFP, contacting the local community college, university, community-based organization and technical school to assess interest and increase awareness of the opportunity. (At the time of the RFP's release, the agency will engage additional measures to outreach to a greater radius of potential bidders.)

The ad hoc committee was established through individual, face-to-face meetings to assess the willingness and availability of the board member to participate in the development of the RFP and the associated procurement process. The expectation created with the committee members required them to read and understand

regulations and statutes associated with the One Stop Operator and Career Services, the services that must be delivered and the operational processes associated with the service requirements. In addition, Workforce GPS provided several webinars on the One Stop Procurement process, which board members were encouraged to review for additional insight. In one of the first webinars, they identified a best practice of having an outside entity create the RFP, to reinforce the firewalls that are required for an open and full competitive process, as is stipulated in 2CFR 200.320. As part of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board's procurement process, the board created a contract with an outside entity to develop the RFP, with input from the ad hoc committee and the executive director.

During recent meetings with NJDOL for technical assistance, the board has further refined the career services and operational costs associated with the procurement and have made additional modifications to the budget that will be applied to the competitive bid. Using RFP templates from other workforce development agencies, following the guidance provided in TEGl 15-16, and using the input of the ad hoc committee for the development and weighting of the scoring rubric, the contracted provider will complete the RFP no later than June 30, 2023. Because the policy of New Jersey establishes the contracted services for two years with the opportunity for two one-year renewals, the importance of the evaluative review for the service renewal cannot be understated.

Once the RFP is completed, the County's Purchasing Department will be notified of the intent to submit it for proper public notice. Because of summer vacations and summer breaks ACWDB does not intend to release the RFP until mid-August. As has been stated before, in order to assure a 'full and open competitive process' for procuring these services, all potential competitors must be fully available and prepared to consider the opportunity. When all proposals have been submitted and received by the county purchasing department, the ad hoc committee of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board will be charged with reading and reviewing all proposals, using the scoring rubric to evaluate and consider all proposals. The results of the scoring will be validated by the agency fiscal officer with final award determined by the average score calculated for all eight committee members. The summary of all results and the announcement of the award will be made public following the ratification by the county executive and the Atlantic County Board of Commissioners.

#### **B. LWDB's Efforts to Avoid Conflict of Interest and Maintain Appropriate Firewalls.**

As has been stated above, the LWDB took extensive efforts to avoid conflict of interest and maintain appropriate firewalls. A firewall document is included as an attachment to this plan. Using the assistance of other local area WDB directors and the guidance provided by NJDOL and USDOL's Employment and Training Administration through Workforce GPS, the agency created its procurement team utilizing only private sector members who had no vested interest, in the workforce development services. The orientation of the ad hoc committee included review of TEGls, NJWINS and a non-disclosure agreement for all members of the committee.

In addition, LWDB will follow Atlantic County's protocol for Conflict-of-Interest acknowledgement. Prior to evaluating and scoring the responses to the RFP, all members of the ad hoc committee will complete a conflict-of-interest form following Local Government Ethics Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:9-22.1 et.seq. This affirms there is no conflict that will unfairly bias the scoring results.

### **C. Impact of Regional Supports on Procurement Activities.**

The regional support for the One Stop Operator and Career Services procurement process has been extremely valuable in the development of a detailed, functional RFP for both the Operator and Career Services. The support of EDSI, the Garden State Employment and Training Association and the New Jersey Department of Labor's technical assistance, both through virtual conversations and the training modules, have been instrumental in the planning and development of the One Stop Operator and Career Services RFP.

In addition, the feedback that has been received by local colleagues has helped shape the nature and purpose of the RFP for both the One Stop Operator and the Career Services. Having the benefit of the experiences of fellow directors from other areas has also been very helpful in planning the detail associated with the scope of services, the weight associated with various aspects of the scoring rubric and the procedures that should be in place to assure that there is clear separation and firewalls between the LWDB and career services.

Collectively, the South Jersey Workforce Collaborative members have all shared their procurement processes and associated experiences as we all recognize the benefit to all by sharing. The South Jersey Workforce Collaborative has become a strong group of connected workforce development agencies who regularly communicate on a broad scope of topics for information and guidance. In building the strategy for how to develop the RFP and maintain the required firewalls, ACWDB relied on the expertise and experience of board directors in other regions of the state.

### **3) Oversight and Monitoring**

Oversight and monitoring of One Stop Operations is a critical function for assuring that agency services are delivered as expected, that the quality of service either meets or exceeds current expectations and that the outcomes and performance are in line with local and state benchmarks. Oversight of career services and contracted services is an essential requirement of ACWDB funded services.

#### **A. Monitoring Operations of One Stop Career Centers**

ACWDB requires monthly reporting of all career service activity to evaluate referrals, service delivery and outcomes of services on behalf of the customer. Reviews of case files awarded contracts and case outcomes holds both line worker and supervisors accountable for the customers' outcomes. From the time a customer either enters the front door or expresses an interest by phone or on-line, One Stop services are tracked for timeliness, individual service and customer satisfaction, using the resources of the AOSOS system, internal Google documents, Excel spreadsheets and the crystal reports associated with the AOSOS case management system, provided by the MIS Program Specialist.

Monitoring of One Stop's Career Center services is also evaluated through the One Stop Career Center Certification Process that is completed every two years. The certification process requires each One Stop Career Center to conduct a rigorous review of all career service procedures, including equal access to all customers, assurance that the work force development board is fully certified, verification of a current complaint and grievance policy, verifying minimum standards of service delivery and a completed quality bench-marking tool.

Locally, case monitoring has become especially important since the agency's customer access to services had been restricted by Covid 19, CDC guidelines and local county policy. Because the volume of customers has

been much lower than in the past, individual cases are now monitored for measurements of progress. All customer service activities are monitored in conjunction with agency performance on state-established performance goals.

### **B. Budget of Procured Providers**

The budget and expenditures of all procured providers is and will be monitored on a monthly basis by the ACWDB monitoring staff. A primary function of the monitors is to assure that the funds awarded for service contracts are being expended as required in the RFP, regulations and policy. For current contracted services, including Out-of-School Youth, In-School Youth, several inter-governmental agreements and the Work First New Jersey contracts, ACWDB's monitoring staff work with the contracted provider to verify actual levels of service, using the documented funded services within AOSOS and the files of the provider to cross-reference enrolled customers, services being provided, and performance benchmarks obtained. All contracts contain language to allow the ACWDB to adjust or reduce allocated funding if the contracted provider is under-performing. The monitors will also work with providers to ensure that they understand the requirements for complying with the tenets of the RFP. The recordings of the ACWDB monitors are also used when considering the annual renewal of contracts for those awardees who have multi-year contracts.

### **C. Participation, Service Delivery and Outcomes of Procured Providers**

As stated above, ACWDB monitoring staff assume a primary quality-control position in the evaluation of contracted service providers' performance. In addition to the monitors themselves, the MIS Program Specialist 3, plays a critical role in determining how the level of participation and the service delivery affect the required outcomes established in the RFP. In some circumstances it is imperative that the monitors and MIS maintain regular communication because the MIS Program Specialist is also responsible for evaluating whether or not the services being provided are positively or negatively impacting ACWDB's state performance benchmarks, using the FutureWorks database and dashboard for quarterly performance evaluation. The quarterly performance report is a standard part of the quarterly agency agenda for the full board.

This oversight has been expanded through the use of the crystal reports, which have the ability to determine which cases and whose cases are in need of additional attention in order to positively affect ACWDB benchmark outcomes. Unit supervisors are aware of both unit performance related to adult, dislocated worker and youth services, as well as which case manager is associated with those cases that require additional attention in order to meet performance standards.

With the impending procurement for One Stop Operator and Career Services, monitoring staff will have a critical role in evaluating contract performance.

### **D. Training Contracts (ITA)**

As has been discussed earlier, the use of occupational training contracts has been the mainstay of most of the training services provided by the ACWDB over the years. This occupational training contract process has provided many newly skilled workers the opportunity to explore employment opportunities, however, in many instances, the number of customers who successfully achieved employment in the field they were trained in

was substantially below 50% even six months after training completion, largely because there was no direct relationship between identified employer need and the training interest of the workforce customer. More recently, the emphasis on placing the connection to identified employment need has resulted in much better performance results. In addition, the members of the monitoring unit also are responsible for training compliance and customer complaints. The ACWDB monitors are responsible for an annual visit to all contracted training providers to evaluate compliance with regulatory requirements.

The monitors are also responsible for investigating allegations and complaints related to training services, duties and responsibilities associated with the training providers. The monitor's responsibilities include obtaining the report of customer complaint, then visiting the training provider to discuss the concerns raised by the customers. The monitors then produce a detailed report that identifies noted concerns and recommend steps to address those concerns, including the training providers needed corrective action.

ACWDB will rely on the actions of the monitoring staff to assure quality control for all contracted services, including competitive contracts, Individual Training Agreements and Inter-governmental contracts.

### **E. Work-Based Learning (WBL) Contracts and Agreements**

In May of 2020, ACWDB initiated its first efforts at instituting an On-The-Job training program for dislocated workers. The initial interest was in providing wage reimbursement for employers who had been hard-hit by the impact of the pandemic. At that time, the agency requested an increase in the wage reimbursement for employers with less than fifty (50) employees, to help relieve some of the financial burden for the employers while offering immediate wages to an interested training candidate. The initial wage reimbursement for these businesses was 70% capped at \$6,000 by local board policy. Consistent with the state's plan, the importance of introducing *work-based learning* to the workforce development system began to develop as the focus of workforce training became more about meeting industry-sector and employer need, and less about providing occupational training to a trainee and hoping for the best. As is illustrated below, ACWDB has created policy around the four prongs of work-based learning to provide a full array of **WBL** to complement the occupational training offered as the staple of workforce development training for years. The current WBL service array includes the following:

- **On-the-Job Training**: This is a wage reimbursement provided to participating employers who are intent on providing skill development while the training candidate is working and receiving a wage. The contract establishes the length of the training based on ONET code and number of training hours for the job definition. The Contract reflects the number of hours of training, percent wage reimbursement and the total amount of the contract. It also reflects baseline skills, skills that the individual is being trained for and the expected outcome. At the conclusion of the training contract, all trainees must continue unsubsidized employment with the employer.
- **Registered Apprenticeship**: This work-based learning resource offers employers the opportunity to develop advanced skill levels in current employees or educate and train new workers to address identified skill gaps. The registered apprenticeship process combines the use of a work process to establish the training progression, using the combination of *related technical instruction* (RTI) and *on-the-job learning* (OJL). In most circumstances, registered apprenticeship programs are significantly

longer than On-the-Job training. Registered apprenticeship training also requires obtaining an industry-valued credential and at least one incremental wage increase.

- **Incumbent Worker Training-** ACWDB provides this training for employers who are looking to upskill current employees to meet skill gaps and be competitive within the business or to avert a layoff. The majority of the workers involved in incumbent worker training must be employed for a minimum of six months. The agency is intent on expanding this work-based learning component which currently focuses on upskilling laborers to CDL certified truck drivers within the local utility authority and municipalities. Prior to 2022, local departments could provide their own training for CDL in-house, however, in early 2022, regulations were changed to require a certified third party to conduct the training. ACWDB has created a third-party contract with a certified CDL provider to establish a weekend training program at the employer's location.

The agency is intent on developing incumbent worker training processes to assist the local manufacturing industry in filling their skill gaps, thus being more competitive and as a result, expanding existing business. This will also allow ACWDB to assist in backfilling the employer's vacant positions.

- **Transitional Jobs-** the transitional jobs program is the fourth resource in ACWDB's work-based learning arsenal. Transitional jobs targets those individuals who are WIOA eligible and have presented as either chronically unemployed or having an inconsistent work history. The primary purpose of this resource is to build paid work history for the individual with the opportunity to demonstrate their value to the employer. For the employer, because these candidates are among the hardest to serve, the agency may offer up to 100% wage reimbursement with no obligation to retain the individual at the contract conclusion. Should the employer find the trainee of value to his/her business, he/she could elect to continue the employment with unsubsidized funding.

Agency monitors are responsible for assuring all employers and work-based learning customers are in full compliance with local board policy and regulatory requirements associated with this training modality. Monitoring staff will conduct field visits to the employer's work location, review the work-based learning contract, speak with the employer representative and the trainee to assure full compliance with the training contract and associated regulations. Reports are provided to the executive director and the members of the business development committee and the full board during quarterly meetings.

## **F. Systems Supporting Business Practices**

With the onset of Covid, many of the standard practices of the Pleasantville One Stop Career Center and the Atlantic County Office of Workforce Development came to a sudden halt. From March of 2020 to June 15, 2020, many workers were coming into the office for one day a week or a portion of one day to complete any work that could be done. All state services were working from home. There was very little communication between the local workforce development services and the state employment services. During that same period of time, ACWDB spent time reviewing the current practices as they related to agency performance and came to the conclusion that the only way that all aspects of performance, from credentialing to median wage increases to job retention had to be connected to employer need.

As a result of these internal discussions, examination of current business relationships and the recognition that the current occupational training practices were not necessarily addressing individual employer need, the agency leadership began the development of a business-focused workforce development team that would address employer needs as a system. In early 2020, ACWDB in conjunction with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance began planning the development of an OJT system that would support the needs of local businesses, with a focus on using this work-based learning tool to assist in the diversification of industry in Atlantic County. As has been stated earlier, the Angelou Economics 5-year Strategic Plan for Atlantic County emphasized the importance of diversifying the industry sectors. As part of the effort to incorporate this mission into the fiber of local workforce development, the agency developed its On-the-Job training program with an intent to focus on businesses and industries other than hospitality, retail and tourism. In response to this longer-term plan, the agency requested a waiver of the current 50% wage reimbursement rate to increase to 70% for those industry sectors with less than 50 employees. These businesses would include tech start-ups and small manufacturers to support the economic diversification of the county and region.

In July of 2021, the agency created the business-focused Job Development unit, consisting of two (2) job developers and a supervisor, to manage agency business services and develop business relationships. The ACWDB had multiple conversations with New Jersey Department of Labor's Chief of Business Services to determine how best to develop a coordinated service system using the strengths of the state's business services and the local workforce development job development unit. As a result, the ACWDB created the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team, which is comprised of the ACWDB Executive Director, job developers, the state business services representative and the employment services manager. Using the strengths of each partner and the coordinated communication of all members, the team has created a comprehensive, close-knit unit that provides business services to county industry.

Using the strengths of each partner, the workforce development team can provide a number of responses to individual industry need. As an example, the employment services manager uses the resources of the state's database to identify skill sets within the resumes of unemployed workers to find candidates to meet employer need. The state business services representative creates job orders for employers who are pursuing talent needs and offering wage reimbursement to eligible businesses. ACWDB's job developers work with industry representatives and referred Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth candidates to develop work-based learning contracts for county and regional employers. All activities within the Atlantic County Workforce Development Team are known and shared with each member. It is the intent of the ACWDB to continue and expand the use of work-based learning as a primary training resource for both training candidates and the employer.

ACWDB intends to continue to develop the work-based learning programs in an effort to address employers' identified needs. With the expansion of registered apprenticeship and transitional jobs contracts, the ACWDB is intent on reconfiguring the agency budget so that 50% of all services will be related to work-based learning. Within the next two years, the emphasis on business staffing needs will be the nexus for identifying training need for career development. At the writing of this strategic plan, the agency is involved with multiple businesses who have made training requests to fill skill gaps.

Oversight of the business development processes includes a monthly report by the business development unit, AOSOS review through the crystal reporting structure and the monitoring reports that occur as a result of the field visits to employer sites for OJT, Registered Apprenticeship and Incumbent Worker training.

### **G. One Stop Certification**

ACWDB will work in cooperation with the contracted One Stop Operator to complete the required One Stop Certification process. ACWDB will provide SETC policy guidance and oversight for the certification process. As part of this process, the Oversight committee of ACWDB will follow the One Stop Operator progress in the certification process and will review the documents associated with certification for completeness and accuracy. The Oversight committee will also involve members of the state employment services managerial staff, as well as members of the ACWDB disability committee in the assessment and review of progress toward certification as a number of the areas include ADA compliance and full access to services. The oversight committee will create a timeline and schedule for completion of each step of certification and will conduct a final review of all information before submitting the final application to the SETC.

### **4) Performance Measures and Accountability**

An annual evaluation shall be conducted to determine how successful the One-Stop System has been in cultivating employer relationships and meeting performance standards set by NJLWD and to ensure the quality and effectiveness of services. Performance measures will be negotiated with the Governor and CEOs to ensure that local area performance is adequately tracked and measured. Any such measures need to be measurable and be aligned with the goals and objectives of the local area. Performance measures should be in accordance with the State performance requirements for each local area. At the same time, the targeted focus on identified industry need should create the successful connection between the agreed upon performance and the anticipated outcomes.

### **A. One Stop Delivery System**

The performance related to the One Stop Delivery System must address those areas associated with job retention, credential attainment and median wage increases. As has been stated above, the agency conducts a monthly review of the AOSOS crystal reports and a quarterly review of the FutureWorks Report to assess performance. The reports are evaluated by unit supervisors from the adult/dislocated worker and youth units for performance compliance, any areas of that require additional attention are brought before the assigned employment specialist for further action. The expectation for ongoing improvement in all performance areas is understood by all workforce staff.

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

ACWDB is in the process of completing the procurement process for the competitive bid of both the One Stop Operator and the Career Services. ACWDB expects interested respondents to submit proposals for both the Operator and Career Services. As a component of the bid proposal, applicants are expected to address the strategy that will be employed to assure compliance with performance requirements. As part of the process to evaluate the effectiveness of the contracted provider, performance will be evaluated both through the quarterly reporting system, but also through customer satisfaction surveys and internal tracking reports that document both outcomes and service effectiveness.

One aspect of service delivery that will be included in the RFP in addition to state performance requirements, will be an assessment of service efficiency, that is, how quickly the customer's service needs have been addressed. This could be related to a job referral, work-based learning contract completion, literacy referral or ITA completion. Service efficiency will be a primary focus of performance evaluation for the duration of the strategic plan.

### **C. Youth Providers**

ACWDB will maintain control over the competitive contracting process for both Out-of-School Youth and In-School-Youth programs. Based on current activity levels for out-of-school and in-school-youth programs, the agency will continue to evaluate whether to continue with both programs or to expand the use of out-of-school youth programs and reduce or eliminate the in-school youth programs.

The case management staff who are responsible for the day-to-day case management and AOSOS data entry of both in-school youth and out-of-school youth programs will be part of the career services procurement process.

## **5) Local Plan Development**

*The Workforce Development Board and leadership staff together led the development of this plan.*

### **a.) Planning Meetings**

The Board is comprised of 34 representatives from Atlantic County with more than half its membership representing the private sector. The group meets to provide oversight, planning and direction. This Plan was developed during the fall of 2022 and the winter/spring of 2023, through Full Board, Board Committee, stakeholders and staff input. Sections were drafted by the lead staff related to certain program or policy areas or members of the Board Committees/stakeholders. (A listing of all committee members is attached to this plan.)

Board Committees that met and worked collaboratively on sections of this Plan include:

- One-Stop Oversight Committee (October 2022 and February 1st, 2023)
  - Provided input on operations, performance and service delivery shifts, as well as discussion of the procurement processes for the One Stop Operator and Career Services.
- Business Development Committee (October 2022 and February 2023)
  - Provided input on the shift to work-based learning and the emphasis on addressing identified employer need.
- Healthcare Workforce Committee (November 2022)
  - Provided input on the need for specific job titles and the type of training required for those titles;
- Literacy Workforce Committee (November 2022 and February 2023)
  - Provided input on the use of current literacy services, concerns about the reduced level of funding and the need to expand service access to interested customers.
- Disabilities Workforce Committee (November 2022 and March 2023)

- Provided input for areas related to Disabilities and DEI. Also focused attention on the limited availability and the need for employers to be flexible.
- Youth Investment Council (November 2022 and March 2023)
  - Provided input on out-of-school youth needs and the importance of youth representation on the committee.

Key planning meetings included:

- Meeting held with the county Career and Technical Education schools to identify current demand occupations and planned strategies for pursuit of increased emphasis on STEM-related industries for emerging industries. (December 2022)
- Meeting with Max Slusher and Lauren Moore of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance to discuss current and emerging industries. (January 2023)
- Virtual meeting with presentation and input from community members and agency partners; Meeting participants included Ren Parikh-Ideal Institute of Technology, Thelma Wilder-Volunteers of America, Max Slusher-ACEA, Donald Campbell-Atlantic Independent Living, Dasha Brown-City of Pleasantville, Forrest Gilmore- Atlantic County CWA, Samuel Wear-NJDOL Business Services Representative, Ambrose Grey-Leaders in Training CBO.
- Full Board Meeting at Showboat with 28 board members, March 2023.

All input was considered by the Board and has laid the foundation to set new goals. Members have been invaluable assets in producing this final document.

Atlantic County Workforce Development Board 2022 to 2026 Local Plan is being finalized as of April 11, 2023 in draft form, the 30-day review for the plan will occur from April 17, 2023 to May 19, 2023. The following steps will be taken for the 30-day review:

- Plan to send copies to all libraries and municipal buildings in Atlantic County
- Place on both County and WDB website
- Send announcements to local Press of Atlantic County directing residents to the websites and libraries
- Send email to all WDB members and committee members
- Have printed copies available at the One Stop Career Center for public review.

## **B. Public Comment and Document Distribution Process**

The ACWDB 2022-2026 Local Strategic Plan began its 30-day public review on April 17, 2023. Copies of the draft document were provided for the county's press release, partner organizations, all county municipalities, county libraries, members of the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board and its sub-committees. Copies of the draft local plan were also available on the workforce development board website and hard copies were available at the One Stop Career Center offices at 2 South Main Street, Pleasantville, NJ and the Atlantic County Office Building located at 1333 Atlantic Avenue, Atlantic City. In addition, electronic copies were shared with new community partners as part of the introduction and discussion process targeted to building diverse community relationships.

**C. Public Comments**

Public Comments were submitted to the workforce development board's contract administrator during the public comment period between April 17th and May 19th. The agency received three responses, all from workforce development board members or members of the workforce development board staff. Two of the responses commented on the importance of members of the disabled community as essential members of the current and future labor force and the need to work with employers to provide the necessary accommodations and work environment to benefit from their talents. There was also a board response to compliment the structure and completeness of the plan.

Attachment -A

Atlantic County WIOA				WDB Membership Chart									
Date Updated: <b>June 27, 2023</b>													
version 11-19-2020 (fallow SETC Policy #2015-01, update d 11/17/2020)													
				1, 2, or 3 years									
Officers (indicate Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary)	Last Name	First Name	Title	Business / Organization	Business	Organized Labor	CBOr	Education	Government Partners	Other	Appointment Date	Term of Service	
<b>Business Members: Must comprise 51% of membership (may not include multiple business members if)</b>													
Seat 1		Rajput	Riaz		Global Community Services	1						3/23/2010	2022 to 2025
Seat 2		Beatty	Alan		Shore Medical Center	1						7/12/2004	2020 to 2025
Seat 3	Chair	Drou	James		Barqata Carina	1						7/28/2015	2021 to 2024
Seat 4		Jennings	Thamar		Jennings Funeral Home	1						5/31/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 5		De Curtis	Kelly Ann		Atlantic Electric Popea	1						5/31/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 6		Singh	Nandini		Kumar	1						2/12/2019	2022 to 2025
Seat 7	Treasurer	Pampai	Michael		Bally's Casarz Carina	1						5/20/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 8	Vice Chair	Mcabee	Maryann		Hard Rack	1						2/12/2019	2022 to 2025
Seat 9		Darzey	Geoffrey		Darzey Construction	1						1/19/2021	2021 to 2024
Seat 10		Freolan	Greg		Windy Crest Media	1						10/6/2020	2020 to 2023
Seat 11		Callie	Jae		Rardel Corporation	1						5/20/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 12		Darai	Parina		TD Bank	1						9/27/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 13		Sareth	Michelo		Hard Rack Carina Hotel	1						9/27/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 14		Bullinger	Neal		South Jersey Industrial Marketing Coordinator							8/15/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 15		Fayil	Sandra		Seaview, A Dalco Hotel	1						2/00/23	2022 to 2026
Seat 16		Chait	Michael		Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce	1						3/00/23	2023 to 2026
Seat 17		Hauker	Elaine		Hauker Janitorial Contractors	1						4/18/2023	2023 to 2026
Seat 18		Vekiar	Nancy		Excel Care Health Management								
<b>Economic Development: 1 member required, counted as business member</b>													
Seat 19	Required	Sturher	Max		Atlantic County Economic Alliance	1						7/6/2021	2021 to 2024
<b>Organized Labor and Community-Based Organizations: Must comprise 20% of membership</b>													
				(1) Joint Labor-Management Apprenticeship Program Rep, if one exists in the area. (If not existent, then an Apprenticeship Program Rep is required.) Must be a labor organization member or training									
Seat 20		Kelly	Dan		Community Quert			1				7/7/2020	2020 to 2023
Seat 21		Kanczyk	Dan		UFCW Local 152		1					3/31/2020	2020 to 2023
Seat 22		Staker	Steven		IBEW Local 351		1					2/8/2022	2022 to 2025
Seat 23		Farter	Ray		IBEW Local 351		1					7/12/2003	2021 to 2024
Seat 24		Braun	Dan		Atlantic City Rescue Mission			1				11/12/2012	2021 to 2024
Seat 25		Fard	Mark		Emphrant Veteran's Services			1				3/12/2016	2022 to 2025
Seat 26		Constantina	Pat		Patriscane			1				1/29/2013	2022 to 2025
Seat 27		Charler	Wallace II		Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City			1				6/27/2023	2023 to 2026
<b>Education Representatives: 3 members required (additional members optional)</b>													
Seat 28	Required	Gaba	Dr. Barbara		Title II Adult Education and Literacy Provider			1				3/14/2017	2023 to 2026
Seat 29	Required	Guenther	Dr. Philip		County Voc Tech School in the local area			1				4/21/2022	2022 to 2025
<b>Government Partners: 2 members required (additional members optional)</b>													
Seat 30	Required	McClellan	Paul		ES / Wagner-Payne Representative				1			8/24/2010	2020 to 2025
Seat 31	Required	Titancki	Candace		DVRS Representative				1			10/6/2020	2023 to 2026
Seat 32		Gilmer	Farrort		Optional- County Edaf Social Services Rep				1			7/12/2004	2023 to 2026
Seat 33		Schleifer	Jan		FAA Tech Center				1			6/6/2017	2020 to 2025
<b>Other: Additional members may be appointed as appropriate</b>													
Seat 34		Kreischer	Tim		Atlantic County Special Services Coordinator					1		6/30/2023	2020 to 2023
					14	3	5	3	4	1			
					57%	24%	4%	12%	3%				