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*Workforce Investment Board of Passaic County*

# **Vision for Workforce Services in Passaic County**

## **2009-2014 Strategic Plan**

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## Executive Summary

From March through June, 2009, the Workforce Investment Board of Passaic County worked with a Steering Team and six industry-based subcommittees to develop a 5-year strategic plan for the County's workforce development activities. This plan provides recommendations on how to develop and implement seamless career pathways of education and services that will ensure that workers in six industry sectors have the skills and supports to meet employer needs. These industries are *Healthcare; Transportation, Logistics and Distribution; Green Jobs; Entrepreneurship; Educational Services and Entertainment, Arts and Retail.*

The plan also addresses strategies for meeting the needs of special populations in Passaic County--*disengaged young people*, including young people who are in danger of or who have *dropped out of high school and adjudicated youth; individuals transitioning off of welfare (TANF); ex-offenders; individuals with disabilities; English as a Second Language (ESL) and low literacy workers; and undocumented immigrants.*

Based on an analysis of Passaic County's industries and labor force, as well as its assets and challenges, the Steering team and the industry-based subcommittees identified overarching strategic goals and strategies to develop and implement career pathways in the County, as well as industry-specific goals and activities. They also developed recommendations for addressing the needs of the priority populations in the County.

### Overarching Strategic Goals and Activities for Implementing Industry Clusters

***Goal 1: Re-structure the Workforce Investment Board and its activities to support the development and implementation of a career pathways model in Passaic County.***

- a. Provide all WIB members with an introduction to career pathways planning to ensure they have necessary background knowledge and information.
- b. Create cluster-based WIB committees, one for each targeted industry cluster.
- c. Set up a Labor Market Information Data Collection and Analysis Committee to develop a plan and systems for collecting and sharing information.
- d. Work with the One Stop Oversight Committee to develop appropriate performance standards and expectations.
- e. Engage the Youth Council, the Disabilities Issues Committee, the Literacy Committee and the Faith-based Committee in pathways planning for their targeted populations.
- f. Develop revised Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to reflect new roles and responsibilities in implementing a career pathways model.

***Goal 2: Develop strategic partnerships that support each of the targeted industry clusters.***

- a. Develop and implement an outreach and engagement plan to engage key stakeholders in each of the industry clusters.

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- b. Hire County-based Cluster Coordinators to manage partner development, creation of career pathways, coordination of pathways events, etc. within each of the industry clusters.
- c. Work with the County Board of Chosen Freeholders to take a leadership role in the development of pathways within Passaic County.

### ***Goal 3: Develop and implement a data collection system to monitor trends and develop more effective career pathways and programs and services.***

- a. Convene a WIB Labor Market Information Collection and Analysis Committee responsible for ensuring that accurate, timely information is available for cluster planning and development.
- b. Develop and implement a data/information collection and sharing plan.
- c. Advocate with the State to allow direct WIB access to Department of Labor and Workforce Development data so that local areas can create their own reports on a timely basis.
- d. Develop asset maps for each industry cluster.

### ***Goal 4: Align workforce development programs and activities to reflect cluster-based approach.***

- a. Develop detailed competency and skill models for the key occupations in each of the targeted clusters that reflect the needs and issues of local employers.
- b. Develop “road maps” that describe the knowledge and skill requirements for targeted industries and occupations and the pathways for development and advancement within those industries.
- c. Map all available funding resources and develop strategies for aligning these resources in support of the targeted career pathways.
- d. Identify barriers to employment for targeted populations and gaps in funding and programs and services and develop plans to address these issues.
- e. Set performance measures and expectations that reflect cluster-based goals.
- f. Make better strategic use of the County’s educational resources.
- g. Structure the WIB Request for Proposal (RFP) process to reflect the values and expectations of the career pathways approach.

### ***Goal 5: Develop the capacity of the One Stop system to support a career pathways approach.***

- a. Provide One Stop staff with accurate, timely information and tools that allows them to effectively assess and counsel job seeker customers.
- b. Develop assessment processes that reflect the needs of employers, provide appropriate information for effective career decision-making and are consistent across all programs.

- c. Explore the re-deployment of One Stop staff to better support career clusters.
- d. Redesign customer flow to reflect changes in assessment processes and referrals for programs and services along career pathways.
- e. Redesign programs and services to better support the implementation of career pathways.
- f. Develop and implement a staff training plan for all One Stop staff, including WIA, Wagner-Peyser, TANF/TANF, community-based organizations, etc.

***Goal 6: Develop a technology plan to make better, more strategic use of technology to support information/data-gathering, communications and provision of services.***

- a. Develop a social media strategy to communicate with employers, job seekers and other stakeholders.
- b. Create online learning opportunities and connect to existing distance learning strategies and programs.
- c. Provide “virtual” One Stop services.
- d. Use laptops to make staff more mobile and allow them to provide on-site services to employers and to job seekers at community and faith-based organizations.

***Goal 7: Develop career awareness and exploration strategies to “market” industry clusters to County residents.***

- a. Adapt existing career pathways materials for use in Passaic County.
- b. Develop a repository of teacher materials and lesson plans that help teachers and youth providers integrate career lessons into the classroom.
- c. Have the WIB and the Freeholder Board sponsor Career Awareness weeks that target specific industries and jobs in those industries.

**Recommendations for Serving Priority Populations**

1. Develop a common framework for assessment and career planning that is utilized by all agencies/organizations and that is based on best practices in career planning, not on program requirements.
2. Develop protocols and processes for ensuring that providers working with special populations have access to accurate, timely labor market information as well as information on available programs and services, education and training, etc.
3. Develop “bridge” programs that teach basic skills like communication, math and problem-solving at the same time individuals are learning occupational skills.
4. Develop appropriate “wrap-around” services to support at-risk workers in specific industries.
5. Develop asset maps of programs and services for targeted populations.
6. Develop social service provider networks to work together on a regular basis to address the needs of targeted populations.

## **Background & Planning**

In March 2009, the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) of Passaic County, under the direction of Executive Director, Lanisha Makle, began developing its 5-year strategic plan. The goal of the planning process was to develop strategies for adopting a sector-based, career pathways approach to workforce development within the County to ensure that the County continues to supply a trained workforce to meet business needs.

A Steering Team comprised of representatives from key business, educational, community-based organizations and government agencies, was convened to develop the overall plan. Six subcommittees, one for each industry sector, were also formed. Business, education and, where appropriate, union representatives from the targeted sectors were involved. The sector subcommittees were:

- **Educational Services**
- **Entertainment, Arts and Retail (EAR)**
- **Entrepreneurship**
- **Green Jobs**
- **Healthcare**
- **Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD)**

The Steering Team and the subcommittees met several times from March through June, both in face-to-face sessions, as well as through conference calls. They reviewed available demographic and labor market data and existing information on the current state of career pathways in the targeted sectors, including work being done regionally through the North Jersey WIRED initiative.

Meeting notes, best practice examples and source documents were maintained online at a private, password-protected wiki (<http://passaicwfd.pbworks.com/>) that was accessible to all committee members. From this information, they developed the recommended strategic goals and activities discussed in this plan to implement the career pathways model in Passaic County.

## **The Career Pathways Model**

To meet the needs of Passaic County employers and residents, the Workforce Investment Board is using an industry-based career pathways approach. The goal of this model is to create seamless pathways of education and other services that workers can use to continually develop their skills and access the demand jobs in the community. Career pathways also provide opportunities for County residents to move into work that pays family-sustaining wages.

In developing this strategic plan, both the Steering Team and the sector-based subcommittees evaluated the current ability of the workforce system to implement a career pathways approach, based on a number of elements required for successful implementation. These include:

- **Strategic partnerships** with key employers, educational institutions, workforce development organizations and others.

- **Data** to identify gaps in education and training and to measure outcomes in terms of educational attainment and economic advancement.
- **Road maps** jointly produced by educators, workforce development professionals, educational institutions and employers that show the connections between education and training programs and jobs at different levels within the sector.
- **Clear linkages between remedial, academic and occupational programs** within educational institutions and easy articulation of credits across institutions to enable students to progress seamlessly from one level to the next and to earn credentials while improving their career prospects and working within the field.
- **Curricula defined in terms of competencies required for jobs and further education at the next level**, tied where possible to industry skill standards, certifications and licensing requirements.
- Opportunities to **learn by doing through** class projects, labs, simulations and internships.
- **Programs offered at times and places (including workplaces) that are convenient for working adults** and structured in small modules, each **leading to a recognized credential**.
- The **flexibility to enter and exit education** as circumstances permit.
- **"Wrap-around" support services**, including career assessment and counseling, case management, child care, financial aid and job placement.
- **"Bridge programs" for educationally disadvantaged youth and adults** that teach the basic skills like communication, math and problem-solving in the context of training for advancement to better jobs and post-secondary training.
- **Connections to the K-12** system that provide educators with the information they need to effectively advise and prepare young people for demand industries and occupations and parents and students with the information necessary for effective career decision-making.
- **Alignment of both public and private funding sources**, such as WIA Title I and Title II, Carl Perkins, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance, (GA), and Workforce Learning Links, so that these resources are supporting skill-based training for in-demand occupations along a career path.
- **Capacity of workforce system agencies** (such as One Stop Career Centers and community-based organizations) to provide the assessment, career counseling and job search supports necessary to advise and prepare adults for advancement or to transfer into new industries.

Through the strategic planning process, it was clear that there are no industries where there are coherent, coordinated programs and resources that guide County residents through a career

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path. Developing the infrastructure and processes to accomplish this is a priority goal of this plan.

### **Labor Market Analysis**

Passaic County is located in the heart of Northern New Jersey and is part of what is considered the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan Area. The County offers easy access to New York City and other metropolitan areas via automobile, bus, freight and passenger train. There is also ready access to three international airports (Newark Liberty, LaGuardia and John F. Kennedy) and the Ports of Elizabeth and Newark, making Passaic County a desirable place to both live and work.

#### **The Labor Force**

The County currently boasts a population of 491,000, which is projected to increase within the next five years to approximately 500,000. Within the next 5 years, slightly more than half of the workforce of 240,000 will be female and 52% of the workforce will be non-white—37% Hispanic and 15% African-American. In addition, within 5 years, the majority of the County's population (54%) will be under 20 or over 55.

Passaic is a county of extremes—geographically, economically, and educationally. Portions of the County are densely populated—Paterson is New Jersey's third largest city—while other parts are rural, lacking the public transportation infrastructure necessary to get those residents to work. According to the latest Census data (2007), the majority of the County's residents live in its three largest municipalities--the City of Paterson, the City of Clifton and the City of Passaic.

Educationally, the County is also split. While 24% of County residents have a BA or higher, significant portions of the population lack the basic credentials and skills to be successful at many Passaic County jobs. According to Passaic County's Literacy Plan:

- 31.4% of those over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma, including 45% of the residents in the city of Paterson. These rates are much higher than the state average of 23.3%. Over 100,000 people living in the County do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Statistics from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) show that 50% of the general population score in level 1 or 2 of the prose literacy scale. In Passaic County that statistic is over 60%. The National Governor's Association, as well as other organizations in the country, have identified Level Three proficiency as a minimum standard of success in today's labor market.
- Of the adults in the county who are between the ages of 18 and 64, nearly half speak a language other than English. There are 40,065 Passaic County residents who reported to the Census that they speak English "not well" and another 11,225 that said they speak English "not at all".

This educational divide is reflected in the economic extremes of the County. While the median family income for the County as a whole is \$56,054 (2000 Census), the median family income in the City of Paterson is \$35,420, with almost 20% of Paterson families living at or below the poverty line. The median family income in the City of Passaic is \$34,935, with 18% of families living in poverty. Not coincidentally, these two cities also have high high school dropout rates.

These income differentials create vast disparities in access to education, transportation, housing, reliable childcare, etc., which, in turn has a significant influence on the businesses the County is able to attract and the range of workforce supports and services the County must offer to create effective career pathways.

### **Impact of the Recession**

The current recession has had a profound impact on Passaic County's economy.

In the past year Passaic County's unemployment rate has nearly doubled, going from 5.7% in April 2008 to 10.7% in May 2009. This is higher than the overall state rate of 9.2% and is the highest of all of the Northern New Jersey counties (Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union and Warren).

Men and those with a high school diploma or less are being hardest hit. Of the 15,463 unemployment claimants in April 2009, 56% were male, 25% had less than a high school education and 45% had a high school diploma. The high unemployment rates among those with a high school diploma or less is symptomatic of not only the current recession, but also the ongoing loss of less skilled jobs from the economy. Even as companies begin to recover, it's likely that many of the jobs formerly held by these workers will not return.

In addition to the high unemployment rate among workers with less education, it's clear that more highly educated workers are not immune to job loss either, as the County is seeing a significant increase in the numbers of workers with Associate's, Bachelor's and graduate degrees being laid off as well. Many local employers see these layoffs as temporary responses to the economic downturn and anticipate re-hiring as the economy begins to improve. This is particularly true of the healthcare sector, where the demographics of an aging population make healthcare critical. However there is no clear picture of when this growth will occur and how many jobs it will create.

### **Passaic County Assets and Challenges**

In addressing its economic development needs and challenges, Passaic County has a number of key assets supporting its efforts.

- **Location**--As noted previously, the County's location offers easy access to New York City and other metropolitan areas via automobile, bus, freight and passenger train, as well as through major airports. Ironically, this wide access to transportation has also made it easier for some County residents to go outside of the County for employment. For residents, this flexibility is vital. However, it also puts more pressure on local employers when workers have greater choices in where they seek employment.

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- **Educational Institutions**—The County is home to Passaic County Community College, William Paterson University, Montclair State University and Berkeley College, in addition to an array of trade and technical schools. These provide the necessary infrastructure for developing and delivering skill-based education and training in support of career pathways. In a number of cases, these efforts are already underway and provide models for continuing educational development.
- **Development of Regional Career Pathways through the North Jersey WIRED Initiative**— The Passaic County WIB has been working with the 9 WIBs in Northern New Jersey through the North Jersey Partners (funded through a USDOL WIRED grant) to use a regional approach to economic and workforce development. These activities are discussed in greater detail in the industry sector sections of this plan. It's important to note, however, that overall, the WIRED partnerships provide Passaic County with a framework and resources for developing key career pathways and connections both regionally and within the County.
- **Established relationships with Chambers of Commerce and key businesses**-- Implementing a sector-based career pathways model requires developing extensive partnerships with businesses in the targeted sectors. The Passaic County WIB has good working relationships with and is a member of all local area Chambers of Commerce, including the Greater Paterson Chamber, the North Jersey Regional Chamber, the Tri-County Chamber, and the Meadowlands Regional Chamber, as well as being a member of the Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey. It also has linkages with local businesses in most of the targeted sectors, particularly in healthcare.
- **Train connections between Paterson and Hackensack** that make it easier for workers to move between those two cities.
- **A Transportation Opportunity Center (TOC) operated by Meadowlink that provides assistance to job seekers in meeting transportation needs.** Job seekers can access the TOC through the One Stop Career Center.

The County also faces some challenges to implementing a career pathways model:

- **The majority of Passaic County's businesses are small--91% employ 20 or fewer employees.** This makes developing an industry sector-based series of career pathways somewhat more challenging as there are many more businesses to engage in the process. It also makes it more difficult to disseminate information and develop effective channels of communication with these businesses as there is no centralized way to identify and communicate with them. Finally, the current strategies for engagement of employers emphasize involving them in high-touch, high commitment activities, such as participation in WIB committees. However, only larger companies have the staff capacity to participate in these ways, so the voices of smaller companies are not heard.
- **Fragmentation of programs, services and communication channels is a major issue.** For example, there are a number of career and educational programs available

through K-12 school districts, community and faith-based organizations, the One Stop Career Center system and the institutions of higher education in the County. However, these programs are not aware of one another or of how the services they offer could be integrated and organized to support particular career pathways. There is no single way for people to access these services, nor do these programs share a common vision for how to effectively prepare people for the demand jobs in the County.

There are also few shared communication channels so that organizations can be easily updated on changes in programs, skill needs, etc. As a result, training and education programs do not necessarily reflect the skill needs of employers and individuals do not have the information they need on all of the available programs and resources to make informed career choices.

Another impact of fragmentation is that funding resources that support career training and education in the County are not being used in a coordinated way to support ongoing professional development for residents. In part this is because federal and state funding for workforce learning goes through both the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, depending on the program. Local school districts also provide their own funding and set their own priorities. In addition, employers, unions and professional associations are also funding and/or providing training programs. The result is that the County is not getting the most “bang for the buck,” because there is no concerted effort to look at how resources could be used in a coordinated way to support specific career pathways.

Finally, because of the fragmented nature of career-related activities in the County, there are no clear, usable “road maps” that have been jointly developed by employers, educators and service providers that will effectively communicate to all residents the preparation and pathways associated with the County’s demand industries and occupations. Further, because there has been no coordinated development, there are also gaps in services that would better support residents who want to prepare for careers in specific industries. Without these road maps and the development of coordinated services, workforce preparation is haphazard at best. At worst, it is completely ineffective in preparing job seekers for demand jobs and meeting employer expectations.

- Related to the issue of fragmentation is the fact that **no single entity or organization is responsible for coordinating and developing career pathways in Passaic County.** The North Jersey Partners is attempting to address this issue on a regional level by hiring coordinators for targeted sectors, but these individuals are serving 9 counties and, depending on the sector (such as in the case of TLD), employers in other counties are more of a priority. While the Passaic County WIB would logically play this role for the County, it currently lacks the staff capacity to effectively manage partnership development and other pathway-building activities for all of the sectors. This issue must be addressed if the WIB and the County is going to seriously pursue a career pathways approach to workforce and economic development.

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- **There is a lack of up-to-date, usable and accessible data and information that can be used for ongoing career pathways planning.** While the State is beginning to address this issue through its *Real Time Jobs in Demand* project, which provides monthly detailed updates on the demand jobs in each county, there are still issues in terms of data collection and reporting with this process. Counties must wait for the State to provide the information and have no ability to develop their own customized reports. There are also issues around the validity of some of the data. *Real Time Jobs* also does not provide information on skill requirements or needs, so it doesn't help the WIB drill down for effective planning and program development.

In addition to challenges in getting demand data, there is also little useful information on the supply of labor. We can only guess at the skill levels of workers based on gross measures such as levels of education or former occupations (and even that data is difficult to find), making it challenging to effectively plan the appropriate education and supports for developing pathways. At best, the information currently available for planning is anecdotal, based on what companies and agencies tell the WIB. This means that information is incomplete, not provided in a usable format that is easily shared with others, and may be skewed toward the needs of larger companies and the groups of workers currently being served by the workforce system.

These data issues were particularly evident as we began to gather information to develop this strategic plan. In most cases, limited information was available that was specific to Passaic County--occupational data, for example, was available in some sectors only for the State. It was also impossible to find good meaningful information on the supply of labor in different sectors. Most was anecdotal ("Employers tell us that their staff don't have technology skills") and none of it was collected in any systemic way that would be useful for analysis and planning. Addressing the data collection and analysis issues is, of necessity, a critical priority if pathways planning is going to be truly effective.

- **The One Stop Career Center system currently lacks the capacity to implement a career pathways model.** The County's One Stop Career Center system is a critical delivery mechanism for career pathways services. The One Stop works with dislocated workers, TANF recipients and disadvantaged youth and adults and for many job seekers is their primary connection to the job market. However, while the One Stop's career counselors and other staff have some basic information on demand occupations and employers in Passaic County, they do not have access to the detailed information necessary to effectively counsel and guide their job seeker customers along career paths.

Further, the One Stop service delivery system and customer flow is not geared toward supporting career paths. The intake and assessment process does not reflect the needs of employers or specific industries, nor does it help customers accurately assess their ability to enter into or continue along a career path. In addition, the services available to customers do not reflect their needs and the realities of the

workplace. For example, transportation is an issue for many customers in accessing employment. While vouchers are available for public transportation, access to jobs is still limited to those areas served by the public transportation system. Employers that are not accessible via public transportation do not have access to the full labor pool and the job seeker customers necessarily have limited job options. Other workforce areas have addressed this problem by developing programs to help job seekers purchase cars or by creating shuttle services that can get job seekers to employers. These are the kinds of services that are necessary to effectively implement a career pathways approach that benefits both local employers and residents of the County.

- **The K-12 educational system is disconnected from the needs and issues of industries and does not support career pathways education in a coherent, systemic way.** The K-12 educational system is the most important pathway for preparing young people for their adult careers and for exposing them to various career opportunities in preparation for post-secondary education and training. Unfortunately, there is no shared vision within the K-12 system about the need for or content of career information and education. Further, there are few ongoing, effective connections between schools, employers and workforce partners that provide educators, students and parents with the career information they need for effective decision-making. While New Jersey state standards include career-related expectations, No Child Left Behind requirements put the majority of the focus in most schools on preparation for the core testing that young people must pass, not on career activities. However, in order to build effective career pathways, connections must be made with schools to ensure that they are providing young people and their families with good information about the education and skills needed to be successful after high school. Schools must also be providing the educational programs that give young people the foundational skills they need for post-secondary success.

## **Selection of Industry Sectors**

As noted earlier in this plan, Passaic County has selected 6 industry sectors in which to build career pathways. They are (in alphabetical order):

- ***Educational Services***
- ***Entertainment, Arts and Retail (EAR)***
- ***Entrepreneurship***
- ***Green Jobs***
- ***Healthcare***
- ***Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD)***

These clusters were selected for several reasons. With the exception of Green Jobs, these industries account for the majority of economic activity in Passaic County. Further, there are already a number of local and regional workforce development activities underway to support the development of talent in these industries that provides the Passaic County WIB with

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opportunities to leverage resources and existing assets. These industries also offer a range of jobs, including those “middle skill” jobs requiring some post-secondary education but less than a 4-year college degree, that will help build a healthy regional economy. Finally, in the case of Green Jobs, the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has provided a new infusion of funding to support the development of a green infrastructure, making this the perfect moment to focus on building this new industry in the region.

### **Passaic Workforce System Values**

In its initial planning process, the Steering Team identified a number of core tenets to be integrated throughout the plan. They are:

- The system should be business-driven, based on the needs and requirements of demand industries and occupations in the County and region.
- All residents in all parts of the County should be able to access and benefit from the career pathways approach.
- Connectivity to the K-12 system is critical. Educators, parents and students must understand the needs and requirements of business and have access to tools and roadmaps to help them plan for the future.
- The linkages, programs and services that are developed should take into account the regional nature of the County’s economy. They should also be pro-active, agile, flexible and responsive to the needs of both County business and residents.
- Technology should be leveraged to expand and improve the quality of services and to provide greater access, transparency and accountability.
- A career pathways approach relies heavily on effective channels of communication and information. Therefore it is critical that all partners focus on developing and implementing appropriate communication protocols and strategies that support the free flow of information.
- All staff must develop a common vision and culture in support of the County’s career paths. Everyone should understand what skills and education are necessary for success in the County’s demand industries and occupations. Programs and services should be aligned with these paths and staff should be able to help County residents effectively navigate their way to success.

### **Over-Arching Strategic Goals and Activities**

The ultimate challenge to Passaic County’s implementation of a career pathways based approach is the fact that there is no shared picture of the needs and issues of the County’s industries and of its job seekers and there is no shared vision for how to provide the programs and services that are necessary to effectively prepare County residents for job opportunities in

the region. Without a shared understanding of the issues and a coordinated approach to preparing the County's job seekers, it is impossible to implement a sector-based strategy. Therefore, the most critical goal of this strategic plan is to bring together the Passaic County community to develop a workforce system that is capable of supporting Passaic County's industry sectors and its residents.

Later in this plan, we describe the specific needs and issues of the six industry clusters that are the primary economic engines for the county and the strategic goals and activities that have been developed to support those clusters. We also describe the issues and needs of several targeted populations in the County and the strategies for programs and services that should be incorporated into pathways planning to ensure access to careers for all County residents. However, in order to effectively implement a demand-driven, industry cluster approach, the County must first create the infrastructure and framework upon which the career pathways model can be built.

### **Strategic Goal 1**

*Re-structure the Workforce Investment Board and its activities to support the development and implementation of a career pathways model in Passaic County.*

The Workforce Investment Board of Passaic County is charged with coordinating the workforce development activities of the County. In its role as a convener and broker, the WIB helps gather and disseminate information, facilitates planning and helps develop strategic partnerships to implement the pathways approach. It also works to address the needs of special populations, such as those with low literacy levels, individuals with disabilities and disadvantaged youth. To accomplish these tasks, the following is recommended:

- 1. Provide all WIB members with an introduction to pathways planning to provide them with necessary background knowledge and information.** Because the WIB and its members will be major drivers of the County's pathways planning effort, it's important that they have thorough knowledge and understanding of the career pathways model and planning process.
- 2. Create cluster-based WIB Committees, one for each industry cluster,** charged with planning for and implementing the suggestions in this strategic plan. These committees should include key leaders from economic development, government, education and workforce development who can help guide and develop a coordinated approach to serving each cluster most effectively. See Appendix A for a draft WIB organizational structure.
- 3. Set up a Labor Market Information Data Analysis/Collection committee to develop a plan and systems for collecting and sharing information** from employers, educational providers and others. This will allow stakeholders to better monitor occupational trends, skill requirements and skill gaps and provide more accurate information for planning. More on the activities of this committee is discussed in Strategic Goal 2.
- 4. Work with the One Stop Oversight Committee to develop the appropriate performance standards and expectations.** The Oversight Committee is responsible for overseeing One Stop performance. In order to ensure the effective implementation of a career pathways

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model, they will need to develop additional standards and expectations that will measure implementation and effectiveness. They will need to work closely with the cluster-based committees and the Labor Market Information and Data Collection committee in this process.

5. **Engage the Youth Council, the Disabilities Issues Committee, the Literacy Committee and the Faith-based Committee in pathways planning for their targeted populations.** It may make sense to have members of each of these committees serve on one or more cluster-based committees as a way to share information and incorporate the needs of these populations into planning. There will also be a need for each of these committees to consider how the pathways model will impact their work and priorities so that they can revise their work plans accordingly.
6. **Develop revised Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to reflect new roles and responsibilities in implementing a career pathways model.** MOUs are required by law and define the relationships between the County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Fiscal Agent, the WIB, the One Stop Operator and the One Stop Partners. MOUs also lay out performance expectations and requirements in terms of how programs and services should be administered. As the WIB and its stakeholders redefine and re-align programs and services to support the career pathways approach, the MOUs will need to be re-defined to reflect these new expectations. For example, this plan recommends the development of common assessment and counseling protocols among the Partners that are geared toward meeting the needs of employers and helping customers access career paths. As these strategies are developed, the Partner MOUs should reflect these expectations. These MOUs should also reflect the expectations for local roles, responsibilities and service delivery laid out by the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) in its WIB Handbook.

### **Strategic Goal 2**

*Develop strategic partnerships that support each of the targeted industry clusters.*

To implement an effective career pathways model, it is critical that the WIB develop strategic partnerships with key employers, professional and trade associations, the K-16 educational system, government agencies, the One Stop Career Center, and community and faith-based organizations. Some of the key partners are already members of the Workforce Investment Board and others, particularly educators and employers, were further engaged through this strategic planning process. However, these partnerships are still new and the WIB must work to strengthen them and to further engage other partners who are not currently participating.

To achieve this goal, the following is recommended:

1. **Develop and implement an outreach and engagement plan.** This plan should identify the key players to be engaged for each cluster. It should also include multiple options for engagement, including:
  - Participation in WIB standing or ad hoc committees, including the cluster committees and the Regional Advisory Committees established through the WIRED initiative.

- Participation in County Forums that focus on issues specific to a cluster (i.e. Healthcare needs) or that cut across clusters (i. e. technology training).
  - Participation in focus groups, surveys, etc. to collect data and information on specific issues and needs. This includes involving stakeholders in the development of competency and skill models that reflect their needs.
  - Creation of cluster-specific e-newsletters or blogs that provide ongoing information about developments and issues in the sector.
  - Opportunities to participate in mentoring, job shadowing and internship activities with the K-12 system.
  - Use of social media, such as LinkedIn and Facebook Groups for specific clusters, as well as Twitter accounts for the clusters to share quick tips and resources.
2. **Hire County-based Cluster Coordinators to manage partner development, creation of career pathways, coordination of pathways events, etc. within each of the clusters.** Although regional Coordinators are currently working in a few of the clusters (Healthcare, TLD), these positions cover other counties and cannot provide the dedicated time to Passaic County necessary to adequately support the cluster approach. The Coordinators would work closely with WIB Committee(s) associated with their cluster, as well as with the One Stop Business Resource Center and appropriate business and community partners. It may be possible to fund these positions through partnerships with employers, community and faith-based organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc. AmeriCorps/VISTA volunteers may also be another potential source of staff.
3. **Work with the County Board of Chosen Freeholders to take a leadership role in the development of pathways within the County.** While the Workforce Investment Board of Passaic County plays an important role in the engagement of stakeholders in the career pathways development process, it is critical that the Board of Chosen Freeholders also be engaged in these activities. As the governmental leaders for the County, they have a large stake in the County's economic growth. Championing the issue of workforce development as a key economic development strategy for the County can provide much-needed marketing and support for pathways planning. Suggested strategies include:
- Having the Board of Chosen Freeholders sponsor many of the pathways development events, such as Employer Forums and cluster career fairs.
  - Involving Freeholders in cluster planning sessions.
  - Developing marketing and outreach materials, such as e-newsletters or a blog, that show the Board engaging in discussions around cluster and career pathways issues.

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- Providing Freeholders with talking points and information that can be used at public meetings, community events, etc.

### **Strategic Goal 3**

*Develop and implement a data collection system to monitor trends and develop more effective career pathways and programs and services.*

Lack of accurate, usable, accessible and complete information is a major impediment to implementing the career pathways approach. Some organizations are gathering data and information on their own--for example, the regional Healthcare Coordinator is gathering information on employer needs--but this information is only accessible by reading Coordinator reports. Organizations must first know that the information is available and then know to ask for it. Further, this information is not presented in a standardized, searchable format that would allow stakeholders to, for example, search for employers that had similar skill shortages.

To build effective career pathways, it is critical that the WIB develop systems for collecting, analyzing and sharing key data on employer skill needs, training programs, supportive services, etc. This information should be accessible to all stakeholders involved in the planning process, preferably in a real-time, searchable database. It should include not just data currently collected by the One Stop, but also applicable data from employers, higher education, the K-12 system, adult education, and community and faith-based organizations. This data should not only provide information for planning purposes, it should also be data that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. The WIB should also work to share this data and information in ways that are usable not only for pathways planning, but also for individual career decision-making and planning.

Building this information infrastructure is a major priority, as it is the only way that the WIB and its partners can be sure that they are making data-driven decisions in the planning process.

1. **Convene a WIB Committee responsible for labor market information data collection, analysis and sharing.** This would be a new standing committee and its primary function would be to initially develop a plan for data collection and analysis and then to oversee its implementation and make refinements as necessary. Members of this Committee should represent all major stakeholder groups (the cluster industries, education, government, the One Stop system, etc.) so that the data collection needs and issues of all groups can be represented.
2. **Develop and implement a data/information collection and sharing plan.** This includes identifying the data to collect from employers, educational programs, supportive services, etc. that will allow for effective pathways planning and communication about the pathways. The plan should also include strategies for collecting the data and for developing a database or other system that provides searchable, actionable, real-time information that can be accessed for planning and decision-making. This plan must include strategies for ensuring that labor market data and information is funneled to front line staff, such as One Stop Career Counselors, TANF case workers and case managers at other organizations who are working with job seekers.

3. **Advocate with the State to allow direct WIB access to Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) data so that local areas can do their own reports.** LWD has access to employer and job seeker information that would be extremely helpful to Passaic County's planning efforts. However, to receive reports, the WIB Director must request that they be created by LWD staff, which can take weeks or months to receive. If Passaic County had the ability to access portions of the data and create their own reports, this would allow them to focus their own data collection efforts only on that data that is unavailable through the State system.
4. **Develop asset maps for each cluster,** similar to the BioOne Asset map ([http://www.bio-one.org/google\\_asset\\_map/asset\\_map.html](http://www.bio-one.org/google_asset_map/asset_map.html)). These asset maps should include associated businesses, training and education programs, supportive services, the One Stop Career Center, etc.

#### **Strategic Goal 4**

*Align workforce development programs and activities to reflect cluster-based approach.*

As strategic partnerships are formed and information collection and analysis systems are put into place, the WIB and its partners will need to take steps to bring programs and services into alignment with the career pathways approach. One of the major issues in pathways development is the fact that organizations and their programs and services are disconnected from each other and fragmented throughout the County and the region. In order to get the most "bang for the buck" and develop the appropriate programs and supports the County will need to focus on aligning its workforce development efforts with the needs and issues of each of its targeted clusters.

Recommended strategies for achieving this include:

1. **Develop detailed competency and skill models for the key occupations in each of the targeted clusters that reflect the needs and issues of local employers.** Generic competency models exist for most of the clusters. Examples of these are posted in the wiki used for the development of this strategic plan. For them to reflect the needs of Passaic County employers, however, the WIB will need to adapt these models based on feedback from employers in each of the clusters. This can be done through focus groups and planning sessions. The process itself is also a valuable strategy for engaging employers and other stakeholders in understanding and supporting the career pathways approach.
2. **Develop "road maps" that describe knowledge and skill requirements for targeted industries and occupations and the pathways for development and advancement within those industries.** These maps should also identify available education and training options and the supportive services available to help local residents prepare for these key occupations. The maps should be jointly developed with employers, the K-16 educational system, government agencies, the One Stop Career Center system and community and faith-based organizations in the County so that all available options are included. These maps will also indicate where there may be gaps in services and supports--for example, where there may be a need to create a training program or to

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address a particular barrier faced by the workers employed in that industry or occupation. .

- **Map all available funding resources and develop strategies for aligning these resources in support of the targeted career pathways.** As noted previously, workforce development activities in the County are funded through a variety of entities. School districts receive funds through local property taxes and the Department of Education. Occupational skills training and adult literacy program funding comes from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. For college-level programs, individuals can access state and federal financial aid and the community colleges and public colleges and universities access funding from the State and other sources. Each of these funding sources has its own “strings” attached to the use of the money and each entity making decisions about how to use the funding is working with their own priorities.

In order to most effectively leverage its resources, however, the County must 1) understand the funding that is being utilized for educational and workforce development activities and 2) work with all stakeholders to better align use of these resources in support of the career pathways approach.

The WIB is already attempting to do this in its use of Recovery Act funding, as described in its Recovery Act Strategic Plan, recently submitted to the State. Individual Training Account funds and On-the-Job training, for example, will be geared primarily toward occupations that fall into one of the six targeted industry clusters in this plan. More details are available in the Recovery Act plan.

- 3. Identify barriers to employment for different populations and gaps in funding and programs and services and develop plans to address these.** One of the most important components of effective career pathways planning is ensuring that the needs and issues of the workforce in accessing jobs are also addressed. These issues tend to cut across clusters and to include problems such as lack of transportation, access to affordable childcare, etc. There are also certain worker populations that face multiple barriers, such as ex-offenders, disadvantaged youth and TANF recipients. One of the goals of a career pathways approach is to provide these workers with pathways out of poverty into better-paying jobs. Therefore concurrent with planning the training and educational programs necessary to provide workers with the requisite skills, plans must also be developed to remove barriers that impede access to jobs for certain populations. More information on this is included in the section on *Priority Populations*.
- 4. Set performance measures and expectations to reflect cluster-based goals.** The adage that you “get what you measure” is nowhere more true than in the workforce development system. Therefore it is important that the WIB and its sector committees set performance goals and expectations that are consistent with the career cluster approach. For example, in its One Stop oversight capacity, the WIB should set clear expectations with the One Stop Career Center about how the One Stop should be assessing, counseling and training One Stop customers to support the career pathways. The WIB

will also have to revise its “demand occupation list,” which provides guidance to the One Stops about the training programs that can be paid for through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and other One Stop funding.

**5. Make better strategic use of the County’s educational resources.** Passaic County is blessed with a number of educational institutions with resources and capacity to provide the appropriate training and services to support career pathways. Each institution is uniquely positioned to provide services to various populations. In the pathways planning process, it will be critical to maximize use of these resources. For example, the Vocational Technical Schools have both day offerings for traditional age students and evening options for adult students. Through their evening programs, they have the capacity to supplement education and training that is provided through Passaic County Community College, which can expand opportunities for working adults.

**6. Structure the WIB Request for Proposal (RFP) process to reflect the values and expectations of the career pathways approach.** The WIB of Passaic County contracts for many of its services through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, which clearly communicates the program models and standards of service expected from potential providers. Therefore, in structuring its RFPs, the WIB will need to incorporate pathways practices and expectations into the process. At a minimum, these would include:

- *A focus on the targeted industries and populations identified in this plan.* Priority would be given to those projects that support career pathways development, particularly for targeted populations.
- *Inclusion of one or more of the elements described in the Career Pathways Model section of this plan in any program design.* For example, encouraging projects that are project-based, incorporate both literacy and occupational skills training, use a competency-based curriculum that addresses the skill needs of employers in the targeted pathway and that provide wrap-around support services specifically geared toward both the needs of the industry and those of the targeted workforce.
- *Use of assessment tools and processes that reflect the requirements of specific industries, as well as best practices in career assessment.* These assessment tools and processes should be coordinated among all partners responding to an RFP.
- *Knowledge of and experience with both the targeted populations to be served, as well as the industry clusters.* Providers should be able to connect to job requirements and job placement opportunities within the demand industries. They should also demonstrate how they will tie into any other cluster activities that may be happening.
- *Staff and organizational capacity to access and use career pathways and labor market information in the assessment and career planning process with customers.*
- *For programs that serve youth, priority should be given to those programs that focus on dropout prevention, services to out-of-school youth and/or youth involved with the juvenile justice system.* These programs should be clearly tied to

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occupations in one of the targeted career pathways. Further, because of the WIB's desire to nurture entrepreneurship through community-based projects, these too would receive priority.

More specific requirements will need to be developed as part of the career pathways planning process. For example, healthcare employers may identify assessment tools and processes that are specific to their industry. Therefore, RFPs that would be soliciting providers to serve populations in these industries would need to include information on the specific assessments that providers would be expected to use. Over time, as the priorities and needs of the targeted industries and populations become clearer, the RFPs should reflect this changed thinking. They should evolve to elicit the kinds of programs and services necessary to serve the new understanding of a particular occupation, industry and/or population.

### **Strategic Goal 5**

*Develop the capacity of the One Stop system to support a career pathways approach.*

The One Stop Career Center system is the operational arm of the WIB, delivering programs and services according to guidelines established both by federal and state regulations, as well as the WIB Oversight Committee. In order for the One Stop to effectively support a career pathways approach, however, it must develop its capacity to do so.

Recommended activities to achieve this goal include:

1. **Provide One Stop staff with the information they need to effectively assess and counsel job seeker customers.** As the WIB works with its strategic partners to identify employer needs and to develop data collection systems and career pathways roadmaps, it must develop strategies for sharing this information with staff on a timely basis. This information should allow staff to effectively assess job seekers in terms of skills, interests, etc. so that job seeker customers can make informed choices about careers and training options. This means that it must be provided in a way that is useful for career counseling and service delivery.
2. **Develop assessment processes that reflect the needs of employers, provide appropriate information for effective career decision-making and are consistent across all programs.** Currently, the assessment tools and processes used in the One Stop Career Center do not reflect the realities of the workplace. Most of the One Stop partners assess for only two things--literacy levels and barriers to employment. To assess literacy, most partners use the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). However, this assessment is an academic tool, used for determining grade level performance--it is not based on the literacy needs of employers. And while assessing and addressing barriers to employment is important, barrier assessment is mostly used as a case management tool (i.e., which services does a client need to access) and is not particularly useful as a tool for accessing employment.

Another major problem with One Stop assessment processes is that the tools and processes are not consistent across all One Stop partners. TANF uses one set of tools and processes, Wagner-Peyser staff use another and WIA staff use yet another. However, to support career pathways, all partners must share the same assessment tools and processes if they are going to effectively counsel and prepare job seeker customers for the County's demand occupations. Assessment is a strategy for determining what individuals need to do in order to prepare for and move along a career path; it is not a function of what a particular funding source requires.

Therefore, as career pathways planning continues, the WIB and the One Stop Career Center system must work with employer partners and others to identify the assessment tools that will provide job seekers, employers and One Stop staff with the information they need to effectively prepare customers for demand jobs. Where possible, the One Stop should use the assessment tools being used by local employers in demand industries, both as a way to help employers pre-screen applicants, as well as to ensure that job seekers have the information they need to make informed decisions. This can be done as part of the assessment evaluation process currently taking place through a subcommittee of the WIB's Literacy Council.

At a minimum, the One Stop should explore workplace literacy assessment options, such as the WorkKeys Work Readiness assessment and credentialing process. WorkKeys is a tool developed by the ACT to assess key workplace readiness skills such as Reading for Information, Locating Information, and Applied Math. It is an employer-developed tool that assesses the skills employers have identified as critical and the results of the assessment have been mapped to over 15,000 occupations. Additional information on WorkKeys is available at <http://www.act.org/workkeys>.

- 3. Explore the re-deployment of One Stop staff to support career clusters.** One of the strategies used by many workforce systems to support career clusters is to create Cluster Specialist positions within the One Stop. These individuals have particular expertise in and knowledge of an industry and are able to provide job seekers with more in-depth support and counseling in accessing careers within that particular industry.

If the One Stop decides to use Cluster Specialists, they would still need to have generalist staff available to help job seeker customers determine the path that they should pursue. These staff would focus more on assessment and initial career exploration with job seekers and then would refer customers to the appropriate Cluster Specialist once a decision had been made.

- 4. Redesign the customer flow.** Of necessity, if assessment tools and processes are changing and staff are taking on different roles and responsibilities, the One Stop will need to re-evaluate and redesign the flow of job seeker customers to adapt. In general, it is suggested that the flow allow customers to first assess skills, interests, work values, etc. and conduct initial exploration of career options based on the results of assessments. Once this process is completed and an initial career plan is developed, then job seekers would then be referred to the Cluster Specialists who would support

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and assist job seekers in accessing their chosen career path. The initial assessment and career planning process can take place through a combination of individual and group activities to maximize use of staff.

5. **Redesign programs and services.** As pathways planning activities continue, gaps in services and programs will be identified. The One Stop Career Center system will need to use this information to redesign its programs and services, potentially seeking out new partnerships and refining its own program offerings. For example, the WIB is exploring the possibility of implementing a Driver's License Restoration program, modeled on a similar initiative in Essex County, as part of its planning for use of Recovery Act funds. It may also make sense to create Cluster Career Clubs that job seekers can access in order to network with other job seekers interested in the same cluster and to connect with the clusters' employers. These clubs can also be used as a way to regularly educate and support job seekers on the needs and issues of that specific industry.
6. **Develop and implement a staff training plan for both One Stop staff, as well as for the staff of One Stop partners, such as community-based organizations, Wagner-Peyser staff, etc.** For staff to support career pathways planning with job seeker customers, they need not only information, but also the appropriate skills. The North Jersey WIRED partners are already in the process of developing staff training programs to teach staff how to use labor market information for career planning, and Passaic County One Stop staff should be included in this effort. Staff will also need training in understanding the needs and issues of each of the industry clusters and in how to use the career pathways information for effective career counseling. New assessment tools and procedures will also be necessary and staff will need training in these as well.

Note that this training should be provided to ALL One Stop partners, including WIA, Wagner-Peyser, WorkFirst NJ and the staff of the various community-based organizations providing career assessment and counseling services to Passaic County job seekers. It is critical that all staff working with job seeker customers understand and are able to use career pathways strategies with customers. The quality of counseling and information cannot be a function of which staff person or agency is working with a job seeker.

### **Strategic Goal 6**

*Develop a technology plan to make better, more strategic use of technology to support information/data-gathering, communications and provision of services.*

Free and low-cost technology tools offer a number of opportunities for the WIB and its strategic partners to collect, analyze and share information, market programs and services and provide services to job seeker and employer customers. Most employers make extensive use of technology and the expectation is that the workforce system will do the same. In addition, effective use of technology allows the WIB and the One Stop to expand its engagement with the community and its ability to provide services.

In developing a technology plan, it's recommended that the WIB explore the following:

1. **Development of a social media strategy to communicate with employers, job seekers and other stakeholders.** Social media--blogs, wikis, social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook, Twitter, etc.--are transforming the ways that organizations do business. In most cases these tools are free or very low-cost, yet provide powerful opportunities for marketing, community building and information sharing. They are also a primary mechanism for connecting to younger workers, who make extensive use of social networks, text messaging and other social media tools.

The WIB has already experimented with using a wiki, which is a website that uses special software to easily create and edit web pages and is particularly useful in creating collaborative websites. This strategic plan was developed using a private wiki that allowed Steering team and subcommittee members to go to a central location for all meeting notes, source documents, links to best practices, etc. They also were able to add comments and suggestions that furthered discussions in between meetings and calls.

The WIB has also set up a blog where is is sharing articles, links and information related to workforce issues and industry developments of interest to Passaic County businesses and residents. With its Recovery Act funds, the WIB is also planning to set up e-newsletters and text messaging capabilities that will alert job seekers about appointments with counselors, workshop schedules, job openings and programs and services available through the One Stop Career Center.

Further, as part of its marketing efforts, the WIB has purchased *Constant Contact*, an email newsletter management system that will allow it to easily create and manage email newsletters for multiple audiences.

To gain full benefit from these tools, however, the WIB must be sure it plans a coordinated social media strategy that leverages all available communication tools most effectively. It may make sense, then, to create sector-specific groups on LinkedIn, a professional networking site used by a large number of employers. To reach youth, Facebook, MySpace and mass text messaging strategies will need to be explored. The WIB should also consider how it could coordinate its social media efforts with other organizations, such as the local Chambers or the North Jersey partners, creating "co-branding" opportunities to leverage resources, employer networks and established "brands."

In addition, the County and other workforce agencies will need to re-examine its policy of blocking access to social media for its employees. Staff will not be able to take advantage of the marketing, messaging and networking opportunities offered by social media if they are not able to access it.

2. **Creating online learning opportunities and connecting to existing distance learning.** Online learning has exploded in the past few years, not only in terms of 2 and 4-year college offerings that are available online, but also in terms of webinars, videos,

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tutorials, etc. that are available to address a variety of workforce and occupational skill needs.

In planning for career pathways, the WIB should be sure to catalog currently available online learning options and include them in the development of career roadmaps. This includes exploring online learning programs that are available through the professional associations that serve various industries. For example, there are a number of online courses available to serve the healthcare industry.

In addition, the WIB and its partners should also explore how it could use webinar and web conferencing capabilities to enhance offerings that are already available. For example, through *Go-To-Webinar*, for a relatively low monthly fee of \$99, a license to provide unlimited webinars to up to 1,000 people can be purchased. Other services, such as *ReadyTalk* and *DimDim* offer similar capabilities. With this capacity, the WIB and its partners could offer webinars for specific industry clusters or occupations, as well as professional development opportunities to One Stop and partner staff on ways to implement career pathways. This capability could also be used to conduct employer focus groups and share information on trends and developments in each of the industry clusters.

3. **Provision of “virtual” One Stop services.** Many One Stop customers do not want to come into the One Stop location to access services. This is particularly true for higher-skilled dislocated workers who are used to accessing information and services online. As part of a plan to make better use of technology, the WIB and One Stop should explore ways that services can be provided in a virtual environment. In many cases, this can be done for free or at very low-cost. For example, *Ning* ([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)) is a software platform that allows anyone to create their own social network, which includes forum discussions, events, blog posts, and photo and video-sharing capabilities. With this tool, networks could be created to support specific career clusters, allowing staff to share tips, links, videos, etc. related to the cluster and providing job seekers with an opportunity to network and get information on the cluster. Ning networks can be created for free, but there is also the option to pay \$20/month to run your own ads in the network. With this capacity, the One Stop could advertise job openings, feature particular employers or training programs, etc.
4. **Use of laptops to make staff more mobile and allow them to provide on-site services to employers and at community and faith-based organizations.** There has been an ongoing shift toward greater mobility of services occurring within the business community. Doctors and nurses use laptops in the examining room to record patient data during exams and in the TLD industry, drivers and floorworkers are using laptops and scanners to track the movement of packages through the system. Not only does this technology improve efficiency and productivity, it also allows services to be provided anywhere, at any time--something that's critical for WIBs and One Stops to embrace in order to effectively serve their customers.

Currently, to access services job seekers must physically go to the One Stop location. However, if staff were provided with laptops and Internet access, they could just as easily go into the community to provide assessment, career counseling and other services, allowing them to access customers who lack the time or willingness to go into the One Stop.

This same mobility would allow staff to better serve employer customers as well. Staff could, for example, use a laptop to enter information on skill needs into a database during an on-site interview with the employer. They could also use a laptop to administer assessments at the employer's location to prepare for customized job training and other services.

## **Strategic Goal 7**

*Develop career awareness and exploration strategies to “market” industry clusters to County residents.*

One of the roles of the Workforce Investment Board should be to provide County residents with concrete, usable information on the career opportunities available in targeted industries. This information should be provided both to young people (the emerging workforce), as well as to adults who are already working. Below are some suggested strategies to pursue in support of this goal.

1. **Adapt existing career pathways materials for Passaic County** to create brochures, websites, handouts, etc. that “sell” the pathways. Make these widely available throughout the community via the County website, schools, etc.
2. **Develop a repository of teacher materials and lesson plans that help teachers and youth providers integrate career lessons into the classroom.** The Delaware County STEM Career wiki at <http://dcstem.pbworks.com> is an example of how this could work. Workforce areas in Pennsylvania have also sponsored week-long teacher workshops in the summer that pair educators with an employer mentor for a one-week job shadow, after which teachers develop a lesson plan based on the experience.
3. **Have the WIB and the Freeholder Board sponsor Career Awareness Weeks that target a specific industry and jobs in those industries.** These should be marketed to the entire community and coordinated with schools and community-based organizations that work with job seekers, including the One Stop Career Centers. Specific activities could include
  - *Educators' Forum/Breakfast*--Bring together employers in the targeted sector and have them overview careers in the sector, required education and training, employer expectations, etc. to educate teachers, guidance counselors, youth services providers, etc.

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- *Public Forum*--Have employer panels present on career options in the targeted sectors to interested County residents, including students, parents and job seekers considering a career change.
- *Career Fair*--A community-wide event that allows individuals to interact directly with people in targeted occupations. Also consider creative themes, like a "Vehicular Career Day" where companies bring in various types of vehicles (ambulance, fire truck, cars, etc.) and talk about the associated careers.
- *Occupations in the Classroom*--During the Career Awareness Week, people within the targeted occupations make presentations in the classroom and at community organizations. These can also be done using videoconferencing to allow individuals from several different locations to "talk" with people in particular occupations.
- *Student Job Shadowing*--Connect young people to the workplace by having them participate in job shadows in the targeted industry. These can often be done as group tours/presentations and can start with middle school students.
- *Teachers in the Workplace*--Connect teachers with people in targeted industries and occupations for a day-long job shadow that culminates in a discussion about what has been learned about the jobs and the industry.

# INDUSTRY SECTORS

## Healthcare

### Issues and Context

Healthcare is the second largest industry in Passaic County, employing 23,000 individuals. Key employers include major hospitals and health systems, such as St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center and St. Mary's Hospital. Healthcare workers are also employed at doctor's offices and clinics, hospices, long-term care facilities, and community-based and home-health organizations.

Occupations within healthcare cover a range of skill and educational requirements. Low-end entry-level jobs, such as janitors, orderlies, etc. require minimal training and education and the pay is commensurate with the skill level. In some cases these can be pathways into other positions, such as supervisory positions, but more often these provide individuals with exposure to the healthcare setting and encourage them to seek training for technician or patient care jobs.

There are also a number of "middle skill" occupations within healthcare. These are jobs that require some post-secondary training and certification, but less than a 4-year degree. Technical positions such as radiology tech and respiratory therapy fall into this category. So do some nursing categories (such as LPN and RN), certified nursing assistants and home healthcare aides. Wages in this category can be wide-ranging. Technicians and nurses can command higher, family sustaining salaries, while nurse's assistants and aides make a relatively low hourly wage.

There are also many high skill jobs within healthcare requiring a bachelor's or advanced degree. These include physicians and specialized nursing occupations, such as Nurse Anesthetist. Physical and Speech Therapists are in particular demand.

Key issues to consider in healthcare sector pathways planning include:

- For some years, the healthcare industry has been relatively stable. However, recent hospital closings and bankruptcies, as well as the impact of the recession have caused a number of large lay-offs, creating a short-term glut of experienced staff looking for work, particularly in nursing, where shortages had previously been reported. This is making it difficult for new graduates to find positions. There are also experienced staff continuing to look for work. This is considered to be a short-term issue, however, as the overall demographic trend of aging Baby Boomers points to a continued need for healthcare staff.
- Employers report the greatest turnover in low and high-skill positions. Lower-skill jobs include orderlies, janitors, etc. where lack of basic workplace literacy skills and "work ethic" cause high turnover. In the highest skill jobs, such as Physical and Speech Therapists, turnover results from the ability of healthcare facilities in surrounding

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counties to pay higher wages and therefore, attract the most skilled talent. According to employers, middle skill jobs, including nurses and technicians, are relatively stable.

- There is an increasing push to provide healthcare in settings other than acute care (hospital) facilities. Therefore, there is increased demand for home health aides, as well as for staff to work in community-based settings, long-term care and assisted living facilities and in doctor's offices. In planning healthcare career pathways, this means there's a need to engage these other types of employers in the planning process in order to better understand their skill needs and the changing work environment.
- There is also a trend toward requiring additional training and education for many positions. In nursing, for example, many hospitals are looking for BSNs, rather than RNs or LPNs. These trends will impact the types of education that must be made available.
- As in many other industries, technology is having a major impact on healthcare. Of particular concern to employers is the current push to create electronic medical records. Healthcare employers report that both current staff and new hires lack even basic technology skills, making it difficult for them to learn new record-keeping systems. This is true even of middle-skill workers, such as nurses and technicians who must change from paper record-keeping to an electronic system. Employers report that finding a way to develop the basic technology skills of current staff is a priority.
- Through the North Jersey Partners (WIRED) project, regional efforts to develop a healthcare career pathway have been underway for some time. The WIRED project has formed a regional Advisory Council and hired two coordinators to conduct outreach to healthcare employers and help coordinate the development of healthcare pathways in the region. In addition, Passaic County Community College has been the lead organization in implementing a High Growth Job Training Initiative Project to expand the RN program and provide training to Patient Care Associates, providing an effective training model for pathways training in healthcare.

### **Recommended Strategies**

- *Engage with an expanded selection of healthcare employers* to better understand the needs of the healthcare sector and provide higher quality information and services to job seekers. These include:
  - Physicians' offices
  - Community-based health programs/organizations, including federally qualified healthcare centers (FQHCs).
  - Medical societies and professional organizations
  - Long-term care and assisted living facilities
  - Home health care agencies

- *Develop a multi-tiered strategy of engagement to allow employers multiple ways of sharing and receiving information and being involved in workforce efforts.* Potential options include:
  - Participation in the Regional Advisory Council for Healthcare, established through WIRED.
  - Participation in ad hoc committees of the Advisory Council that are developed to address specific issues, such as a shortage of nursing instructors.
  - Providing opportunities for employers to participate in mentoring, job shadowing and internship activities.
  - Creating Video/audio interviews on healthcare careers that can be used for career exploration for multiple populations. Pennsylvania did a series of these kinds of videos. Links to these can be found here: <http://dcstem.pbworks.com>
  - Using social media to connect with employers and individuals in healthcare occupations:
    - Sponsor a LinkedIn Group for healthcare providers in the region.
    - Sponsor a FaceBook Group for providers. This could also be used for making connections between young people and professionals.
    - Create a Twitter account and use it to share quick links, articles, tips, job openings, etc.
  - Sponsor a Healthcare Forum. This could be sponsored by the Freeholder Board as a County-wide or regional event. It would bring together healthcare practitioners, educational providers and workforce staff to discuss issues related to talent development and meeting the present and future workforce needs of healthcare providers.
  - Conduct surveys on needs and issues related to different topics impacting the healthcare industry, such as the impact of technology on training and skill needs. These could be done on a periodic basis and the results shared with healthcare providers.
  - Develop a healthcare careers email newsletter to share information about trends, occupations, etc. that features local workers and employers. This could also be done through a blog that could share news related to national and local trends, training and education programs, etc.
- *Provide students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, administrators and school boards with solid, useable information about opportunities and trends in healthcare.* Potential strategies for doing this include:
  - Publishing a regular email newsletter or some other kind of publication on healthcare careers, education and training, etc. that could be emailed to school districts, school boards and parents.

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- Develop healthcare careers activities and lesson plans that could be shared with teachers and community-based organizations working with youth to expose them to healthcare careers. The WIB has recently received a 21st Century Skill grant to support this project.
- Develop career pathways brochure and/or online materials to share with educators, students and parents. North Jersey Partners is developing a brochure for print and online use that could be adapted for this purpose.

## **Transportation, Logistics and Distribution (TLD)**

### **Issues and Context**

Transportation, Logistics and Distribution is an industry that transcends Passaic County--it is a critical economic engine for the entire North Jersey region. Some 130,000 individuals are employed in “goods-moving” companies--companies that specialize in transportation and warehousing. Another 280,000 individuals are in TLD occupations in other industries, such as retail, manufacturing, and wholesale trade.

In Passaic County, there are 3,600 individuals employed in companies specializing in TLD work, while another 36,000 are employed in wholesale and retail trade where a significant proportion of workers are doing TLD-related work. Employers of TLD workers in the County include NJ Transit, Arrow Group Industries, Retail Logistics, International Specialty Products and GlaxoSmithKline.

There are four TLD job families:

- Logistics Planning and Management
- Warehousing and Distribution
- Transportation
- Support positions across job families, such as health/safety/environmental management, sales and service and maintenance and repair.

Some require an associate’s or bachelor’s degree, but many require only on-the-job training or post-secondary vocational education. Occupations within the industry include bus and truck drivers, mechanics, floorworkers, computer support specialists, analysts, clerical support and supervisors and managers.

The North Jersey Partners WIRED initiative is in the process of building a Talent Development Network to support career pathways within the TLD industry. In support of that project, they have been conducting research into the TLD industry and gathering information on needs and issues. Among their findings:

- As with other industries, technology is having a major impact on how work is done within TLD. Warehousing and distribution centers are using automated goods moving systems that require workers to input and review computer data. Radio frequency identification (RFID) is being used to track and move most goods and sophisticated software

packages manage warehousing and transportation activities. These changes require workers at all levels to have technology skills, including in those jobs (truck driver, floor worker) in which technology was not traditionally a job requirement.

- Employers report skill deficiencies in three key areas--"workplace readiness," customer service and supervisory skills. Workplace readiness includes such skills as communication and the ability to work in a team. These are particularly problematic in lower-skill jobs.
- Employers also report difficulty in hiring and retaining skilled material handler supervisors and mechanics and repair technicians.

Regionally, through the North Jersey Partners activities, work has already begun to build TLD career pathways. In November, 2008, they held a TLD Workforce Roundtable to share information on trends and opportunities in the TLD sector and to identify the priority challenges for the sector. The ultimate goal is to create a TLD Talent Development Network to include the North Jersey WIBs and One Stops, K-12 school systems, community colleges and the 4-year colleges and universities, the NJ Commission on Higher Education and the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The goals of the network are to develop TLD career pathways by engaging employers to understand skill needs, developing and refining curricula to address these needs, providing the appropriate training and supports and educating area residents about the TLD industry and its demand occupations. The Network is currently in the process of developing a work plan to implement the TLD career pathways in the region.

As with healthcare, a TLD coordinator has been hired through the WIRED initiative to manage career pathways development activities throughout the region. However, as with healthcare, staff time is split across several counties. This means less ability to focus on the employer engagement and educational activities necessary to build a strong TLD sector.

Much generic work has been done to develop TLD competency models and approaches through the US Department of Labor and other regions around the country. This information is readily available (some has been uploaded to the strategic planning wiki) and can be used by Passaic County to begin development of more customized career pathways in the County. In addition, the North Jersey Partners are in the process of developing a TLD Academy to provide certificate training programs for individuals interested in TLD occupations. This, too, can be leveraged into Passaic County's plans.

### **Recommended Strategies**

The primary focus of Passaic County's strategic TLD activities should initially be on engaging employers and educators in the County around customizing and developing pathways and understanding employer needs in TLD occupations.

1. *Identify Passaic County TLD and TLD-related companies and begin developing a database of companies and contacts.* This could potentially be done in conjunction with local Chamber(s) of Commerce, professional associations, etc.

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2. *Develop and implement an outreach plan to engage local TLD companies in pathway formation and understanding skill needs.* As discussed in the section on over-arching goals, this plan should provide employers with a range of ways to be engaged in the career pathways process. The WIB may also want to consider sponsoring a local TLD Forum, similar to the event sponsored by the North Jersey Partners. They could also sponsor a webinar on TLD competency models to test applicability to local needs, similar to what the US Department of Labor has done nationally. Social media tools (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) could also be used to engage and communicate with employers.
3. *Customize generic TLD pathways for Passaic County.* The WIB should develop local labor market information on companies that hire, job descriptions, typical career paths, skill/education requirements, etc. They also need to identify local training providers/programs so that career maps can be created and gaps in training and supportive services can be identified.
4. *Develop TLD-specific career exploration events and activities.* As with all the clusters, there's a need to educate County residents, schools, etc. on the opportunities within TLD. As part of cluster planning, the WIB should create events or activities, such as a Forum or newsletter, that can communicate the options, educational requirements, etc. for occupations within the TLD sector.

## **Entrepreneurship**

### **Issues and Context**

As noted earlier in this plan, Passaic County is a county of small businesses, with over 90% of companies employing 20 or fewer people. Not only do the owners and managers of these small businesses need entrepreneurial skills and supports, their workers do as well in order to support the companies for which they work. Entrepreneurial skills are increasingly in demand in large companies, too, as workers are expected to work more independently and manage projects and teams. The growth in freelance employment and contract workers is also a factor influencing the need for the development of entrepreneurial skills in the County.

Small businesses in the County cut across all industries with companies in all of the demand industries discussed in this plan, as well as in industries such as manufacturing and wholesale trade. This means that some support for entrepreneurs will be provided through the development of pathways in other industries. However, there is still a need to provide training and supports that help individuals develop their entrepreneurial skills and make business plans a reality. Further, skill-building and other services must support growth along a continuum, from start-up to maturing small business.

A key issue in developing the entrepreneurial path is the need to create a “culture of entrepreneurship” that presents small business as a viable career option for County residents. Career assessment, exploration and planning resources must be available to help individuals

evaluate whether or not they should pursue an entrepreneurial career, including supporting “1099” or freelance workers.

There are a numbers of current initiatives in the County and in the region geared toward supporting entrepreneurship.

- The New Jersey Small Business Development Centers (NJSBDC) network and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC) have partnered to provide a 33-hour Entrepreneur Certificate Program (ECP).The ECP gives entrepreneurs and existing small business owners an opportunity to learn about all the necessary steps to successfully start a new business and expand existing operations.The courses familiarize small business owners with business plans,legal issues,marketing strategies,financial statements,small business taxes,and small business record-keeping systems. Entrepreneurs and small business owners who successfully complete this program receive an official certificate issued by Passaic County Community College and the William Paterson Small Business Development Center.
- In addition to the Entrepreneurial Certificate, William Paterson University's Small Business Development Center offers a number of free and low-cost workshops throughout the year. They also provide Spanish language texts for some of their courses.
- SCORE, which provides counseling to small businesses, has chapters in Bergen and Essex/Hudson/Union Counties that residents can access.
- The Passaic County One Stop has a Business Resource Center that provides a free point of access programs and services that serve businesses. They can help businesses recruit qualified workers, train new or incumbent workers and access industry and labor market information.
- The North Jersey WIRED initiative is in the process of developing an Entrepreneurial Toolkit of resources for North Jersey entrepreneurs. This toolkit will be available to all of the North Jersey partners to share with their County's businesses.

As is the case with most of the industry clusters, however, these programs and resources are not being developed and shared in a coordinated way that is part of a larger shared vision for how the County should support its entrepreneurs.

### **Recommended Strategies**

1. *Develop strategic partnerships with key business, workforce and educational organizations supporting entrepreneurship, including:*

- Small Business Development Center at William Paterson University
- One Stop Business Resource Center
- Chambers of Commerce--North Jersey Chamber, Greater Paterson, Tri-County Chamber
- Junior Achievement

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- SBA
  - SCORE
  - Economic development agencies
  - Passaic County Community College
  - United Way of Passaic County
  - William Paterson University Center for Continuing and Professional Education.
2. *Use the WIRED toolkit on Entrepreneurship that is currently being developed to identify gaps in programs and services and develop a plan to address these issues.*
  3. *Create clear road maps for job seekers on how to access and pursue an entrepreneurial career.* This should include information on how to determine if entrepreneurship is an appropriate option and the stages of business development. It should also include information on all supports (not just training) that are available to support entrepreneurs in the County.
  4. *Encourage entrepreneurship through strategic partnerships with community-based organizations and agencies/organizations working with specific youth populations (i.e., juvenile justice, etc.) Suggested activities include:*
    - Collaborative development of an entrepreneurial curriculum for Passaic county youth that could be utilized by all local community-based organizations and programs.
    - Sponsorship of an “Entrepreneurial Boot Camp” during the summer to teach youth how to write a business plan and start a business.
    - Strategic use of WIA youth funding and other resources to encourage entrepreneurial programs.
  5. *Build the capacity of the One Stop Career Center to support entrepreneurship.*
    - Identify entrepreneurship assessments and build assessment of entrepreneurial skills and interests into the One Stop career assessment process.
    - Provide staff with career resources to support entrepreneurship as a viable career option. This includes the WIRED Entrepreneurship toolkit and any career road maps created to support entrepreneurial careers.
    - Ensure that One Stop staff are referring people who are interested in entrepreneurship to the One Stop’s Business Resource Center for more information and support.
    - Bring the State Department of Labor and Workforce Development Self-Employment Assistance program into the Passaic County One Stop. Currently, the only way for Passaic County residents to access this program is by attending sessions at the Bergen County One Stop.

## Green Jobs

### Issues and Context

Unlike other industry sectors that have been selected for career pathways-building because of their current importance to Passaic County, the Green Jobs cluster has been identified as an opportunity for future growth and development.

The Governor's Master Energy Plan includes a goal to "develop a 21st century energy infrastructure that supports the goals and action items of the Energy Master Plan, ensures the reliability of the system, and makes available additional tools to consumers to manage their energy consumption." This includes ensuring that there is a trained, qualified workforce to fill jobs in this sector.

In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has provided significant funding to states to support worker training in green jobs, with New Jersey due to receive \$3.2 billion over the next two years. The US Department of Labor is also releasing a *Pathways out of Poverty* grant solicitation for which the Passaic County WIB intends to apply.

There is still some uncertainty about what exactly constitutes a "green job." The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University recently published a report designed to address this issue. It identifies green jobs as those that involve protecting wildlife or ecosystems, reducing pollution or waste, reducing energy usage or and/or lowering carbon usage. The report describes two key sectors of green jobs--the Energy Efficiency (EE) sector and the Renewable Energy (RE) sector.

Energy Efficiency sector jobs focus on retro-fitting homes and businesses to improve their use of energy and the development and manufacture of products that reduce energy usage. Typical EE jobs fall into a few categories. Residential weatherization jobs include building inspectors, carpenters, electricians, etc., as well as workers who can perform energy audits. Primarily these are jobs in the construction trades that now require workers to have knowledge of how to describe and install energy efficient materials. Commercial and Industrial Retrofitting jobs require higher levels of education and training and include Electrical Engineers, Mechanical Engineers, Cogeneration Construction and Operation, Measurement and Verification Technicians and Energy Management Analysts.

Renewable Energy sector jobs involve creating, installing and maintaining renewable energy sources. These jobs tend to be more specific to the energy source, i.e., solar, wind, nuclear, geothermal and hydropower. They are generally in manufacturing or in heavy construction, installation and operations/maintenance.

At this juncture, it's difficult to determine what the demand for these jobs will be as the sector is new and developing. Supporting this cluster means focusing primarily on identifying green jobs and industries and working with key stakeholders in the County and the region to understand green job opportunities and needs. It also means finding ways to encourage the growth of

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green businesses within the County. A useful graphic for developing green jobs career pathways is included in this plan as Appendix B.

### **Recommended Activities**

1. *Work with the County's Energy and Sustainability Committee to identify how workforce development activities can support the implementation of the County's Energy and Sustainability Policy.* Passaic County is currently in the process of developing an Energy and Sustainability Policy that addresses issues such as the purchase of hybrid vehicles and required LEED certifications. The Committee is also exploring use of renewable energy sources in various County properties and facilities and other strategies for reducing its carbon footprint. The Workforce Investment Board should work with the E&S Committee to engage other departments in the County that are receiving Recovery Act funding to support the development of a green jobs economy to determine how workforce training programs can support the County's Energy plan. This can also be used as an opportunity to coordinate the efforts of these various departments in their use of Recovery Act funds to ensure maximum synergy and leveraging of resources.
2. *Engage companies and other key stakeholders in discussions about their needs and plans for "going green" in the County.* As part of the process of engaging County officials in discussions about energy use, there may also be value in sponsoring community forums, surveys, etc. to determine how companies intend to address energy goals. This can give the County valuable information about potential demand for green energy jobs, as well as feedback on the issues and concerns that businesses are facing.

Residential weatherization is a key target of Recovery Act funds, with tax credits and other programs being offered to home-owners attempting to address energy use in their homes. The County may also want to consider getting feedback from homeowners about their interest in and plans for using green products and services as another way to understand the potential market and encourage responsible energy use.

3. *Identify green companies in the County and begin developing strategic partnerships.* Because the County can play a role in setting expectations and guidelines around green goals and energy use, they are in a particularly good position for helping to create a market for green products and services. The County could use this as a way to engage companies in a partnership process. This could also be a strategy for supporting entrepreneurship in the County.
4. *Develop strategic partnerships with local trade unions,* as many EE jobs involve unionized workers in the trades. Unions are also providing "green" training to their members that could potentially be leveraged.
5. *Conduct a County census of green jobs and their skill requirements.* Because the sector is so new, it is unclear how many green jobs exist in the County, as well as what skills are required. To develop effective pathways, there is a strong need to get a clear picture of the job base.

6. *Adapt existing green job career pathways information for Passaic County.* A number of green jobs pathways models have been developed, particularly as a pathway out of poverty. The County will need to review these models and adapt them to meet County needs.
7. *Develop and implement career exploration activities on green jobs that can be utilized by the One Stop Career Center, by K-12 educators and by community-based organizations.*

## **Educational Services**

### **Issues and Context**

Educational services covers a range of employers in the County, from public schools in the K-12 system, through community colleges, private proprietary schools and 4-year colleges and universities. In addition, educational services are provided by adult literacy programs, trade and vocational-technical schools, and occupational skills training programs like YouthBuild and Job Corps.

In Passaic County, 118 institutions employ 3,200 individuals and the average wage for the industry is \$32,000. Many of these workers are teachers and teacher's aides employed by the County's many public schools. Adult literacy instructors and instructors for occupational skills training programs (such as nursing) are also included in this workforce.

Several trends are influencing the educational services sector:

- Higher numbers of young people are being classified as "special education." This not only creates greater demand for special education teachers, it also requires that regular classroom teachers develop skills in differentiating instruction, supporting Individual Education Plans (IEPs), etc.
- There is a need for literacy, GED preparation and ESL instructors as a result of both high dropout rates in some portions of the County, as well as the number of non-English speaking residents needing additional education. At the same time, State and federal funding for these programs is being cut.
- Many school districts are no longer granting tenure after three years as they once did. They will hire teachers for three years and then lay them off to hire a new crop of teachers at lower salaries. This keeps costs down. It also means that the tenured staff are skewing much older.
- Related to this, community colleges and 4-year institutions are making much greater use of adjunct staff than before. This changes the nature of the work for people teaching at this level, requiring them to weave together teaching gigs at several institutions in order to create a career. This may also be creating a two-tiered system of older tenured staff and younger, non-tenured and more mobile staff. At this juncture it's difficult to tell which hiring strategy will persist and what impact that will have on the industry.
- Teacher preparation is somewhat uneven, depending on the route that teachers take into the occupation. Many teachers continue to pursue the traditional route of a 4-year

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degree that includes a classroom-based practicum to provide teachers with experience in working directly with students. However, there are also a number of alternative certification programs that have been developed to quickly transition workers from other industries into education. These programs do not necessarily require participants to obtain actual teaching experience--they simply take education course in order to receive their certification. As a result, teachers hired through this route essentially have to learn on the job, sometimes even finding through that process that education was not the appropriate option for them. There is concern within the educational community that this lack of practical experience has a negative impact on the quality of new teachers coming into the classroom through these programs.

- Despite public reports indicating shortages in qualified math and science instructors, the educators participating in the strategic planning process indicated that this is not the case. While it is somewhat more difficult to find qualified math and science teachers than in other disciplines, they are still able to fill these positions.
- As in the other clusters, there are big gaps in technology skills, in part because of the aging workforce in education.

In terms of a career pathways model, a big part of the reason for focusing on this sector is to ensure that educators have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively implement a career pathways approach in the County. Teacher preparation impacts the quality of teaching and an effective career pathways model requires good teachers. It is also critical to engage educational services as a sector as a strategy for ensuring that the staff necessary to provide education and training for the other sectors is available. For example, through our conversations with schools on the strategic planning committee, we became aware of the fact that there is only one Broad Technical Education program in the State and that it is difficult to find Tech Ed teachers with the necessary background and certification.

A critical issue related to working with the education cluster in implementing career pathways is the differing values and beliefs about the issue of preparing young people for careers. For most schools, young people are divided into two categories--those who will go to 4-year colleges after graduation and those who don't. "College-bound" in a high school setting means 4-year school and "career" means everything else. The unfortunate problem with this belief is that many career path jobs require less than a 4-year degree, yet schools are not geared at all toward supporting students in pursuing things like apprenticeship, community college or professional certifications following graduation from high school.

Another challenge in working with education is the fact that traditional beliefs about "Vo-Tech" and career education programs persist. In many schools, it is the special education students who are referred to the Vocational Technical schools, despite the fact that many of the jobs for which young people would train require literacy and problem-solving skills at levels similar to those in college prep programs. Further, college-bound students receive little exposure to career information and activities as their primary focus is on preparing to attend a 4-year college, rather than on exploring career areas and determining whether or not a 4-year degree is either appropriate or necessary.

## Recommended Activities

1. *Provide professional development opportunities to teachers to help them develop lesson plans and make linkages to targeted industries and careers.* In the section on Overarching Goals, we've made some suggestions about strategies for providing professional development to teachers. These should be geared toward educating teachers about opportunities available in local industries and providing them with opportunities to develop lesson plans based on real-life work.
2. *Develop customized road maps detailing education, skill requirements, etc. for Educational Services positions, particularly Technical Education, Special Education and Adult Education (Literacy) teachers.*
3. *Support alternative routes to teacher certification that include a classroom practicum so that individuals making the transition from business into education have classroom experience prior to seeking employment.*

## Entertainment, Arts and Retail

### Issues and Context

The Entertainment, Arts and Retail (EAR) sector is one of the largest in Passaic County. It includes retail stores, theaters, restaurants and hotels and employs almost 10,000 workers in a variety of positions. Many of these jobs are entry-level positions--retail sales associates, food services workers, hotel cleaning staff, etc. However, there are also opportunities for higher level positions in supervision and management, guest services, customer service, etc. Many people also get their start in retail, where they learn basic workplace skills, before moving on to jobs in other industries.

One of the challenges to engaging employers in this sector is the fact that retail establishments are either subsidiaries of "big box" retailers with little local control, or they are small, family-owned concerns where there is little time for or interest in participating in outreach activities. This makes it somewhat more difficult to engage in career pathways planning that is customized to meet local employer needs.

There are a number of existing training resources available to support the EAR cluster in the county include:

- A Retail Skills Training program through Passaic County Community College to provide foundational skills training for entry-level workers. This program is funded through WorkFirst New Jersey.
- A regionally-developed customer service skills curriculum that was created as part of the North Jersey WIRED partnership.

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- A regionally-developed Training Center to support paths into careers such as Retail Buyer.

Until the recession began over a year ago, demand in the EAR sector was booming, fueled by the development of “big box” stores and malls in the area and the traditionally high turnover of the sector. Unfortunately, EAR has now been one of the sectors hardest hit by the current recession with sharp job losses occurring in the wake of store and restaurant closings and reduced consumer spending. As a result, while it is still one of the County’s targeted sectors, it is considered a much lower priority for career pathways development.

### **Recommended Activities**

1. *Monitor demand for retail sector jobs through the Real-Time Jobs in Demand data and other sources to determine growth patterns and hiring trends.* This includes monitoring existing relationships with retail employers and tapping them for information on a regular basis. This will allow the WIB to determine if and when it should begin more active outreach to these employers. When growth occurs, the WIB should then pursue the appropriate activities for supporting this cluster, as outlined in the overarching goals section.
2. *Develop customized career path information, particularly for higher-skill retail careers,* that includes connections to the available education and training programs. Job seekers and students should be able to see occupations beyond entry-level sales associates so that they are able to advance into higher positions as they become available.

# Priority Populations

One of the goals of implementing a career pathways model is to ensure that all residents of the County have access to the training and supports necessary to enter and advance in the County's targeted industries. To accomplish this, special attention must be paid to several priority populations that may require additional assistance to overcome multiple barriers to employment. These include:

- Disengaged and disadvantaged young people, including young people involved with the Juvenile Justice system and those who are in danger of or who have dropped out of high school.
- Individuals transitioning off of welfare (TANF)
- Ex-offenders
- Individuals with disabilities
- English as a Second Language (ESL) and low literacy workers

All of these groups face difficulties in finding employment and advancing in careers because of a combination of factors. These can include inadequate workplace literacy and/or occupational skills, lack of access to affordable childcare, lack of transportation, and poor information for decision-making about careers and education. Many of these groups, particularly people with disabilities, ex-offenders, and undocumented immigrants, must also battle negative employer stereotypes, which can have profound influences on who gets hired and who is promoted.

Coordinated career pathways approaches can be one of the most effective economic development tools a region can use to create pathways out of poverty for its citizens. This is why the US Department of Labor is issuing two major grant solicitations for grant projects in July 2009, one to support the general development of career pathways out of poverty and the other to support the development of green career pathways specially geared toward targeted populations. The WIB of Passaic County intends to apply for both of these grants. If awarded, they would provide a major funding boost for implementing targeted pathways projects in the County.

Below, we will discuss issues and recommendations specific to the targeted populations identified above. However, there are more general recommendations that, if implemented, would benefit all of these populations. They are listed below.

## Overarching Recommendations for Serving Priority Populations

1. **Develop a common framework for assessment and career planning that is utilized by all agencies/organizations and that is based on best practices in career planning, not on program requirements.** In order for any job seeker to make informed decisions about careers and educational opportunities, he/she must have information about personal skills,

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abilities, work values, interests and potential barriers to employment and education. Job seekers must also have information about all of the options available to them, both in terms of the jobs they may want to pursue, as well as the education and supportive service options available to obtain employment.

Within the workforce system, there are many organizations providing assessment and career counseling/planning services to job seekers in these priority population areas. These include the One Stop Career Center, social service agencies and community and faith-based organizations. However, the assessment processes used by these organizations are focused primarily on the needs of the organization. They are structured to obtain the information the organization needs to provide services, rather than based on the information the job seeker needs to access careers. For example, many of these organizations are focused on barrier removal, so much of their assessment process is designed to identify barriers and little if any attention is paid to determining job seeker interests, work values and skills. In addition, job seeker customers do not “own” this information, so they also take little responsibility for using it to make career decisions.

Because assessment tools and processes tend to be organization-specific, job seekers must complete new assessments every time they access services at a new agency. Further, the assessment information they receive varies, based on the organization or program they are accessing.

In many cases, assessment tools are also not providing job seekers and employers with the right information. For example, many programs use the TABE to assess literacy levels. However, this is an academic tool, not an employer-based tool. It does not provide either job seekers or employers with concrete information about the job seeker’s ability to function effectively in the workplace.

While assessment is a key issue, the information that customers receive for career planning is also a problem. Often, customers are made aware only of the career opportunities and/or training programs typically used by a particular organization or agency. This does not allow job seekers to make informed choices because they are unaware of all of their potential options.

In order for job seekers to be effectively supported in a career pathways model, there must be a common assessment process that is based on the needs of both job seekers and the employers in the targeted industries, not on the needs of organizations. Organizations should be using the same core tools so that individuals have the information they need to determine if a career path is appropriate for them and what skills they will need to develop in order to enter into or advance within the pathway. These core tools should provide concrete information on the individual’s ability to function effectively in the workplace. In particular the County should explore the use of WorkKeys and KeyTrain (as a remediation tool) as discussed earlier in this plan. These tools have been developed specifically for the workplace and they correlate to some 15,000 occupations.

Organizations should also be providing customers with the same information about the range of educational and supportive service options available in the County so that job seekers are able to make informed choices about their career plans. This means providing information on labor market data and demand occupations, requirements of demand jobs, educational programs to prepare for these jobs, available supportive services, etc. The information provided should not be based on the program in which a customer is enrolled, but on the results of his/her assessments and the career pathway the job seeker is interested in pursuing.

2. **Develop protocols and processes for ensuring that providers working with special populations have access to accurate, timely labor market information as well as information on available programs and services, education and training, etc.** Because so many service providers are working through nonprofits, social service agencies and faith-based organizations to meet the specialized needs of these targeted populations, it is critical that the WIB develop strategies for funneling user-friendly and accurate information to providers for their use in counseling and planning. This ties in with the previous recommendation to develop common assessment and career exploration/planning activities and services. Job seekers must have access to the right information at the right time. In many cases, this means that the information must come through the agencies working most closely with these populations.
3. **Develop “bridge” programs that teach basic skills like communication, math and problem-solving at the same time individuals are learning occupational skills.** Because youth and adults from these targeted populations often lack both basic workplace literacy and occupational skills, any career pathways programming that is developed must address these twin gaps. Individuals who must access remedial programs to improve literacy skills prior to accessing occupational skills training are less likely to enter into or complete occupational skills training. Therefore it is critical that programs be developed to address both the workplace literacy and occupational skill gaps simultaneously, rather than consecutively. Ideally this is done through the use of project-based curricula that allow individuals to learn by doing and that teach workplace literacy skills in the context of a particular occupation or industry. The Retail Skills Center program implemented at PCCC provides a potential model for this kind of programming.
4. **Develop appropriate “wrap-around” services to support at-risk workers in specific industries.** Having the appropriate mix of supportive services to meet the needs of at-risk populations is critical. Individuals facing multiple barriers to employment must have access to services that address issues such as childcare and transportation. Further, because many employers use credit checks and drug testing as part of the hiring process, services must be available to help at-risk populations address these issues as well.

For these supports to be most effective, however, they should be linked to the specific industries and career pathways and based on the issues and needs both of the workforce in those industries as well as the needs of the employers in those industries. For example, many companies in related industries tend to cluster in the same area and therefore share

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transportation issues in terms of accessing various pools of workers. This is where a shuttle service or some kind of coordinated ride-sharing arrangements might work.

As the WIB and its partners continues to plan for the implementation of career pathways, it should ensure that the process includes identification of issues and barriers that impact the workforce in these industries and the development of a range of services and programs designed to ameliorate these issues.

- 5. Develop asset maps for targeted populations.** There is a dizzying array of government agencies, nonprofits, educational institutions and faith-based organizations providing services to assist various disadvantaged populations. However in many cases these organizations are providing similar services, competing for clients, while there may still be gaps in other service areas needed for that particular population. In order to better understand what programs and services are available in the County to serve the needs of the targeted populations, the WIB and its partners should work together to develop an asset map of available services. Based on this asset map, they must then identify gaps in programs and services and work with provider agencies and organizations to explore strategies for addressing these gaps. School and Main (<http://www.schoolandmain.org/>) has done extensive work with workforce areas to do this kind of mapping. Some do-it-yourself resources and tools can be found here: <http://delicious.com/michelemmartin/assetmapping> .
- 6. Develop social service provider networks to work together on a regular basis to address the needs of targeted populations.** To provide more coordinated programs and services that address the needs of targeted populations, it's helpful to develop networks of providers that work together on a regular basis to address the needs of special populations. The asset mapping process suggested in the previous recommendation can provide an excellent foundation for the development of these enduring networks of providers. The WIB's Youth, Literacy and Disabilities Issues Committees provide potential frameworks for pursuing this strategy. In addition, the WIB's very active Faith-based Committee will be another asset in identifying and convening partners in this process.

## **Disengaged and Disadvantaged Youth**

### **Issues and Context**

Young people are the future workforce and ensuring that they are adequately prepared for the work that will be part of the County's economic future is critical. Some 25% of County residents are under 18, according to 2007 census data. That figure goes up to 30% in the Cities of Passaic and Paterson, where there are also the greatest number of young people living in poverty.

Young people dropping out of high school is one of the major challenges for the County, particularly in the more urban districts. In Paterson, for example, only 47% of 18-24 year olds are high school graduates according to US census data. The dropout issue is not only a problem for the individuals who are unable to access the vast majority of County jobs, but also

for the County, as high school dropouts are more likely to utilize social services such as TANF and are more likely to be incarcerated. Dropouts are also more likely to be laid off and are laid off for longer periods of time, putting a greater strain on the Unemployment Insurance system.

Unfortunately, in many school districts a high school diploma is no guarantee that graduates will have the skills necessary to obtain employment or to access the post-secondary education required for many of the jobs in the County. Passaic County College reports increasing numbers of incoming students who must take remedial courses prior to taking college-level coursework. In addition, the One Stop Career Center finds that many One Stop customers with high school diplomas still test as basic skills deficient on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), which is used to determine readiness for occupational skills training programs. Research clearly indicates that the more remedial courses an individual must take prior to entering their occupational program of study, the less likely they are to complete the occupational skills training; one study found that individuals who had to complete 3 remedial courses had only a 14% chance of completing their associate's degree program. This clearly reduces the opportunities for these individuals within the job market and deprives the County of a strong workforce.

Young people involved with the juvenile justice system are another at-risk population for Passaic County. While rates of incarceration have been declining in the County, recidivism is higher than average, in part because of the lack of structured follow-up activities and programs that address the special needs of this population. Just as with adult offenders, research indicates that attaching youth to meaningful work and educational activities as part of the transition out of the juvenile justice system is a critical component of any transition programming.

### **Recommended Activities**

- 1. Explore strategies for developing dropout prevention and re-engagement programs that leverage the resources and supports of all partners in the workforce system.** Because there is no single solution to resolving the dropout problem and no partner with all the resources to do so, it's critical that all stakeholders in the community come together to develop a more comprehensive dropout prevention strategy. Community models for doing so are available from a variety of sources. For example, the ***Grad Nation Guide Book*** available through America's Promise (<http://www.americaspromise.org/>), provides a detailed blueprint for community action. ***Whatever it Takes***, available at: <http://www.aypf.org/publications/WhateverItTakes/WITfull.pdf> provides case studies of programs and services developed in other communities. Preventing young people from dropping out of school and re-engaging them with the system is a multi-faceted issue that is deserving of its own strategic plan. Because of the importance of education to ongoing career success, however, it must be a priority for the County and for the Workforce Investment Board.
- 2. Develop an asset map of youth services and a network of program providers.** As noted in the overarching recommendations in this section, the development of an asset map of programs and services, as well as an ongoing network of youth services providers are

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important components for addressing the needs of targeted populations. In the case of disadvantaged and disengaged youth, this is particularly critical, as they are in need of a continuum of programs and services that address very different developmental issues from childhood through adolescence. Therefore, these efforts should cover a wide continuum of providers and organizations, from juvenile justice facilities and organizations that serve pregnant and parenting teens to after-school and summer camp programs. Particular attention should be paid to the availability of programs and services for young people who have already dropped out of school to either re-enter or participate in a credit recovery program or other option for obtaining a degree. There are extensive resources available for developing both youth asset maps and networks of providers. Some excellent tools can be found at <http://www.schoolandmain.org/tools.htm> in the section on *Youth Program Initiative Training Guides*.

- 3. Develop a coordinated outreach strategy for reaching targeted youth that utilizes peer-to-peer and technology-supported strategies.** One of the most challenging aspects of serving disengaged youth is finding them. Once they have dropped out of school, unless they contact a social service agency or community-organization, it is very difficult to reach them. Further, they tend to prefer both different modes of connection (i.e, use of technology and social media), as well as connections with peers, rather than adults.

To address these issues, as part of the pathways development process, special attention should be paid to developing peer-to-peer, technology-enhanced outreach and engagement strategies for connecting to out-of-school youth. These can include working with youth who are already connected to programs to develop youth-oriented outreach and marketing campaigns, using social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, and exploring uses of text messaging to reach young people.

- 4. Explore strategies to connect career pathways information and processes to existing youth-serving programs.** As indicated, there are many organizations in Passaic County providing services to youth. In most cases, finding ways to connect young people to careers and educational opportunities is a key strategy for these programs. Therefore the WIB and its Youth Council should explore strategies for connecting the career pathways information and resources it develops to these existing youth programs. For example, the Juvenile Justice Commission is currently in the process of applying to become a Juvenile Detention Alternative (JDAI) site through the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This project can provide an opportunity to also connect young people with career pathways options.

## **Individuals Transitioning from TANF and General Assistance (GA)**

### **Issues and Context**

Approximately 2,700 individuals are receiving WorkFirst New Jersey (TANF) benefits in Passaic County. Several hundred more are receiving General Assistance (GA), which is provided to individuals who do not have children.

Individuals on welfare face many barriers to employment, including the need for affordable childcare (for TANF clients), lack of transportation and lack of basic workplace readiness and occupational skills. They may also have substance abuse and/or mental health issues, particularly in the case of GA clients who often must also deal with homelessness. The reality is that one of the primary reasons these individuals seek benefits is because they possess so many barriers to employment.

Since the passage of the Welfare to Work legislation in the mid-90's, all TANF and GA recipients must conform to the requirements of New Jersey's "work first" approach to welfare, which focuses on job search and obtaining employment. While this seems like a laudable goal, the reality is that with the abysmally low skills of most TANF and GA recipients and the many barriers they face, the best they can hope for is a minimum wage job that after childcare and commuting costs can actually leave them worse off than if they continue to maintain their benefits. Further, in many cases these jobs do not include health benefits, something that most of these individuals desperately need.

There are several challenges to implementing a career pathways approach with this population. First is the fact that the career pathways model is developmental and the TANF system does not support development of workers. Success of TANF programs is measured by the "participation rate," which means the percentage of welfare recipients participating in approved activities. Six weeks of job search activities or community-based employment for 35 hours a week are approved activities. Full-time occupational skills training or literacy development activities are not. While some skills training is allowed, it is short-term and usually not enough to provide the skills boosts these individuals need to access true pathways employment opportunities.

This focus on "work first" also means that TANF and GA recipients receive minimal assessment and career counseling services that will 1) help them understand their own skills, interests and abilities and 2) tie this information to available career pathways. The guidance they receive is designed to move them from "allowable activity" to "allowable activity." It does not give them a framework for understanding the opportunities available in various industries and what they will need to do to prepare for those opportunities in a longer-term way. It also does not provide them with information or supports for the kinds of long-term thinking and educational activities necessary for them to truly access career pathways.

Many TANF and GA recipients have minimal work experience, which creates another barrier to employment. As a condition of receiving ongoing benefits, these individuals are provided with an opportunity to gain work experience through "CWEPs"--job placements in community-based organizations. However, these placements usually have nothing to do with the job seeker's interests and do little if anything to prepare them for any of the career pathways under development in the County. In some cases they may teach broader work readiness skills, but in most instances, this is not the case. This lack of connection to the demand occupations in the county is a wasted opportunity.

Unlike most states, New Jersey has a consolidated workforce system where the "To Work" component of TANF services is provided through the One Stop Career Centers. TANF

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customers work with a Board of Social Services case manager to maintain their eligibility for benefits and to access supportive services and they work with the One Stop on employment-related activities, such as job search. In theory, this is a practice that makes sense. However in reality it is difficult to implement. The case managers in the two organizations work within very different organizational cultures with very different goals and expectations for performance. They use different customer and data management systems and have access to different kinds of information about the work and training opportunities available in the County. As a result, customers do not experience the kind of seamless flow of services and activities necessary to support true career pathways.

Finally, all TANF clients have children, most of them under age 6. This has important impacts on the design of career pathways programs and services that would effectively prepare these workers. It creates a greater need for flexible programming, offered at different times of the day and on different days of the week. There is also a need to explore strategies such as on-site childcare for in-person training and the use of distance learning that would allow job seekers to access training from home. In addition, DFD Special Initiatives activities that support barrier removal, such as license restoration, post-TANF supports for rent and utilities, child care, transportation, etc. should be coordinated to support the career pathways approach.

### **Recommended Activities**

- 1. Develop a career assessment and planning process that is based on employer needs and best practices in career planning, not on barrier assessment and program requirements.** While there is a need for TANF and GA customers to identify and address barriers and complete the paperwork required for program eligibility, assessment and planning should not stop there. In order to effectively implement career pathways where job seekers understand all of their options and are able to match themselves to available opportunities, TANF and GA customers need appropriate information about themselves and about their choices. This means designing an assessment process that engages customers in understanding their interests, work values, skills, etc. and how these match up with available work opportunities in the demand pathways. Customers should participate in the kinds of assessments that provide them with concrete information that is valuable to both themselves and to employers in making appropriate matches. They should also receive information about the demand occupations, required preparation, and opportunities for obtaining the skills necessary to pursue those jobs. This information should be based on the results of their assessments, not on what is an “allowable activity.”
- 2. Explore strategies for better connecting community work experiences (CWEPs) to the demand opportunities in the region.** The requirement that TANF and GA recipients participate in community-based work experiences to continue receiving benefits can actually provide some great opportunities for developing contextual training that is tied to various career pathways. As the WIB and its partners plans for pathways implementation, special attention should be paid to how CWEP work sites could be developed that will better support occupational skills training and development related to the demand occupations in the area.

3. **Explore strategies for providing training and services that accommodate the fact that many TANF participants have young children.** Part of the pathways planning process is to create flexible, workable training activities that better accommodate the needs and issues of both job seekers and employers. Pathways planning for TANF participants must take into account that these individuals usually have small children, which limits their ability to participate in training and other developmental activities. Other counties in New Jersey have had success in using distance learning strategies with this population, providing participants with laptop computers, internet, and access to online courses in a variety of areas. Planners should also consider strategies for flexible scheduling and providing onsite childcare for in-person activities.
4. **Develop strategies for information sharing and communication of career pathways information and opportunities that better coordinate the efforts of One Stop and Board of Social Services staff.** Because the issues of career, working, supportive services and benefits are so intertwined in the provision of services to TANF and GA customers, it is absolutely critical that staff from both the One Stop and the Board of Social Services (BSS) be providing the same sorts of information and messages. The reality is that conversations with BSS case managers will inevitably move into issues of career and work, while discussions about career and work with One Stop staff will often lead to discussions about supportive services and TANF program participation. To avoid confusion and ensure that common messages are being communicated and reinforced, staff must be on the same page with access to the same information and resources. In implementing pathways planning for this population, then, it will be critical to develop shared processes for better sharing information about both the labor market and individual job seeker customers.
5. **Provide staff development for BSS case managers on the implementation of a career pathways approach.** BSS staff, like One Stop staff, will need training in the concepts of career pathways and how to appropriately advise and work with customers in the County's career pathways model. They will need to understand their roles in communicating about pathways and how their programs and services can support the implementation of the pathways approach.

## **Ex-Offenders**

### **Issues and Context**

Ex-offenders, those who are transitioning from prison back into their communities, face a number of barriers to employment including homelessness, substance abuse and mental health issues, lack of training and education, a lack of work history and lack of transportation. The average offender functions at a 6th grade level in reading and a 5th grade level in math, making it difficult for them to access career path jobs when they leave prison. In addition, they face special barriers that go with their status as ex-offenders, including the prejudices of employers and hiring practices that may preclude their employment in certain industries or occupations.

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Connecting ex-offenders to meaningful employment that pays a living wage is a critical strategy in reducing recidivism. If ex-offenders are unable to find work, they are more likely to commit a crime for cash or even to get themselves sent back to prison if they see no other alternatives. In fact, within three years, 67% of ex-offenders re-enter prison, 30% of them within the first 6 months after release.

While ex-offenders face major barriers to employment, some industries are more open to employing individuals with a criminal background than others. Healthcare and Educational services tend to have extremely strict requirements, while TLD and Green jobs may be more willing to employ ex-offenders.

### **Recommended Activities**

- 1. Explore strategies for building specialized career pathways in the TLD and Green jobs sectors that support the needs and issues of ex-offenders.** As the WIB builds the TLD and Green jobs pathways, special attention should be paid to developing potential pathways for ex-offenders. This will require extensive planning and discussion with employers in the sector to develop strategies that address their concerns. It will also require engagement of and coordination with the various faith-based and community-based organizations currently working with this population.
- 2. Engage the many community and faith-based programs serving ex-offenders to provide labor market and career pathways information and obtain their perspectives on serving this population.** Many faith-based organizations and community nonprofits provides supportive services to ex-offenders. To ensure that these organizations are providing effective counseling and support to their constituents, special efforts should be made to ensure that these organizations have key career pathways information and access to job search resources to effectively serve their constituents. In addition, they should be engaged in understanding the special needs and issues of ex-offenders so that these can be addressed in the pathways planning process.

## **Low Literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) Workers**

### **Issues, Context and Recommendations**

Jobs in the current market require higher level literacy skills than a large number of Passaic County workers currently possess. According to Passaic County's Literacy Plan, over 40,000 County residents report that they speak English "not well" or "not at all." Statistics from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) show that 50% of the general population score in level 1 or 2 of the prose literacy scale. In Passaic County, over 60% of the population score level 1 or 2. Over 100,000 individuals living in the County do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Frequently the individuals who face literacy issues are also from one of the other targeted populations in this section--disengaged youth, individuals on TANF, ex-offenders, etc.--creating

a complicated interplay of cause and effect. In order for these individuals to access any of the career pathways in the County, however, improving literacy has to be a first stop.

Passaic County's 2009 Literacy Plan outlines many of the issues that must be addressed in order to provide more effective literacy services. The Plan also outlines the necessary steps to address these issues. These should be integrated into the overall career pathways planning process to ensure that literacy issues are addressed.

## **Individuals with Disabilities**

### **Issues and Context**

According to 2007 US Census data, 97,500 people in Passaic County identify themselves as disabled--that's almost 20% of the County's population. The term "disability" is broad, encompassing a range of issues from physical challenges like visual, hearing and mobility impairments, to traumatic brain injury, developmental disorders (such as autism), mental health issues and learning disabilities. There is also a wide range of functioning and ability to access employment. Some individuals with disabilities require extensive coaching and support or supported employment opportunities, while others need only minor accommodations to obtain employment.

Statistically, individuals with disabilities have higher unemployment rates and greater difficulty obtaining employment. In part this is because of employer misperceptions regarding the costs of accommodating and employing individuals with disabilities. There are also issues around ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the appropriate occupational, work readiness and job search skills to qualify for positions and effectively advocate for themselves in the hiring and employment process.

Employment services to individuals with disabilities are most often provided through social service agencies and community organizations that are not connected to the larger workforce system. The One Stop Career Centers have Disability Program Navigators who have been trained to link individuals with disabilities to available resources, but often this just means a referral to a disability-specific service provider, such as the Division for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), rather than accommodated services through the regular flow of the One Stop. In addition, because providers exist in their own disability-related silo, they are not as connected to the job opportunities and other resources available through other parts of the workforce system such as the One Stops.

While individuals with disabilities are often provided with extensive resources to obtain additional training and education, the agencies providing this support often do not have up-to-date information on labor market demand, industry requirements, etc. to effectively advise their clients. This means that individuals may be trained in occupations that are not in demand, making it more difficult for them to find employment.

Individuals with learning disabilities are a major issue for the workforce system. In some cases, individuals have been identified through the school system and have an Individual Education

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Plan (IEP) that describes the learning disability, impact and necessary accommodations. However, One Stop and other workforce staff do not necessarily have the skills or expertise to use this information in advising and working with clients. In addition, many individuals have undiagnosed learning disabilities or incomplete information in their IEPs, which makes it even more difficult for staff to help job seekers identify and address any impacts of the disability on employment.

To address some of the issues around fragmentation of services, the WIB of Passaic County and its One Stop are partnering with Bergen and Hudson Counties to provide employment services to individuals through The Mosaic Center for Disability Employment, a project funded by a grant from the Kessler Foundation. This initiative is a public/private partnership designed to “serve as a single point of contact to match the needs of employers with the best qualified job candidates and assist job candidates with disabilities fulfill their employment goals.” Efforts to provide services to this targeted population should leverage both the Mosaic Center, as well as the Disability Program Navigators in the One Stop Career Center.

### **Recommended Activities**

- 1. Engage service providers in the pathways planning process.** Because of the siloed nature of services to job seekers with disabilities, it’s critical that those agencies and organizations that are working directly with these populations be included in the career pathways planning process. Not only will they provide valuable insight into the issues and needs of individuals with disabilities, they will also be able to obtain better information and make connections to employers that support their clients.
- 2. Ensure that providers of employment services to individuals with disabilities have appropriate labor market information to effectively counsel their clients.** As part of the process of disseminating labor market and career pathways information, the WIB should make special efforts to reach out to disabilities services providers to give them accurate, timely labor market information.
- 3. Provide One Stop staff with tools and training to deliver career counseling and employment services to individuals with disabilities, particularly learning disabilities.** Those individuals with disabilities who have the skills to seek regular paid employment are meant to be served through the One Stop Services system, with support and assistance from the Disability Program Navigators and any disability-related service providers who are appropriate to be involved in the process. However, for One Stop staff to work effectively with this population, they need the tools and skills to do so. The New Jersey Department of Human Services is in the process of applying for a federal grant that will, in part, provide ongoing training and networking opportunities for One Stop staff and staff working exclusively with the disability community. Passaic County One Stop staff should take advantage of this training.

# Timeline for Implementation

This strategic plan is designed to be implemented over a 5-year period. Below is a suggested timeline for implementation.

## **Year One**

In the first year of the strategic plan, the focus should be on developing the initial infrastructure for the career pathways planning process. This includes the re-structuring of WIB committees and its activities, the formation of cluster-based groups, and the development of the appropriate data gathering, analysis and sharing mechanisms. Asset mapping and the development of employer engagement strategies are also important components for the first year.

### *1st Quarter*

- Develop background materials and resources for use in training existing and new WIB members and other County departments and stakeholders on the career pathways model and planning strategies.
- Train existing WIB members and other relevant partners/stakeholders on the career pathways model and planning strategies.
- Work with the County Board of Chosen Freeholders to develop strategies for them to take a leadership role in marketing and supporting career pathways in the County.
- Draft committee roles, responsibilities and activities for cluster-based and Labor Market Information committees.
- Begin recruiting members for cluster-based and Labor Market Information committees. Engage WIB members in this process.
- Work with existing WIB committees to determine how career pathways model will impact their committees and develop strategies for integrating them into the overall pathways planning process.
- Identify One Stop and partner staff training and development needs and develop a staff training plan. This should be integrated with any other staff development plans currently being developed, such as the North Jersey Partners plan.
- Begin exploring strategies for hiring Cluster Coordinators and developing roles, responsibilities, activities, etc.

### *2nd Quarter*

- Provide Orientation sessions to new committees. Review strategic plan, career pathways model and planning process and draft roles, responsibilities and activities.
- With cluster-based committees, begin development of cluster-based asset maps and competency models, adapted for Passaic County.

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- Work with cluster-based committees to develop stakeholder outreach and engagement plans that allow for multiple opportunities for engagement with the planning process.
- Work with Labor Market Information Committee to begin developing a data collection/information sharing plan for the County. They should identify data and information to collect and existing resources for this information. The Committee should also develop information sharing standards that address issues such as how information can be made widely available, updated on a regular basis, etc.
- Engage Oversight Committee in reviewing existing One Stop standards and expectations and developing new processes and standards for evaluating progress of pathways implementation.
- Begin development of asset maps and provider networks to support targeted populations.
- Begin implementation of One Stop and partner staff training plan.
- Develop technology plan. This may be integrated with the work of cluster-based committees where they are asked to develop a plan for how they will use technology to support their sector, expand outreach, market careers, etc. Part of this planning process should include identification of barriers to implementing technology so that these can be addressed.
- Hire Cluster Coordinators to help facilitate the activities and work of the cluster-based committees.

### *3rd Quarter*

- Begin mapping all funding resources and matching them to the cluster-based maps and competency models being developed. Determine how funding sources can be deployed and re-aligned to better support the pathway.
- Begin re-evaluating One Stop and partner assessment, career planning, and job search processes, tools and strategies and aligning them to better support the implementation of specific pathways.
- Begin implementation of cluster-based outreach and engagement strategies.
- Work with cluster-based committees to determine gaps and issues in programs and services identified during the asset mapping and competency model development process. Develop priorities to address these issues.
- Begin implementation of data collection and sharing plan developed by Labor Market Information Committee. Continue to monitor and re-evaluate the process to improve and address issues.
- Where feasible, begin implementation of technology plans.

### *4th Quarter*

- Begin developing and implementing plans to address pathways gaps and other issues.

- Develop and implement revised career assessment, planning, job search and other processes so that One Stop staff and partner organizations are better aligned to support the career pathways approach.
- Develop career awareness and marketing materials based on the cluster asset maps and adapted competency models.
- Develop plan for supporting career awareness and exploration within each of the clusters.
- Continue monitoring and refining the data collection and information sharing processes.

## **Year Two**

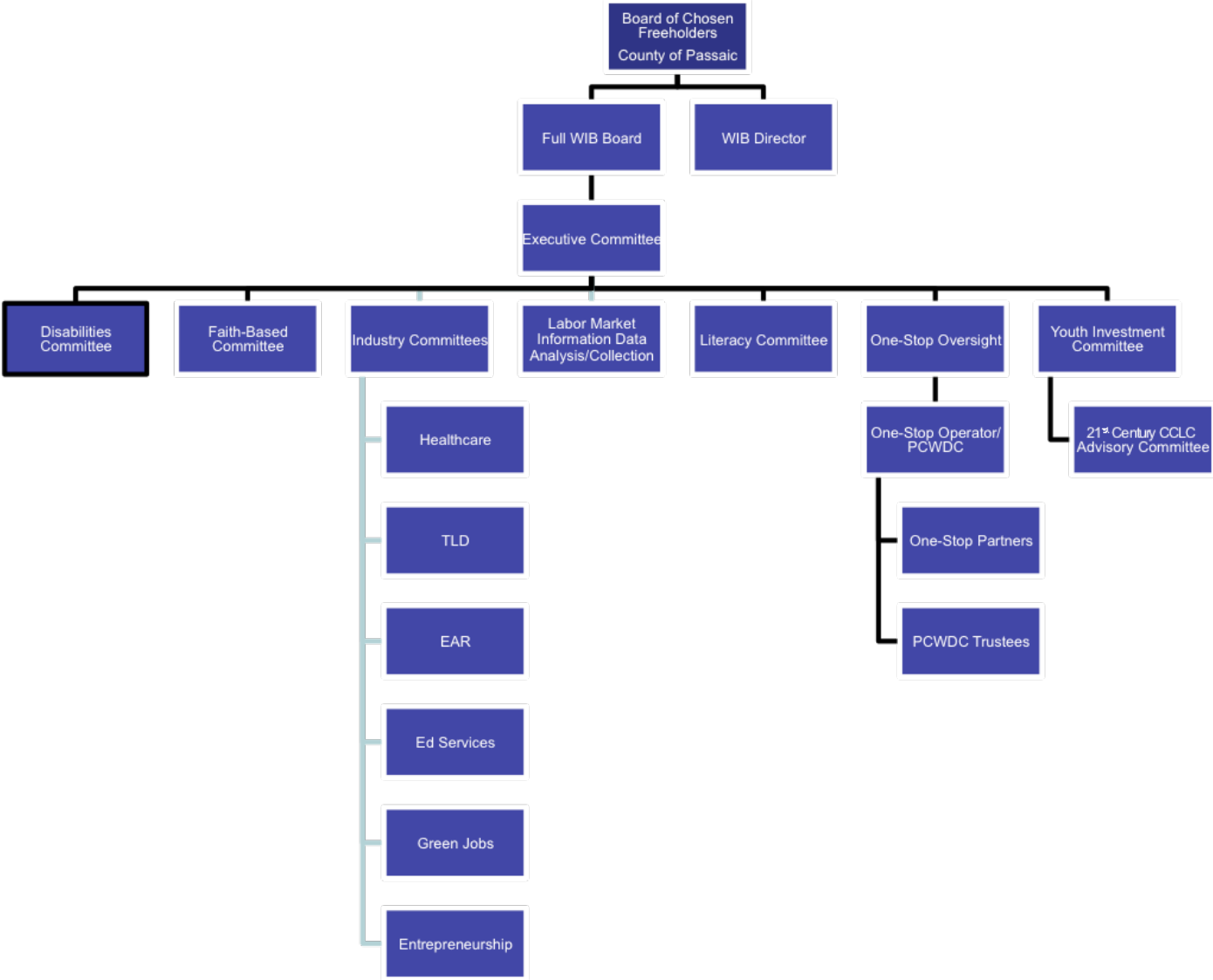
In Year Two, work should focus on further developing the pathways infrastructure and refining pathways activities and offerings. Activities would include:

- Evaluate Year One progress and identify what is/isn't working to guide work in Year Two.
- Where necessary, develop new strategies for engaging employers, educators and other stakeholders who were not involved in the process during the first year, particularly in those clusters and areas where specific input is needed.
- Based on the status of individual clusters, design and implement additional pathways offerings to support additional targeted populations and/or emerging needs of employers.
- Expand career awareness, exploration and marketing activities within the County. Depending on the status of the cluster, this may include sponsoring more events and activities, developing industry-based websites for sharing information, etc.
- Continue to refine the assessment, career exploration and customer flow processes within the One Stop and with partner organizations so that it supports each career pathway.
- Continue to refine the information collection and sharing process to address problems in the types of data being collected and/or how information is being shared with stakeholders.

## **Years Three through Five**

In Years 3-5 of the plan, work should continue in terms of refining strategies and processes to better meet the needs of both the industries and targeted clusters. Each year the WIB should evaluate the success of various pathways activities and determine what is/isn't working. It should also continue to seek out and develop appropriate strategic partnerships for expanding programs and services. Depending on the nature of progress to that point, there may be a need to re-evaluate processes, seek new funding sources, identify and engage new partners and develop new strategies for data collection and analysis.

**APPENDIX A**  
**DRAFT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



APPENDIX B

“green jobs”: a workforce system framework for action

<b>FOUNDATIONAL</b>	<b>Policy Drivers/ Interests</b>	Economic Recovery & Job Creation	Legislation/ Funding	Economic Competitiveness	Energy Independence, Efficiency & Security	Save the Planet	Eco-Equity				
	<b>Transforming Industrial Sectors &amp; Occupations</b>	Energy Generation/Efficiency/Security				Environmental Protection					
		Renewable/ Green Energy (wind, solar, geo, biomass)	Sustainable Manufacturing	Construction/ Skilled Trades	Transportation	Government Oversight	Water Management	Materials & Waste Management			
<b>Skill Changers</b>	New Technologies			New Processes		New Materials					
<b>ROLES</b>	Align Policies & Programs/ Inclusive Investments/ Service Delivery Strategies	Education & Training Models			Strategic Partnerships for Workforce Solutions			Workforce Information		Knowledge Sharing/ Networking/ Communications	Research/ Accountability
		Apprenticeship	Youth Pipeline	Community Colleges	Industry	Labor	Education at all Levels	Federal Partners	CBO/FBO		
<b>OPERATIONAL</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	1. Program resources focused on re-skilling/ re-employing in green jobs	1. Map “green” education pathways leading to portable and industry recognized credentials – short term/ long term	1. Engage/convene strategic partners	1. Collaborate to develop & leverage new and existing data/information sources	1. Develop new “green” learning opportunities for workforce system staff at all levels	1. Research & evaluation				
		2. Program participants have access to “green skills” & “green jobs”	2. Identify and leverage existing education & training resources/ investments	2. Align “green” strategies with regional economic recovery and growth strategies	2. Project new jobs, changing jobs, occupational definitions & new skill needs	2. Fully leverage the communication, knowledge sharing, & e-learning capacity of Workforce3 One	2. Performance reporting/ benchmarking				
		3. Build on & leverage existing sector initiatives & green workforce solutions	3. Educate & train to industry standards/ credentials	3. Define workforce challenges	3. Refine/develop competency models, assessment tools, & career ladders/ lattices	3. Build & nurture a “green jobs” community of practice	3. Comprehensive system for training grantees/sub-grantees and monitoring compliance at all levels				
		4. Program policy & direction & strategic investments reflect focus on “green”	4. Build capacity of community colleges	4. Develop innovative workforce solutions	4. Adapt and refine career guidance tools	4. Leverage conferences & other communication forums to network & share knowledge	4. Competitive procurement for contracts & grants				
		5. One-Stop staff have knowledge about “green jobs” & service delivery strategies have “green” focus	5. Refine/develop “green” apprenticeship models	5. Asset map to share/ leverage knowledge, products, and resources	5. Collaborate to disseminate	5. Promote peer to peer & mentorship learning opportunities and professional development	5. Transparency of grant and contract making to public.				
		6. Prepare workers for emerging industry occupations	6. Prepare workers for emerging industry occupations	6. Collaborate! Collaborate! Collaborate!							

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## *Appendix C*

### **Passaic County Workforce Investment Board and One Stop Locations**

- Workforce Investment Board of Passaic County

930 Riverview Drive, Suite 250

Totowa, NJ 07512

973-569-4020 (phone)

- One-Stop Career Centers of Passaic County

52 Church Street (*Comprehensive One-Stop Career Center*)

Paterson, NJ 07505

973-340-3400 (phone)

388 Lakeview Avenue

Clifton, NJ 07011

973-340-3400 (phone)

370 Broadway

Paterson, NJ

973-977-4350 (phone)

25 Howe Avenue

Passaic, NJ 07055

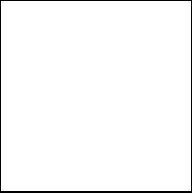
973-916-2648 (phone)

*Appendix D*  
**Workforce Development Acronyms**  
**Guide to Workforce Acronyms**

- ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act
- ARRA: American Recovery and Re-investment Act
- CBO: Community Based Organization
- CEO: Chief Elected Official
- CETA: Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, former federal program replaced by the job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in 1983
- CIO: Chief Information Officer
- DCA: Department of Community Affairs
- DCF: Department of Children and Families
- DOE: Department of Education
- DVOP: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
- ES: Employment Service, now referred to as Workforce Development
- ETA: Employment and Training Administration (of the United States Department of Labor)
- FBCO: Faith-Based and Community-Based Organization
- FBO: Faith-Based Organization
- FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency
- FFY: Federal Fiscal Year
- FS: Food Stamps
- FUTA: Federal Unemployment Tax Act- funding source for Wagner-Peyser
- GED: General Education Development (testing for high school equivalency)
- HHS: Health and Human Services; a federal agency responsible for public assistance and similar services for low-income individuals
- ITA: Individual Training Account, program for individuals with income qualifications that allows them to receive training and other services offered through the One-Stop Career Center
- JJC: Juvenile Justice Commission
- JTPA: Job Training Partnership Act, primary federal job training program, replaced by WIA in 1998
- LMI: Labor Market Information
- LVER: Local Veterans Employment representative

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- LWD: New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- MIS: Management Information System
- MSFW: Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers
- NASWA: National Association of State Workforce Agencies
- NAWB: National Association of Workforce Boards
- NGA: National Governors' Association
- OJT: On-the-Job Training
- PY: Program Year, July 1-June 30
- RRI: Rapid Response Initiative
- SDA: Service Delivery Area
- SFY: State Fiscal Year
- TAA: Trade Adjustment Act, federal program to provide assistance to individuals for retraining and reemployment services for individuals who become unemployed as a result of increased imports from anywhere in the world, including NAFTA countries
- TANF: Temporary Aid to Needy Families, formerly AFDC (Aid for Dependent Children)
- YIC: Youth Investment Committee
- TJTC: Targeted Jobs Tax Credit, a tax credit for businesses who hire people from specific target groups, such as welfare recipients, economically disadvantaged youth, veterans, etc.
- UI: Unemployment Insurance
- UC: Unemployment Compensation
- USDOL: United States Department of Labor
- VOC-ED: Vocational Education
- VOC-Rehab: Vocational Rehabilitation
- WP: Wagner-Peyser Act- establishes the public employment service and provides for its funding
- WEC: Workforce Estimating Conference
- WIA: Workforce Investment Act of 1998, primary current federal workforce legislation, replacing former Job Training Partnership Act
- WIB: Workforce Investment Board
- TANF: Work First New Jersey
- WTTW: Welfare-to-Work

- 
- WOTC: Work Opportunity Tax Credit, a federal incentive to employers for hiring welfare recipients.