October 2026 Leadership Meeting Minutes

Location: 1st Floor Conference Room
Date: Tuesday, October 27, 2026
Time: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Meeting Attendees

- **Fernandel Almonor** – One-Stop Operator
- **Paul Grzella** – Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board
- **Jeanne Cassano** – Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board
- **Barbara Stockton** – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR) Business Outreach Team
- **Danielle Kwan** – DVR Somerville Manager
- **Christina Shockley** – Hunterdon County Youth Outreach Representative
- **Karen Araujo** – Permanent Favor Business Services
- **Marie Marnell** – Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission / WorkFirst
- **Chris Peake** – One-Stop Career Training Services Center
- **Andrea Rosario- Askie** – New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI)

Section Breakdown & Meeting Discussions

1. Opening & Logistics

- **Room Setup & Attendance Tracking:** The meeting room layout was adjusted temporarily to accommodate a scheduled partner event immediately following the meeting. Attendance signing is now captured automatically using AI tools.

2. Quarterly Customer Job Preferences Data

- **Top Preferred Roles:** Stock clerks and warehouse positions consistently remain at the top spot. Customer service and retail also continue to show strong demand.
- **Notable Trend Spikes:** A significant spike was noted in client interest for Administrative Director and Business Director roles.
- **Strategic Application:** Preference synthesized data from spreadsheets will directly inform upcoming recruitment focus areas and employer outreach connections.

3. Quarterly Government Job Focus Recruitment Event (October 29th)

- **Event Location & Metrics:** Scheduled at the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce with 15 participating employers secured, 2 of which will conduct on-site interviews. Over 294 job seekers registered, exceeding initial targets by over 200%.
- **Team Roles & Responsibilities:**
    - **Workforce & Employer Relations:** Karen and Business Services Team
    - **General Management & Information Table:** Fernandel
    - **Interview Room Management:** Ingrid
    - **Crowd Control & QR Registration:** Jeanne, Chika, Andrea, and Sylvia
    - **Registration Table Support:** Barbara
    - **Directional Signage & Floor Plans:** Jeanne and Chika
    - **Employment Services Table:** Sofia (general population support) and Daphne (veteran-specific support)
- **On-Site Interview Policy:** Formal pre-event resume submissions closed on October 22nd. Candidates seeking interviews after the deadline can pitch employers directly on-site at the employer's discretion.

4. Recruitment Event Outcomes & Historical Reporting

- **July Event Placements:** Confirmed 10 direct hires resulted from the July entry-level recruitment event.
- **Macro Placement Report Initiative:** Business Services will assemble a cumulative report tracking macro-level placement metrics across past quarterly events for board reporting and annual documentation.
- **Client Identification Alignment:** Signed candidate interview rosters will be shared with Danielle, Monica, and Janetta to cross-reference client outcomes with case managers.

5. Co-Enrollment Matrix & Partner Updates

- **Matrix Expansion:** The updated matrix expanded to 2 pages incorporating hyperlinks for NJ Literacy partners, Mercer MedTech, and recent NJAD grantees.

6. SETC / Garden State Workforce Conference Debrief

- **Highlights & Attendance:** Over 670–700 workforce professionals attended state-wide workshops focusing on work activity strategies, SNAP engagement, and AI integration.
- **Discussion Topics:** Discussions focused on employer relationship building, OJT models, and addressing labor market shifts related to AI advancement.

7. Future Leadership Meetings

- **Schedule Confirmation:** The November meeting scheduled for November 24th will remain on the calendar as planned based on attendee availability.

Partner Status Reports

Workforce Development Board (WDB) – Paul Grzella

- **OJT & Training RFAs:** Re-releasing Request for Applications (RFAs) for regular On-the-Job Training (OJT), incumbent worker training, and apprenticeship OJTs. Current active OJTs include Dental Assistant at Zufall Health and an open role at EboClair.
- **Veterans Job Fair:** Scheduled for November 5th (4:00 PM – 7:00 PM) with 37 registered employers and service agencies.
- **Transportation & Vanpool Challenges:** Evaluated Go-Hunter vanpool logistics for shift workers at Restaurant Depot in Hunterdon County. Identified cost ($4,000/month) and employer liability constraints.
- **Mobile Platform Feature:** Launching a free social services mapping feature integrated into the mobile platform in two weeks.
- **Digital Literacy Hub Grant:** Received state notification regarding funding allocations ($84,000+) for adult literacy, ESL, and GED programs running October to September.
- **National Workforce Advocacy:** Represented regional workforce initiatives at the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Summit in Washington, D.C., advocating with legislative representatives.

Business Services Team – Karen

- **Employer Outreach Events:** Coordinated recruitment events including First Solution Route (120 registered, 3 hires) and ShopRite Branchburg (4 total hires across two hiring dates).
- **Rapid Response Events:** Coordinating an upcoming December 2nd response event for Kings/Acme (66 affected workers in logistics and customer service). Reached out to offer rapid response services following reported Verizon layoffs.
- **USAJobs Workshop Success:** Federal virtual navigation workshop hosted 86 attendees. Exploring hosting recordings via a dedicated One-Stop YouTube channel.
- **Resume Portal & Career Assessment:** Renewed the resume portal contract and added an upgraded career assessment module. Monthly portal engagement averages 30–35 active users.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) – Danielle Kwan

- **Staffing Updates:** Welcomed a Rutgers intern and hired a new vocational counselor starting November 16th (bringing total counselor staff to 6). The supervisor position is anticipated to open internally within a month.

One-Stop Career Training Center – Chris Peake

- **PatStone Staffing Support:** Welcomed Angela Plummer Jones as front desk office assistant (29 hours/week) managing calls, orientations, and walk-in scheduling.

- **Audit Compliance:** NJ Department of Labor conducted an on-site annual data validation review on October 9th auditing 30 random files; preliminary results were positive.
- **Outreach & Community Events:** Sofia Bandiera will staff the job fair resource table and represent One-Stop services at the Somerset Armory event on November 7th serving National Guard and military families. Sent a targeted e-blast to 6-month unemployment recipients.

WorkFirst NJ (WFNJ) / Educational Services Commission – Marie Marnell

- **Budget & Staffing:** Budget finalized; recruiting for two part-time positions post-January. Currently supported by PatStone intern Kim assisting with administrative tasks.
- **Client Training Cohorts:** Enrolled 5 clients into the October Mercer MedTech Digital Equity training cohort. Enrolled individual clients into AI courses at NJIT, medical billing, and CNA programs.
- **Outreach & Placements:** Reported 3 job placements in September. Expanding website resources to inform SNAP clients of alternative work activity options.

Youth Outreach (Hunterdon & Somerset Counties) – Christina Shockley

- **Website & Outreach Optimization:** Initiating a redesign of county youth web pages to streamline resource access across Hunterdon and Somerset counties, incorporating Middle Earth services.
- **Apprenticeship Grant Research:** Reviewing eligibility requirements for the NJ GAINS grant program to evaluate business-focused apprenticeship opportunities for youth.