



Building Community & Economic Growth Through Local Empowerment



Presented by: Stephanie Gonzalez, Bridgeton UEZ Coordinator

Table of Contents

1. Introduction & Purpose
2. Role of the UEZ Coordinator
3. The Role of the UEZ Coordinator in UEZ-Funded Events
4. 2025 Event Portfolio & Economic Highlights
5. Economic Impact & Vendor Sales Metrics
6. Fiscal Accountability & Vendor Payment Process
7. Statewide Collaboration & UEZ Jamboree Initiative
8. Program Goals and Alignment
9. Takeaways & Statewide Replication Model
10. Digital Presence and Promotion
11. Challenges & Lessons Learned
12. Vision for FY2026 & Beyond

1. Introduction & Purpose

The Bridgeton Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) program drives local economic revitalization through strategic events, business support, and community partnerships. This 2025 report showcases UEZ-funded initiatives that strengthened our local economy, supported certified businesses, and inspired statewide collaboration. As the Bridgeton UEZ Coordinator, I aim to highlight how event-driven engagement can attract new enrollments, retain existing businesses, and foster community pride.

2. Role of the UEZ Coordinator

The UEZ Coordinator serves as the primary liaison between the municipalities we serve and the UEZA board, the New Jersey DCA, and local businesses. Responsibilities include managing budgets, overseeing event logistics, ensuring compliance, and fostering partnerships. Additionally, coordinators act as mentors to new municipalities, sharing best practices for program implementation and fiscal accountability.

3. The Role of the UEZ Coordinator in UEZ-Funded Events

UEZ Coordinators bridge communication between local government, businesses, and the DCA. Through thoughtful event planning and community partnerships, we create programs that drive both economic and social impact.

Flow: UEZ Coordinator → Event Planning → Vendor Engagement → Fiscal Review → Community Impact → DCA Reporting

4. 2025 Event Portfolio & Economic Highlights

Our 2025 UEZ events were designed to engage UEZ residents and empower UEZ certified small businesses. Each event offered free vending opportunities for certified UEZ businesses, increasing exposure and promoting entrepreneurship, which lead New business Relocating into zone.

Cinco de Mayo Celebration — Attendance: 800 | Vendors: 55 | Sales Impact: \$10,500

Juneteenth Celebration — Attendance: 1200 | Vendors: 69 | Sales Impact: \$9,800

Bridgeton UEZ Unity Day — Attendance 2300 | Vendors: 43 | Sales Impact: \$15,940

Back-to-School Giveaway — Attendance: 900 | Vendors: 20 | Sales Impact: \$1500

Bridgeton UEZ experience at Fiesta Borinquena | Attendance: 200 | Vendors: 15 | Sales Impact: \$1500

Bridgeton UEZ Block Party — Attendance: 2400 | Vendors: 72 | Sales Impact: \$13,248

Día de los Muertos Cultural Festival —Est Attendance: 1800 | Vendors: 25 | Sales Impact: est. Bring awareness to business and future sales

Thanksgiving Give-Back Event — Attendance: est. 1400 | Vendors: 10 | Sales Impact: est. \$ Bring awareness to business and future sales

Holiday Parade & Market — Attendance: est. 2300 | Vendors: 80 | Sales Impact: \$10,000

And bring awareness to business

5. Economic Impact & Vendor Sales Metrics

Vendor data from surveys and registration records indicate consistent growth in both certification participation and sales. Each UEZ-funded event directly increased revenue opportunities for small businesses and supported the revitalization of downtown Bridgeton. Using the strategy of partnering with local schools, our police department, fire department and EMS, has definitely assisted us in bringing in more support to our events run smoothly. We also incorporated Free entertainment, Free concert series, and free family fun zone.

6. Fiscal Accountability & Vendor Payment Process

As part of the Bridgeton UEZ's commitment to transparency and responsible use of UEZ funds, all vendor payments and expenditures follow strict fiscal protocols. Our office ensures every UEZ-funded event and partnership maintains compliance with municipal finance regulations and New Jersey DCA guidelines.

- **Vendor Verification:** Vendors must submit valid W-9 forms, active Business Registration Certificates (BRC), and proof of good tax standing with the NJ Division of Taxation.
- **Proper Contracting:** Vendors must have signed City Service Contracts or Purchase Orders (PO) before services begin; all copies are shared with the Purchasing Agent and Finance Department.
- **Invoice Submission:** Vendors submit official invoices that match approved contract and PO details.
- **Review & Approval:** I work closely with the Purchasing Agent and Finance Office to ensure all payments are accurate and compliant.
- **Direct Payment for Services:** The City pays vendors directly — ensuring UEZ funds are used only for authorized services, not as unrestricted donations or grants.

This structured system safeguards the integrity of the UEZ program, prevents misuse of funds, and establishes a statewide model for fiscal accountability and coordination.

7. Statewide Collaboration & UEZ Jamboree Initiative

To strengthen inter-municipal collaboration, the Bridgeton UEZ is proposing the 'UEZ Jamboree Initiative' — a rotating series of events hosted across multiple zones. Participating municipalities will offer free vending to each other's certified businesses, expanding exposure, increasing business-to-business connections, and promoting regional growth.

8. Program Goals Alignment

Each event and fiscal process aligns with the NJ UEZ Program's statewide goals to:

- Strengthen local economies
- Encourage business development
- Expand employment opportunities- Revitalize commercial corridors
- Promote public-private partnerships

9. Takeaways & Statewide Replication Model

The Bridgeton UEZ model demonstrates how fiscal responsibility, creative community engagement, and inter-city collaboration can transform economic growth. Other municipalities are encouraged to adopt this transparent, event-driven approach to strengthen their own zones and build a unified network of empowered small businesses. I also want to make sure that my other fellow coordinators that have been paving the way with events in their cities. Get a big, Thank you. I look forward working more intentional with my fellow coordinators.

10. Digital Presence & Promotion

Our UEZ program uses social media, city websites, and email communications to amplify event reach. Key strategies:

- Highlighting UEZ-certified vendors before, during, and after events.
- Live updates on social media to engage residents and drive attendance. Collaborating with local media partners for free publicity.

11. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Every year brings opportunities to improve:

- Vendor coordination: Ensuring timely contracts and W-9/BRC submissions.
- Attendance tracking: Capturing accurate metrics for reporting.
- Weather and logistics: Preparing contingency plans for outdoor events.

Lessons: proactive planning, cross-department communication, and flexibility are critical for success.

12. Vision for FY2026 & Beyond

Looking forward, we plan to:

- Expand the UEZ Jamboree Initiative to additional municipalities.
- Introduce new seasonal events supporting small businesses, state support with commercial or event where we introduce all coordinators from each zone.
- Increase marketing reach and resident engagement.
- Track measurable economic impact and UEZ enrollment growth.

— Stephanie Gonzalez | Bridgeton UEZ Coordinator | New Jersey UEZ Program