



New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

Vacant, Chairman

Mikie Sherrill, Governor

SETC Commission Meeting Minutes Wednesday, June 17th, 2026 10am – 12pm Teams Platform

I. Welcome & WDB Updates - SETC Joan Desmarais Deputy Executive Director

Ms. Joan Desmarais called the meeting to order at 10:04 am and welcomed members and guests. In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1978, notice of this meeting was submitted to the Secretary of State's office and was posted on the SETC website. The roll call was taken and the SETC had a quorum. Approval of March 18th, 2026, meeting minutes were approved by Sally Nadler and Dr. Danielle Jubanyik. Joan Desmarais gave an update that SETC attended two great events, one of the events which was the New Jersey Community College Consortium which held valuable presentations including LMI information. There were collaboration and alignment of student pathways in higher education. The event also touched on meeting the challenges and opportunities of AI in the workplace. The second event the SETC attended was at Nokia Bell Labs. There was open discussion with many stakeholders regarding workforce development and areas of improvement. With regards to workforce development and our workforce, there were discussions surrounding the New Jersey India Commission and the Asian Indian Chamber of Commerce at Nokia.

Many policymakers, business leaders, educators and innovators attended. In addition, there are several Workforce Development Board updates. The SETC is required to ensure that all the local areas complete their two-year local plan modifications. Two areas currently just completed them which I am happy to report out. Middlesex plans to approve their two-year local plan at the end of July and then we will be concluding this exercise. New Jersey has 17 local areas, including North, Central, and South. Hudson County will be approved July 1st, Newark on June 30th, and Mercer will be on June 28th. All the approvals will be posted on their websites, which is a requirement of the USDOL. Also, the USDA has been which allows us to reduce our out of school youth spending requirement from 75 to 50% for local formula youth funds under the new waiver, 50% of youth funds must be spent on out of school youth and 50% can be spent on in school youth.

This allows flexibility of our local areas to serve more in school youth who need early intervention and career exploration prevent youth from dropping out by engaging them while still in school. This will allow for balanced programs that meet the local community's needs and allows us to expand partnerships with schools and educational institutions and help build career pathways starting earlier in a young person's journey.

Also, our Workforce Business Services Rapid Response Office of Research and Information Vocational Rehabilitation Commission for the Blind, are busy focusing on adult education and literacy, and as you can see on the screen, this includes all of these parts of our wheel programs that we administer here at the state of New Jersey. The SETC is also working with the monitoring team and our office of internal audit to ensure we provide coordination and Technical Support. Web certification includes a review of board composition and structure, their local strategic planning efforts include including local and regional planning, which I've mentioned their performance metrics, their fiscal and administrative integrity and local partnerships and collaborations. Service delivery compliance governance innovation, best practices and evidence of continuous improvement is a big undertaking for us every two years and we are working hard to get through it and providing all the support required for the 17 local areas.

Currently, the USDOL has issued an RFI and are seeking public comment. The public comment is to inform 2 modernization efforts to strengthen the nation's workforce. First, they're soliciting input to inform the design and implementation of a modernized online career site currently delivered through one stop career centers. This is the public workforce information website that helps job seekers explore occupations, locate training programs, identify local services and connect to job listings and this is on the federal career site careeronestop.org.

Second, there's listening input to inform a modernization of the Occupational Information Network. The ONET program, which publishes detailed descriptions of occupational employment and serves as a foundational data resource for workforce tools and services across the country.

The SETC plans to coordinate with the appropriate entities here at NJDOL and with our partners and additional stakeholders to provide a formal written response from New Jersey's public comments for this effort by USDOL which are due by 8/10/2026.

Anyone can make a public comment, as again these slides will be shared, you can see in the blue here on the slides that's the live link to take you to the instructions and how to submit public comment. You may be a private career school, job seeker, or an employer.

In addition, programs are welcome to submit comments to the federal government on these two efforts. Lastly, we have a business unit which offers information to folks on recruitment and hiring, workforce training and development, employer support and resources. NJDOL also has other Divisions such as the Office of Research and Information which provides labor market data, Economic Research and analysis, and workforce intelligent tools which have our grant opportunities. Thank you for all the great work everyone is doing and will now welcome our first presenter.

II. New Jersey One-Stop Career Center Overview Andre Hardy, Assistant Division Director, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Mr. Andre Hardy, Assistant Division Director with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development provided an overview of New Jersey's One-Stop Career Center system, its role within the broader workforce development system, the services provided to job seekers and employers, the populations served, the partnerships that support service delivery, and the oversight responsibilities of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL). The presentation explained that New Jersey currently has 23 One-Stop Career Center locations across 17 workforce development areas. These centers are part of the larger American Job Center Network, which consists of approximately 2,300 public workforce centers across the country.

The system operates under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which became law in 2014 and promotes the integration of workforce partners to better serve job seekers and employers. The presentation emphasized that One-Stop Career Centers provide a much broader range of services than many members of the public may realize. Although One-Stop Career Centers have traditionally been associated with unemployment, they function as reemployment and career-development entities designed to help individuals enter, re-enter, or advance within the workforce. Services include career navigation and counseling, career pathway information, orientations, job-readiness workshops, resume assistance, interview preparation, mock interviews, networking assistance, job-search assistance, and access to computers and job boards. The centers also provide recruitment events and job fairs through business-services teams, allowing job seekers to connect directly with employers seeking individuals with skills and backgrounds. These services are particularly important for individuals who may not have access to computers at home or who may need assistance to become more comfortable with current technology and digital job-search practices. Another important function of the One-Stop Career Centers is connecting individuals with community resources when barriers outside of employment may prevent them from successfully entering or remaining in the workforce. The presentation explained that One-Stop Career Centers are not necessarily subject-matter experts in every area of human services, but they are responsible for connecting customers with appropriate community resources. Examples include referrals for individuals experiencing food insecurity or housing insecurity. The presentation stressed that basic needs must be addressed because it can be difficult for an individual to successfully participate in employment and training activities when fundamental needs have not been met.

The centers also provide access to labor-market information so that individuals can better understand what employers are seeking, which certifications and educational credentials may be valuable, and how different career pathways are expected to grow or decline within New Jersey and local labor markets. The goal is not simply to help someone obtain any available job, but to assist individuals in identifying career opportunities that can lead to long-term employment and family-sustaining wages. Supportive services may also be available to assist individuals with barriers such as transportation, interview clothing, and other costs that may be difficult to manage while unemployed or underemployed. Work-based learning is another important component of the system. Services may include apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, transitional work, and incumbent worker training. The centers also provide English-language services for individuals who need to strengthen their language skills to obtain employment, GED and high-school equivalency services for individuals who did not complete high school through a traditional educational setting, and vocational training through training providers approved by NJDOL. The presentation explained that some of these services are subject to eligibility requirements, while other basic services are available to anyone who enters a One One-Stop Career Center.

The One-Stop system serves a wide variety of populations. These include the public, employers, dislocated workers, individuals who are long-term unemployed, low-income adults, veterans, youth, underemployed workers, English-language learners, mature workers, individuals recovering from addiction, migrant and seasonal farm workers, justice-involved individuals, and individuals with disabilities. Employers are considered important customers of the One-Stop system because establishing strong employer relationships is necessary to connect job seekers with meaningful employment opportunities and career pathways.

Veterans receive priority of service under federal legislation, and the One-Stop system includes specialized staff who assist veterans and individuals transitioning from military service with identifying transferable skills and connecting those skills to civilian employment opportunities.

Specialized services are also available for disabled veterans who may face physical or cognitive barriers resulting from their military service. Youth services include assistance for both in-school and out-of-school youth who face barriers to employment. These barriers can include basic skills deficiencies, justice involvement, pregnancy or parenting responsibilities, aging out of foster care, and language barriers.

The presentation also highlighted the importance of recognizing underemployed individuals as a population that may require workforce services. The fact that someone is employed does not necessarily mean that the individual is earning a family-sustaining wage. Individuals who are working but whose household income remains insufficient may qualify for intensive case-management services through the One-Stop system. Mature workers, generally individuals age 55 and older, may also face specific challenges associated with age, fixed income, and the need for employment or supplemental employment. Other specialized populations include individuals recovering from addiction, migrant and seasonal farm workers whose employment may follow agricultural seasons, justice-involved individuals who may face employment barriers because of prior arrests or incarceration, and individuals with disabilities who may require specialized assistance and accommodations to obtain competitive integrated employment. A significant portion of the presentation focused on partnerships and the integration of services. The One-Stop system includes federally required partners when those partners exist within a local workforce area, as well as state-required and recommended community partners. The purpose of this structure is to bring together organizations with different areas of expertise so that customers can receive coordinated services. In some cases, a single customer may meet the eligibility requirements for several programs or partners, making collaboration particularly important. The presentation emphasized that the system works best when multiple partners come together to address the complete needs of an individual rather than operating independently.

Also discussed, partnerships involving NJDOL business outreach, workforce programs, SNAP and other public-assistance populations, recovery programs, justice-involved individuals, youth programs, libraries, and summer youth employment opportunities. Community libraries were identified as important access points for the workforce system, while other programs provide opportunities for youth and individuals facing specific barriers to employment. These partnerships help expand the reach of the One-Stop system and provide additional avenues for individuals to access employment and training services. New Jersey's workforce system is described as "state aligned but locally responsive." There are 17 workforce development boards and 17 workforce areas throughout the state, with 23 One-Stop locations. NJDOL provides statewide oversight, establishes expectations, and promotes accessibility, consistency, and equitable service delivery. At the same time, local workforce development boards can develop approaches that reflect the needs of their individual communities and local economies. The presentation explained that economic conditions and workforce needs can differ significantly throughout New Jersey, meaning that strategies that work in one region may not necessarily work in another.

NJDOL's oversight responsibilities include ensuring that local workforce areas engage in planning, provide access to labor-market information, maintain active partnerships, engage employers, develop career pathways, provide access to technology, and appropriately oversee workforce programs and resources. The presentation emphasized that career development is an important part of the system. While an individual may initially need a job, the larger goal is to help that person understand how employment can lead to a career and ultimately to sustainable wages.

Financial and program accountability were also discussed. Federal workforce funding comes to the state and is distributed to local areas, creating an obligation to demonstrate that funds are being used appropriately and that programs are achieving results. Performance measures can include whether individuals obtain employment, remain employed, earn credentials, and achieve sustainable wages after receiving services. NJDOL also has responsibilities related to infrastructure costs, service-provider procurement, coordination with education providers, monitoring spending, and ensuring that individuals with disabilities can access One-Stop facilities and services through appropriate accommodation and adaptive technology.

The presentation explained that workforce policy follows a federal, state, and local structure. Federal laws and regulations establish requirements for workforce programs and funding. Federal guidance is reviewed by NJDOL and incorporated into state policies and workforce guidance. Local workforce boards then have the responsibility of implementing these requirements within their communities while ensuring that local policies remain consistent with federal and state requirements. Monitoring and technical assistance are used to help local areas understand and implement these requirements and to address issues that may arise.

Skill Up was identified as an online platform offering more than 7,000 self-paced courses and certifications. The resource allows individuals to pursue industry-recognized credentials on their own schedules, including people who may work during normal One-Stop operating hours. The presentation noted that credentials from major companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Amazon are among the types of opportunities available through the platform.

My NJ Career was also presented as a free online tool that uses generative artificial intelligence to assist individuals in identifying career and training pathways based on their existing experience and career goals. Users can upload a resume and receive personalized job and training recommendations. The tool can help individuals identify transferable skills and explore potential career changes before connecting with their local One-Stop Career Center to put an employment or training plan into action.

The NJ Training Explorer is also another tool that allows job seekers and individuals interested in training to search for programs based on factors such as the type of training they want, their ZIP code, and the maximum cost they are able or willing to consider. These resources demonstrate the continued expansion of technology and online tools within New Jersey's workforce development system.

In closing, there was discussion around that successful workforce development depends on strong partnerships, effective state and local coordination, employer engagement, public awareness, accountability, and the ability to respond to the specific needs of local communities. The overall goal is not simply to connect individuals with jobs, but to help them move toward meaningful career pathways and family-sustaining wages while ensuring that employers have access to a qualified workforce. Mr. Hardy then took a question from Commission member, Mr. Anthony Ferrara, who asked for Mr. Hardy to touch on Virtual support. Mr. Hardy explained that for folks that cannot reach the One Stop Career Centers, training and meetings with counselors which are offered through virtual means to connect the job seeker with tools and resources in virtual form.

III. Workforce Pell Presentation Thomas Hilliard, Senior Policy Advisor, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development Stefani Thachik, Senior Advisor, NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education

Mr. Thomas Hilliard, Senior Policy Advisor, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development Stefani Thachik, Senior Advisor, NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education opened up the presentation with an overview of New Jersey's implementation of the new Workforce Pell program, including the goals established for the pilot year, the state's interagency coordination efforts, eligibility requirements, performance standards, implementation timeline, and the process used to determine which training programs would qualify for Workforce Pell funding. The state has identified several key principles for implementing Workforce Pell. These included expanding access for learners, particularly individuals who have historically been underrepresented; ensuring that participants can access the resources necessary to successfully participate; supporting strong academic and economic outcomes; maintaining a high-quality portfolio of training programs that meet employer needs; and prioritizing transparency and feasibility as the program is implemented. The state indicated that these principles would continue to be reviewed and refined as Workforce Pell moves beyond the initial pilot year.

Workforce Pell was described as a cross-cutting initiative requiring significant coordination among state agencies. New Jersey established an interagency working group representing seven agencies or divisions to improve coordination, clarify shared responsibilities, work with providers and stakeholders, align Workforce Pell with existing programs such as WIOA and Perkins, and improve the sharing of expertise, data, and other resources. The working group also supports consistent communication as the program is implemented.

The report also addressed the important role of the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC). The presentation explained that SETC is not merely a spectator or stakeholder in the process. Under the Workforce Pell provisions enacted through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025, the Governor determines whether the state will participate after consultation with the State Board. The presentation emphasized that the consultation process is intended to be meaningful and that SETC members are being asked to provide input as the program moves forward.

A major focus of the report was the quality standards that training programs must meet to become eligible for Workforce Pell funding. The purpose of these standards is to ensure that federal financial assistance supports high-quality programs that produce positive outcomes. Eligible programs must be operated by accredited Title IV institutions, meet specified requirements concerning program length and duration, have been in operation for at least one year, and lead to a recognized postsecondary credential. Credentials must generally be stackable or portable, or represent the recognized credential for an occupation, and must provide a pathway toward related certificates or degree programs.

The program also establishes significant performance requirements. Programs must achieve at least a 70 percent completion rate within 150 percent of the standard completion time and a 70 percent employment placement rate within six months of completion. Beginning around 2029/2030, additional requirements will apply concerning whether completers are placed into occupations or sectors related to the training they received. A value-added earnings test is also expected to become effective around that time, requiring consideration of earnings in relation to tuition and fees paid by

the student. The implementation timeline has moved quickly. The state established its interagency working group in early fall and began preparing for the program even before final federal regulations were issued. New Jersey also submitted comments on the proposed regulations. Final regulations were published approximately one month before the presentation, with the U.S. Department of Education beginning to accept submissions on July 1 and eligibility provisions taking effect July 20. The first Workforce Pell grants to students are expected to be issued in the fall. The presentation emphasized that the current year is a pilot year and that additional eligible training programs are expected to be identified during the following year.

New Jersey has developed policies and procedures addressing several Workforce Pell requirements. These include determining whether programs prepare individuals for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations; meeting employer hiring needs; ensuring credentials are stackable and portable; and ensuring that programs provide academic credit that can be applied toward an aligned certificate or degree. The state sought to align these policies with existing workforce programs and, where possible, relied on NJDOL's Labor Demand Occupation List and local and regional waivers developed under WIOA. The state also established requirements concerning information that institutions must submit, a process for consultation between the Governor and the State Board, and a process through which institutions can appeal a termination decision. The report explained that written policies establish the framework for the program, while the methodology and data-collection process are necessary to determine whether programs meet those requirements in practice.

New Jersey was considered well positioned to implement Workforce Pell because of its existing Eligible Training Provider List and Consumer Report Card infrastructure. The state used existing data where possible and supplemented that information with additional data collected directly from training providers. The eligibility process began with programs on the existing training-provider list and examined whether programs were Title IV eligible and connected to in-demand occupations. Additional information was then collected regarding program duration, stack ability, the collection of Social Security numbers needed to measure employment outcomes, and whether the program had been operating for at least one year.

The data showed that the eligibility requirements were challenging for many programs to meet during the pilot year. Initially, 52 providers representing 276 programs received the supplemental data survey. Nineteen providers ultimately submitted information covering 144 programs that could potentially qualify. After applying additional requirements concerning program duration, operating history, Social Security number collection, and stack ability, only nine providers and approximately 23 to 24 programs met all those criteria. The next stage required individual student data so that completion and employment outcomes could be measured. Five providers submitted the necessary data for six programs. Employment outcomes were measured using New Jersey unemployment insurance wage data as well as the State Wage Interchange System to identify employment outside of New Jersey. Of the programs for which sufficient student-level data were available, only three met the 70 percent completion requirement, and only one program met both the 70 percent completion and 70 percent employment requirements. As a result, only one program was expected to qualify during the initial pilot year.

The presentation characterized this outcome as part of the learning process associated with the pilot. Programs that did not meet the requirements will receive eligibility determination letters identifying the criteria they did and did not satisfy. These letters are intended to provide transparency and help providers understand what changes may be necessary to become eligible in the following year, including potential changes in data collection or program structure. The state is attempting to

balance expanded access to federal financial assistance with strong accountability requirements designed to ensure that students receive meaningful training that leads to credentials, employment, career advancement, and ultimately stronger economic outcomes. The pilot year is also being used to establish the necessary infrastructure, collect data, identify challenges, and refine the program for future years. The limited number of programs initially qualifying reflects the high performance and data requirements established for participation, while the state expects the eligibility pool to grow as additional providers submit the required information and strengthen their ability to meet the standards. Stefani Thachik paused to take a comment from Dr. Yolanda Allen, Assistant Commissioner with NJDOL Workforce Division. Dr. Yolanda Allen mentioned that they are creating guidance currently related to the Workforce Pell because there is a need to help local areas regarding the Workforce Pell. Mr. Hilliard discussed Dr. Yolanda Allen's comment and agreed that all the reports point out New Jersey is demonstrating and taking a structured and quality-focused approach to implementing Workforce Pell because there is only one federal program in which only one program has met all the screens for the current year. Mr. Hilliard mentioned it's a slower start than any one of us would want, but it is essentially mandated through the structure created by the federal government. Typical for what's happening in other states, we keep in close touch with other state governments and they are experiencing the same trends that we are so having a pilot year in which most students in most areas of the states will frankly not have access to Workforce Pell, will enable us to get our guidance and relationships and infrastructure in place for the following year. We anticipate a significant ramp up in participation. Mr. Paul Grzella, Director of Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board, made a comment that this will strengthen the current design, data and performance of our training and there will be bigger and better supporting roles that everyone in workforce development has already to which we can have one integrated system which will offer a multi-channel communications approach and strengthening our ability to provide services after July 1st.

IV. Public Comment – None currently.

V. Closing Remarks – Joan Desmarais, SETC Deputy Executive Director

Joan closed out the meeting at asked for a motion to adjourn. Joan thanked all the presenters and thanked everyone for attending. We will see everyone at our next SETC Commission meeting on Wednesday, June 17th, 2026.

Attendees Members /Alternates

Anthony Ferrara
John Gagliano
Dr. Danielle Jubanyik
John Sarno
Sally Nadler
Gregg DeBaere
Charyl Yarbrough
Teri Duda
Bob Wise
Stefani Thachik (OSHE)

Attendees

Joan Desmarais
Carlye Lamarca
Kyree Robinson
Eddie Roberts
Christine Gillespie
Brandon Jurakhan
Michael Chando
Dharman Patel
Edgardo Rivera
Tom Truchan
Brian O'hare
Thomas Hillard
Jimmy Patel
James Gabriel
Jennifer Kaklamanis
Angela Androla
Karen Rodriguez
Nimit Shah
Francis Giglio
Sylvia Mendoza
Michael Paglia
Dr. Yolanda Allen
Andre Hardy
Roberto Soberanis
Felicia Bryant
William Sarboukh
Karen Gaylord
Andy McAlpin
Luz Dow
Meredith Barracato
Natasha James-Waldon
Conrad Mercurius

Addtl. Attendees

Patricia Silva
Shakirah Plumb
Brandy Jones
Stephanie Bain
Ryan Richardson
Chad May
Jobi Odeneye
Paul Hiler
Ken Robell
Tracey Hampton
Jennifer Gonzalez
Anjali Thanawala
Christian Estevez
Jawana Hardwick
Lisa Lynch
Katrina Bell
Fahtema Lewis
Michael Gorman
Ken Haney
Judith Atkinson
Baden Almonor
Yvette Molina
Mike Capone
Jesus Arestirado
Vanessa Madrid
Tonya Coston
Emilie Stewart
Lori Margolin
Ivana Salerno-Hiter
Jason Cassese
Andrea Levandowski
Anita Belle
Allison Spinelli
Rob Wells
Janea Wilson
Craig Morris
De'Kyen Jordan
Kidiecia Brack
Patty Howard
Brendan Rickards
Paul Grzella
Diane Paz
Saleem Marriam
Elvira Vieira
Kimberly Colgan
Jessika Baer
Henry Bass
Sharita Brown
Francis Khun
Monica VanPelt
Jade Bechelli

Sanghamitra Choudhury
Fernandel Almonor
Sonja Williams
Pavithra Lakshminarayan
Joann Johnson
Linda Scherr
Craig Jez
Yolanda Taylor
Samantha Pfeiffer
Carlos Merino
Oswaldo Arango
Sandra Moss
Stephen Hart
Paul Tattory
Kendra Lee
Jacqueline Kineavy
Alexandra Gusciora
Barry Ferguson
Maria Heidkamp
Curtis Meyers
Jody Hirata
Catresa McGhee
Wes Leibig
Lesha Armour
Karen Cinkus
Catherine Starghill
Catherine Carroll
Shanel Robinson
Dr. Lovell-Pugh Bassett
Gonzalo Perez
Alexandra Gusciora
James Piccone
Beverly Robinson
Christy Robinson
Tammy Mollinelli
Michelle Allen
Brian Coutts
Antonio Rivera
Dimple Agarwal
Dorothy Murray
Anthony Driggers
Amanda Simo
Gabriela Campbell
Samual Wear