

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
STATE SENIOR
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
COORDINATION PLAN**

YEAR 2001

Submitted by:

The New Jersey Department of Labor

STATE SENIOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES COORDINATION PLAN

Section 1. Plan Participation

The State of New Jersey initiated a broad based, highly collaborative planning process for the development of the Strategic Five-Year Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Investment System. This plan, required by the Federal Workforce Investment Act, documented the One-Stop workforce investment service delivery vision and strategy that the State adopted even before the signing of the Workforce Investment Act. The plan applies to the five-year period between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2004. Individuals representing State and local agencies on aging, participated in the planning process along with individuals representing all other public and private non-profit agencies and organizations serving older workers and/or providing core, intensive or training services as defined in the Workforce Investment Act. That plan was made available for public comment and no negative comments regarding services to older workers were received.

The Governor's State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), in directing the unified planning process of the Strategic Five-Year Unified State Plan, encouraged involvement and input to the plan. A similar plan of participation was encouraged at the local area Workforce Investment Board level to insure the inclusion of Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) concerns in local plans for One-Stop operations.

A major change to the SCSEP program in the last year has been the transfer of the program to the Division of Employment & Training in the New Jersey Department of Labor. This change has promoted inclusion of the program in New Jersey's One-Stop workforce investment system.

Section 2. Organizational Involvement

The New Jersey Department of Labor, Division of Employment and Training, is the State Agency responsible for the administration of the State SCSEP. July 2000 marked the first time in New Jersey's SCSEP long history, that the program administration is not in the aging network, but rather in the "mainstream" employment and training community. As the State SCSEP Grantee, the Department of Labor has become the leading advocate for the older worker and their contribution to today's workforce. The Division of Employment and Training is committed to the total integration of its SCSEP, known as Workforce 55+, with the broad array of Labor's employment and training programs delivered through the One-Stop system. The State SCSEP Director, being part of the Division of Employment & Training family, will continue to use his/her position and Labor's network to lead efforts in coordination among SCSEP contractors and organizations that can be engaged in older worker activities. The Division, via its SCSEP staff, will continue to provide increased awareness of the value of the mature worker in the workforce as well as the unique training requirements of this population.

(a) The State Office on Aging and the Area Agencies on Aging

The State Office on Aging and the Area Agencies on Aging continue to advocate for the older American. Their gerontology specialists provide guidance on training and services for seniors. The State Office on Aging is a direct link to the older population at the local level. The services and needs of the older worker are made available through the 21 county Area Agencies on Aging. These Agencies have become a part of New Jersey's One-Stop workforce investment system. SCSEP clients are comprised of the hardest to serve and most in need. Therefore, many supportive services are needed before employment can become a reality in many cases. Through the referral network of the Office on Aging, seniors receive the supportive services necessary to re-focus on their employment and training needs. Recognizing that Title V SCSEP is the employer of last resort for many older economically disadvantaged job seekers, and that basic needs must be met before job services can begin, the aging network derives significant benefit from being a part of New Jersey's One-Stop system.

The State Office on Aging assists the 21 county Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in developing comprehensive, coordinated service systems for adults aged 60 and over. Services funded and available through the AAA may include information and assistance, outreach, transportation, case management, homemaker, visiting nurse, respite, telephone reassurance, hospice, escorted transportation, adult day care, legal assistance, education, caregiver support, etc. Meals provided in a group setting and delivered to the home are also available through the Area Agencies on Aging.

The State Office on Aging:

- Works in cooperation with, and refers clients to Area Agencies on Aging for benefits, counseling, outreach, and socialization.
- Provides personal counseling on attitudes relating to age, grooming, appearance, and physical limitations.
- Develops worksites with a high degree of socialization for clients who potentially are, or have been, isolated.
- Refers to displaced homemaker counseling services.
- Refers to family guidance clinics.
- Refers to welfare for program/benefits.
- Counsels and refers alcoholic clients to hospitals and organizations treating alcoholism.
- Visits sick clients at hospitals or at home, assuring them that a program slot will be available when they are able to return.
- Solves problems of personality conflict.
- Refers clients to Human Service organizations for clients support needs.
- Provides companions for older infirm persons.

(b) SCSEP Grantees

There are four National SCSEP Grantees operating in New Jersey. They are: Green Thumb, Inc. (G/T), the National Council on the Aging, Inc. (NCOA), The National Urban League, Inc. (NUL) and The National Senior Citizens Education and Research Center, Inc. (NSCERC).

New Jersey National and State SCSEP sponsors have collaborated on initiatives in the past. These include, National “Hire the Older Worker Week” activities, Job Fairs, Employer Conferences, Older Worker Award Ceremonies, etc. However, with implementation of the Workforce Investment Act and the emergence of the One-Stop system, improved coordination of SCSEP resources is possible.

The New Jersey SCSEP facilitated meetings with the local National SCSEP Directors from Green Thumb, The National Council on the Aging, Urban League and the National Senior Citizens Education and Research Center, in preparation of the Equitable Distribution of SCSEP positions report and to prepare the State Senior Employment Services Coordination Plan. State and National SCSEPs in New Jersey will take a non-partisan approach when addressing the employment and training needs of older job seekers within the One-Stop workforce investment system.

A significant change in operations, based on the collaborative nature of the One-Stop system and the focus on customer satisfaction will permit agencies to receive services from multiple SCSEP programs. We will adopt the posture of serving the clients needs first, our individual program needs second. We know that if the employing community experiences successful older workers hires, it will have positive effects on how mature workers are accepted in the workforce.

The following actions were developed and agreed upon by SCSEP grantees:

- Create a formalized approach for sharing job orders on an on-going basis. This will improve customer satisfaction and performance ratings from our employer customer.
- Joint/universal referral forms to be used by participants receiving services through One-Stop partners and/or employers.
- Joint training of our SCSEP participants assigned to One-Stops to include knowledge of the partners, procedures, use of computers to access information, i.e., One-Stop Operating Systems (OSOS), post resumes, etc.
- State SCSEP to communicate and meet at minimum bi-annually with National SCSEP.
- Keep abreast of new legislation, which may impact negatively or favorably on the quality of life of older workers.
- Collocation of regular Title V SCSEP services at One-Stop Centers and affiliates. SCSEP Directors will coordinate schedules of participants to provide maximum coverage at One-Stop Centers and maximum job opportunities for participants.
- Where there are multiple SCSEP providers in a service area, abolish “duplication of service” rule at One-Stop Centers.

- Coordinate regular SCSEP attendance at local WIB meetings. There will be a cross sharing of WIB meeting minutes.

(c) Nonprofit Providers of Employment Services

The New Jersey Department of Labor has solicited the assistance of the New Jersey Foundation for the Aging to serve on the Senior Employment Services Coordination Planning Committee in the ongoing finalization of this plan.

“New Jersey needs a strong and dynamic workforce in order to have a healthy business environment. Across the country 24 million baby boomers will reach the so called ‘retirement age’ by 2008. It is estimated that less than 10 percent of the Fortune 100 companies are considering the impact that this incredible exit of their workforce will have on their business. Currently in our state 13.4 percent of all jobs are held by adults over the age of 55. New Jersey will definitely feel the impact of this mass exit. This exit; however, creates an incredible opportunity for companies to find effective employees-even for the most difficult to fill positions. The problem has been that everyone looks in the same traditional places for employees, but they fail to take advantage of an obvious and available good source of talent. Mature workers and non-traditional workers remain an untapped resource for New Jersey employers. Only 34 percent of those persons over age 55 are employed. Whether considering new career moves, altering work responsibilities or entering the work force for the first time, this potential pool of employees could positively influence the labor shortage that NJ businesses are experiencing today. A quick look at the annual job openings across the state indicates that there are openings in every educational/training level that adults over age 55 could easily fill. It is important to recognize that the current shortage of labor will only be magnified as the baby boomers in New Jersey reach retirement age.”

Excerpt from Grace Egan, Executive Director of NJFFA

The New Jersey Foundation for the Aging is interested in issues that support independence and autonomy for New Jersey’s older residents. Employment opportunities directly impact quality of life issues that influence the daily lives of persons over age 55. The New Jersey Foundation for the Aging has partnered with the New Jersey Department of Labor along with other corporate and labor sectors to address our mutual interests. With planning we will facilitate job opportunities for adults over age 55 and also provide labor solutions for industry.

(d) Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)

There are seventeen Workforce Investment Boards in New Jersey. Local Aging Agencies have participated in Memorandums of Understanding and in the preparation of local strategic five-year unified plans for workforce readiness. SCSEP programs are fully integrated into the service offerings of each of the One-Stop Career Centers.

The State Office on Aging will continue to work with the WIBs and serve as a resource on older worker employment and training issues.

The new One-Stop environment and the relaxation of the “duplication of services” rule will allow a Green Thumb participant and a WF55+ participant to work the same job; a NCOA participant and an Urban League participant to work for the same supervisor or NESERC and WF55+ share job orders for clients. Our intent is to maximize older worker services to employers and job seekers and to make the One-Stop system older worker friendly.

(e) Other Organizations Including Businesses and Labor

Each WIB is composed of a majority of business members and must have at least two representatives of organized labor. Services to older individuals was a subject dealt with by all WIBs in the development of their local plans.

Section 3. Comments

Senior employment services was included in the Strategic Five-Year Unified State Plan for New Jersey’s Workforce Investment System. SCSEP participated in the planning and consultation process for the Plan. New Jersey’s Strategic Five-Year Unified State Plan was made available for public comment by way of regional public hearings and no negative comments regarding services to older workers were received.

Section 4. Plan Provisions

(a) Basic Distribution of SCSEP Positions

Annual meetings are convened with the National SCSEP Grantee’s local Directors to discuss problematic overserved and underserved areas. The State SCSEP Director coordinates efforts to increase SCSEP enrollment in the underserved counties. Under no circumstances will an economically disadvantaged older worker be laid-off to accommodate equity in any geographical location.

It is our goal to reach the older adults with the greatest economic need and to achieve equity in the distribution of SCSEP-funded positions. As an attachment, a copy of the March 30, 2001 Equitable Distribution of SCSEP Resources Report is enclosed.

(b) Special Populations

Information for this category was derived from the 1990 Census Data in comparison with Title V SCSEP current enrollment information of all SCSEP Projects in the State as of December 30, 2000. The findings were accumulated by a special consultant hired by the US Department of Labor. New Jersey will undertake increased efforts to outreach to the disabled community for improved employment services to this group. Coordination efforts are underway with such agencies as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Similar efforts will be given to other special populations in need of additional services, as indicated on the attached Special Populations Chart.

- (1) Greatest economic need – The SCSEP is serving well over the non-SCSEP population in this category.
- (2) Minorities – Again, the SCSEP serves a higher percentage of minority individuals than is reflected by the same age group of eligible individuals from the census data.
- (3) Greatest social need – The information is not so easily read. It seems to be conflicting. See attached 4.b Special Population Chart.

(c) Type of Skills

For Program Year 2001, this information is not available.

However, we will obtain this information through the New Jersey Department of Labor (OSOS). OSOS is a coordinated technology-supported network to meet the technology requirements of New Jersey's Career Center system as defined in the Strategic Five-Year Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Investment System. The State's performance measures will be geared to the needs of employer and employee customers and address the needs of all workforce investment agencies. Performance measures will reflect outcomes such as earnings and job retention, but also will be established to reflect skills attainment. The SCSEP is a partner program and is being integrated in OSOS.

(d) Community Service Needs

Information, research and/or assessment of how New Jersey will collect, monitor and measure its community service needs for specific populations is not available for Program Year 2001. Again, this information will be attainable through the comprehensive assessment tool of OSOS by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing customer information to create an employment plan that matches the specific needs, goals, and aptitudes of customers within New Jersey's current labor market. Also, the development of an employment plan and tracking service delivery component of OSOS might be utilized for this category information.

(e) Coordination with the Workforce Investment Act

SCSEP inclusion in the One-Stop system, created pursuant to the Workforce Investment Act, significantly increases the opportunities for older workers entering the One-Stop system. With the SCSEP program in the mix of programs accessible through the One-Stop system, One-Stop operators can offer any older worker SCSEP's unique services.

Section 5. Plan Recommendations

The State of New Jersey recommends that any subsequent plan become a part of the Strategic Five-Year Unified State Plan for New Jersey's Workforce Investment System.