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Edward J. Bloustein School
of Planning and Public Policy

WorkFirst New Jersey's Community Work Experience Program

**A Report to the New Jersey Department of Labor and
Workforce Development**

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Glossary and Abbreviations

ABAWDs -	Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents
AOSOS -	America’s One-Stop Operating System
BEE-	Baltimore Employment Exchange
CWEP-	Community Work Experience Program
DHS/DFD -	Department of Human Services’ Division of Family Development
EDPT-	Employability Plan Development Tool
FDP-	Family Development Plan
FLSA-	Fair Labor Standards Act
GA-	General Assistance
MOE -	Maintenance-of-Effort expenditures
NHEP-	New Hampshire Employment Program
NEWWS -	National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies
NJDLWD -	New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
NJCAN -	New Jersey Career Assistance Navigator
OES-	Office of Employment Security
OSCC -	One Stop Career Center
OJT -	On-the-Job Training
PEP-	Pennsylvania Employable Program
REACH-	Realizing Economic Achievement
SNAP-	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TANF-	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TABE -	Test of Adult Basic Education
WEP-	Work Experience Program
WIA-	Workforce Investment Act
WIOA-	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WFNJ-	WorkFirst New Jersey
WPR-	Work Participation Rate
PRWORA -	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

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Executive Summary

In January 2018, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDLWD) asked graduate students at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy to conduct a four-month study on WorkFirst New Jersey's Community Work Experience Program (CWEP). In 1996, under President Clinton's promise to "end welfare as we know it," Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (Public Law 104-193) that made monumental changes to federal welfare policy, including imposing work requirements on recipients as a condition for cash assistance, as well as lifetime limits on benefit receipt. This act led to the creation of welfare-to-work initiatives. Under PRWORA, states require participants to engage in work activities and impose sanctions if individuals refuse to participate. In 2005, the Congress passed the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), that added several provisions to improve the reliability of work participation data and integrity. The passage of the Deficit Reduction Act (2005) increased pressure on states to meet a federally determined Work Participation Rate (WPR). As a result, states increased the use of Work Experience Programs to increase their WPR. CWEP is one of the core work requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA) beneficiaries in the state of New Jersey.¹ The purpose of CWEP is to provide experience and training to individuals to assist them in obtaining unsubsidized employment.

The scope of the project was to examine the CWEP's processes across all counties in New Jersey and evaluate its effectiveness in helping participants become more employable and work ready, and to propose actionable recommendations for improvement.

The research team, using qualitative methods, analyzed primary and secondary data to gather information about CWEP administration across all counties in New Jersey. Methods included:

- Conducting an extensive document review of WorkFirst New Jersey documentation, the CWEP Directive 2010, related program data, and other documents.
- Comparing CWEP to Work Experience Programs in other states. Reviewing documents from seven states: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Washington, New York, Ohio, New Hampshire and Montana. The review suggests that there is a great variation between the states in how CWEP is administered. The research team also highlighted the dearth of content available on understanding the implementation of the process in detail.
- Conducting interviews with program officials who manage CWEP at the state and local level to inform a profile of the CWEP in New Jersey. The research team created three

¹ Moreover, Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) that receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) are required to work in New Jersey and can also be placed into the CWEP.

standardized versions of interview protocols for Workforce Development Board Directors and CWEP personnel. Each protocol was divided into five thematic blocks.

Findings

Administrative, Process and Compliance

- The list of statewide CWEP worksites is not centrally stored. Instead, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDLWD) manually compiles a list of all CWEP worksites in each local area.
- Currently, there is no standard way in which counties identify and recruit CWEP worksites. Sites are identified in several ways based on the circumstances, and personal relationships in each local workforce development area.
- The majority of counties ensure that CWEP providers meet the standards identified in the CWEP Agreement.
- Most counties only input attendance hours from e-timesheets into AOSOS. There is no indication that a majority of counties input data into any or all categories outlined in the 2010 CWEP Directive, such as detailed information about the CWEP placement. There is a lack of standardized documentation processes as counties deploy different methods to record CWEP information pertaining to a placement.

Matching Participants to CWEP Worksites

- Counties use a wide variety of pre-CWEP placement assessment tools to understand a participant's fit for potential worksites. These tools range from screening through work readiness programs to conducting assessment tests.
- Counties use different examination methods to test skills of participants before the CWEP placement.
- For participants' assignments to worksites, counselors/case managers in all counties responded that they work with their participants to find the appropriate CWEP match based on their skills.

CWEP Participants at Worksites

- As required by regulation, counties place participants with nonprofit organizations and government organizations.
- While participants engage in a range of work, most of the work did not require technical skills and interview data suggests that most CWEP participants are engaged in clerical and administrative work.

- A typical CWEP placement lasts six months. Counties thereby apply the guidance of the CWEP Directive, which recommends that “the normal duration of any CWEP assignment at an approved worksite should not exceed six months” (CWEP Directive, 2010, p. 8).
- It is not common for participants to have a series of placements during the span of their six-month placement.
- When issues arise between a CWEP participant and a worksite, each county has designated staff that attempts to intervene before beginning the sanctioning process.
- There are various reasons why CWEP placements end before their full term, including finding full time work or failing to show up at the worksite.

What Happens After CWEP

- With the exception of Mercer County, no counties reported conducting post-placement tests intended to gauge the level of skills, work ethic, and experience acquired as a direct result of the CWEP placement.
- The majority of counties reported that the CWEP placements did not yield positive employment outcomes for most participants and that they require further skill development to improve participant’s employability.

Efforts to Evaluate and Innovate

- In terms of how OSCC or vendor organizations get feedback on placements and their effectiveness, no standard process is followed throughout the State.
- CWEP activities, including the quality and number of worksites and how participants are faring, are evaluated through multiple means at the OSCCs.
- County personnel indicated there are various strengths to the CWEP activity in New Jersey.
- There are many different opinions throughout the counties and their workforce boards on how to improve CWEP.

Recommendations

An analysis of the findings showed that there were areas for improvement. The research team believes that due to a stable economy, new administration, a history of innovation in welfare-to-work programs and existing diversity in the field, New Jersey can play a leading role in developing more innovative CWEP activities and strategies that can serve as an example for other states.

1. Revise the current CWEP Directive. Given the decentralized administration of WFNJ and the likely variation that resulted over eight years, the NJDLWD could review the 2010 CWEP Directive and reestablish a clear goal and purpose of CWEP. The directive could seek to clarify what features of the CWEP activity distinguishes the program from other employment activities under WFNJ, such as On-the-Job training. A revised directive could

be developed with input from CWEP managers and OSCC operators on how to best use the available resources in their respective OSCCs.

2. Offer WFNJ participants a wider variety of worksites through exploring various alternative and innovative strategies, such as the use of On-the-Job Training (OJT).
3. Create a more streamlined and structured matching process between participant's interests, skills, and worksites, with the introduction of different tracks to increase the manageability of the program.
4. Develop a system to share best practices amongst all WFNJ stakeholders at the state and local levels to address the challenges that emerge through the decentralized administration of CWEP. While innovative CWEP strategies already exist in some New Jersey counties, there is no robust mechanism for counties to share those strategies and experiences with each other. A better coordination mechanism between counties could help with providing participants with a more diverse selection of placements across county lines.
5. Support and train local and state institutions to keep a record of their activities and establish a robust evaluation process of all components of CWEP in order to be able to continuously improve the program. Re-establish a statewide working group that is focused on evaluation and innovation, and is responsible for compiling and interpreting the data collected on all levels of government.

From Social Welfare to Welfare-to-Work

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a federal assistance program administered under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) from 1935 to 1996, delivered cash assistance primarily to single mothers who qualified because of low income status (Falk, 2012). However, little to no restriction existed for how long a beneficiary could receive welfare. This indefinite eligibility caused critics to grow wary of the program and its delivery. Some argued that it encouraged welfare recipients to stay on welfare instead of seeking withdrawal from public assistance, gaining autonomy, and participating in the labor market (Goertzel & Hart, 1995, p. 1).

With the skepticism surrounding long-term welfare users in mind, researchers and policy makers began revisiting welfare programs such as AFDC that delivered cash assistance without work requirements. In 1996, under President Clinton’s promise to “end welfare as we know it,” Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (Public Law 104-193) that made monumental changes to federal welfare policy, including imposing work requirements on recipients as a condition for cash assistance, as well as lifetime limits on benefit receipt. This act led to the creation of welfare-to-work initiatives that are defined as “programs that offer employment services and education or training that encourages work participation, requires participation or a combination of both” (Falk, 2012, p. 6). The legislation also gave states much greater flexibility in crafting their specific welfare policies establishing the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides a block grant to states—or a guaranteed level of funding, regardless of the number of families eligible for cash assistance. Under this funding arrangement, states have increased latitude in choosing how they spend their federal TANF dollars and can spend these funds on a wide variety of programs, as long as they are consistent with the broad goals of TANF as set out in the federal legislation (GAO, 2014, p. 4).

Under PRWORA, states require participants to engage in work activities and impose sanctions if individuals refuse to participate (CBPP, 2015). The federal guidelines set forth 12 categories of work activities that can count towards the work rates. Nine of these 12 categories are core categories that can count towards any hours of participation (See Appendix 5).

For a state to meet federal work participation rates (WPRs), half of the families receiving TANF assistance must be engaged in a work activity for at least 30 hours a week. In addition, states must have 90 percent of two-parent family engaged in work generally for 35 hours per week (CBPP, 2015). However, states can set their own policies to determine who must participate in work activities under the federal guidelines. States have taken different approaches to TANF administration and a number of states delegate some authority to the county level. In states where counties have greater flexibility to shape their TANF programs, specific work requirements, training opportunities, and services provided can differ depending on the county in which the participants live (Hahn et. al., 2015, p. 7). Because of this great variation in how much flexibility

is offered to states by PRWORA, there is now substantially more state-to-state and within state variation in welfare programs than there was in the years leading up to TANF (Hahn et. al., 2015, p. 4). Relatively little knowledge has been gathered about the different parts of current welfare-to-work programs (Falk, 2017, p. 14f.). In the following section, an overview of the existing literature about the core activities in question – work experience programs – will be provided.

Work Experience Program in other States

In 2005, Congress passed the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), which reauthorized the TANF block grant and added several provisions to improve the reliability of work participation data and integrity (GAO, 2010). The passage of the Deficit Reduction Act (2005) increased pressure on states to meet their WPR. States that did not meet the minimum work participation rate faced penalties (Kauff & Derr, 2008, p. 1). In light of the policy changes, states took different approaches to meet the new federal WPR requirements. Some attempted to increase their rate by closing cases that were not meeting work requirements, thereby reducing the number of caseloads. Others increased the use of work experience programs (Kauff & Derr, 2008, p. 2).

The Work Experience Program (WEP) is one of the nine core federal activities that TANF recipients can participate in to meet the first 20 hours of their weekly work requirement. Generally, work experience programs provide TANF recipients with a work opportunity that will help them to develop skills, knowledge, and work behaviors that will increase their employability. Forty-three states allow some form of work experience programs as an allowable activity (Hahn et.al., 2017, p. 25). However, there is a shortage of literature on the implementation of WEPs and what constitutes a successful WEP. One consistent finding is that “strength and consistency of implementation” of work experience programs has a significant impact on their success (Sattar, 2010, p. 1). Even without taking into account the content of a program, a fraught service delivery with numerous delays can lead to more families dropping out of program (Brown & Derr, 2015).

The following are WEP examples from selected states that have implemented some form of the WEP successfully based on the literature available:

Maryland

In 2005, Maryland began encouraging counties to expand the use of work experience as a means toward achieving federal work participation rates. The state issued several memoranda providing technical assistance to counties to ensure that work placements are responsive to FLSA requirements while maximizing the hours recipients may spend in work experience (Kauff & Derr, 2008, p. 6). In response, select counties created WEPs, and others increased the number of available work experience slots in existing programs by collaborating with additional employers for placement sites. For example, Baltimore City has a long-term partnership with the Mayor's Office of Employment Development for work experience positions, but also has conducted an extensive marketing campaign to develop new work-site agreements with other public and private for-profit and nonprofit employers. The unit of job developers from the city's Department of Social Services called itself the Baltimore Employment Exchange (BEE) to present a more business-like, rather than social services, image to employers (Kauff & Derr, 2008, p. 7). In 2008, the city had worksite agreements with 50 to 60 employers, the majority of which were in private for-profit organizations. In 2008, approximately 200-250 TANF recipients were in BEE work experience positions such as clerical, hospitality, or custodial positions (Kauff & Derr, 2008, p. 8).

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's Community Work Experience Program provides work experience opportunities for cash grant recipient who have not received an offer of employment or training from the Office of Employment Security (OES) or the Pennsylvania Employable Program (PEP) (Chapter 166, n.d). Assignments are made to projects sponsored by state departments, federal government, and nonprofit agencies. While participants are in their WEP program, they must continue to search for full-time employment through OES or PEP. The Employment Unit (EU) provides orientation to every person assigned to CWEP. In terms of accessibility, the EU makes the assignment within 25 miles of the participant's residence. Recipients of the state's WEP program do not use their income or resources to pay costs for participation. Expenses for transportation and other costs that are necessary and directly related to participation in WEP are borne by the project operator through a payment of up to \$25 per month per participant. Those participants who refuse to participate in WEP without a good cause are subject to multiple sanctions. Work experience is limited to six cumulative months in a participant's lifetime (Chapter 166, n.d).

Washington

The Washington Community Jobs program is “the oldest and largest Transitional Jobs program serving TANF recipients with the greatest employment barrier” (Lower-Basch et al., 2014, p. 5). The program is statewide and geared specifically towards those TANF participants with significant employment barriers. The participants work “20-30 hours per week in temporary, wage-paid positions at nonprofit organizations and public agencies” with the TANF funds paying for wages and support services (Lower-Basch et al., 2014, p. 5.).

Montana

Montana is another example of a standardized statewide work experience program (Derr, 2008, p. 8). Work experience placements are used as “training sites to build the job skills of TANF recipients” (Derr, 2008, p. 8) and in order to prepare them for competitive employment individualized ‘training plans’ are negotiated (Derr, 2008, p. 8). There are two aspects that are interesting about Montana’s program: 1) the program is structured so that “recipients can spend no more than three months at any given work site” to create a natural transition point to competitive employment (Derr, 2008, p. 8) and 2) the Montana program in general tries to put participants into placements that mimic a competitive employment as much as possible (Derr, 2008, p. 9).

New York – Erie County

New York has a county administered TANF program so there is a wide variation in how WEPs are administered. In Erie County, New York structured their program around “neighborhood hub sites,” which are contracted nonprofit agencies in neighborhoods where large numbers of TANF recipients live (Derr, 2008, p. 4). These hub sites reduce transportation barriers and the possibility to “hire work experience supervisors whose full-time job is to teach TANF recipients job skills and health workplace habit” (Derr, 2008, p. 7). While the Erie County program represents an interesting approach to the idea of a CWEP, the current literature does not clearly indicate whether this component is still in use exactly in the same form.

Ohio – Hamilton County

Ohio’s TANF program is one of the county-administered programs, where “each county builds its own administrative infrastructure and service delivery system for operating work experience programs” (Derr, 2008, p. 12). In Hamilton County “residents participating in Ohio Works First [similar to WFNJ] who are unable to find a work or volunteer activity to fulfill the work program

requirements, work closely with Community Link to remove any remaining barriers to finding employment” (Ohio means jobs, n.d.). Community Link is a “one-stop shopping” (Ohio means jobs, p. 13) service provider, where staff from different agencies co-locate. What stands out in the Hamilton program is that the county tries to offer highly individualized work placements and has strong partnerships with “county adult education providers” that allows them to structure placements to enhance the educational activities of participants (Ohio means jobs., p. 12).

New Hampshire

New Hampshire’s Work Experience Program (WEP) offers work experience opportunities to individuals who receive financial assistance from the state. WEP participants are limited to nonprofit or community organizations that provide direct community service. WEP programs must include structured activities and community service to help the employability of participants. New Hampshire Employment Program (NHEP) staff, based on their compliance with requirements in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), select the work sites (The Work Experience Program, 2014, p.3). Participants are authorized for childcare services and transportation assistance. WEP maximum work hours are determined by subtracting all child support retained from monthly assistance grant and adding it to total food stamp allotment and finally dividing it by state federal minimum wage.

WorkFirst New Jersey

New Jersey was among the first states to experiment with welfare policies that deviated from AFDC, such as work requirements. Under the state’s Realizing Economic Achievement (REACH) program, authorized by New Jersey Governor Tom Kean, public assistance beneficiaries had to design a plan that stated how they planned to exit welfare (Goertzel & Hart, 1995). Subsequently, Assemblyman Wayne Bryant created the Family Development Program (FDP) in 1992 that continued the REACH program’s work requirements, but added other policy features. Legislators, activist groups, and legal advocates saw FDP as controversial because it required each family member to create a plan, unlike REACH that only mandated that one person create a plan. Additionally, women who gave birth to an additional child while receiving public benefits were not granted more welfare aid (Goertzel & Hart, 1995).

While New Jersey transitioned from REACH to the FDP, national efforts to increase work participation and end indefinite welfare eligibility were underway in Washington D.C. As delineated above, mandating work requirements for public assistance recipients gained public support, leading to the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) in 1996 (Edelman, 1998).

New Jersey transformed its FDP welfare program in accordance with PRWORA and pursuant with the statutory requirement of the Work First New Jersey Act Public Law 1997 (P.L. c. 13, c.14, c.37, and c. 38) that created the WorkFirst New Jersey Program (WFNJ). WFNJ authorizes first and foremost, cash benefits and support services for needy families under the federally funded TANF program. These mechanisms include but are not limited to: medical assistance through NJ Family Care (Medicaid), child care, transportation, work activity allowances, substance abuse treatment, parenting and nutritional educational services, assistance to past or present survivors of family violence, and diversion through the Early Employment Initiative (EEI) (New Jersey State Plan for TANF, 2014). New Jersey is one of few states that also provides cash benefits and services to individuals and couples who do not have children through a state-run General Assistance (GA) program. Because of “certain necessary differences in the requirements and the responsibility” between the TANF and the GA programs, WFNJ is structured into two segments: the WFNJ/TANF component for families with children and the WFNJ/GA component for single adults and couples without dependent children (N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.1 b).

The Department of Human Services’ Division of Family Development (DHS/DFD) is the agency primarily responsible for supervising the WFNJ program at the state level in New Jersey. The 21 county agencies administer the cash assistance and support services at the local level under the supervision of DFD and through contracted vendors (New Jersey State Plan for TANF, 2014). In 2004, the State of New Jersey shifted oversight and coordination of WFNJ’s work activities to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, resulting in WDBs and OSCC administering the employment and training components of WFNJ to the 18 local workforce development areas, including but not limited to, the responsibility for administering CWEP.

Key Features of WFNJ

- Mandates most recipients, unless exempt or deferred, to participate in work activities.
- Reduces the duration of public assistance from federal TANF funding to five years (or 60 months).
- Provides “pre and post-TANF support services” such as case management services, childcare and transportation to help recipients progress towards work.
- Relies on the Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) to promote self-sufficiency. IRP recognizes the obligations of both the TANF recipients as well as those of the county agency. It identifies the participant’s plan to achieve self-sufficiency, the participant’s barriers to employment, and the services provided by the county agency. The IRP is a living document that both parties update as work activities and family circumstances change. (New Jersey State Plan for TANF, 2014)

WFNJ and Work Requirements

Families apply for WFNJ/TANF or single adults and couples without dependent children apply for WFNJ/GA cash assistance at the local Department of Human Services or the Board of Social Service. Potential recipients have to meet a set of requirements² in order to be eligible for the programs, among the most important being the requirement to participate in work activities (CBPP, 2015). As of 2017, there were eight core activities in New Jersey that fulfilled this requirement (see Appendix 5) - the hours necessary to work vary depending on family type and the age of the youngest child.

Moreover, Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) that receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T³) are required to work in New Jersey and can also be placed, among others, into New Jersey's Work Experience Program (CWEP Directive, 2010).

Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) in New Jersey

Work Experience Program in New Jersey, known as the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP), is one of the federally countable work activities (see Appendix 5). In New Jersey, Workforce Development Boards administer CWEP at the county (N.J.A.C. 10:90, 4.1-4.20). According to N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.3, CWEP "is utilized to provide work and training to enable recipients to adjust to, and learn how to function in, an employment setting." CWEP provides individuals with work and training to acquire the general skills to better function in an employment setting. The purpose of CWEP is therefore to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized employment. (State of New Jersey, 2014, p. 16f.). GA and TANF recipients who are assessed to be job-ready are placed into CWEP when they are not able to find work after four consecutive weeks.

By regulation, placements must be with either a public, nonprofit, or private charitable employer. CWEP participants are directed towards organizations and agencies directly involved in useful public service areas, such as health, recreation, child and adult care, education, environmental protection, social services, and more. CWEP participants are prohibited from working for private-for-profit employers (New Jersey State Plan for TANF, 2014).

The work host site staff of a CWEP⁴ placement is responsible for providing supervision to the participant and verifying their attendance in their work activity. WFNJ/TANF recipients are

² such as cooperation with child support requirements, medical support orders, assigning all rights to child and spousal support to the county agency

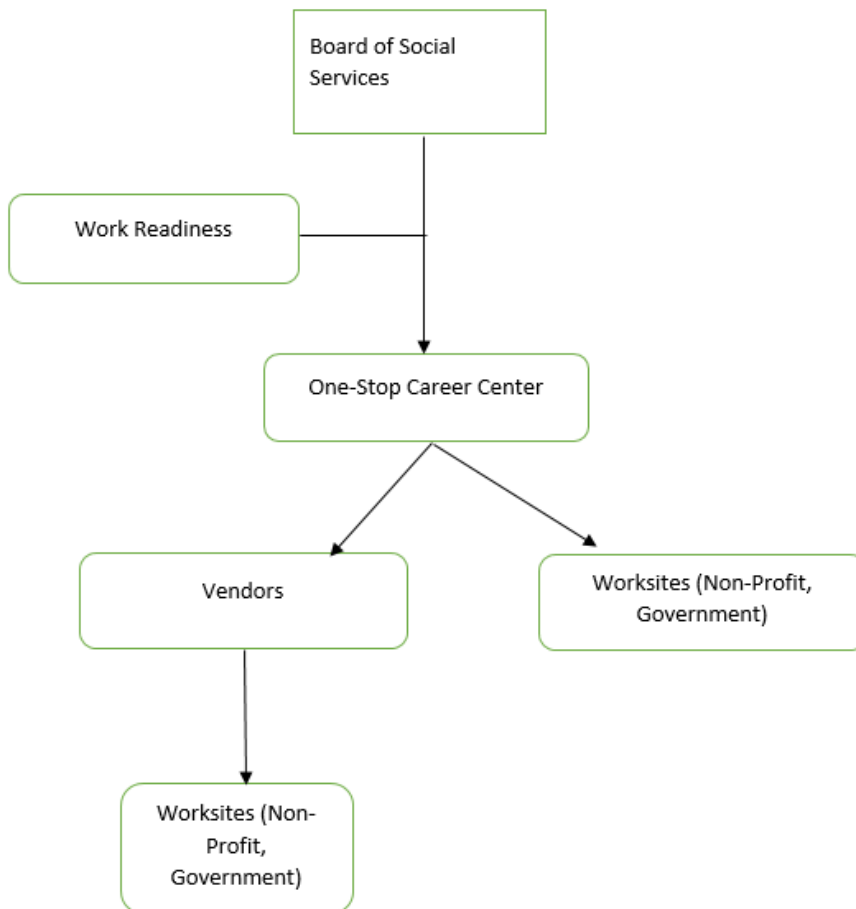
³ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/able-bodied-adults-without-dependents-abawds> Last accessed: 02/11/2018

⁴ Also known as worksites or placements

required to participate for 35 hours per week.⁵ If less than 35 hours per week are available, the participant must make up the remaining hours in another work activity. A CWEP placement can be terminated prior to the end of the agreement period if the work host site or CWEP participant fails to comply with the requirements of the agreement.

The following diagram shows CWEP worksite assignment process flow. The CWEP participant is assigned to One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) by the Board of Social Services. The OSCC makes the placement directly to worksites or their partnering vendors make the assignment and administer the program activities. The matching and placement is discussed in detail in the findings section.

Figure 1: CWEP Worksite Assignment Process Flow

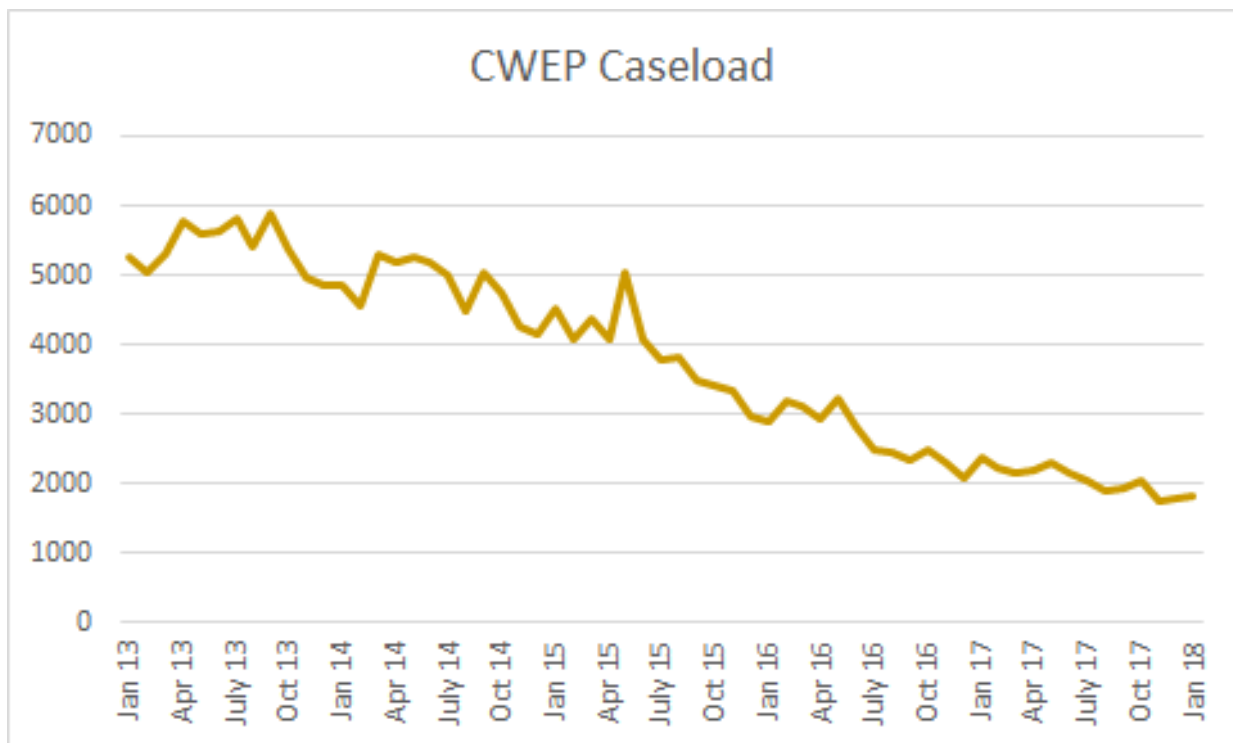


Source: Interviews with Workforce Development Board, county staff and CWEP personnel

⁵ The requirement for GA recipients and SNAP ABAWDs are different.

CWEP placements account for a large amount of WFNJ recipient placements. In January 2018, CWEP participants accounted for 45 percent of the total employment directed activities. The other employment directed activities include training and job search. This percentage is down from 48 percent in 2013. However, in absolute numbers, CWEP caseload has been decreasing over the years. Since January 2013, the CWEP caseload has decreased by 65 percent statewide from 5,272 in 2013 to 1,833 in 2018. The following chart (Figure 2) displays a decline in monthly CWEP caseloads since 2013.

Figure 2: Monthly CWEP Caseload from January 2013 - January 2018



Source: DFD Current Program Statistics (2013-2018)

In order to provide better direction and guidance to local areas, the NJDLWD issued a Directive on Community Work Experience (NJDLWD, Directive Issue 10-1, Volume 7, dated February 19, 2010). The Directive defines Community Work Experience as “a program with employers who agree to provide training opportunities for participated at approved worksites” (Directive, p. 1). The directive offered information to local areas in the following areas:

- Interpretation and understanding of the CWEP activity, including a definition of CWEP;
- CWEP competency expectations;
- Worksite sponsor requirements;
- Workers compensation coverage and requires;
- Standards for CWEP workforce agreement development;
- Verification of CWEP sites;
- Hours of participation and duration of CWEP activity;
- Requirements for documenting CWEP participation in America's One Stop Operating System (AOSOS) including records retention; and
- General guidelines for how to maximize the work experience component.

Methodology

The project began with the formation of a project management team, including the key research team from the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and officials from the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC).

The scope the project was to examine the CWEP's processes across all counties in New Jersey and evaluate its effectiveness in helping participants become more employable and work ready. In order to meet this objective, the research team used the following methods:

- Conduct a literature review of work experience programs in other states;
- Conduct extensive documentation review of WorkFirst New Jersey documentation, the CWEP Directive 2010, CWEP administrative data provided by the NJLWD and related program data;
- Conduct interviews with program officials who manage CWEP at the state and local level to inform a profile of the CWEP in New Jersey; and
- Provide actionable recommendations for improvement.

Qualitative interviews were conducted to collect data from Workforce Development Board Directors, and local CWEP personnel, in all counties of New Jersey, as well as several interviews with state employees of NJDLWD. Semi-structured interview protocols were designed around five main themes that became the basis of analysis. Three distinct interview protocols were designed for the three levels of staff and were categorized into five sections each. The first category investigated the administration of CWEP services, process, and compliance with the state's CWEP Directive. The second examined the process of assigning participants to worksites. The next explored participants' experiences at the different worksites, including what happens to participants after their CWEP placement at a worksite ends. The research team then asked interviewees their personal opinions on the program's strengths and challenges. The final category sought to gain insight into interviewees' efforts to evaluate and innovate their county's CWEP program. The interview protocols are attached in appendix 1-3 of this report. The interviews were conducted both by telephone and in-person. However, a majority of interviews were conducted over the telephone. After the research team completed the interviews, the interview transcripts were coded under the following five themes: (i) administration, process and compliance, (ii) matching participants to worksites, (iii) CWEP participants at worksite, (iv) what happens after CWEP, and (v) efforts to evaluate and innovate. Each team member examined the interview findings from a specific category and extracted the findings. Then, the research team peer-reviewed other members' findings for accuracy.

Limitations

The depth of this study is limited by several factors. It was not possible to incorporate the perspectives of all CWEP stakeholders. The research team did not interview participants or the working employees at the various worksites due to time constraints. Therefore, the findings only describe CWEP from the perspective and experiences of local CWEP administrative personnel, Workforce Development Board Directors, and representatives from the NJDLWD. Furthermore, while individuals from every WDB area were interviewed, representatives from Newark were not interviewed. However, quantitative data of their CWEP activities are encompassed under Essex County. Also, the responses may be based on interviewees' recollections at the time and anecdotal evidence, as well as biases may be present. Last, it is important to note that the local CWEP administrators were not acting in the same role across counties. At times, the administrators were OSCC directors. Other times, they worked for social services and the vendor organization. The variability in role and relationship to CWEP may be a reason for any variability in the findings.

Findings

This section discusses the findings from interviews conducted with the Workforce Development Board Directors and CWEP personnel in 21 counties across New Jersey. Divided into five thematic blocks, these findings are used to inform recommendations to improve CWEP and its implementation throughout the state.

Administration, Process, and Compliance

- A. **The list of statewide CWEP worksites is not centrally stored. Instead, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDLWD) manually compiles a list of all CWEP worksites in each local area.** Currently, One-Stop Career Centers (OSCC) or the contracted vendors administering CWEP services manage the lists in their respective counties. In certain counties, the OSCC is not responsible for working directly with CWEP participants, instead counties contract out and partner with a vendor. For example, Greater Raritan partners with the Hunterdon County Educational Service Commission (HCESC). HCESC manages CWEP participants directly and also updates the list of CWEP sites. Essex County has a monitoring unit within their OSCC that is responsible for updating their worksites.
- B. **Currently, there is no standard way in which counties identify and recruit CWEP worksites. Sites are identified in several ways based on the circumstances, and personal relationships in each local workforce development area.** In certain counties, county officials are responsible for marketing to potential CWEP sites, approving worksites and maintaining documentation. Another county mentioned how local nonprofits

expressed their interest to be recruited as a CWEP worksite. Several counties mentioned that they issue Request for Proposals to recruit nonprofits and government agencies as worksites. Essex has their own monitoring unit that updates the list of CWEP sites by inspecting the site and once the unit completes the inspection, then there is a written agreement and the site is added to their list. Regardless of the recruitment method, all CWEP worksites enter into an agreement with the OSCC or the contracted vendor. Overall, each county's relationship with the worksite varies.

- C. **The majority of counties ensure that CWEP providers meet the standards identified in the CWEP Agreement.** The contract between worksites and the CWEP vendor or OSCC creates standards for both the worksite and the CWEP administrators. Hudson County specifically mentioned how they use the TANF/CWEP verification tool that is listed in Attachment C of the CWEP Directive. Additionally, Hudson County staff regularly communicate with worksites. Depending on the county, a telephone call between the worksite and the OSCC (or vendor), may take place once or twice a week. In certain instances, staff visit the worksites. Less than three counties go above and beyond the contract agreement by having a staff person visit the worksite and verify if standards are met. In particular, Mercer County holds meetings with the worksites to discuss updates and activities with the partnering organizations.
- D. **Most counties only input attendance hours from e-timesheets into AOSOS. There is no indication that a majority of counties input data into any or all categories outlined in the 2010 CWEP Directive, such as detailed information about the CWEP placement. There is a lack of standardized documentation processes as counties deploy different methods to record CWEP information pertaining to a placement.** A majority of counties noted that they only enter attendance data into AOSOS. Atlantic County commented that they also input an employability plan for each participant. Cumberland, Salem, and Cape May noted that they include when a participant changes sites or their work activity. Mercer County maintains a spreadsheet to communicate with case managers on a monthly basis. In turn, case managers and vendors may have their own tracking systems and may submit monthly reports. However, the majority of counties just input e-timesheets as their data for AOSOS.

Matching Participants to CWEP Worksites

- A. **Counties use a wide variety of pre-CWEP placement assessment tools to understand a participant's fit for potential worksites. These tools range from screening through work readiness programs to conducting assessment tests.** Morris, Sussex, and Warren require participants to participate in a structured 30-day work readiness program that runs 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. five days a week, prior to placement at a CWEP site. Sometimes

managed by the OSCC personnel, and at other times by contracted vendors, the work readiness program helps administrators assess the skill sets of participants and their likelihood to succeed by analyzing factors, such as barriers to employment, professional experience, and their background. Activities conducted at these sites include resume building, round table networking, and overview of employment barrier assessment. Greater Raritan is another county where participants are required to first go through a 30-day work readiness program that runs five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Program activities are standardized for each participant and include life skills, how to open a checking account, how to interview, how to apply for a job, how to apply online for a job, and so forth. At the end of their 30-day period, participants may be placed into CWEP if their counselor feels it is the best option for them.

- B. Counties use different examination methods to test skills of participants before the CWEP placement.** Participants who are referred to work experience programs participate in an initial assessment of their workforce readiness. Once a participant has been referred to CWEP program, on average, it takes the OSCC or vendors between one to four weeks to assign the participant to a worksite to start their program. A wide range of factors are taken into account by counselors while making placements, including barriers to employment, prior employment history, skills, health status, access to worksite, education, social skills, legal and financial history, and prior work experience. CWEP administrators responded that they use either the Employability Plan Development Tool (EPDT), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) scores, New Jersey Career Assistance Navigator (NJCAN)⁶, or other career assessment tools the provider believes to be beneficial to the assessment process. However, the process is not standardized across the counties. Bergen County uses the EPDT to identify the strengths and needs of the participant as it relates to employability and career development. In Greater Raritan, the instructors assess participant computer skills in addition to their standard procedures.
- C. For participants' assignments to worksites, counselors/case managers in all counties responded that they work with their participants to find the appropriate CWEP match based on their skills.** Most counties, except three, acknowledged that they follow the State's CWEP Directive for CWEP determination and placement processes; however, there are slight differences in practice based on each county's individual needs and preferences. Cumberland, Salem and Cape May differ from the State's CWEP Directive in terms of placement process and service provision. There, the Board of Social Services provides both case management and assignment to work activities. Though they somewhat deviate from the State's CWEP Directive, they stated that the state monitors and checks their work activities every three months. In Essex and Hudson counties, the placement process is more extensive as interviews are conducted with potential worksites in addition

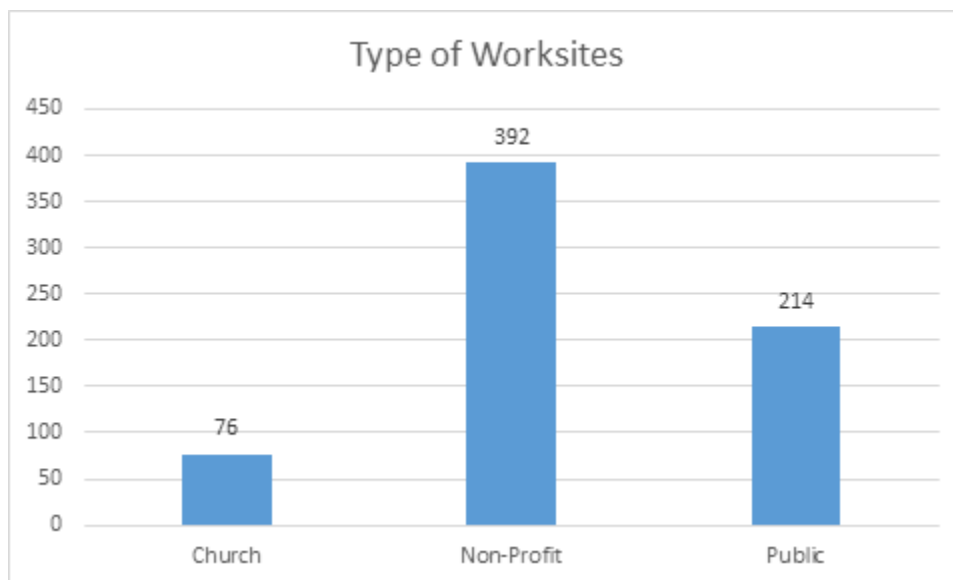
⁶ NJCAN: <https://portal.njcis.intocareers.org/>

to meetings with their assigned counselor(s). The participants interview with potential worksites to finalize if they like the match.

CWEP Participants at Worksites

- A. **As required by regulation, counties place participants with nonprofit organizations and government organizations.** As per the statutory requirement, participants can be placed with nonprofits 501(c)(3) organizations, public agencies, federal, state, and local governments. Worksites mainly consist of food banks, social agencies, recreational departments, faith-based groups, childcare daycare centers, and so forth as noted in Figure 3. According to the data provided by the NJDLWD, the majority (approximately 57 percent) of the total worksites are nonprofit organizations and 31 percent of the worksite placements were made at public organizations. Some placements were also made at churches.

Figure 3: Type of CWEP Worksites

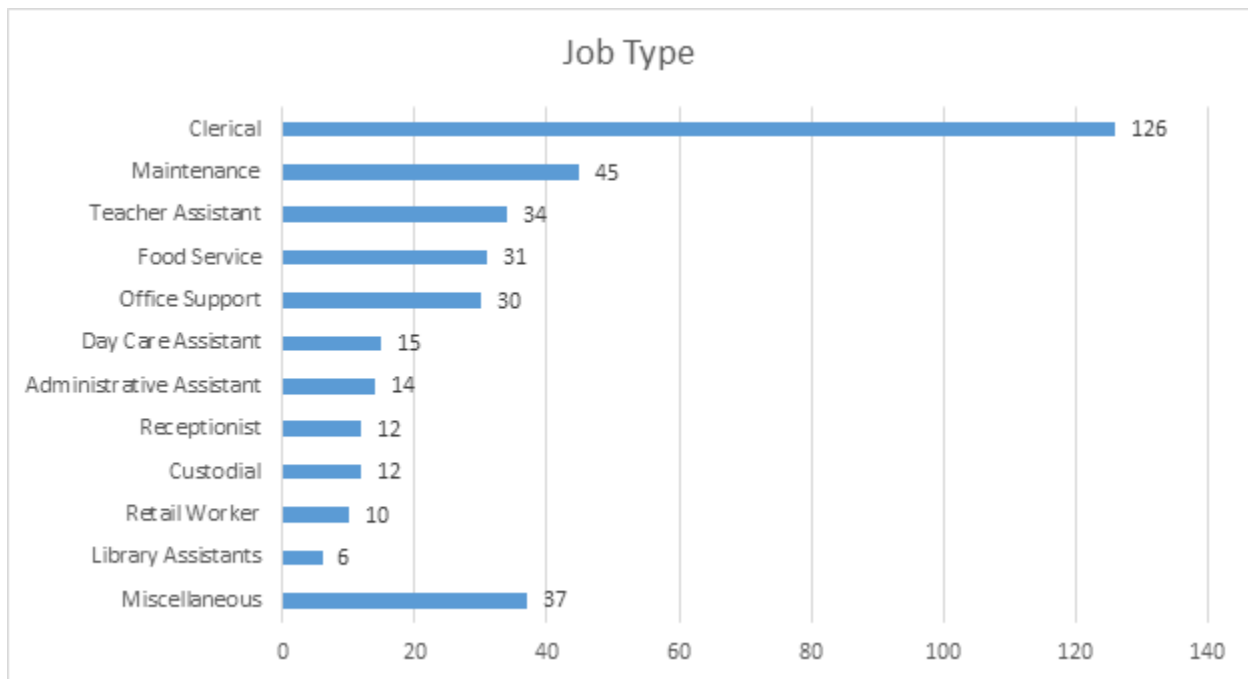


Source: Data manually compiled by NJDLWD as of March 6, 2018 (NJLWD)

- B. **While participants engage in a range of work, most of the work did not require technical skills and interview data suggests that most CWEP participants are engaged in clerical and administrative work.** Most counties and AOSOS reported data affirmed this finding. Some participants are also placed at childcare worksites. Upon further exploration, the research team found that the future of childcare worksites may change as a new federal directive requires more background checks and training for employment in

the childcare sector⁷. This requirement may negatively impact CWEP placements at childcare worksites by placing a financial burden to pay for background checks. Counties reported that participants are engaged in a variety of work that ranges from culinary positions to logistics. A few interviewees specifically remarked that the range of work available for participants is limited in their counties due to the exclusion of for-profit businesses as potential worksites. Figure 4 shows the main job categories based on the AOSOS data provided by the NJLWD.

Figure 4: CWEP Job Types



Source: Data manually compiled by NJDLWD as of March 6, 2018 (NJDLWD)

- C. **A typical CWEP placement lasts six months. Counties thereby apply the guidance of the CWEP Directive, which recommends that “the normal duration of any CWEP assignment at an approved worksite should not exceed six months”** (CWEP Directive, 2010, p. 8). Most counties allow an extension for special circumstances. For instance, counties report that they may extend a participant’s placement if the worksite is in the process of creating a job opportunity for the participant. Hudson, Mercer, Cumberland, Salem, Cape May, and Essex reported that they engage in this practice. The most distinct program is that of Union County which offers different CWEP program tracks. Depending on the track, a CWEP assignment can last two, three, or six months.

⁷ <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/licensing/state/nj> Last accessed: April 26, 2018

- D. **It is not common for participants to have a series of placements during the span of their six-month placement.** However, it was reported by some interviewees that participants do have the option to change their CWEP sites if their original placement was not the right fit for them. Two counties suggested that they intentionally place participants at different sites during their CWEP experience to help them to gain different experiences. One county expressed the wish to place participants into different placements, but issues such as lack of transportation and childcare facilities hinder such strategies.
- E. **When issues arise between a CWEP participant and a worksite, each county has designated staff that attempts to intervene before beginning the sanctioning process.** CWEP participants either work with a social worker, case manager, or counselor at the OSCC or vendor organization to address issues that may arise at a worksite. If participants are having trouble with the worksite, they hold an initial conversation with their assigned staff person. The staff person tries to get to the root of the issue. Sometimes, it is transportation problems or other issues that may cause poor attendance, miscommunication and/or poor fit. From there, the participant and the staff person address the issue, or hold a collective conversation with the worksite. Those interviewed noted that terminating participants is rare, and other times they may choose to relocate participants to another worksite that meets their individual needs. However, termination is not usually the first course of action. Middlesex and Passaic have trial periods for participants to work at a site for two to three weeks before determining if the placement is a good fit.
- F. **There are various reasons why CWEP placements end before their full term, including finding full time work or failing to show up at the worksite.** Interviewees stated that a placement may be terminated before the natural end because the participant found work. Other interviewees observed that participants simply do not show up at their work sites, which can lead to the participant violating the conditions of government aid. However, the underlying reasons for participant absences vary. Oftentimes, the reasons are related to their individual situation and factors that were not explored in the scope of this project.

What Happens After CWEP

- A. **With the exception of Mercer County, no counties reported conducting post-placement tests intended to gauge the level of skills, work ethic, and experience acquired as a direct result of the CWEP placement.** Without this quantifiable data, it is hard to attribute the impact of CWEP on the employability of participants. Instead, at the end of a placement participants meet with their individual counselors to review the skills that they developed and determine the next appropriate activity or service. A lack of clarity surrounding CWEP's basic objective, which is not understood uniformly across the state,

translates into the lack of a streamlined process as personnel place participants in very different post-placement work activities. Typically, these activities include occupational training, GED classes, job search, networking, workshops, or other work activities. Counties responded that they do not conduct post-placement tests for several reasons. The most often cited reason remained linked to the nature of worksites, which do not possess the human resource or fiscal capacity to evaluate the skills, work ethics and experience participants gained from their CWEP placement. In Burlington, there are informal assessments of participants, but none for the CWEP sites in particular. In Greater Raritan, participants meet with counselors to determine their specific needs. Most times, participants and their individual counselors debrief about the participant's experience and discuss future opportunities but there is no streamlined case-flow process. In Mercer County, the employer fills out an evaluation at the three-month mark as well as the six-month mark. This allows them to see what areas need improvement. In most cases, if a participant does not find a job and returns to CWEP, a social worker assesses the situation and their case. In cases where their progress is stagnant, CWEP personnel stated that they transition participants to more suitable placements. The only exception is Mercer County, which reported that they ensure that the worksites fill out participant evaluations at both the three-month and six-month mark during their placements. Greater Raritan stands out from other counties, in this regard, as it provides its participants workshops, referrals, emails, and text messaging after CWEP.

- B. The majority of counties reported that the CWEP placements did not yield positive employment outcomes for most participants and that they require further skill development to improve participant's employability.** Some interview respondents believe that CWEP placements should act like internships and therefore lead to a job at the assigned worksite. Others acknowledge that CWEP is not designed to be a "job placement" site but a work experience so participants can gain employability skills for jobs in the private sector. Even in cases where counties believed that participants were a perfect match for worksites and their placement would perhaps lead to a job at that worksite, their counselors recognized that they would not get a job because of structural issues such as the worksite not possessing the fiscal capacity to hire participants. Interviewees were cognizant of the larger systemic issues at play such as the nature of worksites that tend to be nonprofits, government organizations or churches, with limited work activities that allowed for the development of technical skills that enhance employability and lack of fiscal capacity for creation of jobs for participants.

Efforts to Evaluate and Innovate

- A. In terms of how OSCC or vendor organizations get feedback on placements and their effectiveness, no standard process is followed throughout the State.** Atlantic County reports that it receives monthly feedback on its placements. Morris, Sussex, and Warren

follow a standard protocol of monitoring worksites locally, involving one-on-one meetings about participants. In Cumberland, Salem, and Cape May, there is usually a call with the worksites to see if the program has evolved. If there is any negative feedback, it goes straight to the director. Monmouth County utilizes an open door policy should any issues arise.

- B. CWEP activities, including the quality and number of worksites and how participants are faring, are evaluated through multiple means at the OSCCs.** In Atlantic County, the CWEP personnel have an operations meeting to gather feedback on current CWEP placement efforts, receive reports from providers, and monitor units and their contracts. In Greater Raritan, the OSCC follows criteria set forth in federal legislation and state legislation regarding their operation. They rely on performance measures as evaluation tools. In Mercer, the personnel and directors meet bi-monthly with the Board of Social Services to determine if any changes are needed. In Cumberland, Salem, and Cape May, every OSCC undergoes a certification process. The Department of Human Resources Division monitors compliance. In Monmouth, the program is monitored by the state.
- C. County personnel indicated there are various strengths to the CWEP activity in New Jersey.** Given the different ways that the CWEP activity operates at the State level, there are several opinions on the program's strengths. In Atlantic County, the personnel feel fortunate that many government agencies partner with them to have CWEP placements. In Cumberland, Salem, and Cape May, those managing the program feel positive about their ability to get people to worksites quickly, and are more apt to know when and where a problem may occur, which they attribute to the experience and talent of their staff. In Camden, those managing the program felt that CWEP is a "win-win" for participants, as the participant gets real world experience.
- D. There are many different opinions throughout the counties and their workforce boards on how to improve CWEP.** Most interviewees commented that there was a need to allow for-profit employers to be recruited as CWEP worksites as they may be more likely to hire, which may improve the likelihood that a CWEP participant would have a job at the end of their placement. Other suggestions for improvement included:
- Compensating people while in a CWEP placement citing summer stipends for youth as an example.
 - Taking into better account the transportation needs of participants, especially in rural areas as well as other barriers to employment.
 - Development of a dedicated CWEP site contact who can help develop job descriptions for different sites.

- Improve, update and standardize work site agreements across all workforce areas, and look at ways to improve the capacity of work sites to supervise CWEP participants.
- Clarify what CWEP is (as a training site to allow participants to gain valuable work experience and skills) and what it is not (a pre-employment or trial worksite leading to employment at that site).

Recommendations for Policy and Operations

There are many dedicated local and state staff who deliver excellent services to CWEP participants in New Jersey, but certain challenges prohibit CWEP from reaching its full potential. The objective of this study was to understand CWEP administration in New Jersey and its effectiveness in transitioning participants to unsubsidized employment. The study also aims to provide actionable steps and recommendations for the improvement for CWEP based on the research findings. An analysis of our findings revealed areas to improve CWEP services to address the diverse challenges.

The research team believes that due to a stable economy, new administration, a history of innovation in welfare-to-work programs and existing diversity in the field, New Jersey can play a leading role in developing more innovative CWEP activities and strategies that can serve as an example for other states.

The following recommendations should therefore not be seen as a critique to how the program looked in the past, but rather as recommended direction for how the program could potentially look in the future.

1. Revise the current CWEP Directive. Given the decentralized administration of WFNJ and the likely variation that resulted over eight years, the NJDLWD could review the 2010 CWEP Directive and reestablish a clear goal and purpose of CWEP. The directive could seek to clarify what features of the CWEP activity distinguishes the program from other employment activities under WFNJ, such as On-the-Job training. A revised Directive could be developed with input from CWEP managers and include targeted orientation for OSCC operators on how to best utilize the available resources in their respective OSCCs. Another important update in the Directive could be to introduce quality performance indicators to assess the quality of services provided at the worksites as well as to gauge the participants' work readiness at the end of the program. In order to better implement the state Directive, NJDLWD could initiate regular training sessions, both in-person and online, on how to best implement the CWEP Directive. These training sessions should be available to all staff members, not only those responsible for WFNJ, in order to prevent misunderstandings about the CWEP activity and ensure that it fits organically into the workflow

of the OSCC. In the end, the formulation of a new CWEP vision that is accepted by peers can be best achieved by involving all stakeholder involved with CWEP –WDBs, contracted providers, local CWEP administrators, responsible state officials and the participants– on a continuous basis. The state could put in place a sunset mechanism to revisit the directive after a certain time span (e.g. every 18 months) to ensure an open environment for improvement.

2. Offer WFNJ participants a wider variety of worksites through exploring various alternative and innovative strategies. CWEP staff made clear during the interviews that they aspire to match participants to worksites that fit the individual needs of their participants. In certain instances, the possibility of placing a person with a specific skill set to a matching worksite is sometimes not possible due to limited availability of CWEP placement opportunities. The inability to make placements at for-profit companies and various other individual barriers to employment like transportation, violence, substance abuse or childcare issues forces the participants to settle for something that does not allow them to productively use their skills. One promising approach to address those barriers is to assess whether it is possible to place CWEP participants into other WFNJ “core activities” (See Appendix 5) such as On-the-Job training (OJT). This process could be facilitated by the NJDLWD. While some counties are already making extensive use of similar strategies⁸, a statewide effort to diversify the portfolio of activities of WFNJ through including, among other things, more OJT-placements, may lead to a bigger pool of opportunities for current CWEP participants. This could make it possible to place work-ready participants into activities that are relevant for them and may lead to jobs in the private sector.

3. Create a more streamlined and structured matching process between participant interests, skills, and worksites, with the introduction of different tracks to increase the manageability of the program. The research team recommends addressing the challenge of efficiently placing participants into the activity that is most beneficial for them by categorizing CWEP into different program “tracks” by different areas. These areas could be categorized by education level, work readiness, or skill requirements, and would be helpful not only in successful participant matches but also in improving the manageability of the program as a whole. While some counties have already arranged their CWEP program into different tracks (e.g. Union County has three CWEP tracks) the research team believes that a more streamlined approach statewide would help CWEP contractors to make placements more structured. The fact that other states are using similar models reaffirms this recommendation. For example, in Connecticut and in Montana, service providers divide participants into groups by their level of work readiness, as different levels of work readiness require different work activities (Brown & Derr, 2015, p. 9). A local employment center in Salt Lake City furthermore divides participants into different tracks based on their level of education (Brown & Derr, 2015, p. 39) and the Washington TANF program has different service delivery tiers based on a mix of indicators (GAO, 2014, p. 25). Finally, this improved overview of

⁸ Essex, for example, is using the synergies between CWEP and OJT.

different “tracks” of CWEP will make it easier for local officials to employ a career pathways approach to the matching process and streamline placements consciously to achieve the career goal of the respective participant.

4. Develop a system to share best practices among all WFNJ stakeholders at the state and local levels to address the challenges that emerge through the decentralized administration of CWEP. While innovative CWEP strategies already exist in some New Jersey counties, there is no robust mechanism for counties to share those strategies and experiences with each other. An improved coordination mechanism between counties could help with providing participants with a more diverse selection of placements across county lines. The research team recommends the development of a reliable and easy-to-access system to share best practices between counties that could yield high benefits. In this context, an online platform that is easily accessible for local CWEP personnel to share their experiences, and simultaneously serves as a repository to centrally store relevant information regarding CWEP, could be a way forward. NJDLWD could take the lead in such an effort and designate one person who would act as a manager and contact point for the suggested platform. This person would also be responsible for organizing periodic meetings with relevant local CWEP officials to discuss the best practices that emerged on the platform and ensure open communication between all partner organizations.

5. Support and train local and state institutions to keep a record of their activities and establish a robust evaluation process of all components of CWEP in order to continuously improve the program. Re-establish a statewide working group that is focused on evaluation and innovation, for example through helping local programs explore the possibility of federal waivers to test innovative strategies that go beyond the ‘traditional’ CWEP program (GAO, 2014, p. 35). This working group may consist of state and local officials and could meet on a quarterly basis each year to continuously support local CWEP officials in developing their programs. The group would also be responsible for compiling and interpreting the data collected on all levels of government. In this regard, the NJDLWD may want to consider exploring strategies to incentivize CWEP administrators and providers to enter more detailed information into the central AOSOS system. This centralized and standardized database would assist the state in tracking the different components of the CWEP program across all counties.

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Interview Protocols

Appendix 1: CWEP Personnel Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, my name is ____ I am a graduate student at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and as part of my graduate program I am conducting a basic analysis of the WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) .

We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about WFNJ program administration and especially CWEP. Given your immense work experience as a Workforce Development Board Director, we want to know what you think. This interview should last for approximately an hour.

Privacy Disclosure: Your opinions and recommendations will not be connected to you by name but facts about the program will be associated with service delivery in your areas.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about this project?

_____ Questions Begin _____

Please describe your position/role in the Workforce Development area of _____.

(Probe: What is your job title? What are your responsibilities related to TANF/CWEP?)

Administration, Process, and Compliance

1. The labor department is compiling a list of all of your CWEP sites, how is that list kept current and who is responsible for updating it? How are potential CWEP worksite identified? What are the application protocols and criteria?
2. How do you ensure that CWEP providers meet the standards identified in the CWEP agreement?
3. What's the procedure when the placement isn't working for the participant?
4. When you are matching participants to a site, what factors do you take into account?

Matching participants to CWEP sites/sponsor sites

1. Can you briefly explain the process of assigning participants to a CWEP placement?
2. How do you match participants with CWEP placements and how do you record/document the process? (Prompt: Ask about specific data sets etc.)

Follow-up: What are the most common reasons why you match participants to a CWEP placements (Prompt: Availability/ Needs of the participant etc.)

3. In general, when someone is required to work, and determined that CWEP is the best service, how long does it take to assign and start their CWEP activity?
4. To what organizations are participants typically assigned?

Participants at the CWEP sites

1. Do you do a formal pre-assignment assessment? (If yes, what tool do you use)
2. What kinds of work experience are participants engaging in?
3. How do you track the participants at the CWEP sites?
4. On average, what is the duration of the CWEP placement?
5. In the last year, how many CWEP contracts were terminated before the natural ending of the contract?
6. In general, what are some reasons why a CWEP does not work out - either for the participant or the site?

What happens after CWEP?

1. What sort of activities or services are CWEP participants referred to once their CWEP placement expires? How do you determine this?
2. Do you have any data on the employment outcomes for CWEP?
3. Do you do a formal post-assignment assessment? (If yes, what tool do you use)

Efforts to Evaluate and Innovate

1. How often do organizations (worksites) in the local area get feedback on the CWEP in your county?
 - a. Never
 - b. Once a month
 - c. Once a quarter
 - d. Bi-annually
 - e. annually
2. How do you evaluate placement sites?
3. What actions are taken based on the results of the evaluation?
4. Is there any system of knowledge-sharing/best practices regarding CWEP sites in place?
5. Do you have any concluding thoughts on the CWEP component of WFNJ?

Appendix 2: Workforce Development Board Directors Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____. I am a graduate student at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and as part of my graduate program I am conducting a basic analysis of the WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) Community Work Experience Program (CWEP).

We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about WFNJ program administration and especially CWEP. Given your immense work experience as a Workforce Development Board Director, we want to know what you think. This interview should last for approximately an hour.

Privacy Disclosure: Your opinions and recommendations will not be connected to you by name but facts about the program will be associated with service delivery in your areas.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about this research project?

_____ Questions Begin _____

Please describe your position/role in the Workforce Development area of _____.
How many different processes exist in your Workforce Development Area?

Administration, Process, and Compliance

1. Do local areas have a (current) master list of CWEP?
 - i. How is this maintained?
 - ii. Who is responsible for updating this master list for both CWEP locations and assignments?
2. What local organization determines how CWEP participants are referred and placed?
3. How are potential CWEP worksites identified in your local area? What are the application protocols and criteria for organizations?
4. How do you ensure that CWEP worksites meet the standards identified in the CWEP agreement?
5. What data do you report to the County Welfare Agency on a participant's CWEP placement? If someone fails to show at a CWEP site, what happens?
6. What data on the CWEP placement is entered into AOSOS?

Matching participants to CWEP sites/sponsor sites

1. Do you use a pre-placement assessment tool to determine if a participant is a 'good fit' for CWEP and where they are placed?
 - i. What does that pre-assessment look like?

- ii. Do you have example to share with us?
2. Do you use a post-placement assessment tool to determine if a participant learned the skills expected of them from the placement?
 - i. If no, how do you determine if the placement resulted in skills improvement or not?
3. How does your local CWEP determination process and placement process differ from the State's CWEP directive?

participants at the CWEP sites

1. On average, what is the duration of the CWEP placement?
2. Do CWEP participants usually engage in one placement, or can they have a series of placements over time?

What happens after CWEP?

1. What sort of activities or services are CWEP participants referred to once their CWEP placement expires?
2. What are the employment outcomes for CWEP?

Efforts to Evaluate and Innovate

1. How often do organizations (worksites) in the local area give feedback on the effectiveness of the CWEP placements?
 - Never
 - Once a month
 - Once a quarter
 - Bi-annually
 - Annually
2. How are One Stop Career Centers evaluated in terms of the effectiveness of their CWEP processes and placements?

Personal Opinions

1. What do you think are the strengths of your local CWEP activities and placements?
2. What do you think are areas in CWEP locally and at the state level that could use some improvement?
3. What recommendations can you offer us to improve CWEP both locally and statewide?
4. Do you have any concluding thoughts on the CWEP component of WFNJ?

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your program?

End

Appendix 3: Department of Labor Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, my name is ____ I am a graduate student at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and as part of my graduate program I am conducting a basic analysis of the WorkFirst New Jersey (WFNJ) Community Work Experience Program (CWEP).

We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about TANF program administration and especially CWEP. Given your immense work experience with the Department of Labor, we want to know what you think. This interview should last for approximately an hour.

Privacy Disclosure: Your opinions and recommendations will not be connected to you by name but facts about the program will be associated with service delivery in your areas.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about this research project?

_____ Questions Begin _____

Please describe your position/role in the Department of Labor (Probe: What is your job title? What are your responsibilities related to TANF/CWEP?)

General description

1. Could you shortly give us a characterization of the ‘community work experience program’ (CWEP) in New Jersey?
2. What is the main purpose of CWEP in your opinion?
3. How does the CWEP program relate to the general framework of the WFNJ?
4. What is the relationship b/w CWEP & other welfare reforms & other workforce development programs?

History of CWEP

1. What is the history of the community work experience program in New Jersey? (Probe: What makes CWEP in New Jersey special in comparison to other states ?
2. How do you think CWEP contributed to the overall WFNJ Program in the past?

Bureaucratic processes

1. How many different processes exist in New Jersey around CWEP?

2. Could you shortly outline the service delivery system for CWEP?
 - a. What works well at the moment?
 - b. Where do you see challenges?
3. Is there any system of knowledge-sharing/best practices regarding CWEP sites in place?

General Evaluation

1. What does the CWEP currently do well? And how so?
2. What are the general challenges for the CWEP in New Jersey?
3. Finally, do you have any concrete recommendations for improving the CWEP program?

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your program?

End

Appendix 4: List of Workforce Development Boards

Workforce Development Board	
1	Camden County Workforce Development Board
2	Essex County Workforce Investment Board
3	Monmouth County Workforce Development Board
4	Union County Workforce Development Board
5	Bergen County Workforce Development Board
6	Hudson County Workforce Development Board
7	Morris/Sussex/Warren Workforce Development Board
8	Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board
9	Newark Workforce Development
10	Passaic County Workforce Development Board
11	Greater Raritan Workforce Investment Board
12	Ocean County Workforce Investment Board
13	Mercer County Workforce Development Board
14	Cumberland-Salem-Cape May Workforce Development Board
15	Gloucester County Workforce Development Board
16	Burlington County Workforce Development Board
17	Atlantic Cape May Workforce Development Board

Appendix 5: Core Work Activities

Federal Core Work Activities (TANF)	New Jersey Core Work Activities (TANF and GA)	SNAP E&T Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unsubsidized employment 2. Subsidized private-sector employment 3. Subsidized public-sector employment 4. Work experience 5. On-the-job training 6. Job search and job readiness assistance (only 6 weeks in a year for only 4 weeks in a row; can move up to 12 weeks in hard economic times) 7. Community service programs 8. Vocational education training (up to 12 months and no more than 30 percent of families that a state counts to the WPR can come from vocational education training) 9. Providing childcare services to an individual who is participating in a community service program 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unsubsidized employment 2. Subsidized private-sector employment 3. Subsidized public-sector employment 4. Work experience 5. On-the-job training 6. Job search and job readiness activities 7. Community service 8. Vocational education/career and technical education (if a GA recipient dual enrolled in SNAP E&T is in compliance, they may participate in this longer than 12 months) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job search 2. Training 3. Employment 4. On-the-job training 5. Work experience 6. Other activity that will lead to gainful employment