

CHAPTER 125

AN ACT establishing the Talent Network Program in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and supplementing and amending P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-1 et seq.).

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.34:15D-28 Findings, declarations relative to the Talent Network Program.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. To maintain a competitive edge in the 21st century, New Jersey must develop a highly productive workforce that has the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by employers in the State's key industries;

b. Workforce development and education programs that are directly aligned with the needs of employers will ensure that more New Jersey residents have pathways to economic opportunity and successful careers, and that employers receive the talent required to drive the growth of their businesses;

c. To cultivate such employer-driven partnerships, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development has supported the development of talent networks since 2011;

d. The department currently funds nine talent networks of employers, educational institutions, and workforce development organizations in industries including advanced manufacturing; construction & utilities; financial services; food industry; health care; life sciences; technology; transportation, logistics, and distribution; and retail, hospitality, and tourism; and

e. The establishment of a Talent Network Program will create a permanent plan within the department to strengthen and enhance these and future partnerships in meeting the workforce needs of the State.

C.34:15D-29 Talent Network Program.

2. a. There is established in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development the Talent Network Program. The purpose of this program is to develop centralized sources of intelligence about the workforce needs of the State's key industries by building employer-driven partnerships between employers, educational institutions, and other organizations concerned with workforce development.

b. To fulfill the goal of the Talent Network Program, the department shall annually award grant funds to nonprofit organizations, industry associations and post-secondary educational institutions, who demonstrate knowledge and expertise in one of the State's key industries. The department may continue grant agreements with talent networks which were awarded prior to the enactment of P.L.2019, c.125 (C.34:15D-28 et al.).

c. Each nonprofit organization, industry association and post-secondary educational institution awarded grant funds through the Talent Network Program pursuant to subsection b. of this section shall:

(1) engage and convene employers located throughout the State to identify common skill gaps and workforce needs within the targeted industry;

(2) engage and convene key education and workforce providers located throughout the State to identify the capacity of local partners to meet industry workforce needs;

(3) form partnerships that are employer-driven and that include at least three key education and workforce providers;

(4) create a strategy for building and sustaining such partnerships through commitments from employers, workforce organizations, educational institutions, training providers, community and faith-based organizations, and other key stakeholders;

(5) facilitate the development of a workforce plan to respond to identified workforce needs and opportunities;

(6) host an annual industry summit to gather intelligence and inform key workforce stakeholders of essential employer needs;

(7) contribute to the department's development of an industry-valued credential and degree list and career awareness materials;

(8) maintain a website and a presence on social media to disseminate industry intelligence and labor market information to job seekers, students, employers, and education and workforce stakeholders;

(9) report annually to the department and the Legislature the status of the industry's workforce needs; and

(10) perform any other duties as required by the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development.

d. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the Talent Network Program shall be funded through federal job training funds, as defined in section 4 of P.L.1989, c.293 (C.34:15C-1). The department is authorized to use any additional funds necessary to fulfill the provisions of this section, as determined by the commissioner, from the Workforce Development Partnership Fund moneys reserved for the Talent Network Program pursuant to section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9).

3. Section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9) is amended to read as follows:

C.34:15D-9 Workforce Development Partnership Fund.

9. a. A restricted, nonlapsing, revolving Workforce Development Partnership Fund, to be managed and invested by the State Treasurer, is hereby established to: provide employment and training services to qualified displaced, disadvantaged and employed workers by means of training grants or customized training services; provide for the other costs indicated in subsection a. of section 4 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-4); provide for the New Jersey Innovation and Research Fellowship Program as provided for in section 3 of P.L.2015, c.235 (C.34:15D-26); provide for the Talent Network Program as provided for in section 2 of P.L.2019, c.125 (C.34:15D-29); and facilitate the provision of education and training to youth by means of grants provided by the Youth Transitions to Work Partnership pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1993, c.268 (C.34:15E-1 et al.). All appropriations to the fund, all interest accumulated on balances in the fund and all cash received for the fund from any other source shall be used solely for the purposes specifically delineated by this act.

b. During any fiscal year beginning after June 30, 2001, of the total revenues dedicated to the program during any one fiscal year: 25% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved to provide employment and training services for qualified displaced workers; 6% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved to provide employment and training services for qualified disadvantaged workers; 37% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for and appropriated to the Office of Customized Training; 5% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for and appropriated to the Talent Network Program established pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2019, c.125 (C.34:15D-29); 3% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for occupational safety and health training; 5% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership

Fund reserved for the Youth Transitions to Work Partnership created pursuant to P.L.1993, c.268 (C.34:15E-1 et seq.); 3% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for the New Jersey Innovation and Research Fellowship Program established pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2015, c.235 (C.34:15D-26); 10% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for administrative costs as defined in section 3 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-3); 0.5% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund reserved for the State Employment and Training Commission to design criteria and conduct an annual evaluation of the program; and 5.5% shall be deposited in an account of the Workforce Development Partnership Fund to be used, at the discretion of the commissioner, for any of the purposes indicated in subsection a. of section 4 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-4).

c. Beginning January 1, 1995, through June 30, 2002, the balance in the fund as of the previous December 31, as determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, shall not exceed 1.5 times the amount of contributions deposited for the calendar year then ended. If the balance exceeds this amount, the excess shall be deposited into the unemployment compensation fund within seven business days of the date that the determination is made.

d. Beginning July 1, 2002, and for any subsequent fiscal year, if the unexpended cash balance in any of the accounts indicated in subsection b. of this section, except for the account reserved for the Talent Network Program, less any amount awarded in grants but not yet disbursed from the account, is determined to exceed 20% of the amount of contributions collected for deposit in the account pursuant to this subsection during the fiscal year then ended, the excess shall be regarded as an unemployment compensation contribution and deposited into the unemployment compensation fund within seven business days of the date that the determination is made. If the unexpended cash balance in the account reserved for the Talent Network Program, less any amount awarded in grants but not yet disbursed from the account, is determined to exceed 20% of the amount of contributions collected for deposit in the account pursuant to this subsection during the fiscal year then ended, the excess shall be deposited into the Workforce Development Partnership Fund account reserved for the Office of Customized Training.

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved June 17, 2019.