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Non-profits launch private Camden Works initiative with support from businesses and philanthropic organizations

Program to centralize employment process for Camden companies and residents

CAMDEN, NJ – A new job training and employment placement program will soon help Camden residents take part in the city’s historic economic resurgence. The Camden Works employment initiative was launched today by six non-profits: the State of New Jersey National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Cooper’s Ferry Partnership, Latin America Economic Development Association, Center for Family Services, Hopeworks and Camden County Workforce Investment Board. These six Managing Partners will soon begin to streamline the hiring process for Camden residents, companies, and job training programs.

Camden Works is being supported by financial partners led by Co-Chair, George E. Norcross, III Chairman, Cooper University Hospital, MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper and Co-Chair Susan Story, President & CEO of American Water Works, Inc. along with the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, Wells Fargo, NFI, Conner Strong & Buckelew and The Michaels Organization, to name a few initial donors.

Camden Works is a four-year private pilot initiative constructed to fill employment opportunities with Camden residents by streamlining the connection between employers and residents seeking jobs. By working with employers and helping residents overcome common barriers to gaining employment, Camden Works will build pathways for residents to participate in the city’s economic growth.

Recognizing the unique composition of the City’s population, Camden Works is being constructed with wraparound social services as a core foundational piece of its design. By placing a robust social safety net at the center of the initiative, Camden residents will be enabled to overcome employment barriers.

“There is no shortage of talented and ambitious people in the City of Camden, what has been lacking are the mechanisms to match that talent with employers and training programs that can set them on the path to a rewarding career,” said Congressman Donald Norcross. “Because of the unprecedented economic development in the city, many new jobs that have come to Camden are now filled by city residents. This initiative will give us the opportunity to build on that progress.”

The goal of the program will be to place Camden residents in full-time employment. The initiative is designed to evaluate the needs of local companies, recruit candidates, connect candidates to job training programs, and then ultimately match candidates with companies that need them. The Managing Partners will also assist the Camden Business Association to develop a database to identify small businesses and increase local supplier diversity.

“The implementation of the Camden Works initiative will enable Camden residents to make those connections and take advantage of the more than 4,600 jobs that have come to Camden since 2013,” said Freeholder Jonathan Young, liaison to the Camden County Workforce Investment Board. “The services being provided through this program will be a game changer and the WIB is proud to partner on it.”

The imperative for the commitment of private sector and philanthropic entities ensures the initiative will be funded privately while working to secure workforce grant funding.

“Camden is American Water’s home and we are committed to making the community better because we are here,” said Susan Story, President & CEO of American Water. “Supporting this new jobs effort is one more way American Water is working with others in our community to create jobs for local residents as we also strengthen and support education and small business growth in Camden.”

Camden Works will monitor progress of the plan by measuring concrete outcomes like full- and part-time job placement, knowledge, attitude, behaviors, and beliefs of job-seekers, as well as holding regular meetings with partners to receive ongoing feedback and suggestions for corrective action.

“Camden Works will optimize how we connect Camden’s richly diverse and talented workforce to tremendous companies looking for particular skillsets,” said Camden Mayor Frank Moran. “It gives me gratification to know that our Camden residents will be able to take advantage of our City’s growth and connect to these outstanding opportunities. For far too long, there was simply no structured, centralized mechanism for them to find each other. These six non-profits with proven track records, will leverage their experience to lay the groundwork to further boost local employment; bringing us another step closer to making inclusive prosperity a reality throughout the city.”

The aim of the Camden Works initiative is to further reduce the City’s unemployment and poverty rates by connecting Camden residents from all walks of life with jobs that earn sustainable wages.

“Camden has all the components necessary to build a thriving economy – it’s just a matter of connecting them in a synergistic way,” said Richard Smith, President of the State of New Jersey NAACP.

Another member of the partnership is an organization who has advocated for organic growth in Camden for years.

“The stable and focused strength of our Managing Partners, the financial support of our business and philanthropic leaders and the guidance of our Advisory Partners will boost residents living wage employment opportunities,” said Raymond L. Lamboy, President & CEO of Latin America Economic Development Association. “As a collective, we are excited to support this effort.”

Camden achieved record low unemployment levels in 2019, reaching 6.6%, a 30-year low, but continues to lag behind the state as a whole. The Camden Works program is intended to continue reducing that disparity, while also increasing the share of Camden residents in jobs located in the City.

“We’re so proud to bring our holistic approach to uplifting individuals to Camden Works, helping even more people overcome obstacles, find comfort, and build the foundation for a successful future,” said Richard Stagliano, President & CEO of Center for Family Services.

In August, Cooper’s Ferry Partnership produced a one-stop-shop website in partnership with Hopeworks that provided a single place to find job opportunities. Now they will be joining in as a partner to build organic job training and workforce investment connections through Camden Works.

“Hopeworks is excited to be part of Camden Works. This initiative complements our mission to grow the employment opportunities for Camden residents,” said Dan Rhoton, Executive Director of Hopeworks.

Camden City has seen incremental growth on every level when it comes to access and opportunities to employment whether it comes from the state Department of Labor, U.S. Census Bureau or S&P International. Now, with the launch of Camden Works, that progress will be compounded by focused and strategic training for residents.

“Camden Works will provide an ideal platform for us to effectively support and reconnect vulnerable populations to job readiness programs,” said Kris Kolluri, President & CEO of Cooper’s Ferry Partnership.

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