

CHAPTER 375

AN ACT concerning the strategic alignment and collaboration between local workforce development boards, community colleges, and county vocational school districts, and supplementing 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-31.2 Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Economy Opportunity Skills System Act.”

C.34:15D-31.3 Findings, declarations.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Because New Jersey needs a skilled workforce to compete in the global economy and to promote economic mobility for residents, the State seeks to create a more efficient and seamless service delivery model for local workforce and economic development by better aligning State workforce development services, community colleges, and post-secondary programs in county vocational school districts; and

b. Strengthening strategic coordination between these entities will enhance the delivery of training and services, address labor market needs, and provide a skilled talent pipeline to meet the demands of employers throughout New Jersey.

C.34:15D-31.4 Definitions.

3. As used in this act:

“Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development.

“Community college” means a county college established pursuant to chapter 64A of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

“County vocational school district” means any entity established pursuant to article 3 of chapter 54 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes for the purpose of providing efficient occupational, technical and academic education opportunities to secondary and postsecondary students.

“Department” means the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

“Division” means the Division of Workforce Development in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

“Local workforce development board” means the local board established in each designated local workforce development area pursuant to the “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act” (29 U.S.C. s.3101 et seq.).

C.34:15D-31.5 New Economy Opportunity Skills System Pilot Program; annual report.

4. a. To establish the “New Economy Opportunity Skills System Pilot Program,” the division shall initiate a pilot program in a select number of local workforce development areas to strengthen strategic alignment and collaboration between the operations of local workforce development boards, community colleges, and post-secondary programs in county vocational school districts. Under the division’s oversight, the pilot program shall include:

(1) joint development and implementation of workforce training programs with an emphasis on industry-recognized credentials along with strengthening and validating participants’ existing skills and experience;

(2) dedication to a customer-centered approach that enables participants’ success through delivery of wrap-around assistance as appropriate;

(3) collaborative efforts for branding, outreach, and marketing to increase awareness of available training and career services;

(4) integrated planning and coordination of funding resources to maximize the impact of State and federal support for workforce development; and

(5) performance evaluations based on appropriate metrics aligned with State and federal workforce development programs to assess participant outcomes, program effectiveness, and other measures as required under the “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,” (29 U.S.C. s.3101 et seq.) and applicable State laws; and

(6) a memorandum of understanding binding all participating entities through a specific scope of work, pilot timeline, delineated roles and responsibilities, funding and mechanisms for disbursement of funds to participating entities by the division, and reporting requirements to ensure participating entities expend public monies efficiently towards pilot goals.

b. The division shall partner with the Office of Research and Information in the department to ensure the local workforce development areas participating in the pilot program are selected based on objective, scientific criteria. To the extent possible, the division shall consider the criteria identified by the Office of Research and Information to ensure participating areas are representative of the larger universe of local workforce development areas in the State so that the pilot outcomes may be evaluated based on evidence-based criteria.

c. The division, in consultation with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges and the New Jersey Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools, shall develop a strategy to strengthen Statewide strategic alignment and collaboration between local workforce development boards, community colleges, and post-secondary programs in county vocational school districts. The strategy shall include:

(1) a guideline for scaling the pilot program established pursuant to subsection a. of this section to other areas throughout the State;

(2) recommendations for legislative and regulatory changes needed to facilitate integration; and

(3) an implementation timeline and resource plan for Statewide integration.

d. At the end of the pilot period, the division shall submit an annual report to the Governor and to the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the progress and outcomes of the pilot program and the implementation of the “New Economy Opportunity Skills System Pilot Program.” The report shall include:

(1) data on participant outcomes, including, but not limited to, employment rates, credential attainment, wage increases, and other appropriate metrics aligned with State and federal workforce development programs and applicable State laws;

(2) recommendations for improvements or adjustments to the “New Economy Opportunity Skills System Pilot Program”;

(3) an update on the Statewide integration strategy and its implementation; and

(4) a recommendation as to whether the pilot program can and should be scaled and expanded Statewide.

5. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire three years after the effective date, but the commissioner may take any anticipatory administrative action in advance as may be necessary for the implementation of this act.

Approved January 20, 2026.