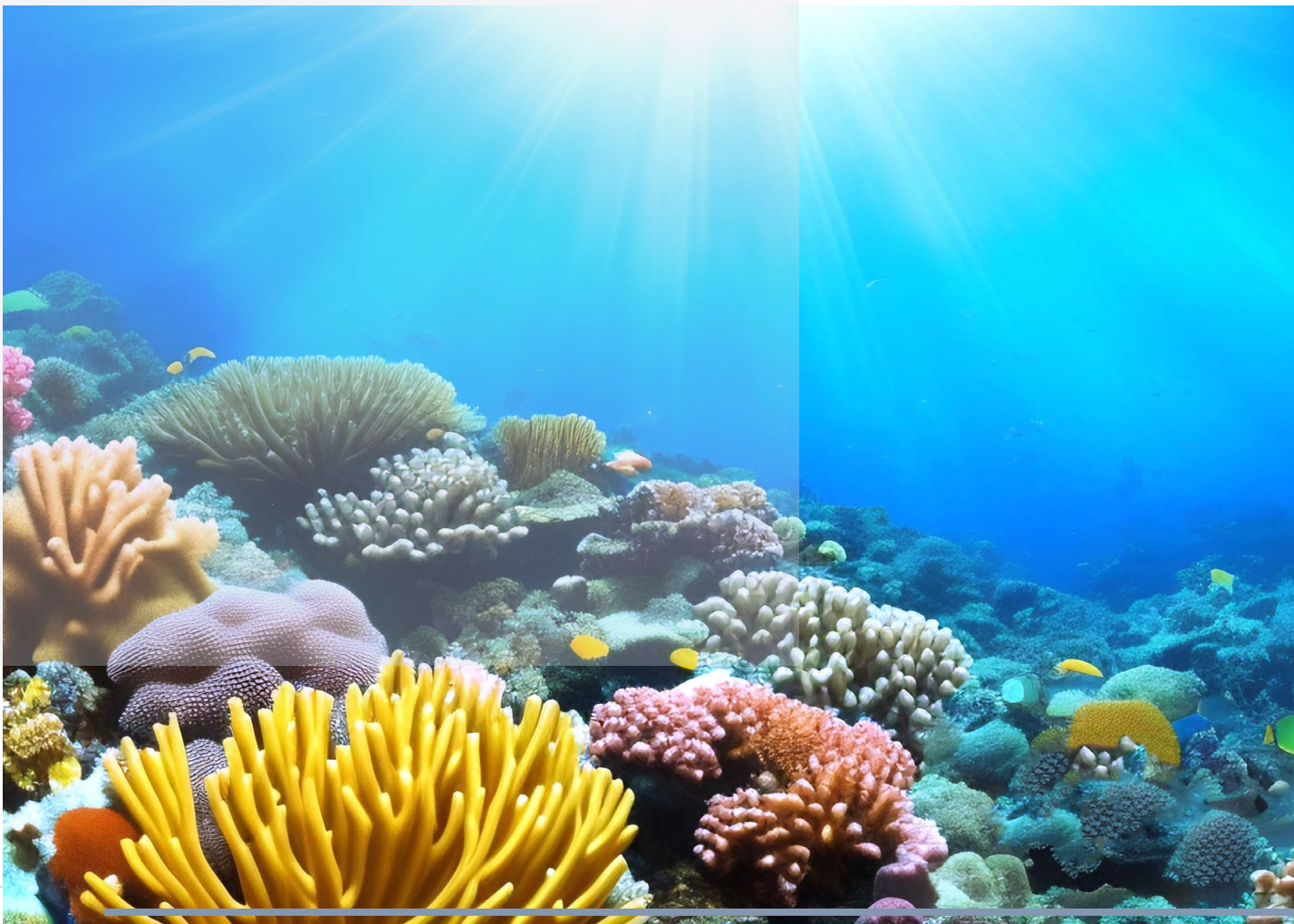


THE SEA-CRETS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

GARDEN STATE & EMPLOYMENT TRAINING ASSOCIATION'S
42ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE CATALOG

OCTOBER 22-23, 2025 – OCEAN RESORTS ATLANTIC CITY, NJ



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

4:00pm-6:00pm: Registration
Location: Registration Booth, Level 10

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

7:00am-11:00am: Registration & Exhibitor Meet & Greet
Booth and Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

7:00am-8:30am: Breakfast
Location: Ovation Hall, Level 10

9:00am-10:00am: Pre-Conference Sessions 1
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

10:15-11:15am: Pre-Conference Sessions 2
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

11:30am-1:30pm: Opening Remarks, Awards, and Keynote Speaker
(Lunch Provided 11:30-12:30pm)
Location: Ovation Hall, Level 10

2:00pm-3:00pm: Session 3
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

2:00pm-4:00pm: Coffee Break
Location: Ocean A-D

3:30pm-4:30pm: Session 4
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

5:00pm-7:00pm: Networking Event
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

Thursday, October 23, 2025

7:00am-9:00am: Registration, Breakfast 7:30-8:30am
Location: Registration Booth, Level 10

9:00-10:00am: Session 5
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

10:30-11:30am: Session 6
Location: Exhibitors Hallway, Level 10

11:30am-12:45pm: Lunch Break
Location: Ocean A-D and Registration, Level 10

10:00am-12:00pm: Session E (120 minutes)
Location: Exhibitor Hallway, Level 10

1:00-2:00pm: Session 7
Location: Exhibitor Hallway

Upon entering Ocean Resort, please follow directions to Conference Center

Parking Garage: Please park and take elevator to Level 11, which is the “Hotel Lobby” Level. Please continue around and to the right, past check in, walking towards the ocean. Please take elevators or escalators down to **Level 10** which is the Conference Center. Registration will be on your right!

If you arrive before check in, please bring your belongings down to registration as we will have a bag check for the conference. We will be redirecting everyone down the hall to the bag check.

CHECK-IN FASTER: ON MOBILE

- 1. On your arrival date, click on the link emailed to you and follow the instructions to complete your online check-in.**
- 2. If a room is not yet available when completing your check-in, we will send a follow-up email alerting you when your room is ready.**
- 3. When your room is ready, proceed to the Key Pick Up Only line with a valid government-issued photo ID to pick up your room keys.**

Be sure to download the GSETA Conference 2025 app from the Apple store or Android store! This will provide all conference updates in real time, guide you around the hotel’s features, and detail opportunities to speak with other attendees, exhibitors and speakers, helping you to optimize your time at our conference.

Our Presenters & Session Descriptions

- **From our Partnering Sponsor, Better Data, Better Programs: Tracking for Real-World Workforce Needs:** Nisha Jackson & Jessica Grullon, Grant Associates
 - *Join Grant Associates as we explore how better data can free up time, empower partnerships, and inform strategy—ultimately leading to better outcomes and greater impact. In this hands-on session, program leaders from Atlantic County will present a roadmap to turn scattered data into structured, shareable databases. We will offer practical strategies for building illuminating dashboards that help frontline teams capture meaningful progress, track referrals, and highlight outcomes for all funding types.*
- **From our Partnering Sponsor, Clean Energy Pathways & Transferable Skills:** Sarah Pidgeon, Step Up Solar
 - *This session would focus on highlighting transferable skills for a wider range of career opportunities in clean energy*
- **Exploring DVRS: Preparing for Youth for Employment Readiness:** Toni Scott, NJDOL DVRS
 - *Are you concerned about the challenges students face in transitioning from school to the workforce? Do you find it difficult to navigate the available resources and support systems to ensure their success? Join us for an interactive workshop designed to address these concerns and empower you with the tools needed to guide students toward fulfilling careers. This session will delve into the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and its crucial role in preparing students for employment. We will explore the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and their impact on career exploration and post-secondary opportunities. Through open and honest discussions, we'll identify common barriers to student success and present practical solutions to overcome them.*
- **Creating a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging in the Workplace:** Jackie Lue Raia, ALEXENA Consulting LLC
 - *This highly interactive session will focus on providing skills, tools and insights that will allow for effective communication and understanding among staff, colleagues, and clients that should aid in creating a culture of empathy, understanding and belonging.*
- **Cultivating Transformational Partnerships through Compassionate Communication:** Ericka Kelley, Sage Horizon LLC
 - *This interactive presentation explores the integration of the Sage Horizons Leadership Framework into workforce development with a focus on enhancing empathetic leadership and inclusive practices. The session offers evidence-based strategies and creative methodologies, such as journaling and art, to foster effective communication and strengthen organizational partnerships. Participants will engage in hands-on activities that promote self-awareness and empathy, equipping them with practical tools to transform their work environments and build resilient, supportive teams.*
- **The Trauma Response to Change: Transforming Resistance in Workforce Development:** Krystina Jackson, Converge Consulting Group
 - *In workforce development, significant organizational changes often face strong resistance despite clear benefits. This session reveals why: Our brain processes change as a form of trauma. When workforce transformations disrupt identity and security, they trigger survival responses that traditional change management approaches fail to address. Discover how to work with — rather than against — natural human responses to organizational shifts. Learn practical tools to identify trauma responses, build psychological safety, and implement change more effectively, essential skills for workforce leaders implementing program changes, technology shifts, or organizational restructuring. Leave with assessment tools and strategies to transform how you lead change in workforce development.*

- **Keep Your Fork at 50+, The Best is Yet to Come:** Mark Smith, The Process
 - *This session deals with a topic that, while often overlooked, has become more important since COVID and the recent displacement of many of Federal Government worker: Men and women over age 50 either having to look for employment and/or returning to the workforce. Today more than ever before, members of the "seasoned" workforce population find themselves frustrated with the potential of age discrimination and the lack of skills to compete with younger workers. Bolstered by first-hand experience, this session will open participants' eyes and create a collaboration to assist the men and women we serve.*
- **Secure Your Mask:** Kimberly Meadows, National Association of Workforce Development Professionals
 - *"Secure your mask before helping others" is a phrase we commonly hear on a flight. However, this applies to life as well. In this session, we will discuss how to avoid burn out, professionally and personally, and discuss strategies to put into place to operate at your best. Workforce development is a service industry. As workforce development professionals we also must remember to serve ourselves!*
- **Fueling Your Talent Pipeline: NJ State Higher Education Financial Aid Resources for Workforce Development:** Carla Donegan, HESAA
 - *In the 21st century, a highly educated and motivated workforce is the most crucial resource for organizational sustainability, growth, and success. New Jersey Higher Education Financial Aid can play a key role in helping employers attract, retain, engage and advance top talent. Leaders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors will learn how HESAA can strengthen their workforce through state financial aid funding for upskilling employees. Employers will be introduced to NJ Higher Education Financial Aid Programs, the NJ BEST 529 College Savings Plan and NJ State Student Loan Redemption Programs which provide opportunities to enhance an existing employee benefits program at no cost to employers or their employees.*
- **Conflict Management: Transform Your Adversaries into Advocates!:** Susan Russo, Susan Russo HR LLC
 - *Conflict can be healthy and productive, or it can be damaging and destructive. Some of the greatest innovations of our time arose after a healthy round of conflict. We each have our own unique weaknesses and habits which can derail a productive discussion into unhealthy conflict. This session will explore the reasons we tend to avoid conflict or fight to win even after we realize we're wrong. Methods for facilitating productive dialogue amongst varied perspectives will be discussed.*
- **Empowering the Workforce: Leading with Empathy, Resilience, and Vision:** Curtis Campogni, Speak4MC, LLC
 - *This session explores how empathy and resilience drive impactful leadership, revealing strategies for: Overcoming barriers and navigating change with confidence, building lasting trust through compassionate communication and inspiring teams with clarity, intention, and a shared vision. Curtis' journey as an adoptive father further demonstrates how life's toughest moments can bring forth strengths like patience and persistence. Attendees will gain practical insights to enhance client and community engagement, uplift their teams, and make a lasting difference in workforce development.*
- **The C.A.P.E. Conversations Framework: Building Trust, Engagement, and Long-Term Growth:** Curtis Campogni, Speak4MC, LLC
 - *In today's workforce, fostering meaningful conversations is key to driving engagement, trust, and retention. This session introduces the C.A.P.E. Conversations Framework (Connection, Adaptability, Purpose, and Empowerment), a proven strategy that equips workforce professionals with the tools to: Build authentic connections that drive trust and collaboration, adapt communication styles to meet the unique needs of each individual, empower clients and employees to take ownership of their growth, strengthen team culture and*

improve outcomes by shifting from compliance to commitment. Through real-world examples and interactive discussions, participants will leave with actionable strategies that enhance communication, spark growth, and drive long-term success.

- **Power Partnerships: Community Colleges & Workforce Boards Driving Workforce Innovation:** Catherine Starghill, NJ Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development
 - *This panel will explore collaborative strategies between community colleges and workforce development boards to align education with labor market needs. Panelists will share best practices, lessons learned, and successful program models that have improved outcomes for job seekers, students, and employers across New Jersey.*
- **The Confident Speaker Mindset: Show Up, Speak Up, and Be You:** Natasha Bryant, Speak Life Transformation
 - *Public speaking isn't just about delivering the perfect message — it's about showing up with purpose, clarity, and confidence. In this empowering session led by a licensed mental health professional and confidence mindset expert, professionals and entrepreneurs will learn how to overcome the thoughts and habits that block them from speaking with confidence and authenticity. Through interactive exercises and mindset strategies, attendees will identify limiting beliefs like comparison, perfectionism, and imposter syndrome — and learn how to replace them with empowering truths. This workshop also introduces the 4 YOU Principles to help participants speak in their natural voice, create authentic messaging, and develop a presentation style that reflects their unique strengths. Whether you're leading a team, pitching a business idea, or stepping into the spotlight for the first time, this session will equip you with the tools to speak with courage — even when you're scared. Because confidence isn't earned... it's built.*
- **Resilience: Preparing For Tomorrow, Today:** Josh Davies, The Non-Prophets
 - *We all know there is only one constant in this world — change, and nothing has exemplified that better than the beginning of this decade. Rather than sitting back and hoping for the best, now is the time to prepare for the coming reality. While we don't know what the future holds, with the proper perspective on coming changes, we can build the personal and organizational resilience needed for our unpredictable times. Learn how to develop a workforce with the skills needed to be successful today and into the future.*
- **The Art and Science of Prompt Writing:** Brianna Kerth, EDSI
 - *This is an interactive session designed to help workforce development professionals harness the power of AI tools like ChatGPT through intentional and effective prompt design. Led by Brianna Kerth, Instructional Designer at EDSI, this session introduces the C.L.A.P³ Method — a practical, six-step framework pioneered by EDSI to help users craft clear, targeted prompts that yield high-quality outputs. Participants will explore real-world use cases such as creating job readiness materials, drafting outreach communications, and customizing training content. Through live demonstrations and hands-on collaboration, attendees will gain the confidence and skills to use AI to streamline tasks, enhance program delivery, and support jobseekers in building relevant, tech-driven skills for today's workforce.*
- **Small Bytes, Big Impact: Microlearning for Youth Workforce Success:** Brianna Kerth, EDSI
 - *Small Bytes, Big Impact: Microlearning for Youth Workforce Success introduces workforce development professionals to the power of microlearning — short, focused learning experiences designed to boost engagement and skill-building among young adults. This session explores how microlearning can address common barriers in youth programming, such as inconsistent attendance, digital fatigue, and limited attention spans, while still delivering meaningful, job-ready content. Participants will explore real-world examples,*

design their own microlearning activities, and walk away with practical strategies to integrate bite-sized learning into their existing programs — proving that even small lessons can lead to big outcomes.

- **Letting Go of Limiting Zones: A Pathway to Personal and Professional Breakthroughs:** Tirza Barnes, Tirza Motivates, LLC
 - *As workforce development professionals, your mission is to help others break through obstacles and achieve their goals. This workshop flips the focus: What might be holding you back from serving at your absolute best? "Letting Go of Limiting" is an interactive experience designed for professionals to identify and begin to address the often-unseen internal barriers that can affect effectiveness and well-being. Through guided exploration and practical strategies introduced in this workshop, participants will gain tools to recognize and begin transcending five key "limiting zones," fostering greater resilience, clarity, and impact in their work.*
- **The Solution-Focused Leader: Inspiring Teams to Overcome Obstacles and Thrive:** Tirza Barnes, Tirza Motivates, LLC
 - *As a nonprofit leader in workforce development, your team's ability to navigate challenges and achieve meaningful impact is paramount. This interactive workshop delves into the core principles of Solution-Focused Leadership, offering practical strategies to inspire and empower your team members to become proactive problem-solvers and achieve greater outcomes for the individuals and communities you serve. This session moves beyond simply identifying problems to cultivating a mindset that focuses on leveraging existing strengths, fostering collaboration, and generating effective solutions. You will learn how to shift your leadership approach to unlock your team's potential, build resilience in the face of adversity, and ultimately drive greater success in your workforce development initiatives. You'll discover actionable techniques to cultivate a culture of innovation, identify what's already working well, and collectively achieve more significant and sustainable results.*
- **Silver Tsunami hitting Assisted Living and Senior Living Communities:** Ashante Abubakar, Argentum, and Dan Passarella
 - *Our session is intended to create a forum for discussion focused on the "very present challenge" and "fast approaching workforce Silver Tsunami" threatening our seniors across the nation, specifically in New Jersey. We have observed a significant "GAP" in Senior Living Community use and awareness of public workforce resources. We will use this arena as an opportunity for Workforce SUPPLY side to understand the various career opportunities within assisted living and the DEMAND Side to better understand the available employment supports within government and educational entities not widely known to agencies and employers. This will be an excellent opportunity for an informational discussion where we all come together to share experiences and to discuss opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources. The future of the healthcare workforce starts now through our collaborative efforts, conversations, and commitment to ensuring New Jersey is prepared and ready to take on the opportunities that come with providing the best quality of life for seniors. This conversation will help set the foundation for additional collaborations and programs to best support workforce development for New Jersey's assisted living industry while collaborating to identify highly qualified employees.*
- **Supporting the Homefront: Workforce Solutions for Military Families:** Melanie Moffett, Equus Workforce Solutions/Monmouth One-Stop
 - *Military families are one of the most resilient, adaptable, and mission-driven communities in our nation — and yet, they remain underserved in workforce development programs. This presentation will offer a roadmap for how Local Workforce Boards, Department of Labor officials, and community leaders can deliver workforce solutions that genuinely meet the needs of veterans and their spouses.*

Melanie Moffett, drawing on her experience as a veteran military spouse, and workforce development leader, will discuss proven strategies to ensure military families are not just recognized but prioritized in workforce policy and practice.

- **Impact of AI in Workforce Development:** Ren Parikh, Ideal Institute of Technology
 - *As artificial intelligence rapidly transforms industries, workforce development must evolve to keep pace. In this thought-provoking session, Ren Parikh shares real-world insights from Ideal Institute of Technology's pioneering career education model, where students earn while they learn through work-based learning and social enterprises. Discover how AI is reshaping skills training, career pathways, and employment ecosystems — especially for underserved populations — and explore actionable strategies to integrate AI-driven tools, personalized learning, and ethical innovation into the future of workforce development.*
- **Utilizing Assistive Technology to Promote Inclusive Employment:** Mike Marotta, Assistive Technology Advocacy Center
 - *This learning experience will focus on how to utilize the Principles of Universal Design to promote an inclusive employment environment. Real world Assistive Technology examples will be shared to highlight ways to create a more inclusive workplace environment for individuals with disabilities. These workplace accommodation solutions will be no-tech, low-tech and high-tech and across all areas of disability. Learn how AT can be utilized to ensure success for any employee.*
- **Career Counseling for Trauma-Affected Youth:** Ophelia Strickland, A&L Solutions LLC
 - *Youth impacted by trauma often face complex barriers that can hinder their ability to secure and sustain employment or complete training programs. In workforce development, it is crucial that practitioners are equipped not only with empathy, but with specialized tools and trauma-informed strategies to guide these youth towards career success. This session will equip attendees with creative job placement strategies, practical career counseling approaches, and effective case management techniques. Participants will also explore best practices in career development tailored to meet the unique needs of trauma-affected youth. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of how trauma manifests in youth behavior and participation, as well as actionable techniques to support and empower them through career development journeys. Through a blend of discussion, real-world examples, and hands-on tools, attendees will be introduced to a trauma-informed approach that is practical and empowering.*
- **Youth Development & Engagement -Understanding the Youth Audience:** Ophelia Strickland, A&L Solutions LLC
 - *Workforce development professionals working with youth face unique challenges in recruitment, engagement, and retention. This interactive session offers practical, youth-centered strategies to strengthen recruitment, engagement, and retention within workforce development programs. Attendees will explore innovative approaches to attract and sustain youth participation, with an emphasis on culturally responsive practices, engagement strategies, and trust-building techniques. By exploring real-world examples, group discussions, and hands-on activities, participants will leave with actionable strategies they can implement immediately.*
- **Coaching Introverted Clients to Network with Confidence in a Post-COVID World:** Ophelia Strickland, A&L Solutions LLC
 - *As workforce development professionals continue to assist their clients with navigating a post-COVID job market, there is an ongoing challenge in helping them re-engage with professional opportunities. Among those most impacted are introverted job seekers — individuals who often feel overlooked in traditional networking environments and may experience heightened anxiety or reluctance due to the shift toward in-person interactions. This interactive session highlights tools and strategies to support introverted clients who may struggle with self-promotion and networking. Attendees will explore the unique challenges introverts face, learn coaching techniques to*

build their confidence, and discover how to guide them in building authentic professional relationships in-person and online. Through guided discussions, role play, and scenario-based learning, attendees will develop personalized coaching techniques that empower introverted clients to approach networking with confidence, authenticity, and intention.

- **Don't Just Float - Swim Forward: Leading with Purpose During Workforce Shifts:** Marvina Robinson, B. Stuyvesant Champagne
 - *In the constantly evolving landscape of workforce development, leadership must do more than maintain course; it must be bold, intentional and visionary. As a former Wall Street executive turned founder of a luxury champagne brand, Marvina S. Robinson understands what it takes to lead during disruption, challenge conventional norms and build something extraordinary from the ground up. This session dives into the mindset and strategies that helped her navigate a male-dominated industry, overcome regulatory hurdles and scale a global brand rooted in authenticity, innovation and resilience. Attendees will walk away with insights on how to apply entrepreneurial leadership, build transformational partnerships and implement innovative tools that include technology, storytelling and brand-driven culture to stay future-ready in workforce spaces. Whether you're managing career pathways, building community partnerships or guiding teams through transition, this talk will inspire you to lead with purpose, stay agile and swim toward your next big opportunity, not just stay afloat.*
- **Reaching New Heights: Creative Outreach Strategies for Workforce Programs:** Christopher Gibbs, EDSI
 - *This interactive workshop aims to deepen community connections and expand equitable access to workforce development opportunities. Designed for community partners, workforce professionals, and outreach specialists, the session will highlight best practices in community engagement, outline the scope of services offered through New Jersey's official workforce development system, and share effective models for building awareness of job readiness, employment support, and training programs. Participants will explore how strategic outreach efforts, collaborative partnerships, and event-based engagement (e.g., hiring fairs, neighborhood pop-ups, and resource tables) drive community empowerment. Real-world examples will illustrate how to align services with neighborhood needs, reduce access barriers, and foster trust with underserved populations.*
- **Microlearning in Workforce Development: Transforming Professional Training for Lasting Impact:** Christopher Gibbs, EDSI
 - *Discover how microlearning revolutionizes workforce development by delivering concise, targeted lessons that enhance knowledge retention, skill-building, and professional growth. This session explores the science behind microlearning, best practices for implementation, and real-world applications for workforce professionals, job seekers, and organizational leaders. Learn how to design accessible, effective microlearning strategies that drive engagement, improve job readiness, and align with evolving industry needs. Empower your workforce with agile, efficient training solutions tailored for today's fast-paced environment.*
- **Beyond Burnout: Designing Healing-Centered Systems that Don't Harm:** Kim Glenn, EDSI
 - *Stress is inevitable—but harm is not. This interactive workshop introduces the Healing-Centered Restorative Engagement (HCRE) framework as a strengths-based, social model for well-being in the workplace. Participants will explore how vicarious trauma and burnout show up in workforce development systems and how traditional, individually focused responses fall short. Through guided discussions and practical tools, attendees will learn how to co-create systems that support restoration rather than depletion — and walk away with a personal well-being plan to sustain themselves and their teams.*

- **Customer First by Design: A Hands-On Introduction to Journey Mapping:** Kim Glenn, EDSI
 - *In today's WIOA-funded workforce system, equitable service delivery requires more than good intentions — it demands intentional design. This highly interactive workshop introduces workforce leaders and board professionals to the practice of Participant Journey Mapping, a visual and data-informed process to reimagine services from the participant's perspective. Participants will explore foundational concepts, walk through EDSI's six-step approach to journey mapping, and engage in hands-on activities using real-world templates and tools. Whether your goal is to reduce systemic barriers or improve performance outcomes, this session will help you see your system with new eyes and leave prepared to begin a journey mapping initiative in your own program or region.*
- **Customer First in Practice: Journey Mapping Results, Roadblocks, and Reflections:** Kim Glenn, EDSI
 - *What happens after the map is drawn? In this informative and thought-provoking session, workforce leaders will explore real-world case studies of how journey mapping has impacted workforce systems across states — including early work conducted in New Jersey. Through examples from Missouri, Illinois, and New Jersey, attendees will see how mapping participant experiences has led to meaningful changes, improved performance, and deeper engagement with underserved communities. The session will also reflect on New Jersey's earlier journey mapping efforts: what changed, what didn't, and what got in the way. This is an opportunity to revisit and reinvigorate your board's commitment to customer-first design.*
- **Real Voices, Real Results: How 3 NJ Counties Use Texting and Apps to Stay Connected:** Dave Asheim, Engage By Cell; Ebony Williams, Middlesex County WDB; Melanie Moffett, Monmouth One Stop Operator, Paul Grzella, Director Greater Raritan WDB
 - *How can workforce boards deliver faster service, reach more job seekers, and simplify access to training and events — without adding more work for staff? In this panel session, workforce leaders from Middlesex, Monmouth, and Greater Raritan (Hunterdon and Somerset Counties) will share how they're using mobile communication tools like text messaging and web apps to improve access, increase participation, and streamline outreach. Join these workforce development practitioners for a candid conversation about how their teams introduced new tools, gained internal buy-in, and delivered measurable results.*
- **Disrupt Aging in Your Community: A New Narrative on Aging:** Curtis Springstead, AARP
 - *This dynamic, interactive session was developed by AARP to challenge outdated beliefs about aging and to promote a more inclusive, empowering narrative. It is a dynamic program designed to challenge common perceptions of aging and highlight the personal relevance of our society's growing aging population. Rooted in the principles of equity, inclusion, and lifelong potential, this presentation invites participants to rethink what it means to grow older today. It is designed to inspire individuals and communities to embrace aging as a time of growth, purpose, and opportunity.*
- **Inclusive Hiring, Minimal Risk – Big Reward!:** Meghan Lynn, Arc of Camden & Jeanne Page-Soncrant, NJDOL
 - *Inclusive hiring is so much more than just the right thing to do these days. This presentation is aimed at promoting inclusive hiring practices and the reasons why this should be an organization's strategic initiative — because it makes smart business sense! The breakout session will challenge workplace myths, discuss the positive financial impact of inclusivity, and showcase how partnering with community-based employment services is imperative to an organization's overall business success and long-term plans. Research indicates that businesses practicing disability inclusion experience higher revenue and improved workplace safety and cohesion. Additionally, financial incentives such as the On-the-Job Training programs, grant-funded internships, and customized training grants*

provide resources and funds for hiring. State and federal programs and services are available to all employers yet are often overlooked. This presentation will show how to access these SIPS (services, incentives and programs) and collaborate with the Department of Labor and other supportive employment agencies.

- **Unlocking Gen Z+ Potential: Future-Proofing Your Workforce for Innovation & Growth:** Luke Goetling, LTG Strategy
 - *The Future of Work will be led by Gen Z+ — it's time for New Jersey's workforce development system to get ready! Discover data-driven insights and actionable strategies to attract, engage, and retain this critical talent pool while maximizing their impact on workforce development programs and career outcomes. Go beyond the headlines: Move past "Quiet Quitting" and "Great Resignation" narratives that dominate workforce discussions. This session delves into the unique values, motivations, and workstyles driving Gen Z+ job seekers and how workforce development professionals can leverage these insights to improve program effectiveness and client success rates.*
- **The Transformation From Manager to Leader:** Michael McBride, The WINGS Project
 - *This session will discuss the dilemma that many find themselves in once they have ascended to a position of leadership — how to move beyond managing and develop into an effective leader. This session is designed to embolden current and future leaders with strategies and techniques that will assist them in implementing these practical growth points in their daily professional careers.*
- **Coping in the Workplace:** Katie McGowan, Career Connection Employment Resource Institute, & Whitney Hendrickson, MHANJ
 - *The "Coping in the Workplace" presentation provides professionals with an overview of effective strategies to manage stress in work environments. It will explore four types of coping mechanisms: problem-focused, emotion-focused, meaning-focused, and social coping. These approaches support stress management through problem-solving, emotional regulation, meaning making, and connection with others. The presentation also highlights current research on common workplace stressors and emphasizes the real impact of stress on productivity, attendance and overall mental health. To promote healthier coping at work, the session offers practical tools, resources, and strategies for building resilience. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own coping styles and identify actionable steps they can take to strengthen their ability to manage stress in professional settings.*
- **SNAP Impact--How Recent Federal Changes Impact Your Work:** Alecia Eubanks, Melissa Moody and Michelle Lowe, NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development
 - *The first few months of the new federal administration has brought about many changes to federal programs. Of significance are the changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the work requirements for recipients of the program. There has been discussion surrounding Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirements, ABAWD waivers, general SNAP work requirements, as well as overall SNAP eligibility. Such changes can make it difficult to decipher between fact and fiction, truth and myths. This presentation will dive deep into these federal updates and discuss how the changes to the work requirements will impact our work and our clients. It will also discuss potential Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) updates under the TANF Reauthorization Bill and the impact for Work First New Jersey TANF recipients.*
- **Leading with Hope and Vision in the New Ab-normal:** Richard Maher, Adaptive Human Capital, LLC
 - *When change feels overwhelming, fear and uncertainty can lead to worker disengagement or even turnover. In today's "New Ab-Normal," leaders must navigate challenges like the pandemic's aftermath, global crises, and political divides. How do leaders overcome fear and uncertainty? This interactive workshop explores the neuroscience of change to understand workforce responses like "quiet*

quitting.” Today’s leader must become a dealer of hope and support the workforce to keep up when “The New Ab-Normal” may be generating fear and uncertainty. This interactive workshop will help leaders understand workforce responses to uncertainty and disruption while providing actionable tools and techniques to engage and energize workers. We’ll explore the power of vision and how to help maintain and build an agile, innovation-focused workplace culture through difficult times.

- **Sounds of Tomorrow (Digital World of Success):** Dwayne Seaton, Fatimah Littlejohn, and Benajmin Guy, Sounds of Tomorrow
 - *Welcome to Sounds of Tomorrow, where limitless creativity meets personal growth! This vibrant community is committed to igniting artistic expression and nurturing individual development. With a diverse array of workshops in Artist Development, Film, Podcasting, Web Development, Photography, and more, Sounds of Tomorrow empowers people of all ages to explore their talents, unleash their potential, and shape a brighter tomorrow through the transformative force of the arts.*
- **AI vs. Managers: Navigating Gen Z’s New Workplace Expectations and Trust Dynamics:** Angela Hooper-Menifield, Menifield & Associate, LLC
 - *As Gen Z enters the workforce, many are turning to AI-driven tools for feedback and career guidance — often bypassing managers and career professionals. This session explores what this shift means for workforce leaders and how to adapt leadership styles to remain relevant, trusted, and effective. Learn how to integrate AI as a support tool, rebuild generational trust, and develop strategies to engage and retain Gen Z staff and clients without losing the human connection that drives long-term impact.*
- **How to Have the RITE Conversation™: Mastering Difficult Discussions in Workforce Leadership:** Angela Hooper-Menifield, Menifield & Associate, LLC
 - *In high-stakes workforce environments, difficult conversations are unavoidable — but they don’t have to be damaging. This session introduces the RITE Method™, a leadership communication framework designed to help managers and team leaders navigate tough conversations with clarity, empathy, and impact. Whether you’re addressing performance issues, mediating conflict, or giving critical feedback, the RITE Method™ equips leaders with tools to handle it all professionally and productively. Walk away with a repeatable, teachable strategy to improve relationships, boost morale, and lead through tension with confidence.*
- **Charting a Course for Success: Ways to Engage and Empower Youth:** Christina Peng and Kerry Twomey, Metrix Learning, Paul Grzella, Director Greater Raritan WDB, and Cynthia Torres, Atlantic County WDB,
 - *This panel discussion will focus on how the Atlantic County WDB and Greater Raritan WDB (Hunterdon and Somerset Counties) have partnered with Metrix Learning for training within their Summer Work Experience programs.*
- **Mindfulness for Workforce Professionals: Tools to Build Resilience, Presence & Performance:** Jean Trujillo, Jean Trujillo Consulting LLC
 - *This experiential workshop introduces mindfulness practices that reduce burnout and improve decision-making. This is tailored for employment counselors, trainers, and workforce development leaders.*
- **Coaching Skills for Frontline Workforce Staff: Empowering Conversations that Inspire Client Action:** Jean Trujillo, Jean Trujillo Consulting LLC
 - *This hands-on workshop shares essential coaching skills such as active listening, reflective inquiry, mindset shift, and reframing, for frontline staff to practice supporting client motivation, clarity, and accountability.*

- **The Power of Purpose-Driven Partnerships:** David Shinder, and L. Bradley Williams
 - *Could we be looking at collaboration through the wrong lens? Beyond mere collaborative actions, opportunities exist to work across programs, organizations, and systems, where collaboration is purpose-driven and outcome-based. The motives driving collaboration affect not just the quality of your partnerships, but their results. What makes collaboration essential to the success of workforce programs and how can stakeholders devise strategies to achieve greater efficiencies and more meaningful results through strategic alliances? Models from the private sector, philanthropy, academia, public service, community action, and other disciplines suggest that a shared purpose is the jet fuel of collaboration. In search of more perfect partnerships? Join us as we explore unique models, innovative approaches, and proven strategies and put workforce system collaboration under the microscope.*
- **RISE to the Challenge: Building High-Impact Workforce Development Boards:** Kendra Lee, NJDOL & Patricia Robertson, NJDOL
 - *We will delve into the strategies and practices that define high-performing boards. Participants will gain insights into key metrics for success and learn from examples of boards that exemplify excellence. Our focus will be on enhancing service integration, fostering strategic partnerships, and boosting overall performance to elevate workforce development efforts.*
- **One System, Many Voices: How do we build a workforce system that is truly responsive to industry needs?:** Howard Miller, NJDOL
 - *This session explores how NJDOL industry-driven partnerships are anchored in business engagement and sector strategies initiatives that help align state and local workforce development efforts to create a cohesive, efficient and outcome-driven workforce system. Participants will examine how collaboration works across different regional partners while centering the conversation around the needs of industry. The workshop will highlight practical approaches to unify workforce development efforts, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of employers while connecting career-pathway opportunities with the job seekers.*
- **RISE Together: Cultivating a Resilient Workforce for Tomorrow:** Kendra Lee, NJDOL, Kathleen Heil, NJDOL, Justin Minor, NJDOL, Roe Falcone, NJDOL
 - *Learn about best practices to invest Work Experience funds including recruitment of youth, partner engagement, and program design. This workshop will also feature information on how to connect youth with Minor Working Papers for employment after Work Experience.*
- **The Fiscal Force Awakens: Fiscal Monitoring and Grant Reporting:** Theresa Valley, NJDOL, Luz Dow, NJDOL, James Reed, NJDOL, Emily Watts, NJDOL, Sally Pezzino, NJDOL, & Nalini Ammanamanchi, NJDOL
 - *This presentation focuses on topics built around the auditing and monitoring process: monthly reporting and drawdowns; the onboarding process; understanding the importance of fiscal monitoring in workforce programs; guidance on how fiscal monitoring, internal controls, and audits support integrity and sustainability; and best practices and methods to ensure financial compliance and efficiency.*
- **RISE in Data: Transforming Labor Market Statistics into Actionable Strategies:** Dr. Nicol Nicola, NJDOL, John Ehret, NJDOL, JoAnne Caramelo, NJDOL
 - *This session offers an inside look at the Labor Market Information (LMI) Unit and its vital role in transforming data into actionable insights. Over the course of 30 minutes, presenters will explore how the team collects, analyzes, and delivers labor market data to inform workforce, education, and economic development decisions. Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of the tools and strategies being discussed support evidence-based planning. The presentation will be followed by a discussion and a 10-minute Q&A to address questions and explore how LMI can support local work and planning.*

- **RISE to Excellence: Strengthening Workforce Outcomes through Local SAM Innovations:** Sheryl Hutchinson, NJDOL & Dr. Yifan Wang,
 - *This presentation will engage local workforce board and program staff, to familiarize them with the WIOA Title I performance targets development process, and how targets are negotiated at the state and local levels. The presentation will include information and the development of the local statistical adjustment model (SAM), and its use for performance target negotiations and post-program year assessment. The discussion will highlight 1) how the Local SAM is used to account for the expected economic conditions and the expected characteristics of participants to be served in the local areas, and 2) how the Local SAM is applied at the close of a program year to adjust for actual economic conditions experienced and actual characteristics of participants.*
- **RISE to Success: Empowering Justice-Impacted Individuals Through the JOBS Program:** Briana Menjivar, NJDOL, Judge Mark Sandson, NJ Courts, Jaclyn Tortoriello, NJ Courts, Maurice Hart, NJ Courts.
 - *This presentation will highlight the Job Opportunities for Building Success (JOBS) program — an initiative aimed at equipping justice impacted individuals with the support necessary to achieve self-sustaining employment. In partnership with the Judiciary, the program is designed to assist probation clients in attaining long-term employment outcomes and reducing recidivism. The presentation will focus on how the JOBS program delivers support through one-on-one career services, supportive services, training, and hands-on work experience such as internships.*
- **Maximizing the Funding and Opportunities of Local Workforce Development Boards:** Walter Simmons, Employ Prince Edward's Inc.
 - *This workshop will help attendees understand the structure of America's Publicly Funded Workforce Development System and where its billions of dollars are allocated. It will simplify and explain local workforce development boards and local workforce systems, and plainly identify the opportunities, traditional and non-traditional roles for post-secondary entities. Attendees are encouraged to bring their ideas, questions, and concerns regarding WIOA and Local Workforce Development Boards for the speaker to discuss and provide feedback from the perspective of a current Executive Director of a Local Workforce Development Board.*
- **Build It, Braid It, Sustain It: Utilizing a braided funding model to operate workforce development programs and systems:** Walter Simmons, Employ Prince Edward's Inc.
 - *Let's get creative! We all know that workforce development programs can suffer from the ebbs and flows of federal funding formulas, eligibility criteria, and document collection. This workshop explores how Employ Prince George's and the Prince George's County Workforce Development Board have cultivated more than 20 different funding sources, utilized a braided funding model, and created a comprehensive system of partners, programs, and services that far exceed traditional workforce development norms. This system includes nontraditional partnerships, wraparound services and support for job seekers, and programs that wouldn't be affordable or conceivable if traditional federal funding were the only source of financial support. Attendees will learn strategies to develop program models, explore new partnerships and funding sources, understand braided funding, and how to leverage federal, state, local, foundation, and private sector funding.*
- **The WHY, WHAT, and HOW of Innovative & Nontraditional Workforce Development Boards:** Walter Simmons, Employ Prince Edward's Inc.
 - *Evolving technology, demographic and industry changes, a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, or a drastic downsizing of the federal government can change the needs of a local area. Constant change can lead to local workforce boards consistently having to redirect efforts and experience extreme levels of system, staff, and board fatigue. How do workforce board leaders maintain success and manage to overcome these challenges calmly? Join this engaging discussion about local workforce areas and directors that have created innovative and non-traditional workforce development boards to consistently stay ahead of the curb and meet the needs of their communities.*

- **Building a Highly Skilled Workforce with Non-Traditional Apprenticeships:** Andrew Carpe, Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, Diana Adel
 - *The Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL) is a Department of Energy National Laboratory that performs essential research across a full range of applications, whether it's developing fusion as a clean, safe and virtually limitless power source or creating the next generation of materials for microelectronics and quantum sensors and devices, using plasma, the 4th state of matter. PPPL has developed an apprentice program that addresses the need to train and retain a highly skilled workforce that is critical to help support PPPL's mission.*
- **From Seed to Skills: Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today – Talent, Training and Transformation:** Penni Wild, NJ Department of State, New Jersey Business Action Center, Tauhid Chappell, Wesley McWhite, Genevieve Jones, Hugh Giordano
 - *This lively 60-minute panel discussion with cannabis experts from the state-sponsored NJ Cannabis Training Academy (NJCTA), the NJ Economic Development Authority, which recently launched a new \$5 million grant program for eligible recreational cannabis entrepreneurs, the NJ Cannabis Regulatory Commission's Office of Equity and Inclusion and the United Food & Commercial Workers, as well as an owner of a dispensary who is also an NJCTA instructor, will focus on the evolving workforce demands in New Jersey's growing adult use cannabis market. The panel is moderated by Penni Wild, the state's Business Action Center's Deputy Executive Director. After brief remarks and updates from each speaker about the work being done to cultivate talent, training and transformation in this industry, the panel will open for questions and answers to provide practical takeaways for attendees.*
- **Sankofa Builders Apprenticeship Programming USDOL and Green Energy:** Jerry Fosu, Christopher Williams, Benajamin Guy, Sankofa Builders
 - *Bridging the partnership through modern design; Benefits Of Registered Apprenticeship Programs; Earn While You Learn, Work full-time for a full-time salary and take classes, Create a path toward a remarkable lifelong career, Develop skills in hands-on, real-life situations, Become a federally-recognized Journey worker, Learn skills that are transferrable and last a lifetime, Enter into a career where skilled craft labor is in high demand all across our country*
- **Enforcing the Whys, Hows, and Whats: Driving Realistic Outcomes Through the Youth Individual Service Strategy (ISS):** Jahshae Stewart and Asad Faison, New Jersey Youth Corp, New Jersey City University
 - *This presentation explores how generational shifts in motivation, responsibility, and purpose are reshaping how today's youth are guided through the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). By contrasting the driven, purpose-seeking mindset of past generations — who often viewed college and work as earned opportunities — with the current generation's increased access yet decreased sense of urgency, presenters highlight the need to realign ISS with the “why,” “how,” and “what” that truly resonate with young people today. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies for crafting ISS plans that foster accountability, relevance, and long-term outcomes in college and career pathways.*
- **Strengthening Workforce Pipelines Through the Lens of Industry-Led Partnerships:** Taylor Scicchitano, COIM, Inc, Steve Tice, and Georgia Smith
 - *Featuring the Manufacturing Alliance of South Jersey (MASJ) as a case study, this session will highlight how manufacturers across the region have united around shared goals — forming action teams focused on building talent pipelines, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and elevating the voice of manufacturers in regional policy discussions. These employer-led partnerships are convened by the Industry Partnership Team's project managers and work together with local workforce systems, educational institutions, and community-based organizations to co-design solutions that directly address skill gaps, short- and long-term hiring needs, training, and retention challenges.*