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## **I. Overview of Feedback/High-level Takeaways**

Several key topic areas emerged from the Competitive Task Force discussion on fostering the TNJ region's economic competitiveness, as listed below. Task Force members agreed that pursuing effective solutions would require forging and strengthening partnerships and enhancing understanding and awareness of these issues.

- **Effective public transportation system.** The region must enhance access to employment opportunities and goods and services by addressing gaps in public transportation. We should make use of available technology to augment the existing fixed public transit system.
- **Well trained workforce.** For this to happen, we need to involve community colleges and vocational/technical colleges in the TNJ competitive task force.
- **Strong understanding of the regional job market.** Including New York and Pennsylvania in our analysis and getting a better handle on wages by business sector is important to fully understanding our region's job market dynamics. We need to foster public and private partner relationships and bring the business community into the Competitive Task Force. Trade groups and our TMAs can facilitate these relationships.
- **Enhanced innovation and entrepreneurship.** New Jersey needs to do a better job of marketing our innovation and competitiveness. We need to provide technical assistance and capacity building through symposiums, videos, marketing materials and grant writing.
- **Efficient freight movement.** We need to engage our local communities in freight location decisions and guidance through a targeted freight/trucking handbook. Communities need to understand what goes into the operation of a freight-related business; having more information at hand will help local officials effectively inform the public and will make communities more attractive to businesses making location decisions.

## **II. Summary of Discussion by Focus Area**

### **FOCUS AREA 1: CREATE AND RETAIN WELL-PAYING JOBS BY SUPPORTING GROWTH IN OUR REGION'S KEY INDUSTRIES**

- Support partnerships with WIBs, Talent Networks, Community Colleges and Vocational/Technical Schools.
- Support a feeder system between colleges and employers.
- Support a database of job opportunities by business sector and salary information.

### **FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCE NORTH JERSEY'S INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM**

- Create a symposium on innovation and entrepreneurship.

- Create a marketing campaign to target audiences about the strengths of North Jersey's workforce and other aspects of our strength as a region.

**FOCUS AREA 3: STRENGTHEN THE REGION'S ECONOMY BY BUILDING ON EXISTING ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Develop a guidebook for communities on how to attract freight and trucking businesses and how to deal with potential issues of truck traffic.
- Invest in creating and maintaining world class infrastructure.
- Seek to align transportation investments to support economic vitality and private sector investment.
- Continue to work on the one-seat ride into New York City.

**FOCUS AREA 4: ALIGN WORKFORCE TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY NEEDS**

- Develop apprentice programs.
- Align K-12 curriculum development to workforce needs.
- Offer vocational training at the college level.

**III. Technical Assistance/Capacity Building Recommendations**

- Symposium on grant-writing
- Talent Network event
- Symposium on innovation and competitiveness

**IV. New Member Recruitment**

- Involve community colleges, vocational and technical schools, as well as four-year colleges in our Task Force.
- Involve The Council of NJ Grantmakers in our Task Force.
- Partner with local chambers of commerce.
- TMA's should play an important role in our Task Force and serve as a conduit to private businesses.

**V. Visibility and Awareness-Building Events**

- Create a symposium on innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Connect with trade groups to help bring private business to the table.
- Create a marketing campaign to emphasize our competitiveness and innovation.