



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 27, 2021

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Governor Murphy Announces Return and Earn Incentive Program

NJDOL to provide \$500 to new hires, cover 50% of wages during training as economy recovers from Covid-19 pandemic

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today announced that the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) will begin implementation of the Return and Earn program. This new initiative will provide a \$500 incentive for unemployed workers reentering the workforce and receiving job training from businesses with 100 or fewer employees.

“Throughout this pandemic, I have heard much about the issues facing small businesses and the dedicated, hard-working men and women who enable their success,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Our Administration is committed to assist businesses in hiring workers, while providing benefits to those entering and re-entering the workforce that will set them up for success in their new jobs and their future careers. This program will help both businesses and their workers, and is yet another step that we have taken to boost our economy.”

“The Murphy Administration is committed to doing everything we can to help our workers and businesses overcome the labor challenges of the economic recovery,” **said Department of Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. “The Return and Earn program will assist New Jerseyans in returning to the workforce, and provide employers with the resources they need to fill the vital positions that will allow them to grow and thrive. The pandemic may have put our workers through the ringer, but this Administration is prepared with the tools to get every Garden State worker back on track and earning a steady income.”

Facilitated by NJDOL's Business Support Unit, Return and Earn will take advantage of New Jersey's existing On-the-Job Training infrastructure to provide wage reimbursement support to New Jersey employers that hire eligible applicants with identifiable skills gaps. Employers will then be reimbursed for 50% of the wages paid for regular hours worked during the contracted employer-provided training period.

Employers can receive the wage subsidy for up to 6 months, up to the cap of \$10,000 per Return and Earn employee and are limited to a total Return and Earn subsidy across all employees of \$40,000.

NJDOL is currently working on the execution of this program, including developing a streamlined online application process. The general process and eligibility criteria are as follows:

- NJDOL will work with employers to identify prospective candidates for available positions.
- The employer will provide substantive On-the-Job Training at their location or, depending on circumstances, utilize approved virtual training, that result in skill badges or industry-recognized credentials.
- Eligible applicants are private and not-for-profit employers with up to 100 full-time employees.
- Candidates must be New Jersey residents working full-time (minimum 32 hours per week).
- Seasonal, part-time, commission-based, or 1099 positions are not eligible.

Additionally, many workers will be eligible for supportive services like childcare and transportation reimbursement, which have been barriers for many re-entering the workforce.

More information will be issued by NJDOL in the coming days. Employers can visit [NJ.gov/labor/returnandearn](https://nj.gov/labor/returnandearn) to express interest in this program and receive application information as it becomes available.

The Return and Earn program is being executed in collaboration with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Office of Innovation, and is part of the Murphy Administration's whole-of-government approach to support to the business community and its workers.

"Our small business community has been hit hard over the last 18 months, and now, as things begin to return to normal, worker shortages are threatening their ability to meet the newfound demand," **said Senator Cruz-Perez, Chair of the Senator Economic Growth Committee.** "This new program will benefit both small businesses in need of new employees and workers looking to return to the workforce in a higher-skill position. Providing wage replacements will remove the burden of training new employees while also developing our state's talent pool at a time we need it most."

"The pandemic has changed the workplace as we knew it and more must be done to reinforce New Jersey's workforce now. Ensuring that small businesses have the employees they need with the proper training necessary is vital to our economic recovery," **said Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly.** "Programs such as the Return and Earn program are key to addressing current staff shortages and preparing workers for a successful transition back into employment. We're supporting New Jersey small businesses and families through these opportunities."

“In recent months, more employment opportunities have opened up at small businesses throughout our state, yet many employers are struggling to find workers to fill positions,” **said Assemblyman Raj Mukherji**. “Incentivizing and enabling unemployed residents to reenter the workforce while providing small businesses with the resources they need to attract, train, and retain employees will help the families and businesses at the heart of our communities. This program will play an important role in New Jersey’s road to economic recovery from the global pandemic.”

"The New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce supports Governor Phil Murphy’s “Return and Earn” program," **said Tom Bracken, President and CEO of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce**. "The NJ Chamber is gratified that the Governor has responded to our requests that more American Rescue Plan dollars be invested in the state’s business community to help accelerate our economic recovery. The “Return and Earn” program not only provides financial incentives for workers to return to the workforce, it provide crucial skills training that can result in longer-term employment and more opportunity for these workers. The NJ Chamber continues to believe that additional investment of American Rescue Plan dollars in business-focused programs like these will generate a more robust and sustainable economic recovery in New Jersey."

"The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey supports the return and learn incentive announced by Gov. Murphy today," **said John E. Harmon, Sr., President and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey**. "It's a good use of funds to help address the labor shortage that has adversely impacted our small businesses during the pandemic while providing training to individuals whose skill sets need retooling. The program is a win-win for both employers and employees and will improve the overall competitiveness of our state."

"The Return and Earn program represents the beginning of an opportunity to provide job training while helping employers incentivize workers to come back to the workplace," **said Michele Siekerka, President & CEO of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA)**. This program is a good start to address the workforce challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and we look forward to working toward continued holistic approaches to further address the future of work in New Jersey."

“Return and Earn will go a long way in solving a critical need for employers to stock their talent pipeline and, at the same time, supporting the critical upskilling needs of our employees,” **said John Sarno, President of the Employers Association of New Jersey**.

This \$500 Return and Earn incentive and On-the-Job Training subsidy will be funded by \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Additional related supportive services will be funded by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds.

New Jersey job seekers can visit [CareerServices.nj.gov](https://www.careerservices.nj.gov) for help finding gainful employment opportunities. NJDOL offers a wide variety of programs including job search help, résumé and interview guidance, networking advice, education and training, one-on-one support, and services tailored specifically to veterans,

mature workers, youth workers, individuals in recovery, justice-involved individuals, and people with disabilities. These services are available telephonically, online, and via smartphone.

Also available to all New Jersey residents are free online training courses through [Metrix Learning](#). Courses are offered in a variety of high-demand industry sectors, including information technology, business analysis, customer service, project management, and digital literacy. Courses range from basic work readiness for new workers to tailored training for high-level professionals and management, with topics such as Customer Service, Microsoft Office, Adobe, Quick Books, Analytical Skills, Data Management/Reporting, Time Management, Leadership Skills, Health & Safety, and First Aid, among many others.