



**NEW ORLEANS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

NOWDB Full Board

Meeting Summary

March 13, 2024 | 11:00AM

Attendance

Members Present

Gregory Curtis
Claire Jecklin
Dottie Bellato
Rachel Mackey
Peter Pappas
Rodney Wallis
Connie Carlson
Thelma French
Floyd James
Mikal Anderson

Board Staff & Guests

Sunae Villavaso
Tammie Washington
Karmen McKinley
Neia Limar
Ada Kwanbunbumpen
Lori Boissiere
Leonard Zanders
Jason DeGruy

I. Call To Order

Board Chair Gregory Curtis called the meeting to order at 11:04AM

II. Roll Call

Neia Limar completed a roll call of NOWDB members that were present.

Board Members that attended the meeting virtually: Arlanda Williams / Missy Sparks

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III. Board Chair Updates

Please note for the record that NOWDB members or members of the public who are participating via Zoom can submit comments or questions on the chat box and the Board Chair will recognize all public comments at the appointed time of the meeting.



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/JOB1

March 13, 2024

Board Staff Updates/ Program Oversight Report

Office of Workforce Development (OWD) Director, Sunae Villavaso, provided staff updates and introduced new staff member, Neia Limar as Executive Assistant and Board Manager and advises of Karmen McKinley's promotion to the Director of Youth Initiatives. Director Villavaso also discussed the Community Action Agencies/Community Service Block Grant / Association of Community Action Partnerships meeting with Louisiana Secretary of Labor, Susana Schowen, in Lafayette, LA on February 6th and 7th. She also shared that the House of Representatives passed "A Stronger Workforce for America Act" (ASWA) which aligns with the plans and visions of Secretary Schowen has for workforce development.

Director Villavaso met with Jaime Cruz, her counterpart in Las Vegas and CEO of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce along with Davon Barbour and Gregory Curtis to discuss workforce initiatives they implemented leading up to the Super Bowl. However, their focus was geared towards small business. Villavaso talked about a beautification opportunity that would assist youth and adults to receive a FAA credential to fly drones that would be used to clean buildings 6-stories and above downtown.

Dottie Bellato asked if there would be the ability to track and assist youth participants with placement after the 2025 Super Bowl leaves the city. Director Villavaso remarked that the Downtown Developmental District (DDD) has funding for this type of work year-round and can likely be contracted to provide this work. The group discussed and shared their thoughts around this idea. Director Villavaso advised the group that the Mayor of East Orange, New Jersey will be visiting New Orleans May 21-23, 2024 where the drone training program is currently fully implemented. Mrs. Bellato offered to co-host a meet & greet between New Orleans Workforce Development and the guest from New Jersey.

Director Villavaso advised the group that a Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) was released related to \$7.4 million of the \$11 million ARPA funds received from Mayor Cantrell with the approval of the City Council to invest and create a skilled workforce using Workforce Development as a strategy. The NOFA selection committee reviewed the first round of proposals which included proposals from the Leonard Merriman Flight School in collaboration with Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP) and the New Orleans Chapter of the Tuskegee Airman to train youth to become pilots. Graduates from this program will earn their private license and we are working on a partnership with United Airlines for apprenticeships wherein these participants can work toward becoming a commercial air pilot. Another proposal for review is in partnership with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) program in the field of education to provide stipends for teachers in training. An additional proposal from the Corporate Internship Leadership Institute was discussed. Award letters are projected to be dispersed by Friday, March 15, 2024.

Greater New Orleans Inc. (GNO Inc.) will be the backbone organization around advanced manufacturing, Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) will be the backbone organization in the healthcare arena and will co-lead building green infrastructure with Thrive New Orleans, and Port of New Orleans will lead for transportation and logistics.



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/JOB1

March 13, 2024

Director Villavaso closed with sharing the outcomes from the State of Louisiana's monitoring visit of the Office of Workforce Development on February 19th and 20th of this year. A final summation is still pending however, positive feedback was provided during their visit regarding the innovative work that OWD is doing and the physical presentation of the center.

Board member Thelma French asked if the final recommendations for funding would need to go before City Council a second time. Director Villavaso advised that the proposals would not. Mrs. French also inquired when would be the targeted start date for the funded programs. Director Villavaso stated June/July 2024.

11:44am Director Villavaso exited the meeting to participate on a panel at Gallier Hall

Youth

Chair Jecklin opened by extending an invitation for new members to join the New Orleans Workforce Development Board Youth Committee (NOWDBYC) to encourage the diversity in representation. She reported on the positive progress of the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment. She shared that the 2024 goals for the NOWDBYC are: (1) to continue meeting young people through WIOA, (2) to continue progress monitoring, and (3) alumni initiatives by tracking outcomes long term. Chair Jecklin advised the group of the upcoming Job1 Youth Expo scheduled for April 10, 2024 and encouraged participation and support for this event. She added that the committee is seeking to distribute more information about WIOA and plans to invite a representative from the Citywide Youth Planning Board (CYPB) to the next NOWDBYC meeting on April 22, 2024 in addition to having Leonard Zanders from Job1 attend the next CYPB meeting on April 22, 2024 to share information about how WIOA enrollment works and how those funds help participants to receive training.

Chair Jecklin concluded her report with information regarding an RFP seeking an entity to build the EMS Core training program held at the Career Center which is a 5-month training program that prepares opportunity youth for jobs as EMTs and Paramedics.

Finance

Chair James discussed the expenditures through January 31, 2024. The overall expenditure rate for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs are at 44 % through January 2024 with 16% of the grant life remaining on the carryover and 66% grant life remaining on current allocation. These are consistent with past trends and show no drastic deviations from a year-over-year standpoint.

He closed his report by sharing that a transfer of funds request was submitted to the state to transfer \$581,168 (56.84%) of Dislocated Worker funds to the Adult program. This request was made due to the current realized demand for WIOA Adult services being higher in the local area than the demand for Dislocated Worker Services. This is believed to be due to the poverty rate in New Orleans being one of the highest poverty rates in the United States, which means that many individuals are struggling to meet their basic needs and may not have the resources to invest in job training or education.

Business Engagement

Chair Williams reported on the work the committee is doing with small businesses and the development of an assessment tool that would gather information about the needs of the businesses, the types of employees they are looking for, what services are they currently receiving from the City and what services are they looking to receive.



She shared the plan to disseminate more information via social media and other media outlets through Job1 to small businesses. She added the plans for small businesses to work in collaboration with adult and youth training programs with the intentions of providing participants with gainful and meaningful employment. She closed her report by noting the action item for the committee's next meeting is to determine what information will be collected on the aforementioned assessment tool.

Operator Report

Director Leonard Zanders opened his report by sharing that Job1 enrollment numbers are up. He shared that on January 31, 2024, Job1 hosted a training fair that yielded over 300 attendees of which 124 participants went through orientation for training and are being processed despite limited training funds however, the funds transfer mentioned by Finance Chair James will free up resources in Job1's adult programming. Regarding Business Solutions, the "Walk-In Wednesday" events have been fairly good. A career fair was held on February 20, 2024 with more than 30 employers. Job1 has also piloted Restoration Station program. Registration for the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program has begun. Year-round programming with the Young Adult Expo will continue and the next event is scheduled for April 10, 2024. The link to this event will be posted on the Job1 website. The Mardi Gras work program was successful, pay checks have been distributed and that program is presently closing out this month.

Initiatives to boost on-the-job has launched with the introduction of a "reverse" job fair. A pilot of this event was held in February wherein a handful of targeted job seekers were organized to meet potential employers who aligned with their career interests. The potential employers were recruited and positioned to meet each participant in a rotation circuit. This allowed for quick 5-minute meetings/mini-interviews with each job seeker directly connecting them to the maximum number of potential employers as possible. Potential employers are to follow up with eligible job seekers. Another such event is scheduled to be held at the end of March.

The center received funding for a re-entry program, RESTORE. The process of reaching out to individuals currently incarcerated has begun via referrals from Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) and from a visit to B. B. Rayburn Correctional Center. The intake process for participants is underway. This program is based on partner collaborations. There are currently 30 partners in place to participate and a number of MOUs have been received. Restoration Station events will take place every 3rd Wednesday where Job1 partners are onsite. Director Zanders concluded his report by announcing that the next installment of the Restoration Station initiative is scheduled for next Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

WIOA Program Manager, Tammie Washington announced that the State requires NOWDB to have at least 4 board meetings per calendar year however, if a quorum isn't met then the meeting does not count.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12PM



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/JOB1

March 13, 2024