



**NEW ORLEANS  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

DRAFT

NOWDB Full Board  
JOB1 Business and Career Solutions Center  
1307 Oretha Castle Haley – New Orleans, LA  
October 16, 2024 | 11:00AM  
Meeting Summary

**Attendance**

**Members Present**

Gregory Curtis  
Melissa Sparks  
Floyd James  
Arlanda Williams  
Charlene Bonck  
Jerry Repka  
Allyson Wilson  
Rachel Mackey  
Peter Pappas  
Rodney Wallis  
Andrew O’Brien, Sr.  
Angelle Hava

**Members Absent**

Allen Square  
Claire Jecklin  
Thelma French  
Mikal Anderson  
Dottie Belleto  
Jeffery Martin  
Runiaja Vicksbrown  
Jeffrey Schwartz  
Danielle Garrett  
Connie Carlson  
Desiree Stelly Bordenave  
Chris Bardell

**Staff and Guest**

Sunae Villavaso  
Neia Limar  
Tammie Washington  
Sabrina Johnson  
Karmen McKinley  
Lori Boissiere  
Chanttell Patin  
Leonard Zanders

**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Roll Call**

Board Chair Curtis forewent roll call and confirmed a quorum was not met.  
Board Members who attended the meeting virtually: Stacey Shepperson

**III. Board Chair Updates**

Chairman Curtis opened the meeting with a reminder to subcommittees to meet on the off-months outside of full board meetings. He also announced that an Executive Committee meeting would take place prior to the December 11<sup>th</sup> full board meeting. Mr. Curtis noted that participation activity is most important and request that more people up for subcommittees, specifically noting that the Youth Committee is open to anyone working the space of education and/or training to contribute to the outcome

of our Youth Services. He emphasized the need for finding creative ways to engage youth. The floor was opened for comment.

Arlanda Williams shared that Delgado has partnered Job1 and Jefferson Parish to collaborate every other Thursday and will host a large career day event on November 7, 2024 at Delgado's River City Campus in Avondale, LA with teams from both Jefferson and Orleans Parish. Dr. Williams added that they expect over 150 people to attend and participate in the event.

Chairman Curtis inquired about annual reporting to the Mayor and administration with updates on NOWDB affairs in alliance with mandated partners. Director Villavaso and Chairman Curtis agreed to have a broader discussion on this topic at the next Executive Committee meeting.

### **Staff Updates/Program Oversight Report**

Director Villavaso provided a status report on unemployment for the City of New Orleans of 4.9% which is down from the previously reported 5.1% - 5.3% but higher than the 4.1% reported for the month of June. She directed members to refer to a copy of House Bill 119 that was sponsored by Representative Troy Romero which was passed into law and is now referred to as Act 412 which references unemployment which changes the length of time individuals can receive unemployment from 26 weeks to 20 weeks. This law will go into effect January 1, 2025.

A new 501(c)3, Louisiana Workforce Association, was created in a response to a decrease in funding. All directors in the 15 local areas are members. This membership helps supplement the funding shortage in grants and federal funding. The association's first meeting was held on September 30 and October 1, 2024 at the Windsor Court.

Mrs. Villavaso added that the association met with Osmar Padilla and Susana Schowen, Secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, who discussed the likelihood of having one workforce development board for the state of Louisiana which would mirror the model in Utah. Conversations are currently taking place around the difference in median wage for Utah, approximately \$70K, versus that of New Orleans which is significantly lower. Additional dialogue is being had about the upside to the Utah model being a "one-system" approach, where individuals can visit one office and can get information about all the services they qualify for.

Mrs. Villavaso continued her report with a status update on the labor participation rate. As of today, the region is at a 47% labor participation rate. With the implementation of the sectorial partnerships, the goal is to get the labor participation rate up to 60%. The State of Louisiana is currently at 58% and the nation is at 62%.

On October 14, 2024, Mrs. Villavaso met with GNOF who is ready to launch their sectorial partnership in green infrastructure/building trades in November 2024.

Another meeting was held with GNO Inc. on October 15, 2024 who initially received federal funds to jump start a form of sectorial partnerships in aerospace. The City has made an initial investment to jump start a sectorial partnership in Advance Manufacturing. The Office of Workforce Development (OWD) is currently waiting for the Port of New Orleans to launch. From the initial investment in these partnerships, we are hopeful to see the outcomes and return on investment within the coming year.

Additionally, Susana Schowen and Osmar Padilla visited Job1 and was impressed with the work that the center is providing. This is a positive indication that OWD is on the right path to becoming the benchmark of what workforce development should look like nationally.

Also, OWD is currently closing out the Careers Grant for dislocated workers which would result in a return of \$200K despite having met the performance goals of the grant.

Mrs. Villavaso announced her appointment to the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) Board. This is a significant shift given that there historically has not been any local representation prior to today.

A list of entities who were awarded funds from the \$11 million ARPA funds was presented to the group along with their respective award amounts.

OWD is in preparations for the upcoming budget hearing before City Council on October 23, 2024.

Mrs. Villavaso shared her plans to meet with NOWDB members individually to discuss the work and function of the board and roles of board members at a granular level.

The Fall Internship Program is going well with 168 youth participants in partnership with the New Orleans Career Center's Bridge Program.

### **Finance Committee Report**

Finance Committee Chairman, Floyd James, reported that the budget will be going before City Council on October 23, 2024 for approval. He gave an overview of the proposed budget of \$5 million for the period of July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 and presented the respective allocations.

### **Youth Committee Report**

A brief summary of the Youth Committee meeting that was held on July 22, 2024 was provided by NOWDB Manager, Neia Limar. She reported that the topics of discussion at that meeting focused on the progress and challenges of the Mayor's Fall Internship Program. The program served 168 youth participants which exceeded the goal of 150.

Clarity on the payroll process was improved from the year before. Chairman Curtis commented on the model presented during the Boston Workforce Best Practices convening and suggested his hope in implementing a similar structure in New Orleans.

### **Operator Report**

Director Zanders reported that the annual programmatic WIOA process is currently on track at the end of this 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. The goals for this new program year have increased and there has been some staff restructuring. Efforts to promote the successes in the MSYEP are underway in partnership with Bright Moments. Media content was captured at the last youth employment event and the footage will be used to create a campaign that will circulate through the rest of the year to garner participation for the MSYEP. The expectation is to have a final commercial to present at the December NOWDB full board meeting. The Careers Grant ended strong with the only measurement that fell short of the goal was in the area of On the Job Training, scoring at 70% as opposed to the required 90% minimum. Job1 received noteworthy attention federally for exceeding Placement goals and Retention goals amongst minorities in comparison to other demographics that resembled New Orleans. Job1 will continue to host Reverse Job Fairs due to its historic success. Earn & Learn has \$480K allocated for participant stipends, of which \$464K have been invested, leaving approximately 1 more payroll cycle for the 268+ participants in the Earn & Learn program. Mr. Zanders gave a breakdown of the differences between the function for ARPA funds versus WIOA funds. Funds from ARPA will be prioritized and utilized first, leaving WIOA funds to be a last resort.

An open discussion was had around the local and national need for childcare.

### **IV. Public Comments**

There were no comments from the public.

### **V. Open Discussion**

The meeting concluded at 12:00pm.