



**NEW ORLEANS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

NOWDB Executive Committee Meeting
February 3, 2026 | 1:00PM
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Members Present

Gregory Curtis
Melissa Hopson Sparks
Claire Jecklin
Allen Square
Floyd James
Arlanda Williams
Thelma French

Staff Present

Jenny Mains
Tammie Washington
Neia Limar
Sabrina Johnson
Karmen McKinley
Torrie Jakes

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Gregory Curtis called the meeting to order at 1:02PM

II. Roll Call

Board Manager Neia Limar completed roll call and confirmed a quorum was met.

III. Board Chair Updates

Mr. Curtis welcomed Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, Jenny Mains, to the meeting. He delivered key points regarding Mayor Moreno's 'First 100 Days Plan' which began January 2026. The plan prioritizes job creation and economic growth through a "New Orleans open for business" approach, led by Dr. Mains. Key initiatives include boosting workforce training, supporting small businesses, and improving economic opportunities in underserved areas like New Orleans East. Key Workforce and Economic Development actions will include:

- Focus on Local Employment: Connecting residents directly to high-paying jobs.
- Targeted Development: Specific focus on job creation in underserved neighborhoods, including New Orleans East.
- Small Business Support: Revamping the permitting process and safety regulations to create a more business-friendly environment, intended to generate revenue.
- Infrastructure Jobs: Plans to hire 100 additional street workers to improve city infrastructure, which serves as an immediate jobs program.
- Strategic Leadership: Appointment of Dr. Jenny Mains as Deputy Mayor for Economic Development to lead these efforts.

Mr. Curtis added that these actions are part of a broader 100-day plan focusing on accelerating infrastructure projects, enhancing city department productivity, and addressing the city's financial

crisis. He also reported on the Executive Order from the Louisiana Governor's Office which aims to consolidate all local workforce development boards into one State Workforce Development Board. Ms. Hopson offered further clarification that the local boards would pivot to become advisory boards. Dr. Mains advised the committee that a meeting was held earlier that day with the Secretary of Louisiana Works, Susana Schowen, where it was discussed that the State of Louisiana will be submitting a waiver request to the Department of Labor to execute the aforementioned Executive Order. Ms. Washington also attended the meeting with Susana Schowen and noted that the State plans to take more of the administrative functions from the local boards creating the new expectation of making local board staff more "client facing". The plan is to have local board staff would remain employees of the City of New Orleans to continue carrying out services and programs.

Within the component of centralizing workforce development, the State board will be responsible for developing policies, and managing the One Stop Operator, which will include procuring a One Stop Operator contract for the entire state. Although local area boards will continue to provide services, concerns have been raised regarding the loss of autonomy since local boards have historically set their own policies, service priorities, and budgets based on the needs of local employers and job seekers, and available funding. The Office of Workforce Development will continue to wait for more information and guidance as it relates to the impacts of the Governor's Executive Order and will relay information to the NOWDB in real time. The State is preparing a waiver request package for submission to the United States Department of Labor in the next few weeks. The action items in the Executive Orders violate federal regulations; therefore, waivers are required to execute the Executive Order. Until the waivers for the Executive Order are approved by USDOL, local boards will continue to function as usual.

Ms. Jecklin raised a question regarding block grants. She expressed concern regarding the impacts that may affect WIOA funds granted to New Orleans outside of operating the American Job Center (JOB1) when the State transition takes place.

Ms. French raised a similar concern related to block grants but more specifically about timing of program year contracts and the expected transition. She asked if a schedule for follow up meetings related to the process had been put in place. Ms. Washington advised that there was no schedule however, Ms. Schowen announced that she would meet with Directors as updates became available; however, Directors could reach out to her if they have any additional questions in the meantime. Ms. French stated that she will be attending a training in Lafayette next week and will share any information gained from that session with the committee.

IV. Staff Updates

Ms. Washington informed the committee of the new reporting structure. The Office of Workforce Development now falls under the direction of Dr. Jenny Mains, Deputy Mayor of Economic Development. Meetings have been had with Dr. Mains to discuss Mayor Moreno's First 100 Days plan. Ms. Washington also spoke about the 2026 CNO budget impacts to the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. Within the Mayor's First 100 Days plan, the goal is stated to have 2,000 youth enrolled in the program from both the New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) and the NOLA Youth Works Summer Program. The goal is to have at least 1,000 youth enrolled in the NOLA Youth Works Summer Program however, current allocations for the program have been significantly cut down to \$308K which would support about 105 youth participants. Conversations to find additional funding are actively taking place with the Assistant CAO in the

CNO budget office and the Director of the Community Development Block Grant. Dr. Mains added that the budget is short by 900 youth participants in the age range of 16-24-years-old. Mr. Curtis expressed gratitude to the Mayor's Office for their efforts and offered support and assistance on behalf of the NOWDB.

V. Board Updates

Ms. Limar directed the committee's attention to the NOWDB bylaws 3.9.1 which states:

3.9.1. Any Board member who has three (3) consecutive unexcused absences from regular meetings of the Board may be removed by the CLEO upon recommendation of the NOLA-LWDB12.

She stated that a pattern of chronic absenteeism by any Board member should be addressed moving forward. She also reminded the committee that, although the Board is in an election year for new officers, previous recommendations were made to defer the nominating process until the new mayoral administration had an opportunity to propose appointments. Mr. Curtis advised that he will schedule time to meet with Dr. Mains to receive guidance from the administration regarding the Board leadership composition.

VI. Open Discussion

Ms. Jecklin asked for clarity on the number of youth participants outlined in the Mayor's plan. Ms. McKinley confirmed that the total number is 2,000 participants (1,000 from NORD and 1,000 from NOLA Youth Works) and that the actual numbers will be determined after the budget is finalized.

Ms. Hopson requested Dr. Mains share her vision on a success for the NOWDB. Dr. Mains affirmed the importance of the work produced by the NOWDB and stated that the administration will continue to listen for guidance from the NOWDB on ways they can assist with initiatives.

Ms. Limar confirmed that the next full NOWDB meeting will be on Tuesday, February 10th and the next Executive Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, June 2nd.

Mr. Floyd asked for clarity on which individuals would be providing information on the State's proposed workforce transition. Mr. Curtis stated that information would be coming from Governor Landry and his administration. The decision to have the NOWDB remain as an advisory board would come from Mayor Moreno and her administration.

Ms. Hopson acknowledged that the current gubernatorial administration has a strong focus on rural Louisiana and asked how does New Orleans seek balance on the State's scale as it moves toward a "one board" approach in workforce. Mr. Curtis advised that the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) has taken the stance against statewide centralized boards and have communicated their argument as to why it is essential that urban areas and municipalities maintain control of their local boards. Mr. Curtis will forward the full article published by NAWB to Ms. Limar for general distribution to NOWDB members.

The meeting adjourned at 1:41PM.