



**NEW ORLEANS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

NOWDB Full Board
JOB1 Business and Career Solutions Center
1307 Oretha Castle Haley – New Orleans, LA
February 10, 2026 | 11:00AM
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Members Present

Melissa Hopson
Chris Bardell
Danielle Garrett
Floyd James
Claire Jecklin
Rachel Mackey
Andrew O’Brien, Sr.
Chante Rice-Graham
Jeffrey Schwartz
Allen Square
Rodney Wallis
Arlanda Williams-Smith
Allyson Wilson

Members Absent

Gregory Curtis
Mikal Anderson
Dottie Belletto
Charlene Bonck
Desiree Stelly Bordenave
Thelma French
Angelle Hava
Carla Major
Jeffery Martin
Peter Pappas
Jerry Repka
Stacey Shepperson

Staff and Guest

Tammie Washington
Neia Limar
Karmen McKinley
Sabrina Johnson
Torrie Jakes
Icesiss Guy
Angelique White-Miller

I. Vice-Chair Welcome

11:15am Vice-Chair Missy Hopson called the meeting to order. Ms. Hopson advised the Board that she would be presiding today’s meeting as Chairman Curtis attended the meeting virtually.

II. Roll Call

Board Manager Neia Limar completed roll call. Board members Carla Major, Peter Pappas, Charlene Bonck, and Gregory Curtis attended the meeting virtually.

III. Vice-Chair Updates

Vice-Chair Hopson advised the group that the Executive Committee met with the new Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, Dr. Jenny Mains. The topic of discussion at the meeting covered the Louisiana Governor Landry’s executive order to convert local area workforce boards into one centralized state-operated board, Mayor Moreno’s First 100-Days plan, and the Mayor’s focus on job creation and economic development. Ms. Hopson expressed the importance of the work produced by the NOWDB and acknowledged the Board members commitment to service. Vice-Chair Hopson confirmed that quorum had been met and addressed the Action Item on the agenda.

Approval of the NOWDB Full Board Meeting Minutes from December 3, 2025

Motion by: Andy O'Brien

Second by: Danielle Garrett

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

IV. Staff Updates

Deputy Director Tammie Washington reported on 2026 budget impacts. There has been a decrease in funding for the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. 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 Dr. Mains and the CNO administration. A request has been made for the CNO budget office to restore the funding that was allocated in 2025, which will allow the MSYEP to accommodate the goal number of youth participants outlined in Mayor Moreno's 100-Day plan. Ms. Washington announced that Jeffrey Schwartz is now the Office of Community Development (OCD) Director which oversees the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and has joined the efforts to locate additional funding for the MSYEP. More information regarding the launch of the 2026 MSYEP will be forthcoming from Ms. McKinley.

Ms. Washington also discussed the Executive Order (EO) issued by Governor Landry on January 29, 2026, aimed to "Modernize Louisiana's Workforce for a New Era". A copy of Executive Order # JML 26-011 was provided to the Board. The EO authorizes Louisiana Works to request waivers from the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) due to its nonalignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The EO proposes to dismantle local workforce boards and adapt one statewide board that will carry out functions such as developing a plan for local activities, consolidating block grants, and replacing local oversight and compliance monitoring with a single statewide monitoring framework. Local Chief Elected Officials have raised concerns regarding the loss of autonomy since local boards have historically set their own budgets and policies based on local priorities and funding. The current directive states that operations at the local level will continue to function as usual in order to stay in compliance with the WIOA. The EO must pass through and be approved by the USDOL before any further actions can be taken at the state level. It was also noted that there is no expectation of any loss in staffing. Possible changes could include making local board staff more "client facing". More information will be disseminated to the Board as it is received.

Mr. Schwartz commended Ms. Washington on her proactive stance regarding this issue. He stated that his impression is that Secretary Schowen hopes to partner with localities. He encouraged Board members to reach out to Ms. Schowen with any feedback or guidance they may have. Mr. James asked who would be providing guideline information regarding the transition. Ms. Washington advised that the information would be coming from the State of Louisiana and would be primarily directed to the Chief Elected Officials.

Mr. Curtis stated that the Board, as a public body, cannot lobby for or against a position on the matter. He encouraged Board members to exercise their right to educate others on the facts of the

issue. A healthy discussion was had on the subject of Board's role, function, and how members should appropriately address the topic with the public.

Ms. Jecklin offered the recommendation that the Board compile a set of questions to provide to Dr. Mains that she can ask as the CNO's representative when conferring with State Secretary Schowen. Mr. Schwartz volunteered to consolidate questions in partnership with Ms. Washington to help the Board and CNO administration navigate the approaching transition in the workforce landscape. Mr. Pappas suggested that the Board release a public statement on its position. Ms. Jecklin countered with the idea that the CNO release a public statement, and the Board should engage and inform. Ms. Limar advised that she will schedule a meeting for an ad hoc committee immediately following the Mardi Gras holiday to continue the conversation.

Ms. Washington concluded her report informing the Board of upcoming State monitoring on March 11-12, 2026. She also made it known that Equus made a change in leadership. Mr. Leonard Zanders is no longer with the company. A meeting has been scheduled with an Equus executive for later today to receive updates and plans going forward. Mr. Curtis asked if there is a new point of contact for JOB1 leadership. Ms. Washington confirmed that inquiries for JOB1 leadership should be directed to the attention of Christine Grigsby. Ms. Grigsby affirmed that she is in direct contact with the management team at JOB1 and that there would be no interruptions in daily operations.

V. Committee Reports

Youth Committee

Youth Committee Chair Claire Jecklin reported that the MSYEP is currently waiting for the City's budget to be finalized to determine the financial allocations for 2026. A tentative registration timeline has been prepared which will differ from years past where registration would typically take place in January. MSYEP registration for 2026 will likely begin immediately following Mardi Gras. She added that the committee discussed an anticipated decrease in the 2026 MSYEP budget which would impact the quantity of participants and the quality of their experience. Also noted during the committee meeting was the continued growth in attendance for the HiSET class. Several participants who started in the summer of 2025 are now being co-enrolled into Delgado Community College's Adult Education program.

Additionally, JOB1 will not pursue a reconnection with Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) due to the work readiness and the professional development components already being incorporated into the HiSET curriculum. Preparations for the next Young Adult Expo are currently taking place and the event is scheduled for Saturday, April 18, 2026 from 10am to 1pm. Ms. Jecklin concluded her committee report stating that documentation assistance is available for Orleans Parish residents through a partnership with ABC Title and the Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles which allows birth certificates, state ID cards, driver's licenses (first-time or duplicate) to be fast-tracked and expedited. Transportation assistance for Orleans Parish residents needing help getting to and from work is available up to \$500 that can be divided between ride share and public transportation.

Ms. Hopson asked Ms. McKinley in what ways the Board can support employer recruitment efforts. Ms. McKinley recommended Board members examine any opportunities their businesses might have to employ youth during the summer. An email to potential business partners will be distributed soon.

Business Engagement Committee

Business Engagement Chair Dr. Arlanda Williams-Smith reported that the Business Engagement Committee met on January 14th. The JOB1 team reported to the committee that JOB1 hosted their weekly Walk-In Wednesday event designed to engage community industries as well as job seekers looking to connect with training providers, resource partners and employment opportunities. JOB1 also launched their Mardi Gras initiative in partnership with the City of New Orleans Sanitation Department. JOB1 engaged over 400 individuals in-person and 300 individuals online.

JOB1 and the City of New Orleans Sanitation Department hosted an in-house career and training fair next week, January 21st from 10AM-1PM. Currently there were over twenty employers, six training providers, and eight resource partners registered. Individuals completed orientation that determines if they are qualified to receive scholarships for training through WIOA. Additionally, JOB1 partnered with Goodwill for the NOLA Connects initiative which focuses on areas that have experienced an influx in unemployment numbers and where transportation can be a barrier. The objective is to bring employers, training providers and resource partners directly to individuals in need of these services. New Orleans East was the first location for the NOLA Connects Career and Training Fair. There are plans to bring NOLA Connect to the Lower Ninth Ward and Algiers.

Dr. Williams-Smith also reported that the employer survey would serve as the Board's first phase of employer engagement and feedback. The next phase would be a roundtable and/or panel discussions to address hiring needs and practices. She advised the board of the committee's efforts to diversify the composition of membership and that Rodney Wallis was invited and has joined the committee. Ms. Limar added that thirty-one surveys had been completed by employers at the last hiring event and she will email the results of the survey to the Business Engagement committee before their next meeting on March 11th.

Programs & Services Committee

Committee member, Ms. Mackey, reported that the Programs & Services Committee met on January 28th. The committee discussed how the JOB1 center manages services to clients with disabilities. The committee also discussed the continued development of Wellness Wednesdays Workshops in partnership with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) and ARC GNO. The committee received positive feedback from an individual who attended one of the workshops and was successfully connected to employment. Kudos were given to the Weekly JOB1 Newsletter and Board members were encouraged to join the email list.

It was also noted that Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) is currently facing staffing challenges and has recently realized a sudden reduction on counselors. Applicants who are interested in employment with LRS are encouraged to apply online. Ms. Mackey concluded her report announcing that plans have been made for Ms. Bonck to conduct an evaluation of the JOB1 center for accessibility compliance.

Finance Committee

Finance Chair, Floyd James, reported on expenditure through December 31, 2025. As of that date, the overall expenditure rate for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs stands at 38%. Of the total grant funding, 21% of the carryover funds remain, and 71% of the current PY25 allocation is still available. He noted that while current expenditures are lower than this time last year, they remain below the expected level for six months into the program year. It was explained that the expenditure rate could be higher; however, administrative guidance recommended slowing spending through December 2025 due to the city's ongoing cash flow challenges. He also reported that the building lease expired on December 31, 2025, and was currently routing by the Law Department. As of January 26, 2026, the system showed that the lease was with the vendor for review and signature. Mr. James added that the Pathway 4 grant continues to enroll participants. He concluded his report announcing that the State will be onsite to conduct a monitoring visit on March 11th & 12th.

Executive Committee

Vice-Chair Hopson reported that the Executive Committee met on February 3rd. At this meeting, the committee met the new Deputy Mayor of Economic Development, Dr. Jenny Mains. The group discussed the Governor's executive order and the CNO administrations position on the matter. The committee requested Dr. Mains to describe her vision of success for the NOWDB. Board member attendance and absenteeism at full board meetings will be reviewed to ensure the board maintains actively engaged members.

VI. Operator Report

Ms. Miller-White reported that Adult and Dislocated Worker programs currently have 282 enrollments which is 51% of the goal, 101 training placements which is 100% of the adult training placement goal and 50% of the dislocated worker training placement goal. JOB1 hosted training orientations for over 200 individuals during the January 21st Career and Training fair. Participants received orientation on WIOA services, eligibility and suitability for training programs, career assessments, and next steps on applying for employment.

The Business Services Department currently has 51 new employers in the HIRE system. On January 21st, JOB1 hosted over 400 attendees at its 3rd Career and Training Fair, themed *New Year, Better You*. An array of services was provided during this event. The Youth Works Department currently has 41 active enrollments, 35 job placements, 15 individuals in training, and 34 in work experience. Staff are planning to host the JOB1 Youth and Young Adult Expo on Saturday, April 18th from 10AM to 1PM.

The RESTORE Reentry Program successfully met the goal of having 150 participants enrolled. Delgado Community College participated in the Wellness Wednesdays Workshop and completed onsite registration for OSHA, CPR and forklift training. Ms. White-Miller concluded her report sharing the success of the Fam First – Training Grounds pilot program which assisted expecting and/or new parents. Although participants completed JOB1's four-week Job Readiness program on January 29th, JOB1 will continue to provide career services, training navigation, and employment guidance as participants progress through the remainder of the program.

VII. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

VIII. Open Discussion

Ms. Washington expressed regrets for the OWD being unable to provide a working lunch as it has in the past due to the current budget constraints. She explained that, although the OWD is federally funded, expenses must be paid out by the CNO first and are then reimbursed. She stated that hopefully OWD will be able to restore the practice in the future.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion by: Rodney Wallis

Second by: Carla Major

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

Meeting adjourned at 12:23pm