



**NEW ORLEANS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

DRAFT

NOWDB Full Board
JOB1 Business and Career Solutions Center
1307 Oretha Castle Haley – New Orleans, LA
March 19, 2025 | 11:00AM
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Members Present

Gregory Curtis
Melissa Hopson
Charlene Bonck
Thelma French
Danielle Garrett
Floyd James
Claire Jecklin
Rachel Mackey
Andrew O'Brien, Sr.
Peter Pappas
Jerry Repka
Jeffrey Schwartz
Rodney Wallis
Allyson Wilson

Members Absent

Mikal Anderson
Chris Bardell
Dottie Belletto
Desiree Stelly Bordenave
Angelle Hava
Jeffery Martin
Stacey Shepperson
Allen Square
Runiaja Vicksbrown
Arlanda Williams

Staff and Guest

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

I. Chairman Welcome

11:14am Chairman Curtis welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged the highlights of Sugar Bowl, Super Bowl and Mardi Gras since the last full board meeting in December 2024.

II. Roll Call

Chairman Curtis requested roll call to confirm a quorum.
Board Manager Neia Limar completed a roll call of NOWDB members present and confirmed that a quorum was met.
Board Members who attended the meeting virtually: none

III. Chairman Updates

Chairman Curtis advised the group that the Office of Workforce Development underwent an Orleans Parish WIOA Onsite Monitoring Review conducted by the Louisiana Workforce Commission

on January 29 – 30, 2025. A finding from that review resulted in a review of the board vacancy policy in the New Orleans Workforce Development Board (NOWDB) bylaws. He directed the group's attention to page 8 of the City of New Orleans Local Workforce Development Board 12 Bylaws, Section 3.7 to review the proposed modified language regarding the time frame for filling vacancies. A discussion was had for clarity about the approval process for new board members. Mr. Curtis advised the group of his plans to attend the National Association of Workforce Boards meeting in Washington, DC on March 29, 2025 to be a part of the national conversation around the eminent changes for the future of workforce boards.

IV. Approval of the NOWDB Bylaws Revision

Motion by: Andrew O'Brien

Second by: Melissa Hopson

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

Approval of the NOWDB Full Board Draft Meeting Minutes August 14, 2024

Motion by: Claire Jecklin

Second by: Andrew O'Brien

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

Approval of the NOWDB Full Board Draft Meeting Minutes December 10, 2024

Motion by: Rodney Wallis

Second by: Andrew O'Brien

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

V. Staff Updates/Program Oversight Report

Office of Workforce Development (OWD) Director, Sunae Villavaso, reported on the immediate effects stemming from the change in administration this past January. She noted that during her attendance at the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) the week of the presidential inauguration, a cease & desist memo was communicated to terminate WIOA funded work and programs. The City has rallied their federally funded departments in response to directive in an effort to generate alternative solutions in the event funding streams stop. She added that the end of the current 4-year term is approaching on June 31st and there will soon be a need to post an RFP for a potentially new operator. The current RFP includes language that references "35% DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise) participation from the City" which has paused the progression of the RFP. OWD is expecting clear directives from Washington sometime this week regarding this matter. A discussion around how to move forward with the RFP was had by the group.

A motion was presented for the NOWDB to support the administration in moving forward with the plan for the RFP as currently directed.

Approval of the NOWDB supporting the forward progression of the proposed RFP

Motion by: Thelma French

Second by: Claire Jecklin

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

Director Villavaso continued to share the current objective of determining how to minimize dependency on WIOA and secure funding that is more flexible. Another priority objective is the alignment of high school credits that provide graduates the credentials that automatically qualifies them to connect to employment. Board member Claire Jecklin expounded on the topic to provide context.

Mrs. Villavaso concluded her report by sharing that members of the USCM from Arizona visited the City of New Orleans and the New Orleans Career Center. The center was ranked in the top three for best practices and is considered a state-of-the-art facility and is the inspiration of innovative and progressive programming. Additionally, the City of New Orleans has received \$100 million that will be attached to a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) in April which will be available to local workforce boards. If awarded, Orleans Workforce Development Board #12 would have access to these funds through 2028 and would use them to extend the Jobs for America's Graduates program, the extension of sectorial partnerships, more progressive and innovative programs, support Total Community Action with housing, etc.

Youth Committee Report

Youth Committee Chair reported that the focus of the committee is Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP). There has been incredible interest by both youth and employers alike. She invited and encouraged all board members who have a business to employ at least two youth for the summer. She advised the group that registration for the MSYEP will continue through April. The committee report concluded with the announcement that JOB1 will be hosting the Youth Expo on Wednesday, April 16th on Oretha Castle Haley Blvd.

Finance Committee Report

OWD Fiscal Manager, Sabrina Johnson, reported that the Finance Committee met in February 2025. She reported on the overall expenditure rate of 38.66% through December 31, 2024. A transfer request was discussed and is currently being routed in the Equus contract. The Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) conducted their annual monitoring review and all requested items have been submitted. LWCs final report is still pending.

Business Engagement Committee Report

Business Strategies Manager, Lori Boissiere, reported that the board approved the survey and it is in the process of being published in collaboration with JOB1. It will be marketed during Walk-In Wednesday's participants and business owners. Feedback from the survey can be expected at the next board meeting.

Operator Report

Director Zanders reported that the Pathway Home grant (locally entitled “RESTORE”) had 98 out of a target 150 participants enrolled. This program is offered to individuals who are currently incarcerated and have an expected release date between 28-270 days. JOB1 is currently working with the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, Orleans Parish Sheriff’s Office, Plaquemines Parish Prison, and B. B. Rayburn Correctional Center. The program consist of a 4-week work-readiness training. As of March 2025, there are 375 enrollments for the WIOA program (which is 68%) and more than 100 WIOA trainings for adults. There are 36% of the Dislocated Worker Training placements. Today, March 19th, JOB1 hosted a Career & Training Fair where more than 40 vendors participated and over 100 orientations have taken place. Another installment of Walk-In Wednesday’s will be hosted at the center in collaboration with GNO Inc. next week. Director Zanders announced that Shermeeka Mitchell has transitioned into a new role with a different organization. The new One Stop Operator is Icesiss Guy Glapion and Priscilla Cheatham has been promoted to Business Solutions Manager. He reminded the group that the Youth Expo will be held on April 16th and encouraged board members to get involved. He added that the JAG program concludes on May 30th. The Youth Program currently has 49 of 75 enrollments (which is 65%), 16 youth have participated in the Work Experience program, 65 of 75 youth job placements, and 20 of 20 training accounts obligated for youth participants. He concluded his report by sharing a success testimonial from a program participant.

Board Manager

Board Manager, Neia Limar, advised the group that an informal survey would be emailed to their attention to vote on their preferred day of the week to meet for future NOWDB meetings. Dates previously held for 2025 meetings may change as a result of the outcomes of the survey.

VI. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

VII. Open Discussion**Motion to Adjourn**

Motion by: Claire Jecklin

Second by: Missy Hopson

No Opposition

The motion was approved by unanimous decision.

Meeting adjourned at 12:23pm.