

## 06.12.25 Board Meeting | Q2

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Meeting Location: Brown Eagle 7808 Airline Hwy |Baton Rouge, LA 70805 |

Members Present:

NAME	ROLE
Elizabeth Beckham	<b>Chair</b>
Evon Roquemore	<b>Vice Chair</b>
Brett Simon	<b>Member</b>
Blaine Grimes	<b>Member</b>
Kenneth Champagne	<b>Member</b>
Christy Reeves	<b>Member</b>
Dawn Hall	<b>Member</b>
Josh Sonnier	<b>Member</b>
Yvette Moody	<b>Member</b>
Katreena Moses	<b>Member</b>
Russell Wilkes	<b>Member</b>
David Fahr	<b>Member</b>

Members Absent:

NAME	ROLE
Amy Eberly	<b>Member</b>
Judi Lefebvre	<b>Member</b>
Brandy Tyson	<b>Member</b>
Chad Williams	<b>Member</b>
Shanan Waters	<b>Member</b>
Andrew Fitzgerald	<b>Member</b>
Gayle Fisher	<b>Member</b>

Staff Present: Juanita Coverson (Eckerd Connects) | Girlie Anderson (EmployBR) | Barbara Dunn (EmployBR)

Guests: None

*Quorum met*

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Meeting called to order at 2:30 p.m.

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS | COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Elizabeth Beckham, Chair called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm. A quorum was met.

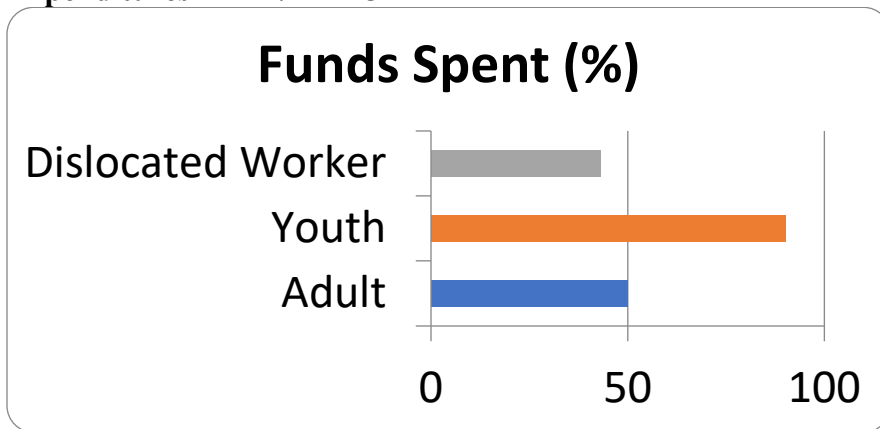
Approval of Local Plan | Approved (*motion by Brett Simon, Second by Blaine Grimes. Motion carried.*)

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT | Amanda Stanley | WIOA Chief Administrator | Board Director

### New Member Introductions

Amanda welcomed two new board members: Katreena Moses from DCFS and Josh Sonnior from Labor/Apprenticeship.

### Expenditures PY 24/ FY 25



### Budget Allocation Update for PY 25/ FY 26

Overall increase of \$500,000 for the state; adult and youth funding increased while dislocated worker funding decreased. Estimates for each board have not been shared by LWC, but should have the new allocation amounts within the next few weeks.

### Job Fair Highlights

A job fair was held on April 30, 2025 with over 100 vendors and over 1300 attendees. The total cost was approximately \$60,000.

### Statewide Workforce Shifts and Board Regionalization

Discussion around positioning EmployBR to be a lead entity in anticipation of statewide workforce shifts, such as a single state model or mergers, to avoid being absorbed by another board, especially as the capital region. Amanda confirmed that Governor Landry and LWC's stated goal is more regionalization in Louisiana. Assistant Secretary Padilla-Osmar noted that Louisiana has 15 local boards, more than comparable states. While a single state model (like Utah, the only one in the nation, where everything goes through one entity) is an ultimate goal, board directors who visited Utah found it might not work well in Louisiana due to its unique population spread. The immediate goal is regionalization, aiming to consolidate the 15 boards to eight or fewer.

### Potential Merger/Re-designation of EmployBR and Geaux Jobs, Local Governance Concerns

Amanda explained that for consolidation to occur under current guidelines, the chief elected official of each proposed area must agree (e.g., Mayor Edwards for EBR 21 and Tangipahoa for Geaux Jobs) and assumed Metro Council approval would also be needed, similar to a past shift in reporting streams. If the mayor agrees, LWC would absorb the costs, and a single board would sit in Tangipahoa, raising questions about representation and who would “own” the consolidated region. Amanda expressed strong opposition to a potential merger between EmployBR and Geaux Jobs, citing the vast difference between rural parishes and EBR, and plans to educate the mayor on WIOA and the risk of decision-making shifting to Tangipahoa Parish. Talks about this merger heated up but have since stalled. Amanda noted that the BRAC is for the merger of EmployBR and Geaux Jobs but shared that she does not agree with this position nor the merger, and has data to support that. Josh Sonnier interjected he has been working with the Mayor on other issues and “Together Baton Rouge”. He offered his support to join others in talking with the Mayor if the opportunity presents itself.

### **Funding Comparison: EmployBR vs. Geaux Jobs**

Amanda and Elizabeth discussed the comparison of funding, noting EmployBR receives approximately \$3.5 million and Geaux Jobs \$3.4 million. AStanley highlighted that while Geaux Jobs serves 10 parishes and EmployBR serves one, their populations are similar, resulting in comparable funding levels. AStanley also noted a difference in focus: EmployBR is more participant-focused, while Geaux Jobs is more business-focused.

### **Stakeholder Engagement and Education**

Efforts to educate council members and the mayor about EmployBR’s work were highlighted, including outreach by Amanda, Elizabeth, and Evon. Amanda has sent information to all council members and has a scheduled meeting with the mayor, who is still learning about WIOA five months into his term. Amanda previously spoke with Charlie Davis (Chief Administrative Officer) and secured a one-on-one meeting with the mayor at an event. Evon Roquemore emphasized the need to counter outdated perceptions by sharing current, “moving outcomes” of what EmployBR has already done and is currently doing, stressing the importance of a unified board voice.

### **Community Perceptions and Historical Issues**

Discussion centered on negative perceptions of EmployBR, which Amanda attributed to historical disconnects and “bad feelings” over the past 10 years. Amanda noted that the reorganization occurred only two years ago (in 2023), which is insufficient time to fully overcome these historical issues. Evon shared a personal experience of previously advising against EmployBR but now seeing an “entirely different story” due to the commitment of the current administrative staff, emphasizing that outdated experiences should not define current operations.

### **Board Representation and Advocacy**

Board members discussed the importance of presenting a unified voice and sharing updated, relevant success stories to counter outdated negative perceptions. Evon suggested articulating the pros and cons of the proposed merger and the goals being sought (e.g., efficiency) to avoid the perception that the board is merely trying to protect its own jobs.

### **Pros and Cons of Merger/Re-Designation**

There was a request to articulate the goals, pros, and cons of the proposed merger or re-designation, including efficiency, representation, and the unique needs of Baton Rouge compared to other regions. Amanda reinforced the idea that different areas have specific needs beyond just population. Girlie sought clarification on whether the discussion was about the single state model or the EmployBR/Geaux Jobs merger. Amanda noted that LWC currently lacks a policy on statewide re-designation or mergers, though past mergers occurred under previous LWC administration in areas like Lafayette and Lake Charles/Shreveport.

### **Timeline and Recent Developments**

The merger/re-designation topic emerged within the last 60 days, with increased discussion since late March. Amanda confirmed there was no prior knowledge of this issue at the February meeting.

## **PROGRAM REPORT | Girlie Anderson | Program Administrator**

### **MYWE Program Overview and 2025 Launch**

Overview of the Mayor's Youth Work Experience (MYWE) program for this summer (2025), which hosts 300+ students aged 14 to 24. In addition to the Work based learning pathway, this year the program includes new career accelerator pathways in partnership with BRCC. Career Accelerator Pathway and Partnerships designed to help the school board and scholars focus on metrics needed from the Department of Education to graduate high school.

Partnerships with BRCC fulfill four career accelerator tracks:

1. Arts and technology
2. Information technology
3. Health sciences
4. Field trades

BRAC also helped facilitate 86 host site partnerships.

### **Tool Time Sessions**

Tool Time' sessions held on Thursdays at 10:30 AM and noon, offering a 90- minute time span for organizations to present to youth about career opportunities and future jobs. Board members were invited to participate in tool time sessions.

### **Performance Metrics and Outcomes**

173 ITAs were issued across all three funding streams

- 121 credentials successfully obtained
- 31 individuals still in training

### **Work Experience Program**

96 overall participants of which 36 has permanent job placements

- 36 dislocated workers
- 38 ISY (high school seniors)
- 1. 22 temporary youth (college scholars or older staff).

5 OJTs –

- 1 didn't work out
- 1 still in progress
- 3 have been hired permanently with Brightside

### **Partnership Spotlights: DPW and Someone Always Cares Foundation**

- DPW has a new director in automotive, we have more work experience placements there in areas like parts, clerical positions, and infrastructure support (e.g., trash pickup, grass cutting, building maintenance). Some individuals received CDL training and are now working permanently with the city in infrastructure support.

- The Someone Always Cares Foundation supports three justice-involved youth (mostly aged 17-20) who have conditions to meet to remain free citizens. The foundation acts as their appointed regulator by the judge, and EmployBR partners with them to provide stipends for commitments, monitored monthly via attendance and a skills progression chart.

### **Strategic Focus and Digitalization**

Steps are being taken to digitize the WIOA application process. Currently working with LWC to utilize their pre-screening application. This involves reaching out to OWD and MIS, who are working with Geographic Solutions to enable necessary features for better determination and reduced document uploads. The case management process is also being revamped, as it's proven doable with five case managers. The goal is to digitalize the process so case managers no longer need to manually input or upload documents, only print them for physical folders. Amanda noted that the ultimate goal is to go as paperless as possible pending federal approval as federal regulations currently require physical folders.

### **Participant Support and Digital Literacy**

Girle addressed concerns about participant computer literacy, explaining that student workers in the resource center are skilled to assist clients. They can guide individuals to computers, help them create "higher accounts," and complete the WIOA pre-screening application (which takes less than five minutes). Support is also available for uploading documents from phones or in the office, where cameras are available on computers.

### **Technology Advancements and Executive Dashboards**

EmployBR is partnering with Bright Technology to develop executive dashboards for improved data visibility and to address invoicing issues. This initiative is part of a broader effort to position EmployBR as the "number one board" and the preferred face for any new statewide administration changes.

Girle Anderson shared participant testimonials from the Youth Professional Development Series held at the EmployBR office and shared the performance metrics for the year. The WIOA Orientation Implementation has been successful, with sessions starting in October 2024. A total of 95 attendees have participated.

## **ONE-STOP OPERATOR REPORT | Juanita Coverson | One-Stop Operator | Eckerd Connects |**

### **Operational Updates and Facilities**

Updates were provided on facilities, equipment, and operations. EmployBR is currently meeting ADA requirements and certifications, with the process for full certification underway. The American Job Center (AJC) certification is completed and current. Challenges with client computers are being addressed with the Information Systems (IS) department. The business monitor at the office entrance is being updated to post jobs and training opportunities. The Wooddale office is closed to the public but used by state staff during construction at the main local office.

### **Employment Services and Performance**

The Employment Services team, now comprised of Reemployment Services, Wagner-Peyser, employment workers, and computer lab staff, has worked diligently to decrease client response times. Daniel Penn, a newer supervisor for the Employment Services team, was recognized for his phenomenal communication in ensuring information flows between state and city sides.

### **Partnerships and MOU Updates**

Juanita reported being part of a pilot team for Louisiana Workforce and Social Services (LAWAS) between DCFS and the Workforce Commission to refine client transitions. Work on report portals, monitoring evaluations, and performance indicators is awaiting approval from the governor's office. The MOU content is

largely stable, but updates are needed for infrastructure funding agreements and partner signatures. Job Corps is no longer a partner, and changes are expected with adult education. Partner meetings are planned for the third Thursday of each month commencing July 2025. Mandated partners include LCTCS, Adult Education, DHDS (Community Services Block Grant), HUD, Housing Authority, BRCC, REHAB, DCFS, TANF, CETC, SNAP and EMT programs, Senior Employment Programs, LWC (TAA, UI, Wagner-Peyser, Vets, Migrants, Seasonal Farm Worker Program), City of Baton Rouge and EmployBR, National Farm Worker Job Program, Youth Build, AMI Kids, Reentry, and Eckerd Connects.

### **Job Fairs and Regional Recruitment**

Efforts include assisting Ms. Babs with recruitment for the Greater Baton Rouge Regional Job Fair. For rural areas, EmployBR “goes to them,” working with councilman Rowdy Gaudet. Despite low employer turnout (e.g., three employers at one event), they utilized a book with QR code of hiring companies and continuously emailed job opportunities to clients. The Cheneyville job fair was canceled but is being reconvened with Councilman Brandon Noel. Collaborative recruitment efforts are underway with veteran representatives and the Louisiana Department of Corrections.

### **Traffic Count and Client Demographics**

In 2024, EmployBR assisted a total of 11,439 people who walked through the doors, with a detailed report to be provided in August. Of those, 61% identified as adult or youth (3% youth, 58% adult), and 39 clients did not report. The highest client concentration came from the 70805 area (Councilman Daryl Hurst’s district), and this information is shared with council members. Approximately 1,700 clients came from out of state (e.g., Mississippi, California), and 88% of clients who signed in reported their zip codes.

### **Guest Speaker / Presentation**

N/A

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

N/A

### **ADJOURNMENT**

*Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.*

### **ACRONYMS LEGEND**

**AFL-CIO** American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

**BRAC** Baton Rouge Area Chamber

**LWDB** Local Workforce Development Board

**BRCC** Baton Rouge Community College  
**DCFS** Department of Children and Family Services  
**DDWG** Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant  
**DHDS** Department of Human Development and Services  
**DW** Dislocated Worker  
**EBRPSS** East Baton Rouge Parish School System  
**ETPL** Eligible Training Provider List  
**FY** Fiscal Year  
**IFA** Infrastructure Funding Agreement  
**ISY** In-School Youth  
**LRS** Louisiana Rehabilitation Services  
**LWC** Louisiana Workforce Commission  
**LWDA** Local Workforce Development Area

**MOU** Memorandum of Understanding  
**MYWE** Mayor's Youth Work Experience  
**NDWG** National Dislocated Worker Grant  
**OSO** One-Stop Operator  
**OSS** Office of Social Services  
**OSY** Out-of-School Youth  
**PY** Program Year