



Office of the Governor
JOHN BEL EDWARDS

CHALLENGES MET. PROGRESS DELIVERED.

Louisiana Workforce Commission, 2016–2023

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During the Edwards' administration, Louisiana achieved record-breaking low unemployment rates.



Introduction

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Message from LWC Secretary Ava Cates

From floods, hurricanes, ice storms and tornados, to a global health crisis and near government shutdown, we have been through it all. Despite these challenges, the Louisiana Workforce Commission has managed to forge ahead and continue on its mission to put people to work.

During the Edwards' administration, Louisiana achieved record-breaking low unemployment rates. We started January of 2016 with a seasonally adjusted (SA) unemployment rate of 6 percent. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Louisiana's SA rate peaked at 13.5 percent in April of 2020. The LWC worked around the clock to combat the effects of the pandemic and put people back to work. We are happy to report that, in 2022 and 2023, Louisiana has had record-breaking low unemployment.

I am also incredibly proud of the work that the LWC Office of Workforce Development has done to serve millions of Louisiana's citizens by providing training and upskilling services, Registered Apprenticeship programs, JAG programs for youth, job fairs for job seekers around the state, and rehabilitation services for those with significant employment barriers. Throughout the past seven years, the LWC has made remarkable progress in the growth of Louisiana's workforce.

Nevertheless, the LWC's greatest challenge and most humbling achievement occurred at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when hundreds of thousands of Louisianans suddenly found themselves unemployed. With an all-hands-on-deck approach, the LWC staff sacrificed their time and safety to ensure individuals received unemployment benefits, while simultaneously fighting widespread fraud attempts and implementing new pandemic benefit programs created by the CARES Act. As a result of their hard work, Louisiana was one of the first states to implement these programs and has paid out over \$11 billion to nearly 1 million individuals to date.

Serving in Gov. Edwards' administration since 2016 has been a privilege and an honor. His remarkable leadership and enduring faith in my work have made the past several years some of the most profound of my career. I am truly grateful for the experience I have gained, the lifelong friends I have made, and the invaluable lessons I have learned.

Employment and Wages by the Numbers

The LWC takes pride in putting people to work. When Governor Edwards took office in 2016, there were 1,994,884 employed Louisiana citizens. As of June 2023, seasonally adjusted data shows that 2,037,445 individuals are employed. This is a record high for the third consecutive month. At the same time, Louisiana's not seasonally adjusted (NSA) unemployment rate was 6.3 percent, while the seasonally adjusted (SA) rate was 6.0 percent. In April of 2020, Louisiana's NSA unemployment rate peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic at 13 percent, with an SA rate of 13.5 percent. As of September 2023, Louisiana's SA unemployment rate is at 3.3 percent, while the NSA unemployment rate is at 3.6 percent. These latest numbers represent record-breaking lows in Louisiana's unemployment rates and demonstrate the power of Louisiana's resilient workforce.

Not only are more people employed than ever, but they are also earning higher wages. In 2016, the average weekly wages in Louisiana were \$877. Today, the average weekly earnings are the highest they have ever been in Louisiana, totaling \$1,089. That is a 24% increase in wages under Gov. Edwards.

Disaster Response and Disaster Dislocated Workers

In 2016, the LWC received a \$1,699,317 disaster assistance grant from USDOL to provide temporary jobs in Louisiana parishes to help with disaster clean-up efforts, including humanitarian assistance. Many individuals lost homes, jobs, and businesses. This grant provided a source of income to Louisiana residents and much needed relief to those who needed it most. In addition to the temporary job assistance provided, over 100,000 meals were served to those in need following the disasters. From 2016 until now, services have been provided to over 2,000 individuals.

The LWC Awarded \$1.5M Grant to Expand State Apprenticeship Programs

The LWC was awarded an unprecedented \$1,550,000 million grant by the U.S Department of Labor (USDOL) for the Expanding Opportunities Today to Meet Tomorrow's Needs project, aimed at increasing the number of registered apprentices throughout the state. This grant proved to be a huge success, as the Registered Apprenticeship program has since grown exponentially throughout the state.

Red Stick Retail Shop

On Thursday, October 27, 2016, in the wake of recent flooding that had devastated many people's homes and belongings, Cortana Mall opened their doors to host the "Red Stick Retail Shop." Thanks to the combined efforts of State Representative Edward "Ted" James, the Urban League of Greater New Orleans (ULGNO) and K.I.D.S./Fashion Delivers, an organization committed to help people of poverty and tragedy, the Red Stick Retail Shop provided a free retail shopping experience for recent Louisiana flood victims. The shop provided new clothing and other personal items to people impacted by the flooding. In addition, more than 50 individuals gained employment through this opportunity.

AT&T Louisiana Makes Donation to LWC for Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Program

AT&T Louisiana donated \$150,000 to the LWC to expand the Jobs for America's Graduates program. In September of 2016, Gov. Edwards announced the increase of JAG programs in Louisiana from 69 to 115 sites for the 2016-2017 school year, expanding the program into 37 school districts and serving approximately 4,600 middle and high school students.

JAG is a nationwide, non-profit program that helps students facing difficult challenges earn their high school diploma or equivalent degree, successfully attend a post-secondary institution and find meaningful employment. In 2017, the program reported a 94 percent graduation rate, a 76 percent job-placement rate and an 80 percent full-time jobs rate.

LWC Hosts Memorial Day Program to Honor Fallen, Injured Workers

Many Louisiana workers risk their own health and safety to make Louisiana a better place to live and work. In order to remember and honor those workers who lost their lives, have been injured or made sick on the job, LWC hosted the Workers' Memorial Day Program on the steps of the Louisiana Capitol on April 28, 2017, in partnership with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

During the 2017 Legislative Session, State Senator Regina Barrow presented a proclamation recognizing Friday, April 28, 2017, as Workers' Memorial Day. Similar proclamations have also been issued by East Baton Rouge Parish Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome and Gonzales Mayor Barney Arceneaux. LWC has and will continue to recognize and honor those workers who sacrifice so much for the citizens and businesses in our state.

LWC Offers Bonding Services for Employers

In June of 2017, under the federal Fidelity Bonding Program, the LWC began offering bonding services to employers for hard-to-place job seekers. This federal bonding program provides employers with insurance that protects against employee misconduct and dishonesty and acts as an incentive to hire at-risk applicants. Bond insurance issued ranged from \$5,000 - \$25,000 for a 6-month period with no deductible, and covers theft, forgery, larceny and embezzlement. Persons qualifying as at-risk job applicants include ex-offenders, recovering substance abusers, public assistance recipients, persons with poor financial credit, economically disadvantaged youth, adults lacking work history, and individuals dishonorably discharged from the military.

Louisiana Unemployment Tax Rate Ranked Among Lowest in the Nation

In September of 2017, the LWC held the fifth-lowest average unemployment tax rate paid by businesses on total wages in the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). Louisiana businesses also had the second-lowest taxable wage base in the country for unemployment taxes.

LWC Assisted Floridians in the Wake of Hurricane Irma

The LWC knows all too well the devastating effects of hurricanes on a state's workforce economy. After Hurricane Irma swept through the state of Florida in September of 2017, LWC's Office of Unemployment Insurance Administration (OUIA) assisted Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity Reemployment Assistance Program with claim intake for thousands of disaster-related unemployment claims. Louisiana's OUIA employees assisted Florida residents filing for unemployment as a result of Hurricane Irma's widespread destruction. Applicants were placed into two basic categories: those who qualify for traditional unemployment benefits and those who qualify for DUA – a federally-funded program designed to be used as a last resort safety net for residents who may not qualify for regular unemployment assistance. The LWC is always prepared to respond to disasters, both for our state and our fellow neighboring states.

Statewide Disability Employment Job Fair Held During National Disability Employment Awareness Month

In October 2017, the LWC hosted multiple hiring events with LWC's Ticket to Work program, which in the last 10 years helped to employ 15,000 jobseekers at more than 1,500 businesses across Louisiana. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy to educate the public about disability employment issues and to celebrate the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities.

LWC Partners with State Agencies for GAME ON Taskforce

GAME ON is the acronym for Government Against Misclassified Employees Operational Network, a unique task force found only in Louisiana, which puts companies on notice that misclassifying workers in Louisiana is intolerable. The GAME ON task force focuses efforts on industries historically known to use independent contractors to a large degree, namely construction, health care, hospitality, personal services and staffing companies.

Each GAME ON agency takes a different approach with regards to misclassified workers. For example, LWC looks specifically at the impact to the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, which covers unemployment benefits for eligible workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own. Since employers pay into the trust fund based on the number of their employees, companies that claim independent contractors do not pay into the trust fund, and those workers may therefore be ineligible for unemployment benefits.

Additionally, the LWC Office of Workers' Compensation looks at whether a company is maintaining adequate workers' compensation coverage for employees, another factor potentially skewed by use of independent contractors. Workers injured on the job are denied lawful benefits, such as a portion of their wages and the costs of medical treatment, when classified as an independent contractor rather than as an employee. The costs of these lawful benefits then get shifted to other social safety nets such as Medicare and Social Security when it is the employer's obligation, through workers' compensation insurance, to pay these benefits.

LWC Rolled out New Initiatives to Tackle Long-term Delinquent Unemployment Taxes

In 2017, LWC ramped up efforts to get employers with long-term, unpaid unemployment tax bills to settle their debts, including taking any federal income tax refunds due to the employer. Letters were sent to an estimated 8,000 employers with delinquent Louisiana unemployment taxes that were at least one year old and totaled more than \$100. These letters served as notification of the LWC's intent to submit their debt for offset through the federally mandated Treasury Offset Program (TOP).

Employers had 60 days to either pay the balance due plus penalty and interest; request a review of LWC documentation of the unpaid taxes due; or provide the LWC with bankruptcy documentation, if applicable. Since then, over \$26 million has been acquired through TOP offset or employer direct payment collections.

The LWC also enhanced its monthly delinquent tax notices mailed to employers to provide full details on all past due taxes, including those older than five years.

Workforce Training Program Offered Pathways to Electric Utility Careers

Sponsored in part by the LWC and launched in December 2017, the Certified Line Worker Training Program equipped students with specialized training and certification to secure employment as line helpers and apprentices. Certified line workers play a critical role in the industry by installing transformers and other pole top equipment, identifying defective devices, inspecting and testing power lines, and laying underground cable. This program included classroom instruction paired with hands-on skills training and assessment. Upon completion of the program, students were eligible for employment, earning a salary of \$33-\$40,000, with the potential to become senior-level line workers within six years and earning a base-level salary of \$57,000.

Licensed Practical Nurses Registered Apprenticeship Program Announced with Ochsner Health System

In partnership with the LWC, Ochsner Health System's Workforce Development Department developed a new apprenticeship program in December 2017 that was designed to prepare individuals with healthcare backgrounds for careers as Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). The Ochsner LPN Registered Apprenticeship program is an outcome of the 2016 federal grant awarded to the LWC to increase the state's number of registered apprenticeship programs. It was also developed in response to the challenges Ochsner identified when moving graduates of its Medical Assistant (MA) program into higher positions.

The LPN apprenticeship program, accredited by the Louisiana State Board of Practical Nurse Examiners, is a 12-month program offered through Northshore Technical Community College that features both classroom and clinical components. Upon completion, graduates earn an associate's degree in practical nursing. The inaugural class consisted of current Ochsner Health System employees, including graduates of the Ochsner MA Program and military veterans with specific qualifications.

Dow Chemical Company Joins the LWC Registered Apprenticeship Program

In 2018, Dow Chemical Company joined the ranks of Louisiana's growing list of companies offering registered apprenticeships, becoming the latest program employer to seek registration through the LWC. While the Dow U.S. Apprenticeship program has operated successfully at the national level, this marked an expansion and integration of the program into the Louisiana workforce system. Dow's apprenticeship program offered classroom instruction and on-the-job training in the manufacturing careers of instrument electrical technician, chemical process technician and millwright. The three-year program provided a starting salary of \$14 per hour with gradual increases.

Apprenticeship Division Receives Over \$1M in Continuation Funding from USDOL

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) awarded continuation funding to the LWC's Apprenticeship Division, totaling \$1.27 million. The State Apprenticeship Expansion grant supports efforts to increase the number of apprentices and programs throughout Louisiana, to improve and develop new curricula, and to further engage in outreach initiatives.

Apprenticeship Council Approved First Angola Welder/Fitter Program

In 2018, the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DOC) received approval from the State Apprenticeship Council to establish a welder/fitter Registered Apprenticeship Program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. The program involved preparing inmates with life sentences to become mentors for "short-timer" inmates interested in pursuing welding and/or pipefitting careers after they are released from prison. The first of its kind in Louisiana, the program was part of an overall, statewide effort by Gov. Edwards to better prepare offenders for careers upon reentry.

First-ever IT Apprenticeship Program in Louisiana

In 2018, the LWC Registered Apprenticeship division announced the launch of Apprenti Louisiana, the first Information Technology (IT) apprenticeship program in Louisiana. This program is a collaborative effort between the LWC, NexusLA and the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC). While multi-faceted, the program's main objective is to both prepare and connect Louisiana residents with IT jobs of the future. Initial training wages began at \$35,000 for the first six months, and increased to over \$43,000 thereafter. Completers of the program earned CompTIA A+ and Network + credentials.

Louisiana GDP Increases by \$2.3B in Third Quarter

Louisiana's real gross domestic product (GDP) increased by \$2.3 billion – or 1.9 percent – in the third quarter of 2018, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). Louisiana's GDP increased from \$249.7 billion in 2018's second quarter to \$252 billion in the third quarter. Louisiana's third-quarter GDP increase followed the trend of growth – by 4.7 percent in the first quarter, 4.3 percent in the second quarter, and 1.9 percent in the third quarter of 2018. This level of GDP growth is virtually impossible without a strong business and workforce economy. LWC takes pride in its role in ensuring Louisiana's economic health and stability remain strong and competitive.

2019

LWC Partnered with LEDA to Assist Displaced Walmart Workers

In April 2019, the LWC partnered with the Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA) to host a job fair for employees impacted by the closure of Walmart in Lafayette, in addition to local job-seekers in the area. There was no cost to attend the fair, which provided employment opportunities for individuals who wanted to transition to, or begin a career in the greater Lafayette, La. area.

Louisiana Unemployment Trust Fund Surpasses \$1B

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Trust Fund, which is administered by the LWC, surpassed the \$1 billion mark—the highest the fund had been since 2009. Louisiana's employers pay into the trust fund based on the number of covered workers employed by the company. These funds, in turn, pay unemployment benefits to eligible claimants.

In the same vein, employer contributions via employer quarterly taxes helps fund the state's Incumbent Worker Training Program (IWTP), which provides a means for employers to train their existing workers.

Louisiana JAG Receives National 5-of-5 Award

In August 2019, Louisiana's Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG-LA) received national recognition as it earned the highly coveted 5 of 5 Performance Award at the annual JAG National Training Seminar. The 5 of 5 Award recognizes states and sites that achieve exceptional performance in program graduation, job placement, positive outcomes, full-time job and full-time placement rates. That year, JAG-LA achieved a 98% graduation rate, 80% job placement rate, 90% positive outcomes rate, 79% full-time job rate, and 91% full-time placement rate.

Unemployment Rate Decreased in Every Region for First Time since Pre-pandemic

In July 2021, for the first time since Sept. 2019, the not seasonally adjusted preliminary unemployment rate in all nine of Louisiana's Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA's) went down both over the month and over the year. Louisiana's not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for July 2021 was 6.3 percent, a decrease of 3.7 percentage points from the July 2020 not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 10.0 percent. The rate also showed a decrease of 1.1 percentage points from the June 2021 rate of 7.4 percent.

Workplace Success and Mental Health with Kuder

In 2021, the LWC partnered with Kuder to utilize the company's Hope Central platform to assist Louisiana workers and businesses. The platform offers career advancement as well as workplace and interpersonal success strategies, and also serves as a resource for social, emotional, and mental health tools.

LWC Mobilizes Resources and Offers Opportunity in the Wake of Hurricane Ida

In September of 2021, in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Ida, the LWC's Mobile Workforce Center (MWC) traveled to parishes recovering from Hurricane Ida to help residents apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA). The MWC is a state-of-the-art vehicle equipped with computers, high-speed internet, and other workforce resources to help individuals and businesses get the help they need. President Biden granted, and the Department of Labor expedited, a major disaster declaration request for 25 Louisiana parishes. This made disaster unemployment assistance available to businesses and residents whose employment or self-employment was lost or interrupted as a direct result of Hurricane Ida.

To further support Hurricane Ida recovery efforts, the LWC was awarded a \$5 million Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). The grant funds helped provide Louisianans with jobs focused on debris clean-up, food and water distribution and other humanitarian aid in their own communities.

2020

LWC Responds to COVID-19

From March 2020 through the end of 2021, the LWC worked tirelessly to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that Louisiana's citizens received much-needed assistance in the form of unemployment benefits, online job search platforms and resources, and job-training and upskilling services. In addition, LWC fought against the pervasive and widespread fraud that was ubiquitous throughout the nation during that time. Simultaneously, the LWC was tasked with implementing numerous new federal benefit programs that resulted from passage of the CARES Act.

Louisiana was also among the first states to submit an application for lost wage assistance. Gov. Edwards prioritized ensuring that Louisiana citizens received payments despite challenges with navigating two federal agencies. As a result, Louisiana is one of seven states to have been awarded unemployment assistance from FEMA.

On April 13, 2020, Louisiana became one of two states paying Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), clearing the way for 1099 and self-employed individuals to receive both PUA and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) weekly benefits. Eligible individuals received an additional \$600 in benefits per week. While the CARES supplemental pay served as invaluable to all UI claimants, it was particularly vital to residents who normally would not qualify for state unemployment benefits, such as those who are self-employed.

2022

LWC Offering Scholarships for Google Career Certificates

On May 26, 2022, the Louisiana Workforce Commission began offering hundreds of scholarships that provide access to Google Career Certificates. The Grow with Google scholarships are funded through a partnership between the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and Google, who together are making 30,000 program scholarships available throughout the country. Google offers career certificates in high-growth fields like project management, user experience (UX) design, data analytics, IT support, and digital marketing and e-commerce.

Classes are self-paced and offered through the online learning platform, Coursera. The certificates require under 10 hours of flexible study per week and take 3-6 months to complete on average. They utilize hands-on projects and direct employer connections to help learners fully understand the subject matter. Upon completing the certificate, graduates get free access to career resources like coaching sessions, mock interviews and resume building tools, including access to "Big Interview." They will also have the opportunity to connect with over 150 employers in the Google Career Certificates employer consortium.

Drive your Future

In February 2022, the Louisiana Workforce Commission helped ease the truck driver shortage across the state by offering a truck driver training grant to qualified applicants. The program, "Drive Your Future," was spurred by the truck driver shortage and the supply chain crisis the country is facing right now. The "Drive Your Future" program paid for qualifying students across the state to attend certain accredited truck driving schools and earn their Commercial Driver's License. Focusing on veterans and the underemployed, the program's goal is to get Louisianans on the road to a new career.

2022

LWC Partners with Coursera for Tech Ready Louisiana

On August 2, 2022, the LWC launched "Tech Ready Louisiana," a program that will bring free online learning to thousands of people across the state. LWC partnered with Coursera to offer Louisianans access to thousands of courses to help them develop new skills and increase their career readiness. Coursera is one of the world's largest online learning platforms, offering over five thousand courses. They work with over 250 top universities and companies including Yale University, Columbia University, Microsoft, and Google to provide training for the high-demand skills that employers seek.

Tech Ready Louisiana aims to provide all Louisianans with accessible education and training to help them reach their career goals in areas such as career readiness, digital skills, data analytics, hospitality and tourism, and healthcare. All courses are fully online and self-paced to work around busy schedules. Learners can earn a certificate in three to six months.

LWC Partners with Southern University Law Center for Expungement Initiative

In August 2022, as part of the Edwards' Administration Justice Reinvestment program, the LWC partnered with SULC to provide expungement services to eligible individuals. Thousands of people have attended the various events, with more eagerly awaiting assistance at future events. These services have helped citizens obtain gainful employment, leading to career growth for those previously justice-involved individuals who have demonstrated positive progress.

LWC Partners with State Fire Marshal's Office to Offer First-time Training Reimbursement

Launched in March 2023, the partnership between LWC and the Louisiana Firefighter and Emergency Training Academy (FETA) aims to increase the number of firefighters able to attend the Academy and those needing additional medical-related certifications to qualify for jobs, promotions, and/or wage increases. It also seeks to increase the certification, qualification, skills, and abilities of those in the Louisiana Fire Service industry. LWC believes this will accomplish the ongoing goal of increasing the fire service workforce and volunteerism figures, which have been on a concerning decline over the past decade.

Traditionally, a firefighter recruit academy hosted at FETA can cost students and/or their sponsoring fire departments anywhere from \$3,800 to \$6,000. Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) courses can cost \$500-\$1,200. These costs are often prohibitive for the hundreds of volunteer fire departments across the state, leaving their members without the best training, tools, and preparation to provide top-quality service to their communities. This partnership offers the opportunity to change that.

Drive your Future 2.0

Due to the incredible success of the Drive Your Future program, LWC launched Drive Your Future 2.0 in April 2023. Over 95 students received paid tuition thus far.

LWC Partners with Southern University for Teachers Apprenticeship Program

In an effort to recruit, train, and retain qualified educators in Louisiana in 2023, the Louisiana Workforce Commission partnered with Southern University and A&M College for its first Registered Apprenticeship Teachers program. Louisiana joins seven other states offering the program — Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, and Tennessee. Southern is the first historically Black university to participate in the program.

Registered Apprenticeships offer an opportunity to address many challenges related to recruitment and retention, while also creating new professional pathways so that educators can become and remain teachers and leaders in Louisiana for all students. Registered Apprenticeship eliminates some of the cost pressures associated with traditional teacher programs by including an earn-as-you-learn component. This is also an alternative pathway for those that might not have a degree in education.

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) is the sole employment provider for the program. Students will be converted directly into apprenticeship status at the beginning of their second year of the three-year program.

2023

Challenges Met

03

From 2016 to 2023, we endured incredible challenges and made incredible progress. From the high 2016 unemployment rate to the current record-breaking lows, going paperless, setting records for identifying misclassified workers, countless natural disasters, and even a global health crisis, each obstacle served as yet another testament to LWC's continued commitment to be the backbone of Louisiana's workforce.

In August 2016, we experienced an unpredictable storm that caused catastrophic flooding in Louisiana, displacing our residents and creating job loss within our community, which caused our unemployment rate to rise. With the help of aid from the USDOL and Gov. Edwards, we were able to quickly help our residents get back on their feet by providing jobs to aid in disaster recovery. Louisianans remained resilient throughout this unprecedented time.

LWC Announces 2020 First Quarter Unemployment Tax Payment Deferral

Louisiana responded to the devastating effects of the pandemic on Louisiana's businesses by announcing a temporary unemployment tax payment deferral for employers in the first quarter of 2020. While employers were required to file their first quarter 2020 wage and tax reports with the agency by April 30, 2020, payment of the associated taxes was deferred. The goal was to help businesses impacted by COVID-19 stay afloat.

Louisiana UI Claimants Received \$600 worth of Additional Unemployment Benefits

Louisiana residents filing for unemployment benefits received an additional \$600 worth of weekly benefits as promised via the CARES Act. Louisiana was one of only two states in April 2020 that immediately implemented the CARES Act programs, paid Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC). Combined, those programs resulted in more than \$560 million in COVID-19 benefits paid to Louisianans in need.

Between 2020 and 2021, LWC faced a multitude of challenges head on, and even managed to accomplish quite a bit. In the midst of the largest global health crises the world has ever seen, coupled with one natural disaster after another, the Edwards' Administration supported LWC's efforts to obtain federal assistance for Louisiana's workforce and business communities and to ensure our citizens received all of the benefits they were entitled to.

LWC Paid Millions in Lost Wage Assistance

Gov. Edwards continued to ensure Louisiana citizens received payments despite challenges with navigating two federal agencies. We were among the first states to submit an application for lost wage assistance. As a result, Louisiana is one of seven states to have been awarded unemployment assistance from FEMA.

When Disaster Strikes, LWC is Ready to Respond

In September 2021, the Louisiana Workforce Commission's Mobile Workforce Center (MWC) traveled to parishes recovering from Hurricane Ida to help survivors apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA). The LWC also launched additional efforts to support jobs and recovery services after Hurricane Ida by employing people from our own communities to rebuild.

As an agency, we remained focused on continuing to pay benefits and rebuilding Louisiana's workforce and the state's economy. At LWC, work is our middle name. Our goal is to provide the tools, assistance, and knowledge to help shape the workforce for the state of Louisiana.

Our team has risen to the occasion time and time again. As we look ahead, we do so knowing the people of Louisiana are resilient, the challenges we face are not insurmountable, and our agency will remain focused on our core mission of putting people to work.

Leaving Louisiana Better Than We Found It

At LWC, we firmly believe that progress is a true measure of success. One of our goals throughout Gov. Edwards' administration was to learn from and improve our processes and procedures to become the country's best workforce agency. In so doing, we have implemented several new programs and systems and updated our policies and procedures to better reflect the current state of Louisiana's workforce needs. As our work is never truly finished, we have a few new initiatives in the works that we look forward to launching in the coming year.

Phase 1 of the UI Tax modernization project is scheduled to launch in early 2024. The modernized Louisiana Wage and Tax System (LaWATS) will result in significant re-engineering of UI Tax Operations business processes and the replacement of multiple, disparate legacy systems with a single system utilizing current technology to conduct core UI Tax functions of employer registration, wage filing, and unemployment tax collection. The new LaWATS system will provide Louisiana employers and agents with a significantly improved customer experience, including streamlined processes and enhanced self-service options via web technology, improved security and privacy, and expanded ability to identify and reduce unemployment fraud, resulting in a significant reduction in agency processing and staffing costs.

Also, UI Benefits is implementing another exchange under SIDES (State Information Data Exchange System)-Additional Fact-Finding (ADF). SIDES-ADF will allow the state to electronically submit additional separation questions to employers/TPAs to gather more details of the separation. This will enable more timely and quality determinations to be issued by the state's adjudication team. The employer/TPA can also respond electronically to the request. This new process will decrease the need to send out additional mailers/letters, decreasing the postage costs and the amount of paper mail received by UI employers. SIDES-ADF will also allow real-time responses to be automatically available in the unemployment file. This creates a more effective way of processing claims. This will also increase our ability to meet federal quality measurements set by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL).

The LWC is extremely proud of its many successful endeavors over the past seven years. We have created numerous workforce development programs, paid billions in unemployment and workers' compensation benefits, and helped countless Louisiana citizens obtain meaningful careers. Yet, nothing demonstrates LWC's success better than the stories of the actual individuals whose lives we have impacted through our work. There are several programs that have consistently produced incredible stories of success. Below are just a few examples:

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) funded Caleb Brown's tuition, books, and supplies, which were not covered by FAFSA, and assisted with college room and board. Caleb maintained a satisfactory GPA and exemplified the commitment and dedication necessary to successfully complete his vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. Caleb graduated with a Master of Science in Finance from the University of New Orleans in December 2020. Later he obtained a Louisiana Real Estate License and a Broker's License. LRS was able to assist with his fees for application and board licensures, office materials, tools, and proper work attire. Caleb has obtained employment with New Harlem Realty as a Real Estate Broker in Houma, LA. He is employed full time earning \$5,000 monthly with full benefits.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) – Mr. Freeman had over 27 years of work experience as a delivery driver for Bayou State Wholesale Seafood Inc., located in Ball, Louisiana. Bayou State was a small family-owned business that delivered fresh/frozen seafood to restaurants and businesses in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Bayou State shut down its business after 29 years. Mr. Freeman suddenly found himself unemployed as a result.

Mr. Freeman filed for unemployment benefits and several weeks later was selected for the RESEA program. Mr. Freeman loves driving trucks wanted to obtain his CDL. He took the necessary steps to enroll in a CDL program and prepare for the pre-permit test. He completed and passed the pre-permit test with a perfect score in September 2022 and was gearing up for his CDL program. He completed the CDL program in November 2022 and received his permit/license. By December 2022, Mr. Freeman officially became employed as a professional truck driver.

Expungement Initiative – JT is an expungement client who was able to secure a job after getting help filing his expungement. He was struggling to find employment and was told a previous charge on his record was preventing him from being hired even though he was not convicted of that charge. The arrest charge proved to be a deterrent for employers. Staff stepped in to communicate with a potential employer and explained that an "arrest only" offense cannot prevent a person from being hired in LA. At that time, JT had already started the expungement process, and his record would soon be cleared. JT was able to begin work before his expungement was even granted.

Registered Apprenticeship – "Being an apprentice in Local 1846 has been one of the best experiences of my life. The support and encouragement given by leadership, instructions, and my sisters and brothers is something I haven't experienced. I learn something new every day, and I feel assured that I am receiving the best training possible." – Lita Farquhar, Local 1846 Gulf Coast Carpenters and Millwrights Training Trust Fund

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) – "For over 22 years, I worked for Libbey Glass. I was displaced from my job due to the company's decision to shut down operations at the Shreveport plant, effective December 31, 2020. I decided to retire after the decision to shut down the plant. I contacted the TAA program and applied for assistance to help fund my education. Southern University at Shreveport is where I decided to further my education, and I majored in health care to obtain a degree in Phlebotomy. I completed all courses with honors, then applied and passed the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) Board Certification. I officially became certified on February 28, 2022. After graduating and becoming board-certified, I accepted a position at one of my training sites, Ochsner LSU Health. Accolades to the TAA program!" – Theodora Richardson

BY THE NUMBERS

06

During this Administration

The LWC continues its mission by putting people to work and helping the citizens of Louisiana. The data below highlights what we have accomplished from 2016-2023 and includes Labor Market information, Unemployment Insurance claim numbers, COVID-19 programs, fraud collections, treasury offset program collections, and job fairs.

Labor Market Information

The number of people employed in Louisiana has increased by 31,668 since January 2016. The state has experienced its highest levels of employment ever during 2023. In fact, June 2023 recorded the highest number of people employed in the state for the month of June with 2,037,445 people employed.

According to the Census American Community Survey, the median household income in Louisiana was \$45,146 in 2016 and has increased to \$52,087 as of the 2021 figures.

The average annual wage was \$45,622 in 2016 and increased to \$56,605 in 2022 according to Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage data.

Unemployment Insurance Claims Filed

	Initial Claimed Files
2016	119,503
2017	107,446
2018	98,279
2019	91,100
2020	1,133,132
2021	243,468
2022	79,673
2023	42,471

As of July 28, 2023 we have paid the following totals roughly through all of COVID related programs:

PUA	\$ 1,022,508,534.43
FPUC	\$ 6,183,179,179.73
PEUC	\$ 570,830,131.63
LWAP	\$ 575,872,974.93
MEUC	\$ 320,700.00
TOTAL	\$ 8,352,711,520.72

Treasury Offset Program (TOP)

2023	- \$1,788,375
2022	- \$2,733,992
2021	- \$5,665,186
2020	- \$3,226,564
2019	- \$5,433,519
2018	- \$7,810,954
Since implementation	- \$26,658,590

Louisiana Rehabilitation Services

61,746 citizens served since 2016-2023

Rules Promulgated

166 rules were promulgated (Including the 53 from the State Plumbing Board)

Excluding the State Plumbing Board - 113

Mobile Workforce Unit

Deployed 257 times since first deployment in July 2021

Fraud Collections

	Fraud	Fraud Penalty
2016	\$4,158,741.15	\$1,108,751.73
2017	\$2,886,321.26	\$835,407.31
2018	\$2,240,737.40	\$580,572.65
2019	\$3,726,888.60	\$962,287.97
2020	\$4,697,926.99	\$1,230,540.14
2021	\$2,764,142.20	\$848,650.14
2022	\$2,299,908.92	\$610,287.50
2023	\$2,773,001.63	\$712,657.21
Total	\$25,547,668.15	\$6,889,154.65

Job Fairs

	Number of Events
2016	130
2017	157
2018	158
2019	151
2020	74
2021	165
2022	103
2023	94

Press Releases

	Count
2016	141
2017	112
2018	108
2019	108
2020	112
2021	115
2022	36
2023	46

Note: These numbers reflect the number of job fairs LWC directly participated in. There are possibly many more that LWC assisted with.



Office of the Governor
JOHN BEL EDWARDS
2016–2024