



Jacksonville City Council

JSEB Special Committee

Final Report

June 17, 2024

Committee Members

Council Member Raul Arias, Chair

Council Member Ken Amaro

Council Member Mike Gay

Committee Charge

Created through Council President Salem's January 5, 2024, Memorandum, the Jacksonville Small & Emerging ("JSEB") Special Committee was charged to assist the JSEB Program in its operations and to help make Jacksonville a leading small business hub. This memorandum charged the JSEB Special Committee to specifically address the following matters:

- Review current code provisions within Chapter 126 (Procurement Code), *Ordinance Code*, and identify and make recommendations on any key areas for improvement in enhancing JSEB's efforts in recruitment and retention.
- Review and provide recommendations on initiatives and strategies to bolster recruitment and retention.
- Make recommendations on any gaps in governance and pivotal areas identified in order to foster an equitable and thriving small business ecosystem in Jacksonville.

Meeting Dates and Presenters/Guests

- February 22, 2024
 - Gregory Grant, JSEB Administrator
 - Council Member Ju 'Coby Pittman
- March 6, 2024
 - Gregory Grant, JSEB Administrator
 - Council Member Joe Carlucci
 - Michael McCoy, JAXPORT
 - Yetunde Oyewole, JAXPORT
 - Bill Hickey, JEA
 - Wendy Khan, Office of Economic Development
 - Brian Bergen, Office of Economic Development
- April 3, 2024
 - Gregory Grant, JSEB Administrator
 - Gabe Hamda, ICATT Consulting, Inc./Bidmore
- May 22, 2024
 - Gregory Grant, JSEB Administrator
 - Council Member Terrance Freeman
 - Dr. Carlton Robinson, JAX Chamber
 - Chris Budihas, Client Focused Media
 - Ed Randolph, Office of Economic Development
- June 17, 2024

Background

The Jacksonville Small and Emerging Business (JSEB) program was established in 2004 and has undergone several revisions, with the latest in 2021. Starting in 2023, under the leadership of Administrator Gregory Grant, legislative amendments to Chapter 126 began to further refine the program. The JSEB program's objectives include race and gender-neutral goals aimed at supporting Jacksonville's small and emerging business citizens. Additionally, the JSEB program seeks to support the Mayor's vision of making Jacksonville the "Small Business Capitol of the Southeast." Administrator Grant's focused directives encompass education, community, capital, and contracts. The recent developments in the JSEB program span technology advancements, marketing initiatives, staffing enhancements, and legislative amendments. These updates aim to streamline operations, increase visibility, and support the growing needs of the program.

- COJ Technology Solutions: Tentatively scheduled for July 1st, this initiative focuses on the digitization of JSEB processes.
- Marketing Initiatives: Three new campaigns were launched in June to increase program exposure.
- Enhanced Staffing Initiative: Introduced in June to accommodate the expanding demand.
- Legislation Amendments: Created in June to improve program structure and support. The JSEB technology project has brought significant advancements. The digitization of the JSEB application process has been carried out internally, resulting in an approximate cost saving of \$1.4 million for the city. This project also includes the creation of transparency data dashboards

that provide instant reporting for stakeholders, enhancing the program's accountability and transparency. In addition, a dedicated JSEB website is being launched to boost branding efforts. The website features a welcome landing page, customizable subpages for detailed program information, a user-friendly content management system (CMS) for easy updates, ADA compliance, and accessible social media links. These improvements aim to provide a more engaging and accessible experience for users. The JSEB marketing project has seen several new initiatives. Exposure through broadcast TV station WJXT Channel 4 began in June, and additional contractor exposure through Client Focus Media is set to launch in July. The JSEB Ambassador Program, utilizing guerrilla marketing techniques, will also launch in July. Moreover, the COJ JSEB social media marketing is managed through Public Affairs, and the EBO marketing on the LIT TV Network was launched in June. These efforts aim to increase visibility and engagement with the JSEB program. The successful approval of bill 2024-0294 has allowed for enhanced staffing to meet the growing demand for JSEB services. The MyJAX 630-CITY call center has adapted to assist with increased call volumes, launching this initiative in June. Additionally, the COJ City Volunteer Program has recruited several volunteers to support departmental needs, and the City Internship Program has hired four interns to manage the workload and support JSEB initiatives. Both programs were launched in June, reflecting a proactive approach to addressing staffing needs.

Legislation

2024-0294-E – Introduced by the JSEB Special Committee, this Ordinance appropriated \$61,582.35 to provide funding and salary for two new full-time positions within the Equal Business Opportunity Office of the Finance and Administration Department to meet the JSEB program’s staffing needs. These two positions involved a full-time Administrative Aide (an existing position which this legislation moved from part-time to full-time) and an additional Business Compliance Analyst.

2024-0437 (as of June 17, 2024, this bill is in Committees and is scheduled to be up for final action at the June 25, 2024 City Council meeting) – Introduced by the JSEB Special Committee, this Ordinance would amend the Ordinance Code to reflect several changes recommended by Gregory Grant, JSEB Administrator. These changes included:

- Removing the bond enhancement program, as Dr. Grant believed this program to be a redundancy,
- Amending that the recertification process for JSEBs is required every 24 months to every 36 months, as the 24-month timeline has proved to be burdensome to both JSEBs and to JSEB staff, and
- Extending the program graduation timeline for JSEBs from 9 to 15 years and creating the designation of “JSEB Prime Member” for JSEBs after 9 years of participation with a strong encouragement that these JSEBs serve as mentors to other participants, as the existing graduation requirement pushed valuable institutional knowledge out of the JSEB program.

Summary

The JSEB Special Committee held five meetings from February to June 2024.

Prior to February 2024, the JSEB program [provide some background information on the state of the JSEB program prior to this Committee’s work].

Largely because of Dr. Gregory Grant’s vision and leadership, and with input and oversight from the JSEB Special Committee, the JSEB program has made significant strides in its goals of fostering an environment suitable for the flourishing of the small business community in Jacksonville. It introduced two Ordinances, one of which has been approved by council and is awaiting the Mayor’s signature, and one of which is currently in committees and is scheduled for final council action on June 25, 2024.

In addition to these two pieces of legislation, the JSEB Special Committee has also discussed projects relating to technological improvements and marketing that should increase the community’s access to and awareness of the JSEB program.

These technological projects include:

- Digitization of the JSEB application process, which should result in an approximate \$1,400,000 cost savings to the City.
- Installation of Transparency Data Dashboards, which will provide instant reporting for stakeholders.
- Creation of a dedicated JSEB website, which will enhance branding efforts to include a welcome landing page, customizable subpages for program details, a user-friendly content management system, accessibility to social media links. The site will be ADA compliant.

These marketing projects include:

- JSEB exposure through Broadcast TV station WJXT Channel 4, which launched in June 2024.
- JSEB Contractor exposure through Client Focus Media, which will launch in July 2024.
- JSEB Ambassador Program, a guerrilla marketing campaign which will launch in July 2024.
- COJ JSEB Social Media Marketing through the Public Affairs Division.
- Equal Business Opportunity Office Marketing through LIT TV Network, which launched in June 2024.

In addition to the two additional staff positions added through 2024-0294-E, the JSEB program has also made additional staffing efforts, including:

- Utilizing the MyJAX 630-CITY call center, which has provided accommodations to assist with increasing call volume.
- Recruiting volunteers to assist with the growing needs of JSEB through the COJ City Volunteer Program.
- Hiring four interns to assist with the current workload and growing JSEB initiatives through the City Internship Program.

While the Committee in its entirety has been marvelous in accordance with the achievements that have been made to this point, the finish line is still yet to come. This Committee has merely started what needed to be done through the genesis of multiple ordinances coordinating the betterment of JSEB and the City of Jacksonville. These ordinances are signed into law in the coming months and changes will be soon made to the current plan. However, these changes will need to be monitored and the results need to be followed up with as the new legislation comes into effect, so they are seen to completion. I recommend this JSEB Committee to reconvene again in January of 2025 to allot enough time for the current ordinances to be injected into the system, and then be able to identify and rectify any unforeseen issues. Future considerations are also as listed as follows for what still needs to be done, giving efficacy to the need of future JSEB Committees;

Future Consideration - (Replacing the JSEB Monitoring Committee with City Council Presentation meetings to Rules or Finance) - Sec 126.607

Future Consideration - Data tracking changed from "dollar value of contracts awarded" to "dollar value of contract payments" for the 20% city goal. Sec. 126-607

Future Consideration - Disparity Study not being conducted by EBO/JSEB due to managing a race and gender-neutral program. Consider placing this task to the JHRC. - Sec. 126.612

Future Consideration - Minimum Funding Program Requirement - Sec.126-605 to increase by 200k to manage JSEB Entrepreneurship Education and Workforce Development Initiatives.

Upon the submissions of this final report, the JSEB Special Committee has concluded its work with the expectation that JSEB administration will continue to consider ways to better the JSEB program and its effectiveness in ensuring that the small business community thrives. I would like to extend appreciation to Council Members Amaro and Gay for their service on this special committee; to President Salem for establishing the committee; to Dr. Gregory Grant and all JSEB staff for their tireless work to reinvigorate the JSEB program; to all stakeholders, including subject matter experts, small business owners, and Council Members, who have provided valuable institutional knowledge throughout the lifespan of the JSEB Special Committee; and to all City Council, Office of General Counsel, and Council Auditor's Office staff for their assistance.

Raul Arias, City Council District 11