



Strategic Plan

FY 2018 – FY 2022

Kyle Fortson, Chairman
Gerald W. Fauth, III, Board Member
Linda A. Puchala, Board Member



Table of Contents

	Page
I. Overview.....	3
II. Mission.....	4
III. Vision and Values.....	4
IV. Organizational Structure.....	5
V. Stakeholder Engagement.....	6
VI. Agency-Wide Priority Goals.....	9
VII. Strategic Goals.....	10
VIII. Program Goals.....	11
Office of Legal Affairs/Representation.....	12
Office of Mediation Services.....	14
Office of Arbitration Services.....	17
IX. Support Office Goals.....	18
Office of Administration.....	18
Office of Fiscal Services	19
Office of Information Services.....	20
X. Major Management Priorities & Challenges.....	21

I. Overview

The National Mediation Board (NMB) is an independent Executive Branch agency established by the 1934 amendments to the Railway Labor Act (RLA) of 1926. The 1934 amendments to the RLA established the NMB's duties and responsibilities as they related to the railroad industry in the United States. In 1936, the RLA was expanded to include the airline industry.

The NMB is headed by a three-member Board appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Board Members annually self-designate a Chairman. The Board Members provide overall leadership and strategic direction for the Board. The Departmental Directors and General Counsel direct the program operations which include the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), Office of Mediation Services (OMS), Office of Arbitration Services (OAS), and the support offices which include the Office of Administration (OA), Office of Fiscal Services (OFS) and Office of Information Services (OIS).¹

Strategic Plan Planning Process: In compliance with OMB Circular No. A-11 (2016), the NMB has developed and formalized a process to review, evaluate, develop and modify its strategic plan. The NMB managers endeavor to continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of programs mandated under the RLA. Strategic planning and evaluation is an ongoing process with specific milestones outlined throughout the calendar year.

January – February: The strategic planning process commences at the beginning of the calendar year with a review of the NMB Mission Statement, Strategic Goals, and Performance Goals for the agency.

March: Evaluations and assessments are conducted by each program and support office area. Any changes, suggestions, or deletions are forwarded to the Board for review and comment.

April: Approved changes and revisions are incorporated into the draft document and conditionally approved.

May - June: The initial draft the Strategic Plan is submitted to the OMB for a review and comment period.

July: The draft Strategic Plan is circulated to Congress and various stakeholders for review and comment.

August: The draft Strategic Plan will be posted on the NMB website for a review and comment period. Any changes or suggestions are forwarded to the Board for consideration

¹ This Strategic Plan has been developed in compliance with the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, in accordance with guidance found in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), [Circular A-11, June, 2016](#).

September: A full draft of the Strategic Plan is submitted to OMB for review.

December: The final draft of the Strategic Plan is submitted to the OMB for clearance.

February: Concurrent with the President's Budget, the NMB Strategic Plan is published.

II. Mission

Based upon the statutory language², the NMB has an over-arching mission for the entire agency and specific supporting missions for each program area within the NMB.³

Agency Mission: To promote harmonious labor relations in the airline and railroad industries in the United States in order to best avoid an interruption to commerce or to the operation of any carrier engaged therein.

Representation Mission: To facilitate the orderly determination of representation in the airline and railroad industries in the United States.

Mediation Mission: To facilitate the settlement of disputes related to pay, work rules, and working conditions, and to develop innovative approaches to dispute resolution and problem solving for carriers and organizations in the airline and railroad industries in the United States.

Arbitration Mission: To facilitate the settlement of disputes arising from the implementation or interpretation of existing agreements covering rates of pay, work rules, and working conditions.

In keeping with the missions outlined in the Act, the NMB's strategic goals will cover the spectrum of labor relations in the airline and railroad industries, from questions concerning whether workers are represented and which group or individual may represent them, to the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements, to resolution of questions regarding performance under established collective bargaining agreements as well as the supporting services that ensure the capacity to realize these goals in an efficient manner.

III. Vision and Values

The NMB will build on its more than eighty years of success by focusing on its statutory missions and remain committed to a set of basic organizational values:

Personnel: The NMB is committed to recruiting and maintaining a workforce that is second to none in talent, training, and diversity. We will promote an environment that fosters the

² The Railway Labor Act, Section 151a, General Purposes. For a full copy of the RLA, see the NMB [website](#).

³ The NMB's Strategic Plan recognizes the statutory purposes of the Railway Labor Act (RLA) administered by the NMB. These purposes are incorporated as the NMB's overall mission in the Strategic Plan. The NMB has established programs to carry out the individual purposes outlined in the RLA. The representation purpose is carried out by programs in the Office of Legal Affairs. The mediation purpose falls within the programs of the Office of Mediation Services, and the arbitration purpose is carried out by the programs in the Office of Arbitration Services. Offices that support all purposes are the Office of Administration, the Office of Fiscal Services, and the Office of Information Services.

continuous development of leadership, technical skills, and professional skills in all employees;

Public Service: The NMB will strive for excellence by providing high quality products and timely services to the parties and the public;

Collaboration: The NMB will foster an open environment where teamwork is encouraged and professional relationships are based on mutual trust, respect, support, cooperation, and communication; and

Transparency: The NMB will make appropriate information and data available in order to inform the public, Congress, and stakeholders about its activities.

IV. Organizational Structure

The NMB consists of seven organizational structure units, and when fully staffed, has 51 full-time employees as follows:

- Board Members (including Confidential Assistants) – six employees;
- Office of Legal Affairs, including Representation Services, led by the General Counsel – nine employees;
- Office of Mediation Services – fifteen employees;
- Office of Arbitration Services – six employees;
- Office of Administration – six employees;
- Office of Fiscal Services, led by the CFO – four employees; and
- Office of Information Services, led by the CIO – five employees.

In addition, the NMB contracts for services in the areas of Information Services, Arbitration, Personnel Services, Payroll, Finance, Procurement, and Telephone/Internet Voting.

V. Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholders in the work done by the NMB include carrier and organization members in the airline and railroad industries, lawyers, and arbitrators who have a practice related to the RLA, Congressional oversight committees, and members of the public.

The NMB has developed a number of avenues of communication with stakeholders, all of which are active and all of which channel information, assessments, and recommendations to the NMB.

Dunlop I

The Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations⁴ (also known as the Dunlop Commission) was the precursor to more focused groups, the Airline Industry Labor-Management Committee⁵ and the Joint Labor/Management Rail Freight Committee.⁶ These reports, collectively referred to by the NMB as “Dunlop I” made recommendations and set challenges that have guided the NMB for the past two decades.

Dunlop II

In 2009, the NMB formed a successor group to continue the work begun by the Dunlop I Commission. The Dunlop II group⁷ consists of representatives from rail and air labor and management, and has been continually active since its creation.

The NMB meets with the Dunlop II group twice per year to get feedback on agency performance, industry trends, and other information vital to the missions of the NMB.

Section 3 Committee

“Section 3” refers to the section of the RLA that deals with resolution of grievances related to compliance with the terms of collective bargaining agreements in place on airline and railroad properties. The Section 3 Committee consists of principal leaders in the rail industry for both labor and management (e.g., Union Presidents and Vice-Presidents or Directors of Labor Relations for carriers). The NMB meets twice-yearly with the working group to discuss initiatives and get feedback on agency performance in arbitration and grievance mediation.

Arbitration Forum

The Arbitration Forum was formed to obtain feedback from stakeholders who are frequent hands-on users of the Section 3 process. This group includes representatives from rail labor and management as well as a representative from the arbitration community who use the National

⁴ The Commission was formed to look at worker-management relations across all sectors. The Commission published its report in December, 1994.

⁵ The Air Committee issued its report in April, 1996.

⁶ The Rail Committee issued its report in August, 1996.

⁷ The first Dunlop II report was issued in 2010.

Railroad Adjustment Board process, the System Board of Adjustment and Public Law Board processes. The Forum meets periodically to review feedback on the Section 3 process and to discuss implementation of NMB policies.

Passenger Rail Conference

The NMB periodically hosts a Passenger Rail Conference at which representatives from passenger rail labor and management share information about industry trends, critical issues in bargaining, and the status of other agency work in the passenger rail arena.

Freight Rail Symposium

The NMB periodically hosts the Freight Rail Symposiums, at which representatives of rail labor and management for the freight railroads will have the opportunity to share information about industry trends, critical issues in bargaining, and offer feedback to the NMB regarding the status of agency work with the freight railroads.

Presentations to Stakeholder Conferences and Meetings

From time to time, carrier organizations and union organizations hold conferences and meetings at which the NMB is invited to speak. At these conferences NMB staff and Board Members are able to convey information to the parties and the public, and receive feedback about the NMB.

ABA Labor and Employment Law (L&E), Railway-Labor Act Conferences

The American Bar Association L&E meetings feature presentations by the NMB staff and Board Members, and enable interaction with members of the bar who practice before the NMB or are involved in collective bargaining with the parties who operate under the RLA.

ABA Section of Dispute Resolution (SDR)

The NMB staff and Board Members regularly offer presentations at the American Bar Association's SDR conference. At the SDR meetings are members of the bar who practice before the NMB, and who are engaged in collective bargaining with parties operating under the RLA. Also in attendance are arbitrators who are members of the NMB roster. The NMB staff and Board Members are able to gather feedback on critical issues from attendees at each conference.

Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR)

The NMB staff and Board Members regularly offer presentations at ACR conferences. At the ACR meetings are arbitrators who are members of the NMB roster. NMB staff and Board Members are able to gather feedback on critical issues from attendees at each conference.

National Association of Railroad Referees (NARR)

The NMB staff and Board Members regularly offer presentations and participate in panels at annual NARR conferences. Membership in the NARR is limited to those attorneys and arbitrators engaged in RLA work, the vast majority of whom are members of the NMB arbitrator roster. The NMB staff and Board Members are able to gather feedback on critical issues from attendees at each conference.

National Academy of Arbitrators (NAA)

The NMB staff and Board Members regularly offer presentations and participate in panels at annual NAA conferences. At the NAA meetings are arbitrators who practice in both the airline and railroad industries, many of whom are members of the NMB roster, and some are members of the NARR. The NMB staff and Board Members are able to gather feedback on critical issues from attendees at each conference.

National Bar Association (NBA)

The NMB staff regularly participate in annual conferences of the NBA, attended largely by minority members of the American Bar Association. Attending NBA meetings are members of the bar who practice before the NMB and who are engaged in collective bargaining with parties operating under the RLA. Also in attendance are arbitrators who are members of the NMB roster, or who have an interest in joining the NMB roster. The NMB staff are able to gather feedback on critical issues at each conference.

NMB Public Information

The NMB maintains four public information venues through which feedback from the public is obtained:

- The NMB website (www.nmb.gov) is one of the most accessible and informative of government websites, and is clearly offered as an avenue to contact the agency or to give direct feedback;
- The NMB Knowledge Store is the default research tool for practitioners who are involved in the NMB's Section 3 process, and for members of the public. A feedback contact is clearly marked on the Knowledge Store and is routinely used to give direct feedback to the agency;
- The NMB maintains a public information hotline that allows direct access to agency public information staff and which is routinely used to give direct feedback to the agency; and
- The NMB also maintains a public waste, fraud, and abuse hotline and email account. The hotline and email account are solely monitored by the National Labor Relations Board, Office of the Inspector General under a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in January of 2018. The identities of those who contact the hotline and email account are protected under the provisions of the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 and the Inspector General Act of 1978.

VI. Agency-Wide Priority Goals

Priority Goal 1:

Training: The NMB will provide quality training and development opportunities for all staff members to ensure that it can continue to provide its services effectively.

Measures:

- Ensure every NMB employee has an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in each fiscal year.
- Require all supervisors to review and approve each employee's IDP in each fiscal year.
- Annually review, and revise if necessary, the agency training policy to ensure that all staff members have access to remedial, development, and advancement training as appropriate.

Priority Goal 2:

Recruitment: The NMB will, consistent with federal government guidelines and regulations, actively recruit high quality, diverse candidates for positions in all agency offices.

Measure:

- Periodically review and update the agency recruitment plan to ensure the NMB targets diverse candidates and maintains its highly skilled work force.

Priority Goal 3:

Retention: The NMB will continue to maintain an accomplished and knowledgeable workforce by creating a positive work environment and opportunities for growth within the agency.

Measures:

- Identify key skills for each position.
- Create a pathway to advancement within the agency for junior employees to aid succession planning.
- Achieve a rating at or above the small agency average in categories related to employee engagement in the annual Office of Personnel Management employee survey.
- Review the prior year's annual employee satisfaction survey and identify additional opportunities to improve.
- Conduct an internal climate assessment in 2018/2019 to further ascertain areas where the agency excels and where it can improve.

VII. Strategic Goals

NMB Strategic and Program Goals

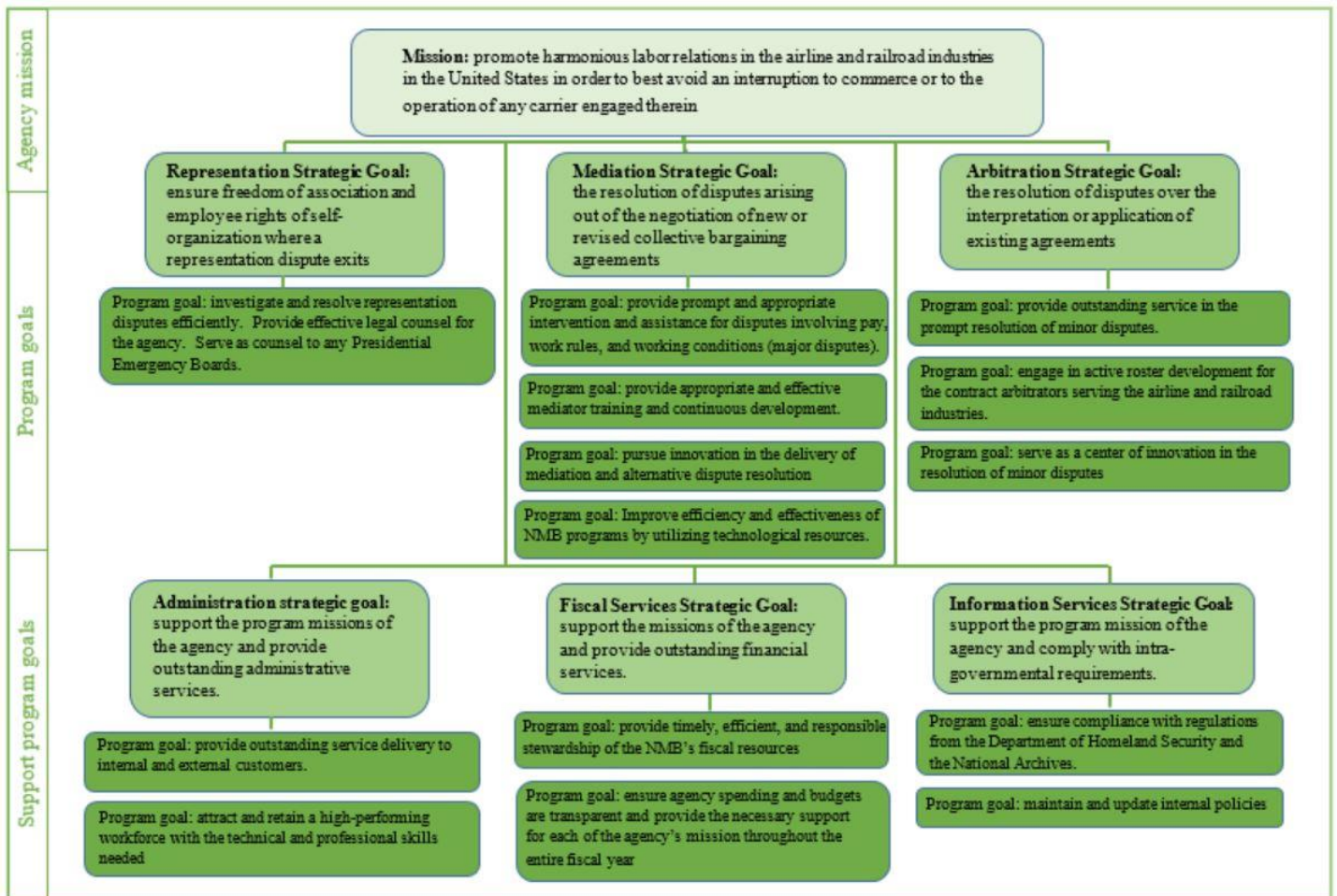
Administration guidance for performance management and analysis encourages the establishment of strategic goals, program goals, and measures that lend themselves to trend analysis instead of snapshot, report card activity reports.

The NMB adopted the standard definitions of goals and programs detailed in Circular A-11, Part 6, by the Office of Management and Budget. In this document, Strategic Goals are overall agency goals that “group multiple program outcome goals.” For the NMB, strategic goals are clearly established by statute and relate directly to the statutory mission of the agency.

In Circular A-11, Program Goals are specific to programs and address performance in areas that are of particular scope and independence under the control of programs. Performance Goals in this document will “target levels of performance over time” for each of the programs.

NMB Statutory Strategic Goals

- The effectuation of freedom of association and employee rights of self-organization where a representation dispute exists.
- The resolution of disputes arising out of the negotiation of new or revised collective bargaining agreements.
- The resolution of disputes over the interpretation or application of existing agreements.



VIII. NMB Program Goals

For purposes of this strategic plan, the NMB has adopted the definition of “program” provided by the OMB: “any organized set of activities directed toward a common purpose or goal that an agency undertakes and describe an agency’s mission, functions, activities, services, projects, or processes.”

Based upon this definition, there are three program areas within the National Mediation Board: The Office of Legal Affairs; the Office of Mediation Services; and the Office of Arbitration Services.

Representation Goals

Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)

Representation Strategic Goal:

The effectuation of freedom of association and employee rights of self-organization where a representation dispute exists. When presented with a question regarding representation, the NMB staff conducts investigations, ascertains the status of the group or individual seeking to represent workers, conducts representation elections, certifies the results of the election, and handles inquiries or challenges to the election.

Representation Program Goals:

Goal: Investigate and resolve representation disputes efficiently. Provide effective legal counsel for the agency. Serve as counsel to any Presidential Emergency Boards.

Note: For all Representation Measures, “respond” indicates contact with the party requesting service or information. Supplying all requested information or services may vary in time depending upon the complexity of the request and other factors related to the request.

Objective A: Prompt investigation of representation disputes and definitive resolution of employees’ representation status for collective bargaining purposes.

Measures:

- Respond to representation applications within two business days of their receipt by the NMB.
- A NMB investigator will be assigned to investigate representation matters within two business days following the initial NMB response, unless the NMB declines to process the application.
- In all cases, the NMB’s determination of whether there is sufficient showing of interest to warrant further investigation will be made within 45 calendar days of docketing.
- In all cases, a certification or dismissal will be issued the next business day after the ballot count.
- All non-appellate representation cases will be completed within 90 calendar days of docketing.

Objective B: Enhance training and development of the OLA staff.

Measures:

- The OLA managers annually held career and skill planning with all OLA staff.
- Each staff member will annually update his or her Individual Development Plan (IDP), identifying a course of continuing education that is reevaluated every 12 months.
- Each year, the General Counsel will create an updated annual departmental training plan to be reviewed and approved by the Board.

Objective C: Enhance outreach opportunities in the legal, labor relations, and alternative dispute resolution communities to better inform stakeholders about developments and increase the skills and experience of OLA employees.

Measures:

Members of the OLA will continue to actively participate as presenters and attendees in conferences sponsored by the American Bar Association, the American Law Institute, and the Association of Labor Relations Agencies.

- The OLA will continue to regularly participate in intra-governmental initiatives with other federal agencies such as the Department of Labor, National Labor Relations Board, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.
- The OLA attorneys will continue to serve as editors of the RLA treatise published by the Bureau of National Affairs to ensure up-to-date information is available to practitioners.
- The OLA will foster partnerships with educational institutions to develop and present research, educational programs, and training programs pertaining to labor and employment law and dispute resolution especially in the railway and airline industries.

Objective D: The OLA staff will provide prompt and efficient assistance to Presidential Emergency Boards.

Measures:

- Maintain continuous industry and agency communication at a level that provides early preparation for Presidential Emergency Board management.
- All OLA staff will be trained on Emergency Board procedures to ensure that multiple Boards could be staffed if necessary simultaneously and/or if existing staff with experience are unavailable.

Objective E: Maintain concise, relevant reference materials that are readily available to the public and which reduce the number of man-hours used to research and respond to inquiries.

Measures:

- The OLA will conduct semi-annual reviews of the Representation Manual and website, updating where appropriate.

- The OLA will review FOIA requests to determine what, if any, documents requested could be posted on the FOIA Reading Room on the NMB’s website to decrease the volume of FOIA requests, and will conduct ongoing reviews thereafter.
- The OLA will expand information available to the public in the representation case section of the NMB’s website.
- The OLA will conduct ongoing reviews of the Representation “Frequently Asked Questions” section on the NMB’s website.

Objective F: Expand the use of technology to further streamline and reduce costs in interference investigations.

Measure:

- Investigate use of voice recognition software and other cost and time saving mechanisms in taking employee statements during interference investigations.

Mediation

Office of Mediation Services (OMS)

Mediation Strategic Goal: The resolution of disputes arising out of the negotiation of new or revised collective bargaining agreements.

Under the RLA, organization and carrier representatives must bargain over what are generally known as “major disputes;” i.e., rates of pay, work rules, and working conditions that ultimately result in collective bargaining agreements. Importantly, in the area of major disputes, the NMB has no authority to impose conditions or to compel the parties to agree to terms other than those to which they mutually and freely agree. The RLA clearly establishes the duties of the parties, which includes the foremost duty, the duty of “carriers and employees to settle disputes.”⁸ The NMB can offer mediatory assistance, and can to an extent control the pace and form of the negotiations. In the end, however, it is the parties who ultimately maintain control of when and if they reach mutual agreement on collective bargaining terms through mediation under Section 6 of the RLA. The NMB also offers mediation to the parties through non-statutory Grievance Mediation (GM) programs under which the parties may take advantage of facilitated problem solving.

Mediation Program Goals:

Goal 1: To provide prompt and appropriate intervention and assistance for disputes involving pay, work rules, and working conditions (major disputes).

Objective A: To provide timely and accurate case processing by updating performance goals and quality control systems for case assignments and case management.

⁸ The Railway Labor Act, Section 152, First, Duty of Carriers and Employees to Settle Disputes. For a full copy of the RLA, see the NMB [website](#).

Measures:

- Applications for Mediation or GM services will be assessed, date stamped, and reviewed by the Director of Mediation Services (DOMS) prior to docketing.
- Applications will be docketed within two business days from the date on which the request was received.
- Docketed cases will be assigned a mediator within five business days of the date on which the case was docketed.
- Assigned mediators will make contact with the parties involved in the case within five business days from the date on which the case was assigned.
- Mediators will submit an initial case report, to include a case management strategy, within five business days of the date of the first meeting with the parties.
- Mediators will submit an updated case report within five business days from the date on which any meeting with the parties concludes.

Objective B: Provide outstanding case management.

Background:

The RLA requires that the parties have “complete independence” in the resolution of disputes arising under the Act. In this statutory environment, NMB mediators may hold meetings, urge the parties to bargain, and engage many strategies to move the parties toward mutual agreement. However, it is the parties who have the responsibility to bargain in good faith and ultimately control the outcome of bargaining. The statutory framework intentionally makes mediation open-ended, and each case is different based on the parties’ interests and circumstance, thereby making it difficult to establish hard time frames for case management. Compared to the RLA, for mediators operating under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), contracts expire and deadlines drive the behavior of both mediators and parties. Under the RLA, contracts become amendable and the status quo is maintained until the parties reach agreement, or until the Board judges that the parties should be released from mediation. Under the RLA, outstanding case management calls for close monitoring of cases and regular reviews of case strategy. Although statistical analysis of past cases indicates that, on average, cases are concluded within 18 months and with approximately 50 days of work “at the table.” These time frames cannot be used as hard standards as every case is different based on, among other things, the specific parties and representatives at the table, the external and internal economic circumstances, and other variables.

Measures:

- In each mediator report, due within five days of the end of any meeting with the parties, the mediator will include an updated case management strategy.
- The Senior Mediators, DOMS, and Board Members will conduct quarterly case review meetings to evaluate the status of all cases one year old or older, and to assess and revise

the case management plan if appropriate. The quarterly review will include discussions of strategies that could potentially be instrumental in the resolution of the case.

- The aged case data abstract and the aged case list will be updated and distributed to the Board Members each quarter.

Goal 2: Provide appropriate and effective mediator training and continuous development.

Objective A: Provide training and orientation for new mediators to ensure their ability to successfully mediate major disputes within the rail and air industries.

Measures:

- Within five days of in-processing, each new mediator will receive a briefing book and undergo a standard new employee orientation.
- Within 20 business days, new mediators will have in place an IDP based on the standard IDP guidelines for NMB employees.
- New mediator training will be completed within 30 days of the mediator's start date.

Objective B: Provide state-of-the-art ongoing training for all mediators.

Measures:

- The NMB will annually review, and revise if necessary, the standard required training for all mediators.
- The NMB will have a mandatory training event encompassing recent developments in the rail or airline industry, or in mediation, five times annually in conjunction with each of the scheduled mediator meetings.
- Each training event will have a designated training case number.

Goal 3: Pursue innovation in the delivery of mediation and alternative dispute resolution services.

Objective: To provide Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) programs that offer innovative mediation and problem solving methods to the parties to improve their ability to resolve disputes expeditiously. Mediation and ADR Services will review and update programs and ensure that mediators are exposed to state of the art ADR approaches to dispute resolution.

Measures:

- Mediation and ADR Services will periodically review, and revise as necessary, all NMB ADR programs to ensure the program reflects best practices.
- Mediation and ADR staff will attend major dispute resolution conferences (e.g., Association for Conflict Resolution, ABA Section of Dispute Resolution), and at the mediator meeting immediately following each major dispute resolution conference,

mediators who attended will provide a summary of the information and materials to the entire mediator corps on information obtained during the conference.

Goal 4: Improve efficiency and effectiveness of NMB programs by utilizing technological resources.

Objective: Provide information and expertise in new and evolving technology appropriate for enhancing Mediation/ADR work.

Measures:

- Utilize the NMB OIS staff as a resource for information regarding IT applications relevant to mediation.
- As available, train mediators and the parties in the use of IT applications relevant to mediation.
- Where appropriate, mediators will offer the use of IT applications relevant to mediation to conduct remote mediation sessions.

Arbitration Goals

Office of Arbitration Services (OAS)

Arbitration Strategic Goal: To facilitate the settlement of disputes arising from the implementation or interpretation of existing agreements covering rates of pay, work rules, and working conditions.

Once a collective bargaining agreement is in place, disagreements regarding whether the terms of the agreement being adhered to are referred to as “minor disputes.” By statute, the NMB may assign arbitrators to decide minor disputes. In the rail industry, the NMB also pays the arbitrator’s fees and costs. A major non-statutory program of the NMB grievance mediation offers a consensual method for resolving minor disputes short of arbitration that reduces costs to the parties and the taxpayers, and can accelerate resolution.

Arbitration Program Goals:

Goal 1: Provide outstanding service in the prompt resolution of minor disputes.

Measures:

- Within 60 days of the assignment of a case, the case will have been decided or scheduled for a hearing.
- If a case is scheduled for a hearing, the hearing will be held within 120 days of the date of assignment.
- If a case has been heard, the decision must be rendered within 90 days of the date of the

hearing.

Goal 2: To engage in active roster development for the contract arbitrators serving the airline and railroad industries.

Measures:

- The NMB will continue its development program for prospective RLA arbitrators to diversify and expand the pool of contact arbitrators.
- At the end of each fiscal year, the Director of Arbitration Services will publish in the annual report, the names of arbitrators used during the fiscal year.

Goal 3: The Office of Arbitration Services will be a center of innovation in the resolution of “minor” disputes.

Measures:

- The Director of Arbitration Services will meet periodically with rail labor and management officials to discuss innovations in arbitration and promote the best practice for more efficient management of resources in resolving minor disputes.

IX. NMB Support Office Goals

There are three support offices within the NMB: the Office of Administration; the Office of Fiscal Services; and the Office of Information Services.

Administration Goals

Office of Administration (OA)

Administration Strategic Goal: To support the program missions of the agency and provide outstanding administrative services.

Administration Program Goals

Goal 1: To provide outstanding service delivery to internal and external customers.

Measures:

- For requests for assistance or service from internal customers made before 12:00 noon, Administration staff will respond on the day the request is made.
- For requests for assistance or service from internal customers made after 12:00 noon, Administration staff will respond before 12:00 noon in the following day.
- External requests for assistance or service will be responded to within two hours of the receipt of the request.

- New Employee Orientation training will be completed for each new employee within one month of the date of employment.
- A Board Member Briefing Book will be available to each new Board Member on the day of his or her confirmation.

Goal 2: Attract and retain a high-performing workforce with the technical and professional skills needed.

Measures:

- Execute the Board's long-term plans for the number and type of employees needed.
- Assist NMB's managers with the staffing process to maintain their ability to meet department goals.
- Continuously develop workforce skills in line with agency requirements.

Fiscal Goals

Office of Fiscal Services (OFS)

Fiscal Strategic Goal: To support the missions of the agency and provide outstanding financial services.

Fiscal Program Goals

Goal 1: To provide timely, efficient, and responsible stewardship of the NMB's fiscal resources.

Measures:

- The NMB contracting personnel will brief the Board on each new contract awarded, and any substantial change or extension of an existing contract to ensure contracts meet the needs of the agency at a reasonable cost.
- The NMB will continue to update requisition procedures for procurement and contracting in accordance with best practices
- To ensure transparent and accountable payments, no later than one week after the end of each month, the NMB will reconcile arbitrator billing with the office responsible for NMB procurement and contracting at the Bureau of Fiscal Services (BFS).
- The NMB staff will process and pay expense vouchers within five business days of receipt of a valid voucher.

Goal 2: Ensure agency spending and budgets are transparent and provide the necessary support for each of the agency's missions throughout the entire fiscal year.

Measures:

- On the fifth day of each month, the CFO will deliver to the Board a current budget report.

- On the fifth day of each quarter of the fiscal year, the CFO will deliver to the Board a review of spending and projection for the remainder of the fiscal year.
- At the end of the fiscal year, the NMB books will be closed and then newly opened for the next fiscal year. This will be completed within three weeks of the last day of the fiscal year.

Information Services Goals

Office of Information Services (OIS)

OIS Strategic Goal: Support the program mission of the agency and comply with intra-governmental requirements.

OIS Program Goals:

Goal 1: Ensure compliance with regulations from the Department of Homeland Security and the National Archives.

Measures:

- The Director, Office of Information Services (DOIS) will ensure the timely and accurate filing of semi-annual Federal Information Security Management Act reports through the MAX.com portal.
- The Senior Agency Official for Records Management and the Records Management Officer will respond to the annual National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) certifications requests.
- The DOIS will coordinate the response to IT related Binding Operational Directives.

Goal 2: Maintain and update internal policies.

Measures:

- The Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) and DOIS will coordinate the annual security review and reauthorization of all NMB information systems.
- Information System Security Plans, the NMB Records Handbook, and NMB's Privacy Policy will be edited and modified by the end of 2018, and reviewed each year thereafter.
- The CISO will submit quarterly cyber-security evaluations to the DOIS including the status of all Plans of Action and Milestones.
- The NMB will contract with third party auditors for a Security Assessment on a bi-annual basis.

Goal 3: Maintain hardware/software architecture and configuration.

Measures:

- The NMB will adopt procedures that ensure all hardware and software procurement is approved by the DOIS.
- The DOIS will ensure that all hardware and software configurations are documented approved and monitored by Information and Communications Technology (ICT). This is inclusive of all approved devices, network hardware, and cloud resources.
- In 2018, the NMB will rewrite the end-user device policy to reflect current concerns.

Goal 4: Fully trained and technology-literate staff.

Measures:

- An annual training plan will be created by the DOIS for mandatory position appropriate training to all NMB personnel for cyber-security, records, and privacy. This training should include general and application-specific instruction.
- By the end of 2019, the OIS will produce procedures and documentation as appropriate for all NMB information system processes.
- By the end of 2018, create an online OIS support request application to allow the tracking of deskside support and improvements to our internal systems.

X. Major Management Priorities

Two significant events in FY 2018 helped to chart the course the NMB will take over the term of the FY 2018 – FY 2022 Strategic Plan: a new Board was appointed; and the GAO submitted their biennial audit report. The Board established the agency’s priorities, and the audit report highlighted challenges the agency must address.

An immediate priority that crosses all program areas at the agency is staffing, recruitment and retention. We are currently staffed at 66 percent of our established FTEs due to retirements, attrition and the hiring freeze from 2017. We are pleased to announce the signing of a new Delegation Order, effective in June 2018, which reorganizes the NMB. The Office of Chief of Staff, the position of Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, and the position of Assistant Chief of Staff (Administration) are eliminated and the NMB is reorganized into the following six (6) offices:

- Office of Legal Affairs (OLA);
- Office of Mediation Services (OMS);
- Office of Arbitration Services (OAS);
- Office of Administration (OA);
- Office of Fiscal Services (OFS); and
- Office of Information Services (OIS)

The heads of each of the six offices now report directly to the Chairman and the two Board Members. The Board Members are delegated the authority to supervise and direct, and to initiate, progress, and sign all personnel actions for the heads of each office. The Board now serves as selecting officials for the heads of each office, and the Board will immediately begin the process of hiring a Director of Fiscal Services (DOFS) and a Director of Information Services (DOIS). We will then fill the remaining vacancies in a measured and systematic way. The Board believes that these changes will greatly improve communications and enable the NMB to operate more efficiently and effectively.

We continue to attempt to accurately and effectively address the human resource challenges identified in the GAO report. The agency benefits from a well selected, diverse, capable, and creative staff. Once hired, our challenge is in the area of retention. OPM survey findings indicated that some staff members felt that they did not have the tools and/or training to fully accomplish their work. We are in the process of updating NMB's training policy and working to improve it. In general, we need to make the agency a better place to work to insure the employees we have remain engaged in their work and responsive to our missions.

The NMB also maintains a public waste, fraud, and abuse hotline and email account. The hotline and email account are solely monitored by the National Labor Relations Board, Office of the Inspector General. The identities of those who contact the hotline and email account are protected under the provisions of the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 and the Inspector General Act of 1978.

Another priority is the role of the Office of Information Services that has become increasingly important in the way we work, and in harnessing and organizing our data. The OIS has developed two customized case management systems, and is currently developing a new agency website that meets federal standards. It is our intention to capitalize on the many possibilities OIS can generate. We will consolidate those areas in the agency that have evolved into OIS functions, such as security and privacy, to join records and information management under the OIS umbrella, thereby leveraging expertise, streamlining workflow, and gaining organizational efficiency. Our OIS staff has begun work on addressing these important aspects of working with technology, and have set deadlines for accomplishing them.

The Board also seeks to reduce the backlog of rail arbitration cases. The effort will be addressed in several ways by placing cases into standardized subject classifications, by scheduling cases of a more serious nature to be heard sooner, by more aggressively encouraging the use of alternative dispute resolution methods, such as grievance mediation, and by grouping like cases together to be heard as one, to resolve disputes. For example, grievance mediation blends the resources and talents of two existing departments in the agency, the Office of Arbitration Services and the Office of Mediation Services to identify and act on rail grievances already docketed, or those that can be resolved before they are docketed.

Uncertainty in funding, and the use of multiple continuing resolutions (CR) instead of full year budgets is a challenge for the agency that compromises planning and creates interruptions in mission and program areas. Our statutory missions require a substantial amount of planning, scheduling, and travel, and involve not only agency employees, but contractors and other parties as well. The uncertainty caused by CRs results in case work delays or last minute compressed sessions.

The NMB will continue to provide the best service possible at the budget levels agreed to by Congress and the President, and will use this strategic plan as a baseline to guide its continuous improvement efforts over the course of the next several years.