New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) Youth Athletics

Final Report

September 22, 2026

Edward Michel, CIG

Inspector General

NEW ORLEANS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Re: <u>New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) Youth Athletics</u>

I certify that the inspector general personnel assigned to this project are free of personal or other external impairments to independence.

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Inspector General

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The Office of Inspector General for the City of New Orleans (OIG) conducted an evaluation of the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission's (NORDC) management of youth athletics teams. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether NORDC had sufficient internal controls in place to ensure youth sports teams complied with organizational policies and the law, and to ensure registration fees and other financial issues surrounding youth athletics were handled properly.

Athletics and other physical activities are associated with increased confidence, lower rates of depression, decreased risk of substance abuse, increased cardiovascular health, and reduced cancer risk for youth.[1] Given the potential for youth sports to improve participants' quality of life, the importance of athletics programming in the lives of many New Orleans youth, and the City's financial investment in NORDC, it was crucial that the organization exercise adequate controls over teams and how funds raised for youth sports programming were managed.

NORDC youth athletics teams were based at parks throughout the city. The vast majority of teams were run by parents and volunteer coaches. NORDC's policies for team management relied on authorized booster clubs to ensure money raised for youth sports was spent appropriately. Booster clubs were community-based organizations formally recognized by NORDC and allowed to sell concessions and charge registration fees for youth sports because they adhered to a set of by-laws that required regular financial reporting and an elected board of directors.

OIG evaluators found that booster clubs were present at only five percent of the playgrounds that hosted NORDC sports teams, leaving teams at other parks with minimal guidance and oversight. NORDC did not collect registration fees in accordance with the City Code, losing approximately $150,000 per year that could have been used to support youth sports programming and jeopardizing fair competition by allowing financial disparities between teams. Further, NORDC failed to enforce its own policies for volunteer coach background checks and spectator behavior, resulting in some participants feeling unsafe at games and

[1] President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, *Benefits of Youth Sports* (President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020), https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS_Report_OnePager_2020-08-31_web.pdf.

NORDC being unable to verify that the coaches entrusted with mentoring young athletes had not been convicted of violent crimes.

Specifically, OIG evaluators found the following:

- NORDC did not maintain adequate records of authorized booster clubs and did not consistently enforce its booster club policies.
- NORDC lacked strategies for recruiting and sustaining booster clubs, and written policies for team management in the absence of booster clubs.
- NORDC did not collect registration fees as prescribed by the City Code, inconsistently collected internal fees, and allowed individual teams to collect money with no oversight.
- NORDC did not consistently enforce rules for coaches and spectators.

To address these deficiencies, the OIG made the following recommendations to NORDC:

- NORDC should develop internal controls for enforcing booster club policies, assign booster club oversight tasks to personnel with appropriate knowledge and experience, and train staff to enforce booster club policies.
- NORDC should develop realistic, proactive strategies and written guidelines for recruiting new booster clubs and managing youth sports at playgrounds where no booster clubs exist.
- NORDC should establish clear and enforceable fees, centrally collect a single fee for all teams, and adopt an electronic payment process.
- NORDC should address pervasive deficiencies in its background check practices, create formal security protocols, and work with the City to explore ways to expand options for game security.

In its official response, NORDC accepted recommendations 3 and 4 and partially accepted recommendations 1 and 2.

I. Objectives, Scope, and Methods

The Office of Inspector General of the City of New Orleans (OIG) conducted an evaluation of the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission's (NORDC) policies and procedures with regard to youth athletics teams between January 2024 and September 2025. The objectives of the evaluation were to determine whether NORDC had sufficient internal controls to ensure teams complied with departmental policies and the law and to assess whether NORDC's controls for registration fees, money handling, and other financial issues related to youth athletics were adequate.

In conducting the evaluation, OIG staff reviewed City laws, NORDC policies, and best practices for managing youth sports organizations. Pursuant to Section 2-1120 of the Code of the City of New Orleans and La. R.S. 33:9613, evaluators interviewed personnel and obtained documents from NORDC. Evaluators also surveyed NORDC youth sports coaches and interviewed current and former coaches.

This evaluation was performed in accordance with the Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General for Inspections, Evaluations, and Reviews.[2] OIG evaluators were greatly assisted in the preparation of this report by the full cooperation of NORDC and its employees.

[2] Association of Inspectors General, "Quality Standards for Inspections, Evaluations, and Reviews by Offices of Inspector General," *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* (New York: Association of Inspectors General, 2022).

II. Introduction

In New Orleans, public recreational programs, like youth sports leagues, are provided through the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC), a commission of the City of New Orleans whose mission is to "advance the physical, mental, and social well-being of New Orleanians by providing safe and welcoming environments for recreational, athletic, and cultural experiences."[3] The City of New Orleans (the City) allocated $19,382,748 from the General Fund to NORDC in its 2025 Adopted Annual Operating Budget, an increase of $2,029,871 from the previous year.[4] This significant investment of public resources was aimed at, among other things, supporting NORDC's public recreation facilities and athletic programming.

NORDC youth athletics teams were based at parks throughout the city, called "active playgrounds." In 2025, these teams served more than five thousand registrants, an increase of nearly five hundred from the previous year. NORDC offered basketball, baseball, softball, tee ball, flag football, tackle football, soccer, and track and field. The vast majority of teams were run by parents and volunteer coaches.

Athletics and other physical activities are associated with increased confidence, lower rates of depression, decreased risk of substance abuse, increased cardiovascular health, and reduced cancer risk for youth.[5] Given the potential for youth sports to improve participants' quality of life, the importance of athletics programming in the lives of many New Orleans youth, and the City's financial investment in NORDC, it was crucial that the organization exercise adequate controls over teams and how funds raised for youth sports programming were managed.

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[3] City of New Orleans, *2025 Adopted Annual Operating Budget* (New Orleans, LA: City of New Orleans, 2024), https://nola.openbook.questica.com/#/budget-book/20f8ecf6-1840-492b-86e1-d967d9792842/10328772-2e8a-44ea-8392-a41b49d4887f.

[4] Ibid.

[5] President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, *Benefits of Youth Sports* (President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020), https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS_Report_OnePager_2020-08-31_web.pdf.

III. Oversight of Booster Clubs

To support the administrative side of managing youth sports teams, NORDC allowed parks to develop booster clubs, which could handle finances, fundraising, and other resources for teams. NORDC policies and procedures for handling team money were focused almost entirely on booster clubs. Together, the policies laid out a process for formally recognizing booster clubs at NORDC parks, described the relationships between booster clubs and NORDC, and set forth requirements for how booster clubs operated and handled money.[6]

NORDC policies allowed for only one booster club at each park.[7] In order to be recognized, a booster club needed to recruit twenty members, conduct an election of officers, obtain a bank account, and submit an application to NORDC.[8] Booster club applications were required to be approved by NORDC's booster club liaison, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).[9]

NORDC's *Booster Club By-Laws* (*By-Laws*) set out controls aimed at ensuring booster club money was appropriately collected, documented, and spent. The *By-Laws* authorized booster clubs to determine registration fees for athletics and required those fees to be submitted in writing to NORDC.[10] Despite the booster club's right to officially establish registration fees for athletics programming, NORDC's *Booster Club Policies and Procedures* explicitly stated that no child could be turned away from NORDC programs as the result of financial hardship. Instead, booster clubs were instructed to accept family members' volunteer hours in lieu of the assessed fees.[11] The *By-Laws* also explicitly prohibited individual team

[6] New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *NORDC Booster Club By-Laws*, Revised January 2019, https://nordc.org/nordc/media/Assets/Files/Booster-Club-By-Laws-Adopted-19_1.pdf; New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *NORD Booster Club Code of Ethics*, Revised February 2019, https://nordc.org/nordc/media/Assets/Files/NORD-Booster-Club-Code-of-Ethics_1.pdf; New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *Application for Booster Club Recognition*, Revised June 2019; New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *Booster Club Policies and Procedures*, Revised May 2017; New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *NORD Concessions Privileges Agreement*, Revised May 2019, https://nordc.org/nordc/media/Assets/Files/NORD-Concessions-Privileges-Agreement.pdf.
[7] NORDC, *Booster Club Policies and Procedures,* 1.
[8] Ibid., 5, 7.
[9] NORDC, *Application for Booster Club Recognition*.
[10] NORDC, *Booster Club By-Laws*, 10.
[11] NORDC, *Booster Club Policies and Procedures,* 2.

coaches from collecting any fees or donations unless they were also elected officers of a recognized booster club.[12]

Booster clubs could raise additional money by selling concessions, a privilege not allowed at playgrounds without booster clubs.[13] NORDC required booster clubs to submit a concession rights agreement each year, maintain a valid permit from the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), and designate at least one Food Safety Manager, who was required to be certified by the LDH.[14] The *By-Laws* further allowed booster clubs to raise money through board-approved sponsorship agreements.[15]

The ability to collect money through concession sales and sponsorships came with the responsibility of documenting and reporting financial information to NORDC through an annual financial report and quarterly financial reviews throughout the year.[16] The booster club's board of directors, whose election was overseen by a NORDC staff person, had the responsibility to make all financial decisions on behalf of the organization.[17] An elected treasurer was required to maintain accurate financial records for the organization, deposit booster club funds in an officially-designated bank account, and provide financial reports to booster club membership.[18] The treasurer was further charged with paying for board-approved expenses and signing checks, which required double endorsement by the treasurer and board president.[19]

Finding 1: NORDC did not maintain adequate records of authorized booster clubs and did not consistently enforce its booster club policies.

While NORDC's *Application for Booster Club Recognition* and *Booster Club By-Laws* established a clear process for documenting and recognizing booster clubs, there was disagreement about which and how many active booster clubs NORDC had. NORDC's CEO informed OIG evaluators that NORDC had "one and a half" active Booster Clubs, stating that the Commission recognized Lakeview Boosters Club

[12] NORDC, *Booster Club By-Laws,* 11.
[13] Ibid., 16.
[14] Ibid., 15-16; NORDC policies sometimes referred to the Louisiana Department of Health under its previous name, the Department of Health and Human Services, or by the acronym DHH.
[15] Ibid., 9.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 5, 9.
[18] Ibid., 7-8.
[19] Ibid., 7-9.

(Lakeview Boosters) and the Harrell Booster Club (Harrell Boosters), which was struggling to sustain itself.[20]

In a subsequent interview, NORDC's Chief Programming Officer (CPO) informed evaluators that Lakeview Boosters was the only active booster club at a NORDC park. However, NORDC provided the OIG with current concessions agreements, financial statements, and permits for both Lakeview Boosters and Harrell Boosters and reported that there had been no booster clubs dissolved since 2019. Contradicting both the CEO and the CPO, the NORDC employee responsible for collecting financial reports and paperwork from booster clubs did not acknowledge Harrell Boosters at all and stated that NORDC recognized only Lakeview Boosters and St. Patrick Booster Club, Inc. (St. Patrick), which had not been mentioned by any other NORDC representatives. Despite this assertion, OIG evaluators learned St. Patrick was not actually operating as an officially recognized NORDC booster club.

NORDC's inability to easily and consistently identify all active booster clubs indicated significant deficiencies in the organization's recordkeeping and oversight. While NORDC had strong written policies for booster clubs, the organization's capacity to enforce these rules was significantly hindered by the fact that it could not even identify all existing booster clubs. Further, NORDC's inability to identify all booster clubs meant that at least one organization was operating a concession stand and collecting money on behalf of NORDC facilities and programming without substantive oversight. As such, there was a risk that parents and other community members believed NORDC oversaw the management of their contributions when, in actuality, it did not.

LAKEVIEW BOOSTERS

Lakeview Boosters at Lakeview Playground was the only organization that all NORDC representatives the OIG spoke to agreed was an active booster club. As such, the OIG evaluated NORDC's enforcement of booster club requirements with regard to Lakeview Boosters. Evaluators explored Lakeview Boosters' compliance with NORDC rules as a way to determine whether NORDC adequately enforced its own policies. Instances in which NORDC could not demonstrate Lakeview Boosters' compliance with booster club policies indicated deficiencies in tracking

[20] Note: NORDC's CEO resigned after the end of the period under review. He is referred to as the CEO throughout this report because he was in charge of the organization during the entire period of review.

and enforcing the oversight mechanisms designed to ensure booster clubs' resources were well-managed. The focus of this evaluation was NORDC's oversight mechanisms, rather than Lakeview Boosters' operations.

AREAS OF COMPLIANCE

Lakeview Boosters was governed by NORDC requirements and its own organizational by-laws (the Lakeview By-Laws). In accordance with NORDC's *By-Laws*, the Lakeview By-Laws required sports registration fees to be set by the Lakeview Boosters Board of Directors.[21] Board meeting minutes showed Lakeview Boosters' compliance with this requirement.

In accordance with NORDC's *By-Laws*, Lakeview Boosters indicated that they collected fees centrally and did not allow coaches to collect or handle team money. The organization used a software product called Playmetrics to manage registration and fee collection for all sports teams. Playmetrics allowed Lakeview Boosters to collect registration forms and fees electronically, removing the potential for coaches to misplace money or use it for personal purposes.

The Lakeview By-Laws authorized the organization's Board of Directors to comply with NORDC's requirement regarding financial hardship by waiving dues based on financial hardship by a majority vote of the Executive Board.[22] A representative of Lakeview Boosters informed OIG evaluators that the organization recently allocated grant funds toward financial aid for needy youth athletes and had provided fee waivers for all athletes who provided proof of financial need.

Lakeview Boosters reported that they adhered to NORDC's financial controls by requiring two signatures for every check. The Board also discussed finances and approved youth athletics expenses, like uniform costs, at public meetings. Lakeview Boosters reported that they also employed an accountant to manage the organization's financial reporting obligations.

AREAS OF NON-COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT FAILURES

NORDC policies required booster clubs to submit concession rights agreements each year, maintain a valid permit from LDH, and designate at least one certified Food Safety Manager.[23] NORDC provided the OIG with a valid, up-to-date food

[21] NORDC, *Booster Club By-Laws*, 10; Lakeview Booster's Club, *By-Laws,* 1.
[22] NORDC, *Booster Club Policies and Procedures*, 2; Lakeview Booster's Club, *By-Laws*, 2.
[23] NORDC, *Booster Club By-Laws*, 15-16.

service permit for Lakeview Boosters and a Concession Rights Agreement signed by the president and vice president of the organization. However, the Concession Rights Agreement provided by NORDC was an outdated version of the form that did not include NORDC's current requirement that a booster club maintain a certified food safety manager. A representative of Lakeview Boosters informed OIG evaluators that the organization had not been required to submit Concession Rights Agreements in the past and had only submitted the current one because NORDC reached out to them directly and asked for them to sign the form "ASAP." Lakeview Boosters' signed Concession Rights Agreement was dated July 12, 2025, approximately two weeks after the OIG requested copies of the agreement from NORDC.

NORDC's *Booster Club By-Laws* required booster clubs to submit quarterly financial statements and annual financial reports.[24] NORDC provided OIG evaluators with evidence that it collected at least some financial reports in the form of balance sheets from Lakeview Boosters. However, NORDC did not have Lakeview Boosters' annual reports from either 2023 or 2024 on file. Lakeview Boosters provided the OIG with evidence that detailed Profit and Loss Statements had been created for the end of 2023 and all of 2024, however NORDC did not have the documents on file. A representative of Lakeview Boosters stated that NORDC only occasionally asked for quarterly financial reports and never asked for year-end financial statements. This indicated NORDC failed to enforce the reporting requirements laid out in its booster club policies.

EVALUATION OF FINANCIAL RECORDS

It was unclear whether NORDC reviewed or evaluated booster club financial statements in any substantive way. When asked what criteria were used to evaluate the financial statements, NORDC administrators stated that they intended for the booster club liaison to look for significant revenue due to concession sales and registration fees. NORDC's CEO stated that an evaluation of booster club financial documents should ensure that expenses were limited to things that supported programs and facilities at their designated parks. However, the NORDC employee charged with reconciling booster clubs' financial statements informed OIG evaluators that they had received no training for the role and did not know what the expectations were for assessing the documents.

[24] Ibid., 9.

Lacking clearly-communicated standards or training regarding evaluation of financial statements, NORDC missed potentially problematic information contained in booster club records. For example, the OIG reviewed financial documents in the possession of NORDC showing that Harrell Boosters accepted a one-thousand-dollar donation to support "championship activities" for an athletics team, including shirts, transportation, and food. The funds were not deposited into Harrell Boosters' organizational bank account, in violation of NORDC's *Booster Club By-Laws*.[25]

Harrell Boosters had also accepted a $1,550 donation for the purpose of providing monetary assistance for holiday meals. Harrell Boosters provided NORDC with a copy of a disbursement confirmation, outlining the names, dates, and amounts of six individual disbursements. OIG evaluators found this money was never deposited into Harrell Boosters' bank account, and no payments appeared to have been made from the account in the amounts of the individual disbursements. Therefore, NORDC had no way of confirming the money was distributed in compliance with the law. These alleged transactions also violated NORDC's *Booster Club By-Laws*, which stipulated that the treasurer must deposit all money collected by the club in an organizational bank account.[26] The potential violations should have prompted investigation of the transactions by NORDC.

Despite the presence of these transactions in NORDC's records, the staff member responsible for reviewing the documents informed OIG evaluators that they had never identified any questionable financial documents.[27] The fact that NORDC did not identify these violations of *Booster Club By-Laws* indicated that its policies and procedures for evaluating financial records were inadequate or unenforced, limiting the transparency and accountability intended by requiring those very controls.

NORDC officials indicated that frequent personnel changes were a factor in the organization's difficulty enforcing policies. They further acknowledged that there was no formal, written job description for the booster club liaison. High staff turn-over, when combined with a lack of written expectations for the booster club liaison, led to a lack of consistency and confusion regarding the scope and methods of the liaison's job responsibilities.

[25] Ibid., 7.
[26] Ibid.
[27] The OIG did not investigate whether the funds were misappropriated.

NORDC had an obligation to verify compliance with its booster club policies. Because NORDC failed to maintain adequate documentation of booster clubs and did not consistently enforce its policies for booster club oversight, the organization could not ensure that booster club representatives adequately managed financial matters and food safety.

Recommendation 1: NORDC should develop internal controls for enforcing booster club policies, assign booster club oversight tasks to personnel with appropriate knowledge and experience, and train staff to enforce booster club policies.

NORDC's official booster club policies outlined guidelines for ensuring that funds were managed for public benefit rather than private gain. However, lack of enforcement, particularly weak recordkeeping and unclear expectations of the booster club liaison, led to a situation in which compliance with many booster club policies was, in practice, voluntary. NORDC should create strong internal structures that allow the organization to effectively oversee booster clubs regardless of staff turn-over.

NORDC should draft a written job description for its booster club liaison and identify clear lines of authority within the organization. NORDC's existing policies specify many responsibilities for the booster club liaison. The organization should synthesize them into a single document that lays out expectations for the liaison and assign one or more members of NORDC's leadership team to ensure the liaison adequately enforces booster club policies. Doing so will make it easier for the booster club liaison to identify the tasks required of their role and for NORDC to hold the liaison accountable for completing those tasks.

NORDC should further assist the booster club liaison by providing clear guidance and continual training based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities identified in the job description. In particular, NORDC should draft criteria for evaluating booster clubs' financial statements and train the liaison on those criteria. NORDC should also provide the liaison with training on identifying indicators of fraud.

Further, NORDC should develop written procedures for storing, filing, and evaluating documents associated with booster clubs. These procedures should outline a process though which paperwork for each booster club is organized in electronic files so all relevant staff have access and missing information is easier to identify.

Finally, NORDC's *Application for Booster Club Recognition* stated that certificates of recognition were issued for the period of one year.[28] NORDC should design and implement a system for re-certifying booster clubs annually through the booster club liaison or another authorized NORDC representative. Preparation for recertification may include approval of updated concessions agreements, food handling certificates, and financial statements. The process should include clear instructions for what should happen if paperwork is not submitted on time or other policies are not followed.

[28] NORDC, *Application for Booster Club Recognition,* 2.

NORDC's rules for booster clubs encompassed several areas of team management that were relevant to all parks and playgrounds with youth athletics teams. Policies governing NORDC Booster Clubs acknowledged the importance of ensuring money collected on behalf of youth athletics was managed in a transparent and ethical manner. According to the *NORD Booster Club Code of Ethics,* "It [was] essential to the proper operation of NORDC that booster club members be impartial and that membership in the booster club not be used for private gain, and that there be public confidence in the integrity of government."[29]

NORDC's booster club policies were consistent with controls recommended by non-governmental entities as well for handling the finances and governance of recreational sports teams. Little League, a non-profit that sponsored youth baseball and softball programming through locally-managed affiliate organizations, recommended Local Leagues establish a governance structure based on an elected Board of Directors.[30] That Board of Directors was authorized to establish "reasonable" registration fees for youth sports, but was prohibited from turning away youth athletes due to their parents' inability to pay.[31] In an effort to "equalize the benefits of the Local League," participants were prohibited from soliciting money for individual teams.[32]

Little League also recommended financial controls for Local Leagues. Its *Best Practices for Your League's Finances* recommended producing a budget each year and providing it to participants during registration, which could help "explain how registration fees [were] set and why fundraisers [were] necessary."[33] The organization further recommended Local Leagues exercise internal controls by maintaining a central bank account, documenting expenditures, requiring dual endorsement on checks, and preparing annual financial reports.[34] While these

[29] NORDC, *NORD Booster Club Code of Ethics,* 1.
[30] Little League, Constitution Sample, art. IV, §1.
[31] Little League, Constitution Sample, art. III, §4; Little League Regulations, Regulation XIII (c) – Commercialization.
[32] Little League, Constitution Sample, art. IX, §2.
[33] "Best Practices for Your League's Finances," Little League, accessed January 12, 2026, https://www.littleleague.org/university/articles/best-practices-for-your-leagues-finances/.
[34] Little League, Constitution Sample, art. V §5 and art. IX §1.

expectations were not binding on NORDC, they further highlight the significance of governance and financial controls for youth sports.

Finding 2: NORDC lacked strategies for recruiting and sustaining booster clubs, and written policies for team management in the absence of booster clubs.

NORDC's strategy for ensuring proper team management focused entirely on booster clubs. NORDC's CEO stated that the organization's goal was for all parks with youth sports teams to have booster clubs that could support facilities maintenance and programming through concession sales. However, NORDC failed to foster booster clubs at the vast majority of parks, leaving most coaches and teams without guidance for managing team finances and without authorized ways to raise additional money for programming and facilities maintenance.

NORDC made attempts to realize its goal of having booster clubs at every park, but those attempts were unsuccessful. The CPO informed evaluators that NORDC held an event in 2025 to provide interested parties with information about the benefits of booster clubs and how to form one. However, no new booster club applications were submitted as a result of the event. The booster club liaison stated they also sent out an email blast encouraging community members to form booster clubs but received no response.

NORDC staff identified additional barriers to recruiting and maintaining booster clubs. They informed evaluators that parents sometimes attempted to form booster clubs during the popular football season, but interest waned in the off-season. Additionally, NORDC's leadership stated that many people did not want to take on the responsibility of running a booster club.

NORDC representatives informed OIG evaluators that NORDC maintained no rules for team management at parks where no booster clubs existed. NORDC leadership reported that this situation was the result of relying on informal practices and not realizing that formal, written policies were necessary. As a result, with only two of the organization's forty-two active parks having some type of official booster club, 95 percent of active NORDC parks operated without any formal rules for team management.

OIG evaluators conducted a survey of coaches to explore the variety of financial management practices and fee structures for teams in the absence of any official policies from NORDC.[35] Most teams were coached by volunteers, but some coaches were employed by NORDC as site facilitators. OIG evaluators surveyed volunteer coaches and employee coaches separately because NORDC administrators reported that employee coaches were not allowed to collect or handle any money on behalf of teams, although the organization lacked policies to that effect.

Evaluators found the methods for collecting team fees varied. Thirteen of the eighteen volunteer coaches who responded to the survey (72 percent) said they collected money for the team themselves. Five volunteer coaches (28 percent) reported that parents collected money instead of or in addition to the coach. Teams coached by NORDC staff members were more likely to assign money collection duties to a parent than those coached by volunteers. Seven of the staff coaches who responded to the survey (64 percent) said at least some of their teams' fees were collected by parents.

However, employee coaches, who NORDC said were prohibited from handling team money, still collected funds on behalf of their teams in some cases. Of the eleven staff coaches who responded to the OIG survey, four (36 percent) reported that they collected money on behalf of their teams. Additionally, OIG evaluators conducted a follow-up interview with a volunteer coach, who stated that the NORDC staff member in charge of supervising his park also managed team budgets and collected money from parents.

Some team fees were collected in ways that were not easily traceable. Fifteen of the volunteer coaches who responded to the survey (83 percent) said that their teams collected at least some money in cash. Similarly, seven staff coaches (64 percent) reported that their teams collected fees in cash.

Of those who responded to the OIG survey, 100 percent of employee coaches and 67 percent of volunteer coaches said their teams did not have their own bank accounts. This was inconsistent with best practices issued by Little League and NORDC's *Booster Club By-Laws,* which stated that organizations sponsoring youth sports should maintain their own bank accounts.[36] Other best practices for financial management, like reporting requirements and the use of double

[35] The response rate to the volunteer survey was low (eighteen responses to 283 surveys), and NORDC could not provide a reliable list with contact information for all coaches. The OIG is using survey responses to illustrate the spectrum of team practices rather than the exact percentage of teams participating in each activity.
[36] NORDC, *Booster Club By-Laws*, 9; Little League, Constitution Sample, art. IX §7.

endorsements on checks, were only possible if organizational funds were segregated in separate bank accounts. Without dedicated team accounts or written financial management guidelines, well-meaning coaches faced the risk of accidentally co-mingling team money with personal funds. Further, NORDC had no way of preventing coaches from purposely misappropriating team funds.

While NORDC officials told OIG evaluators that no child could be turned away from sports programming based on an inability to pay registration fees, they stated they were unaware of any written policy on financial hardship other than the one outlined in the *Booster Club Policies and Procedures*. In the absence of clear written guidelines for teams without booster clubs, coaches reported a spectrum of responses to financial hardship. Many coaches reported paying registration fees themselves for children in need. Other coaches said the community rallied together to raise the funds necessary for a child's registration fee. Still other coaches simply reported that the child was allowed to play but did not specify whether any money was collected on behalf of the child.

While the majority of coaches stated that children were not turned away from NORDC athletics as a result of financial hardship, some survey respondents told the OIG that children could not play NORDC sports if they could not pay registration fees. In fact, one volunteer coach and one NORDC employee coach responded that they believed NORDC policy actually required children to be prevented from participating if they could not pay. This indicated that NORDC had not effectively communicated its policies to all of the volunteers and staff who were responsible for implementing them, leaving some youth at risk of being turned away from athletics programming in which they should have been allowed to participate.

NORDC policy stated only booster clubs were allowed to sell concessions or conduct other fundraising efforts, and NORDC representatives reported that they investigated reports of unauthorized concessions and stopped concession sales that occurred outside of authorized booster clubs. However, survey responses indicated that some individual teams did sell concessions or other snacks. Evaluators also reviewed one pending booster club application submitted to NORDC showing that community members had conducted organized and ongoing concession sales without official authorization. These unauthorized concession sales left NORDC with no way to ensure food safety guidelines were followed and profits were properly managed.

NORDC's reliance on booster clubs for oversight despite most parks not having one meant that the entity had no mechanisms to monitor critical youth sports operations at most parks.

Recommendation 2: NORDC should develop realistic, proactive strategies and written guidelines for recruiting new booster clubs and managing youth sports at playgrounds where no booster clubs exist.

NORDC should develop a proactive approach to recruiting and fostering new booster clubs. In addition to its email blasts and formal information sessions, NORDC should explore more personal ways of reaching out to community members who exhibit the interest and capacity to found booster clubs. The organization should work with park staff, who have existing relationships with parents and community members, to identify potential booster club founders. Additionally, NORDC should actively work to connect new and potential booster clubs with informal mentorship opportunities.

Regardless of NORDC's efforts, booster clubs may not be feasible at all playgrounds. NORDC should approach its relationships with each playground on an individual basis. For example, NORDC staff reported that, if parks focused on a single sport, some booster clubs struggled to remain viable in the off-season. NORDC should explore creative approaches to addressing this issue. The organization could potentially develop guidelines for a seasonal or scaled-down booster club that operates during one particular season, continues to submit financial statements throughout the year, but has fewer requirements for regular meetings year-round.

NORDC should also use existing mechanisms for developing formal relationships with community groups other than booster clubs. NORDC had Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs) with a number of community organizations to establish mutually beneficial relationships for operating and maintaining NORDC properties. These agreements granted many of the rights and privileges booster clubs enjoyed but did not place as many requirements on the organizations.

NORDC may choose to explore similar arrangements with other organizations. Community groups like neighborhood associations, churches, and schools already have a vested interest in the vibrancy of New Orleans neighborhoods and the lives of youth. Many of them also have existing organizational structures that provide a control environment that could allow NORDC to authorize concession sales without requiring as much hands-on involvement in elections or other governance. NORDC should develop a list of internal controls an organization should have to be eligible for such an agreement and work with community groups, where appropriate, to develop CEAs that provide public benefit.

Finally, NORDC should draft formal written policies for team management in the absence of booster clubs. Not every park will have a booster club and certain rules should apply to the management of all youth sports teams. These policies should include guidelines regarding whether individual teams are allowed to collect money and, if so, how that money should be handled and documented. They should also include an official statement about the right of all children to participate in athletics programming, regardless of their families' ability to pay registration fees. Further, NORDC should draft written policies for staff members who also coach athletics teams, clearly stating that employee coaches are not allowed to handle money on behalf of teams and establishing oversight mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance.

The Code of the City of New Orleans (the Code) established a fee schedule for renting NORDC facilities and registering for NORDC programs like summer camps and seasonal sports.[37] The Code required that City department heads submit their proposed fee schedules to the City Council each year, adjusting fees "to account for inflation or other relevant factors."[38] NORDC's current schedule used a "graduated scale based on family income."[39] In the case of seasonal sports registration, fees were set as follows: fifteen dollars for athletes whose families had below average income; forty-three dollars for participants from average income families; and sixty-four dollars for children whose families had above average income.[40]

According to the City Code, families could submit proof of income through "documentation provided for participation in programs of the Orleans Parish Schools, or other documentation approved by the director of recreation."[41] In contrast to the fees established in the Code, the NORDC Athletics Registration Check List posted on the NORDC website required only "a $5 registration fee per participant."[42]

NORDC was accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). CAPRA's accreditation standards required NORDC to maintain a "revenue policy that is periodically updated regarding fees and charges for services and the strategies and methodologies for determining fees and charges and levels of cost recovery."[43]

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[37] Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 2-1102(A).
[38] Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 70-553(a) and (b).
[39] Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 2-1102(A)(7)(a).
[40] Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 2-1102(A)(7)(b).
[41] Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 2-1102(A)(7)(a).
[42] "Athletics-Registration-Form-2023.pdf," How to Register, Baseball, New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, accessed March 27, 2025; Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 2-1102(A)(7)(b).
[43] Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, *The National Accreditation Standards, Sixth Edition* (National Recreation and Park Association, 2019), 92, https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/4ecbd8c4801e494f82c38169b0aedc20/capra-national-accreditation-standards-master-document-revised-2023.pdf?communitykey=2d7ebdfa-73f2-4b7c-930f-7ff32663f0d9&tab=librarydocuments.

Finding 3: NORDC did not collect registration fees as prescribed by the City Code, inconsistently collected internal fees, and allowed individual teams to collect money with no oversight.

FEES COLLECTED BY NORDC

NORDC's actual registration fee for seasonal sports differed significantly from those established by City law. Although the Code listed a forty-three-dollar registration fee for seasonal sports for average income families, NORDC officials stated that until recently the organization did not charge any registration fee at all. The OIG calculated a rough estimate of the revenue NORDC lost by choosing not to collect the fees outlined in the City Code.[44] If NORDC had collected the average-income registration fee from all registrants living above the poverty level it could have raised as much as $150,000 for youth sports programming in 2025.

Instead, in the past few years NORDC instituted a five-dollar registration fee for all youth athletes, far below the forty-three-dollar rate for an average household listed in the City Code. OIG evaluators found NORDC did not consistently collect even this significantly lower fee. Lacking an electronic mechanism for parents to easily pay NORDC directly, NORDC relied on coaches to collect the fees from parents and submit them on behalf of the team's entire roster. However, data provided by NORDC showed that 55 percent of teams did not submit registration fees in 2024. The lack of submission grew to 75 percent for the first half of 2025. Among those that did not submit five-dollar registration fees were teams coached by NORDC staff and teams located in traditionally affluent areas like Lakeview, raising concerns that NORDC lacked sufficient mechanisms for ensuring that all teams submitted fees, that coaches collected registration fees but did not submit them to NORDC, or that NORDC did not adequately record all five-dollar fees it received from teams.

[44] United States Census Bureau, "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months", American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701, 2024, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1701?q=youth+poverty&g=050XX00US22071, accessed July 23, 2026. The United States Census Bureau estimated that thirty percent of New Orleans children between five and seventeen lived below the poverty line in 2024. The OIG calculated this estimate based on the remaining seventy percent of the 5,130 total registrants paying a forty-three-dollar fee.

ADDITIONAL TEAM FEES

Although NORDC's registration form listed a five-dollar registration fee, evaluators found individual teams often charged families much more. NORDC's Chief Financial Officer stated that, in the absence of booster clubs, teams should not charge any registration fees above and beyond the five-dollar fee assessed by NORDC. However, NORDC representatives informed OIG evaluators that the organization did not maintain any policies for team fees at parks where no booster clubs existed. NORDC's CEO acknowledged the organization was aware that many teams charged additional money. He stated that these fees were used to purchase uniforms, custom football helmets, and other equipment.

NORDC's CEO stated that NORDC did not have oversight over how much money volunteer coaches charged, and they did not know about these costs before they were collected. He informed OIG evaluators that coaches creatively purchased things on behalf of their teams, and NORDC did not know about the purchases until athletes showed up at a game with equipment. Another NORDC official told OIG evaluators that NORDC was reluctant to institute rules about team finances because it might alienate volunteer coaches.

NORDC's Athletics Director told the OIG any additional fees a team charged were the result of agreements between the coach and the parents. In response to the OIG's survey, coaches reported a wide variety of registration fees charged by teams. Volunteer coaches reported registration fees ranging from zero dollars to $150 or more. In several cases, coaches did not report a numerical fee but said that registration costs depended on the uniforms that were selected each season. Similarly, employee coaches' responses indicated that their teams expected a broad spectrum of economic investments from families. While seven of the eleven employee coaches who responded to the survey reported that their teams did not charge any fees above and beyond NORDC's five-dollar registration fee, the other four employee-led teams reported fees as high as $120.

NORDC's practice of allowing individual teams to collect as much money as parents were willing to pay did not align with many other public recreation departments. For example, a representative of the Jefferson Parish Recreation Department (JPRD) informed OIG evaluators that JPRD collected a four-dollar registration fee online. Each playground collected twenty to twenty-five dollars for uniforms, and all uniforms and equipment were provided to athletes. Similarly, Austin, Texas's recreation program coordinator reported that all registration fees for youth sports were collected by recreation centers themselves. Recreation centers ordered all uniforms and equipment, and athletes were prohibited from competing using equipment not issued by the recreation department.

Significant differences in team fees led to disparities on the field at NORDC. The Athletics Director informed OIG evaluators that observers could tell the difference on the field between teams that used standard NORDC-issued equipment and those that purchased more expensive equipment through high registration fees. NORDC's CEO acknowledged often being "amazed" by the expensive uniforms some teams wore.

The disparities created by unequal team fees might make it difficult for less affluent teams to compete, contradicting NORDC's stated interest in creating a "competitive balance between playgrounds."[45] For instance, one volunteer coach described the challenge of being expected to play against travel teams, referencing their more expensive uniforms as part of what made the competition seem unfair. He informed OIG evaluators that his players expressed frustration with the inequalities between his team and those with more resources, with some quitting altogether as a result.

High fees may have also discouraged some parents from registering their children in the first place. A fee of over $100, as charged by some teams, might be beyond a family's ability to pay. Because NORDC failed to clearly communicate its informal policy on financial hardship and oversee the fees charged by individual teams, families might have assumed their children were unable to play, or individual teams might not have provided necessary hardship waivers, causing some children to miss out on valuable athletics opportunities.

In addition, the lack of oversight over team finances created risk that team money might be misappropriated for private gain. NORDC's Athletics Director acknowledged having dismissed coaches for mismanaging team funds. Multiple current volunteer coaches stated they believed some coaches were stealing money raised through team fees.

The lack of policies regarding money collected on behalf of NORDC sports teams created additional risk that parents would assume their investment was subject to government oversight when, in reality, there was none. NORDC's CPO confirmed this threat, stating that parents sometimes reached out to obtain refunds for fees they paid directly to coaches. She informed OIG evaluators that

[45] New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *Athletics Division Handbook, Standards of Behavior, S.O.P., Sports: Football (Tackle)*, Revised April 2025.

in those situations she had to tell parents NORDC had no control over the money and that their only recourse was to approach the coach directly.

Recommendation 3: NORDC should establish clear and enforceable fees, centrally collect a single registration fee for all teams, and adopt an electronic payment process.

NORDC should collect registration fees consistently and in accordance with the City Code. To accomplish this, NORDC should submit a proposed update to its fee structure, as required by the City Code, and work with the City Council to ensure it is adopted.[46] The proposed fees should be sufficient to support the youth athletics program without being so high that families are discouraged from participating. The updated fees should account for economic changes that occurred in the eleven years since this portion of the Code was last updated, as well as any other factors or policy priorities that might determine reasonable fees.[47] The new schedule should only include fees that are clear, realistic, and practical to collect.[48]

The new fee schedule may remove the existing tiered fee system, which is vaguely-defined and burdensome to implement because doing so would require a family income determination for every player. Instead, to meet the needs of lower-income athletes, the City Code amendments should codify NORDC's internal policy that no child can be turned away based on financial hardship. The Code should clearly identify how financial hardship will be approved, possibly based on federal poverty guidelines. NORDC should then adopt and publicize written policies for how families can apply for fee waivers based on financial hardship. City Code updates may include a single registration fee for all seasonal sports or different fees for individual sports based on the relative cost of equipment.

NORDC should implement internal controls to ensure fees are collected and accounted for. This should include processes in which NORDC collects all registration fees itself, purchases uniforms and equipment centrally, and prohibits coaches from setting additional fees for individual teams. Doing so may be a

[46] Code of the City of New Orleans, Sec. 70-553(a) and (b).
[47] While updating recreation fees, NORDC, the CAO, and the City Council should also reconcile Section 2-1102 with Sections 106-171 through 106-179 of the Code, which still include some outdated fees that appear to have been unchanged since 1956.
[48] For example, City Code Section 106-176 lists fees for swimming in City-owned pools, which NORDC leadership told evaluators would be difficult and unpopular to collect.

difficult transition for NORDC, but it is crucial for fostering fair competition and addressing the inequalities documented earlier in this report. It will also align NORDC with best practices for recreational sports league management promulgated by Little League, which state fair competition requires that all funds raised on behalf of the league be commonly managed and evenly distributed among teams.[49]

NORDC should work with the Office of Information Technology & Innovation (ITI) to implement a mechanism for collecting athletics registration fees and other money electronically. A representative of ITI informed OIG evaluators that ITI has already developed an electronic cashiering tool for NORDC within software called iNovah. The tool will allow NORDC to collect registration and facilities rental fees through credit card and electronic payment methods like Apple Pay. According to ITI, adopting the iNovah system for online credit card processing would not involve any additional cost to NORDC, although users would be charged a convenience fee for transactions.

iNovah could reduce the risk of fraud and streamline some of NORDC's recordkeeping processes by providing reporting functionality and automatically transferring transactions to the City's General Ledger in BRASS. According to ITI, if NORDC approves the transition, iNovah could be up and running in as few as thirty days. NORDC should initiate the transition to electronic fee processing as soon as possible.

[49] Little League, Constitution Sample*,* art. IX, §1 and 2.

VI. Enforcement of Policies for Coaches and Spectators

NORDC policies outlined a number of documents required from volunteer coaches. In addition to a written application, NORDC mandated that all volunteer coaches submit and clear a background check each year.[50] NORDC also required each coach to complete SafeSport anti-abuse training every year and submit a certificate of completion.[51]

NORDC also required each athlete's parent to agree to abide by a code of conduct that prohibited anyone other than players and coaches from entering the field or team sideline during a game and stated that critical or abusive statements to athletes, referees, and coaches would not be tolerated.[52]

Finding 4: NORDC did not consistently enforce rules for coaches and spectators.

The vast majority of NORDC's youth athletics coaches were volunteers. The OIG released a public letter on June 4, 2026 that identified several significant deficiencies in NORDC's collection and evaluation of background checks for coaches.[53] The letter documented lapses in recordkeeping and insufficient internal controls, leading to NORDC's inability to perform basic functions like producing an accurate list of authorized coaches.[54] Additionally, the OIG found that NORDC had background checks on file for only 54 percent of a random sample of coaches, failed to process many background check authorizations, and relied on background checks that did not provide information necessary to determine whether coaches had been convicted of crimes for which they were arrested.[55]

The OIG also requested copies of the required SafeSport certificates for all coaches who volunteered with NORDC in 2024 and 2025. Documents provided in response

[50] "NORDC Volunteer Coach requirements," Volunteer, New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, accessed July 29, 2025, https://nordc.org/activities/volunteer/.
[51] Ibid.
[52] New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, *Athletics Player/Parent Contract and Code of Conduct,* accessed July 13, 2026, https://nordc.org/nordc/media/NORDC_Next/Tagged-PDFs/Athletics-Registration-Form_03-06-26.pdf.
[53] New Orleans Office of Inspector General, *Youth Athletics Background Checks* (New Orleans: Office of Inspector General, 2026), https://nolaoig.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/NORDC-Background-Check-Letter.pdf.
[54] Ibid., 1, 4.
[55] Ibid., 2-3.

to the request showed NORDC had SafeSport anti-abuse training certificates on file for only 14 percent of coaches.[56]

Additionally, NORDC did not consistently enforce its Code of Conduct at youth athletics games. A NORDC administrator told OIG evaluators the organization prevented unauthorized individuals from entering the field during games by issuing identification (ID) badges to coaches at the beginning of each season, requiring coaches to wear them at games, and checking the sidelines for unauthorized individuals. However, OIG evaluators spoke with three current and former NORDC coaches. All of these coaches reported that NORDC inconsistently enforced ID rules or did not enforce them at all. One coach informed evaluators that, in the current year, coaches only received identification badges two weeks before playoffs. He reported that he did not even bother to pick up his own badge because he knew his team would not make it to the playoffs.

NORDC representatives explained that the organization's ID printer had recently been broken, meaning that NORDC could not issue valid identification cards to coaches. They additionally stated that NORDC did not keep records of the IDs it issued before the OIG requested them, and the organization could not produce a list of authorized coaches. As such, it was impossible to determine who had been issued official NORDC coach IDs in any previous year.

OIG evaluators also found NORDC did not enforce Code of Conduct violations consistently for parents and other spectators. A NORDC administrator stated that security was not provided at all games. NORDC administrators and volunteer coaches both reported that security violations at games were at least partially the result of the fact that professional security was not provided at all games. They noted that this was out of alignment with nearby parishes and school-sponsored sporting events, which did use police protection.

NORDC administrators reported that, although they would prefer to provide New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) officers for game security, their understanding was that local law prohibited using general fund money to hire NOPD officers for this purpose. Further, police officers were more expensive than the organization could afford.

Therefore, where professional security was present, it was often provided by private security guards rather than police officers. When no professional security

[56] The SafeSport "Protecting Students from Abuse" course taught coaches to identify, report, and respond to child abuse.

officers were present, NORDC staff were often tasked with directly addressing Code of Conduct violations that occurred at games. The repercussions for misbehavior depended on which NORDC staff were present at the time. Some NORDC staff were proactive, while others might not intervene because they did not want to get involved or feared for their own safety.

Current coaches stated security deficiencies might make some participants, particularly women, feel unsafe. One volunteer reported that he took security "precautions" at NORDC games that he did not need to take at other youth sporting events because those events had more effective security. NORDC administrators acknowledged that security problems did arise at games. For example, the CEO stated he once witnessed a person physically assault a referee before jumping a fence and fleeing.

Recommendation 4: NORDC should address pervasive deficiencies in its background check practices, create formal security protocols, and work with the City to explore ways to expand options for game security.

The OIG's previously-published letter regarding NORDC's background check practices for youth sports coaches presented several recommendations for NORDC. The OIG recommended NORDC should "develop a formal, written process for documenting names and contact information of officially recognized youth sports coaches.[57] The OIG further recommended that NORDC "implement control mechanisms for ensuring that each coach has an annual, processed background check on file with all required documentation before an ID badge is issued" and "create guidelines for documenting when charges against a potential volunteer have been dropped."[58] Additionally, the OIG recommended that NORDC obtain background checks that searched national databases and reflected the dispositions of as many cases as possible.[59]

NORDC acknowledged discrepancies in its existing background check procedures and said it had assigned NORDC staff as Compliance Monitors to process background checks and perform recordkeeping duties related to coach applications. NORDC also stated it would conduct "random site visits to assigned playgrounds at least once a week" to "[m]onitor team practices and games,

[57] New Orleans Office of Inspector General, *Youth Athletics Background Checks,* 4.
[58] Ibid., 5
[59] Ibid.

ensuring that only certified coaches were participating in team activities." The OIG is encouraged by NORDC's response to concerns about its background check processes and looks forward to future improvement.

The OIG recommends NORDC also take action to improve security at games themselves. NORDC staff work hard to provide a safe and pleasant environment at sporting events, often in tense situations. The OIG acknowledges that NORDC staff are neither law enforcement officers nor security professionals. As such, NORDC should provide them with ongoing support for their responsibilities related to enforcing the Code of Conduct. NORDC should provide its staff with written security protocols for sporting events. The protocols should include descriptions of general thresholds for enforcing the Code of Conduct and offenses that warrant ejecting spectators from a game or contacting law enforcement, while acknowledging that interpersonal conflict can be unpredictable and might sometimes require employees to use their best judgment.

Given that NORDC employees have varying skill sets and written policies cannot address all possible security scenarios, NORDC should also provide staff with ongoing training in dealing with complex security issues that arise at games. In particular, NORDC should require de-escalation training for staff members whose jobs require enforcing the Code of Conduct.

NORDC administrators stated NOPD officers provided the best security at games, but current NOPD policies prevented them from using general fund money to hire officers to work details at games. NORDC should work with other City agencies, including the NOPD, the CAO's Office, and the City Council, to find ways to obtain NOPD officers as game security. NORDC should clarify any current legal restrictions around using general fund money to hire police officers, including any restrictions in NOPD's internal policies. NORDC should then work with City officials to ensure they are able to use NOPD officers for security when needed. This process might involve requesting the police superintendent to assign on-duty NOPD officers to NORDC sporting events. It might also require interdepartmental fund transfers to fund game security. Likewise, NORDC should request a reasonable budget allocation for this crucial public purpose.

VII. Conclusion

NORDC provided recreational spaces and activities to New Orleanians, resources that supported citizens' physical and emotional wellbeing. NORDC received substantial public investment from New Orleans' taxpayers for these purposes. In addition, it was entrusted with more than 100 playgrounds and other facilities, which dotted the landscape of neighborhoods throughout the city, and with the safety of children who participated in its athletics programming. The OIG conducted an evaluation of NORDC's youth athletics policies and procedures in an effort to determine whether NORDC had sufficient internal controls in place to ensure youth sports teams complied with organizational policies and the law, and to ensure registration fees and other financial issues surrounding youth athletics were handled properly.

Evaluators found that a laissez faire approach permeated NORDC's management of its youth athletics teams. The organization's leadership relied on what they believed were generally-understood policies and procedures, many of which were never written down or formalized in any way. As a result, NORDC was unable to effectively communicate or enforce its informal policies, leaving athletics coaches with varied and often contradictory understandings of crucial issues. For instance, some NORDC coaches believed the organization required them to prohibit children from participating in youth sports if their parents could not pay registration fees. This belief was in direct opposition to the policy NORDC leadership aimed to convey and created risk that some children might miss out on valuable athletic opportunities.

Where written policies did exist, NORDC did not consistently enforce its own rules, leading to a failure to collect fees that support youth sports programming and lapses in oversight surrounding significant issues like background checks and money management. As such, NORDC limited the financial resources available to provide youth sports programming, could not protect the city's children from potentially problematic coaches, and could not ensure money raised to support youth athletics was not stolen or mismanaged.

Specifically, evaluators found NORDC did not keep adequate records of booster clubs and failed to consistently enforce booster club policies. While NORDC aimed for active booster clubs at all active playgrounds, the organization had only one universally-acknowledged booster club and lacked adequate strategies for recruiting and retaining others. In the absence of booster clubs at the vast majority of playgrounds, NORDC had no written policies for managing athletics or money raised on their behalf. Further, NORDC did not charge registration fees outlined in the City Code and failed to consistently collect a five-dollar registration fee it had recently established. Instead, individual teams collected a wide array of fees with no oversight from NORDC. Additionally, evaluators found that NORDC inconsistently enforced background check requirements for volunteer coaches and Code of Conduct violations at sporting events.

To address these findings, the OIG recommended NORDC create internal structures for continuity and consistency related to its management of booster clubs. The OIG recommended NORDC develop strategies for recruiting booster clubs and written guidelines for managing youth sports at playgrounds without booster clubs. The OIG also recommended NORDC work with other City agencies to update registration fee policies, centrally collect a standardized registration fee for all teams, and enable an electronic payment process. The OIG recommended NORDC improve background check procedures for volunteer coaches, as discussed in greater detail in our previous public letter.[60] Finally, NORDC should formalize security protocols for sporting events and work with the City to make it possible for NOPD officers to provide security at games.

NORDC staff and volunteers provide invaluable programming to the city's youth. However, the organization's ability to meet its goals was hindered by lack of written policies and lax enforcement of those that existed. This environment of benign neglect led to the risk that funds raised for youth sports might be misappropriated, food safety guidelines might be ignored, and NORDC might not receive all registration fees it was owed. NORDC should address these issues to ensure that it can continue to provide high-quality recreational programming for the next generation of New Orleanians.

[60] New Orleans Office of Inspector General, *Youth Athletics Background Checks* (New Orleans: Office of Inspector General, 2026).

OFFICIAL COMMENTS FROM THE NEW ORLEANS RECREATION DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

City Ordinance section 2-1120(8)(b) provides that a person or entity who is the subject of a report shall have 30 days to submit a written response to the findings before the report is finalized, and that such timely submitted written response shall be attached to the finalized report. An Internal Review Copy of this report was distributed on August 19, 2026, to the entities who were the subject of the evaluation so that they would have an opportunity to comment on the report prior to the public release of this Final Report. Management Response Forms were received from NORDC on September 18, 2026. Their forms are attached.

NOTE: The OIG appreciates NORDC's timely response to the findings presented in this report. However, NORDC's response included several factual errors and failed to address pervasive deficiencies described in the report itself. NORDC's leadership should seriously consider future changes that resolve the root causes of the findings, particularly with regard to the following:

In its response to Recommendation 1, NORDC stated that it already had appropriate oversight, staff, and training in place for booster clubs, noting that the Commission assigned a staff member to serve as booster club liaison in June 2025. However, as described in this report, in November 2025 that staff member reported that they had received no training for their position and had not been informed what was expected of them with regard to evaluating booster club financial documents. The oversight deficiencies documented in this report, including the failure to flag large financial transactions that violated *Booster Club By-Laws*, occurred after that individual had assumed the role, indicating that assigning a booster club liaison was insufficient to ensure adequate oversight.

In response to Recommendation 3, NORDC committed to drafting a formal policy regarding financial hardship and launching an online electronic payment system. These are positive steps. However, NORDC's proposal fails to address substantive elements of the recommendation. For instance, NORDC proposed no actions to resolve the discrepancy between its own fee structure and the fee structure prescribed by the City Code. It also failed to address the issue of additional fees imposed by individual teams, which leads to inequity on the field, discourages some athletes from participating, and puts team funds at risk of fraud, waste, and abuse. The OIG urges future NORDC leadership to tackle and resolve these issues.

In response to Recommendation 4, NORDC stated it had a formal documented volunteer screening process that included a centralized electronic database of all applications and compliance for all coaches. This was not the case at the time of this evaluation, during which NORDC leadership acknowledged that it not only lacked a volunteer database but was unable to produce an accurate list of coaches. The OIG urges NORDC to implement changes that address this and other problems identified in the OIG's June 4, 2026 public letter regarding pervasive deficiencies in NORDC's background check process.[61]

[61] New Orleans Office of Inspector General, *Youth Athletics Background Checks* (New Orleans: Office of Inspector General, 2026).

NEW ORLEANS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Inspection and Evaluation Division

New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) Youth Athletics
I&E 25-0001
Management Response Form

Please complete this form and return as specified below. Supply your responses in the shaded boxes.

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following recommendations by selecting a response from the dropdown box. If you ***Reject*** or ***Partially Accept*** the recommendation, please explain why in the space provided, including any alternative solutions to address the finding. Please devise a plan for implementing the recommendations or solving the problems that were found. Describe each action your agency will take to implement the recommendation, or fix the problem, along with the name and contact information of the person(s) responsible for the action and the completion date.

Return this completed form to [redacted]

Enter name here:

Recommendation #1 requiring immediate action:	**Responsible Person: (Name and Contact)**	**Response choice (Select One):**
1. NORDC should develop internal controls for enforcing booster club policies, assign booster club oversight tasks to personnel with appropriate knowledge and experience, and train staff to enforce booster club policies.	Athletics Director jahall@nola.gov	**Partially Accept**

If you *Reject* or *Partially Accept* Recommendation #1, please explain why or propose an alternate solution:

NORD recognizes the importance of strong internal controls, however, appropriate oversight and staff training for booster club operations are already in place. Since June 2025, NORD has had a designated Booster Club Liaison responsible for reviewing and tracking NORD-sanctioned booster clubs, assisting with verification of club records, and attending booster club elections and special meetings.

Additionally, the Athletic Director, who has served in the role since 2019 and has extensive knowledge of booster club operations, provides oversight and training to the Booster Club Liaison and NORD park site supervisors.

Describe the actions you will take to implement Recommendation #1 or fix the problem:	**Responsible Person:**	**Completion Date:**
1.1 NORD will review and update the existing booster club BYLAWS AND concession agreements with input from current NORD sanctioned booster clubs.	Athletics Director, Booster Club Liaison, approved booster club representatives	December. 31, 2026 with on-going yearly reviews
1.2 NORD will hold twice yearly meetings with sanctioned and prospective booster clubs to ensure compliance, offer guidance and provide support to individuals seeking to become an official booster club.	Athletics Director, Booster Club Liaison, NORD site facilitators	January 2027 and June 2027

RECOMMENDATION #2 REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ACTION:	RESPONSIBLE PERSON: (NAME AND CONTACT)	RESPONSE CHOICE (SELECT ONE):
2. NORDC SHOULD DEVELOP REALISTIC, PROACTIVE STRATEGIES AND WRITTEN GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITING NEW BOOSTER CLUBS AND MANAGING YOUTH SPORTS AT PLAYGROUNDS WHERE NO BOOSTER CLUBS EXIST.	CHIEF PROGRAMMING OFFICER NEROBINSON@NOLA.GOV	**PARTIALLY ACCEPT**

IF YOU _REJECT_ OR _PARTIALLY ACCEPT_ RECOMMENDATION #2, PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY OR PROPOSE AN ALTERNATE SOLUTION:

NORD considers the recruitment of new booster clubs an aspirational goal and remains committed to working with interested community groups through the established process to become a NORD-sanctioned booster club. Given current staffing resources, however, NORDC believes it is more realistic to prioritize written guidelines for managing youth sports at playgrounds where booster clubs do not exist. This includes developing clear policies for team management and establishing consistent cash-handling procedures for NORD staff across all divisions, not solely within the Athletics Division. These measures will provide greater consistency and accountability in the management of youth sports regardless of whether a booster club is in place.

DESCRIBE THE ACTIONS YOU WILL TAKE TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATION #2 OR FIX THE PROBLEM:	RESPONSIBLE PERSON:	COMPLETION DATE:
2.1 CONDUCT A YEARLY REVIEW OF THE EXISTING COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT HANDBOOK FOR NORD ATHLETICS, AND ADD LANGUAGE ABOUT TEAM MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING REGISTRATION FOR PLAYERS AND TEAMS, EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS, FACILITIES USAGE, FEES AND MONEY HANDLING, AND COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT.	ATHLETICS DIRECTOR, CHIEF PROGRAMMING OFFICER, ATHLETIC DISTRICT MANAGERS	DECEMBER 31, 2026
2.2 DRAFT AND FINALIZE TEAM MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR OTHER SPORTS THAT DO NOT FALL WITHIN THE NORD COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT HANDBOOK.	ATHLETICS DIRECTOR, ATHLETIC DISTRICT MANAGERS	DECEMBER 31., 2026
2.3 PROMOTE NORD'S ADOPT A PARK PROGRAM TO INTERESTED GROUPS AS AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF SUPPORTING THE PARK IN LIEU OF AN ORGANIZED BOOSTER CLUB. THIS MAY ASSIST THOSE PARKS WHERE PARENT SUPPORT OR PLAYER PARTICIPATION IS NOT LARGE ENOUGH TO WARRANT A YEAR-ROUND SANCTIONED BOOSTER CLUB, BUT THIS IS STILL A WAY TO GIVE BACK TO THE PARK THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM.	NORD MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS TEAM	ONGOING
2.4 REVIEW AND REVISE NORD'S EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK TO ADDRESS EMPLOYEES THAT WORK AROUND CASH / MONEY TO IDENTIFY THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT ARE TO BE FOLLOWED. CONDUCT CASH HANDLING TRAINING TO REVIEW THE POLICIES WITH STAFF UPON IMPLEMENTATION.	CAO HR DIVISION, CHIEF PROGRAMMING OFFICER, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, SITE FACILITATORS & OTHER NORD STAFF AS APPLICABLE	JANUARY 31, 2027 WITH YEARLY REFRESHER TRAINING

Recommendation #3 requiring immediate action:	**Responsible Person: (Name and Contact)**	**Response choice (Select One):**
3. NORDC should establish clear and enforceable fees, centrally collect a single registration fee for all teams, and adopt an electronic payment process.	Chief Programming Officer nerobinson@nola.gov	**Accept**
If you *Reject* or *Partially Accept* Recommendation #3, please explain why or propose an alternate solution:		
Describe the actions you will take to implement Recommendation #3 or fix the problem:	**Responsible Person:**	**Completion Date:**
3.1 Develop formal policy on inability to pay, which is needed to fully enforce the $5 athletic fee already in place.	Chief Programming Officer	November 20, 2026
3.2 work through the city's ITI department to establish online credit card payment acceptance methods.	Chief Programming Officer	November 20,2026
3.3 develop and implement a registration process that includes online registration. train athletic staff on new process.	Chief Programming Officer, Athletics Director, district managers, site facilitators	December 31, 2026
3.4 conduct public education and training on online registration and payment process	Chief Programming Officer, Athletics Director, district managers, site facilitators, NORD MARCOM team	ongoing, beginning February 1, 2027
3.5		

Recommendation #4 requiring immediate action:	**Responsible Person: (Name and Contact)**	**Response choice (Select One):**
2. NORDC should address pervasive deficiencies in its background check practices, create formal security protocols, and work with the City to explore ways to expand options for game security.	Athletics Director jahall@nola.gov	**Accept**

If you *Reject* or *Partially Accept* Recommendation #4, please explain why or propose an alternate solution:

Describe the actions you will take to implement Recommendation #4 or fix the problem:	**Responsible Person:**	**Completion Date:**
4.1 NORD has a formal documented volunteer coach screening guidelines and process. This includes a centralized electronic database of all applications and compliance for all volunteer coaches. This process will be conveyed and enforced for every coach by athletic staff.	Athletics Director and athletic district managers	Yearly background checks due by July 1st
4.2 Develop written game security protocols that establish minimum security expectations, procedures for responding to incidents, and roles and responsibilities for NORDC staff, booster clubs, coaches, and security personnel.	Chief Programming Officer, Athletics Director, district managers	November 20, 2026
4.3 Based on funding available in athletics budget, NORD will continue to have onsite NOPD presence at championship games as necessary. Requests will also be made to NOPD to have officers include a patrol during other games if possible.	Athletics Director, district managers	Ongoing
4.4		
4.5		