



January 8, 2024 Board Minutes

Date: January 10, 2024

Location: Zoom/Telephone Call-in Meeting

Minutes Taken By: Tracey Long

Time: Meeting called to order at 11:07 am CDT by Tony Bennett

ELCNWF Staff members present in person: Suzan Gage, Executive Director, Matt Bonner, Administrative Director, Tami Valdez, Communication and Development Director

ELCNWF Staff present via Phone/Zoom: Sam Sweazy, Finance Director; Ken Whittaker, Operations Director; Lindsay Holmes, Education Services Director, Chelsea Ranew, Special Projects Director; Tracey

Guests present: None

Full Board: Yes No Quorum: Yes In attendance: 11/20

Executive Comm. Yes No

Roll Call to Include Board Members on Zoom/Telephone: Yes

| Executive Committee | First Name | Last Name | Present | Present Via Phone/Zoom | Excused Absence | Unexcused Absence |
|---------------------|------------|--------------|----------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| ● | Tony | Bennett | | 1 | | |
| | Rachel | Chima | | | | |
| ● | Traci | Corbin | | 1 | | |
| ● | Irvin | Clark | | 1 | | |
| | Sharon | Gaskin | | | 1 | |
| | Zach | Gilmore | | | 1 | |
| ● | Kenneth | Griffin | | 1 | | |
| ● | Tiffani | Hinds | | 1 | | |
| ● | Jeanne | Hitchcock | | 1 | | |
| ● | Miatta | Jalaber | | 1 | | |
| | Missy | Lee | | | 1 | |
| ● | Gina | McAllister | | 1 | | |
| | Jon | McFatter (P) | | | 1 | |
| | Mary | McKenzie | | | 1 | |
| ● | Juliana | Melara | | 1 | | |
| | Johanna | Plummer | | | 1 | |
| ● | Renae | Rountree | | 1 | | |
| ● | Joe | Seabrook | | 1 | | |
| | Joe | Taylor | | | 1 | |
| | Richard | Williams | | | 1 | |
| | Myrtis | Wynn | | | 1 | |
| | | Total | 0 | 11 | 9 | |

Utilization Report for Direct Services

We reimburse contracted providers in each of the seven counties served. The information below shows the payment to School Readiness and VPK providers for direct services (slots) and compares the previous month.

| SCHOOL READINESS | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | October 2023 | November 2023 |
| <u>School Readiness</u> | SR Slot Dollars \$1,443,085 | SR Slot Dollars \$1,129,371.83 |
| Payments to Child Care Providers for Direct Services (Slots) | Children Paid – 2,238 | Children Paid – 2,194 |
| VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN | | |
| | October 2023 | November 2023 |
| <u>VPK Program</u> | VPK Payments \$489,819.06 | VPK Payments \$417,875.52 |
| Payments to Child Care for VPK services | Children Paid- 1,584 | Children Paid- 1,614 |

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS, GUESTS, AND STAFF

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA – Tony Bennett

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the meeting agenda as presented.

MOTION: Miatta Jalabar moved to approve the meeting agenda as presented

Seconded by Kenneth Griffin

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3. ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS – Tony Bennett

3.1. Minutes: Board Meeting November 8, 2023 (*See DRAFT Minutes*)

3.2. Credit Card Transaction Report (*See Regions Credit Card Analysis & Statement November 2023*)

VOTE NEEDED: Approve the consent agenda as presented.

MOTION: Renae Roundtree moved to approve the consent agenda as presented

Seconded by Miatta Jalabar

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

4. COMMITTEE/FULL BOARD REPORTS – Tony Bennett

4.1. Executive Committee- Tony Bennett – Vote needed

4.1.1. New Governorial Appointee Members and Board Chair Update

On December 22nd, the Governor announced the appointment of two new members to the

ELCNWF Board of Directors. The following is information from the Governor's recent press release:

Governor Ron DeSantis Appoints Two to the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of Veronica Watkins and Erin Johnson to the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida.

Veronica Watkins

Watkins is the Funeral Director and Embalmer at Peel Funeral Home. Active in her community, she is a former President and current board member of the Holmes County Chamber of Commerce and a member of the First Baptist Church Children's Committee. Watkins earned her associate degree in funeral services education from Jefferson State College and her associate degree from Chipola College.

Erin Johnson

Johnson is an Executive Assistant at Rish Real Estate Group. Previously, she was an Associate Broker at Amwins Insurance Group. Johnson earned her bachelor's degree in global business, risk management and insurance from Troy University.

The Governor's Appointments Office also stated they are in the process of appointing a new Board Chair. Chair Jon McFatter will continue to serve as the Board Chair until the new appointment is made.

VOTE NEEDED: Approve the ratify the two appointments of Ms. Watkin and Ms. Johnson.

MOTION: Kenneth Griffin moved to ratify the two appointments of Ms. Watkins and Ms. Johnson as recommended.

Seconded by Jeanne Hitchcock

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

4.1.2 Outreach and Development RFP- Vote needed.

The Coalition recently released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for marketing services to create and execute a public awareness campaign as part of the ARPA Discretionary grant funds expenditure plan. Proposals are due by January 8th. The ELCNWF Evaluation Committee will evaluate any proposals received by the deadline and present their recommendation for award at the board meeting.

The Coalition recently released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for marketing services to create and execute a public awareness campaign as part of the ARPA Discretionary grant funds expenditure plan. The following agencies submitted proposals by the January 8th deadline:

- Intium Health
- Sachs Media
- National Strategies PR

- National Strategies PR with Brandwater Media

After meeting with the selection committee, it was unanimous to recommend award to National Strategies PR with Brandwater media for RFP 2023-08 Outreach and Awareness Campaign.

VOTE NEEDED: Approve the award to National Strategies with Brandwater Media as recommended.

MOTION: Miatta Jalaber moved to approve the award to National Strategies and Brandwater Media as recommended.

Seconded by Renae Roundtree

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

4.1.3 Family Needs Assessment RFP - Vote Needed

The Coalition recently released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for completing a 2024 community needs assessment highlighting identified needs and requested resources for families with children ages birth to eight (B-8) as part of the ARPA Discretionary grant funds expenditure plan. Proposals are due by January 8th. The ELCNWF Evaluation Committee will evaluate any proposals received by the deadline and present their recommendation for award at the board meeting.

VOTE NEEDED: No vote needed at this time.

4.1.4 SR Enrollment Strategy Due to Reduced Funding – Vote Needed

When the ELCNWF received the initial FY24 funding award from DEL, our School Readiness (SR) direct service allocation was back to our original FY23 amount. This began our new fiscal year with a projected deficit in our SR direct service expenditures. Since then, we have only enrolled children in the School Readiness (SR) program from the priority 1 and 2 eligibility categories and our SR wait list has increased to over 600 children. In October, DEL awarded additional funding which helped alleviate the projected direct service deficit at the time. In November, DEL announced there were additional funds available for Coalitions to request through their re-obligation process. ELCNWF requested an additional \$400,000 in direct service funds which are expected to be awarded in January. By implementing the wait list strategy and with the additional funds, a surplus in SR direct services was projected so we began sending approximately 30 SR funding offers per week to families on the wait list.

DEL has recently announced additional SR funding that some Coalitions are not able to expend, and other Coalitions are again able to request funds through DEL's re-obligation process. ELCNWF would like the board to consider a recommendation to request an additional \$500,000 in SR direct service funds to further reduce the wait list and position ourselves to hopefully increase our FY25 direct service allocation in the event changes are made to the allocation methodology in the current fiscal year.

VOTE NEEDED: Approve the ELCNWF staff recommendations for requesting additional SR direct service funds from DEL as recommended.

MOTION: Miatta Jalaber moved to approve the the ELCNWF staff recommendation for requesting additional SR direct service funds from DEL as recommended.

Seconded by Joe Seabrook

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

4.2. Finance Committee – Tiffani Hinds

4.2.1. FY23 DEL Fiscal Monitoring Report Update

DEL has released the FY23 fiscal monitoring draft report for initial review and response. ELCNWF staff are preparing a response to one (1) draft finding regarding internal control environment: Lack of internal controls evidence – prohibited use of unencrypted mobile computing devices. The ELCNWF has already put controls in place with its IT vendor, Inspired Technologies, to further safeguard the use of unencrypted mobile computing devices. A final report will be shared with board at an upcoming board meeting as soon as it is available.

4.2.2 FY23 Audit Update

The ELCNWF’s audit firm, Moss, Krusick and Associates are currently working to complete the FY23 audit. We are awaiting the release of the FY23 revenue confirmations by DEL to complete the audit. The revenue confirmations are expected in January and MKA anticipates presenting the draft audit report to the board at the February 8th board meeting.

4.2.3 Audit Services RFP Update

The ELCNWF’s contract with the current audit firm, Moss, Krusick and Associates, will end on June 30, 2024. The Board Treasurer and ELCNWF staff will prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) to be released in the coming months to have a new contract in place by July 1, 2024.

4.3. Policy and Personnel Committee- Mary McKenzie

4.3.1 EC3 Program Incident Policy – Vote needed

As part of our contract with Northwest Florida Health Network, we are required to have an incident reporting policy in place that meets specific requirements. A draft EC3 Program Incident Policy has been included in the board packet for the board’s review and approval.

VOTE NEEDED: Approve the policy as presented.

MOTION: Joe Seabrook moved to approve the EC3 Program Incident Policy as presented.

Seconded by Renae Roundtree

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

4.3.2 Holiday Policy Amendments – Vote needed

The following language is recommended to add to the Coalition’s personnel policies regarding paid holidays effective July 1, 2024:

4.2 Holidays

The Coalition may grant holiday time off to all regular employees on the holidays listed below:

1. New Year's Day (January 1)

2. Martin Luther King Jr. Day (third Monday in January)
3. President's Day (third Monday in February)
4. Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
5. Juneteenth (June 19)
6. Independence Day (July 4)
7. Labor Day (first Monday in September)
8. Veteran's Day (November 11)
9. Thanksgiving Day, day after Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday and Friday in November)
10. Christmas Eve, Day (December 24, 25)

VOTE NEEDED: Approve the Holiday Policy amendment as recommended.

MOTION: Miatta Jalaber moved to approve the Holiday policy amendment as presented.

Seconded by Renae Roundtree

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

4.4. Education and Program Committee- Suzan Gage

4.4.1 No report

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

5.1. Organization Update

5.1.1. ARPA Funding Update

For FY24, ELCNWF was awarded approximately \$4.98M to implement the Early Learning Discretionary Grant Program funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) COVID-19 crisis recovery. The Early Learning Discretionary Grant Program provides funding for the following initiatives: Increasing/building the supply of child care; Training, professional learning activities, and workforce initiatives; Local initiatives/pilot projects to improve kindergarten readiness; Community outreach and family engagement; Equipment, supplies, classroom materials; Curriculum; Business administration computer software; and Early learning technology, including School Readiness learning computer software. As of November 30th, the Coalition has expended approximately \$3.6M with most of the funds going to providers and early learning teachers through grants and stipends. Additional grants and projects will be implemented and awarded throughout the remainder of the fiscal year.

5.1.2. Legislative Updates

The 2024 legislative season began with committee meetings in September – regular session begins January 9, 2024 with the deadline for filing bills for introduction at 12:00 noon on that day. As of December 11th, there were 827 bills filed for the 2024 Regular Legislative Session with a total of 88 bills related to Education and 10 specifically related to early learning. A few of the bills being tracked include:

1. SB 294 – Davis/HB 427 – Nixon
 - Adds instructional hours to VPK program. The school-year program increased to 1,440

hours (average of 8 hours per day) and summer increased to 480 hours.

2. SB 916 – Calatayud/HB 929 – Trabulsky
 - Aligns eligibility to State Median Income and increases to 55% SMI (equating to about 165% FPL).
 - Implements a sliding fee scale (we assume as a starting point for the proposed federal rule changes) for parent co-payments to increase in percentage with a parent's income.
 - Modifies the funding formula allocation to consider, at a minimum, current enrollments, eligible populations, reimbursement rates and the 22%.
3. SB 1026 – Grall (no companion bill on record)
 - Raises the VPK admin to 5%
 - Adds language for an early learning coalition to choose to appoint an additional public sector board member in order to include a representative of local law enforcement
 - Adds language regarding allowing other ways to develop a VPK providers' performance metric and restricting a provider's curriculum from including using the coordinated screening and progress monitoring program, any other progress monitoring program, or an instructional program that requires one student to one device for direct student instruction

The Governor also released his budget recommendations in December. The following are highlights for early learning funding:

- \$1.6 Billion in funding for early child education
- Voluntary Prekindergarten - \$456.5 Million
 - Increase of \$155 to the School Year Program BSA for a total of \$3,096
 - Increase of \$135 to the Summer Program BSA for a total of \$2,646
 - Maintains \$4.9 Million to continue implementation of VPK Program Assessments
 - Increase to 5% for VPK admin
- School Readiness – \$1.11 Billion – The budget maintains 2023-24 funding levels for the School Readiness program:
 - \$889.9 Million base School Readiness funding
 - \$40 Million for the differential pay program (CLASS Differentials)

- \$30 Million for the local match program
- \$70 Million for Gold Seal payment differentials
- \$5 Million for special needs differential allocation
- \$77.4 Million to sustain and expand SR services
- Other Early Learning Initiatives – \$24.4 Million
 - \$6.9 Million to establish the Summer Bridge Program
 - \$10 Million continued funding for the T.E.A.C.H. program to provide early childhood teacher scholarships;
 - \$4.5 Million for the Help Me Grow program to connect children and families with information, resources and developmental services to enhance health, behavior and learning in the development of young children
 - \$3 Million continued funding for teacher training and statewide professional development to improve childcare instructor quality; and
 - \$3.9 Million for the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) to deliver high-quality School Readiness curriculum directly to parents so they may strengthen the cognitive and early literacy skills of at-risk children.

5.1.3. Sachs Public Awareness Campaign Final Report

In April 2023 we signed an agreement with Sachs Media to The Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida, in collaboration with Sachs Media, launched a communications campaign to raise the profile of Kickstart Success while also highlighting two other important early education priorities, CLASS assessment scores and developmental screenings. The three goals of this campaign are to drive interest in becoming a child care teacher, to educate parents on available no-cost developmental screening services, and to raise awareness of CLASS assessment scores.

Through a combination of social media, digital, and Over-the-Top (OTT) advertising, as well as more traditional methods such as radio and gas pump advertisements, the campaign accumulated nearly 13 million impressions within the seven-county region and secured nearly 3,000 clicks. A copy of the final report is included in the board meeting packet.

5.1.4 Board Member Orientation – February 14, 2024

ELCNWF will hold a virtual board orientation on February 14, 2024 immediately following the February board meeting via Zoom for new members, members who have not previously attended an board orientation, or any other members who would like a refresher on the ELCNWF’s background and programs.

5.2. Monthly Service Numbers

5.2.1. School Readiness and VPK Enrollment Numbers and SR Waitlist *(See SR and VPK Enrollment Numbers and SR Waitlist through December 2023)*

5.2.2. Contracted Providers *(See Total VPK Contracted Providers VS. VPK Programs with CLASS Scores as of December 2023)*

5.2.3. Education Services *(See December 2023 Service Numbers for Education Services)*

5.2.4. Media Coverage/Activity/Events *(See December 2023 Media Coverage Activity Events)*

5.2.5. Childcare Resource and Referral Numbers *(See December 2023 Child Care Resource and Referral Service Numbers)*

5.2.6. Help Me Grow Service Numbers *(See Help Me Grow November 2023 Data Snapshot)*

5.2.7. Inclusion/Child Service Numbers *(See December 2023 Service Numbers for Child Services)*

5.2.8. Early Childhood Care Coordination *(See December 2023 Service Numbers)*

5.2.9. Contracted Provider CLASS Scores *(See December 2023 Service Numbers)*

5.3. Coalition Fraud Update-

The Coalition currently has one (1) suspected fraud case under investigation. The Coalition will share updates with the Board as we receive them.

5.4. Internal Monitoring *(See Internal Monitoring Reports)*

5.4.1. CCR&R, HMG, and EC3

Copies of the internal monitoring executive summary have been included in the board packet.

6. DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPORT

Miatta Jalaber informed the Board that Department is preparing for DEL SR training and is looking forward to working with staff.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Members of the public are allowed up to 3 minutes each to address the board. There were no public guest in attendance.

8. NEXT MEETING: February 14, 2024

9. ADJOURNED at 12:01 p.m. by Jon McFatter