



April 8, 2026, Board Minutes

Date: April 8, 2026

Location: Zoom/Telephone Call-in Meeting

Minutes Taken By: Tracey Edwards

Time: Meeting called to order at 11:05 am CST by Chase Christianson, Chair

ELCNWF Staff members present in person: Suzan Gage, Executive Director; Matt Bonner, Administrative Director; Tracey Edwards, HR and Administrative Support Specialist

ELCNWF Staff present via Phone/Zoom: Sam Sweazy Director; Ken Whittaker, Operations Director; Priscilla Greco, Staff Accountant; Felecia Dorchuck; Accounts Receivable Specialist;

Guests present: Jeff Carter, Board Attorney;

Full Board: Yes No Quorum: Yes In attendance: 15/24

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			1	
	Chase	Christianson		1		
	Irvin	Clark			1	
	Doug	Crosby		1		
	Sharon	Gaskin		1		
	Zach	Gilmore		1		
	Kenneth	Griffin		1		
	Tiffani	Hinds		1		
	Jeanne	Hitchcock		1		
	<u>Lee Ann</u>	<u>Case</u>		1		
	Erin	Johnson			1	
	Missy	Lee			1	
	Gina	McAllister			1	
	Mary	McKenzie		1		
	Juliana	Melara		1		
	Crista	Miller		1		
	Sarah	Quantara		1		
	Thomas	Register			1	
	Joe	Seabrook		1		
	Joseph	Taylor			1	

	Richard	Williams		1		
I	Myrtis	Wynn		1		
	Veronica	Watkins			1	
		Total		15	8	

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		
	January 2026	February 2026
<u>School Readiness (SR)</u>	SR Slot Dollars – \$1,232,369.54	SR Slot Dollars – \$1,144,692.15
Payments to Child Care Providers for Direct Services (Slots)	Children Paid – 2,372	Children Paid – 2,415
SCHOOL READINESS PLUS		
	January 2026	February 2026
<u>School Readiness PLUS</u>		
Payments to Child Care Providers for Direct Services (Slots) for eligible families above the SR exit threshold.	SR Slot Dollars – \$949.44	SR Slot Dollars – \$1,044.39
	Children Paid – 5	Children Paid – 6
VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN		
	January 2026	February 2026
<u>VPK Program</u>		
Payments to Child Care for VPK services	VPK Payments – \$424,990.94	VPK Payments – \$442,799.85
	Children Paid – 1,496	Children Paid – 1,478

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS, GUESTS, AND STAFF at 11:05 a.m. CDT by Chase Christianson, Chair

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA AND CONENT AGENDA – Chase Christianson

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the meeting agenda and the consent agenda as presented.

MOTION: Sharon Gaskin moved to approve the meeting and consent agenda as presented.

Secinded by Tiffani Hinds

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3. COMMITTEE/FULL BOARD REPORTS – Chase Christianson

3.1. Executive Committee- Chase Christianson

3.1.1. Board Membership Term Renewal – *Vote Needed*

The following individuals are presented to the Board for approval of their re-appointments:

- Mrs. Missy Lee, DCF Regional Administrator Designee, Multi-Co. – 2nd Term Eff. 6/1/2026

VOTE NEEDED: To approve re-appointments of board members as presented.

MOTION: Tiffani Hinds moved to approve re-appointments of board members as presented.

Seconded by Jeanne Hitchcock

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.1.2. Educational Training Consultant, Donna Whittaker– Related Party Contract Below \$25,000 – *Vote Needed*

To follow Florida Statute, the Coalition Board must approve any contracts between Coalition employees, Coalition governing board members, and relatives of either group as s.

112.3143(10)(b), F.S.; defines. The Coalition must comply with the following requirements:

- A valid vote of approval requires a two-thirds vote of the entire governing board (not just those in attendance)
- The impacted individual(s) must complete the necessary conflict of interest disclosure forms, and these forms must be available for presentation to the governing board at the time of the board's vote.
- Any governing board member(s) benefitting from the contract(s) must disclose in advance the conflict of interest and must abstain from the vote process.
- A quorum must be established.
- The Coalition will need to provide a detailed breakdown of how each member voted in order to ensure that two-thirds of the entire membership voted in favor of the related party contract.
- Coalitions can enter into contracts below \$25,000 without prior approval from DEL; however, such contracts are required to be reported to DEL within 30 days after approval by the Coalition governing board is obtained.
- Educational training consultant agreement with Donna Whittaker is NTE of \$5,000.00.

Disclosures: Donna Whittaker is the wife of ELCNWF's Operations Director, Ken Whittaker.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve related Party Contracts below \$25,000-Provider Training Contract with Donna Whittaker not to exceed \$5,000.00.

MOTION: Sharon Gaskin moved to approve related Party Contracts below \$25,000 – Provider Training Contract with Donna Whittaker not to exceed \$5,000.00.

Seconded by Jeanne Hitchcock

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.1.3. Information Technology Managed Services RFP Update – Information Only

ELCNWF staff recently released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for our Information Technology Managed Services. Our current 3-year contract that was procured via RFP in 2023 will expire on 6/30/2026. Proposals are due by 1:00 pm CT on April 7, 2026, and scoring of the proposal will begin shortly after. The scoring outcomes and recommended vendor will be presented to the Board at the May board meeting.

3.2. Finance Committee – Tiffani Hinds, Treasurer and Committee Chair

3.2.1. FY26 DEL Fiscal Monitoring Update – Information Only

DEL and its contacted monitoring firm, Thomas Howell Furgison (THF), concluded its fieldwork during the week of February 2nd from their sample selections. ELCNWF is still awaiting the draft report from DEL so we can provide our initial response. The Treasurer and ELCNWF staff will continue to keep the Board informed of the monitoring progress and any reports issued by DEL and THF.

3.2.2. Bank Changes – *Voting Item*

ELCNWF staff have been exploring options for changing banks due to an increasing fee structure and a changing level of service. Staff have completed all their meetings with local banks and have selected First Federal Bank, which has branches that service Bay, Jackson, Holmes, and Washington counties. Commercial banking representatives will provide a brief overview of their services at the board meeting and will be available to answer questions.

To align with ELCNWF policy, staff request the board’s approval of the following under First Federal Bank, as it is currently approved for ELCNWF’s Regions Bank account. With exception of the line of credit, there is no change to the current account signers, credit card holders, and credit card limits.

1. Open bank accounts at First Federal Bank with the following signers: Board Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, CareerSource Executive Director Board Member, Executive Director, Administrative Director, and Education Services Director
2. Open credit card(s) up to \$50,000 overall limit with the following authorized users: Executive Director, Administrative Director, Operations Director, Education Services Director, Community Impact Director, HMG Program Manager, and Accounts Payable Purchasing Card
3. Open line of credit up to \$100,000 with the following as authorized signers: Board Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, CareerSource Executive Director Board Member, Executive Director, Administrative Director, and Education Services Director

VOTE NEEDED: To approve ELCNWF staff’s request under First Federal Bank as presented.

MOTION: Richard Williams moved to approve the ELCNWF staff’s request under First Federal Bank to include approval of current signers, maintaining current credit card limits, and opening a line of credit of up to \$100,000 with signers as presented.

Seconded by Tiffani Hinds

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.3. Policy and Personnel Committee- Joe Seabrook

3.3.1. No Report

3.4. Education and Program Committee- Dr. Irvin Clark

3.4.1. No Report

3.5. Development Ad Hoc Committee – Erin Johnson

3.5.1. St. Joe Community Foundation Access for ALICE Grant Renewal – Information Only

ELCNWF was notified on February 18, 2026, that we were awarded \$96,000 to continue our Access for ALICE program in Bay Co. The 12-month grant period begins April 1st and this will be the 4th year of the program. The Access for ALICE program provides child care tuition assistance for families who have a slightly higher income and do not qualify for School Readiness. A family's income cannot exceed 70% of the State Median Income (\$68,627 for a family size of 4) to enter this program. Since April 2025, thirty-nine (39) children have participated in the program, with twenty-seven (27) actively enrolled. We are also able to match the funds from St. Joe Community Foundation at a dollar-for-dollar basis with School Readiness Match funds we received from the state which helps to expand the program to more families.

4. Executive Director Overview

4.1. Organization Update

4.1.1. Upcoming DEL Accountability Monitoring

DEL will complete its biennial Accountability Monitoring May 27th-29th. DEL developed performance criteria to provide a framework for measuring a coalition's effectiveness in implementing early learning programs. The performance criteria include indicators about compliance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations to assist Coalitions in maintaining high quality in Coalition Governance, Operations and Program Management, Child Care Resource and Referral, Education Service Delivery and Intervention Practices, SR and VPK Child Eligibility, VPK provider compliance, SR and VPK payment validation, and Data Accuracy. The Executive Director will keep the Board updated on the progress of the monitoring.

4.1.2. Organization and Community Engagements

Below is a list of organization and community engagements attended by the Executive Director during March 2026 that aligns with the ELCNWF's strategic plan, strengthens our partnerships, and advances the focus of early learning at the local, state, and national level.

3/4-3/5:	Annual FPL Northwest Florida Economic Symposium
3/12:	FAIMH Board Meeting
3/19:	Bay Co. Chamber Board Meeting
3/23:	St. Joe Community Foundation Access for ALICE Check Presentation
3/24:	Panhandle Region ELC Executive Director's Meeting
3/27:	The Children's Movement All In For Early Learning Mailman Center Grand Rounds

4.1.3. Legislative Updates

The Executive Director will share information from the 2026 legislative session and the most consequential policy areas including education, early learning, healthcare, child welfare, and juvenile justice. Currently, SB 1690 and similar HB 765 passed their chambers and now awaits the governor's signature. These **similar bills** update child care and early learning definitions, clarify

licensing and insurance requirements for family child care homes, and make administrative changes to early learning programs.

Legislators return in mid-April to determine budgets. We are hopeful that a “compression factor” will be adopted that will result in no more than a +/- 5% variance from the prior year’s ending budget to allow for coalitions plan and adapt to future funding without the wild swings in funding as experienced in years past.

4.1.4. March Data Dashboard

Coalition staff have created a new monthly dashboard to review and highlight certain monthly services by each department. A copy of the March dashboard has been included in the board meeting packet for the Board’s review.

4.2 Monthly Service Numbers (March 2026)

- 4.2.1. **School Readiness and VPK Enrollment Numbers and SR Waitlist** *(See SR and VPK Enrollment Numbers and SR Waitlist Report)*
- 4.2.2. **Contracted Providers** *(See Total VPK Contracted Providers VS. VPK Programs with CLASS Scores Report)*
- 4.2.3. **Education Services** *(See Service and Numbers for Education Services Report)*
- 4.2.4. **Media Coverage/Activity/Events** *(See Media Coverage.Activity.Events Report)*
- 4.2.5. **Child Care Resource and Referral Numbers** *(See Childcare Resource and Referral Service Numbers Report)*
- 4.2.6. **Help Me Grow Service Numbers** *(See Help Me Grow Data Reports)*
- 4.2.7. **Inclusion/Child Service Numbers** *(See Numbers for Child Services Report)*
- 4.2.8. **Early Childhood Care Coordination** *(See Service Numbers Report)*
- 4.2.9. **Contracted Provider CLASS Scores** *(See Service Numbers Report)*

4.3 Coalition Fraud Update

4.3.1. ELCNWF staff have referred one School Readiness recipient case to DEL and the Bureau of Public Assistance Fraud (BPAF). The case is currently under review with BPAF with a pending assignment status. The Executive Director will continue to provide updates on this case and any new cases at upcoming board meetings.

4.4 Internal Monitoring *(See Internal Monitoring Reports)*

- 4.4.1 FY26 St. Joe Community Foundation Expenditure Report

5 DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPORT

5.2 DCF is undergoing some online system updates for providers.

6 PUBLIC COMMENT: Members of the public are allowed up to 3 minutes each to address the board.

7 NEXT MEETING: May 13, 2026

8 ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.