August 12, 2026 Board Minutes

Date: August 12, 2026
Location: Zoom/Telephone Call-in Meeting
Minutes Taken By: Tracey Edwards
Time: Meeting called to order at 11:04 am CST by Chase Christianson, Chairman
ELCNWF Staff members present in person: Matt Bonner, Administrative Director
ELCNWF Staff present via Phone/Zoom: Suzan Gage, Executive Director; Sam Sweazy Finance Director; Ken Whittaker, Operations Director; Priscilla Greco, Staff Accountant; Felecia Dorchuck; Fiscal Specialist; Tracey Edwards, HR and Administrative Support Specialist; Jeff Carter, Board Attorney
Guests present: none
Full Board: _x_ Yes ___No Quorum: yes In attendance: 17/24
Executive Comm. Yes X 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		
	Lee Ann	Case			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		
•	Myrtis	Wynn		1		
	Veronica	Watkins		1		
		Total		17	7	

<u>Utilization Report for Direct Services</u>

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		
	May 2026	**June 2026**
<u>School Readiness (SR)</u> Payments to Child Care Providers for Direct Services (Slots)	SR Slot Dollars – $1,284,223.22	SR Slot Dollars – $1,401,644.23
	Children Paid – 3,002	Children Paid – 4,310 (includes prior month adjustments)
SCHOOL READINESS PLUS		
<u>School Readiness PLUS</u> Payments to Child Care Providers for Direct Services (Slots) for eligible families above the SR exit threshold.	**May 2026**	**June 2026**
	SR Slot Dollars – $273.25	SR Slot Dollars – $456.80
	Children Paid – 4	Children Paid – 8
VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN		
<u>VPK Program</u> Payments to Child Care for VPK services	**May 2026**	**June 2026 (summer program)**
	VPK Payments – $374,360.62	VPK Payments – $59,937.27
	Children Paid – 1,502	Children Paid – 109 (44 in summer program)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS, GUESTS, AND STAFF at 11:04 a.m. CDT by Chase Christianson, Chairman

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

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

MOTION: Tony Bennett moved to approve the meeting and consent agenda as presented.
Seconded by Jeanne Hitchcock
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. Proposed FY27 Officers and Committees – Voted needed

The Chair and Executive Director previously shared a proposed slate of officers and committee appointments for the 2026-2027 fiscal year, which are included in the meeting packet. Board members were asked to review the proposed officers and committee appointments prior to the August

12th board meeting and inform the Executive Director if they would like to serve on a different committee(s) or if they are not able to serve on a committee at this time. A final proposed slate of officers and committee appointments has been included in the board meeting packet for the Board's consideration and approval. Officer nominations will be accepted from the floor at the board meeting per the bylaws.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the FY27 officers and committee memberships as presented.

MOTION: Kenneth Griffin moved to approve the FY27 officers and committee memberships as presented.
Seconded by Dr. Irvin Clark
Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.1.2. Executive Director Annual Review – Vote needed

Rule 6M-9.120 requires that the Early Learning Coalition Board Chair or other delegated member(s) annually complete the Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation, Form DEL-SR 120, August 2022, for the ELC's CEO or executive director. A copy of the Executive Director's 2025-2026 performance evaluation form will be shared at the board meeting.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the Executive Director's 2025-2026 performance evaluation as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Irvin Clark moved to approve the Executive Director's 2025-2026 performance evaluation as presented.
Seconded by Missy Lee
Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

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

3.2.1. FY27 Initial Proposed Budget – Vote needed

A copy of the proposed FY27 ELCNWF initial budget has been included in the board meeting packet for the Board's consideration and approval.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the initial FY27 budget as presented.

MOTION: Doug Crosby moved to approve the initial FY27 budget as presented.
Seconded by Tony Bennett
Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.3. Policy and Personnel Committee- Joe Seabrook

3.3.1. Artifical Intelligence (AI) Use Policy – Vote needed

ELCNWF management has been working with Landrum on guidelines for the acceptable use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools by staff, including ensuring that AI-generated content is reviewed for accuracy before relying on it for work purposes. If a reliable source cannot be found to verify the tool's information, that information cannot be used for work purposes. A copy of the policy has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve ELCNWF's Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy as presented.

MOTION: Kenneth Griffin moved to approve ELCNWF's Artificial Intelligence (AI policy) as presented.
Seconded by Mary McKenzie
Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.3.2. Dress Code Policy Amendments – Vote needed

ELCNWF management has been working with Landrum to update the Coalition's dress code policy to clarify professional appearance in the workplace. The dress code policy amendments provide employees and managers with clearer guidelines on what is expected to maintain a safe, professional appearance across all the Coalition's work environments. A copy of the policy has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

3.3.3. Exempt Employee Attendance and Leave Usage Policy – Vote needed

ELCNWF management has been working with Landrum on updating the Coalition's leave usage policy for exempt employees. The policy amendments better align with FLSA guidelines and provide clear guidelines when exempt employees need to use accrued paid time off (PTO) and sick leave as salaried employees. A copy of the policy has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

3.3.4. Personal and Rented Vehicle Auto Insurance Policy - Vote needed

ELCNWF management has been working with Landrum and Florida First Insurance Brokers (FFIB) on creating a Personal and Rented Vehicle Auto Insurance policy. Through conversations with FFIB, it was discovered that personal insurance policies of employees who use their personal vehicles or drive rented vehicles for work purposes cover the first $10,000 of an auto insurance claim should they be involved in an accident during work activities. The policy ensures that all employees who operate personal or Coalition-rented vehicles for business purposes maintain adequate auto insurance coverage, sets the minimum coverage amounts per law, and outlines the requirements for providing proof of coverage. A copy of the policy has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve ELCNWF's Dress Code policy amendment, the Exempt Employee Attendance and Leave Usage Policy, and Personal and Rented Vehicle Auto Insurance policy as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Irvin Clark moved to approve ELCNWF's Dress Code policy amendment, Exempt Employee Attendance and Leave Usage Policy, and Personal and Rented Vehicle Auto Insurance policy as presented.
Seconded by Tiffani Hinds
Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.4. Education and Program Committee- Dr. Irvin Clark

3.4.1. July Committee Meeting Report

3.4.1.1. FY26 Workplan Goals and Outcomes Reports (through Q4) – *Information Only*

ELCNWF tracks and reports outcomes for its FY26 Education Services and Community Impact workplans on a quarterly basis. Copies of the Quarter 4 reports have been included in the board meeting packet for review. The reports show goals and outcomes that are on track, off track, or already met.

3.4.1.2. FY27 Program Plans Presentation – Vote needed
The Committee Chair and Executive Director convened a meeting with the Education and Program Committee on July 20th to review all program-specific work plans for the duration of their respective grants. Work plans will include, but not be limited to, CLASS, Literacy Coaching, VPK Progress Monitoring, Infant- Toddler Building Better Beginnings, Development and Outreach, Child Developmental Screening and Referral, Help Me Grow Northwest Florida, Mental Health Supports, and strategic goals for the new Road to Readiness initiative across all seven counties. Final work plans, as approved by the Committee, have been included in the board meeting packet for the Board's consideration and approval.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve ELCNWF's FY27 work plans as presented.

MOTION: Tiffani Hinds moved to approve ELCNWF's ELCNWF's work plans as presented.
Seconded by Jeanne Hitchcock
Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.5. Development Ad Hoc Committee – Erin Johnson

3.5.1. No Report

4. Executive Director Overview

4.1. Organization Update

4.1.1. Hurricane Michael FEMA Claim Closeout
ELCNWF received official notice from Florida's Division of Emergency Management that the state and FEMA have finally closed out our case from the Hurricane Michael disaster recovery reimbursement claim – almost 7 years after we were first determined eligible.

4.1.2. 32401 Florida Children's Initiative Potential Fiscal Sponsor Opportunity
In October 2024, the Executive Director notified the Board about the ELCNWF and Goshen Community Resource and Recovery Center working on a grant application through Florida's Ounce of Prevention to bring a Florida Children's Initiative (FCI) program to an underserved community in the 32401 zip code in Bay County. At that time, Goshen approached the Coalition to gauge its interest in serving as the initial fiscal sponsor for the Initiative, should it receive the grant, and until it can secure internal support.

We are pleased to report that the 32401 FCI was approved, and the early learning portion of the project was allocated $300,000 during the 2026 legislative session. The Executive Director and staff are currently working with Goshen on the next steps to become the temporary fiscal sponsor to get the project initiated until a permanent fiscal sponsor can be procured.

4.1.3. Buddy AI Early Learning Platform

Through funding provided by the St. Joe Community Foundation, ELCNWF is partnering with ELCs of Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Emerald Coast to implement Buddy AI, Build A Brain's comprehensive early childhood brain development platform and AI-powered conversational agent, which delivers evidence-based early childhood brain development guidance to parents and caregivers through automated, 24/7 two-way conversations.

4.1.4. Panhandle Children's Collaborative (PCC) 2028 Regional Provider Conference RFP

The Executive Director is working with the following ELC CEOs and Executive Directors from Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Emerald Coast (Okaloosa and Walton) counties to host a regional provider conference in Walton County in January 2028. ELCNWF is taking the lead with contracting with an experienced event coordinator to help plan, organize, and handle registrations for the conference. AELC and other Coalitions have collaborated with an event coordinator for similar events. To identify the best and most experienced event coordinator, ELCNWF will procure the services through a Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP is planned for release in September 2026, with the scoring committee's recommendation presented to the Board for approval at the November 2026 board meeting. ELCNWF plans to enter into a contract with the selected vendor in December, which will give approximately 12 months to plan and organize the conference.

4.1.5. Florida Chamber Foundation 2025-26 Kindergarten Readiness Report

The Florida Chamber Foundation recently released its 2025-26 Kindergarten Readiness Report, which includes key findings, metrics comparing VPK participants and non-participants, and a roadmap to reach the goal of 100% of children ready for kindergarten. A copy of the report has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

4.1.6. 2025-26 Help Me Grow Florida (HMGF) Annual Report

HMGF recently released its 2025-26 Annual Report. A copy of the report has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

4.1.7. Organization and Community Engagements

Below is a list of organizational and community engagements attended by the Executive Director in July 2026 that align with the ELCNWF's strategic plan, strengthen our partnerships, and advance the focus on early learning at the local, state, and national levels.

7/7:	Florida Panhandle Children's Collaborative
7/8:	One Goal Summer Conference Presentation
7/7-7/8:	DEL and AELC Meetings in Tampa
7/15:	Bay Co. 32401 FCI Fiscal Partner Meeting
7/16:	Bay Co. Chamber of Commerce Board Meeting
7/16:	Washington Co. Candidate Meet and Greet
7/17:	Goshen Ministries 32401 Monthly Community Collaboration Meeting
7/23:	HMG Leadership Network Presentation Part 1
7/27-7/28:	Panhandle Area Education Consortium Leadership Conference
7/30:	Help Me Grow Leadership Network Part 2

4.1.8. July Data Dashboard

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

4.3 Monthly Service Numbers (July 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)*

4.4 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 by BPAF and has a pending assignment status. The Executive Director will continue to provide updates on this case and any new cases at upcoming board meetings.

Additionally, ELCNWF was part of a DEL-suspected fraud prevention training on July 30th.

4.5 Internal Monitoring

4.5.1 ELCNWF staff completed internal monitoring on the Bay Solutions vendor contract. A copy of the internal monitoring report has been included in the board meeting packet for members' review.

5. DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPORT

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

7. NEXT MEETING: September 9, 2026

8. ADJOURN: 11:39 a.m.