

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

Meeting Notes

December 8, 2021 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Attendance

Abby Harvey
Analia Nicholson
Charlene Shaw
Cynthia Hurkes
Dena Haudenschild
Denise Swanson
Gillian Wesenberg

Heather Freilinger
Heidi McGowan
Jack Thompson
Michael Carter
Rhonda Janecke
Rhonda Nyseth
Sandy Henry

Steve Schenewerk
Vanessa Pingleton
Athena Wikstrom
Connie Rosas

Welcome and Introductions

Chair, Steve Schenewerk opened the meeting with member introductions and an icebreaker. Due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, this meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Early Learning Division (ELD) and Early Learning Hub Update

The Preschool Promise Request for Application (RFA) has been delayed and a new date when it will be available has not yet been released by the Early Learning Division (ELD). The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) completes the procurement process for the ELD. Currently, ODE's procurement team is understaffed as is the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) team. DAS reviews ELD contracting adding to the delays in RFAs and Hub contracts. There is a consultant, Erin Watson, that is helping with the Theory of Change and outcome expectations. Due to staffing shortages, there are holdups with her contracting right now.

A Preschool Promise interest survey was sent out to providers across the state. Anyone who is interested in expanding current sites or becoming a new Preschool Promise provider is strongly encouraged to complete the survey. If you are even possibly interested, fill it out. While the survey is not a request for funding, it will be used during the upcoming legislative session to show interest in Preschool Promise. The legislature held back \$38M in Early Learning funding during the last session. The ELD will utilize reports and the survey results to show the legislature there is interest in providing Preschool Promise and the designated funds will be spent. Some of the funds received will be spent on Preschool Promise seats, Technical Assistance and coaching for providers, coordinated enrollment, and other Preschool Promise needs.

Coordinated Enrollment is going well. All of the sites across the region are basically full with a few remaining openings in Klamath County and at the Winston-Dillard School District in Douglas County. The South-Central Early Learning Hub will continue to market all of the Preschool Promise programs with an emphasis on those with vacancies. The Hub's goal is to have everyone in the communities where it is available know about Preschool Promise. The region, as a whole, has a large mobile population, so turnover within programs is common. It is important that the Hub is notified by programs of who is attending classrooms, and who is no longer enrolled, so seats can be filled quickly when a family leaves the program. The Hub is working with Care Connections & Education, the regional Childcare Resource and Referral (CCRR) to support Preschool Promise sites. The Hub's role in coordinated enrollment is to qualify students, and the CCRR's role is to provide technical assistance and coaching. As the Hub communicates with sites often through the enrollment process, we pass on

questions and refer sites to the CCRR as appropriate. Heather stated that Gillian and Athena are doing great in sharing the challenges, barriers, and concerns that Preschool Promise sites are facing. Some children applying for Preschool Promise are not independently toileting, which is causing trouble for some sites, especially k12 schools. Preschool Promise is an inclusive program for all children regardless of ability. Heather shared that working through toileting concerns is a great place for collaboration between the Hub, CCRR, and Preschool Promise sites. It also provides an opportunity to provide education to sites on Preschool Promise expectations and potentially classroom design and management. Charlene observed that it can become difficult for teachers when there are interruptions due to toileting needs.

Gillian advised that the Hub is working with Head Start to create marketing materials. Shared materials promote family choice as it provides all of the available options.

The Hub works closely with Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) including Sondra Williams, the regional director, and Dena in Klamath County.

Steve asked about the progress in forming the new Tribal Early Learning Hub. Sandy Henry shared that it was recently created and includes Tribal representatives and families. There is a concern with the current contract that the ELD and Tribal Hub are working through. It gets complicated when viewing government to government concerns and cultural concerns through a European-centric view. Some Tribal Reservations, like Warm Springs, don't even have usable, "public" water. Many government-to-government grants have property rights clauses that ask Tribes to give up sovereign lands. Many Tribes require Tribal Council approval before grants can be accepted.

Child Care and Covid Update

New child care mandates have been put into effect with the new variant. The new guidance is requiring children two and up to wear masks.

Athena advised that during Preschool Promise enrollment some parents have shared concerns with sending children to in-person instruction. At the same time, some parents want to go back to pre-covid "normal."

Michael Carter updated the group that he is excited because Lakeview has a construction contractor which they are trying to sign a contract with to renovate the new child care building. The child care that is being opened by the School District, has an agreement with the hospital now to provide hospital employees with a certain number of child care seats. There are some families who are undocumented within the community. Michael has proposed providing undocumented families with free child care to the Lakeview school board and is awaiting approval.

Revised Early Learning Hub Decision-Making Approach for Early Learning Hub Investments

Heidi reminded the group that the decision-making process was reviewed and revised at the last Regional Governance Council meeting. The process was originally created in 2017. When the process was created, the ELD was focusing on county-specific goals and has since switched to a mostly regional approach. The ELD has recently provided guidance stating that as long as investments are tied to the Hub's workplan, we can use an "and-and" model focusing on county and regional goals as appropriate. Heidi shared the updates to the decision-making process that were made incorporating feedback from

the last Regional Governance meeting. Heidi asked the group if they are comfortable with the changes and if the process is ready for adoption.

Steve proposed making the decision-making document official. Michael motioned to implement the decision-making approach, Rhonda J seconded the motion. All members approved the motion.

Early Learning Hub Budget Overview

Gillian reviewed the proposed budget with the group. The template used was requested by Denise. Due to a funding formula update, while some funds were reallocated to the South-Central Early Learning Hub after initial cuts were made, the Hub did still receive a decrease in funding. A funding floor was put in place by the Early Learning Division (ELD) and some regions had more individuals who identified as part of the ELD's priority populations, resulting in rural areas receiving cuts. Gillian provided definitions of the funding streams.

Steve asked if there is a way that the Regional Governance Council members can work with the ELD and legislatures to assist with getting additional funds for 2023 and beyond. Gillian shared that there is an association for Hubs forming that is modeling itself after the Head Start Association as they have been incredibly successful in getting needed funds. Heidi has done a great job in facilitating conversations with Head Start so we can coordinate efforts taken to legislatures for Early Learning funding. Since the legislature moves so quickly, Gillian can pass on information when it becomes available. Steve shared that he would be willing to send emails, letters, make calls, etc. Steve suggested identifying others who can advocate with us, providers, families, etc. We can support children and families more effectively if we are fully funded. Creating a network of advocates would be helpful in aiding the Hub in getting funds to support children and families. Gillian shared that Head Start has an army of individuals who advocates to the legislature for Head Start funding.

Heather requested detail around the office supply/equipment budget. Athena shared that this includes everything used to operate including printing, computers, IT, office space, etc. Steve requested to have a broader title so it is easier to see. Dena would like to see the Office Supplies / Equipment line broken down so it's more transparent. Hub staff advised that this can be provided in future budgets. Steve observed that it is an easy-to-follow document, and much more streamlined than other budgets he has to review. Gillian shared that the ELD will be asking a lot of questions about the budget to receive clarity on their end as well.

KPI Funding Approach

Denise advised the group that Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation (KPI) will have a rule change due to legislation change. The new rule will be proposed at the first of the year, and will likely be adopted through the Early Learning Council around April. The Legislature and the ELD would like KPI integrated with the Hub's workplan. KPI will continue to have its own workplan as well. The January Hub Director meeting will possibly discuss KPI more.

Cynthia reviewed the KPI Allocation document and the goals of KPI in addressing community population needs. KPI is a fund to seed early learning projects and strategies. There are some one-off situations in funding, however, typical funding will include tracking and moving toward outcomes. The regional approach would have all counties doing the same project. A county approach would target each county's needs and be facilitated separately. KPI can fund in either of these strategies and would like feedback from the Regional Governance Council on their preference.

Steve asked what the Portland State University (PSU) evaluation is measuring. Cynthia shared that there is a pre-test and a post-test for activities that PSU uses to gauge the effectiveness of the activity. It also asks what the family would like to have provided in the future and demographic questions. Professional Development has a similar questionnaire that asks the same type of questions. Denise shared that the evaluations measure the changes in practices for families and professionals.

Cynthia reviewed the proposed funding formula with the group. Children who experience homelessness, foster care, kinship care was dropped when creating the formula, so an update will be sent out that includes this priority population group.

Parent/teacher home visits has been identified as one of the most effective family engagement and school readiness activities. If home visiting was funded, there would be a selection process to provide funds for interested teachers / schools. The workplan is not due for a while, so we do not need a decision today.

Denise shared that the budget, including KPI, and the new workplan is due at the end of February. It was extended due to the delay in contracting.

Rhonda J asked where the biggest bang for our buck would be in funding. It doesn't seem like home visiting would be a very effective use of funds as it is an expensive program that does not cover all of the priority groups. Cynthia advised that using the training model is very important and it is very effective, this has been shown with Yoncalla Early Works in Douglas County. Denise agreed that the home visiting model is very effective. The home visiting model is being utilized in Multnomah and Grant Counties. It provides insight for teachers to understand the family dynamic and situation.

Steve asked if we can fund the training through KPI then have the district pay the teachers for the visits. Analicia confirmed that Student Investment Account (SIA) funding can pay for the parent/teacher home visiting. Cynthia shared that the virtual training is about \$10,000 to \$12,000. Virtual training is the most effective in providing regional approaches and has better attendance.

Denise believes this would be an effective program for KPI to start funding with blended and braided funds, with the agreement that KPI would taper off funding and schools would eventually become fully responsible for the program after they see the successes. Programming like home visiting would provide long-term outcomes, opposed to short-term outcomes, so results may not be visible for some time.

Steve supports utilizing some of the \$50,000 for home visiting, reflecting that being in someone's home gives far more input into a family than seeing them in a community setting. Even being on the porch with masks on can be effective and provide tremendous insight.

Sandy shared that as a previous Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) caseworker, home visiting has to come from a place of mutual respect and needs the home visitor to be accepting regardless of what the home looks like. It's important and does great things, but you have to be very careful of the approach., especially if the family has had a history of interventions.

The group provided their preferences in spending methods:

- Dena prefers regional that way it's not siloing counties again.

- Rhonda J - regional approaches.
- Heather - regionally is great as long as there is room to be flexible in individual communities.
- Jack - Agree with Heather.
- Charlene - Regional

Cynthia will pull together a group to work further on funding approaches and strategies. Recommendations will be brought to the Regional Governance Council, if time does not permit, decisions will be made through a steering committee and will be reported at the next Regional Governance meeting. Steve would be interested in being in the group and asked Cynthia to send an email for committee volunteers. Cynthia will bring recommendations to the steering committee and is requesting that committee members bring ideas as well.

Denise shared that there is a workplan template that was recently provided to Hub Directors. She is willing to provide an extension to the beginning of March for the governance council to review the workplan at their March 9, 2022 meeting. Denise suggested having a committee to create the workplan so that it is ready to be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting in March.

Child Care Update

Heather reviewed the slideshow presentation.

Partner Updates

Community UPLiFT – Previously, The Ford Family Foundation grants were based on regional needs brought by The Ford Family Foundation and all recipients shared the same goals. The South-Central Early Learning Hub is working on the application for a new grant from The Ford Family Foundation which will allow for goals that will align with the Hub and Raise Up Oregon strategies and goals.

There have been 818 referrals to date with 60 referrals this quarter.

The Ford Family Foundation leadership event recently took place. The event reviewed year-end evaluations and interviews from individuals who had engaged in Community UPLiFT and Home Visiting Systems work.

Vanessa has been having great conversations with Susanna Burke from Lake County and Outback Strong. They would like to have Michael and Jack involved in the conversations. Vanessa is hoping that this partnership will allow further engagement with Community UPLiFT in Lake County.

Next Meeting Date

March 9, 2022, from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm