

BrightWorks

2 Pine Tree Drive, Arden Hills, MN 55112

Executive Board Meeting

October 15, 2025

Members Present:

Andrea Cuene, Community Representative

Kacy Deschene, Electoral District 1

Jessica Ellison, Electoral District 1 (Virtual)

Bill Harvey, Community Representative

Sarah Johansen, Electoral District 4

Laura Oksnevad, Electoral District 2

Deborah M. Pauly, Electoral District 4

Members Absent:

Carol Bomben, Community Representative

Paula Cole, Electoral District 3

Karen Gabler, Electoral District 3

Staff Present:

Colleen Feller, Director of SparkPath & Director of Human Resources

John Schultz, Executive Director

Angela Skrade, Executive Assistant, Office Manager, Executive Board Support (Recorder)

Chris Streiff-Oji, Regional COMPASS Director

Tom Wieczorek, Business Manager

Visitors:

Adam Owens, CPA, Abdo

Call to Order:

Chair Harvey called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

BrightWorks Meeting Attendee Introductions & Public Input:

Adam Owens, CPA of Abdo, was introduced to the BrightWorks Executive Board. No public was present.

Executive Board Meeting

October 15, 2025

Approval of Agenda:

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the agenda.

A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Deschene to approve the agenda with a change of order. The motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

A motion was made by Ms. Oksnevad and seconded by Ms. Ellison to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted. The motion carried.

2024-25 Audit Report:

Adam Owens of Abdo provided an overview of the 2024-2025 audit report. This year they are issuing an unmodified opinion, with no instances of non-compliance. The Title I (ReadACT) and Special Education programs were reviewed with no instances of non-compliance. He advised the Federal Government has not issued the official guidance for audit reports yet, so the final audit report is on hold pending this information. The deadline for the regular audit submission is December, and the Single audit must be submitted to the Federal Government by the end of March 2026. He stated that Federal funding over the \$750k threshold triggers the Single Audit.

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the Audit Report.

A motion was made by Ms. Deschene and seconded by Ms. Cuene to approve the Audit Report as submitted. The motion carried.

Financial Update:

Executive Director Schultz began the financial update with a report on organizational issues with cash flow and fund balance. He stated administration is keeping an eye on the Federal shutdown, and that the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will inform us as things happen at the Federal level.

Mr. Wieczorek presented a report that illustrated 20 years of the organization's fund balance history. He advised the board that the information contained in this report is obtained from MDE compliance reports. He stated that this year the budget is around \$13 million and is 95% reimbursement grant driven. He reported that due to the increase in staffing, BrightWorks currently has a little over \$1 million in expenditures each month. To meet the amount required for payroll now takes a significant amount of cash flow. He advised that cash flow issues were present in the past but that the organization had a multiple year reprieve from this with the Educational Assistance for Non-Public Schools (EANS) and Covid Workforce grants. Both grants have since ended, with new reimbursement driven grants replacing them, which is reflected in the fund balance report.

Executive Director Schultz and Mr. Wieczorek then provided an overview of how the payment process works for the current reimbursement driven grants, which has the Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) as the grant holder receiving the payments from the MDE. Problems with this system are causing a lag that puts the organization in a cash flow crunch.

BrightWorks

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Executive Board Meeting

October 15, 2025

Mr. Wieczorek stated that the current priorities for the organization are:

1. Pay Taxes
2. Pay Vendors
3. Pay Staff

He advised timing with health insurance and BMO credit payments also play into the cash flow equation.

He informed the board that of all the service cooperatives, BrightWorks has the largest number of staff employed for the COMPASS program. He advised that while the Read ACT may go away within the next 5 years, something else will come along to replace it. Mr. Wieczorek states that he does not see the cash flow issues being resolved anytime soon.

Questions were answered, and options on how to alleviate this problem were discussed with the board. It was recommended that board empowerment is needed for Executive Director Schultz to meet with the MOE and let them know the dollar value of the ReadACT grant cannot be sustained by BrightWorks, and this system is not working as it is currently set up. The MSC will then need to be brought into the discussion to form a resolution to this continuing problem.

Chair Harvey called for a motion that the BrightWorks Executive Board directs Executive Director Schultz to seek out solutions with the Minnesota Department of Education (MOE) and Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) and inform the BrightWorks Executive Board about the progress being made with the MOE and MSC.

A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Johansen to approve the motion BrightWorks Executive Board directs Executive Director Schultz to seek out solutions with the MOE and MSC and inform the BrightWorks Executive Board about the progress being made with the MOE and MSC as submitted. The motion carried.

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the Financial Update.

A motion was made by Ms. Pauly and seconded by Ms. Cuene to approve the Financial Update as submitted. The motion carried.

Human Resources Update:

Ms. Feller reported on the hire of a dedicated Information Technology staff member in September.

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the Human Resources Update.

A motion was made by Ms. Johansen and seconded by Ms. Ellison to approve the Human Resources Update as submitted. The motion carried.

Executive Board Meeting

October 15, 2025

Leadership Team Reports:

Ms. Feller, and Ms. Streif Oji, shared brief presentations with the board on the programs they oversee. Questions from the board on these programs were answered. Ms. Aasan and Ms. Boots were unable to attend. The board was referred to their reports included in the meeting packet.

Executive Directors Report:

Executive Director Schultz reported that BrightWorks was called upon to assist Annunciation Catholic School by putting together a Metro Crisis Team. Counselors were organized through metro area Superintendents and sent to assist at Annunciation. Annunciation has since requested additional continued assistance for their Special Education students. BrightWorks is looking at being a part of the hiring piece, but funding is a challenge with use of Special Education dollars not allowed for non-public schools. He advised that Federal funding is a possibility but stated there are no answers right now due to the Federal shutdown. The funding part of this situation would be handled by MOE. Board questions and concerns were discussed. The board requested an update from Executive Director Schultz within 6 months.

Executive Director Schultz also provided updates on the development of the Minnesota Teachers Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (MNJATC) and the Long-Term Facilities Maintenance program (LTFM).

He reported the apprenticeship program has increased from 15 apprentices in 2024-2025 to 80 in 2025-2026. There is conversation started with Century College about working together for paraprofessionals getting degrees from their institution. Executive Director Schultz stated the MNJATC has required a lot of his time.

The LTFM program has held 2 good meetings with approximately 10 attendees.

Executive Director Schultz also discussed his work with Superintendents around the topic of AI. He states the use of AI will accelerate in the future. Executive Director Schultz and Ms. Feller are working together to create professional development around AI and find ways bring this to superintendents.

Executive Director's Evaluation Process & Tool - Second Reading:

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the Executive Director's Evaluation Process & Tool.

A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Oksnevad to approve the Executive Director's Evaluation Process & Tool - Second Reading as submitted. The motion carried.

Policy Review:

Executive Director Schultz reviewed Policy 306, in the first read, and policies 401, 402, 412, 430, in the second read.

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the policy readings. A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Pauly to approve the review of Policy 306, in the first read and 401,402,412,430, in the second read as submitted. The motion carried.

BrightWorks

2 Pine Tree Drive, Arden Hills, MN 55112

Executive Board Meeting

October 15, 2025

HOTT Forum:

Topics discussed included upcoming school board elections, board member terms, a Superintendent retirement, and district current issues.

Other Business: None

Adjournment:

Chair Harvey called to adjourn the meeting at 4:51 pm

A motion was made by Ms. Oksnevad and seconded by Ms. Pauly to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.



John Schultz, Executive Director



Bill Harvey, Board Chair

Next Meeting Date: January 21, 2026
