# REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

## Meeting Notes

March 5, 2026 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

### Attendance

Steve Schenewerk
Michael Carter
Dena Haudenshild
Karen Cole
Lane Stratton
Heidi McGowan
Analicia Nicholson
Julie Hurley
Heather Freilinger
Alysha Barraza
Vanessa Pingleton
Athena Wikstrom
Danielle Walker

For ease of member access, Regional Governance Council (RGC) meetings will continue to be held virtually unless otherwise notified.

### Welcome and Introductions

Chair, Steve Schenewerk, welcomed members of the Regional Governance Council (RGC) and individuals introduced themselves.

Members of the Regional Governance Council reviewed December 2025 meeting minutes. Dena Haudenshild motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Steve Schenewerk seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried.

### Early Learning Hub Update

Steve provided an update on the ongoing revision of the South-Central Early Learning Hub's Bylaws. Consultant Janet Carlson had been working closely with Regional Governance Council (RGC) members, South-Central Early Learning Hub staff, and the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) to integrate feedback. A third draft is in progress. Steve explained that the plan was to schedule a final review and approval meeting sometime between March 16 and March 18. He expressed appreciation for everyone's patience throughout the revision process and emphasized his goal of having the Bylaws fully adopted around the same time as the new Early Learning Hub Director is hired, ensuring structural clarity for the leadership transition ahead.

Steve opened the floor for legislative updates. Analicia shared that the Legislature was in its final days and working to reallocate unspent funding to reduce state-level shortfalls. In early learning, agencies were attempting to preserve programs that had already absorbed significant cuts in the previous long session. Some encouraging news emerged regarding Employment Related Day Care (ERDC), where limited funds had been identified to prevent major disruptions, though the amount was not sufficient to fully stabilize the program. Athena added that DELC anticipated a $1.1 million increase through current legislation. While far short of the $45 million reduction from the prior session, it would allow the department to avoid further cuts to programs overseen by DELC by leaving some staff vacancies unfilled. Greater clarity is expected once updated contracts are released.

Athena reported that Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) members across the region had expressed a strong desire to return to a more traditional, pre-COVID form of shared planning and community project development. Several PACs would like to resume identifying and directing Early Literacy and Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation (KPI) funds toward localized initiatives. Athena noted that the open Request for Application (RFA) had so far yielded three applications, all from Douglas County. She planned to continue outreach in Klamath and Lake Counties. Applications for funding are due to Athena by March 20 at 5:00 pm. More information is available on the South-Central Early Learning Hub website at: https://www.scelh.com/kindergarten-readiness-partnership-innovation/request-for-application.

At present, approximately $50,000 in uncommitted KPI funding remains available, though this figure may change once new contracts are finalized. Steve encouraged discussion on how to deploy the funds but, hearing no alternative

proposals, suggested dividing the funds equally among the three counties so that each county's PAC could determine strategies that best serve local needs. This approach, he noted, recognizes that PAC members are most familiar with the priorities of their communities.

A motion to divide all available unallocated KPI funds equally among Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties was made by Dena Haudenshild and seconded by Steve Schenewerk. The motion carried. Steve requested each PAC to provide a preliminary report on fund usage in June and a full report in September.

## Preschool Promise

Athena shared that enrollment activities for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year are already underway. Returning and new student applications opened March 2, and more than fifty returning student forms had already been submitted. Approximately twenty new applications have also come in. The Hub will continue to use the established priority point system for placement, which awards one point for each priority population a child qualifies for based on the Hub's priority populations. Placement will begin in late May or early June, with some slots intentionally reserved for families who often apply later in the cycle due to trauma or instability.

All sites are currently full except Gilchrist, where enrollment has been lower this year due to a recent mill closure and reduced birth rates. The Gilchrist program is flexible and able to accept children from a wide geographic area, and early signs indicate enrollment will increase again next year. Athena also noted that approval had been granted to resume the joint kindergarten and preschool advertising campaign, which uses radio, newspaper, and social media to encourage families to register early and avoid first-day-of-school surprises.

## Community UPLiFT

Danielle provided a detailed update on Community Uplift activity for the current quarter and reviewed cumulative program trends. She noted that from January 1 to the present, the program had received 51 referrals, reflecting steady engagement across the region. Of these, 16 referrals originated in Douglas County, 33 in Klamath County, and 2 in Lake County.

She also highlighted ongoing community outreach efforts, explaining that staff continue to maintain a visible presence at family-focused events. Ronda attended several major gatherings in Douglas County, including an Altrusa Literacy Event at Wildlife Safari, which saw more than 800 children in attendance, First Thursday events. Athena added that Ronda would be attending the Douglas County Community Baby Shower on March 7. In Klamath County, outreach has included participation in resource markets and other public events supporting families with young children.

Danielle then reviewed the quarterly report covering October through December 2025, noting that Community Uplift had received a cumulative total of 1,895 referrals since the program's inception. Of these, 1,074 were from Douglas County, 785 from Klamath County, 31 from Lake County, and 5 from neighboring counties. During the quarter, Douglas County received 27 referrals, Klamath County received 35 referrals, and Lake County received 2 referrals; numbers that closely mirror the same period from the prior year.

She explained that referral patterns have remained consistent, with several longstanding partners continuing to act as strong referral sources. Pregnancy Hope Center remains one of the highest-volume contributors, along with Sky Lakes Outpatient Care Management, local clinics, and school district partners. Additionally, there has been a noticeable increase in self-referrals, which Danielle attributed to targeted outreach efforts on social media, including the distribution of Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos with both English and Spanish subtitles. With the release of the 2026-2027 Preschool Promise applications, the South-Central Early Learning Hub expects an increase in referral numbers as applications ask families if they are interested in a Community UPLiFT referral and/or a referral to Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE).

Danielle introduced a proposal to develop an application to apply for pilot grant funding in Klamath County, inspired by increasing requests from families for additional child safety supports. Building on the successful Cascade Health Alliance (CHA)-funded car seat distribution program, she proposed expanding into additional infant and child safety resources, such as safe sleep items, strollers, baby carriers, and basic home safety items. The distribution system

would follow the same proven workflow used for car seats, including required certified installation where appropriate and safeguards to ensure that all items are new, non-recalled, and accompanied by manufacturer instructions.

To move forward, Danielle requested approval to develop a funding proposal for submission to Cascade Health Alliance or Sky Lakes Medical Center, subject to applicable Douglas Education Service District (ESD) processes. A motion to approve development of the proposal was made by Dena Haudenshild and seconded by Steve Schenewerk. The motion passed unanimously.

## Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR)

Heather provided an update on the broad scope of work occurring within Care Connections & Education, the regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR). She began by noting the strong and sustained participation in Early Childhood Education (ECE) cohorts at both Klamath Community College (KCC) and Umpqua Community College (UCC). Each program now supports more than fifty students, many of whom are currently working in the field and are taking advantage of state funding designed to reduce or eliminate student debt. CCRR Navigators continue to collaborate closely with college programs to help students stay on track and access the resources they need to succeed.

Heather explained that CCRR also remains deeply engaged in supporting individuals pursuing child care licensure or an Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) listing. At any point, the team is assisting between twenty and forty aspiring providers, with timelines varying widely depending on personal circumstances. Once newly licensed or listed, providers receive a welcome package with materials to support safe and developmentally appropriate care, and they are invited to participate in the two-year Strong Start program. Strong Start offers regular training opportunities and a chance for providers to build community with peers who are navigating similar early challenges in the profession.

Several additional professional development opportunities are underway, including an infant-toddler Pyramid Model cohort beginning in March and a Directors Cohort operating successfully in Douglas County. Heather expressed optimism about eventually expanding the Directors Cohort to Klamath and Lake Counties. She also shared that the Wellness Alliance, a year-long initiative that reached ninety participants, is now wrapping up. Providers receive monthly check-ins and materials focused on wellness practices both in their workspaces and personal lives. CCRR is gathering feedback to inform future offerings.

Heather highlighted the recent Courageous Care Summits held in both Douglas and Klamath Counties, noting strong attendance and highly positive feedback. The Summits were intentionally structured to allow participants to choose a Friday or Saturday session, making the training more accessible. Participants expressed appreciation for the social-emotional content, leadership support, and opportunities to connect with colleagues and system partners.

Looking ahead, Heather introduced the new Masterclass Series, a year-long set of advanced training courses designed for seasoned early learning professionals. The series features recognized speakers who will address topics such as parent engagement, developmental leadership, complex behaviors, and trauma-informed infant care. Participants can join the full series or opt into individual sessions.

She also provided an update on the Every Child Belongs (ECB) initiative, which continues to generate interest and questions from providers. Heather acknowledged that some providers have expressed concern about implications for decision-making around children who may be struggling in care. CCRR is approaching this work with a focus on slowing down decisions, offering support early, and coordinating with Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) to match services to each unique situation. Recent cross-agency work led to the creation of detailed provider resource guides in Douglas and Klamath Counties, with a similar effort now underway in Lake County. CCRR has also developed an “Overwhelm-O-Meter” tool to help providers recognize when they may benefit from additional support.

Finally, Heather noted upcoming roundtable sessions offered by 2-1-1, which aim to help partners better understand how to access and navigate 2-1-1’s services.

## Home Visiting Systems Coordination (HVSC) and Take Root Parenting Connections

Vanessa shared that preparations are underway for the Home Visiting and Family Support Gathering scheduled for April. The event will include updates from the Center for Coordinating Oregon's Home Visiting Systems (CCOHVS), a review of system survey results, and breakout sessions led by Heidi and Trauma-Informed Oregon. Vanessa also announced plans for a public service announcement designed to highlight the value of home visiting and noted that the annual professional development survey had already received twenty-seven responses.

Take Root programming continues, including the Family Check-Up digital tool, which provides families with a year of access and optional coaching.

## Partner Updates

Athena announced that the Klamath and Lake County Resource Directory has been updated, fully translated into Spanish, and published on the South-Central Early Learning Hub's website at https://www.scelh.com/parent-resources. A new Google Form allows partners to easily submit additions or corrections, improving the accuracy and accessibility of regional resources. Danielle reinforced that this new system will significantly streamline updates.

## Closing

Steve formally thanked Athena and Danielle for their exceptional work sustaining the Hub during the leadership transition. He also recognized Julie, Alysha, and Analicia for their continued support, and requested that these acknowledgments be recorded in the minutes.

**Next Meeting:** June 2026, date TBD at 11:00 am on Zoom.