



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 24, 2025 | 9 am – 11 AM | Virtual via Zoom

### **Board members present:**

Bob Buesing, Christian Winterbottom, Ted Granger, Claudia Davant, Allison Davis, Rebecca Kapusta, Chris Card, Kyle Baltuch

**Board members absent:** Eddie Gonzale Loumiet, Gege Kreischer, Shawna Pointville

\*\*The number of board members present met the requirements for a quorum.

**Staff members present:** Erin Smeltzer, Lauren Wofford, Lori Stegmeyer, William Kirchhoff, Denise Bishop, David Zimmer, Melissa Clements, Lindsey Smith

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The meeting was officially called to order at approximately 9:06 am. Erin introduced David Zimmer, the new Chief Technology Officer replacing Bill Kirchhoff, who shared his background and excitement about joining the team. The board approved the previous meeting's minutes with Bob calling for the motion, Ted moved, and Christian seconded, all were in favor.

Bob Buesing, Board Chair, moved to the Mission Minute and shared updates on a collaborative early childhood education initiative in Hillsborough County, involving various funders working together to identify best practices and improve coordination. The meeting moved to the finance portion and the group approved Erin's travel and expense summary, which included costs for team meetings, intern onboarding, and participation in the Florida Chamber summit. Erin provided an update on her recent involvement with the Florida Chamber, noting her participation in the early learning section and her potential role as chair of a council focused on great success. Lauren presented current financials and focused on reviewing the organization's financial status and future projections. She noted that revenue was close to the budgeted amount of \$28 million, with \$23 million received so far. The organization is on track to meet all financial targets, with TEACH and Help Me Grow being the largest outstanding items. Erin highlighted the strong financial position, mentioning that the organization could cover its payroll for a year if necessary. The team discussed changes in financial reporting due to new accounting standards and plans to adjust TEACH account models to reduce financial risk. Looking ahead, the budget for the next fiscal year shows an increase in operating funds to \$30 million, up from \$15 million, with potential additional funding from JP Morgan and the Bainum Foundation.

Bob called for a motion to approve the preliminary 2025-2026 budget, which includes a 2% staff salary increase and market adjustments for C-Suite positions. Claudia moved, Ted seconded, and all were in favor. Erin and Claudia successfully navigated a challenging budget process, securing funding for Help Me Grow through proviso language rather than special projects. The organization has approximately \$1

million in pending funding, which will likely be allocated to short-term investments and tech initiatives once confirmed. Additionally, a \$500,000 seed grant was proposed for the center, which will fund staffing, consulting, and initial planning for quality assurance and training systems. Conversations about what this will look like have already started happening and Erin will send updates to the board as things move along.

Erin provided a comprehensive update on early childhood policy achievements from the past year, highlighting successful bills including the switch of school readiness entry threshold from federal poverty level to state median income, the retention of the Council for Early Grade Success, and new requirements for special needs children's providers to have clinical diagnoses and training. She noted that while some coalition funding was cut, early learning overall had a successful legislative session, and she committed to continuing partnerships with early intervention and child welfare organizations despite budget challenges.

The meeting moved to review staff satisfaction survey results and discuss the strategic plan. Jessica presented findings from a recent staff survey, highlighting strengths such as meaningful work (92% positive) and supervisor effectiveness (87% positive), while noting areas for improvement including stress levels (48% reporting multiple times per week) and limited promotional opportunities. The team discussed plans to address these issues through new hires, benefit improvements, stress management training, and leadership development programs. They also acknowledged the need to balance anonymous feedback with open communication and agreed to reinvest in communication training that had been previously successful.

The organization reviewed its past three-year strategic plan, highlighting significant achievements in organizational culture, brand building, and responsiveness to stakeholders. Key accomplishments included doubling the fund balance to \$6 million, expanding Help Me Grow to 15 affiliates in 43 counties, and conducting nearly 4,000 class assessments. The team discussed their next strategic plan, focusing on enhancing internal communication, professional development, and cross-departmental collaboration while addressing capacity issues. They also emphasized the need to restart policy work groups and improve organizational efficiencies through better systems and staff allocation.

The group discussed and refined strategic plan elements, focusing on internal communications, professional development, and cross-departmental collaboration. They agreed to maintain and strengthen existing programs while exploring new partnerships and roles at national and state levels. The team emphasized the importance of cross-training staff and improving organizational infrastructure. They decided to schedule a follow-up board meeting in August to further develop the strategic plan before formal approval at the September meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:35 am and moved to closed executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Winterbottom  
Secretary

Lindsey Smith  
Recording

Minutes Approved on: \_\_\_\_\_ << to be submitted for approval at the next meeting>>

Signature of Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_