



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Board Members Present: Bob Buesing, Gege Kreischer, Larry Pintacuda, Ted Granger, Kyle Baltuch, Allison Davis, Christian Winterbottom, Shawna Pointville

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

Staff Members Present: Erin Smeltzer, Lauren Wofford, Denise Bishop, Lori Stegmeyer, Melissa Clements, Bill Kirchhoff

Board Chair, Bob Buesing, welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm and shared that we have welcomed two new board members, Christian Winterbottom and Rebecca Kapusta, who were approved via email. Bob then invited Christian to introduce himself.

Larry Pintacuda motioned to approve the minutes from the September 2023 board meeting; Gege Kreischer seconded the motion. There were no corrections or improvements and all motioned to approve.

During the Mission Minute, Christian shared that he has been sharing information about what the Forum is with his college and that many people are planning to attend Children's Week. Gege shared that they have a new CEO for the Hillsborough Children's Service Board. Bob shared for his Chair's Report that the Conn Foundation CEO has converted their work from easy projects that help a child here and there to helping foundations that will help more than just a few people at a time. Larry shared his excitement for the direction that the board is going and that he is confident in the new members that have been added.

Finance Committee Updates: Lauren and Erin shared the finance report that the Finance Review Committee reviewed on January 23rd. Lauren shared that we have a net operating income of just over \$100,000 and that the Forum is working to build cash reserves. Bob shared that the list of contracts on the side of the document is an effective way for the board to keep track of what contracts we have open and with whom. Lauren asked Erin to share the diversity of our funders and that Marion County has come on, and that we have picked up training and coaching from a

few different contracts. Lauren shared that we have nearly doubled our cash reserves in the last two years and that if we were to lose all our funding and contracts, we could support our entire organization for a year. Lauren shared our statement of cashflow and our financial ratios. Erin shared that we will see a slight change on cost reimbursement when we start paying rent for the new building, but we have been planning for when that time comes.

Erin shared that the team met this week to start tracking incoming non-recurring revenue because of the prior influx of federal dollars. Erin shared her expenses for travel and other expenditures.

Bob motioned to approve the expense reports. Ted moved; Christian seconded. All approved. Erin's expense report was approved.

Bob motioned to approve the financial statements as presented; Gege moved. Christian seconded. All approved. The financial statements were approved.

Lauren shared that our audit is going wonderfully and there have not been any findings. Once that report is finalized, we will call a short board meeting to share those statements. The only thing that the DEL audit showed was that we were not following the rules for reporting specific procedures, DEL admitted that they had not explicitly stated their expectations. They followed up by stating that they would develop the new rule. Erin suggested the finding was more aligned with technical assistance than to an actual finding.

For legislative updates, Erin shared what she is doing at the Capitol and a few updates on some bills that are coming up.

Erin asked Kyle to go over the tax credit bill and he said it is similar to the bill that was filed last year. It opens about \$5 - \$7 million for employers to support their employees' children, or grandchildren needing to access childcare. It would reimburse about \$300/mo. It also allows funding for businesses to build childcare facilities onsite. A challenge is multistate organizations. These are HB635 and SB820.

Erin shared that the Chamber has released a report called the "Untapped Potential" highlighting the economic impact of not having quality and affordable childcare. Kyle has been traveling the state to present on the issues at hand and Erin encouraged the board to read this publication. In part because of this work, The Consortium chose Kyle to receive the Early Learning Leadership Award during Children's Week.

Erin shared that the appropriations report and that there is a \$13 million recurring funding for T.E.A.C.H. and a verbal commitment to \$7 million nonrecurring which these double the T.E.A.C.H. funding. There is also a proposal for a recurring \$4.5 million for Help Me Grow. Larry shared that when The Chamber gets involved, people listen, and they help us accomplish our funding goals.

Bob asked how we will handle the new demand level that T.E.A.C.H. will bring since the budget has doubled. Lori shared that we have 700 additional scholars than we supported last year, and that our spending is also up. T.E.A.C.H. is still processing applications, but they will award those new scholarships beginning on July 1 when the new funding is available. Projections show that T.E.A.C.H. could have spent \$13 million if they had that amount. The team is focusing on how

the new funding will affect all departments at the Forum and is strategically planning how to make the new funding/spending a smooth transition for everyone here. Lori also shared that we have more INCENTIVE\$ participants this year than ever in the history of the program. Larry asked for clarification on what we forecast for next year and how much our new funding will cover with having so many applications in the queue. Lori shared that they would push as much scholarship money as they could into the next year to use. Erin clarified that we had to pause applications in March in previous years, but this past year we had to stop it in November due to the demand. Erin shared that we are trying to get the state to see T.E.A.C.H. as the doorway to all professional development in the state, both informal and formal. If T.E.A.C.H. can be the “front door,” we can manage all the development, including CEU’s and applicable records so that everything is in one place. Bob shared that he is confident that the Forum can handle the increase in budget beautifully.

Ted asked what the two most optimistic things and the two worst things Erin sees being proposed by the legislature this year. Erin shared that something that we may see pushback on is that in the policy bill there is an allowance for a CDA teacher at a summer VPK who has a micro credential or a level 3 on their instructional support for CLASS. We may see issues because CLASS is not meant to evaluate the teacher alone but is designed to evaluate the classroom. Erin has also heard some pushback on the technology restrictions in that bill and some teachers feel there is value in one-on-one online programs. A positive thing coming up is the massive investment in School Readiness HB929, where reimbursement rates could be wonderful, but she is not sure where they are finding their middle ground. There is a bill that includes a requirement for video monitoring for inclusion classrooms or classrooms for five years old and under to have some extra protection.

For Partner Updates, Melissa Clements shared our collaboration with Teaching Strategies to submit a proposal to JP Morgan Chase to help 260 educators get their CDA, their national CDA through a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship and while coaching them through the development of their portfolios. We are projected to coach 285 classrooms through the LENA contract, and we have a purchase order to do 4,100 assessments this year as well. Erin explained that this is a new revenue source for the CLASS Team and that The Children’s Trust that they are moving all of their work to the ELC of Miami so our registry team and out ELCC team who have been there for a very long time so the Forum made the decision not to bid on anymore work in Miami and instead pull our Miami team in to current projects because we feel like this is a better fit with less audits and more consolidation into the funding programs we are already a part of. Melissa shared that the Miami team is high-capacity and has been with us for 10-15 years and that she is confident that moving them to other contracts will work better for us. Larry asked if we are losing any of Melissa’s staff and Erin shared that the money coming in for T.E.A.C.H. helps us absorb that team into other programs and projects.

Bill shared that our contact for Software as a Service (SaaS) for Iowa will be sent out this week and that we are working with Arkansas to finish their portal, but they are moving a little slower. Our move into the new building is coming along well and the IT team has a great technology plan in place to support people continuing to work from home but also come into the office as needed.

Erin shared that Bill and his team are cleaning up all of our IT processes like help desk tickets and software subscriptions so that the Forum can work more efficiently.

Erin updated the board on the progress of the new building and how quickly it is coming along, we are still waiting on a set move in date.

Denise shared her updates for **HR and Operations** stating that she and Jessica are reviewing policies and revising procedures to clean up existing processes and to improve efficiency.

1. Brought FMLA back “in house” from FLORES (outside vendor) to reduce cost. Jessica Cherry indicated that she was confident she could manage the process internally using our existing Paycor system.
2. Purchased DocuSign as a secure system for gathering electronic signatures and routing documents in a secure and streamlined way.
3. Updated pay and classification scale.
4. Proposing a leave policy to replace the current accrual model. Once fully approved, the policy will take effect in July 2024.
5. Reviewing and revising job descriptions, workflow, and communication practices within programs to improve efficiency. This is driven in part by the organizational need to align positions with the FLSA.
6. Redesigned staff evaluation procedures. Moving to Performance Conversations 3-4x annually with the final conversation serving as a summary of prior conversations. The process is fully online and available through our Paycor system. Training has been provided and managers will conduct one performance conversation with each of their direct reports by the end of February 2024.
7. Reviewing the Employee Handbook to look at areas in need of improvement and policies that may need to be modified or updated Jessica and Karen Buesing have scheduled a meeting to discuss.
8. Discussing NPF Certification for next year. Full renewal application is due in 2025 so work on compiling documents needs to begin ASAP. The process is demanding, and the cost is high, so we need to assess the ROI.
9. Actively engaged in succession planning to prepare for transitions in services and program management as senior level employees consider retirement within the next few years.
10. Implementing the Recruitment and Hiring Module in Paycor to facilitate more consistent practices and streamline the process.
11. Creating a Forum wide training calendar reflecting CF priority areas.
12. Utilizing project management tools such as Trello to document and monitor deliverables, staffing needs, timelines, etc. for each program and department. This will help with accountability, strategic planning, and resource allocation. It will also help the C-Suite make informed decisions about overall capacity and mission alignment.

Research and Special Projects:

Proposals for outside contracts

13. Child Care Group in Texas- submitted proposal requesting strategic planning consultation, needs assessment, and data analysis. Status is pending.
14. ELC NWF- Gap analysis and needs assessment with a community focus. Status is pending
15. DCF FCCPC- Submitted proposal and received intent to award (April 2024)
16. DOE/DEL- Gold Seal- Submitted proposal and received intent to award (April 2024)
17. NPF-GROW project- hired a PR consultant to help with brand development and a marketing plan for the new Forum Forward Corporate membership program. She will engage in website review, conduct a needs assessment/satisfaction survey with current members, and provide strategic marketing recommendations based on the information she collects (TaRhonda Harvey, Kolmio Global kolmioglobal.com)

HMGF

New developments

18. Liz Randall, Senior Director, is back from FMLA/parental leave. We are incredibly happy!
19. Preparing for Statewide Annual Meeting: Orlando in April 2024
20. Contracted with Oppenheim PR to do some market research for the program. Interested in learning what type of social media, video, print material, and community outreach has the greatest impact on engagement with families and providers locally and at a statewide level.

CCES

21. DCF FCCPC- Submitted proposal and received intent to award (April 2024)
22. DOE/DEL- Gold Seal- Submitted proposal and received intent to award (April 2024)
23. *Shout out:* Felicia Bonner was actively involved in writing two proposals for the first time, and with mentoring and support made gains in both her professional confidence and her writing and organizational skills.
24. Met with DEL leadership to discuss Gold Seal and any changes needed to improve the program. This is ongoing.

Bob thanked everyone for their contributions and started Executive Session with the board and Erin and concluded the meeting at 3:54 pm.