



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
Leadership Room
May 28, 2025

Voting Members Present: Dave Arens, Rob Barron, Alicia Chilton, Suzanne Cohrs, Sam Early, Matthew Klemme, Eva Morales, Shay Scholtes, Megan Schultheis, Emily Westergaard; Christian Ramirez participated via Zoom; Jessica Bruning joined via Zoom at 8:08 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Kevin Abler, Tabitha Choquette, Stephanie Guisto, Josh Laraby, Eric Tubbs, Stephen White

Ex-Officio Members Present: Brook Rosenberg

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Kristie Vasey, Child Care Consultant Supervisor Region 4, Child Care Resource & Referral; Cindy Winn, Healthy Start & Empowerment Director, EveryStep

Welcome

Board Chair Suzanne Cohrs welcomed members and called the Polk County Early Childhood Iowa Board meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Quorum was met at this time. Guest introductions were made.

Approval April Minutes

Minutes of April 30, 2025, board meeting were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the April 2025 minutes was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Sam Early. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Audit Committee: April Financials

Alicia Chilton presented the April FY25 financial report. Expenditures are tracking with past year financials at end of April which is 83 percent through the fiscal year.

Chilton reviewed the School Ready and Early Childhood expenditures. Bremner has been in contact with organizations with expenditures lower than the expected percentage. Tammy Engbretson, lead consultant to centers with Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children, has identified curricula and classroom materials needed for quality improvement at several coalition centers. These items will total approximately \$40,000 and will be purchased with early childhood quality improvement funds and non-contracted early childhood funds if needed.

Bremner is estimating carry forward amounts of \$80,000 for the School Ready grant and \$70,000 for the Early Childhood grant. Interest earned which will be added to next year's budget is estimated to be \$42,000.

School Ready

- FY25 School Ready funding \$2,975,693
- Carry Forward funds total \$289,442.42
- FY25 Total School Ready funds \$3,265,135.42
- Interest accrued through April 2025 totals \$30,166.03
- Expended School Ready funds end of April 2025 total \$2,133,884.14
- At the end of April 2025 65% of School Ready had been expended. End of previous April 2024 62% of funds had been expended.

Early Childhood

- FY25 Early Childhood funding \$973,992
- Carry Forward funds total \$154,722.63
- FY25 Total Early Childhood funds \$1,128,714.63
- Interest accrued through April 2025 totals \$10,487.39
- Expended Early Childhood funds at end of April 2025 total \$746,775.42
- At end of April 2025 66% of Early Childhood had been expended. End of previous April 2024 62% of funds had been expended.

A motion to approve the April FY25 Financial Report was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Megan Schultheis. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Fiscal Agent Agreement (Policy 4.3)

Annually the board reviews the fiscal agent and confirms continuation of the agreement.

Jessica Bruning joined via Zoom at 8:08 a.m.

Fiscal Agent duties outlined in the agreement include:

- Receiving quarterly payments and investing funds to accrue interest
- Processing billing invoices received from board staff and issuing payments to organizations.
- Producing monthly GL with all expenditures coded so board staff can tie to the board monthly expenditure report and working with board staff to resolve any differences.
- Including Polk County ECI's financials in the full audit of the fiscal agent finances.
- Providing office space, access to network and server.
- Serving as employer of record with board staff inclusion in all policies and benefits.

A motion to approve United Way of Central Iowa as fiscal agent was made by Dave Arens and seconded by Alicia Chilton. THE MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Executive Director Performance Review and Compensation – Committee Recommendation

Bremner left the room for committee discussion.

Cohrs thanked members who participated in the Executive Director survey. The committee, comprised of Klemme, Early, Westergaard, Chilton, and Cohrs, met to review the board survey results regarding Bremner's performance, evaluate competitive salary information which included other ECI director salaries and metro area nonprofit executive director salaries, and discussed board expectations of the Executive Director position. Bremner received extremely positive feedback in the survey results. The committee acknowledged she has faced a challenging year. She has done an excellent job responding to the uncertainty this year, is a great collaborator with funded partners, and continues to be an excellent leader and reliable resource for both area ECI directors and HHS staff.

Christian Ramirez departed the meeting at 8:20 a.m.

The committee recommends a 15% salary increase beginning July 1, 2025, based on her exemplary performance and seniority in this leadership role. This increase is well within statutory limits, recognizes her extemporaneous leadership and brings her salary to a competitive level with nonprofit executive leaders and senior leaders of area boards.

A motion to approve the committee's Executive Director Compensation increase of 15% was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Megan Schultheis. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

FY26 Budget - FINAL

ECI area board allocations were provided by HHS on May 1st. ECI funding was distributed using the new formula based on risk factors. Any change in funding for an area board was capped by HHS at 15 percent. Polk County ECI received a 15 percent increase in funding. A change related to the new formula and allocation is that revenue will be issued as one grant. Bremner reminded members that child care consulting and training and child care nurse consultant services will be issued contracts for statewide services through HHS. This includes CCR&R contracts and EveryStep Child Care Nurse Consultants contract. Tool O is the state regulatory tool which identifies approved service types and the required performance measures for each service type. Revisions are being proposed by HHS and will be voted on at the June 6th ECI state board meeting.

Jessica Bruning departed the meeting at 9:01 a.m. Quorum was maintained.

Bremner presented the FY26 budget. Programs are listed using the HHS proposed Tool O. The budget is due for submission to HHS via iowagrants.gov by June 1. Cohrs noted if the revisions to Tool O are not accepted at the June 6th ECI State Board meeting, the approved budget can be amended and resubmitted.

A motion to approve the FY26 budget as presented was made by Sam Early and seconded by Rob Barron. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board Member Applications

Bremner reported after further review there is no opening on the ECI State Board in Congressional District 3. Last month Jacob Al-Mazroa had requested a letter of recommendation from the Polk County ECI board to apply for the State ECI Board. Bremner has spoken with Al-Mazroa. He is interested in joining the Polk County ECI board and has submitted an application. Morales recommended Erin Romar, an attorney at the Youth Law Center Bremner has met with her and Romar is interested in submitting an application. Members are asked to contact Bremner with individuals for consideration.

Administrative Report

Bremner's administrative report was included in today's packet.

- The Continuum of Care grant RFP was released by HHS May 19th. Bremner shared the RFP information with the school districts. She will track applicants and awardees. This will not be funded with ECI funds.
- EveryStep Healthy Start & Empowerment is now a Healthy Families America (HFA) affiliate. This is one of the HHS-approved evidence-based programs. EveryStep anticipates having staff trained by October 2025.

Old Business

- None

New Business

- None

Public Comment

- None

Adjournment

Westergaard made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Morales seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Cohrs adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.