POLK COUNTY
EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA

POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
United Way of Central Iowa
Leadership Room
May 27, 2026

Voting Members Present: Alicia Chilton, Dave Arens, Suzanne Cohrs, Sam Early, Matthew Klemme, Josh Laraby, Shay Scholtes, Megan Schultheis; Participating via Teams: Jessica Bruning, Tabitha Choquette, Stephen White; Crhistian Ramirez joined at 8:03 a.m.; Eric Tubbs joined at 8:38 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Kevin Abler, Jake Al-Mazroa, Gabrielle Brooks

Ex-Officio Members Present: Brook Rosenberg

Ex-Officio Members Absent:

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Alyssa Barton, HFA Service Coordinator, Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI); Cindy Winn, Healthy Start Director, EveryStep, both joined virtually via Teams

Welcome
Board Chair Alicia Chilton welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Quorum was met at this time. Guest introductions were made.

Approval April Minutes
Minutes of board meeting April 22, 2026, were presented. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the April 2026 minutes was made by Sam Early and seconded by Suzanne Cohrs. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Crhistian Ramirez arrived at 8:03 a.m.

April FY26 Financial Report
Barb Bremner presented the April FY26 financial report. Expenditures are tracking as expected. EveryStep has communicated they will have approximately $250,000 in unspent funds. In part this is due to several staffing vacancies during the year. Child Care Center Wage enhancement payments for the third quarter have been issued; these contracts are expected to not be fully expended; contract amounts are based on full staffing and retention of all staff. Even with $250,000 unspent from the EveryStep contract, Bremner projects FY26 unexpended funds will be below the state's 20% carry forward limit.

Alyssa Barton, Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) joined the meeting via Teams at 8:08 a.m.

Mid-year contracts with Broadlawns for essential needs and LSI's child development home quality improvement project are expected to fully expend their funds.

Allowable carry forward amount into FY27 is $875,000; currently Bremner is estimating $567,000 in carry forward funds.

Brook Rosenberg arrived at 8:11 a.m.

A motion to approve the April FY26 financials was made by Josh Laraby and seconded by Matthew Klemme. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Executive Director Compensation Committee - Recommendation
Bremner left the room for committee discussion.

Shay Scholtes thanked members who completed the Executive Director performance review survey. The review and compensation committee comprised of Chilton, Cohrs, Early, Klemme, and Scholtes, met to review the board survey results regarding Bremner's performance, discuss Bremner's performance over the past year and consider her salary history. Bremner received a 15% salary increase in 2025 based on her exemplary performance, leadership, additional workload, and to bring her salary to a more competitive level within the nonprofit executive director role for metro area organizations. Scholtes noted Bremner received a 7.5% increase in 2024 based on her exemplary performance as well as her senior leadership role with other ECI areas amid ongoing uncertainty in state redistricting and funding. The committee is making a recommendation for a 3.5% increase for FY27 based on Bremner exceeding expectations and continued exemplary performance and leadership.

After the presentation of the recommendation members discussed a 5% increase reflecting Bremner's broader influence in the ECI community beyond Polk County, her leadership skills, and the potential for her to take on leadership roles as uncertainty continues. The FY27 budget has the capacity for either 3.5% or 5% increase and either total cost would fall within 5% allocation for administrative costs; members discussed administrative costs overall.

Sam Early made a motion to approve a 5% increase to Bremner's Executive Director's Compensation due to her exemplary performance and leadership, Shay Scholtes seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

At the conclusion of the motion, Bremner returned to the meeting. Chilton shared the board decision, and Bremner thanked members for their continued support.

FY27 Budget
Bremner presented three budget scenarios. FY27 Draft Budget A, follows the budget presented in April with an increase to Jai Olive's contract amount. The original request was $20,830. This budget reflects an increase of $16,586 to total $37,416.

Stephen White departed the meeting at 8:28 a.m.

Bremner worked with Jai Olive to revise their funding request to meet needs of doulas and the ongoing enrollment of pregnant women at various points of pregnancy. Doulas meet with clients at various points in their pregnancies and postpartum and not all services for all currently enrolled clients will be completed by the end of fiscal year FY26. As a result, some doula services will extend into FY27. Draft Budget A reflects an increased contract amount for Jai Olive in FY27. Draft Budget A total FY27 allocation of $4,379,221.56 and $680,635.85 in non-contracted funds.

FY27 Draft Budget B, this budget allows for the increase to Jai Olive along with an increase to EMBARC of $150,000. EMBARC was a past recipient of Department of Education Shared Visions grant funding. The agency learned this past week they will not be receiving this 5-year grant funding; a Shared Visions grant of $150,000 was included as anticipated revenue in their budget when they completed the application. Increasing the contract amount to cover the loss of this DOE grant would give EMBARC the opportunity to identify other funding opportunities to cover the shortfall for next fiscal year. Draft Budget B FY27 allocation of $4,379,221.56 and $567,000 in non-contracted funds.

FY27 Draft Budget C, this budget allows for the Jai Olive and EMBARC increases along with $50,000 increases to ICOACH and Shalom's Early Learning Classrooms contracts. These increases would meet each center's funding request for FY27. The budget discussed at the April Board meeting included status quo funding for these two contracts.

Eric Tubbs joined via Teams at 8:38 a.m.

Discussion:

- Both ICOACH and Shalom continue to grow and are making positive steps for their programs.
- Both programs are working with CCR&R, participate in the IQ4K quality rating system, require families to apply for CCA, utilize Dental Connections SMILE Squad and have volunteers from United Way's Book Buddy program.

Crhistian Ramirez departed the meeting at 8:54 a.m.

- Members acknowledged the need for these programs to know funding levels to be able to enroll the appropriate number of children for the fall.
- Members requested Bremner meet with programs to gather more detailed information on how each program would utilize the additional funding.
- Providing additional funding to the program as early as possible will give them stability for growth and the opportunity to plan for fall enrollment.
- Bremner reported the budget needs to be uploaded to state platform Iowa Grants by June 1. It would be possible to adjust the budget after the June 17th board meeting.

Sam Early made a motion to approve FY27 Draft Budget C, which includes increases for Jai Olive, EMBARC and the requested contract amounts of $200,000 for both Shalom and ICOACH Early Learning Classrooms with the request that Bremner and Chilton meet with both programs to discuss the details of the contract and the intended use of the increased funding by both programs. Chilton and Bremner will report on these conversations with both programs at the next board meeting June 17th. Josh Laraby seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Nominating Committee - update

Board Governance and Nominating Committee discussed the Board Member Term spreadsheet. Chilton noted Crhistian Ramirez and Jake Al-Mazroa have submitted their resignations to take effect June 30, 2026; Stephanie Giusto resigned earlier this year. Dave Arens, Tabitha Choquette, Matthew Klemme, and Eric Tubbs will end their second terms on June 30, 2026.

Bremner has met with six potential board members and received applications back from five.

Josh Laraby departed the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Members were encouraged to continue sending Bremner potential board member nominees. The committee will present the slate of nominees along with leadership roles at the June 17th meeting.

Legislative update SF2488-end of session update

Bremner shared her summary of SF2488 approved May 1, 2026 by the legislature. The bill establishes an Early Childhood and Family Services system (ECFS) administered by HHS and aligns with the seven Behavioral Districts. It also establishes an ECFS advisory council with members appointed by HHS and the convening of the study committee that will provide a final report or submit a draft bill to the legislature in January 2027.

Bremner noted this bill has not yet been signed by the governor. Members were encouraged to reach out to candidates on this bill.

Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) training – Open meetings and public records

Bremner reported the link to register for the July 15th IPIB board member training will be live today. This training on Iowa's open meeting laws is required of board members. Members are asked to participate in this 60- to 120-minute required training in lieu of the July board meeting. Upon completion members will receive a certificate from IPIB and are asked to forward the certificate to Bremner once received. Sessions will be scheduled quarterly in the event a member cannot attend the July session.

Administrative Report

- Bremner has been meeting with prospective board members.
- Bremner attended the Shalom preschool graduation, Thursday, May 21st. She will share out the slide show from the event.
- ECI State Board meeting is this Friday, June 5th.

- Bremner will submit the budget to the state and start working on FY27 contracts to be issued after the June 17th board meeting.

Old Business
None

New Business
Bremner reported Jody Kanne has accepted a new Executive Assistant position with United Way. Kanne's work supporting the Polk County ECI Board will end June 30, 2026. Bremner will work with United Way's HR staff to identify a contractor to provide administrative support.

Public Comment
None

Adjournment
Suzanne Cohrs made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Megan Schultheis seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chilton adjourned the meeting at 9:34 a.m.