



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

March 1, 2018
8:15 a.m.

ELC Main Office
10 SE Central Parkway, Suite 200, Stuart

Mission: Partnering with parents, providers and communities to ensure quality early learning experiences through programmatic and financial support.

Vision: Building Blocks for Educational Success

*** Item requires action**

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Determination of Quorum	PAGES	Barbara Clowdus
II. Announcements and Additions/Deletions to Agenda		Barbara Clowdus
III. Adoption of Agenda *		Barbara Clowdus
IV. Consent Agenda * A. Program Minutes – February 1, 2018	1 - 2	Barbara Clowdus
V. Old Business A. Update - Reaching Underserved Communities		Barbara Clowdus Pat Houston
VI. New Business A. Provider Focus Group Recap and Discussion B. Program Updates	3 - 7	Pat Houston
VII. Future Agenda Items A. Data gathering – Teacher turnover rate and number of teachers pursuing degrees.		Barbara Clowdus
VIII. Board Member Comments		Barbara Clowdus
IX. Public Comments		Barbara Clowdus
X. Adjournment		Barbara Clowdus

Public comments may be offered at every Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin & Okeechobee Counties Board of Director's or committee meeting. We welcome the opportunity as part of our continuing effort to improve our responsiveness to the needs of the children, families, and community we serve. To present comment, interested parties are asked to complete a Public Comment Card available at the sign-in table, deliver such to the Chair in advance to the Call to Order, and be present during the public comment period. All interested parties are asked to indicate whether the comment is related to the business associated with the specific agenda before the Board/Committee or if the comment is intended for consideration by the Board/Committee at a future meeting. All comments are limited to 3 minutes unless otherwise waived by a majority action of the members present.



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 1, 2018

ELC Main Office
10 SE Central Parkway, Suite 200, Stuart, FL

Present:	Barbara Clowdus (via teleconference) Rhiannon Forker (via teleconference)	Pat McCoy (via teleconference) Donna Rivett
Excused:	Shonda Hunter	
ELCIRMO Staff:	Migdalia Rosado Pat Houston	Loretta Toth
Others:	Steven Newman	

I. CALL TO ORDER

At the request of Chair, Barbara Clowdus, the meeting was called to order at 8:17 a.m. by Acting Chair, Donna Rivett. Roll call was taken and a quorum present.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Ms. Clowdus requested to add Item C under New Business, to include a discussion on the Program Committee's role with respect to provider's concerns regarding the potential merger and data gathering. Mr. Newman provided an updated from the January board meeting.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Motion to adopt the revised agenda was made by Rhi Forker, seconded by Barbara Clowdus and passed.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Program Minutes – November 2, 2017

Motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Barbara Clowdus, seconded by Pat McCoy and passed.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update – Reaching Underserved Communities

Ms. McCoy reported on the meeting with the Okeechobee School District and ELCIRMO. The Superintendent is very open to transporting students from outlying communities who are on regular school bus routes to school sites where private providers could pick them up and take them to centers that offer VPK. Ms. Houston mentioned that some parents need wrap-around care, which would require additional funding, perhaps through a grant. Also, there are children in Okeechobee who are home-schooled. The next step is to gather data such as number of children and cost. The committee discussed funding and publicity ideas.

Tasks:

- 1) Pat McCoy - research funding sources in Okeechobee.
- 2) Committee members - funding sources that may be available in other areas.
- 3) Pat Houston - compile data.

Ms. Rivett suggested the information be sent to the committee as soon as it is available, and prior to the next meeting. Committee members should forward any information to Ms. Rosado.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion: “Why Are Our Most Important Teachers Paid the Least?” *(shared by Mr. Newman)*

Ms. Rivett, a former preschool teacher, commented on the great article, noting that the pay scale is not changing much. The importance of having a good, solid preschool education can help raise children out of poverty.

Ms. Forker left the call at 8:53 a.m.

Ms. Houston commented on the WAGE\$® program which provides a stipend to early educators for milestones in their professional development. The teacher turnover rate was questioned. Ms. Rivett suggested doing a survey to find out how many teachers have left in the last three years. Ms. Newman recommended gathering data about the number of teachers pursuing degrees with the intent of obtaining a teaching position in the public schools due to higher incomes, suggesting the information may be used to convince legislators and others about this important issue and increase funding to keep the teachers in early education, where they have the most impact.

B. Program Updates – Ms. Houston provided the following updates:

- ELCIRMO is co-hosting an Early Educators Conference this Saturday at Redeemer Lutheran Preschool in Stuart. There are approximately 250 participants registered. The event is free to all participants, with lunch catered by the Olive Garden.
- ELCIRMO is supporting Tykes & Teens in an initiative to provide Pyramid Model training to childcare providers in high-need areas. This initiative will be presented to Indian River Impact 100 for a grant opportunity.

Pat McCoy left the call at 9:11 a.m. A quorum was no longer present.

C. Discussion – Program Committee’s Role – Merger Data Gathering

Ms. Clowdus provided an update from the January board meeting, noting that additional data will be gathered and presented at the March board meeting. She turned the meeting over to Mr. Newman. Mr. Newman attended a provider meeting whereby their concerns were expressed to him. After hearing their concerns, it was recommended the board pursue further fact finding and determine if ELCIRMO will proceed with a merger. A provider focus group will be requested to gather additional data and allow an opportunity for the providers to voice their opinions and concerns. Mr. Newman suggested that ELCIRMO staff have input into the information that may be helpful from the Program Committee standpoint, as not all information pertains to financial and operational issues. Staff was directed to develop questions for committee review and input. Additional discussion was held regarding the facilitator, at which time it was suggested that the Board Chair or Vice-Chair facilitate the Focus Group.

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Update on tasks – Reaching Underserved Communities
- Data gathering – Teacher turnover rate and number of teachers pursuing degrees.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Clowdus, Chair
Donna Rivett, Acting Chair
BC/DR/lt

Provider Focus Group Recap

February 20, 2018

Agenda and Questions/Comments - embedded

Background: At the board meeting on January 25th, 2018 the board directed that a Provider Focus Group be held prior to the next board meeting, with the purpose of eliciting feedback on a potential merger with ELCSLC. This is one component of the fact-finding that is to be considered at the March board meeting, as to whether merging is in the best interest of ELCIRMO.

At the subsequent Program Quality Committee (PQ) meeting, held on February 1, 2018, Committee members directed staff to design the focus group, including developing the agenda and questions as well as securing a facilitator. Committee members recommended that staff request that the ELCIRMO board chair or vice-chair facilitate the focus group.

An inquiry was made to the board chair, requesting that he facilitate the focus group but he asked that the vice chair be approached. An inquiry was made to the vice chair, who agreed to facilitate the focus group. Questions were developed and sent to PQ members, requesting feedback. The feedback received was considered and questions revised, as appropriate.

All Providers contracted with ELCIRMO, including those located in SLC, were invited to attend (via email), and RSVPs were requested. Several Providers expressed their regret of an inability to attend due to scheduling conflicts.

All board members were invited to attend (via email.)

The Provider Focus Group was held on Tues 2/20/18 from 5-6:30pm, at the Children's Services Council of Martin County in Stuart, FL.

In attendance were:

- Four of our 17 board members, one of whom was the designated Facilitator
- 14 Provider participants with direct oversight of 43 contracted sites including SR and VPK programs; note that:
 - Numerous additional Providers indicated a desire to participate, but could not attend;
 - Participants included six former ELCIRMO board members who are owners and/or directors of contracted sites (two from each of our three Counties), who spoke on behalf of Providers who were not available to attend;
 - Participants included adjunct professors in early education and a school board member;
 - Participants included area representatives and/or owners with multiple sites within our region, including one with contracts with four ELCs;
 - Nine of the 14 participants were owners or representatives with multiple sites within our three counties.
- Community partner – Children's Services Council of MC: Executive Director and Manager of Program Services
- ELCIRMO Coalition: Interim CEO, Director of Provider Services, Director of Finance and Quality Specialist
- ELCSLC Coalition: CEO, Director of Programs, Finance Director, Family Services Director and HR/Operations Manager

Provider Focus Group Agenda

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

5-6:30pm

- **Welcome and Introduction of Facilitator**

ELCIRMO Interim CEO, Migdalia Rosado, welcomed participants and introduced Will Laughlin, board member, as facilitator

- **Overview and Purpose of Focus Group**

Facilitator gave brief overview of why the focus group was requested and the intended purpose, including that the information gathered will be shared at the March 22nd board meeting

- **Ground Rules**

Ground rules were reviewed, including encouragement to speak freely

- **Participant Introductions**

Participants introduced themselves, including which Provider(s) they own and/or direct

- **Facilitation of Focus Group**

Facilitator conducted focus group – see details below for questions and comments

- **Closing and Adjournment**

Facilitator made closing remarks, thanking participants for their contributions and adjourned the group at 6:30pm

Provider Focus Group Questions

- What is important to you in the management of an Early Learning Coalition?
 - Issues and concerns are handled expeditiously; [spokesperson for owner with multiple sites who contracts with 4 different ELCs contacts the ELCIRMO office for answers to questions relating to other counties, as they have the fastest response time – “1 day instead of 1 week”]
 - Earned trust; “a true partnership, not just told what to do”
 - Mindset and culture: counties very different, offer support to Directors and staff versus interest in compliance only; “in it together” for the good of the children/families we serve
 - Mission/vision/core values are in sync with communities served; they know their communities
 - Relationships and connections between ELCIRMO staff and Providers/families; [relationships are the foundation for successful coaching/technical assistance]; commitment to values, trust and communication
 - Directors and teachers rely on the knowledge and expertise of ELCIRMO to offer support
 - Quality Specialists have first-hand knowledge of their unique needs and circumstances
 - Quality Specialists foster a nurturing environment vs. punitive environment
 - Knowledgeable, responsive core group of employees who help to implement requirements for state contracts.
 - Not feeling we are alone, but, we are in it together
 - Advocates for children/families and Providers

- From a Provider’s standpoint, what do you believe are the pros and cons of a merger?
 - Pros:
 - One Provider contract for both ELCs
 - Families could transfer between counties without going on wait list [note that SR transfers are detailed in rule to allow county-to-county transfers statewide]
 - Potential IR financial support, not currently received
 - Cons:
 - Rebranding time and expense
 - Rebuilding processes, policies and procedures - time and expense; catch-up time
 - Cost of RFP to facilitate merger
 - Concern that current excellent level of service would decline when absorbed by large entity
 - Loss of quality
 - Learning curve – mission, culture
 - Unknown staffing/org chart; continued loss of knowledgeable staff even though number of children served would double (ELCIRMO has already lost 4 excellent staff members due to “talk” of merger)
 - Risk – potential loss of additional valuable, knowledgeable staff; personal relationships and knowledge lost

- Unknown the effect of a merger on reimbursement rates; Gold Seal and reimbursement rates are historically higher in MC than in SLC
 - The Unknown is not fair to longtime Providers or Staff; 15-months of discussion already
 - CCEP concern – potential competition for CCEP dollars; concern that ELCIRMO counties will not be able to increase match amounts if desired, as currently able to
- Please share any questions, comments or concerns that you have about the merger, that have not yet been addressed.
 - Merger discussion was started between ELCIRMO board chair and previous CEO who was resigning in Dec. 2016; what is timeline of merger, if approved by board or ordered by state?
 - Discussion regarding Board chair’s comment “wish I’d never started this”
 - There has been turnover in board of directors – current members may have little insight into how this began, and why
 - Expense and time lost due to merger discussion; what are future costs – financial and human resources, and over what time frame?
 - Need to know Provider reimbursement rates, including Gold Seal
 - Financial data, including CCEP impact
 - Enrollment/waitlist impact
 - Staffing / org chart
 - Why would CEO of SLC assume position if merged entity, as ELCIRMO has been functioning at a very high level for 15 months with Interim CEO?
 - What other ELCs merged, and what were results?
 - How could merger be recommended when there are not answers?
- Based on the pros/cons and discussion today, do you think a merger is in the best interest of our Coalition?
 - Not enough information provided to make a good determination
- What do you think our board should consider in deciding whether to merge, and what information should be gathered for our board?
 - Board should consider:
 - Funding – would there be a reduction for our Counties
 - CCEP concern
 - Concern of Quality, if merged
 - Cultures in each County and each Coalition – vast differences
 - Providers get what they need promptly now – unknown if would continue
 - Knowledgeable staff now – unknown if would continue
 - Who will benefit? Not the children
 - Costs of rebranding, melding policies and procedures, locations/office space, cost analysis done?
 - What were results of previous ELC mergers – served more children?
 - Let other ELCs merge, see how it goes as a test
 - Trust issues / fears

- Risk: further loss of valuable staff
- Risk: lose valuable Providers - some will stop contracting; tight margins for Providers; if main office is in SLC, location would be inconvenient for Providers
- How can you vote for merger when critical information not known?
- Providers asked that answers be provided if board is supporting merger, and requests a timely decision:
 - – “it has already been 15 months”
 - This started 15 months ago because the CEO resigned – it is still being run great!
 - Turmoil – “there has been 15 months of turmoil - not a day goes by without thinking about this; how would you run your business when finances are unknown?” – financial uncertainty for Providers
 - “We have shown up at several meetings to be heard – are we still not heard? Why so dismissive of Providers?”
 - “Why are we here developing pros and cons? We gave input months ago!”
- Information needed:
 - Financial impact: CCEP, impact on enrollment/waitlists, reimbursement rates and Gold Seal rates, cost analysis of due diligence and merger including rebranding, marketing, locations/office space, org chart/staffing, revamping policies and procedures