



**SC First Steps Board of Trustees  
Meeting April 26, 2019  
9:30 AM  
EdVenture Children's Museum  
211 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present (15):**

Chip Stanley, Chair  
Julie Hussey, Vice Chair  
Josh Baker  
Shelley Canright  
Walter Fleming Jr.  
Senator Greg Hembree  
Tim Holt  
Angel Johnson-Brebner  
Senator Gerald Malloy  
David Mathis  
Jennifer McConnell  
Alexia Newman  
Roger Pryor  
Rick Toomey  
Sue Williams

**Members Absent (6):**

Representative Rita Allison  
Mary Lynne Diggs  
Representative Jerry Govan  
John Meacham  
Mary Poole  
Amy Williams

**Others Present:**

Georgia Mjartan	Cassie Barber
Samantha Ingram	Kate Roach
Zack Catoe	Pierce McNair
Martha Strickland	Porlan Cunningham
Debbie Robertson	Jonathan Artz
Mark Barnes	Beth Moore
Betty Gardiner	



## Call to Order/Quorum Call

Mr. Chip Stanley called the SC First Steps Board of Trustees meeting to order at 9:39 a.m.

Mr. Tim Holt introduced a motion to approve the meeting agenda as written. Ms. Angel Johnson-Brebner provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting opened for public comment. No members of the public present wished to speak.

Mr. Stanley called the board's attention to the consent agenda and asked for any discussion. With no request for discussion, Ms. Sue Williams called for a motion to approve the consent agenda followed by a second by Ms. Johnson-Brebner.

Ms. Hussey noted that the Local Partnership Program Accountability Standards allows the State Office to model itself as a funder to the local partnership offices.

The following items on consent agenda were unanimously approved:

- To adopt the February 2019 minutes as submitted.
- To approve the 2017-2018 990 Form as presented by Manley Garvin, LLP
- To approve the Match Waiver Request from Horry County for 2017-2018.

Mr. Stanley welcomed Dr. Rick Toomey, Director, DHEC, to the board. Mr. Stanley then thanked Ms. Joan Meacham for her service to SC First Steps as a board member, and noted that her replacement, Mr. Michael Leach, would be joining the board as the new director of the S.C. Department of Social Services.

Mr. Stanley congratulated Ms. Sue Williams for receiving the U.S. Children's Bureau Award and Ms. Alexia Newman for receiving the Order of the Palmetto.

Ms. Georgia Mjartan presented the draft personnel policy, *Infants in the Workplace*, to the board. Ms. Mjartan stated that the S.C. Department of Insurance created the original "Infants in the Workplace" policy, and that S.C. First Steps is proposing to a similar version for its employees.

Ms. Mjartan noted that the SC First Steps draft policy broadens the definition of a caregiver to include guardians, foster and adoptive parents; as well as being inclusive of infants such as adoptive and foster infants. Ms. Mjartan also stated that the agency's policy clarified the age limit for having an infant in the workplace as 6 months gestational age.

With no discussion, Ms. Hussey made the motion to adopt the *Infants in the Workplace Policy* as presented and to incorporate this policy into the South Carolina First Steps' Personnel Policies effective immediately. After a second by Mr. Holt, the motion was unanimously approved.



Ms. Mjartan acknowledged Ms. Kate Roach and Ms. Beth Moore, employees of First Steps, who will be able to use this policy as they welcome their new babies later this year.

Mr. Walter Fleming presented the Finance and Administration Committee Report. Mr. Fleming stated that Horry County First Steps has requested a waiver due to their inability to meet the 15% Match requirement. Mr. Fleming said the committee discussed this request and agreed to approve the waiver once. The committee further decided to send the information to the Programs and Grants Committee for analysis in ways to make this request be more punitive should additional requests from this county be received. The waiver was approved in the consent agenda.

Mr. Fleming then discussed the New Draft Allocation Model approved by the Allocation Committee, which was comprised of state board members, Local Partnership Executive Directors and State Office staff - and facilitated by Dr. Max Learner. Mr. Fleming stated that the draft allocation model was submitted to the Local Partnership Executive Directors and the public for feedback.

Mr. Fleming said the implementation year would be Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

Upon a second by Ms. Hussey, the board unanimously approved the motion to approve the Draft Allocation Model for implementation effective with the 2019-2020 fiscal year, based on the phase-in schedule approved by the committee.

Mr. Mark Barnes presented the budget information and stated the agency was on target for our year-to-date spending. Mr. Barnes stated that planning for the next budget year is starting in early May by having in-depth discussions and work session with individual program managers.

Mr. Roger Pryor asked why the funding for Early Head Start funding still appeared on the Financial Status Report. Mr. Barnes replied that the funding was carry-forward funding that came into this fiscal year, but that all accounts will be formally closed on July 1, 2019.

Mr. Barnes noted that the Preschool Development Grant, Birth to Five budget has been created and the board will see that funding's specific line item on the next financial report.

Ms. Williams reminded the group that DSS is the fiscal agent for the grant. Mr. Barnes stated that DSS was the fiscal agent and the recipient of the grant, and SC First Steps is considered a vendor and will meet all reporting requirements of DSS.

Ms. Mjartan stated that SC First Steps had all contracts with local partnerships and other community partners were drafted in a timely manner and executed with all 46 local partnerships for their work with the needs assessment, strategic planning and parent engagement activities. Agreements were completed through sub-contracts with community partners as well.



Ms. Mjartan emphasized the importance in showing the local partnerships and the community that efforts are not to retain money for ourselves, but to act as a conduit for administering funds into the community.

Mr. Barnes gave an update on the new financial management system, the process for procurement, and plans for implementation of the new system. Mr. Barnes said a vendor was identified by the state's Materials Management Office (MMO) and that MMO is finalizing the terms and conditions so that implementation can begin mid-May.

Mr. Barnes stated that the new financial management system would be very comprehensive and will include a fundraising component.

Ms. Sue Williams asked if training on the new system would be offered to the local partnerships. Mr. Barnes responded by saying that access and control levels are being identified and intensive training will be offered to all local partnerships and state office staff.

Mr. Stanley reminded board members that SC First Steps is a public-private partnership and asked that board members consider donating in that regard.

Ms. Jennifer McConnell presented the Program and Grants Committee Report. Ms. McConnell briefed the group on the committee's action item regarding the local partnership 15% match requirement. Ms. McConnell stated that the board's Finance and Administration Committee asked the Program and Grants Committee for guidance when issuing waivers to local partnerships who consistently do not adhere to the 15% match requirement.

Ms. McConnell said that legislation allows the board to issue waivers, but it does not indicate how many. For this reason, the committee would like to establish a protocol that will be used in the future when dealing with waiver requests.

Ms. McConnell stated the following action item from the committee: "While the Board of SC First Steps may or may not choose to grant a 15% match waiver for a first-year request, the Board will not grant a 15% match waiver for 2 consecutive years. If the Board of Trustees does not grant a match waiver, the State Office of First Steps will recapture from the local partnership's current year state funds the amount equal to the matching funds due, but not raised to meet the 15% match requirement at the conclusion of the prior fiscal year. Once recaptured funds constitute a pool of \$10,000 or more, funds will be distributed through a competitive grants process established by the Board. This policy takes effect for the 2020 Grant Cycle and will be applied to any match requests for waivers beginning with FY 2019."

Ms. McConnell opened the floor for discussion on the proposal.



Senator Greg Hembree asked how the funds would be recaptured. Ms. McConnell stated that the funds would be withheld from the local partnership's budget the following fiscal year, which will allow time for the local partnership office to budget with the lesser amount.

Ms. Johnson-Brebner asked how this change would be communicated to the local partnerships. Ms. McConnell briefed the group of one other occasion where funding was recaptured from a local partnership and used to create a competitive grant opportunity for the other local offices.

Ms. Mjartan stated that the state office conducts monthly webinars and quarterly in-person meetings with the Local Partnerships Executive Directors, along with a weekly news round-up and a monthly email newsletter so that local Executive Directors can be informed of any changes approved by the board just as soon as possible.

Ms. Hussey said this process holds the state office accountable as funders, and helps the local partnerships see themselves as grantees while encouraging them to seek additional funding from other sources.

Senator Hembree asked how many local partners, over the years, have requested waivers. Mr. Barnes said this was the first year in SC First Steps history where no local partnership went over the administrative cap and had only one county not achieve the match requirement as opposed to 4-8 waiver requests each year prior.

Ms. Mjartan said the state office local partnership team worked hard writing correction action plans and communicating with local board members to help them achieve success.

Mr. Pryor stated the goal of the committee is to hold the counties accountable, but he also sees the need to be thoughtful in the implementation of automatically denying the waivers and removing funds from the local communities.

Mr. Stanley reminded the group that it is the board's fiduciary responsibility to ensure that state funds are being used appropriately.

Senator Hembree said he understands the conflict of taking money away; however, he stated that Horry County is a generous community and there is plenty of opportunity to fundraise in the county.

Ms. McConnell encouraged the board to be mindful and thoughtful of the process and implementation of the new waiver policy to be sure it is suitable and does not hinder the relationship between local directors and the state office - or decrease morale at the local partnership level.



Ms. Hussey called for a motion to be made on the action item regarding waivers. Senator Hembree made the motion to accept the action item as read by Ms. McConnell. Upon a second by Ms. Johnson-Brebner, the motion was unanimously approved.

Senator Gerald Malloy gave the Legislative Committee Report and asked Ms. Mjartan to discuss the changes in the agency's budget and proviso requests.

Ms. Mjartan discussed the details of the proposed Education Reform bill sponsored by Senator Scott Talley.

Ms. Mjartan then talked about the possibility of creating an Early Childhood Study Committee due to the Education Reform bill not making it out of committee this legislative session.

Ms. Mjartan said the message that SC First Steps shared with legislators was that the study committee felt a little premature due to the fact that the agency has newfound energy behind the Early Childhood Advisory Council, which was established as a mechanism to achieve the purpose that has been outlined in the study committee work.

Senator Malloy briefed the group on the Legislative Oversight Committee study of the agency and stated the study by the Senate group should be complete this year.

Senator Hembree shared his thoughts on the Early Childhood Study Committee and said part of the interest of the study committee grows from the confusion going on with the 0-5 population and all the agencies and organizations that provide services to that population. Senator Hembree mentioned that SC First Steps and the ECAC has a job to help the study committee see and understand that early childhood services are not as disjointed as they may appear on the surface.

Ms. Mjartan stated that through a Senate proviso, 4K carry-forward funds could be used in a more flexible way to include paying quality-rated centers (Level B or above) a higher tuition rate (increase of 10%), the ability to do capital grants to 50 qualifying school districts, and the creation of a multi-county, multi-district provision to allow students to be served across school district lines. Ms. Mjartan said more details would be shared at the next board meeting should the proviso be passed.

Senator Hembree encouraged board members to thank Rep. Vincent Sheheen for his work on the Senate proviso.

Mr. Holt asked Ms. Mjartan if a resource was available that could help educate the public and the Early Childhood Study Committee on the early childhood services offered by the various agencies and organizations.

Ms. Mjartan said the resources and products created from the Preschool Development Grant will help provide this information along with a communication strategy to help



parents navigate SC's early childhood systems through one portal branded as an ECAC product.

Senator Hembree discussed bill S.419 in more detail and stated that the committee would continue to work on the language of the bill during the legislative offseason.

Ms. Mjartan said the Senate did approve funding for an outcomes and accountability data system to have an agency wide system that captures 4K data, Local Partnership data and other added programs to decrease duplication of numbers served. Ms. Mjartan also expressed the desire to add ports of connectivity with other agencies and organizations to share data efficiently.

Ms. Mjartan said some of the Preschool Development Grant funds allowed the hire of a Business Analyst (contract employee) to help research appropriate data systems.

Ms. Mjartan presented her Executive Director's report and stated that the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee did not meet prior to the board meeting due to the strategic planning work to be done by the board later that day.

Ms. Mjartan noted that part of the committee's work is to shepherd the external evaluation of the agency's performance as specified in the organizational goals along with two prevalent programs from the local partnership strategies: Childcare Scholarships and Childcare Quality Enhancement. Ms. Mjartan directed the board to the Evaluation 2019 Overview document within their packet of materials and asked the board to complete the evaluator's survey which will be sent to them on Monday from Ms. Samantha Ingram. The survey was created by the evaluators: The Institute for Families in Society and CARE (Core for Applied Research and Evaluation) from the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health. Ms. Mjartan said the purpose of the survey is to look at the makeup and functioning of the boards at the state and local levels.

Ms. Mjartan talked about the agency's increased communications and outreach efforts. Ms. Mjartan showed the board the agency's new website, which includes a new First Steps 4K web portal to help educate caregivers and give them the opportunity to check their eligibility status for enrollment in the program. Ms. Mjartan stated that MadMonkey was able to create the new website for \$10,000 and provided \$20,000-\$25,000 of additional services as in-kind resources.

Ms. Mjartan briefed the board of the Donate button on the new website and explained that donations can be restricted or non-restricted in order to be used as "glue money" for flexible local partnership spending. Ms. Mjartan noted that donations can be directed to a specific local partnership office or the state office.

Ms. Mjartan discussed at length the increased social media outreach efforts along with the addition of photographs of clients being served, graphically pleasing documents such as the





fillable grant applications, 4K postcards, Countdown to Kindergarten materials, and First Steps 4K billboards.

Ms. Mjartan briefed the group on the First Steps 4K outreach efforts and pointed the board to the materials in their packet.

With no further business, Senator Greg Hembree made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Pryor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m.