

ELC Executive Committee Meeting

September 11, 2014

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Chicago: Department of Human Services
401 S Clinton Ave., First-Floor Conference Room
Chicago, IL 60607

Springfield: Lieutenant Governor's Capitol Conference Room, Stratton Building
401 S. Spring Street,
Springfield, IL 62706

Conference Line: 888-494-4032
Access Code: 7198518485

Minutes

Participants

Chicago: Cindy Zumwalt, Dan Harris, Elliot Regenstein, Sara Slaughter, Michelle Saddler, Maria Whelan, Kathy Villano, Theresa Hawley, Julie Smith, Harriet Meyer, Gaylord Geiskie, Karen Berman, Phyllis Glink, George Davis, Kim Collins, Molly Daily, Anna Colaner, Beth Mascitti-Miller

Springfield: Jan Maruna, Linda Saterfield

Call-in: Daniel Fitzgerald

I. Welcome and Introductions

a. Introductions

Co-chair Harriet Meyer welcomed all attendees to the meeting. She thanked the Department of Human Services for hosting and expressed gratitude to all members for attending a special session. Meyer expressed excitement about a great new opportunity through the Preschool Expansion Grant.

II. Overview of Preschool Development Grant

a. Overview

Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood Development Theresa Hawley provided an overview of the Preschool Development Grant, determining that it is well within the lines of the strategic vision of the Governor's Birth to Five initiative and other Early Learning Council initiatives. She explained the details of the grant, noting that it is

worth \$20 million/year in an Expansion grant for Illinois, who would be competing in a pool with other Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant Recipients. Hawley explained the point of the grant as access to quality preschool spots for high-need four year olds, with 95% of funds or more going to subgrantees. Hawley explained the details of the grant, the timeline of work, the fruitfulness of a meeting held the previous day with providers, and the importance of comprehensive care.

b. Discussion

Hawley answered a question about the need for a Family Resource person, which would certainly be necessary and helpful for the comprehensive services required in this grant but would not go as far as a Head Start requirement goes.

- Maria Whelan inquired about the competitiveness of this grant. Hawley explained that it would be a very competitive process and that the grant may be difficult to receive as many states will be participating in this great opportunity. Hawley noted that states providing the biggest competition against Illinois are Mississippi, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Elliot Regenstein noted that many conservative states may not apply for this grant because their governors have decided not to accept this funding.
- Karen Berman inquired regarding the inclusion of requirements on IEPs and special education issues. Hawley noted that our requirements on IEPs as well as the differences between this grant and the Preschool for All grant coupled make things complicated for special education charging. Hawley also noted that many complications already exist in the system--such as school districts who send kids home on the bus after Head Start, where they return on a new bus minutes later for their Preschool for All classroom in the afternoon.

III. Strategic Vision

a. Overview

Hawley provided an explanation for the continuum of children to be reached, as well as the methods by which she determined the current need for high-need spots and the current supply. From this, Hawley had deduced that the current demand includes about 23% of four-year-olds in the state, while only about 8,000 spots are supplied. This means there is a need for around 300,000 new spots in Illinois.

b. Discussion

- Co-Chair Harriet Meyer and Maria Whelan inquired about the methods of reaching the most at-risk children. Meyer and Whelan noted that we need to make sure that we are working to get the children of the highest need, which should be a target to use in the grant and its implementation. Hawley noted that this point spoke to the importance of community systems. Elliot Regenstein noted that the pipeline for finding these children should start before 4-year-old Pre-K. Hawley noted that this grant will give us the opportunity to build such a community system through a focus on pipelines and communities.

- Gaylord Geiskie inquired about whether racial disparities were looked at in the process of finding the most at-risk children. Hawley explained that, while that was not an explicit focus, the most at-risk communities tended to be those with high racial diversity—including a high number of refugees in Wheaton.
- The determination of Community Partners and how they would be decided to create strong partnerships was discussed. Hawley explained that the most important criteria were areas with high poverty and greatest lack of spots for preschoolers. Other criteria such as full-day kindergarten, smooth transitions, and partnerships with community organizations are also important. Hawley explained that some districts are now signing up for KIDS training, which could be a new requirement for community partners.

IV. **One-Year Plan**

Hawley explained her calculations of funding matches through Illinois and how that would be spent over the next five years, if the grant is received.

- Phyllis Glink inquired about whether this grant and the promise of Illinois' money was responsible. Co-Chair Julie Smith noted that the Governor's Birth to Five initiative can support this type of growth, that the Illinois State Board of Education is providing its support, and that this grant reflects our priorities as a state for early childhood. Regenstein noted that every state applying for this grant is in the same place with having the difficult task of committing funding four years down the road. Smith noted that the Governor's office is fully committed to this plan, which is within the priorities of the Early Learning Council. Smith noted that this does not take away from investing in other Birth to three initiatives.
- Hawley noted that there is not a lot of ready to go community collaboration, but Chicago Public Schools representative Beth Mascitti-Miller noted that it could be coordinated. Whelan noted that the biggest demand would be for full day preschool for four year olds. The possible lack of enough teachers with the right credentials was discussed. DHS Secretary Michelle Saddler noted that this plan should remain as it is, and that Illinois faces the added difficulty of serious underfunding issues at DHS and state-wide. She noted the importance of making sure the federal money does not get sent back into the appropriation committees.
- Gaylord Geiskie voiced concern about the funding of comprehensive services by advocates and the use of resources in that community that already exist were discussed. Smith again noted the importance of growth in all categories.
- Regenstein noted the possibility of either not investing any matching funds or just doing the bare minimum since fund matching is a competitive priority and not a requirement.

Whelan noted that the current strategy is fine, as long as we can make it happen. Meyer stated that the current strategy is evidence-based, and Phyllis Glink agreed, noting that this was a high-risk strategy but also the strategy with the highest reward. Hawley noted that the same risk would come with the strategy of partial matching, whereas the reward would be much lower. Smith noted that all these options had already been discussed by her and by Hawley, who determined that the current plan was the best. Glink noted the importance of including the pipeline strategy in the application, and Geiskie noted the importance of not just restoring \$25 million to that pipeline, but at least the \$80 million that would get us back to 2009 levels.

- Whelan noted that it may be a good idea to say which priority populations are that should be served. Hawley noted that it's about multiple risk factors based on research. Hawley noted the importance of collecting more data, which will not be popular.
- Sara Slaughter left early, noting her support for the grant's application.
- Regenstein noted the importance of refocusing Head Start on three year olds, since this only covers four year olds. Hawley warned against the danger of supplanting funds. The importance of creating priority applications for kids who have an IEP or are in Head Start was discussed. George Davis voiced concerns about getting ahead of ourselves and creating a pipeline without the necessary research on reaching highest-need families, and without knowing what it really looks like for a school-district to have a comprehensive pipeline of services> Davis noted that he isn't quite ready to jump on the federal bandwagon, because historically the state has not served the highest-need families well enough. Meyer noted that we have a puzzle that needs to be retrofitted, and Regenstein explained that we need to give ourselves enough flexibility in this application. Hawley suggested a webinar across the state to discuss Head Start in response to concerns about the fact that many Head Start people do not understand what this grant is about.

V. Committee Action

Maria Whelan moved that the Executive Committee would endorse the proposal for grant funds on behalf of the Early Learning Council. Jan Maruna seconded. A vote was taken, and the measure passed with unanimous support.

VI. Lessons Learned

Hawley and Smith suggested that the group think about lessons learned from previous grant applications, such as the 3700 slots from IHSA, how to best reach populations and how to distribute funds throughout the state.

VII. Closing and Adjournments

Co-Chair Smith thanked all participants and noted that she had recently attended a Keeneyville center for Early Childhood Education ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was great news for the

Hanover Park area. Smith thanked everyone for their time and interest in this grant. The meeting adjourned at 12:25 PM.