



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

July 31, 2026 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Board members present: Allison Davis, Kyle Baltuch, Bob Buesing, Claudia Davant, Rebecca Kapusta, Gege Kreischer

****The number of board members present met the requirements for a quorum.**

Board members absent: Chris Card, Eddie Gonzalez-Loumiet, Ted Granger, Shawna Pointville, Christian Winterbottom

Staff members present: Jessica Cherry, Melissa Clements, Erin Smeltzer, Lindsey Smith, Lori Stegmeyer, Lauren Wofford, David Zimmer

The board meeting was officially called to order at approximately 10:03 am with Bob calling for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 1, 2026 meeting. Diana motioned; Allison seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting then moved to the Mission Minute where Kyle praised Lauren's excellent organization of Finance Committee meetings, and Gege shared positive feedback about the Children's Forum team's representation at the recent One Goal Conference.

Lauren presented the financials as of May 31st, 2026, highlighting that the organization is on track to recognize nearly \$25 million in revenue, with a projected net operating income of \$15,000. Erin noted that this fiscal year was particularly challenging due to lost INCENTIVES contracts and volatility from ARPA dollars, but the team successfully managed to navigate these issues and achieve planned financial outcomes. The board reviewed and approved CEO Expense Report, with Bob calling for a motion to approve, Kyle motioned, Diana seconded; all were in favor.

The organization's budget increased significantly from \$15 million to \$36 million over five years, with major growth coming from new projects including a \$5 million Professional Development Center project, \$20 million in sustained funding, and \$2 million additional for Help Me Grow. The board approved financials as presented, with Bob calling for a motion to accept, Gege motioned, Diana seconded; all were in favor. Erin noted they are expecting two potential new grants, including a DCF grant and a national grant for increasing CDAs. The team discussed upcoming technology solutions for the center with \$2.5 million budgeted, and Erin reported successful legislative outcomes including the passage of early learning bills that removed "daycare" terminology from Florida statutes, establishing a birth-to-20 system.

Erin provided extensive updates on new hires and organizational changes across multiple departments. Key staffing updates included Hue Reynolds joining as Chief Innovation Officer, new project managers being hired, and the addition of a senior communications director starting August 11th. The organization is promoting Penney and Laura to share the Chief Program Officer role while Lori transitions to a part-time senior program advisor position. The

team is actively recruiting director positions in the center and TEACH programs, with 83 applications received for recent job postings. The board will be given the opportunity to approve an updated pay scale document for the Professional Development Center, which will be sent for email approval in the coming weeks.

Erin explained that the staff satisfaction survey launch has been delayed until August due to the amount of onboarding and recruitment work required of Jessica Cherry right now. Delaying this survey will allow her to hire additional team members before proceeding. The organization is experiencing rapid growth, described as moving "like a speedboat," with new hires bringing significant experience and expertise to their roles. David's department is implementing modern IT infrastructure including VPN access, SharePoint cloud migration, and improved computer re-imaging systems to enhance security and user experience across departments.

The meeting covered procurement requirements and public records considerations for the Children's Forum. Erin explained that they must follow Florida's procurement laws and will have DEL approve all procurement documents, with non-staff reviewers from external organizations making the final decision to ensure transparency and avoid conflicts of interest. Melissa Clements provided updates on assessment and coaching services, noting they completed 2,900 assessments and 400 coaching sessions last year with plans for higher volumes this year, and discussed plans to shift some staff from volatile revenue work to more stable center operations.

Lindsey Smith presented a draft board handbook to the team, highlighting changes she had made based on previous feedback from Bob and recent updates to her board liaison role. The team discussed whether to retain a section on board members supporting fundraising efforts through personal giving, with Bob explaining that grant applications often require board member financial contributions. The group also reviewed proposed changes to meeting attendance notification procedures and discussed board membership terms, with Erin proposing a 3-year renewable term structure that would give board members the option to continue or exit after their initial term.

The board discussed bylaws and board membership requirements, with Gege raising questions about potential limits on board size as the organization grows. Erin confirmed that the current limit is 20 members with a minimum of 8 and agreed to look up the specific details in the bylaws. Lindsey presented proposed changes to board attendance requirements and term structures, with the group agreeing to stagger terms where possible and requiring majority vote for bylaw changes. Bob and Lindsey will follow up to discuss these changes and edit the handbook appropriately before presenting to the board for official approval at the next meeting on October 29.

The board discussed implementing a process to address auditor-driven questions, with Lindsey confirming it should be in place before the next series of audits but not rushed. The group celebrated Lori's 28-year career at the Forum, acknowledging her significant contributions to early education and expressing gratitude for her continued support despite retirement. The Tallahassee staff celebrated her retirement and birthday, following the conclusion of this board meeting. The conversation ended with Erin beginning her annual evaluation, highlighting the team's accomplishments and expressing appreciation for the opportunity to work in the field she cares about.

Erin provided updates on the organization's growth, including reaching \$90,000 in corporate membership revenue and a projected budget of over \$36 million, representing significant expansion from previous years. She outlined key priorities for the coming year, including developing the center's infrastructure, growing national partnerships, and managing legislative and agency relationships across the state. Erin also acknowledged the need to better connect with staff members as the organization grows, expressing a personal goal to spend time with different departments to build relationships and ensure everyone feels valued. The board members praised Erin's performance and culture-building efforts, with Diana specifically congratulating her on achieving so much during challenging times.

The board discussed Erin's compensation request, with Bob explaining that Erin declined a salary increase due to concerns about the potential for people to perceive that she is taking a financial increase every time the organization is granted additional funding. The board agreed to offer Erin a \$10,000 performance bonus instead of a salary increase, which would represent approximately 4% of her current \$229,229 annual base salary. Diana and others

supported this approach, noting the political sensitivity around nonprofit salaries in the current legislative climate, with the board agreeing to revisit compensation discussions next year. The group emphasized the importance of supporting the CEO's efforts to delegate responsibilities and manage her workload more effectively, while also acknowledging her preference for not receiving special treatment.

The meeting moved into closed executive session and ended at approximately 11:47 am. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 29th at 10:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Winterbottom
Secretary

Lindsey Smith
Recording

Minutes Approved on: _____ << to be submitted for approval at the next meeting>>

Signature of Secretary: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Chair: _____ Date: _____