



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

Executive/Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

June 26, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

Members Present

Shannon Nickinson (Interim Chair) Roger Thompson
Tammy Hicks

Mona Jackson

Members Absent

None

Staff

Bruce Watson
Dawn Engel

Melissa Jennings

Nina Daniels

Public

None

I. Welcome and Introductions

Notification of the Executive Finance Committee Meeting scheduled for June 26, 2025, was sent to the Pensacola News Journal, and posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board on June 4, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Ms. Nickinson.

II. Public Comments

None.

III. Consent Agenda

Upon a motion made by Ms. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Thompson, the Consent Agenda, consisting of the Agenda, Financial Reports for April 2025 and Minutes of April 24, 2025, was approved without objection.

IV. Coalition Status Reports

a. **Financial Update**

Through May the Coalition spent \$15.3 million of the \$17.9 million SR grant which is 85.7% of the grant. SR Admin was 3.0%, Non-Direct Services was 19.5% and Quality was 10.2%. VPK Services was \$4.8 million of \$5.0 million which is 97.2%. VPK Admin spending was 2.4%.

b. **Enrollment/Wait List Status Report**

There are 2,540 children enrolled in the School Readiness Program of which 55 are SRMAT and 891 are school-age children. There are 206 children on the Wait List. There are 14 children currently enrolled in the Summer VPK Program. There are 1,310 children approved for VPK for 2025/26 Program year.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

c. Contracting and Fraud Summary Report

There are 80 SR providers and 67 VPK providers.

V. Committee Recommendations

None.

VI. Old Business

a. SR Fiscal Year 2024-25 Funding – Update

All SR and VPK Advance money was expended with the May 2025 Invoice. For VPK this was planned, but for SR and SR Plus this was done because the DEL required all SR and SR Plus advances to be returned with the May invoice. To help ensure expenditure reimbursements were more than advances the DEL approved including any non-direct expenses already paid or obligated in June be included in the May 2025 invoice. There will not be a June 2025 or 13th invoice for 2024-2025 for SR and SR Plus services or expenditures. This was done so that the balance of unexpended but allocated SR and SR Plus funds could be reverted to the Coalition for use in Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Payment for the June Service Period of SR and SR Plus will be made by doing a Prior Year Invoice in 2025-2026. The amounts reverted were \$2,560,523 for SR and \$184,588 for SR Plus. Over half of the reverted funds will be needed to pay for June SR and SR Plus services.

b. State SR Allocations

The following four funding scenarios were discussed:

1. At the FY2024/2025 year end funding amount of \$18.3 million, the Coalition can support about 2,500 children.
2. The Legislature has proposed allocating ELC Escambia \$15.8 million. This would only support 2,000 children in care. A reduction in enrollments of 500 children would have to be initiated almost immediately. To achieve this number may require disenrollments.
3. The reverted funding should result in an increase in funding for 2025-2026 of just over \$1.5 million. With this additional funding the Coalition can support 2,200 children in care. This is still a reduction from current enrollments of about 300 children.
4. The AELC has proposed a plan named the Compression Scenario wherein all the reverted are funds and redistributed based on need. This would potentially increase Coalition funding by an additional \$500,000. This would support 2,300 children in care, which results in a reduction of only about 150 children.

c. Funding Projections for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

At this current time, the projection for FY 2025-26 is \$15.8 million. The Escambia Children's Trust has made an offer to try and get the Coalition \$1 million to help offset the shortage in funding.



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

d. Audit RFP Status

The Audit RFP deadline is 11 a.m. on June 27, 2025. An RFP Review meeting is scheduled for July 1 at 9 a.m. to discuss and grade the RFP submissions. Currently, there have been no submissions.

VII. New Business

a. Staff Issues

Ms. Rollins is still out on short-term disability. Ms. Rollins estimated return date is early August 4, 2025.

Mr. Cotton is still out on short-term disability. There is no definite return date for Mr. Cotton.

b. New Finance Director Search

Ms. Abernathy has left her position as ELC's Finance Director. The reasons for her departure are not known. Ms. Abernathy left a resignation letter on the Administrative Assistant's desk that indicated she would continue working for another month. However, she left the position two days later. The Finance Director position has been posted on the website.

The Finance Director discussion led to talks about the Coalition possibly implementing an HR position. Current HR is a collateral duty of the Finance Director.

c. Change to IT Support Services Contract

Digital Boardwalk offers additional IT support services that can be added to the Coalition's contract. Due to the uncertainty of Mr. Cotton's ability to return to his Coalition's IT position, it would be in the best interest of the Coalition to add these services to the current contract.

d. Deanna Oleske Board Member Approval

Ms. Deanna Oleske has been named the Board of County Commissioner's designated appointee to the Coalition's Board of Directors. Upon a motion made by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Nickinson, it was approved without objection to take the appointment of Ms. Oleske to the Board for final approval.

e. Enforcement of VPK Requirements on ECSD and Impact on ReadyKids! Reading Pals Program

While doing annual Program Assessments and Monitoring the Coalition observed that the ReadyKids! Reading Pals volunteers were interrupting delivery of the VPK instruction to take their assigned child for one on one instruction that is not part of the VPK curriculum. Statute, Rule and Guidance states that this is not allowed during VPK Instructional Hours. This was discussed with the school district and it was agreed that this will no longer be permitted during VPK hours. ReadyKids! Reading Pals will have to schedule their sessions at some other time.

f. FY 25-26 Grant Agreement



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

The FY 25-26 Grant Agreement was presented to the EXCOM for approval to be taken to the Board. Upon a motion by Ms. Nickinson and seconded Mr. Thompson, it was approved without objection to presenting the FY 25-26 Grant Agreement to the Board for approval.

g. Governor Closes State Offices July 3, 2025, ELC Authorized to be Closed
Governor DeSantis has declared July 3 as a State Holiday. State offices and Early Learning Coalitions statewide will be closed.

VIII. Audits and Reviews - In Progress

a. DEL Accountability Review
Review complete. Waiting for Final Report.

b. DEL Finance Review
Review complete. Waiting for Draft Report.

IX. Adjourn: The Meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Next Meeting: July 24, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 1720 West Fairfield Dr., Suite 100/400, Pensacola, Florida 32501