

Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC)

Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2013

Present: Kevin Bain, Alonso Weems, Melanie Brizzi, Charlie Geier, Connie Sherman, Beckie Minglin

Absent: Tammy Veselsky, John Burnett

Guest presenters: Amanda Lopez (Transform Consulting Group), Jim Elicker (Purdue University)

Next meeting: January 17, 2014, 1 to 3 p.m., Indiana Government Center South

1. Announcements

N/A

2. Discussion

a. Review of Minutes from last meeting, held October 31, 2013:

The committee reviewed the minutes. Beckie Minglin moved to approve the minutes and Alonso Weems seconded.

b. Review of final draft of Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG) recommendations:

Amanda Lopez presented an updated draft of the EEMG RFF. The RFF had been modified based on suggestions from the ELAC meeting on October 31.

Amanda informed the committee that the Division will be requesting Letters of Intent to Apply.

The committee reviewed the updated draft of the EEMG RFF. Committee members were encouraged to send feedback to Amanda, if applicable, regarding the clarity of language within the RFF. Alonso commented that the language was very clear.

Kevin Bain expressed thanks on behalf of the ELAC to the EEMG work group for their time and effort.

A question was raised about whether an applicant must have the matching funds secured prior to submitting their application. The intent is that a commitment for a match will be there when the program applies, but the match does not necessarily have to be physically secured. Melanie Brizzi noted that the Division will clarify what is meant by “applicant,” because some providers have multiple sites/programs and “applicant” refers to the site, not the parent organization.

The committee discussed the timeline for program implementation of grant funds—school year versus full year. Because the Division has built in extra response time for applications, programs’ ability to do full year implementation will be affected. The normal response time for an RFF is 6 weeks; the EEMG application timeline will be extended to 90 days to give programs time to develop their applications, secure a commitment for matching funds, etc.

A question was raised about the appeal process- is this required by state law or is it just standard practice? The appeals process is standard practice.

A question was raised about the meaning of "equivalent" for the proposed lead teacher education requirements. The definition will be taken from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Amanda noted that the response page limit of 25 pages refers to the entire application and the introduction narrative is included in the limit.

Beckie will provide Head Start information listed by county to include in the Appendix.

As part of the Program Design section, the Division will consider the program's previous experience with enrollment to confirm that each program has the capacity to recruit additional children under the grant. The Division will also be interested in the level of involvement of the organization's Board of Directors.

Project plan- the EEMG work group did not do a timeline for this and did not have a recommendation for one, but the group had consensus on the importance of a project plan for the first 90 days of the grant.

It was suggested that a table or template be included in the Financial Stability section. Amanda will also add examples of acceptable items to submit for this section considering not all programs are audited.

A question was raised about how the EEMG application might compare to other applications child care programs are familiar with- will this application be too daunting for providers? The committee discussed whether the application contained any "overkill" that could be removed to make the process easier for providers; it was noted that the logic model is a good exercise but might be too challenging. The committee agreed to keep the logic model in the application but requested that it be simplified to include just "outcomes" as opposed to "short term" and "intermediate" outcomes. Charlie Geier asked if there should be a difference between grant outcomes and sustainability outcomes. Amanda agreed to add the following to section F: "How will outcomes articulated in Section A (logic model) be sustained after the grant ends?"

Equitable distribution of funds across geographic regions- the EEMG workgroup recommends dividing the funds in four ways: North, Central, South, and a fourth pot set aside for top scorers regardless of region. The ELAC agreed that the language regarding distribution of funds must be as clear and precise as possible and that the Division should not accept applications just to meet a regional quota. The overall goal is to award high quality proposals with geographical diversity across the state. The workgroups recommendation for setting the regions is to divide them based on the number of eligible children in each region.

Minimum score- the EEMG workgroup discussed this topic and did not come up with a minimum score but did determine that a minimum score is necessary. The ELAC agreed that the Division should wait to establish a minimum score until receiving applications. This will allow the Division to set a realistic minimum score based on what is actually being submitted.

The EEMG work group also recommended that there be three categories of acceptance/rejection- accept, conditionally accept/request changes, and reject, but the ELAC did not agree with this recommendation based on the fact that the back-and-forth that accompanies conditional acceptance can slow things down and be a detriment to the whole process.

Scholarship amount- Kevin informed the committee that most of the feedback he has received thus far has been about the scholarship amount and how it compares to other state grants (e.g. Choice scholarships) and whether or not it is sustainable. Amanda presented the Preschool Spending Comparison chart that detailed preschool spending in Indiana as well as preschool spending in the Great Lakes region (MN, KY, WI, MI, OH, IL) and nationally (national preschool spending avg. and national Head Start spending avg.). Amanda clarified that "all spending" (e.g. all spending vs. state spending) can include various funding streams such as TANF, Head Start, etc.

The proposed \$6,700 for an EEMG scholarship would pay for a full day of care for 180 days. It was noted that when only looking at the numbers, a common perspective will be that it shouldn't cost \$2,000 more dollars to serve a four-year-old versus a six-year-old (Choice scholarships are \$4,800). Additionally, would \$6,700 be scalable at the state level? Several committee members argued that providing quality pre-K does cost more (as a result of full day care, ratio requirements, etc.); that the average amount of a Choice scholarship does not include all of the other funding that schools receive (such as Gifted and Talented, Title I, etc.); that the State portion of the EEMG would only be \$3,350; and that under that proposed amount, Indiana would only be higher than Illinois in state spending. The committee also agreed that there would be no Return on Investment or positive child outcomes without high quality programs. Kevin noted that an issue could remain with the upscale funding from the business and legislative community, who may understandably be less familiar with the detailed differences between quality pre-K and kindergarten.

Amanda informed the committee that the EEMG work group did discuss reducing the amount of time from full day to part day with the option for applicants to propose a full day program and request additional funds. However, the workgroup agreed that five hours a day for five days a week is the minimum necessary for child outcomes, and also that low income families are likely to need full day care.

Several solutions were suggested, including:

* Set the state match at \$4,800 and ask programs to secure a 30 percent match or whatever is required to close the gap. The legislation would allow for this- a one to one match was just a recommendation from the workgroup. However, this would affect the evaluation (in that the amount

spent would need to be accounted for) and would lower the amount of children served to 350.

* Let programs tell us how much they spend and the state will supply half with a cap at \$3,350.

However, several committee members worried that this would set a precedent that \$3,350 is what the state is willing to spend on quality preschool, and also that it just simply would not be enough, especially considering the fact that having a lead teacher with a Bachelor's degree would cost beyond the original proposed amount of \$6,700.

Ultimately, the ELAC agreed that an element of local design is necessary for the EEMG, and that programs should be allowed to write the RFF based on the needs of their communities.

Lead Teacher Education Requirements- A question was raised about whether the requirement for the lead teacher to have a Bachelor's degree should be a preference versus a requirement. Amanda noted that it was a big debate with the workgroup and the group was split but all members agreed that a Bachelor's degree is a key component for positive child outcomes. The committee asked how many Paths to QUALITY Level 3 and Level 4 programs currently have Bachelor-level teachers? The Division can get this data and share with the workgroup and ELAC.

REMAINING ISSUES- Three remaining issues were identified and deferred back to the workgroup for reconsideration: funding level finalization, including consideration of a full-time and part-time cohort and the associated scholarship amounts for each, and lead teacher qualifications. The ELAC agreed to vote conditionally on the approval of the RFF providing the workgroup revisited and resolved the remaining issues. Beckie Minglin moved to approve the RFF and Alonso Weems and Charlie Geier seconded.

c. **Evaluation project**- Jim Elicker, Purdue University

Jim Elicker from Purdue University presented information on the Purdue evaluation of Paths to QUALITY.

The first phase of the evaluation began in 2007-2008 in tandem with the statewide rollout of Paths to QUALITY and consisted of interviewing families about their awareness of Paths to QUALITY; a snapshot evaluation of child development; and validation of the Paths to QUALITY program standards using the Environmental Rating Scale (ERS). The Bureau of Child Care used results of this evaluation to inform continuous quality improvement efforts such as adjusting components of the QRIS in its early phases.

A second evaluation of Paths to QUALITY is now underway, and includes the following components:

- i. Provider focus group study
- ii. Longitudinal provider advancement study

- iii. Longitudinal child outcomes study, much more rigorous than child evaluation component of the first study
- iv. Second family awareness survey

The longitudinal child outcomes study will be much more rigorous than the child evaluation component of the first study. It was expanded based on the Paths to QUALITY evaluation requirements from this year's legislation. The study will follow 240 children, including toddlers and 3 year olds, and because the focus in the Early Childhood field has shifted to high-quality adult-child interactions as the most important indicator for positive child outcomes, the research team will be using the CLASS observation tool three times throughout the study to measure the quality of interactions. The children selected for the study will be on CCDF initially, but the research team will follow them over the course of the study regardless of whether or not they remain on CCDF or in formal child care arrangements. The study will track the amount of care received (dosage), quality of care, and type of care. Because Purdue is using nationally recognized/validated measures, Indiana will be able to compare the data from this evaluation with data from other states.

For more information, please see the PowerPoint presentation.

The ELAC agreed to push the full discussion of EEMG evaluation to the next meeting on January 17, but identified the following issues to consider: how rigorous will the study need to be? What will satisfy stakeholders? What level of evidence will be required?

The meeting adjourned at 3:36 PM.