

**New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) Steering Committee**  
**8300 Earhart Blvd. New Orleans, LA 70118**  
**Meeting Minutes for October 13th, 2021**

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**Committee Members in Attendance:** Keith Liederman, Kristi Givens, Joy Mitchell, Kate Mehok, Jen Roberts, Maria Blanco, Glenis Scott (standing in for Thelma French), Jack Shaevitz (standing in for Emily Wolff), Rebecca Latham

**Committee Members Absent:** Rhonda Taylor, Carole Elliot

**Community Members in Attendance:** Aimee Grainer, Caitlin Boley, Keisha Smith, Anna Williams, Dave Hand, Alicia Gerry, Rebecca Latham, Dave Hand

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

- a. At 11:35, Keith Liederman called the meeting to order.

**II. READY START NETWORK UPDATE**

- a. Jen Roberts from Agenda for Children provided a Ready Start Network initiative update.

- i. Staff Transitions

- 1. Announcing Aimee's departure
    - 2. Posting position soon, but Jen and NOEEN team will fill in in the meantime - looking for suggestions!
    - 3. Rebecca Latham at NOLAPS is also hiring for EC Director at NOLAPS

- ii. Upcoming/New Funding & Sector Investment

- 1. IDA Grants

- a. Notifications made Friday
      - b. \$273K to 275 Applicants
      - c. Made of individual and organization donations
      - d. Priorities for those in most affected regions and those who sustained significant damage

- 2. Ready Start Transform Grant

- a. 1 year with potential for more years
      - b. Transformative vision for achieving equitable access to high-quality early care and education
        - i. Agenda will be drafting
        - ii. Upwards of \$1 mil per year - very competitive
        - iii. Workforce - identifying and educating
        - iv. Incentivizing providers to come online
        - v. Hoping to have draft ready for Friday to share next week for feedback - Letting of intent &

general structure & ideas - if successful much longer period to write the full grant

- vi. Asking for broad coalition to support this application - not a lot of time to pull it together
- vii. Maria and Keith are interested in supporting
- viii. Dave Hand would like to be a thought partner on better integrating braided and blended funding to make the verification process more straightforward for our families, and of course, support other efforts

3. CRG

- a. Using it working alongside NOLAPS to improve enrollment, verification, and access
- b. HS tweaking their rubrics
- c. Allows them to be attentive to everyone's needs - allows them more flexibility
- d. Application tweaks - redesign application and data architecture for next year

4. Supply Building & Capacity Grant

- a. Partnership with the data center
  - i. What do we need and where?

5. CLSD Quality & Literacy Supports

- a. Curriculum Kits, Training, Etc.

6. Systems-Level Family Engagement

- a. Pritzker, staff up around advocacy grant initially, now use to how to engage families directly in early childhood process, Keisha Smith
- b. Keisha: Purpose is to help inform parent engagement strategy: focus groups with family and feedback from the Steering Committee. Purpose of focus groups for parents are questions about how they're currently engaged and informed about ECE access and how and what issues they want to be informed and engaged and what is most important to them in choosing an ECE program. Ida has caused adjustments, targeting now 7-9 parents for focus groups to total about 30 parents, 4,5 focus groups. Small gift cards for their time. One tonight, two more by mid-November. Two weeks analyzing data from parent focus groups and steering committee to tabulate data. Present to the Steering

Committee and then have a proposed plan by December. Would they rather do a 90 minute meeting or a survey they can do on their own time? Questions ahead of time? The Steering Committee is generally open to whatever works best, Jen recommends the meeting. Keisha will send email with date and time options. Meeting will be in Zoom during the work day. Including staff that directly works with parents would be helpful. Keisha will send questions in advance for folks to be better prepared.

- c. Tulane and Policy Institute are also working on similar data.
- iii. Working Groups & Parent Engagement
  - 1. Advocacy working group: Working directly with folk in the field to determine best place for work to live in Kenny's absence
- iv. Ida, COVID, & Sector Recovery
  - 1. ARC & Early Childhood Plan recommendations: they took 99% of recommendations, such as providers being paid on license capacity and enrollment over attendance, workforce development and wages
    - a. Jen is happy to share early childhood ARPA plan
  - 2. Will be reapplying to be Lead Agency RFA - due in December
  - 3. Another potential Millage to support early childhood work at city level
    - a. City Seats Program support and increased infrastructure support - supply building and access expansion; how do we build these things concurrently. Could yield \$20-425 mil annually, would cut number of eligible kids who can't get seats now in half, from 8k to 4k
    - b. Keith thinks there seems to be a lot of excitement amongst CC members and the mayor's office
- b. Keith Liederman led a committee discussion on Ida, COVID, & Sector Recovery.
  - i. Conversation: Check-In on sector and providers experiences
  - ii. Keith: Expressing clouds over his head based on how Ida has affected everyone. Reminds him of experiences with folks who worked in CPS and the trauma they experiences - Hard to relate to others who don't live in this area and cannot understand. Shared that he feels like it's important to talk to someone. Sharing to kick off the conversation.
  - iii. Maria: echoes his comments. Last few months have felt like the straw that broke the camel's back after feeling like finally finding their footing

for a second. Feels like they're stuck and restarting again after the hope for the new school year. Most challenging thing has been trying to support her team as she's not a mental health professional. The mood is somber at best, lost family members and displacement while trying to support partners in early head start. Trying to lead by example of taking care of herself so she can support others.

- iv. Jen: Has found that at some point as leaders, the vulnerability has been really good to share. Office losses - trying to muster up enthusiasm and say we'll get through this together and found that being vulnerable was probably the best strategy. Received more letters from that than she's gotten than any others.
- v. Kate: CCS was in quarantine hell and was miserable up until Ida and were going to shut school down and try again. This allowed them to reset and require negative COVID tests. 8 weeks of uninterrupted learning because of negating Fall break. Putting her kids to school in New York while evacuated and the normalcy of their experience lit a fire to have her create normal experiences for kids in school here.
- vi. Joy: Experience has been all over the place. Running a center and being responsible for staff has been so difficult even as being a social worker. Resources are limited or hard to access. Feels like being the mean aunt that no one wants to see going back and forth. Really hard for everyone and then Ida hit like a whirlwind effect
- vii. Kristi: Agrees with Joy's response. It's very overwhelming. Parents who evacuated got arrested and kids are in CPS. Kids are in another school and with another family. Her family is calling to see what they can do, working with EHS to work things out. Been through all of these tragedies and feels like it never stops. Thankfully she has other directors to relate to and share with. Having to act normal when things are not normal. News that Aimee is leaving even felt like another hit - doesn't see who could replace her.
- viii. Glenis: Having a new role in an agency has really helped and where they can help they have, but they're still dealing with it. The vulnerability does go a long way. Family members, parents of children, all of it, is very hard. In a leadership role, you have to celebrate the small victories. Seeing folks evolve where there's new leadership emerging is great to have the new culture, but also focusing on meeting with parents, being in the classroom etc. She wants to connect with parents to get what they're dealing with.
- ix. Having the conversation has helped us all feel some relief.

### III. COORDINATED FUNDING

- a. Aimee Grainer from NOEEN and Agenda for Children provided an update on coordinated funding.
  - i. Regroup on public funds managed - over 17 million funds meaning we can serve over 2600 families and 70 sites
    1. LA4 - 6.8 million
    2. NSECD - 1.8 million
    3. B3/PDG - 4.2 million
    4. City Seats - 4.8 million
    5. 81% of LA4 seats enrolled
    6. 71% of NSECD seats enrolled
    7. LA4 Takeaway: Supply is meeting the demand
    8. Kate was curious about numbers and enrollment rates
      - a. Jen: difficult to understand why parents are making the decisions they're making - hard to determine where to increase access to seats, etc. What is motivating families for the other 19% of open seats not to enroll?
    9. If we hear from schools seeking additional seats in competition with one another, we will bring it to the Steering Committee to help determine.
    10. About 74 students on waitlist don't have assignments, mostly in high-demand schools
    11. Keith - state doesn't make adjustments for seats like EHS does
    12. Kristi: if those seats aren't being filled, the programs should be opened up to higher-income parents eventually.
    13. Kate: maybe offer sliding-scale seats so some parents don't pay full tuition amount and keep center up to near-capacity
    14. Rebecca can help us determine historical enrollment patterns and what we can do to connect to families to get kids back in schools
    15. Aimee: Raising the income bracket and casting a wider net may help us get to where we need to go to meet that gap. Something we tried to do with city seats eligibility criteria
    16. B-3 Allocations looking healthy for the most part. Got a huge boost of funding for those programs. City seats are at 91% enrollment as of Oct 11th. Only 31% of PDG seats have been enrolled as of Oct 11 because ida has delayed when we're able to get those seats into the system, especially because it's a new funding source. Expecting a big boost of enrollment over the next several weeks. PDG is initially more difficult to apply for

because there's a seeking work requirement. For some places, enrollment has been paused due to staff capacity - staggered enrollment until that workforce need is met.

17. Jack wants to know how state matches are potentially incorporated into this - this includes state matches already.

ii. CFR:

1. Steering Committee will review and make recommendations in January
2. LDE will review and make recommendations in Winter 2022
3. BESE will approve final recommendations in April 2022
4. Will reach out to all providers directly asking them to reapply to those seats in the system

#### **IV. COORDINATED ENROLLMENT AND INFORMATION CAMPAIGN**

a. Rebecca Latham and Dave Hand from NOLA-PS provided updates on coordinated enrollment.

- i. If families need to verify, they get a notification to go to FRC. Document drop-off, 2-3 days, they either get a follow-up or complete verification and then an automated response. After that, making ongoing waitlist offers for families. This is a change from the summer on-line process.
- ii. They have integrated SMS messaging into enrollment processing and outreach functionality - such as missing documents and when they can pick their seats, or send them documents they're interested in.
- iii. Previously, it had a main round deadline then early deadline for schools that had more entry requirements. Families found it difficult to navigate the deadlines and there were equity issues. One deadline, opening three weeks earlier than they have in the past. Now it will be Jan 21st. Lake Forest, Ben Franklin, and Lusher are joining unified enrollment. New school finder tool available to families. In the future it will be integrated into applications to treat it as a shopping cart of sorts.
- iv. Working on single sign-on and to improve password reset functionality.
- v. Looking to improve accessibility: languages, etc.
- vi. More clear designation of current-year and next year requirements and updating old language throughout the portal.
- vii. Currently under budget, so looking to make more improvements based on feedback.
- viii. Going to be redesigning applications for next year, we want to build something that is more modern, responsive, and functional than what they currently have, including features like text-to-voice. Pilot launching soon.

**V. COORDINATED OBSERVATIONS & SUPPORT**

- a. Aimee Grainer
  - i. CLASS Observations have begun. Don't anticipate major changes in CLASS protocol. Moving forward more or less normally.
  - ii. Offering both virtual and in-person. Also offering additional levels of notice to create equity between virtual and in-person observations and overall center challenges.
  - iii. NOEEN has and will continue to push LDOE on CLASS. LDOE has not yet released its approach on performance reporting for this year's CLASS scores.

**VI. OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a. Quarterly Convening - Happening Today!
- b. Parent representation - Keisha will release details
- c. Enrollment Sub-committee - Survey for best timing will be released
- d. Next Steering Committee: November 10, 2021.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 1:21 PM.

Action Items

- **Action Item No. 1:** On the motion of Maria Blanco, seconded by Jen Roberts, the Committee approved the adoption of the agenda for the October 13, 2021 Steering Committee meeting.