

Arkansas Early Childhood Commission (AECC) Meeting

October 18, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Deborah (Debbie) Mays (Chair), Jan Stafford, Elizabeth Waldrum, Tiffany Sharp, Representative Megan Godfrey, Tyra Greenwood, Mark Taylor

Members Absent: Senator David Wallace

I. Call to Order

Elizabeth Waldrum called the AECC Commissioners Meeting to order October 18, 2022, at 10:06 a.m. Elizabeth Waldrum read the AECC's mission statement.

II. Approval of Minutes

Elizabeth Waldrum requested a motion for the approval of the April 19, 2022 minutes. Jan Stafford motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Rep. Meagan Godfrey seconded the motion, none opposed.

III. Old Business

- DCCECE Commission Report: Tom Sheppard provided the following updates:
 - The monthly provider calls occur on the first Tuesday of each month at 12noon. It's important to be on those calls, as a lot of information is shared.
 - The November call will be canceled due to a division wide state meeting in preparation of next year.
 - So far \$231,904,673.44 has been paid to providers for Child Care Expansion, Operational, Quality Improvement, Start up and Sustainability Grants.
 - Supply Building applications have been received. There is \$25m allocated in this category. The requested amount exceeds available funding. As a result, every application will not be funded particularly if they include unallowable federal costs such as major construction.
 - Child Care Expansion
 - received 311 applications,
 - approved 165 and
 - paid out 138. These numbers will increase in October.
 - Quality Improvement
 - 1,440 applications received,
 - 1,402 were approved,
 - 1,385 paid.
 - Operational
 - 1,500 applications received
 - 1,473 approved,
 - 1,458 paid.
 - Sustainability
 - 1,246 applications received,

- 1,123 approved,
 - 458 paid.
 - Working on the Maintenance Grant, which will be the final grant. This grant is currently on hold until all information is received on the first four grants. Payments will probably go out early next year.
 - For supporting the child care and early childhood workforce- \$45m in ARPA funds for personnel costs across the state, \$12m for staff bonuses, \$6m for substitutes, \$4m for fringe benefits, \$2m to offset costs of new staff salaries for expansion
 - On Expansion and Supply Building to date, added 1,881 infant slots, 2,273 toddler slots, 3,045 school age slots and 80 home slots across the state.
 - Supplemental Discretionary
 - \$130m for Essential Worker Child Care assistance. Currently serving 17,017 families/24,000 children served during the Pandemic. These funds will be exhausted by December 31, 2022. Notices are being sent out monthly to remind Essential Workers. We are also reminding families to apply for low income child care assistance as the income criteria was updated in October.
 - TEACH and WAGE program is going strong.
 - Still have some funds left for deep cleaning. Once funds are exhausted, this will end.
 - Better Beginnings is seeing a huge increase. There are 550 participating at Level 1, 478 participating at Level 2 and 720 participating at Level 3. Working on promulgation for levels 4,5, and 6.
 - The Nutrition team is still working on Non-Congregate feeding which allows parents to pick up meals.
 - Commodities-79,578 cases of food were distributed monthly. An average of 154,454 families are served on a monthly basis.
 - The Commodity Distribution Unit has been approved for three (3) grants with USDA.
 - The first grant is for just under \$600k which will allow for improving infrastructure at the distribution site level to increase TEFAP distribution to underserved areas of the State.
 - The second grant is approximately \$3.7m and will purchase food from local farmers who are considered socially disadvantaged and distributing those foods to underserved areas of the State.
 - The third grant is utilizing those same disadvantaged farmers for purchasing foods for National School Lunch Program (NSLP) schools in the amount of \$2,206,790.
 - The new Enterprise Licensing System (ELS) went live on August 1, 2022.
 - The “10 Minutes Matter” initiative focuses on encouraging families to read to their children.
- HSSCO/AHSA Updates: No updates.
 - ARPA Updates/Stabilization Grant: Please refer back to the Old Business section of the minutes for Tom Sheppard’s updates.

IV. New Business

- Nominating & Finance Committee Selection:
 - Nominating Committee:
 - Rep. Megan Godfrey is not returning to the legislature and is unable to serve on the committee.
 - Elizabeth Waldrum and Tiffany Sharp volunteered to serve the Nominating Committee. They will present a new chair nomination during the January 17, 2023 meeting.
 - Finance Committee Selections: Mark Taylor and Jan Stafford were selected in July 2021 to serve this committee. Jan stated she will be retiring and possibly moving out of state. Tyra Greenwood volunteered to serve in her place.

V. Summary/Announcements/Public Comments

- Tiffany Sharp: We have a lot of non-profit organizations and as we come upon the holidays, people are looking at how they can help. Please look into these organizations. Remember to advocate for non-profit organizations that work with children.
- Christie Campbell: Save the date for the 2022 Readiness Summit next month. It will be held at Pulaski Tech College in North Little Rock, AR.

VI. Action Items

- Action Item: Elizabeth Waldrum and Tiffany Sharp will present a new chair nomination during the January 17, 2023 meeting.
- Action Item: Keeler Bryson will contact the appropriate entity for replacing committee members (Governor's or Legislative Committee Chairs).

VII. Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be held January 17, 2023. Location to be determined.

VIII. Adjournment

Debbie Mays motioned to adjourn. Jan Stafford seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.