

Early Learning Hub of Linn, Benton & Lincoln Counties Governance Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Commenced	2:00 pm, September 3, 2026 Online via Zoom
Meeting Called By	Bettina Schempf
Staff Members Present	Matt Grams, Jessica Morrison, LeAnne Rogers Trask
Version	Draft
Recorded	Yes

Agenda topics

Roll Call			Council Members Present or Absent					
	Present	Absent		Present	Absent		Present	Absent
DeAnn Brown Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians	☐	☒	Barbara Dougherty Lincoln County Early Childhood Education	☐	☒	Stephany Koehne Linn County Early Childhood Education	☒	☐
Andrea Bartell Linn County Housing	☒	☐	Laura Farmer Benton County Parent	☐	☒	Andrea Lengel Lincoln County Human & Social Services	☒	☐
Alicia Bublitz Coordinated Care	☐	☒	Breeann Flesch Fiscal Agent Non-voting member	☒	☐	Bettina Schempf Benton County Human & Social Services	☒	☐
Belit Burke Linn County Human & Social Services	☐	☒	Susan Halliday Benton County K-12	☒	☐	Paul Smith Benton County Early Childhood Education	☒	☐
Kristi Collins EL Hub Director Non-voting member	☒	☐	Jason Hay Education Service District	☒	☐	Diane Wilkinson Lincoln County K-12	☒	☐
Dean Craig Linn County Business	☐	☒	Tammi Hillhouse Oregon Department of Human Services	☐	☒	Lynnette Wynkoop Child Care Resource & Referral	☒	☐
Bonney Dietrich Linn County K-12	☒	☐	Paulina Kaiser Benton County Health	☒	☐			

Quorum

A quorum is achieved when 51% of current Governance Council members are present. The Council currently has 20 members, and 13 members were present.

Discussion Item

Welcome and Introductions

Daniel Martinez was present as a guest and potential council member.

LeAnne presented the grant proposal for the “Fresh Start Pathways,” an expungement initiative aimed at helping families across Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties clear eligible criminal records. LeAnne highlighted how lingering criminal records severely restrict access to housing, employment, higher education, student financial aid, and community involvement. In Oregon, where an estimated 1 in 3 residents—and up to 3 in 5 in rural areas—has a record (often consisting of multiple non-conviction dismissals or minor charges), this initiative seeks to unlock opportunities for roughly 100,000 potentially eligible individuals.

The plan spans initial community outreach and software screening through to direct legal support and career development. The grant proposal also includes dedicated funding for client restitution fees, with additional financial backing offered by other partners. To achieve the desired outcomes, the initiative unites 3 core partners:

- **Pollywog:** The team will serve as the community outreach lead, leveraging its established network to identify and refer eligible families via Unite US.
- **LBCC JOBS Program:** This transition program will handle intake, offer in-house fingerprinting to save clients fee costs, provide education and career coaching, and utilize the "Record Sponge" software to analyze records.
- **Strahl Law:** Attorneys will provide affordable legal representation to resolve complex record entanglements, petition courts to reduce or waive legal fees, and navigate court-related barriers.

Building on the JOBS program track record of expunging over 5,000 charges, the “Fresh Start Pathways” aims to establish a scalable, sustainable model. The ultimate goal is to improve long-term family stability, boost employment and housing rates, and reduce systemic stress on families across the region.

Staff were commended for outstanding work with Pollywog and Health-Related Social Needs (HRSN) which has significantly grown reimbursement revenue. Additionally, the coordinated enrollment team reached near-capacity for the tri-county region, maintaining only 5 open slots out of 298. Positive feedback was highlighted from a local elementary school principal, who praised the team for filling program slots early and eliminating low-enrollment concerns.

- Following a recent DELC meeting, new categorical eligibility rules were implemented, retroactively effective August 1st. Key updates include allowing children covered by the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) to automatically qualify regardless of standard income guidelines, as well as introducing tribal membership as a qualifying criterion.
- Staff applied the updated eligibility rules and procedures, leveraging the state's ONE system to cross-reference previously ineligible or document-deficient applications. Thanks to this effort, 38 families who were previously struggling with documentation or exceeded income thresholds now qualify.

The bigger the waitlist, the bigger the evidence of needs in the region. To date, there are 87 children on the waitlist across the 3 counties. Moving forward, the team plans to distribute these updated eligibility criteria to Preschool Promise providers and launch targeted marketing and outreach efforts to fill the remaining open slots and support newly eligible families.

Kristi provided an update on the progress of the Parenting Success Network (PSN) transition, highlighting several milestones:

- In August, the EL Hub successfully hosted the first steering committee meeting since the transition. Partner engagement was high, with productive discussions around next steps and overall transition goals.
- To strengthen partner alignment and collaboration, the team established monthly debrief and agenda-planning meetings with the Lincoln County team. These sessions aim to evaluate when to unify existing initiatives versus tailor efforts specifically to Lincoln County's unique needs.
- The team is developing standardized procedures for community partners requesting class funding. Kristi recently met with Strengthening Rural Families, a longstanding PSN Partner, to review preliminary plans and gather feedback.

Looking ahead, the team will focus on building a user-friendly "menu of options" for partners. This process will break down logistics and cost ranges involved in hosting classes, establishing a structured platform to assess funding needs and allocate resources effectively.

Kristi provided an update on Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC), beginning with staffing changes. The Hub has a new analyst who previously served as the Head Start Collaboration Director. Kristi noted this is part of DELC's temporary job rotation strategy due to hiring freezes.

DELC has posted its agency request budget which maintains current service levels for most programs, and will host a webinar on September 30th. Kristi confirmed that original revenue projections for year 2 remain accurate. Additionally, DELC corrected an internal accounting oversight where Title IV-2 funds were deducted twice; as a result, the Hub will receive an unexpected \$42,600 in Title IV-B2 Family Preservation funds for the upcoming 9-month contract period. More details are provided within the "Title IV – B2 Concerns" on page 7.

Council Vacancies	Vacant Council Positions
The Council reviewed open positions. Linn 2, Benton 2, Lincoln 4	
Vacant Positions • Benton County – Business • Benton County – Housing • Lincoln County – Business • Lincoln County – Health • Lincoln County – Housing • Lincoln County – Parent Voice • Linn County – Health • Linn County – Parent Voice	

Fiscal Report	Quarter 4 Financial Narrative and Summary
Matt presented the financial report for April - June 2026, outlining key revenues, expenditures, and program trends: • Revenue totaled \$130,319 for Coordination, \$86,152 for Pollywog (including \$3,302 for HRSN), \$79,446 for Coordinated Enrollment, \$73,623 for KPI, \$7,420 for Birth - 5 Early Literacy, and \$2,477 for Title IV – B2. • Quarterly expenses included \$160,918 in wages, \$118,752 in benefits, and \$24,501 in services and supplies. Partner reimbursements reached \$68,457 for KPI (across 7 partners) and \$7,420 for Birth to 5 Literacy. • Reimbursements surged by 1,210% compared to Q1—an increase driven primarily by dedicated staff effort toward HRSN referrals, which Kristi noted is fully offset by the service reimbursement rate. KPI partner reimbursements increased 63% compared to the prior biennium. Council members attributed this gain to updated allocation methods and mandatory quarterly reporting, which sped up fund distribution and prevented end-of-biennium spend-down scrambles. Five partners have already fully expended 100% of their KPI allocations. Title IV-2 recorded zero reimbursements for the quarter.	

Approval of Meeting Minutes				August Council Meeting Minutes							
The Council was asked to approve the meeting minutes as presented.											
Motion: Lynnette Wynkoop											
2nd: Susan Halliday											
	Yes	No	Abstain		Yes	No	Abstain		Yes	No	Abstain
DeAnn Brown	☐	☐	☐	Barbara Dougherty	☐	☐	☐	Stephany Koehne	☒	☐	☐
Andrea Bartell	☐	☐	☒	Laura Farmer	☐	☐	☐	Andrea Lengel	☒	☐	☐
Alicia Bublitz	☐	☐	☐	Susan Halliday	☒	☐	☐	Bettina Schempf	☐	☐	☒
Belit Burke	☐	☐	☐	Jason Hay	☐	☐	☒	Paul Smith	☐	☐	☐
Dean Craig	☐	☐	☐	Tammi Hillhouse	☐	☐	☐	Diane Wilkinson	☐	☐	☒
Bonney Dietrich	☐	☐	☐	Paulina Kaiser	☒	☐	☐	Lynnette Wynkoop	☒	☐	☐
Voting Results			Individual Votes Cast by Council Members (Yes, No, Abstain)								
Abstentions: Bartell, Hay, Schempf, Wilkinson											
The Council approved the August meeting minutes as presented.											

Discussion Item	KPI Recommendation
Kristi presented the success of the new one-year contracting model, noting that quarterly reporting and explicit spend-down tracking have significantly improved partner accountability and responsiveness. With current contracts running through September 30th, remaining balances reflect ongoing summer programming rather than immediate performance concerns. The primary exception is Corvallis School District, which did not spend its Year 1 allocation due to service delivery challenges; Corvallis requested to retain its initial allocation for Year 2 without accepting new funds, allowing unspent capital to return to the general pool. To maximize community impact, Kristi recommended reallocating pooled, unspent Year 1 funds to partner districts that hit a 75% spend-down threshold or higher, allowing high-performing programs to plan intentionally for Year 2 rather than rushing to spend leftover funds at the end of the biennium. The council agreed with this strategy, and Kristi confirmed she will present final reallocation figures once the quarter wraps up. Additionally, the Hub will begin showcasing partner progress through presentations in the P-3 Alignment Workgroup to engage more school districts, share best practices, and spark new ideas for KPI funding.	

Discussion Item	Birth – 5 Literacy (Approval needed)
Kristi presented the proposed allocation plan for the remaining Birth – 5 Literacy funds, emphasizing the need for intentional spending following a significant statewide award reduction. Out of roughly \$38,000 awarded for the biennium, just over \$10,000 was spent in Year 1. For Year 2, the Early Childhood Coordinating Council recommended 4 targeted expenditure areas to maximize reach: • Jumpstart's Read for the Record: Increasing funding to \$4,000 to accommodate growing regional participation and prevent turning away programs requesting books. • Parenting Success Network (PSN) Speaking Event: Increasing the allocation from \$7,100 to \$10,000 to fully cover speaker fees, family materials, childcare, and interpretation services, building on last year's event. • CCR&R Coastal Conference: Reinvesting in a dedicated literacy training track for early childhood educators to deliver high-impact professional development. • Preschool Promise Providers: Distributing the remaining funds directly to Preschool Promise providers—the only DELC-funded, publicly funded early learning entity excluded from direct state literacy enhancements. Allocating the remaining funds across Preschool Promise's 298 slots equates to approximately \$120.80 per slot, offering even the smallest 6-slot programs a meaningful budget for literacy materials, family events, or staff training. Contracting will mirror the KPI process, requiring providers to submit a brief scope of work before receiving funds on a reimbursement basis. Kristi requested formal council approval to proceed with this proposal.	

Discussion Item Vote				Birth – 5 Literacy							
The Council was asked to approve the movement of the funds.											
Motion: Susan Halliday											
2 nd : Andrea Bartell											
	Yes	No	Abstain		Yes	No	Abstain		Yes	No	Abstain
DeAnn Brown	☐	☐	☐	Barbara Dougherty	☐	☐	☐	Stephany Koehne	☒	☐	☐
Andrea Bartell	☒	☐	☐	Laura Farmer	☐	☐	☐	Andrea Lengel	☒	☐	☐
Alicia Bublitz	☐	☐	☐	Susan Halliday	☒	☐	☐	Bettina Schempf	☐	☐	☒
Belit Burke	☐	☐	☐	Jason Hay	☒	☐	☐	Paul Smith	☐	☐	☐
Dean Craig	☐	☐	☐	Tammi Hillhouse	☐	☐	☐	Diane Wilkinson	☒	☐	☐
Bonney Dietrich	☐	☐	☒	Paulina Kaiser	☒	☐	☐	Lynnette Wynkoop	☐	☐	☒
Voting Results			Individual Votes Cast by Council Members (Yes, No, Abstain)								
Abstentions: Dietrich, Schempf, Wynkoop											
The Council voted to approve the item as presented.											

Discussion Item	Title IV – B2 Concerns
Kristi outlined strategies to address underutilization of Title IV-B2 funds, driven by delayed state contracting and lack of response from a partner in Lincoln County. To prevent the state from pulling back funds during the biennium's closeout, Kristi presented a reallocation and contingency plan for Year 1 funds, upcoming Year 2 dollars, and the newly restored \$42,600 allocation. It was noted that existing providers fully intend to spend their awards, explaining that initial delays on DELC's part caused late contract execution rather than a lack of program need. To address specific service gaps and prevent funds from going unused, the Council agreed on the following action plan: • With the Lincoln County partner non-responsive, the team will redirect Lincoln County's allocation to active partners to expand parenting education and family emergency support across the Benton-Lincoln region. • Kristi will consult regional data metrics to identify targeted opportunities for deploying the additional \$42,600 cross-county windfall across existing contracts, avoiding the administrative delays of onboarding new vendors during an abbreviated 9-month contract window. • Year 1 contracts ending September 30th, 2026 (a 9-month contract) will be amended to roll over unspent balances and incorporate Year 2 funds through the end of the biennium. If any partner leaves funds unspent at the biennium's end, the Hub will first offer those dollars to active contractors with eligible overages; any remaining balance will be redirected to Pollywog's qualifying resource and referral services to guarantee that zero funds are returned to the state. In response to a question about the initial September 30th spending deadline, Kristi confirmed that current contracts will be extended through the end of the biennium. Mirroring the process used for KPI funds, Year 2 funding will be added directly to these existing contracts to allow partners continuous access to resources without interruption.	
The board is in agreement of the proposed spending plan for year 2 for any funds remaining unspent at the end of the biennium: • Step 1: Reallocate remaining funds to existing contracted partners who have eligible cost overruns. • Step 2: Direct any leftover funds to Pollywog's resource and referral operations, which fully aligns with Title IV-B2 grant criteria.	

Discussion Item	Council Attendance
Kristi confirmed that per the charter, members holding designated standing positions are permitted to appoint an alternate by proxy. She advised selecting alternates who share an interest in early learning but do not report directly to the same meetings, ensuring the backup can actually attend when scheduling conflicts or emergencies arise. In response to a question regarding frequently absent members, Kristi noted that leadership will review the attendance record and consult charter guidelines during their next meeting to determine appropriate outreach and next steps. In a discussion about tribal representation, Kristi emphasized that strong local tribal representation remains essential. It has been expressed by tribal representatives that active local engagement has presented scheduling challenges over the past year. A member noted new statewide contacts within the Confederated Tribes and suggested that a tribal representative might be able to recommend a delegate or alternate to step in if their availability remains limited.	

Next Meeting	2:00 pm, October 1, 2026 Online via Zoom
Meeting Adjourned	3:29 p.m.