

Grant Ready Start Network Advisory Council Bylaws

2024

Article I – Name

- Section 1.1 The organization shall be known as the Grant Ready Start Network Advisory Council, hereafter referred to as the “Advisory Council.”

Article II – Mission, Vision, and Purpose

- Section 2.1 **Mission:** To provide children birth to four access to high-quality early childhood care and education and support the diverse needs of children and families in Grant Parish so that children can enter Kindergarten as lifelong learners.
- Section 2.2 **Vision:** Ensure Grant Parish community residents understand and support a system of high-quality and sustainable early childhood education to develop a foundation for lifelong learning.
- Section 2.3 **Purpose:** The purpose of the Advisory Council is to advise the Ready Start Network Lead Agency, hereinafter referred to as the “Lead Agency,” and assist in establishing and meeting protocols, and collaborate to develop and maintain the Ready Start Network’s blueprint through shared strategic planning and decision making. The Advisory Council will assess, develop, and support the implementation of new strategies and practices to increase access and high-quality early childhood demand for early care and education.

Article III – Establishment

- Section 3.1 Louisiana’s legislature passed the Early Childhood Care and Education Act of 2012 to establish an early childhood system that focused on preparing children for kindergarten. This legislation charged the state’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to unify publicly funded pre-K, Head Start, and child care programs into a statewide network so that families have easy access to high-quality early learning options that provide at-risk children opportunities for success in school. To implement this law, the Louisiana Department of Education (the Department), under the leadership of BESE, established a plan for creating local early childhood networks comprised of child care, Head Start, and publicly funded pre-K in public and nonpublic schools under a unified system of early learning and development standards, expectations for adult/child interactions, and accessible enrollment. There are currently 65 of these early childhood care and education community networks in Louisiana, and each functions as a consortium of early learning providers. The Department manages this system by designating a Community Network Lead Agency for each community network that coordinates essential administrative activities, observations, and enrollment.

In 2014 the Grant Parish Community Network was created. It includes the following entities, Grant Parish School Board, LaSalle Community Action Association Head Starts, Dogwood Learning Academy, and Giggles and Hugs.

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Article IV- Fiscal/Calendar Year of the Ready Start Network Council

- Section 4.1 **Fiscal Year/Calendar Year:** For the purpose of the Council year, financial reporting and budgeting, and election of Council members, the RSN Council's year begins July 1 and ends June 30, following the school district's fiscal year calendar.

Article V – Fiscal Agency and RSN Agreement

- Section 5.1 **Governing:** Unless otherwise designated, the Fiscal Agency shall be the Grant Parish School Board. The fiscal agency will govern all oversight and fiduciary decisions of the GECN.
- Section 5.2 **Financial Management:** The Fiscal Agency will receive and administer all funds the RSN will use to carry out its work. The Fiscal Agency will send all required acknowledgments to donors of tax-deductible contributions and will be held responsible for submitting all required grant reports. The Fiscal agency will include all funds received for the RSN on its income tax returns. The RSN will assist the Fiscal Agency by providing the requested information and reports.
- Section 5.3 **Employment and Contractual Responsibilities:** The Fiscal Agency will be responsible for all income and payroll taxes, withholding and reporting of consultant contracts or employees as deemed necessary and appropriate.
- Section 5.4 **Administrative Fees:** To defray the expenses associated with administering the RSN projects, the RSN agrees to pay the Fiscal Agency an administrative fee of ____% of all income received including, but not limited to, grant income and contributions.
- Section 5.5 **Protection of Tax-Exempt Status:** The Advisory Council agrees not to use funds received from the Fiscal Agency in any way that would jeopardize the tax-exempt status of the Fiscal Agency. The Advisory Council agrees to comply with any written request by the Fiscal Agency that it cease activities that might jeopardize the Fiscal Agency's tax status and further agrees that the Fiscal Agency's obligation to make funds available to it is suspended in the event that it fails to comply with any such request. Any changes in the purpose for which grant funds are spent must be approved in writing by the Fiscal Agency before implementation. The Fiscal Agency retains the right, if the Advisory Council breaches this agreement or if the RSN jeopardizes the Fiscal Agency's legal or tax status, to withhold, withdraw, or demand immediate return of grant funds.

Article VI – Ready Start Network

- Section 6.1 **Role/Number:** The business and affairs of the RSN Council shall be composed of no more than (15) persons and no less than (9) persons.

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- Section 6.2 **Timing of Election/Vacancies:** New members may be elected at the last fiscal year meeting or any time during the year upon the recommendation and approval of the majority of the Council members meeting quorum requirements.
- Vacancies occurring in the middle of the year may be filled for the balance of the term by the election of the remaining members of the Council.
- Section 6.3 **Composition:** The Advisory Council shall be composed of persons representing the diversity of the community, taking into account race, gender, economic status, age, and other factors. Representation may include individuals from some of the following:
- Parish School Council Representative
 - Licensed Child Care Representative
 - City Government Representative
 - Head Start Representative
 - Community Representative
 - Parent Representation
 - Philanthropy Representative
 - Faith-based Representative
 - Non-Profit Partner
 - For-Profit Partner
- Section 6.4 **Term:** Each Council member shall hold office for three years. Council members will be divided into three approximately equal groups, one-third of the members to serve for an initial term of one year, one-third for an initial term of two years, and one-third for an initial term of three years. Each person shall serve up to two consecutive full terms on the Council. Persons serving an initial term of less than three years may serve for two additional full three-year terms. After serving the maximum time allowed, a person may again serve after being off the Council for one year.
- Section 6.5 **Removal:** A Council member may be removed, without cause, as determined by a two-thirds vote of the Council present at any meeting at which there is a quorum. In addition, any member of the Council may be removed for a substantial cause by the majority vote of the Council present at any meeting at which there is a quorum. Substantial cause may include failure to participate in the activities of the Council as evidenced by the inability to attend at least three consecutive meetings.
- Section 6.6 **Resignation:** A Council member may resign by submitting a written letter of resignation to the Chair of the Council or the whole Council if the Chair is resigning.
- Section 6.7 **Attendance Policy:** Council members occasionally miss meetings due to circumstances beyond their control, such as illness, work, travel schedules, jury duty, or holidays. These will generally be considered "excused" absences. In all cases, Council members are expected to notify the Council chair of meetings they know they will miss. Failure to attend (3 or 2) (or less than 75% annual attendance) will call for the automatic removal of a Council member. The Council chair will send a follow-up letter to the Council member.

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Article VII – Meeting Protocol

- Section 7.1 **Meeting:** A meeting is a convening of a quorum of the Council to deliberate or act on a matter that the Council has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory over.
- Section 7.2 **Number of Meetings:** Regular meetings of the Council will be held at least six times a year and may be scheduled more often by the Council Chair as needed.
- Section 7.3 **Notice of Meetings:** Meeting notices will be sent out at least seven days before the meeting, with a full agenda item and advance meeting materials for review.
- Section 7.4 **Quorum:** A quorum consists of a simple majority of the full Council membership, 50% plus 1 member. Meetings may be canceled if a quorum is not present, or meetings may be held for discussion only but no official action.
- Section 7.5 **Voting:** Each Council member is entitled to one vote. Voting by proxy is not permitted.

Article VIII - Officers of the Council

- Section 8.1 **Election/Vacancies:** The officers shall consist of a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The Council shall elect the officers. Any vacancy occurring in any office, for whatever reason, shall be filled by a majority vote of the Council for the remainder of the term.
- Section 8.2 **Term:** Officers shall serve a term of two (2) years and until their successors are elected or until they are removed for cause. No elected officer shall serve more than (2) consecutive terms in the same office.
- Section 8.3 **Removal:** An officer may be removed without cause, as determined by a two-thirds vote of the Council present at any meeting at which there is a quorum.
- Section 8.4 **Resignation:** An officer may resign only by submitting a written resignation to the Chair (or Secretary, if the resigning officer is the Chair).
- Section 8.5 **Authority and Duties of the Council Officers:**
- Chair/President: The Chair shall preside at and conduct all meetings of the Council. The Chair will make all agreements and recommendations as the Council has approved them to the fiscal agent. Additionally, the Chair will be responsible for creating the agenda and ensuring its distribution in a timely manner. The Chair will serve as the representative of the Council in meetings and discussions with other organizations and agencies and otherwise perform all of the duties which are ordinarily the function of the office or which are assigned by the Council or Fiscal Agency.
- Vice Chair:** The Vice Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair if he/she is unable to do so or is absent; perform such other tasks as may be assigned by the Council and at the request of the Chair. Other duties might include chairing the nomination process for the Council, serving as the monitor for Open Meeting Law adherence, or similar duties that are not assigned.

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Secretary: The secretary will keep accurate records and minutes of all meetings, make copies of the minutes available to the Council, and distribute them before each meeting. Other responsibilities might include correspondence, meeting attendance, and keeping track of necessary fiscal/Fiscal agency documents.

Article IX – Committees of the Council

Section 9.1 **Committees:** The Council may create committees with powers deemed wise or necessary. The Chair will appoint persons to chair and serve on those committees, including persons who do not serve on the Council. The Council will approve all such appointments.

Article X – Conflict of Interest

Section 10.1 **Managing Conflicts of Interest:** Any Council member, officer, employee, or committee member having an interest in a contract, grant funding, or other transaction presented to the Council or a committee for recommendation or approval shall give prompt, full and frank disclosure of his or her interest to the Council prior to acting on such a transaction. If a Council member does not disclose what appears to be an obvious interest, the Council may determine, by majority vote, whether the interest shows that a conflict of interest exists or can reasonably be construed to exist.

If a conflict is deemed to exist, such person shall not vote on, nor use his or her personal influence on, nor participate in the discussions or deliberations with respect to such a transaction. Such a person may not be counted in determining the existence of a quorum at any meeting where contract, transaction, or determination is under discussion for vote. The minutes of the meeting shall reflect the disclosure made, the vote thereon and, where applicable, the abstention from voting and participation, and whether a quorum was present.

Conflict of Interest policies will be signed annually at the beginning of the fiscal year by all Council members and kept on file with the minutes of the first meeting.

Article XI – Amendments to the Bylaws

Section 11.1 **Bylaws:** These bylaws may at any time be amended, supplemented, or repealed by the Council. A copy of proposed amendments shall be distributed to the full Council 10 days before a regular Council meeting. Amendments shall be adopted with a two-thirds majority vote of an Advisory Council meeting where a quorum is present.

Adopted by the Council for Grant Ready Start Network _____ day of _____ 20____.

Chair

Date

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I, the undersigned, being Secretary of the Council, hereby certify that the above is a true, complete and accurate copy of the Bylaws adopted by the Council.

Secretary

Date

I, as representative of the Fiscal Agency, do hereby accept the Fiscal Agency Agreement as reflected in Article IV.

Fiscal Agency Representative

Date