

V E R M O N T

EARLY CHILDHOOD
ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

Governance Document

ARTICLE I: MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

SECTION I: Mission

The Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance (“the Alliance”) is a statewide, independent, advocacy coalition of parents, individual community members, organizations, early childhood providers, and strategic partners who are committed to improving public policies that impact young children between the ages of birth and eight in the areas of health, safety, food security, economic security, and early care and education.

SECTION 2: Guiding Principles

- A. We will advocate for Vermont’s most vulnerable and underserved young children and their families.
- B. We will advocate for policies that do not harm and are good for young children and their families.
- C. We will make every effort to be a unified voice, working as a coalition that comes together on an agreed upon advocacy agenda.
- D. We will advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in Vermont’s policies and processes.
- E. We will strive to collaborate and work effectively, utilizing the “Capacities of Effective Coalition Members” as a touchstone to inform our role as coalition members. (see appendix)

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS

SECTION 1: The purpose of the Alliance shall be to act as an independent, statewide, early childhood advocacy coalition that works together on the advocacy priorities that we agree to by performing the following functions:

- A. Strengthen alliances among early childhood advocates by convening stakeholders in order to identify common priorities, to develop common messages, pursue common goals, and to collectively advocate for public policies that optimize good outcomes for young children and their families
- B. Create opportunities for our members to engage and educate state leaders, law and policy makers on Alliance priorities.

C. Support, educate, train, and engage community members in order to develop broad public will for policies that support young children and their families and to intentionally diversify stakeholders engaged in early childhood advocacy.

D. We will advocate for inclusion and equity in Vermont's policies and processes.

E. Facilitate the distribution of timely and accurate information to members about Alliance advocacy priorities, community engagement, and educational opportunities.

F. Create opportunities for members to share information on issues impacting the children and families they serve via Early Childhood Day at the Legislature and the Alliance's online communication tools.

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1: Eligibility

A. Member: Members are organizations, businesses, or individuals who have made a commitment to the Alliance's mission and Legislative Agenda.

B. Strategic Partner: Agencies or departments of state government, advisory groups formed by state action, and funding entities may apply to be non-dues-paying Strategic Partners of the Alliance. Strategic Partners may participate on the Standing and Ad Hoc Committees and Issue Working Groups to provide consultation, but are not involved in consensus or other decision-making processes.

C. Membership will be annual, with a cycle beginning on November 1.

D. The Alliance's Fiscal Agent/Sponsor shall automatically be awarded Member status, with no dues payment required.

SECTION 2: Dues & Member Category Defined

A. Annual member dues shall be set by the Steering Committee on an annual basis. Should the Committee fail to act, dues levels from the previous year shall remain in effect.

B. Categories of membership are as follows:

1. Association/Non-Profit: Non-profit organizations

2. Business: A for-profit entity.

3. Individual Supporter: A concerned citizen who represents themselves and does not officially represent an entity or constituency.

C. Staff or Board members of organizational members (categories 1 and 2 above) are considered to be "members in good standing" for the purposes of eligibility for Steering Committee membership, participation in Standing and Ad Hoc committees, and participation in Issue Working Groups.

D. The Executive Committee may waive all or part of the dues of members unable to pay membership dues in full.

E. "Good standing" shall be defined as having paid annual dues for the current membership cycle, or having secured a waiver for payment for the current membership cycle.

F. Members of the Alliance who have taken specific and concrete actions to oppose any portion of the Legislative Agenda may have their membership revoked by a vote of three quarters of Steering Committee members at a meeting for which the required notice included notification that such a vote would take place.

SECTION 3: Member Functions

A. Members elect the Alliance Steering Committee from the membership at their Annual Meeting.

B. Members are eligible to vote and serve on the Alliance's Steering Committee, Standing Committees and any associated working groups or sub-committees.

SECTION 4: Meetings

A. There shall be an Annual Membership Meeting, which will include evaluation of and planning for the structure and functions of the Alliance. Annual Membership Meetings shall be announced to members through notices on the Alliance website, in electronic newsletters, via social media, and other formats as appropriate. A quorum for Annual Membership Meetings shall be 20% of Alliance members in good standing.

B. All committee meetings are open to Alliance members.

C. A quorum for Steering Committee and all other committee meetings shall consist of at least 50% of the members.

ARTICLE IV: STEERING COMMITTEE

SECTION 1: Steering Committee Membership

A. The Steering Committee shall be made up of Alliance members in good standing and shall be elected by the membership at Annual Meetings, except for the Fiscal Agent/Sponsor representative.

B. The Committee shall include an Alliance member (or members) from the following communities, some of whom shall specifically represent the Alliance's core interests:

- the Fiscal Agent/Sponsor organization, who shall be appointed by the organization on an annual basis
- Early Care & Early Education/Community-based child care home-based providers, elected in even years
- Early Care & Early Education/Community-based child care center-based providers, elected in odd years
- Early Care & Early Education/Public school K-3rd grade, elected in even years
- Early Care & Early Education/After- and out-of-school care, elected in odd years
- Safety, two members elected in alternating years
- Health, two members elected in alternating years
- Food Security, two members elected in alternating years

- Economic Security, two members elected in alternating years
- Family Support, two members elected in alternating years
- Parents, two members elected in alternating years
- Business, elected in even years
- at-large, three members total, two elected in odd years and one in even years, in a separate election at the Annual Meeting held after all other required Steering Committee elections have taken place

C. Members of the Steering Committee shall be either individual or organizational members. Candidates for the Steering Committee shall specify under which category of membership they are enrolled at the time of the election. Should an organization hold a seat on the Steering Committee, an individual designated by the organization will serve on the Steering Committee on the organization's behalf.

D. Steering Committee members may fill only one seat, as listed in Section B. above, at a time.

E. There is no compensation for Steering Committee members.

F. The Steering Committee shall have a minimum of 9 members and a maximum of 21.

G. Vacated seats shall be filled by appointment from the Chair after the Chair first solicits nominations from current Steering Committee members. The minutes of the Steering Committee meeting when the appointment is announced shall indicate who nominated them, their category of membership, specify what seat they are filling, and when the term they are filling is set to expire.

H. A term shall be two years.

I. Members of the Steering Committee are expected to participate in Issue Working Groups, Standing Committees, and/or other additional Alliance activities.

J. Members of the Steering Committee who have failed to attend three meetings in a row or who have taken specific and concrete actions to oppose any portion of the Legislative Agenda may be removed by a vote of three quarters of Steering Committee members, at a meeting for which the required notice included notification that such a vote would take place.

SECTION 2: Steering Committee Functions

A. Determines the advocacy goals and priorities of the Alliance through, among other things, the development of an annual Legislative Agenda.

B. Ensures that advocacy priorities established by the Alliance membership are implemented.

C. Ensures good communication and engagement with Alliance supporters and members from outside the committee membership.

D. Oversees membership dues program.

E. Receives committee reports from the standing and ad hoc committees.

- F. Acts as the appeals panel for a position taken by a Committee or Issue Working Group.
- G. Creates ad hoc committees for the purpose addressing specific needs or problems. Ad hoc committees formed are temporary and shall be dissolved once they have met their charge, as determined by the Steering Committee executive officers.
- H. Works in coordination with the fiscal sponsor to select, oversee, and supervise the Executive Director, by providing performance evaluations and professional development opportunity.
- I. Approves an annual Alliance operational budget.
- J. Works with the staff and fiscal sponsor to seek and sustain funding.

SECTION 3: Steering Committee Meetings

- A. The Steering Committee shall meet quarterly or as needed. Notice of meetings shall be given as required by Article III, Section 4.
- B. A special meeting may be called by the Chair of the Committee or by petition of 1/3 of the membership.

SECTION 4: Officers, Executive Committee

- A. The Officers of the Alliance shall be a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, and shall serve until their successors are elected.
- B. The Officers shall be elected by the Steering Committee from amongst its members on an annual basis. Elections shall be held at the next Steering Committee meeting. The term of each office shall be one year.
- C. No Officer may serve more than four consecutive terms in any one position.
- D. The Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that Steering Committee meetings are run efficiently, generally assisting the Executive Director in managing day-to-day operations of the Alliance, and any other duties as assigned or delegated by the Steering Committee.
- E. The Vice Chair shall assist the Chair in performing their duties, and shall serve as the interim Chair in situations where the Chair is unable to perform their duties.
- F. The Treasurer shall, when necessary, assist the Executive Director in maintaining the financial records for the Alliance, and shall ensure that an annual budget is proposed by the Executive Director in a timely manner and that the proposed budget is reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee on an annual basis. The Treasurer shall also ensure that the Steering Committee receives a financial report from the Executive Director on a quarterly basis, or as needed.
- G. The Secretary shall, when necessary, assist the staff in maintaining records of attendance, proceedings, and business transacted at all meetings of the Steering Committee and the development of the annual Legislative Agenda.

H. The officers, along with an at-large member elected by the Steering Committee, together make up the Executive Committee, which shall meet as often as necessary, at the call of the Chair, to assist the Executive Director in managing the day-to-day affairs of the Alliance, and conduct any other duties as identified by the Steering Committee.

I. In the case of a resignation or vacancy for an officer position, the Steering Committee shall act at its next meeting to fill the position, unless a resignation occurs at a meeting, in which case the election will take place at that meeting, unless there is consensus to postpone. If there is more than one candidate for a position, selection shall be by majority vote.

ARTICLE V: STANDING COMMITTEES

SECTION 1: Standing Committee Descriptions

The Alliance maintains one standing committee:

- Policy/Advocacy

A. POLICY/ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

This committee will support ongoing efforts in the State House and elsewhere, during the legislative session and throughout the biennium as appropriate, to further the Alliance's annual Legislative Agenda. The Committee will be made up of one member of each Issue Working Group (IWG) and one at-large member of the Steering Committee.

1. Each IWG shall be responsible for appointing a representative to the Policy/Advocacy Committee.
2. The Steering Committee Chair shall be responsible for appointing the at-large member, using the process outlined in this document for filing vacancies on the Steering Committee.
3. The terms of the members of the Policy/Advocacy Committee shall expire when the Steering Committee adopts a new Legislative Agenda.
4. The Policy/Advocacy Committee shall be exempt from meeting notice requirements listed elsewhere in this document.

SECTION 2: Standing Committee Members

A. Each Committee, except the Policy/Advocacy Committee whose membership is defined elsewhere in this document, is composed of Alliance members interested in the issues considered by each committee and may, at its own discretion, invite non-voting Strategic Partners to attend meetings.

B. Each Committee except the Policy/Advocacy Committee shall select a Chair annually, who shall serve after being approved by the Chair of the Steering Committee. Only Steering Committee members shall be eligible to serve as Committee Chairs, except in the case of the Policy/Advocacy Committee, which shall be chaired by the Alliance Executive Director.

C. Each Committee shall provide regular reports to the Steering Committee.

D. Each Committee will have an Alliance staff member attend meetings to support its work.

SECTION 3: Standing Committee Meetings

A. The Standing Committees may meet monthly or as needed.

B. A special meeting may be called by the Chair of the Committee or by petition of 1/3 of the membership.

ARTICLE VI: ISSUE WORKING GROUPS

Issue Working Groups are ad hoc committees formed by the Steering Committee with the intention of gathering expert opinion and information on advocacy priorities, as identified by the annual Legislative Agenda.

SECTION 1: Issue Working Groups Members

A. The Executive Committee shall, upon the Steering Committee's approval of the Legislative Agenda, appoint a convener for an Issue Working Group (IWG) for each of the top priority items on the Agenda. The IWGs shall be open to Alliance members and Strategic Partners with an expertise in the issue.

B. At least one member of each IWG shall be a member of the Steering Committee.

C. Issue Working Groups will utilize membership and strategic partner expertise on their topic area, will seek input when necessary from other Alliance committees and work in direct coordination with Alliance staff to propose advocacy strategies.

D. Each IWG shall appoint one of its members to serve on the Policy/Advocacy Committee, as described elsewhere in this document.

SECTION 2: Issue Working Group Meetings

Issue Working Groups may meet as needed, and shall be exempt from meeting notice requirements listed elsewhere in this document.

ARTICLE VII: STAFFING AND MEMBER REPRESENTATION OF ALLIANCE

SECTION 1: Staff

The Alliance is staffed by an Executive Director, who is hired by the Steering Committee or a group designated by the Steering Committee. The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations of the Alliance and its staff.

SECTION 2: Members representing the Alliance

Alliance members that receive funding to work on behalf of and/or represent the Alliance shall enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alliance to establish a clear and common understanding of the scope of work that will be performed and expected deliverables. The Executive Director, in coordination with the Executive Committee, will develop the MOU with the party.

ARTICLE VIII: DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES

Conduct of all meetings of the Steering Committee and the Standing Committees will be in accordance with a consensus decision-making process, except where explicitly specified in this document. A consensus decision is one to which no member objects. A consensus is necessary to determine the Alliance’s position on Legislative Agenda proposals, issue campaigns, bills, initiatives, etc., including if that position is neutrality.

ARTICLE IX: AMENDMENTS

This Governance Document may be amended, added to or repealed by the Steering Committee at a meeting giving notice of the proposed changes and where a quorum is present. The Governance Document shall also be reviewed at each Annual Meeting.

This version of the Governance Document has been adopted by the Alliance Steering Committee at a meeting held on December 18, 2018.

Ilene Dickenson, Secretary

APPENDIX 1

“Capacities of Effective Coalition Members”, from What Makes An Effective Coalition? Evidence-Based Indicators of Success, by Jared Raynor, TCC Group, March 2011

http://www.mcf.org/system/article_resources/0000/1297/What_Makes_an_Effective_Coalition.pdf

- Skills/knowledge to work collaboratively
- Commit to the coalition in action as well as name
- Ability to articulate what you bring to the table (e.g., time, resources, access, relationships, reputation, expertise, etc.)
- Ability to articulate what you want from the table
- Ability to weigh the value of coalition membership against scarce resource expenditure
- Willingness to share resources
- Willingness to openly identify conflicts between the individual organization and the coalition
- Willingness to share power/credit
- Willingness to speak as one
- Willingness to explore alternative ideas and approaches
- Willingness to dedicate staffing at a high enough level to make decisions
- Willingness to dedicate staffing to implement assigned tasks
- Strategic use of coalitions to fill critical gaps and leverage resources toward achieving your mission
- Willingness to commit to the coalition for an extended (relevant) period of time
- Understanding of how your issue fits into a broader network of issues