



## Operating Guidelines

2014

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.

This includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

Wilder Foundation, 2001 (2)

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# Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay Operating Guidelines

## **I. Who We Are**

The Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay (GSC) is the local planning and decision-making body for the Great Start system – Michigan’s comprehensive early childhood system. The GSC includes the Great Start Parents (GSP) group (also known as the Great Start Parent Coalition) and values its members as a prominent source of parent voice. The GSC supports the GSP and its core parent members through staffing and funding.

The GSC recognizes five system components: Pediatric & Family Health, Social-Emotional Health, Family Support, Parent Leadership, Early Care and Learning. Two additional components are Communications and Infrastructure.

The GSC goals are those provided by the Office of Great Start:

1. Children born healthy;
2. Children healthy, thriving, and developmentally on track from birth to third grade;
3. Children developmentally ready to succeed in school at the time of school entry;
4. Children prepared to succeed in fourth grade and beyond by reading proficiently by the end of third grade.

## **II. Vision**

Michigan’s vision for our children is : “a coherent system of health and early learning that aligns, integrates and coordinates Michigan’s investments from prenatal to third grade...and a reputation as one of the best states in the country to raise a child.”<sup>1</sup>

This Collaborative envisions a Great Start for every child in the Traverse Bay region—every child safe, healthy and eager to succeed in school and in life.

## **III. Mission**

The mission of the Collaborative is to assure the development and delivery of a comprehensive, coordinated system of community resources and supports to assist all families in the Traverse Bay region in providing a great start for their children from birth through age eight.

## **IV. Purpose**

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish an organizational and procedural framework for the GSC and its committees and workgroups. The GSC is convened by the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD) with funding from the

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<sup>1</sup> *Great Start, Great Investment, Great Future: the plan for early learning and development in Michigan* accessed July 27, 2014 [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/1\\_Great\\_Start\\_-\\_Great\\_Investment\\_-\\_Great\\_Future\\_-\\_FINAL\\_422080\\_7.PDF](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/1_Great_Start_-_Great_Investment_-_Great_Future_-_FINAL_422080_7.PDF)

Michigan Department of Education/Office of Great Start Early Childhood Block Grant (32p). The GSC serves all families and young children living in the TBAISD catchment area. The GSC will operate on a continuous improvement model focused on community needs assessment based on the Great Start Components, parent input, and a long-term strategic plan. The strategic plan will be a continuously updated document outlining how, over time, services and supports from all of the Great Start system components will be made accessible to every child from birth to school entry, and to his/her family.

## V. Membership

Effective GSCs have a diverse stakeholder membership that include parents and a variety of local services seated together at the table<sup>2</sup>. Membership in the GSC is open to any early childhood stakeholder and interested community member, however members should be those agencies, organizations and individuals who are able to address the GSC's selected strategic outcomes.

**Parents of children (aged 12 or younger) who represent the diversity of the county(ies) must constitute at least 20 percent of the total membership.** GSC parent members may not represent an organization as well as the parent role.

Other members may include:

- Business leaders (e.g., a president of a local chamber of commerce, a director of workforce development or economic development for the county or counties or a manufacturing association).
- Philanthropic and/or charitable organizations (e.g., the United Way, a community foundation, a service organization).
- Faith-based organizations
- Organizations that provide services on behalf of minority populations in the county and/or counties.
- Intermediate school district
- Departments of Public Health
- Departments of Human Services
- Departments of Community Health, including Mental Health providers
- Hospitals, health care systems and/or managed care plans serving the area represented by the GSC
- Juvenile or family court judges
- Early On<sup>®</sup>
- Representatives from home visitation and parenting education programs
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Great Start Readiness Program(s) that serves the county and/or counties
- Licensed Child Care Centers and/or Family or Group Homes
- The Great Start to Quality Resource Center
- Local school district superintendents and elementary principals
- Elected governmental officials

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<sup>2</sup> The list of recommended members, provided by the Office of Great Start, is based on the required members list previously published by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation as a part of the grant approval process.

Other membership requirements:

- Parent members are to receive, in a timely manner, the same supports and resources available to non-parent members. This would include at a minimum, financial reimbursement for expenses incurred as a member, and access to professional development and mentoring opportunities.
- Every attempt is made to ensure the rich diversity of the families living in this region and its communities is represented by parent membership.
- The members of the collaborative, with the exception of parents, must have sufficient authority to commit funds, staff and other resources on behalf of their organization.
- A Memorandum of Understanding must be signed annually in order to vote.

In addition, the GSC may recruit, as circumstances demand, such members as are needed to maintain at all times an adequate membership roster that represents the region and its communities, and that supports the work of the Collaborative as specified in its Strategic Plan. Members are selected by an informal process of referral to the Collaborative, followed by a brief interview and orientation with the prospective member to insure they meet requirements itemized above, and have sufficient understanding to commit to the mission of the Collaborative. Referrals for membership can be made by any collaborative member, the Coordinator, or other interested parties. Once selected for membership, the new prospective member shall submit the signed Memorandum of Understanding to the Coordinator. Updated membership lists will be provided to members as necessary at regularly scheduled meetings.

**VI. Membership Categories**

- Standing members are active in the work of the Collaborative; have a current, signed MOU on file; meet the attendance requirements and uphold the principles as stated in the MOU.
- Members-at-large bring with them varied and valuable input on discussions and should represent the diverse interests of the communities. They agree to uphold the mission and values of the GSC but are not required to sign the MOU, are not eligible to vote and are considered ex-officio. Their membership differs from the standing members in that:
  - a. they are not subject to attendance requirements
  - b. they are not counted in the membership total that applies to the 20% rule for parents

**VII. Membership Responsibilities**

It is crucial to the success of the GSC to have an active and engaged membership. It is a requirement that each Collaborative member attends at least two scheduled meetings, with a minimum of five meetings held per year. In the event a GSC member cannot attend a Collaborative meeting, s/he will designate an alternative with the authority to vote on behalf of the member. The membership provides overall direction in the governance and operations of the Collaborative, appoints committees to undertake

specific functions of the collaborative, and assures accountability for commitments made within the collaborative and the community.

Membership duties include but are not limited to:

- Agree to promote the mission and goals of the GSC
- Understand the purpose of the GSC, their role and responsibilities as a member, and actively participate in planning and decision-making
- Attend or send formal representation to GSC meetings on a regular basis.
- Commit resources and make decisions on behalf of the organization (for Organizational representatives)
- Accept appointment to committees, and/or workgroups for specific tasks
- Provide direction, resources and support for committees and workgroups
- Cooperate with providing necessary statistical and other needed information for the completion of the community needs assessment and strategic plan
- Review progress, and ensure coordination throughout the assessment and strategic planning process
- Assure accountability for commitments made within the collaborative and the community
- Keep the Coordinator informed of any changes in membership, contact information, or availability of time and resources
- Participate in and/or provide for professional development and mentoring opportunities
- Make a good faith effort to contribute toward fulfilling the mission and purposes of the Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay.
- Actively and continuously promote the importance of early childhood investment to policy makers and opinion leaders in their communities and the State.

If a member fails to uphold these responsibilities, or behaves in a manner that is disruptive or prohibits the other members from fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, s/he can be removed from the GSC by an act of the Executive Committee.

## **VIII. Officers**

Elected/appointed officers of the GSC shall be the Co-Chairpersons.

Responsibilities of officers are as follows:

Co-Chairpersons:

- Preside at all meetings
- Consult with the Coordinator prior to meetings
- Provide a collaborative leadership style
- Appoint members to committees and workgroups as necessary
- Notify the Coordinator in advance if neither of the Co-Chairs will be present and able to preside at a scheduled meeting

## **IX. Terms of Office**

The Superintendent of TBAISD is a permanent co-chair. The second co-chair shall be a member of the business community and shall represent both a personal and corporate commitment to early childhood. The business co-chair will serve a two year term, followed by a two year term as co-chair emeritus. Elected/appointed officers will serve a staggered term of two years, ensuring that there are always experienced officers serving the collaborative. If there becomes a permanent vacancy in any of the elected/appointed positions, a replacement will be elected/appointed at the next scheduled meeting.

## **X. Election/Appointment of Officers**

Officers will be elected/appointed at the first scheduled meeting of the GSC, and biennially thereafter. A Governance Committee, made up of one representative from each of the counties, the Coordinator, and other members as needed, shall convene annually to review GSC procedures and, in alternate years, to vet and recommend to the GSC a new business co-chair. Any member of the Collaborative may recommend a candidate for the business co-chair to the committee. In the event that there are no candidates willing to fill the offices, the Executive Committee will appoint officers as necessary to fill any vacancies.

## **XI. Staff Person(s)**

A key decision that the GSC will make is the identification of the Coordinator for the local Great Start system. The Coordinator for the Great Start Collaborative will provide support for the development of shared leadership, ownership and capacity amongst all members of the collaborative. The Coordinator role is crucial to the accomplishment of tasks as outlined in the plan of work for the Great Start Collaborative. The Great Start Collaborative Coordinator position will be a 1.0 FTE dedicated staff for the Great Start Collaborative, and will be selected by the Executive Committee via a group interview process.

## **XI. Standing Committees**

The GSC will be undertaking specific tasks, and will accomplish the detailed work of these tasks and processes via the use of committees and workgroups. Standing committees for the projects may include:

- Executive Committee  
Responsible for administrative oversight – this committee will be comprised of the GSC Co-Chairpersons, the GSC Coordinator, and at least 3 additional GSC members representing child care, social services, and any other program or service area. Every effort should be made to include a parent on the committee. The executive committee members should be chosen to represent all counties in the GSC service area.

- School Readiness Advisory Committee  
Required under the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) legislation
- Working Groups  
Working groups may be formed as necessary to carry out the early childhood action agenda and any other work of the GSC. Membership in a working group is open to any interested community member. Working groups must report progress to the Coordinator at least every sixty days.
- Child & Family Wellbeing Committee (a GSC-authorized merger of Pediatric & Family Health and Social/Emotional Health committees)  
Responsible for comprehensive physical health and child development services, including screening, assessment, and intervention, as well as timely and appropriate universal screening, specialized screening, assessment and intervention services designed to promote the social-emotional well-being of all infants and young children, including infants and young children at-risk of developing emotional, and for ensuring appropriate therapy and treatment is available for infants and young children with diagnosed emotional disturbances
- Early Care and Learning Committee  
Responsible for early care (child care) and education services that support the early learning, health, and social-emotional well-being of infants and young children
- Parent Leadership  
Responsible for services and supports that address the stressors impairing the ability of families to nurture the well-being, safety, and overall healthy development of their infants and young children, as well as services and supports for parents in the critical role they play in the healthy development of their infants and young children
- Family Support  
Responsible for services and supports that address the basic, daily living needs of families as well as child and family safety
- Communications Committee  
Responsible for development and execution of a communications plan which will include a local media campaign and coordination of communications efforts and materials needed for implementation of the strategic plan

Each standing committee will form a leadership structure parallel to the GSC, and make regular progress reports that shall be published in the GSC electronic newsletter. The GSC and/or standing committees may form other sub-committees and/or workgroups as needed to fulfill specific tasks. The sub-committees and/or workgroups will make progress reports to the designated standing committee or to the GSC.

Recommendations for additional committees should be submitted to the Great Start Collaborative co-chairs to be considered at the next regularly scheduled GSC meeting.

Committees may include other members on the Great Start Collaborative whom they deem appropriate and necessary to the work of the collaborative.

## **XII. Meetings**

The GSC will hold a minimum of 5 meetings per year at a time and place designated by the GSC. The GSC may add meetings as necessary in order to complete assigned tasks. Notice of meetings will be sent via e-mail at least one week prior to meetings. Agendas will be provided in advance of the meeting. Members without e-mail access will receive meeting notices via the U.S. mail.

The standing committees, and any sub-committees and/or workgroups shall be responsible for scheduling meetings that will accommodate the members of that committee or group, and of sufficient frequency and duration to complete the task assigned within the timeframes allotted. Any unforeseen issue that may cause a delay in completion of the assigned task shall be reported to the Coordinator immediately.

## **XIII. Non-Attendance**

When circumstances prevent executive-level members from participation in required GSC meetings, those members may appoint a high level administrative or managerial staff person to deliberate and make decisions in their absence, as long as the appointing executive attends at least two meetings per year. It is expected that the delegated attendee will report to the member on the business of the Collaborative on a regular and ongoing basis. A member's failure to attend meetings, or to send adequate representation, can be cause for removal from the GSC. Nothing in these guidelines would prevent the GSC from reinstating an individual or agency/organization membership based upon a review and recommendation from the Executive Committee.

## **XIV. Voting**

The preferred decision making process of the GSC shall be consensus of all present. Consensus is defined as:

*A decision, which every member of the group can support, even if the decision is not every member's preference.*

If consensus cannot be obtained, decisions will be made by a simple majority of those members or approved designees in attendance. Each member or designee shall have one vote.

- The GSC Coordinator, Specialists and GS Parent Liaison(s) will be a non-voting standing members.
- At-large members may be present during voting, but may not vote.
- If expedited decisions need to be made between regularly scheduled meetings, simple-majority vote can be taken using phone or email.

When role call voting is required or requested, the names and votes of members or designees shall be recorded in the minutes.



Members or designees shall abstain from voting when the question to be voted upon directly or indirectly provides the member's organization with funding or services through a contractual relationship.

Members are expected to report any other issue that may constitute a conflict of interest. The membership will then determine through the rules above if a conflict does exist, and if so, the member will abstain from voting on the issue. Members will also excuse themselves from discussion regarding issues with which a conflict of interest exists.

Actions voted on by a majority of members or designees where a quorum is present shall constitute authorized actions of the Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay.

The members of the GSC approved by consensus that the Executive Committee may make decisions on behalf of the GSC to accept funds, support grant requests, or approve action when time is of the essence and it is not practical to poll the membership. Every effort will be made to include members in decision-making processes.

#### **XV. Conflict Resolution**

Communications between members of the GSC shall be mutually respectful reflecting the shared vision and spirit of cooperation. In the event that a conflict should arise, it shall be handled in a respectful and discreet manner. Should a member have an issue or conflict that they are not able to address at a scheduled meeting, they may contact the Coordinator for resolution or referral to the Executive Committee. In the event that a member has a conflict or issue regarding the Coordinator, they may contact the Executive Committee directly. In the event that none of these procedures resolves the conflict or issue, the GSC Executive Committee may authorize the use of an outside mediator.

#### **XVI. Procedures and Amendments**

These operational guidelines may be amended by a majority vote of the members of the GSC as appointed. At least one week prior to voting, GSC members will receive written notification of the proposed amendment and the meeting at which it will be considered.

These guidelines will be reviewed annually by the Coordinator and revised as needed to comply with relevant available documents as provided by the Office of Great Start or its appointee(s) as part of the grant award process. The revised guidelines will be reviewed and the GSC membership will vote on the adoption of the revised draft.