

FTF Board Wrap-Up

January 26, 2010

FTF Executive Director Elliott Hibbs Honored

FTF Board Chair Steve Lynn announced that the Board has established the **J. Elliott Hibbs Dedicated Service Award** in recognition of Director Hibbs' outstanding contributions to the implementation of First Things First in its critical early stages. The award will be presented each year to an FTF staff person or team that makes a positive impact by exhibiting professionalism, thoroughness and thoughtfulness in reaching their given objective. On February 12, there will be a public reception in Phoenix for those who want to bid farewell to Director Hibbs. Rhian Evans Allvin will assume her responsibilities as Executive Director on February 16.

Newly Appointed Regional Council Members

Congratulations to the following individuals, appointed as Regional Council members at the January 26 meeting: Ranelda Hastings, Parent, White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council; C. Bradley Brock, Business, White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council; Candida Hunter, Business, Hualapai Tribe Regional Council; Susan Laurita, At Large, Southwest Maricopa Regional Council; Dr. Norman J. Bunch, At-Large, North Pima Regional Council.

Regional Funding Plans:

The Board approved 2011 Funding Plans for the following Regional Partnership Councils: Pinal, Gila, Central Maricopa, Southeast Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Southwest Maricopa, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Navajo Apache, Central Phoenix, South Phoenix, Yavapai, Yuma, North Pima, Central Pima, South Pima, Santa Cruz, Tohono O'odham Nation, and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe.

The Board thanked the Regional Council members and coordinators who presented the plans for their

commitment to children. Board members also praised the Regional Council members for their funding plans, which demonstrated a commitment to building on previous funding plans to promote the continued expansion of a comprehensive early childhood system in each community.

The Board held proposed communications strategies pending the development of FTF's comprehensive public awareness campaign strategy and plan, but did approve specific parent education strategies.

Consortium Interim Report on School Readiness

Representatives from the University Consortium Evaluation Team (ASU, NAU, and UA) presented information on the scope, design and methodology, plus preliminary data and next steps of their study on school readiness in Arizona. The final results of the initial study will be completed by Summer 2010.

FTF Professional REWARD\$ Grant Approval

The Board approved a grant award to Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) as the administrative home of the new FTF Professional REWARD\$ Program. As a companion to Quality First, this is the second FTF signature program addressing child care quality, access and affordability. The program provides financial incentives for early educators, program directors and home providers as they reach milestones in their educational or professional qualifications. Eleven Regional Councils were approved for the initial rollout of FTF Professional REWARD\$. The incentives will be available this fiscal year. FTF Policy and Finance staff will work with VSUW on the implementation of FTF Professional REWARD\$, and the FTF Professional Development Workgroup will act as the advisory committee as policies and procedures are developed.

Communications Update

FTF Communications Director Liz Barker Alvarez updated the Board on the public affairs strategies currently being implemented, including regular communication with regional councils and editorial board visits. Ms. Barker Alvarez also reported that work on the FTF 3-5 year comprehensive public affairs strategy and plan is proceeding on schedule. She highlighted additional outreach strategies and tools that will be launched over the next four months to support that long-term effort. Additional details will be provided to the Regional Council Chairs and Vice Chairs at their leadership forum on February 4.

Legislative Update

FTF Governmental Affairs Specialist Sandy Carpenter reported that since Friday, January 15, FTF Communications and Legislative Affairs have sponsored a brown bag conference call for Regional Council Chairs and Vice Chairs. The purpose of these calls is to provide an update of First Things First and relevant legislative activities.

At the time of the Board meeting, a Special Legislative Session on the state budget had not been called (the special session later was called for February 1).

Eliminating or relaxing the Voter Protection Act is still being discussed by legislators. The “loan” concept that First Things First submitted to state leaders was included in the Governor’s Fiscal Year 2011 budget, but was not included among the various revenue options presented by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee for FY 2011. FTF Board members emphasized that the “loan” concept suggested by FTF included requirements that the funds be paid back with interest and that voters would have to approve any such “loan”.

Ms. Carpenter also reported on various items in the Governor’s FY 2011 budget that will affect the populations served by First Things First, including, but not limited to: elimination of the KidsCare Program, elimination of the Early Education Block Grant and elimination of all-day kindergarten.

Financial and Sustainability Issues

FTF Executive Director Hibbs reported that current revenues continue to be substantially less than they were in Fiscal Year 2009. December 2009 revenues were 20.1% lower than December 2008, and year-to-date revenues are 16.4% below last fiscal year. Little has changed in projected sustainability and current levels of investment are expected to continue through at least Fiscal year 2017. Director Hibbs reported that the raid of voter-protected funds and fund balances discussed by some legislators in December would eliminate FTF’s reserve fund by FY 2012, causing a severe reduction in early childhood investment every year thereafter.

Director Hibbs reported that some regions may experience higher than expected fund balances this year and have needs for which the funds could be used. The Board approved Director Hibbs’ recommendation to provide authority to the Regional Councils to use anticipated unspent FY 2010 funding to expand already approved existing or emergency strategies. Detailed information will be provided to the Regional Council Chairs and Vice Chairs at their leadership forum on February 4.

RFGA Process Improvement Recommendations

Consultant Linda Cannon reported on her review of FTF’s Request for Grant Award (RFGA) process and submitted 22 recommendations for improvement of that process. Some recommendations include staggering of deadlines for funding plans so that all Regional Councils do not have to complete their funding plans at the same time, which in turn, would stagger the deadlines of the corresponding RFGA development and awards. Ms. Cannon also recommended that the RFGA document be streamlined to be more user-friendly. Detailed information regarding the specifics and implementation of Ms. Cannon’s recommendations will be provided to the Regional Council Chairs and Vice Chairs at their leadership forum on February 4.

First Reading Governance Policy 1-119 E-Communications

The Board completed a first read of the policy, which outlines First Things First's responsibility to ensure that FTF Board and Regional Council business is conducted in public meetings and that email communications not violate Open Meeting Law. The Board will complete a second reading of the policy at its February 23 meeting. The draft policy is available [on the Internet](#). Anyone with comments or suggestions about the policy should forward them to Director Hibbs by February 19.

The next FTF Board meeting will take place on February 23 in Phoenix