



The Great Start Livingston (GSL) Operating Guidelines

Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be the Great Start Livingston Collaborative, sometimes referred to as GSL. The Great Start Collaborative is a component of Great Start Livingston (GSL).

Article II: Vision Statement

A great start for every child in Livingston County: safe, healthy and eager to succeed in school and in life.

Article III: Mission Statement

To assure a coordinated system of community resources and supports to assist all Livingston County families providing a great start for children from prenatal through kindergarten entry.

Article IV: Affiliation

Under the direction and guidance of the Office of Great Start (OGS), this is the official collaborative body engaged in the planning and enhancement of the Livingston County early education system.

Article V: Purpose

The purpose of this collaborative committee is to:

- Participate in the on-going process of making decisions about the nature and operation of early childhood-related programs and services in Livingston County.
- Assist the local Great Start Livingston Coordinator in accomplishing early childhood related tasks, goals and objectives to improve the local system.
- Assist in the development and implementation of the GSL Strategic Plan.
- Initiate suggestions for local systems improvement.
- Encourage parent participation.
- Assist in recruiting volunteer efforts and local engagement, including philanthropic, faith-based, public and private support.

Article VI: Great Start Livingston

There are four key organizational components of Great Start Livingston:

1. Great Start Collaborative Livingston County (GSC)
2. Great Start Parent Coalition Livingston County (GSPC)
3. Great Start Steering Committee
4. Great Start Livingston Subcommittees (Workgroups) & Ad Hoc Committees (as needed)

Organizational Structure: See Attachment

Article VII: Great Start Staff

Great Start Livingston will maintain a paid team of at least:

- 1.0 FTE person or persons in the role of GSL Coordinator
- One or more Parent Liaison(s). The primary contact may be no less than 48 hours per month and in total a minimum of 60 hours per month dedicated to the GSPC

Coordinator:

The Coordinator assists with the operation of the GSL and accomplishment of its purpose. The Coordinator is responsible for facilitating collaborative and comprehensive community planning. The Coordinator will provide staff services to the GSC and to Subcommittees. She or he will facilitate communication and networking with agencies and organizations throughout the county. The Coordinator will provide technical assistance to the GSC, through the preparation of materials and reports. She or he will also facilitate the investigation of new collaborative efforts and will assist with the preparation of funding proposals. The job description of the Coordinator will be approved by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will provide input on the evaluation for the Coordinator to the fiduciary, Livingston Educational Service Agency, on an annual basis every March.

Parent Liaison:

The Livingston County Parent Liaison will provide leadership to bring parents together, forming a Parent Coalition to act as a powerful voice for children. The GSPC will work to build public support for investing in early childhood. The local Parent Liaison will:

- Build public will and support by helping parents to advocate effectively for investing in young children
- Serve as a sounding board for Parent Members of the GSL to assure that they represent the views of many parents in the community as well as their own perspective
- Oversee the GSPC, facilitating meetings, events and work progress of the GSPC
- Create linkages between parents and GSL so that all members remain advised and aware of the needs, concerns, hopes, dreams and contributions of parents
- Lend support to GSL efforts such as community meetings, parent focus groups, GSL work groups and community events

Article VIII: Membership Composition

General GSC Membership:

In accordance with guidelines from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC), the Great Start Collaborative Livingston County shall consist of representatives from the following groups:

- Parents (requirements defined below)
- Business Leaders
- Philanthropic and Charitable Organizations
- Faith Based Organizations
- Organization that provides services on behalf of minority populations
- Intermediate School District

- Local publicly funded health, mental health and human services agencies (DHHS, local public health and community mental health)
- Hospital, health care system, managed care health plans and/or health care providers
- Family and juvenile court
- Early On and preschool special education
- Parenting education or family support program not administered by local ISD
- Early care and education professional development providers
- Head Start/Great Start School Readiness Program
- Child Care Providers
- Elementary School Principals
- Local policy makers or elected officials

Additional organizations or individuals may apply for voting membership to GSL. Written application for membership is submitted to GSL Steering Committee, which makes a recommendation to the full membership for vote. Any community member is invited to attend and participate in public GSL meetings. Voting is reserved for approved members.

Article IX: Parent Member Requirements and Reimbursement Procedures

Requirements:

Parents (birth, adoptive, foster, non-custodial or legal guardian) must: constitute at least 20 percent of the total required memberships of GSL; be reflective of the ethnic, racial, and socio-economic makeup of the community; and be parenting children aged 12 or younger.

Parent Reimbursement Procedures:

Parent members of GSL are to receive financial reimbursement for expenses incurred as a member and access to professional development and mentoring opportunities. Parent members of GSL will be eligible to receive a stipend for their participation in regularly scheduled GSL meetings (including collaborative and subcommittees).

Article X: Membership Responsibilities

The members provide oversight, direction and support to the work of the Great Start Livingston Collaborative as follows:

- Regularly attend GSL Meetings and attend subcommittee meetings as needed. See Article XI for attendance and alternate requirements
- Provide expertise on issues that impact young children
- Actively support the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan and Action Plans
- Participate in the review and approval of workgroup deliverables, recommendations and Action Plans
- Support workgroup activities, recommendations and requests for support
- Assure input and participation of diverse segments within Livingston County
- Identify and utilize funding sources to implement services
- Support early childhood grant opportunities
- Participate in and/or provide for professional development and mentoring opportunities

- Keep the Coordinator informed of any changes in membership, contact information, or availability of time and resources
- Provide ongoing public support/advocacy for the advancement of early childhood programs and services in Livingston County consistent with the GSL vision and mission

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 GSL by an act of the Steering Committee.

Conflict of Interest:

No member of GSL shall vote on any matter, which would provide direct financial benefit to that member or member's organization. Members must declare potential conflicts of interest before discussing or voting on items before GSL. The member should immediately disclose the potential conflict. The staff person will facilitate if both chair and vice chair abstain. Subsequent discovery of any undisclosed actual or perceived conflict regarding a matter in which the member participated in either discussion or voting shall invalidate GSL action on the matter.

Article XI: Attendance and Alternates

Attendance:

It is expected that the individual appointed to GSL will be the person attending the meeting. To remain on GSL as a voting member, members must attend at least 50% of the regularly scheduled meetings in any given calendar year. If a member misses three (3) consecutive, regularly scheduled meetings without a satisfactory explanation, they may be removed from voting membership. A letter will be sent to the individual, making them aware of their failure to meet the attendance requirement and urging them to designate a replacement from their organization. Voting rights will be reinstated once regular attendance is established. Removal of any voting member will be brought to the Steering Committee for a vote. A member is not considered absent if his/her alternate is in attendance.

Alternates:

Members may designate a permanent alternate for those times when they are unable to attend a meeting. This person will be appointed by name in writing, by and under the signature of the member, to the GSL Steering Committee. The permanent alternate is given full authority to speak for his/her organization and can vote, only in absence of the member. The appointed GSL member is required to attend at least two (2) GSL meetings per calendar year.

Article XII: Member Term of Service

There is no limit to the term of service for agency/business/faith based representatives.

There is no limit to the term of service for a parent except they must have a child age 12 or younger. New parent members will be recommended to GSL by the active membership of the Parent Coalition or GSL Member organizations as needed to maintain the required minimum of 20%, but no more than 30% parent membership of GSL. If the parent membership exceeds 30% of GSL, the parent coalition and steering committee will elect representation.

Article XIII: Meetings, Quorum, Voting Procedures and Finance

Frequency of Meetings

The Great Start Collaborative shall meet a minimum of six (6) annually on alternate months. *Special meetings* may be called by a Co-Chairperson, by written request to the Chair by one-third of GSC, or by a majority vote of the Steering Committee. Members shall be given a minimum of three (3) day written notice (email) of special meetings, including the date, time, meeting place and purpose of the meeting.

Subcommittees shall meet a minimum of four (4) times per year. Subcommittee meetings may be called by a Subcommittee Co-Chairperson, the Steering Committee, or the GSL Coordinator. Members of each specific subcommittee shall be given a minimum of three (3) days written notice (email) of all meetings, including the date, time, meeting place and purpose of the meeting.

Notice of Regular Meetings

Notice of all regular meetings, including an agenda and minutes of the previous meetings shall be given to all members at least three (3) days prior to the scheduled meeting date either via mail or email.

Agenda Items

Additions and/or amendments to the agenda may be suggested by anyone in attendance and will be considered by the Chairpersons at the onset of each GSL meeting.

Parliamentary Procedures

Roberts Rules of Order, newly revised, shall govern the GSL in all cases to which they are applicable.

Quorum

A quorum shall consist of 50% of the membership. If, however, such members shall not be present, business shall be conducted and the Co-Chairperson(s) will decide if issues requiring action will be brought to vote.

Voting Rights

At each GSL meeting, each voting member present shall have one (1) vote. Members who have not had regular attendance as described in Article XI will be notified prior to the scheduled vote of their loss of voting rights. Organizations with more than one person in attendance shall receive one (1) vote. All issues which require a vote will be listed in the agenda and distributed to members at least one week before the meeting. The members may, by a majority vote, decide to take action on an item not previously listed on the agenda.

All issues requiring a vote will be, as time allows, reviewed by the Steering Committee and recommendations will be presented to the Collaborative for final approval.

Decision Making

The preferred decision making process shall be consensus. 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 or is not appropriate, Robert's Rules of Order shall guide a formal vote. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of GSL.

Finances

The Livingston Educational Service Agency must be the fiscal agent for any funds. When a GSL project is jointly funded, one organization will be designated as the fiscal agent for the project. The Steering Committee will provide oversight to all financial aspects as required. Funding requests outside of the approved GSL budget, or those that will result in a variance of 20% in any line item will be brought to the GSL Steering Committee for review.

Article XIV: Leadership

The members of the GSC will elect a new Co-Chair every year. The Co-Chair will serve two years in that position with another Co-Chair. Elections will occur at the regularly scheduled meeting in September. Co-Chairs can serve no more than two consecutive two year terms. Co-Chairs of the Great Start Collaborative are required members of the Steering Committee and are required to attend all Steering and GSL Committee Meetings where voting will take place.

Duties of Co-Chair:

- Review and approve agendas for Steering Committee and Collaborative meetings
- Regularly attend GSL meetings (Steering, Collaborative, Sub-committee)
- Preside at GSC meetings
- Sign correspondence and letters of support
- Act as spokesperson for GSL as needed
- Review and approve annual reports
- Establish and appoint members to committees and work groups
- Mentoring of incoming Co-Chairperson
- Consult with the GSL staff person on a regular basis

Incoming Co-Chair:

Recommendations for incoming Co-Chair will be made by the Steering Committee to the full GSC no less than one (1) month prior to elections. A vote of the GSC is required to elect an incoming Co-Chair.

Duties of Past Co-Chairs:

- Serve as a member of the Steering Committee for a minimum of one year
- Support the work of GSL by attending GSL events and advocating on behalf of early childhood and the work of GSL.
- Serve as mentor to the current Co-Chairs

Article XV: Committees / Work Groups

The purpose of each subcommittee is to advance the work of the GSL Strategic Plan by implementing the strategies and obtaining the objectives outlined in the Action Agendas.

Responsibilities: Members' participation is in support of early childhood system building initiatives identified in vision and mission. Refer to Membership Responsibilities in Article X.

New Member Orientation: All new members will be provided with background information and will meet with a Great Start Team Member or Chair. New members will be encouraged to attend the state orientation.

Standing GSC subcommittees will consist of:

- Early Childhood Professionals & Community Partners
- Pediatric and Family Health
- Parent and Family Support
- Parent Leadership (Parent Coalition)

Each subcommittee shall assist in the implementation of the work plan/scope of work and provide input for the progress reports which are required by the Office of Great Start. Additional efforts/modifications for local adaptation as determined by the Steering Committee to meet the vision and mission in Livingston County may be implemented. These committees will be chaired by a GSL member who will represent the committee on the Steering Committee to ensure coordination and support of work plan.

Subcommittee Chairperson's responsibilities:

- Understand the requirements of the Strategic Plan and Work Plan and communicate those requirements to all committee members
- Share information/resources/knowledge/tools in a collaborative fashion with all committee members to advance the work plan activities.
- Coordinate committee meetings on a regular basis, in a manner that makes the most efficient use of member time and advances the work of both committee and the GSL.

Additional subcommittees:

- Steering Committee

Responsibilities:

- Be governing body for Great Start Livingston.
- Annual review of goals, objectives, and the work plan
- Provide review of committee work and feedback where appropriate
- Prioritize action items as appropriate and present recommendations to GSL
- General oversight of funding and operations
- General oversight of funding opportunities
- Act as a sounding board for the GSL Coordinator
- Participate in annual staff evaluation
- Act on behalf of GSL between meetings as necessary

The committee will consist of the: Chairperson, Vice Chair, Past Chair, Chairs of each standing committee, Parents, Collaborative Members, Parent Liaison(s), and GSL Coordinator(s). All members of the Steering Committee must be active members of the Collaborative, regularly attending scheduled meetings. The GSL Steering Committee will have the authority to make decisions based on recommendations from the Collaborative body.

The Steering Committee will be staffed by the GSL Coordinator. The GS Parent Liaison(s) will attend as able to maintain a strong connection with the work of the Great Start Parent Coalition.

Meetings and Attendance: The GSL Steering Committee meets up to eleven (11) times annually. The calendar of meeting dates is established in the 4th quarter for the year in advance. Members are expected to attend at least 75% of the meetings. If a member misses three (3) consecutive, regularly scheduled meetings without delivering a satisfactory explanation in writing or in person, a representative of GSL will contact the member and ascertain their continued interest in membership.

Ad Hoc workgroups:

Ad Hoc workgroups shall be established on an as-needed basis, with a specific purpose for a specific length of time. Ad hoc workgroups operate within a charge approved by GSL. Chairs of ad hoc workgroups are elected by the workgroup.

Parent Coalition:

The Great Start Parent Coalition will:

- Meet at least 8 times per year
- Serve as a forum for parents to develop advocacy and leadership skills
- Provide an opportunity for parents to learn about indicators of child well-being in Livingston County through data assessment and discussion of contributing factors
- Make recommendations to the Great Start Collaborative and Steering Committee regarding priorities for the strategic plan and implementation of the plan
- Help inform other parents about the indicators of child well-being and strategies for improvement
- Maintain a Steering Committee of core members to make decisions

ARTICLE XVI: Public Comment

Each regular business GSL meeting will include a public comment period in which any citizen may make a statement regarding an item on a past, present or future GSL open-session agenda, or a matter of general policy over which the GSL has jurisdiction.

Individuals who are not GSL members or designated alternates may speak to GSC in accordance with the following procedures:

- Any person wishing to address GSC shall be recognized by the GSC Co-Chair(s)
- After being recognized by the Chair, he/she must state his/her name and identify the topic on which he/she wishes to address the Board

- Persons may address matters or issues that are determined relevant to GSL business
- Comments shall be limited to no more than three minutes per individual/organization and at the times designated in the agenda, except where extended privileges are granted by the chairperson

ARTICLE XVII: Amendments

The Steering Committee will address any amendments or revisions as needed. A draft will be presented to the Collaborative body for approval upon completion. The Operating Guidelines may be amended by a majority vote of the membership present at a regular or special meeting, or by a majority vote of the entire board, providing that notice of the meeting shall include notice of the proposed amendments.

ARTICLE XVIII: Conflict Resolution

GSL values and encourages the sharing of ideas and new perspectives. It is recognized that in collaborative decision making, areas of conflict and disagreement may arise. GSL believes that who is right or wrong is not of concern. The exchange of perspectives and points of view – not the selling of them – is the issue. Therefore, GSL will address areas of conflict and disagreement by implementation of a Skillful Discussion model:

These issues shall be addressed within GSL by:

- Exploring impasses.
 - Identifying the areas of agreement.
 - Clarifying the points of disagreement
 1. Exploring the facts: What is the data and what does it tell us?
 2. Exploring Methods: How should we do what we need to do?
 3. Reviewing Goals: What is our objective?
 4. Reviewing Values: Why do we think it must be done a particular way, what do we, as the GSC, believe in?
 - Reaching group consensus so that the GSC can move ahead on the areas of agreement.
 - Continuing to address the points of disagreement as the project develops.
- When areas of conflict and disagreement cannot be resolved or impede the progress within GSL, the assistance of a mediator shall be obtained.

Attachment: Organizational Chart

Acronyms:

ECIC – Early Childhood Investment Corporation

GSC – Great Start Collaborative

GSL – Great Start Livingston

GSPC – Great Start Parent Coalition

OGS – Office of Great Start