

BrightWorks

2 Pine Tree Drive, Arden Hills, MN 55112

Executive Board Meeting January 22, 2025

Members Present:

Carol Bomben, Community Representative
Andrea Cuene, Community Representative
Jessica Ellison, (Virtual) Electoral District 1
Karen Gabler, Electoral District 3
Bill Harvey, Community Representative
Sarah Johansen, Electoral District 4
Deborah M. Pauly, Electoral District 4

Members Absent:

Kacy Deschene, Electoral District 1
Pat Driscoll, Electoral District 3
Zena Stenvik, Superintendent, Columbia Heights School District

Staff Present:

Gina Boots, Teacher & Apprenticeship Liaison
Colleen Feller, Director of SparkPath & Director of Human Resources
John Schultz, Executive Director
Angela Skrade, Executive Assistant/Office Manager/Executive Board Support (Recorder)
Chris Streiff-Oji, Regional COMPASS Director
Tom Wieczorek, Business Manager

Visitors:

Peter Leatherman, Morris Leatherman Company
Karen Klein, ICS

Call to Order:

Chair Harvey called the meeting to order at 3:40pm after a quorum was met.

BrightWorks Meeting Attendee Introductions & Public Input:

BrightWorks Executive Board, Leadership Team, and visitor introductions were made. No public was present.

Approval of Agenda:

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the agenda.

A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Bomben to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion carried.

Finance Update:

Mr. Wieczorek advised that his report at this meeting is focused on the December finances. He reported there is currently a deficit due to delays with receiving READ Act grant funding. He has been juggling cash flow over the past couple of months, which has been challenging at times. Executive Director Schultz has been kept informed of the happenings. Executive Director Schultz advised the board this is a State issue, and we are waiting on Title I funds. The Executive Directors of the MN Service Cooperatives (MSC) have met on the issue and are putting pressure on the state to resolve the situation. Mr. Wieczorek explained that the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) was 3 months behind when the READ Act/COMPASS program began and are still trying to catch up. The program has multiple Federal and State sources, so the funding comes from 5 or 6 different places. He states that when MSC receives payment, they are reliable about getting it to us promptly. The MDE has assured us we will get the funding, but until this happens Mr. Wieczorek says

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the priority is to pay staff first. Vendors, second. He stated that payroll has not been missed, but that payments are owed to Resource Training and Solutions and South Central Service Cooperatives.

He added that another issue is we received an advance payment from the MDE, which will need to be paid back. Currently, when factoring in the deficit and the advance payment, we have a negative budget of \$80k. He stated his main concern is when the MDE will want their advance reimbursed.

Mr. Wieczorek reported that BrightWorks is doing all right overall, but cash flow continues to be tight. Grant funding for the Teaching Apprenticeship program has come in, and things have improved, but he included that without our fund balance and reserves advance, it would have been very problematic. Board members expressed concern and had questions regarding the timeline and how this affects the organization's investment earnings. Mr. Wieczorek advised this issue could continue through the rest of this year, but he is hopeful it will improve as the year progresses. He reassured the board that BrightWorks does not bank on investment earnings, so losing investment value is not an issue.

A motion was made by Ms. Pauly and seconded by Ms. Johansen to approve the Finance Update as submitted. The motion carried.

Human Resources Report:

Ms. Feller advised in this period there were no new hires, and one staff resignation.

A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Gabler to approve the Human Resources Report as submitted. The motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

A motion was made by Ms. Bomben and seconded by Ms. Cuene to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted. The motion carried.

BrightWorks District Member Survey

Peter Leatherman of the Morris Leatherman Company presented results of the BrightWorks Stakeholders Survey, conducted in fall of 2024 by speaking with a mix of BrightWorks member district Superintendents, Directors of Teaching and Learning/Curriculum, Special Education, Human Resources, and Facilities/Health and Safety. Board members were not surprised by the survey results and agreed that BrightWorks is hard to describe, making awareness of the services and value offered by the organization difficult to achieve.

The survey results and the best ways to market BrightWorks and increase member district knowledge of the services and support available to them were discussed. Executive Director Schultz shared that challenges have been costs of membership, how to effectively communicate these costs, and low response to Professional Development offerings. He stated that currently BrightWorks is working on creating more professional development offerings outside of the COMPASS program, and that the leadership team is researching the possibility of a new website.

Mr. Leatherman pointed out that with many districts facing staff cuts and searching for cost effective ways to get past these obstacles, BrightWorks has an opportunity of timing. Districts are going to need help. Discussion continued about ways to get information to districts and their boards, and how to get the attention of district leaders. Executive Director Schultz advised that work would continue on this.

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Facilities Services Agreement

Executive Director Schultz introduced Karen Klein of ICS (Innovate, Collaborate, and Sustain). Karen presented an overview of ICS and the support services they offer. Executive Director Schultz shared his plan of a partnership with Karen and ICS for the BrightWorks Health and Safety program. At this time, Karen will begin her work with BrightWorks by having one on one conversations with member districts to determine their needs and interest in the program. A plan for the next school year, and approval of a contract with ICS will be revisited with the BrightWorks Board at a future date.

Leadership Team Reports

Ms. Feller and Ms. Streif Oji shared brief updates with the board on the programs they oversee. Questions from the board on these programs were answered. Ms. Aasan was unable to attend, so the board was referred to her report in the meeting packet and advised to contact Ms. Aasan with any questions.

Apprenticeship Program and ECMC Grant Presentation

Ms. Boots presented information on the Teacher Apprenticeship program. Currently, there are 22 apprentices working in the Intermediate Districts Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Collaborative (ITRAC), who have now begun their 3rd semester of instruction with Minnesota State University, Mankato. She stated that as the program progresses, they are learning what gaps they are seeing with the apprentices, and as a sponsor, can provide some additional training on topics such as executive function, organizational skills, and financial literacy. Some of the apprentices still need goal areas and will need to take other goal area classes.

Ms. Boots reported that work continues around building understanding and processes with BrightWorks' role as a sponsor in teacher apprenticeship. Meetings have been held with other states implementing teacher apprenticeship, as well as representatives from other industries, and we have partnered with Educator Registered Apprenticeship Intermediary (ERA) to provide us with technical support.

Design work continues to move forward for many district/university partnerships in building new licensure programs. Willmar Public Schools is awaiting approval from the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) and has asked BrightWorks to be a sponsor. Their program will begin in the fall with a dual license Special Education Academic Behavioral Strategies (ABS) and Elementary Education apprenticeship. The University of Minnesota has also agreed to move their programs under BrightWorks Sponsorship. They will have 7 district partners across all five of their campuses. They will begin with two apprenticeship programs. One in ABS and the other in Early Childhood.

Ms. Boots has been working on outreach with Ms. Aasan to meet with Special Education Directors and she serves as a board liaison with Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE) to provide updates on the Teacher Apprenticeship program. She has been working to get a Blind/Visual Impairment program going and has met twice with North Dakota State University regarding this.

Ms. Boots has also been working with the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and they have started cross-agency meetings. The next step in the process is creating a Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC), which is a committee comprised of 50% union and 50% management that oversees the statewide apprenticeship program and will function as a 501(c)3. In Cooperation with the DLI Ms. Boots and BrightWorks will lead the kick-off meeting for this program on January 27. Currently, BrightWorks is stepping forward as the statewide sponsor, but eventually this will move under the umbrella of MSC. Ms. Boots explained that the apprenticeship program lives in DLI but also with the MDE, as it is an education program.

Ms. Boots also announced that BrightWorks had the opportunity to partner with Proserva on a grant from the ECMC Foundation. A two-year grant in the amount of \$750k was awarded to BrightWorks to build a Stackable Para Pathway. BrightWorks will partner with Metro State and Mankato State Universities to create this platform on Proserva. Courses and modules created on Proserva will allow paraprofessionals to earn their 10 general

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education core credits. PELSB would issue a certificate when users have completed the program. Ms. Boots states this program will remove barriers by keeping participation at no cost and opening the doors to all paras.

Board questions were answered and members thanked Ms. Boots for her work and ownership with this project.

Policy Review:

Executive Director Schultz reviewed Policies 103, 210, 405, 452, in the first read and 102, 203.5, 208, 410, 414, 430, 722 in the second read.

Chair Harvey called for a motion to approve the policy readings.

A motion was made by Ms. Pauly and seconded by Ms. Johansen to approve the review of Policies 103, 210, 405, 452 in the first read and 102, 203.5, 208, 410, 414, 430, 722 in the second read as submitted. The motion carried.

Executive Director Report:

Executive Director Schultz reported that the MDE is looking at schools struggling with attendance and has asked BrightWorks to build an attendance team. BrightWorks will be hiring coaches for the attendance team and will also be hiring staff to assist Anne Kilzer, Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) Executive Director. Posts for these positions will be both internal and external. BrightWorks will also be reaching out to districts looking at staff cuts. He is looking at staffing for 2025-2026 and is waiting on budget figures from the MDE.

Executive Director Schultz and Ms. Skrade provided an update on the BrightWorks Executive Board election. Nominees are needed for Electoral Districts 2 and 3. A Superintendent and Director of Teaching and Learning are also needed. Executive Director Schultz reports he is currently working on this piece. Board members were asked to assist with finding nominees for the electoral district positions.

Executive Director Schultz also reminded board members of the upcoming Annual Meeting, on April 16, 2025.

HOTT Forum:

The group discussed highlights of the January 2025 Minnesota School Board Association (MSBA) conference, the upcoming MN STEM Day at the state Capitol and a district superintendent search.

Other Business: None

Adjournment:

Chair Harvey called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:30pm

A motion was made by Ms. Cuene and seconded by Ms. Gabler to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.


John Schultz, Executive Director


Karen Gabler, Board Clerk

Next Meeting Date: April 16, 2025
