

**Early Childhood Coalition of Flathead Valley**  
**(formerly the Flathead Best Beginnings Community Coalition)**  
**Guiding Document**  
**REVISED and ADOPTED November 2021**

1. **Name and nature of the organization:** The name of this organization shall be the Early Childhood Coalition of Flathead Valley (referred to as “Coalition” in this document). The Coalition is a voluntary, unincorporated collaborative body of community organizations, public agencies, parents, business representatives, and other interested parties. This Guiding Document serves to provide the governing rules and operating procedures of the unincorporated Coalition, serving a similar function as by-laws in a formal corporation.
2. **Relationship with state and regional entities:** The Early Childhood Coalition of Flathead Valley is an independent, local body that cooperates with state and regional entities and collaborative groups.
3. **Dissolution or Other Change in Organizational Status of the Coalition:** Any decision to dissolve, merge, incorporate, seek tax exemption, or otherwise change the organizational status of the Coalition (as described in Section 1, above) will be subject to a 2/3 formal written vote of the current Coalition membership entitled to vote as defined in Section 8.
4. **Vision and Purpose Statements:**

The **Vision** for the Flathead BBCC is “**Working together for our children’s success.**” The **purpose statement** is: Early Childhood Coalition of Flathead Valley provides opportunities for early childhood professionals and community members to network, strategize and learn so that young children and their families may thrive.

**The Focus Areas for the Council’s work are:**

  - **Sharing information and resources about our organizations and communities**
  - **Linking efforts in our local area with regional, statewide and national work in early childhood**
  - **Connecting members with opportunities for professional development, networking and learning**
  - **Building awareness and supporting solutions across our communities to help ensure success for young children and their families**

5. **Programmatic Focus of the Coalition's Activities:** The Coalition exists to provide various means for its members to engage in, including **communication** (knowing what each other is doing); **coordination** (sharing resources, working on tasks together, and avoiding duplicated effort); and **collaboration** (working together in a more comprehensive way to solve community problems and build a comprehensive, coordinated early childhood system). Such means shall include, but not be limited to, the following activities:
- Convening meetings and other gatherings of the membership.
  - Coordinating sub-groups of the Coalition in the form of committees or work groups [See Section 13 of this document].
  - Conducting community forums.
  - Educate the public about the Coalition and the early childhood system.
  - Assess community gaps, needs and resources related to the early childhood system.
  - Conducting strategic planning to build a comprehensive, coordinated early childhood system.
  - Providing and connecting members to professional development training for services providers.
  - Facilitating access for the Flathead's early childhood system to financial resources such as grants.
  - Providing electronic means of communications between members.
  - Engaging other organizations, contractors, or other resources to carry out the work of the Coalition and its committees.
  - Collecting and analyzing data, both qualitative and quantitative.
  - Other activities as the Coalition may determine.
6. **Coalition Desired Outcomes/Results:** The Coalition may, from time to time, engage in planning and continual improvement processes to determine its desired results and action plans.
7. **Qualifications for Membership:** Membership is open to organizations and individuals contributing membership dues as defined by time to time by the Coalition or Steering Committee, and who are interested in and committed to the development of a comprehensive, coordinated early childhood system for children from prenatal to the age of eight, and their families.

The following organizations are eligible for membership:

- Local education entities
- Child care resource & referral agency
- Public health department
- Health care providers
- Businesses and business associations (such as the chamber of commerce)
- Head start/early head start
- Services for children with special needs
- Local chapter of Montana Child Care Association
- Local chapter of Montana Association for the Education of Young Children
- Local government officials
- Child care providers

- Children’s mental health
- Family support and child protective agencies
- Parent representative(s)
- Law enforcement
- Local labor Coalition
- Home visiting agencies
- Agencies serving pregnant and parenting teens
- Service clubs
- Public/community benefit and philanthropic organizations (foundations, United Way)

Other organizations or individuals may attend and speak at any open Coalition meeting as a participant.

8. **Categories of Membership:** There shall be two categories of membership:

- **Sponsoring Members** are organizations which have contributed dues to the Coalition. Sponsoring members receive one vote on matters before the Coalition as outlined in Section 9. Sponsoring members can send any number of representatives to participate and contribute input to Coalition meetings and other activities.
- **Partnering Members** are organizations which have not paid dues to the Coalition. Partnering Members do not receive a vote but are welcome to attend, participate and contribute input to Coalition meeting, sub-groups and other activities.

9. **Responsibilities and Rights of Sponsoring (Voting) Members:** Matters voted on by sponsoring Members shall include, but not be limited to:

- Approval of resource partner organizations.
- Approve changes to this Guiding Document.
- Approval of strategic plans and other key documents.
- Approval of Steering Committee members with the exception of parent representatives and representatives of **resource partner organizations**.
- The Steering Committee may determine other items for a full Coalition vote, and may make recommendations for consideration of the voting members.

To ensure Sponsoring Membership in the Coalition, organizations will be required to:

- Pay dues as determined from time to time by its Steering Committee.
- Appoint a voting representative and one alternate voting representative to vote on Coalition issues through (others may attend meetings, but votes are limited to one per organization).
- Participate in sub-groups like committee or work groups, and other activities.
- Advise Coalition staff, contractors, and Steering Committee related to the work of the Coalition.

10. **Leadership, Administration and Facilitation:** The Coalition may, at its discretion, elect one or two members of the Steering Committee to serve as chair or co-chairs of the Coalition. In the absence of elected leadership, the Steering Committee will serve as the leadership body of the Coalition. The Coalition, through its Steering Committee, may contract with or hire as an employee a facilitator, coordinator, administrator, minute-taker or other assistance as may be desired.

**11. Resource Partner Organizations and Sub-Grantee Relationships:** As an unincorporated entity, the Coalition may enter into relationships with nonprofit organizations or public agencies to receive, manage, distribute, invest, and account for grant and other funds on behalf of the Coalition. There may be more than one Resource Partner Organization at a time, with different functions and functional relationships with the Coalition. Resource Partner Organization relationships shall be codified by written agreements, as determined by the Coalition and its Resource Partner Organizations and reviewed on an annual basis. The Resource Partner Organizations will be accountable to the Coalition membership or its designee as detailed in written agreements, as well as to the funding source(s), for such functions the use of funds, oversight of staff and contractors working on behalf of the Coalition, and maintenance of records as required by funding sources and government entities. The Coalition may accept funds and carry out certain functions as a sub-grantee of another organization, if approved by the Steering Committee and Resource Partner Organizations.

**12. Steering Committee:** The Coalition shall elect a Steering Committee to act on its behalf to manage and implement the goals and work plans of the Coalition. Elected Membership of the Steering Committee shall be no less than 5 and no more than 9 elected members plus parent representative(s) and Resource Partner Organizations representative(s), if applicable. Elected Members shall be elected through a balloting process from among the Sponsoring Membership of the Coalition. The Coalition may also designate Steering Committee seats for entities involved in the Coalition (for example, from an organization serving as fiscal sponsor for the Coalition). Terms of office for elected Steering Committee members shall be 3 years, after which elected members may stand for election to additional 3 year terms. There shall be not be a maximum number of terms for individual elected Steering Committee members.

The Coalition grants authority to the Steering Committee to carry out specific actions, and to manage certain functions of the Coalition, including:

- Oversee and evaluate work of contractors and staff.
- Approve contracts with consultants or other contractors.
- Plan Coalition meetings and other activities.
- Oversee management of finances and requests for membership dues.
- Decide issues that need to be voted on by Sponsoring Members and make recommendations for action.
- Approve applications for funding and letters of support, as appropriate.
- Appoint up to 3 parent representative(s) as voting members of the Steering Committee from time to time
- Other functions as may be assigned by the Coalition.

If specific authority is not delegated by the Coalition on an issue before the Steering Committee, decisions made by the Steering Committee will be subject to input and approval of the Coalition at its next meeting. The Steering Committee will meet as often as deemed necessary by consensus of the Steering Committee members. There must be a 2/3 quorum at any Steering Committee meeting where actions are taken. The Steering Committee will be subject to the same manner of decision-making specified in Section 15, below.

**13. Creation of Other Committees and Work Groups:** At its discretion, the Coalition may create and dissolve sub-groups to carry out its activities and work plans. Such sub-groups may be ongoing, long-term **Committees** which will generally have defined members, or **Work Groups** that are project-focused, have more flexible membership and participation, and may be time-limited. The Coalition may designate authority to carry out specific actions, or to manage certain functions of the Coalition. Participation in the Committees and Working Groups can consist of Coalition members and other people who are interested and supportive of the goals and activities of the Coalition. Committees and Working Groups may have Chairs or Co-Chairs appointed by consensus of the Coalition, or by the Committee or Work Group itself. Committee and Working Groups will be subject to the same manner of decision-making specified in Section 15, below. Financial commitments proposed by Committees or Work Groups will require approval of the Steering Committee or be related to a budget or otherwise approved expenditure.

**14. Coalition Meetings:** Coalition meetings will occur at least 4 times a year, and may be more frequent as the Coalition or Steering Committee decides. Notifications of meetings shall be by email or other electronic means.

**15. Quorum and Manner of Decision-Making:** For most decisions made at meetings, the Coalition and its Committees and Work Groups will make decisions and take actions using a consensus model which the Coalition shall define from time to time. A formal vote by ballot of Sponsoring Members may be used if required when making decisions regarding such decisions as change in organizational status of the Coalition (Section 3, above) or items referenced for member voting in Section 9.

Balloting may be done electronically or by mail, as long as only one authorized vote is recorded for each Sponsoring Member.

Any member who has a direct interest in a program or agency seeking funding shall abstain from voting on the proposed action. Direct interest is defined as being employed by, being a member of the Board of Directors of the applicant agency, being a recipient of services, or receiving direct benefit from the proposed program.

**16. Manner of Resolving Conflicts or Disputes:** If a conflict arises that cannot be resolved in a Coalition meeting, the matter will be referred to the Steering Committee for resolution or recommendation back to the full Coalition, as the Coalition may determine.

**17. Amending the Guiding Document:** Recommendations to change or amend this Guiding Document may be made by any member of the Coalition at any time. All recommendations to change or amend this Guiding Document must be proposed in writing to the Steering Committee via email or mailed letter. This Guiding Document will be reviewed and revised as deemed necessary by the Steering Committee and be subject to the vote of Sponsoring Members, as specified in Section 9.

**18. Approval and Review of this Guiding Document:**

Date of adoption by Coalition vote: **April 17, 2012;**

REVISED by ballot vote in **November 2017, July 2020 and November 2021.**