

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2015-16 Performance Report

Partnership for School Readiness Board

AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) is to lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system focused on strengthening families and school readiness for all children. The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act was established in state statute 2003 and the current mission statement was revised in 2008.

LEAD ADMINISTRATOR:

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GOVERNANCE:

Here a brief description of the agency's governance structure should be provided. Is the agency headed by a Governor appointee? An appointee of an independent board? Who selects the board, and who are the current members of the board.

The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness board membership is established in state statute and the Board is reviewed under Sunset Review every four years. The board is comprised of 15 state agency representatives and 17 members appointed by the Governor. The OPSR board meetings and related activities are supported by the Smart Start Oklahoma state office staff. The OPSR Board makes recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor on improvements to the early childhood system.

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) contracts with the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) to employ the Smart Start Oklahoma state office staff, including the Executive Director at 80% time. State funds from DHS are used to support this contract. The OPSR board members provide input to UCO into the selection and retention of the Executive Director. In addition to supporting the OPSR Board, The Smart Start Oklahoma state office is also responsible for monitoring DHS contracts with 18 community organizations to implement Smart Start Oklahoma initiatives.

Does the Board have any committees or subgroups?

Yes

If so, please provide a detailed listing of the subgroups and their areas of focus.

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#### Committees:

*Executive Committee* – The Executive Committee shall have and exercise all of the authority of the Board in the management of the OPSR, except to the extent of adopting, amending, or repealing the By-Laws; approving the annual budget; or where action of the full Board is required by law.

*Finance Committee* – Makes recommendations to the OPSR Executive Committee and the OPSR Board regarding the annual budget.

*Community Mobilization Committee* – Makes recommendations regarding Smart Start Oklahoma activities in local communities. Receives and reviews annual recommendations from local community councils. Reviews work plans for local communities and makes recommendations for approval or revision.

*Policy and Workgroup Coordination Committee* - Ensures workgroups are on target with accomplishing tasks set by the OPSR Board. Accepts and reviews recommendations from workgroups. Assists the Executive Committee in identifying cross cutting issues.

*Ad Hoc Child Care Committee* – Reviews the status of child care funding and policies and make recommendations to the OPSR Board on improvements.

*Ad Hoc Early Literacy Committee* – Develops recommendations for a comprehensive state-wide early literacy plan.

#### Workgroups:

*Quality, Access, Standards and Accountability* – Develops recommendations to increase quality and access to early childhood programs and services. Develops recommendations for improving the state's early learning guidelines.

*Community Mobilization* – Provides a mechanism for communication between community councils.

*Data Systems and Coordination* – Develops recommendations for a unified data system, policies and structure to support enhanced community coordination. Identifies opportunities for and barriers to collaboration.

*Professional Development and Workforce* – Develops recommendations regarding a cross sector statewide professional development and career advancement plan. Assesses the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year institutions toward supporting the development of early childhood professionals.

*Public Engagement* – Develops and implements a public engagement initiative to promote school readiness.

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*Special Populations* – Makes recommendations regarding inclusion of underserved groups in early childhood services and programs. Works in coordination with other workgroups to ensure they address special populations within their recommendations.

GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY:

Is there an attendance policy for board members/commissioners? If so, is it being followed?

Yes, there is an attendance policy and attendance is tracked and reported. Board members are expected to attend at least 75% of the scheduled meetings each year and sign an agreement indicating their knowledge of this expectation. The Governor receives a report on board member attendance and uses this information in consideration of making re-appointments to the board. Over the past five years, quorum has been met for all board meetings, with the exception of one meeting. Last year, on average, 75% of the board members were in attendance for each meeting.

MODERNIZATION EFFORTS:

Please provide a listing of all government modernization efforts undertaken by the agency in the last twelve months. Additionally, please provide any authorizing statutory changes that prompted the modernization efforts and whether those efforts have led to cost savings or additional cost burden.

A form of government modernization efforts has occurred this fiscal year with the OPSR Board. This was not due to a statutory change; however these efforts will result in cost savings to taxpayers.

Smart Start Oklahoma facilitated an OPSR Board retreat in March, 2015 to streamline the committee and workgroup structure of the board. As noted in the section on committees and sub-groups of the board, the board supports multiple special interest working groups. The board will consider streamlining the number of groups in order to reduce the burden of attending multiple meetings for board members and other interested early childhood stakeholders. This structure is pending approval at the May 21, 2015 meeting. Cost savings in travel will be realized next fiscal year through the reduction of meetings. Private board members are reimbursed for their travel through the OPSR budget and state agency representatives receive compensation from their agency for travel to OPSR board meetings.

What steps has the agency taken to cut costs and/or eliminate waste? Are there efforts that have been successful which you believe could serve as a model for other state agencies seeking to keep costs minimal?

In addition to a reduction in travel costs due to a decrease in meeting, a solicitation was recently announced for Smart Start Oklahoma community contracts. As a result of budget reductions over previous fiscal years, it was imperative to identify extraneous costs in

order to maintain a broad community presence. Several items that had been allowable for reimbursement in previous contracts were eliminated in the new solicitation. This included elimination of out-of-state travel, purchase of books and/or materials for external organizations, and a reduction in the amount of allowable administrative costs. Eliminating non-essential program functions will also allow community contractors to increase their focus on system coordination efforts.

CORE MISSION:

What services are you required to provide which are outside of your core mission? Are any services you provide duplicated or replicated by another agency? Are there services which are core to your mission which you are unable to perform because of requirements to perform non-core services elsewhere?

Smart Start Oklahoma has not been required to provide services outside of our core mission; however, over time community initiatives drifted into a focus on delivering early childhood programs rather than maintaining a focus on system coordination efforts. This resulted in a potential duplication of services and a lack of attention to the core mission at the community level. The OPSR Board approved the new solicitation to refocus community organizations on the core mission of the organization. Not only will this shift re-direct activities toward the core mission of the organization at the community level, but this will also result in improving the information the OPSR Board receives about barriers in communities that prevent children from being prepared for school.

PRIVATE ALTERNATIVES:

Are any of the services which are performed by the agency also performed in the private sector in Oklahoma? In other states? Has the agency been approached by any foundation, for-profit or not-for-profit corporation with efforts to privatize some of the functions of the agency?

The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness is a public and private partnership board and has clearly articulated that in order to accomplish its goals, both public and private support and participation is essential and not exclusive of each other. Most states have formed similar early childhood advisory councils that are composed of both public and private members. The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness Act also included a provision to establish a Foundation to accept private donations to support early childhood. The Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness, Inc., was established to serve this function. The state funding received by the organization maintains the infrastructure to staff and coordinate cross-systems efforts, while private funding supports activities that are not allowable or available through public funding, such as meals, travel or materials.