



Bylaws

Article I – Name

The name of the Council shall be Spark NH.

Article II – Purpose and Objectives

Section I - Vision

Spark NH’s vision is, “All New Hampshire children and their families are healthy, learning, and thriving now and in the future.”

Section II- Mission

Spark NH’s mission is to provide leadership that promotes a comprehensive, coordinated, sustainable early childhood system that achieves positive outcomes for young children and families, investing in a solid future for the Granite State.

Section III - Focus

Spark NH’s focus is expectant families and children from birth through grade 3 and their families.

Section IV - Guiding Principles

The Council has the following Guiding Principles:

Families and Children:

1. Families should be supported by communities and be partners with stakeholders and service providers in designing, coordinating, and evaluating supports, services, and programs.
2. Preventive approaches early in life provide a rich return on investment and are economically advantageous compared to costly remediation later in life.
3. Successful transitions for young children and their families sustain the foundation of healthy early childhood development.

Early Childhood Systems

4. Early childhood systems utilize evidence-based and promising practices to deliver high quality services and programs to young children and their families that are developmentally and culturally appropriate, and universally accessible.

5. Early childhood systems maximize efficiency and collaboration at both the state and local level, and are aligned with the strengths and individual needs of children and families.
6. Early childhood systems set high standards, self-evaluate and continuously improve the Council.
7. The Council will build on recent and ongoing early childhood planning efforts, research, and initiatives as well as lessons learned from national resources and input from stakeholders.
8. Communication, coordination, collaboration, and partnership across all sectors of the community, both public and private, ensure the effectiveness and impact of services.

Article III – Responsibilities

Governor Lynch's Executive Order of September 7, 2011 provided the following:

1. Vacancies on the Council shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments.
2. The members of the Council may appoint an Executive Committee as well as such subcommittees, task forces and work groups as necessary to carry out their duties.
3. The Council shall be allowed to accept grants and other assistance to support its work upon the approval of the Governor and Executive Council. Any such items shall be brought forward by the Department of Health and Human Services on behalf of the Council.
4. All meetings of the Council, its Executive Committee, and any subcommittee, task force or work group established shall be open to the public and noticed in accordance with RSA 91-A.
5. The Council shall submit annually by October 1st beginning in 2012 a report to the Governor, Commissioner of Education and Commissioner of Health and Human Services on its activities, recommendations and plans.
6. The Council is authorized to adopt such additional governing procedures that are consistent with this Order and Act.

Pursuant to the Governor's Executive order, the Responsibilities of Spark NH required by the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Pub Law 110-134 are as follows:

1. Conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry;
2. Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education

programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among state agencies for administering such programs;

3. Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
4. Develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the state;
5. Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State;
6. Assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4- year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, and
7. Make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.

Article IV – Membership

Section I - Members

Members of the Council shall include the following to be appointed by the Governor and shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor:

- a) Administrator of the Child Development Bureau, DHHS
- b) Specialist from the Office of Early Childhood Education, DOE
- c) State Director of Head Start Collaboration
- d) Title V Administrator for the Maternal and Child Health Section, DHHS
- e) Chair of the NH Interagency Coordinating Council or designee
- f) Chair of the NH Child Care Advisory Council or designee
- g) President of Family Support NH or designee
- h) President of the NH Association for Infant Mental Health or designee
- i) A representative of the designated coordinating body of this Council, Early Learning NH
- j) A representative of the state agency responsible for programs under Part B, Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, recommended by that agency
- k) A representative of the state agency responsible for programs under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act recommended by that agency
- l) A representative of a local educational agency recommended by the NH Association of School Principals

- m) A representative of higher education recommended by the NH College and University Council
- n) A representative of a Head Start agency recommended by NH Head Start Directors Association
- o) A representative of the Children's Alliance of NH recommended by that organization
- p) A parent recommended by the NH Head Start State Parent Advisory Council
- q) A parent recommended by the NH Parent Information Center
- r) Member of the NH House of Representatives or Senate recommended by the Executive Committee of this Council
- s) A representative of local providers of early childhood programs and services recommended by the Executive Committee of this Council from a regional interdisciplinary group
- t) A representative of the NH philanthropic community recommended by the Executive Committee of this Council
- u) The Executive Director of New Futures, or designee
- v) A representative of NH DHHS Office of Medicaid Business and Policy
- w) The Early Childhood Special Projects Coordinator for the Maternal and Child Health Section, DHHS

Section II - Membership Terms

Since members are representatives of their organization, they serve under the rules of that organization. Participating organizations are encouraged to rotate their representation periodically to encourage participation and fresh perspective. All members serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

Article V - Membership Responsibilities

Section I - General

Members shall, to the best of their abilities, agree to:

- A. Attend all regularly scheduled meetings;
- B. Read meeting minutes and review materials associated with prior meetings, as necessary;
- C. Advance and support the Council's Mission;
- D. Commit to candid discussions and consideration of diverse ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect;
- E. Participate in at least one Committee and/ or task force of the Council.

- F. Contact the Chair or Spark NH staff in advance in the event of a necessary absence from a Council meeting, and make further contact with Chair or staff following the meeting regarding his or her responsibilities and/or other assignments

Section II – Representation and Communication with Constituencies or Member Organizations

- A. Members will commit to communicate frequently with the constituency they represent and bring any insights and concerns to the Council for discussion.
- B. Members representing constituencies must speak for the group that they represent.
- C. Members will share information with their organizations, recognizing the responsibility to communicate in a manner that does not create barriers to future collaboration.
- D. Members acknowledge a possibility of discord between Spark NH decisions and their organizations' objectives. Council members agree to properly represent Spark NH decisions and to help their organizations understand the differing position and interests represented by the Council.

Article VI- Attendance

Members are expected to attend meetings to enhance the effectiveness of the Council. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, prior notification must be given to a Spark NH staff person. Notification is requested as early as possible. After the second consecutive missed meeting, a Spark NH staff person shall notify the member in writing that s/he may be removed for missing the next meeting.

Members may participate by telephone or video conferencing if the equipment is available and the member cannot appear in person. Under these circumstances, the Council must ensure that the Council member participating by telephone or video conference is audible by members of the public. Minutes must note the reason for the member's remote participation.

Article VII - Replacement

Council members should send a letter of resignation to the Council Chair and to their organization, with a copy to the Governor's office so that a new member can be recommended by the organization to the Governor's office.

Article VIII - Presiding Officer

The Council Chair will be elected by the Council members. The term of the Chair shall be ~~one~~ two years.

Article IX - Executive Committee

Section I – Purpose

The Executive Committee shall: 1) Provide oversight of the activities of the Council; 2) provide consultation and direction to Council staff as needed to fulfill the mission of the council; 3) report to the Council on all actions taken between regular meetings of the Council; 4) meet between Council meetings

to set the agenda for Council meetings; and 5) Make decisions for the Council where there is not time to convene the full Council and a decision is necessary before the next regular meeting of the Council.

Section II - Membership

The Council Executive Committee shall include the elected officers of the Council: a Chair, a vice-chair, and a treasurer. If the Chair works in State government, then the Vice Chair shall work outside state government and vice-versa. The Executive Committee shall also include the Representative of the designated coordinating body of Spark NH (the Executive Director of Early Learning NH), the Administrator of the Head Start Collaboration Office, a Council member representing the NH Department of Education, and the state Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant Coordinator. The Executive Committee shall also include the immediate past Chair of the Council for one year after his or her term as Chair expires.

Article X - Duties of Officers

The Chair of the Council shall preside over the Council and Executive Committee meetings and work with Council staff on tasks related to the Council. The Vice-Chair of the Council shall preside in the absence of the Chair.

The Treasurer shall oversee fiscal matters of the organization, present an annual budget to the Council for members' approval and ensure development and Council review of financial policies and procedures.

All officers shall serve for ~~one~~two-year terms.

~~Beginning in 2012,~~The Annual meeting of the Council shall be held in ~~October~~December. The Council shall convene its nominating Committee of 3 Council members ~~two months in September~~ before its annual meeting and as it is needed.

The Nominating Committee shall report its nominees to the Council at the following Council meeting after being convened. At that meeting, the Council Chair shall also accept other nominations from the Council membership. At the Council meeting the month following when the Nominating Committee has made its nominations, the Council will ~~hold an election~~call for consensus to select ~~for~~ officers. The officers shall assume office immediately after the ~~election~~meeting.

Article XI- Officer Vacancies

In the case of a vacancy in any office, the Council shall convene its Nominating Committee and ~~elections~~selections shall be held as described in Article X above.

Article XII - Meeting Frequency

The Council shall meet at least four times a year and at other times at the call of the Governor or the Chair.

Article XIII - Decision-making

Section I – General

The Council will make every effort to reach consensus. If consensus cannot be reached after all members have had opportunity to speak and information needed for the decision has been provided, the Council shall make decisions by majority vote.

No Member will be entitled to give his or her proxy to another. If a member wishes to express his or her opinion on a decision at a meeting he or she is unable to attend, he or she may send a letter or email to or speak directly with a member of the Spark NH staff who shall convey the position to the Council.

Section II – Decisions required between regular Council Meetings

When action is required by the Council between the regular meetings of the Council, the Executive Committee shall be empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council. The Executive Committee will make every effort to make decisions by consensus. However, if consensus cannot be reached after all members have had an opportunity to speak and all information needed for the decision has been provided, the Executive Committee shall make decisions by majority vote. The Executive Committee shall report on the decision in its minutes and will submit the decision for review at the next regular Council meeting, including the reason for making the decision outside the regular Council meeting.

Meetings of the Executive Committee must be posted in 2 places at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting unless the Chair decides an emergency situation exists (See Emergency Meetings, below).

Article XIV - Quorum

A simple majority of the currently appointed members of the Council shall be necessary to transact Council business. In the absence of such a quorum, any meeting may be adjourned by a majority of the Council members present.

Article XV- Meeting Notification

Notice of all Spark NH meetings shall be posted no less than 24 hours in advance of the meeting. Notice will be emailed to Council Members and posted on the Spark NH website or on the Early Learning NH website and on the NH Reads website.

Article XVI - Public Meetings

All Spark NH meetings are open to the public and will provide an opportunity for public comment. Members of the public are welcome to attend, observe and sign-in to make comments during public commenting periods in meetings.

Article XVII – Committees

Section I – General

Committees and Task Forces will be convened as needed by appointment of the Chair to serve functions specified by the Council and to exist for periods of time deemed necessary by the Council.

Chairs of Committees may or may not be Council members, but one member of the Council must serve on each committee. Initial Committee Chairs shall be appointed by the Council Planning Committee. Thereafter Chairs will be recommended by the members of the Committee as needed, however, their service is subject to approval of the Council members.

Section II – Responsibilities of Committees

With the exception of the Executive Committee, committees will serve to inform and make recommendations to the Council. Committees shall not vote. The Council shall make all final decisions.

Committees shall be responsible to fulfill the charge provided by the Council, to create a work plan and timeline for its completion, to implement or oversee the implementation of the work plan, and to report to the Council on its progress.

Committee meetings must be posted in the same manner as the Council. Committees shall appoint a member to take minutes at each meeting. The Committee Chair shall send the minutes to Council staff who shall post the minutes in the same manner as the Council. Committee Chairs or their designees must report in writing before every meeting of the Council.

Article XVIII - Relationship with Other Initiatives

The Council will work with other initiatives to avoid duplication of effort. The Council will make every effort to draw from the work of others to fully inform members prior to making recommendations.

Article XIX - Meeting Notes

The Council will keep minutes of the meetings and Staff will send draft meeting summaries to members in advance of the next Council meeting. Council members will approve final minutes at the next meeting. Draft minutes will be available five days after the meetings through Council Staff and final minutes will be posted on the Spark NH website. Committees will follow the same rules governing minutes.

Article XX - Change in Bylaws

Any or all of these policies may be altered, amended or appealed by a majority of the Council, providing that written notice of the proposed action is given to Council members five days in advance of the meeting.