

Copy to Joint Legislative Auditing Committee

Agency for Workforce Innovation

Six (6) Month Follow-Up Response

OPPAGA Report No. 08-61, October, 2008

“Early Learning Coalitions’ Administration Vary Widely; Opinions Divided
On Coalition Efficiency”



Charlie Crist
Governor
Cynthia Lorenzo
Interim Director
James F. Mathews
Inspector General

April 15, 2009

Ms. Cynthia Lorenzo, Interim Director
Agency for Workforce Innovation
Suite 212, Caldwell Building
107 East Madison Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-4120

Dear Director Lorenzo:

Pursuant to Florida Statutes 20.055(5)(g), I am providing a six-month follow-up on the Agency's response to Report No 08-61, issued by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) entitled: "Early Learning Coalitions' Administration and Program Support Expenses Vary Widely; Opinions Divided on Coalition Efficiency". The attached report was developed by the staff of the Office of Early Learning and it addresses the OPPAGA Report as deemed appropriate.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact me and we will respond accordingly.

Sincerely,

James F. Mathews, C.I.G.
Inspector General

JFM/sm

cc: Joint Legislative Auditing Committee
Ms. Barbara Griffin
Dr. Brittany Birken

Enclosure

Office of Inspector General

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**Agency for Workforce Innovation
Six (6) Month Follow-Up Response
OPPAGA Report No. 08-61, October 2008**

The Agency for Workforce Innovation (the Agency) is committed to continual strengthening of the comprehensive early learning system implemented in the State of Florida. The Agency stands by the previous response to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) report on the local governance structure of Florida's early learning programs. The current structure provides a coordinated comprehensive early learning system for Florida's children at the statewide level and maintains a structure uniquely responsive to the needs of the local communities. The Agency continues to analyze the current structure and believes strongly in transparent accountability and maintaining the highest level of efficient stewardship of the public's money. To this end:

- The coalitions report expenditures in accordance with federal and state guidelines on a monthly basis.
- The coalitions and the Agency maintain expenditures below the federally and state mandated spending limits.
- Differences in costs vary from coalition to coalition based on geographic size, population density and the needs of the local communities. The Agency concurs with this acknowledgement within the OPPAGA report.

Over the past six months, the Agency has diligently analyzed approaches to streamline processes statewide to assist coalitions achieve maximum efficiencies. Some specific examples include:

- The Agency is working with coalitions to identify innovative ways to share information with families. The Agency is now providing all VPK forms in an electronic format instead of hard copy to reduce costs associated with mass production and distribution.
- The Agency has developed and is testing a statewide eligibility monitoring tool. This tool is intended to eliminate any duplication in the current system and provide guidance to coalitions on streamlining their monitoring activities to focus on a risk-based approach.
- The Agency continues to prioritize the development of a statewide early learning information system. The results of a feasibility study demonstrate that this centralized data system would result in a cost savings of \$28 million annually based on enhanced efficiencies in program and system operations.
- At the direction of Legislative members in February, the Agency was asked to identify potential cost savings associated with consolidation and other

administrative efficiencies relevant to the work of the early learning coalitions and the workforce boards. To accomplish this, the Agency created a taskforce of early learning and business stakeholders to facilitate expert input. The Task Force was composed of members of the Executive Committee of the Association of the Early Learning Coalitions and the Chair of the Early Learning Advisory Council as well as the chair and the vice chair of the Quality, Legislative, System Development, and Funding Subcommittees. The taskforce identified potential approaches to consolidation, as well as potential benefits and unintended consequences that might result from changes to the early learning system.

The Agency will maintain its efforts to reduce costs at the state level while ensuring quality services are offered to families and children and that all state and federal requirements are met. The Agency also continues working with coalitions to improve the quality of services and reduce local costs where possible.

The Agency would like to reiterate its assertion that early learning coalitions effectively operate as the state's local delivery system of early learning programs, because they are uniquely equipped to meet the specific needs of local communities and to provide comprehensive services for families and children. Finally, the Agency thanks OPPAGA for the suggestions it has shared through its report regarding the structure of Florida's early learning programs.