



702 3RD AVENUE SOUTH

VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA 55792-2797

ARROWHEAD HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL MINUTES

February 11, 2026

PRESENT:

Alicia Varani	VA Toddler Center/Chairperson
Brandi Reamer	EHS Hibbing & West Range
Emily Bolin	Proctor
Karissa Kaiser	EHS East Range-Quad 1
Natalie Skaudis	Preschool Home Base
Patina Evesum	Hermantown
Rob Hietala	AEOA Board Representative
Amanda Gwash	Family Support Specialist
Carla Current	EHS Program Manager
Connie Derickson	Program Manager
Emily Checco	Preschool Home Base Educator
Ileigh Gorham	Disabilities & Mental Health Manager
Jerry Crittenden	Community Relations Manager
Kristine Norberg	Health Manager
Liz Lester	EHS Home Base Educator
Meghan Holmes Katz	EHS Home Base Educator
Nicole Larsen	Family Support Specialist
Meghan Winsor	Disabilities and Mental Health Manager
Barb Fedora	Program Manager
Rachael Johnson	Hibbing II
Chris DeGroote	Head Start Assistant Director
Gabe Johnson	Head Start Director
Tracy Sandnas	Head Start Finance Supervisor

SITES NOT REPRESENTED OR EXCUSED:

Babbitt-Open
Chisholm-Open
Eveleth-Gilbert-Absent
Hermantown-Absent
Hibbing I-Open
Hibbing III-Open
Hibbing IV-Open
EHS Lake & Hermantown-Absent
PSHB-Absent
Two Harbors-Absent

Virginia Infant Center-Absent
Virginia I-Open
Virginia II-Absent

The Policy Council meeting was held on February 11, 2026, at the conference room of the Station 44 Building in Eveleth and via Teams.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Alicia Varani, Chairperson, called the Arrowhead Head Start Policy Council Meeting to order at 9:54 a.m. on Wednesday, February 11, 2026.
- II. **ROLL CALL:** Roll call was taken showing 9 members present. A quorum was established.
- III. **CORRECTION/APPROVAL OF December 9, 2025, POLICY COUNCIL MINUTES:** **Rob Hietala moved to accept December 9, 2025, minutes, supported by Armony Hutchinson. Motion carried unanimously.**
- IV. **CORRECTIONS/ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:** None.
- V. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.
- VI. **ELECTION OF CARRY OVER PARENT:**

NOMINATED	1 ST MOTION	2 ND MOTION	APPROVED
Sara Flack	Karissa Kaiser	Brandi Reamer	Approved

VII. **REPORTS:**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Gabe Johnson reported on the federal side. We have been part of two calls with the new program specialist. All calls are being conducted as group calls until the new program specialists have been onboarded. We may be assigned another specialist at that time.

We are projecting a shortfall in our budget. The agency is looking at a 2-3% cost of living increase and the federal government is approving a .6% cost of living increase. We will have to cover the shortfall with our flat funding. We have had 2 years of flat funding.

Gabe is looking into CCAP dollars to increase funding to cover our expenses.

NHSA is hosting their annual conference in Minneapolis this year. This is especially exciting since it hasn't been held in MN for at least 20 years. We have some staff that will be volunteering to get their registration paid for by NHSA and we can send

12 people within our budget. MHSA is collaborating with NHSA for the upcoming national conference.

Construction is ongoing at the Infant and Toddler Center. Once the construction is complete, a series of reviews will need to be completed prior to opening. We are awaiting approval of our Federal Grant application. Our new fiscal year starts April 1, 2026.

We are currently looking for space for our Hermantown and Proctor classrooms for the upcoming school year. Our rooms are going to be repurposed by the school districts.

We are working with our contracted dietician to increase nutrition outcomes in our program by educating staff and parents. **Karissa Kaiser moved to accept the Director's Report, supported by Brandi Reamer. Motion carried unanimously.**

A. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Tracy Sandnas presented the financial statements.

FY 2025 MN HEAD START GRANT: This grant for \$702,898.00 for the period from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The Current Period Actual Expenditures are \$116,796.77; the YTD Actual Expenditures are \$382,559.64. The balance is \$320,338.36

FY 2025 FEDERAL HEAD START GRANT: This grant for \$2,544,527.00 for the period from April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026. The Current Period Actual Expenditures are \$406,286.46; the YTD Actual Expenditures are \$2,177,279.14. A balance of \$367,247.86 remains.

FY 2025 FEDERAL EARLY HEAD START GRANT: This grant for \$1,821,881.00 for the period from April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026. The Current Period Actual Expenditures are \$255,456.13; the YTD Actual Expenditures are \$1,464,980.36; The balance of \$356,900.64 remains.

The November & December credit card report was presented. **Karissa Kaiser moved to accept the Financial Reports, supported by Armony Hutchinson. Motion carried unanimously.**

C. COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT: Jerry Crittenden reported on enrollment and shared the current enrollment report. He explained how the report works to new members. Head Start was at 98% in January for Federal. EHS was 93% due to the infant toddler center not being open. A discussion was held. **Armony Hutchinson moved to accept the Community Relations Report, supported by Brandi Reamer. Motion carried unanimously.**

D. AEOA BOARD MEETING REPORT DECEMBER 16, 2025: Gabe reported that the board approved the Federal Head Start Grant application. Organization standards and the financial audit report were presented. The audit was clean. **Armony Hutchinson moved to approve the AEOA Board Meeting Report, supported by Karissa Kaiser. Motion carried unanimously.**

VIII.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. SCHOOL READINESS-: Chris DeGroote presented the report to members. She went over the scores for the COR consent area. Scores correlate with the age of the child. She shared highlights by age.

B. PARENT FAMILY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Tabled until the April meeting.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. NEW HIRES:

New Staff	First	Second	Motion Passed
Virginia 1 Classroom Assistant Lacey Butala	Karissa Kaiser	Brandi Reamer	Approved
Hibbing 1 Classroom Assistant Hailey Brant	Karissa Kaiser	Brandi Reamer	Approved
Hibbing Classroom Assistant Sub Kelbie Born	Karissa Kaiser	Brandi Reamer	Approved
Hibbing Classroom Assistant Sub Kathryn Wells	Karissa Kaiser	Brandi Reamer	Approved

B. MEDICA MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING APPLICATION: Gabe reported that this grant application closes in April. Our Disability and Mental Health Managers are putting a plan together to utilize this grant. It could award up to \$100,000 for 2 years. A discussion was held. **Karissa Kaiser moved to approve the Medica Mental Health Funding Application, supported by Armony Hutchinson. Motion carried unanimously.**

C. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: None.

X. POLICY COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE (NEXT MTG April 8, 2026, at Station 44).

- XI. **PARENT & COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:** EHS Home Base Educators did a socialization with our Nutrition Specialist. The presentation went very well.
- XII. **MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION:** Members chose an Easter-Spring theme for our April Policy Council meeting. A discussion was held on the Parent Activity theme for this year. Members agreed on gardening for the theme. This can be tied in to our I am moving I am learning training that we are having on March 6, 2026, with our Supplemental Nutrition grant we received.
- XIII. **ADJOURNMENT: Armony Hutchinson moved to adjourn the meeting, supported by Brandi Reamer. Motion carried unanimously.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sandnas, Finance Supervisor

Gabe Johnson, Director Arrowhead Head Start