Governance Guidelines

These Governance Guidelines are intended to strengthen the effectiveness of Winning Beginning NY (WBNY) as an advocacy coalition by expanding opportunities for member engagement and leadership. WBNY will continue to assess its effectiveness and modify these Guidelines as needed.

Section 1. Mission

WBNY is a statewide coalition which informs policymakers and the public about the benefits of early learning and development from the prenatal period to age eight. The coalition builds a broad-based constituency to advocate for investments in quality early learning and development as a top public priority in New York State.

Section 2. Objectives

WBNY ensures that New York State’s early learning and development system is one that guarantees:

- All young children have access to the early care and learning services that they and their families need.
- Every community offers families the array of family supports and services, responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity, that are needed to raise healthy children.
- All early learning and development programs – in schools, early childhood centers, family child care homes, and including home visiting, Early Intervention, and afterschool – meet consistent, rigorous quality standards, promote inclusion, and are accountable for their performance.
- Every early learning and development professional is well-prepared and has access to ongoing professional development.
- Equally-credentialed early learning and development professionals are equally-compensated, regardless of setting.
- A state-level Early Childhood Advisory Council addresses issues pertaining to our youngest children.
- Adequate financial resources support early care and learning settings.
Section 3. Structure

Steering Committee:

The **Steering Committee** sets the strategic direction for the Coalition. Its responsibilities include:

- Develop a multi-year resource development plan to sustain the Coalition;
- Develop and oversee the annual Coalition budget, linking it with the strategic plan and the resource development plan;
- Implement resource development strategies (grant writing, etc.);
- Provide guidance on ongoing Coalition activities;
- Guide and review the work of the Issue Groups for the consideration of the full Coalition;
- Develop the Executive and Legislative Agendas, guided by the work of the Issue Groups;
- Stand ready to participate in meetings with policymakers;
- Recruit Coalition members; and
- Represent the Coalition with national, state and local organizations.

The **Steering Committee Co-chairs’** responsibilities include:

- Provide oversight of coalition contracts in consultation with the fiscal agent;
- Provide guidance on ongoing coalition operations and activities; and
- Take action on time sensitive issues, between regular meetings.

Steering Committee Membership

The goal of the Steering Committee is to be representative of expertise and commitment among **WBNY** members from across all regions of New York State in all areas of the Coalition’s policy goals. Steering Committee members are expected to meet on a routine basis, but more frequently in preparation for the legislative session. **They are expected to represent the interests of their organizations, contribute substantive knowledge, and to provide access to constituency groups, policymakers, and/or resources to help implement the Coalition’s strategies.** They must commit to active participation regarding implementation of communication and resource development strategies (grant writing, donor cultivation, etc.).

The Steering Committee will ask interested Coalition members to express their desire and commitment to be on the Steering Committee, with specific outreach to the Issue Groups. While the goal is to ensure diversity, specific slots will not be set aside for particular groups with the exception of the organization serving as the fiscal sponsor for the Coalition. Potential participants will be contacted to confirm their understanding of Steering Committee responsibilities and their agreement to serve.

The Steering Committee will present a slate of candidates to be ratified by the Coalition.

A maximum of 13 representatives of WBNY organizational members will serve as Steering Committee members. There will be no term limits.

Annually, Steering Committee members will be asked to renew their commitment to the Steering Committee. At that time, any new members who express an interest in participating are welcome to apply. With each membership change, the remaining Steering Committee members will review the attributes of remaining members to assure strategic representation on the Committee. A decision would then be made as to replace any member who has resigned or to proceed as is. If necessary, the Steering Committee can fill vacancies mid-year.

Steering Committee co-chairs will be determined by a majority vote of the Steering Committee every two years.

Decision-Making Procedures

The preferred method for decision-making is consensus. Approval or voting will require at least three yes votes, with at least one of the votes from a Steering Committee co-chair, and no opposition from other
members within a specified time frame. Co-chairs and at least two additional Steering Committee members will review and sign off on all products produced on behalf of the coalition. Such procedures are needed due to the frequency with which the Steering Committee must take action between meetings to respond to changing situations.

Winning Beginning NY Coalition:

Membership
Members: Coalition members are individuals or organizations who make a financial contribution to the activities of the coalition. Members are entitled to vote on matters that come before the coalition, a listing on the coalition’s web page, full participation as a committee member, and attendance at coalition meetings. Only organization members can serve on the Steering Committee. Annual contributions for WBNY activities will be determined by the Steering Committee.

Supporters: Supporters are stakeholders who fully support the mission and vision of Winning Beginning but are unable to participate actively in the coalition and have not made a financial contribution to its activities. Supporters will be acknowledged on the coalition’s web page and will receive WBNY e-advocacy messages.

Decision-Making Procedures
WBNY’s preferred method of decision-making is consensus. Decisions on major policy issues should be brought to the Steering Committee for discussion, with prior review and recommendations formed by Committees as appropriate. On the rare occasion when consensus cannot be reached and a decision is required, the Steering Committee Co-Chairs may propose a vote. Coalition members vote thumbs up (in favor), thumbs down (opposed), or thumbs sideways (undecided, ambivalent). A simple majority (50% plus one) vote by those present, either in person or through conferencing, is required for approval. In the case of time-sensitive decisions, votes may be conducted by email. Coalition members are not required to support every decision, but are asked to refrain from publicly opposing decisions that have consensus.

Meeting Locations and Notice
Regular Coalition meetings will be held Upstate and Downstate, with consideration given to video- and teleconferencing so that members from around the State can participate. The Steering Committee will determine the frequency and location for both Steering Committee meetings and Coalition meetings.

Committees:

Committees convene to discuss policy and budget priorities. Members self-select. Each group has two co-chairs who schedule calls and in-person meetings as necessary, often communicating with Group members via e-mail. Co-Chairs are elected by the committee membership every two years. On an annual basis, each issue area committee provides the Steering Committee with recommendations for the Executive and Legislative Agendas. Committees also discuss priorities not included on either Agenda, such as those that may be addressed through statute or legislation.

The committees are currently as follows:

- Quality
- Early Childhood and Public Education
- Child care subsidies
- Home visiting
- Early Intervention
- Workforce
- Afterschool
- Mobilization
Additional Committees can be formed at the discretion of the Steering Committee. Committees may include Fundraising, Membership, and Communications as well as others identified by the Steering Committee.

Section 4. Financial Management

Fiscal Sponsor
The Fiscal Sponsor will be housed in one member organization. Its responsibilities are to:
- Provide a financial report to the Steering Committee every six months and more frequently if requested.
- Review and sign off on all budgets for WBNY grant proposals prior to submission.
- Prepare any financial reports related to WBNY grant proposals.
- Pay expenses on behalf of WBNY upon authorization of the WBNY co-chairs.
- Receive all WBNY contributions and grant funding.

Meeting Notes:
Steering Committee members will alternate responsibility for taking and distributing meeting notes.

Section 5. Procedure for Amending Governance Guidelines

These operating guidelines may be amended by a majority vote of coalition members.

Section 6. Effective Date

These Governance Guidelines were ratified by the Coalition on April 30, 2012 and revised on _____.