



**To: Linked Learning Alliance Members**

**From: Governance Planning Committee for the Linked Learning Alliance**

**Re: Recommendations to the Alliance – Organization and Governance Structure of the Linked Learning Alliance**

**Date: April 19, 2010**

On April 14, 2010, the Governance Planning Committee met to develop recommendations for the membership on the future organization and governance structure of the Linked Learning Alliance. The make-up of the Committee can be found in Attachment 1. Overall, the Committee wanted to keep the Alliance as inclusive and flexible as possible. Towards this end, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

### **1. Organizational Model**

The goal of the organizational model is to create an entity where staff is led by an Executive Director who is both a facilitator, supporting the members of a Leadership team and the Alliance as they engage on Linked Learning issues, and when necessary and appropriate, a public voice of the Alliance. Staff will be added as appropriate.

The Committee discussed a continuum of models, ranging from a strong Executive Director who would be the face of the Alliance to one where the Executive Director is in the background supporting members of the Alliance as the public face. The Committee identified a number of important factors in making an organizational decision. Among them:

- Identifying a clear go-to person/organization with direct accountability
- Ensuring buy-in by Linked Learning leaders and stakeholders
- Respecting and supporting the strength and visibility of many organizations in the Alliance
- Facilitating a collaborative effort of diverse organizations
- Seizing the opportunity for level of branding and codifying principles in a more dedicated way
- Retaining flexibility in decision making and timing

The Committee also identified a number of potential concerns with any model:

- A potential lack of focus and the need to avoid multiple and/or conflicting messages which can fragment the Alliance, given the amount of partners and stakeholders
- The difficulty in sustaining a consistently high level of leadership that remains flexible and timely
- The challenge of supporting effective collaboration
- The immenseness and diversity of California
- Staff difficulties in having multiple bosses
- Potential transition issues from ConnectEd to new leadership
- The potential of creating something we already have (e.g., ConnectEd)

After much discussion, the Committee settled on a blended model, seeking to find an Executive Director who could act as the public face but would also understand the importance and need for collaboration and building networks, capacity building and support of individual members, and building on the work of the Foundation, ConnectEd and the current Coalition.

To help facilitate a search, the Committee also began a list of the desired characteristics of an Executive Director – see Attachment 2.

## **2. Governance Structure**

The Committee also spent a considerable amount of time discussing a proposed Governance structure for the organization and recommended creating a Leadership Council composed of Alliance members representing a spectrum of stakeholders, and having specified terms. The responsibilities of the Leadership Council would include the following:

### *Primary Responsibilities:*

- Develop and codify bylaws/operating procedures for the Alliance
- Adopt and continuously update a mission statement, values, and goals
- Develop, direct, and oversee, by adopting metrics of measurement and accountability, implementation of a strategic plan
- Define the responsibilities and commitments of membership in the Alliance
- Hire an Executive Director and exercise appropriate oversight
- Maintain and support the Alliance subcommittee work
- Convene the Alliance

### *Composition:*

The Leadership Council should reflect the community of stakeholders in the Alliance and include but not be limited to representatives of:

- K-12 and Post Secondary (institutions and educators, providers and potential weighted representation)
- Business and industry
- Labor
- Community advocates
- Education policy advocacy community
- Parent representatives
- Student organizations
- Key associations
- Public agencies
- Geographic representation (including rural communities)
- Philanthropy
- WIBs
- Community-based organizations  
(Individuals can wear multiple hats)

### *Process for choosing the Leadership Council*

The Committee recommended that the initial members of the Leadership Council be those individuals that have been participating in this work with the Irvine Foundation for the past three years (See attachment 3), adding if necessary additional individuals to represent key constituencies not yet part of the current group. Going forward, the Leadership Council would be charged with developing and implementing a process for Leadership Council member selection that is consistent with the recommendations on composition, including only individuals with a history of participation in the work.

### *Executive/Steering Committee*

The Committee also discussed whether there is a need for an Executive/Steering Committee. While the Committee did see a need, it also wanted to let the Leadership Council make the ultimate decision. If an Executive Committee is created, the Committee recommends it be a sub-group of the Leadership Council and include the sub-committee chairs, be responsible for vetting first level strategy development and include individuals who are collaborators and hold a passion for young people. As with the Leadership Council, Executive Committee members should also have specific terms.

### **3. Linked Learning Alliance Home**

With input from the Leadership Council, the Irvine Foundation will make the final decision about where to house the Alliance. The choices range from, but are not limited to, an existing organization that expands its work to include the Alliance to a standalone organization created for this purpose to a fiscal sponsor that provides 'back room' support for the Alliance. In any case, the Alliance should be the focus of the work. The Committee did some brainstorming on the desirable organizational characteristics that should be considered in identifying an organization as a permanent home.

- History of success
- An organization that can advance the work without potential conflict
- Existing infrastructure: programmatically and politically, access to Sacramento, communications capacity, and a statewide network
- Ability to leverage existing work
- Ability for resource development
- Flexibility around advocacy
- Ability to focus on building the Alliance

## **Attachment 1 Members of the Governance Planning Committee**

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**Attachment 2**  
**Linked Learning Alliance**  
**Executive Director Characteristics**

- Facilitator, someone who can work complementary with organizations like ConnectEd
- Building networks
- Track record of working through and supporting other leaders
- Strong team builder
- Conceptual knowledge of collaboration
- Ability to understand the needs of constituents
- Strong communication skills – internal and external
- High tolerance for ambiguity
- Strong political skills
- Governmental affairs and policy experience
- Strong fiscal manager
- Bearer of multiple perspectives
- Strong planning, strategy skills
- Adaptability
- Demonstrated passion for student success
- Experience with conflict resolution



**Attachment 3  
Linked Learning Alliance  
Initial Proposed Membership of the Leadership Council**

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