

Public Comment Procedure

Document Control Information

Reference Policy Number (If Applicable): N/A

Procedure Number: GV26-001 **Version:** 1.0

Effective Date: 5/14/2026

Review Date:

Created By: Executive Leadership Team

Approved By: Executive Committee

1. Origin

Pursuant to Florida Statutes Section 286.0114, members of the public shall be provided with a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before a board or commission. This opportunity need not occur at the same meeting at which official action is taken, provided it occurs during the decision-making process and within a reasonable time prior to such action.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure compliance with Florida Statutes Section 286.0114 by establishing a fair, consistent, and transparent process for public comment during meetings of the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County Board (ELCMC Board).

This procedure is intended to:

- Provide members of the public a reasonable opportunity to be heard
 - Promote transparency and public trust in Board decision-making
 - Ensure meetings are conducted in an orderly, efficient, and respectful manner
 - Establish consistent expectations for public participation
-

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all regularly scheduled and special open meetings of the ELCMC Board.

Meeting schedules are available at <https://www.elc-marion.org/board-of-directors/>

Nothing in this procedure shall be interpreted to restrict the statutory right of the public to be heard on a proposition before the ELCMC Board takes official action.

4. Definitions

Board

The governing board of the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County (ELCMC).

Board Chair

The presiding officer responsible for maintaining order, recognizing speakers, and enforcing this procedure during meetings.

Public Comment

An opportunity for members of the public to provide input on propositions or matters within the jurisdiction of the ELCMC Board prior to official action.

Proposition

A matter on which the ELCMC Board is expected to take official action.

Reasonable Opportunity to Be Heard

A meaningful opportunity for public input provided at a time and in a manner consistent with Florida Statutes Section 286.0114.

Disruptive Behavior

Any conduct that materially interferes with the orderly progression of the meeting, including but not limited to interruptions, refusal to yield the floor, or failure to comply with time limits or direction from the Board Chair.

5. Background

This procedure is grounded in the requirements of Florida Statutes Section 286.011 (Florida's Sunshine Law) and Section 286.0114 (public participation). It supports the ELCMC Board's commitment to transparency, public participation, and orderly governance by ensuring the ELCMC Board can receive community input while maintaining efficient and effective meeting operations.

6. References

- Florida Statutes Section 286.0114 – Public Participation at Meetings
- Florida Statutes Section 286.011 – Open Government Requirements

7. Responsibilities

Board Chair

- Presides over public comment periods
- Ensures compliance with this procedure and applicable law
- Maintains order and enforces time limits and conduct standards
- Determines when a speaker is out of order

Chief Executive Officer

- Ensures implementation and organizational compliance with this procedure
- Provides oversight to ensure alignment with legal requirements

Board Liaison

- Receives and logs requests to speak
- Notifies ELCMC Board members of advance requests
- Coordinates meeting logistics and speaker order

Timekeeper

- Monitors speaking time
- Provides time warnings and signals when time has expired

Public Participants

- Comply with submission procedures, time limits, and conduct standards
- Direct comments to the Board Chair and remain within the scope of ELCMC Board business

8. Procedure

1. Submission of Request to Speak

Individuals are encouraged to submit a request to speak in advance using one of the following methods:

Request Methods

In Person / by Mail:

Early Learning Coalition of Marion County, Inc
2300 SW 17th Road
Ocala, FL 34471

Email: HR@elc-marion.org

Website: <https://www.elc-marion.org/board-of-directors/>



Advance requests should be received no later than 8:00 a.m. on the scheduled meeting day to allow for orderly planning.

Failure to submit an advance request shall not preclude an individual from being provided with a reasonable opportunity to be heard.

2. Speaking Time Allocation

- Individuals who submit a timely advance request shall be allotted up to three (3) minutes to speak.
- Speakers may not allocate any unused time to another speaker.

Speaking times may be adjusted by the Board Chair based on:

- The number of speakers (Max 10 speakers)
- Available time
- The orderly conduct of the meeting

3. Notification to Board Members

Upon receipt of an advance request, the Board Liaison shall notify the ELCMC Board members. Board members are not required to respond to public comments during the meeting.

4. Timekeeping Procedure

A designated staff member will serve as Timekeeper during the public comment period and monitor speaking time.

- A warning will be given when 30 seconds remain.
- Speakers are expected to conclude promptly when time expires.

Failure to adhere to time limits may be considered disruptive behavior resulting in:

- The Board Chair declaring them “out of order.”
- Being removed from the meeting.

5. Content and Conduct

Public comments must relate to matters within the official business or jurisdiction of the ELCMC. Speakers must refrain from naming specific employees or contracted providers during their remarks. Personnel matters are confidential and are best addressed through the formal Grievance process. Off-topic, redundant, or operational complaints outside of the ELCMC Board’s policymaking roles may be ruled out of order by the Board Chair.

All remarks shall be directed to the Board Chair; comments shall not be directed to individual board members, staff, or members of the audience. ELCMC Board members



will not engage in discussion unless recognized by the Board Chair for clarification or follow-up.

All participants must maintain civility and decorum. The following are prohibited:

- Disruptive behavior
- Threats or incitement of violence
- Conduct that materially interferes with the meeting.

Violations of these standards may result in removal from the meeting in accordance with applicable law.

Upon adjournment of the meeting, members of the public are expected to exit the meeting space in an orderly manner. Individuals shall not attempt to continue the meeting by engaging ELCMC Board members or staff in official discussion related to ELCMC Board business.

Nothing in this provision restricts an individual's ability to contact the Coalition or Board members through appropriate channels outside of the meeting.

9. Exceptions

Exceptions to this procedure may be made under limited circumstances, provided such exceptions remain consistent with Florida Statutes Section 286.0114 and other applicable laws.

Allowable exceptions include:

- Adjustments to speaking time due to a high volume of speakers
- Modifications to procedures during emergency meetings or declared emergencies
- Alternative formats for participation (e.g., virtual or hybrid meetings)
- Reasonable accommodations provided in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

All exceptions must:

- Be approved by the Board Chair or Chief Executive Officer, as appropriate
- Be applied consistently and without discrimination
- Be documented when they materially impact standard procedure

No exception shall be granted that restricts the public's statutory right to be heard prior to Board action.

10. Related Policies / Forms

- GV26-001-F V1.0 Public Comment Sign-In Sheet

Procedure Review Schedule

This procedure shall be reviewed at least every three (3) years or earlier if required by changes in law, regulation, or operational need.

Revision History

Version	Effective Date	Description of Changes	Requested By	Approved By	Approval Date
1.0	5/14/2026	Initial adoption	CEO	Board Chair	5/14/2026