



Background

This document was created to provide guidance to Great Start Collaboratives, Parent Coalitions and Regional Resource Centers about public education and voter education activities and to provide responses to frequently asked questions.

Public and/or Voter Education

ECIC does not engage in lobbying or partisan political activity, and it does not allow its funding to Great Start Collaboratives, Parent Coalitions or Regional Resource Centers to be used in this manner. Federal, state and private funders are clear about allowances for voter and public education and advocacy. ECIC maintains the highest adherence to these standards and practices. The Sandbox Party and Convention are non-partisan, public education activities. The intent of the Convention and all its activities were public/voter education focused including having the gubernatorial candidates share their plans if elected. If the Party were to endorse a particular candidate or if the Convention had promoted a single candidate, that would have been partisan activity.

Setting the Context

When conducting public and/or voter education campaign it is important to provide a context for the education activities.

Example of how you might introduce yourself:

I am representing our local Great Start Collaborative and Parent Coalition. I am funded locally **through Michigan's Early Childhood Investment Corporation to create** an efficient and effective system of early childhood programs and services that lead to school readiness. Because children have multiple needs, communities must work to provide services that are seamless for children and families, not convenient for bureaucracies. What exists today is a patchwork of more than 84 publically-funded services and programs that are available to a limited number of families based on varying and sometimes confusing eligibility requirements. The result: too many children fall through the cracks. **Michigan's leaders need to** embrace reforms that help move the state from an array of disconnected programs to an accountable early childhood system.

The Touch Point campaign and meetings with individual candidates is one public education activity of our volunteer Parent Coalition to engage in non-partisan, non-political voter education. We want to give candidates an opportunity to share their views on early childhood issues with voters who are interested.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is ECIC a non-profit or governmental organization?

ECIC is a Public Body Corporate or a public, nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation. It was created expressly to do the things government cannot easily do – focus on a particular area of public good and work across departments and issues to create an accountable, connected system. Government does not have the same flexibility and nimbleness of a public, nonprofit, nor does it have the luxury of providing laser focus on one issue. Yet through a public, nonprofit, government can achieve a more streamlined and evidence-based approach to an issue. Moreover, a public, nonprofit is much more welcoming to the private sector and foundation communities which often get discouraged working through government bureaucracy. ECIC, like the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, was established under an Inter-local Agreement under the auspices of the Urban Corporation Act, 1967 PA 7; MCL 124.501 et seq and has a written purpose for its existence.

2. How is ECIC funded?

ECIC is funded with a combination of private and public dollars.

3. Who paid for the Sandbox Party Convention? Was public money used?

The Sandbox Party Convention was solely supported and paid for by corporation and private foundation dollars. No public monies were spent on this effort even though the Convention ably meets the definition of public/voter education.

4. Is ECIC involved in the unionization of the child care workers?

No. The Michigan Home-Based Child Care Council was created to work with unionized child care workers. Child care workers from across the spectrum of Michigan providers and parents are regularly invited to provide input and guidance to ECIC since they are **the ultimate “customers” impacted by ECIC’s quality improvement efforts.**

5. Where will the information collected from the Candidates (currently being compiled by the GSC/GSPC) be made available?

There is a website specifically developed to post all candidate responses to the questions. Local communities will direct all interested voters to view the responses for their own local candidates.

6. Candidates may ask what will happen if they **don’t respond to the questionnaire.** **The website will simply post, “Has not responded”.**



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7. How do you distinguish between **“advocacy”** and **“lobbying”**?
Advocacy is identifying, embracing and promoting a cause – essentially, speaking up for what one believes in. Lobbying is requesting legislators to take action on specific legislation or urging others to contact their legislator requesting action on specific legislation.

 8. How is **“public education/civic engagement”** different than **“political activity”**?
Political activity is clearly defined by the IRS as campaigning for a particular candidate or engaging in partisan politics. Civic engagement is a person or a collective action designed to address a public concern or an unmet need. Public education is the most important civic engagement tool. Public education is sharing success stories, need for services, demand for services and personal experiences.

If at any time you are asked **questions that you don't** feel prepared to answer, please direct the questioner to personally contact Matt Gillard at 517-488-9129.