

Actions taken by IDEA Board of Directors to Strengthen Governance and Accountability

In January 2020, IDEA's Board of Directors held a special meeting to ascertain what led to poor decision-making regarding private air travel and other spending disconnected from IDEA Public Schools' core mission of serving students. The Board then charged IDEA's outside counsel, Schulman, Lopez, Hoffer & Adelstein, LLP, and governance expert, Nygren Consulting, with assessing IDEA's policies and practices. At the conclusion of that assessment, they recommended ways the Board could strengthen its governance and oversight.

Since early 2020, the Board has taken a number of actions, including implementation of these policies:

- Prohibited use of IDEA funds for private air travel, as well as for business or first-class seating on commercial flights. Business purpose requirements have been established for all travel and requests for approval receive heightened scrutiny.
- Clarified guidelines regarding what constitutes appropriate and reasonable IDEA development and networking activities and costs.
- Reframed and limited executive benefits; only those that explicitly advance IDEA Public Schools will be approved.
- Mandated monthly reports to both the Board's finance and audit committees to ensure all charges incurred by IDEA's senior leadership are aligned with our mission and accountability measures, as well as comply with policy and law.
- Required CFO approval on all transactions over \$10,000 and Board approval of any transaction that exceeds \$250,000.
- Mandated detailed review of all budget amendments by the finance committee prior to Board review; funds may not be transferred between departments or organizational units without going through the budget amendment process.
- Instituted formal procedures for both whistleblowers and employee grievances.
- Implemented a conflict-of-interest policy that is stricter than the law requires. Board members, senior leaders and their family members may not do business with IDEA, even though such dealings are permissible under Texas law, provided the conflict is fully and properly disclosed.
- Minimized unrestricted donations and established clear expectations with donors regarding how their resources will support schools and students.

Upon reviewing these policy changes, Nygren Consulting, which has advised similarly large nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, concluded that "the updated policies ensure tighter control over the expenditure of funds, both public and private, and they ensure that the mission of IDEA Public Schools takes the highest priority."

The IDEA national governing board will continue to oversee organization-wide adherence to these policies to ensure every resource is directed wholly toward IDEA's mission. Information about the Board's members can be found [here](#).