Meeting Minutes
Board of Directors Meeting
April 15, 2026

Board of Directors in Attendance (via Zoom): Cara Belvin, Dave Clayman, Danielle Weisberg, James Meyer, Jenna Mathis, Cynthia Whipple, Justin Schall, Skip Allen, Jennifer Black, Jules Kelley
Others in Attendance: Sam Loutzenhiser
Not in Attendance: Shannon Ewer
Opening –

- The Board approved the January 21, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes. Motion by Mr. Meyer, seconded by Ms. Mathis; motion carried unanimously.

Mission Moment & Program Update – Ms. Loutzenhiser

- Ms. Loutzenhiser reviewed Q4 (FY26) program metrics: enrollment is a little over halfway to goal, consistent with the seasonal increase in enrollments this time of year.
- Mentor applicants are a little less than halfway to goal, while matches are a little over halfway to the year's goal of 50. The team is also continuing to monitor matches carried over from FY25 in addition to new FY26 matches.
- The waitlist remains fairly consistent; boys continue to make up a large share of it, and recruiting male mentors remains a top priority.
- The team is on pace to hit its events goal, having held eight events so far this year, including a recent fitness-themed event hosted by a mentor at his gyms in Hanover and Southie. Mother's Day and Father's Day events are next on the calendar.
- Ms. Loutzenhiser shared findings from two mentor focus groups held last month and facilitated by Catalyst Campaigns, aimed at understanding barriers to mentorship, especially among male mentors. Key takeaways: current mentors are the most effective recruitment tool, and time-commitment concerns are the top hesitation for prospective applicants. These insights will inform the organization's first formal Marketing Plan.
- Based on Board feedback, Ms. Loutzenhiser shared finalized proposed mission statement language: "Empower's mission is to support, connect, and empower children and young adults up through age 24 who have experienced the death of a parent, working to overcome the negative impacts of early parent loss."
- Ms. Loutzenhiser reminded the Board of upcoming events: Mother's Day (Sunday, May 10, Southline, Dorchester) and Father's Day (Sunday, June 14, Southline, Boston). Board members are welcome to attend or volunteer.
- Ms. Loutzenhiser shared a "legacy" spotlight on Jess, one of Empower's first enrollees, who lost her mother as a young teenager and has since joined the planning committee for this year's Mother's Day event, a full-circle moment reflecting the impact of Empower's programs.

Advancement Committee – Ms. Mathis

- Ms. Mathis provided an update on behalf of the Advancement Committee, which recently met to review Catalyst Campaigns' findings ahead of setting initiatives for the new year.
- The Committee's overall takeaway: Empower has a strong foundation and a compelling mission; the next phase of work will focus on activating relationships, sharpening messaging, and executing a more focused, Board-led fundraising effort.
- Catalyst's research found that relational trust is the biggest driver of donations, pointing to an opportunity to lead with existing relationships rather than cold outreach.
- The Committee also discussed the need for clearer storytelling that articulates the impact and long-term risks children face without Empower's support, and the importance of showing donors tangible results.
- The Advancement Committee is shifting toward a more structured, Board-led fundraising approach and will ask Board members to help steward a defined set of donor relationships rather than pursue broad, unstructured outreach. More detail will be shared as plans develop.
- Ms. Belvin added that Empower is transitioning to a new donor CRM, Little Green Light (LGL).
- An initial list of approximately 23 priority donors has been identified for in-person visits and calls; Board members are welcome to accompany Ms. Belvin on outreach.
- Ms. Belvin clarified, with input from Catalyst, how the organization is defining "new program" interest from donors — for example, virtual mentorship (an existing program that helps overcome geographic barriers) and a potential expanded investment in caregiver support.
- Ms. Belvin shared that Senator O'Connor has included Empower in the Governor's budget for a $100,000 state appropriation; pending the Governor's signature (expected around August), funds would come through the Department of Children and Families in the fall. Senator O'Connor also spoke publicly in support of Empower at a recent Senate session.
- With guidance from Justin Schall, and with support from Ms. Loutzenhiser and Ms. Kelley, Empower submitted two federal congressional funding requests ahead of the April deadline: $750,000 for a school-based outreach program (Department of Education) and $400,000 for caregiver support (Department of Children and Families). The Board will be updated on the outcome this fall.

Finance Committee Update

- The Finance Committee report was foregone this meeting, as Ms. Ewer was unable to attend. Board members with questions were encouraged to follow up with her directly.

Governance Committee Update – Ms. Whipple

- Ms. Whipple shared that she, Ms. Belvin, Ms. Loutzenhiser, and Mr. Meyer met for a Governance Committee meeting.
- The Committee discussed board member term limits and will reach out to members approaching a term limit to gauge interest in continuing to serve.
- Board members were reminded that nominations for new directors or subcommittee members can be submitted through the nomination form on the website.
- Legal update: Ms. Belvin and Ms. Loutzenhiser met with Ropes & Gray regarding the Jeff Kimball / Empower Change matter. The firm's assessment is that there is no trademark infringement, but there may be a potential labor issue tied to a breach of Mr.

Kimball's severance agreement. Counsel recommended sending a cease-and-desist letter before Mr. Kimball's term ends on June 6, 2026. A follow-up meeting is being scheduled with the firm's attorney, Yana Gus, to determine next steps.

- Ms. Loutzenhiser's quarterly Board check-ins will continue.
- The Committee discussed Empower UK, which currently places more value on activities and events than on the mentorship model; Empower UK will continue to focus on events, with a possible Mother's Day retreat planned for next year.
- Discussion followed regarding potential donor and market confusion between "Empower," "Empower Change," and other similarly named organizations. Ms. Weisberg raised the broader issue of brand equity given how common the word "Empower" is across other organizations, separate from the Jeff Kimball matter. Ms. Loutzenhiser noted that Empower's legal name, Empower Grieving Children, helps provide distinction, and the Board agreed a tagline or additional design element could be considered as part of the Marketing Plan.
- Mr. Meyer noted that the Governance Committee had also discussed the importance of stepping up marketing efforts to clearly distinguish Empower from Empower Change in the marketplace.

Other Business

- Ms. Belvin shared a new in-kind relationship with Samara Data supporting Empower's onboarding to Claude, an AI tool the team plans to use for grant writing, marketing, press releases, and administrative work. Data security and retention questions are being worked through before a wider rollout.
- Reminder: LUMINARIA will take place on Friday, May 8 at the Scituate Lighthouse; the Board was asked to help identify potential sponsors ($1,000+) toward a $50,000 sponsorship goal.

Closing – Mr. Clayman

- Mr. Clayman asked whether an executive session was needed; none was requested.
- Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Weisberg, seconded by Mr. Meyer; motion carried. Mr. Clayman adjourned the meeting.