



# ECRN Fund Annual Meeting

The catalytic advantage of networks to drive impact for young children

October 4-6 2023 | Stellenbosch, South Africa

The [Early Childhood Regional Networks Fund \(ECRN Fund\)](#) is a philanthropic pooled funding initiative launched in June 2022 that empowers ECD networks to be strong, resilient and representative organisations, able to connect the reality on the ground to the national, regional and global agendas that determine how early childhood is prioritised, integrated and funded.

Currently, the ECRN Fund supports networks operating at the regional level, who nurture cross-sectoral working groups and incubate national ECD networks, facilitate the learning and exchange between practitioners and stakeholders working at the frontlines, and foster a movement of advocates that together help to align early childhood outcomes so that ECD continues to play a prominent role in the wider development agenda.

## Annual Meeting Objectives & Overview

This meeting brings together key ECD actors, including funders and networks, to share updates and explore challenges and opportunities in the context of a shifting ECD landscape. By the end of the annual meeting, we aim to have:

- Deepened our understanding of the unique role that regional and global ECD networks play to catalyse and facilitate sector learning, development and action by exploring network mechanisms and the role and importance of networks in advancing ECD outcomes.
- Outlined tangible ideas for how networks and the ECRN Fund can move the agenda forward on two themes: male engagement in early childhood, and young children in crisis.

## Annual Meeting Agenda: At a Glance

Wed. October 4	Day 1: Thursday October 5	Day 2: Friday October 6	
18:00-21:00	9:00-12:30	9:00-12:00	
<b>Welcome Reception &amp; Braai</b> at <a href="#">Stias</a>	<b>Welcome, introductions, and getting into the 'Network Mindset'</b>	<b>Thematic Workshop 2: Young Children in Crisis</b>	
	12:30-13:45	12:00-13:15	
	Lunch	Lunch	
	13:45-16:00	13:15-14:00	
	<b>Thematic Workshop 1: Fatherhood and Male Engagement in Early Childhood</b>	<b>Network Health Framework</b> <u>Part 1</u> : presentation of framework	
		14:00-14:10	14:00-14:10
		Break	Break
		14:10-15:00	14:10-15:00
		<b>Network Health Framework*</b> <u>Part 2</u> : revising the framework (RNs only)	
	16:00-17:30	15:30-17:30	
<b>ECRN Fund MEL Framework: Workshop*</b>	<b>ECRN Fund Steering Committee Meeting*</b> <b>Regional Network Learning Platform Meeting*</b>		
19:00-21:00	19:00-21:00		
<b>Dinner: <a href="#">De Volkskombuis</a></b>	<b>Dinner (by invitation only): <a href="#">Post and Pepper</a></b>		

\*These sessions are closed to ECRNF Steering Committee members and representatives of the Regional Networks.

## Attendance

Attendance to the Annual Meeting is by invitation only and will include ECD stakeholders, donors, network organisations, researchers and others committed to understanding the intersection of ECD and other critical development goals.

The meeting has been organized for **in-person attendance as workshops will be interactive**. For those unable to attend in-person, online attendance to certain sessions may be possible.

There is no charge for attendance to the Annual Meeting. Dinners on October 4th, 5th and 6th, as well as coffee breaks and lunches during the meetings are included. Please note that transportation and accommodation are not covered by the ECRN Fund, unless your organisation has received a travel bursary.

### Closed sessions on Thursday and Friday:

Sessions shaded in grey and marked with an asterix are closed to Steering Committee members and Regional Network representatives as they relate to ongoing grants and the ECRN Fund's strategy.

## Event Location: Stellenbosch, South Africa

We're hosting this Annual Meeting in Stellenbosch as an annex to a convening by [Harnessing Global Data to Advance Young Children's Learning and Development](#), an initiative that brings together leading ECD researchers, advocates, and the global and regional ECD networks to build research capacity and increase the use of data for decision-making to advance early childhood.

Wednesday's reception and Thursday and Friday's meetings will be held at [Stias](#), a beautiful conference venue in the heart of [Stellenbosch](#), about a 35-minute drive from Cape Town International Airport.

Please review the logistics note for information regarding transport, hotel accommodation and getting around Stellenbosch (*stay tuned – this will be released shortly!*).

## Detailed Programme

### Wednesday October 4 – Day 0:

#### 18:00 - 21:00: Welcome Reception & Braai | [Stias Centre](#)

Join us for traditional South African barbeque at the venue where the rest of the annual meeting will take place. From 17:30, you can join for drinks, which will be followed by dinner.

During the same week, network representatives have been participating in a series of meetings hosted by [Harnessing Global Data to Advance Young Children’s Learning and Development](#), an initiative that brings together leading ECD researchers, advocates, and the global and regional ECD networks to build research capacity and increase the use of data for decision-making to advance early childhood. This dinner will bring together colleagues attending these meetings and our annual meeting.

### Thursday October 5 – Day 1:

**Location: boardroom at [Stias Centre](#).**

9:00-9:40	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
9:40-10:10	<p><b>The power and potential of networks: The case in South Africa</b> <b>David Harrison</b>, DG Murray Trust</p> <p><i><a href="#">DG Murray Trust</a> is a key ECD grant-maker who thinks beyond funding: they see themselves as a strategic investor and public innovator, applying a systemic lens to their investment in early childhood in South Africa. David Harrison will help set the scene by connecting DGMT’s <a href="#">ECD strategy of addressing the inequality trap</a> to the role that networks play to catalyse impact and advance early childhood outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>Q&amp;A will follow.</i></p>
10:10-10:20	<p><b>Introduction to the Early Childhood Regional Networks Fund</b> <b>Jessica Hjarrand</b>, Porticus &amp; Fund Chair</p>
10:20-10:35	<p><b>Where is the ECD sector going globally?</b> <b>Elizabeth Lule</b>, ECDAN</p> <p><i><a href="#">The Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN)</a>, together with <a href="#">Grand Challenges Canada</a>, have commissioned a landscape analysis on the ECD ecosystem. From the vantage point of the global ECD network, Elizabeth has been asked to share some insights into where ECDAN sees the sector going and reflect on what networks should be prioritising in the next 1-2 years.</i></p>

10:35-10:45	<p><b>Annual Meeting: Objectives &amp; Overview</b> Giulia Barnhisel, ECRN Fund</p>
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break
11:00-12:30	<p><b>The Network Advantage: How regional ECD networks leverage their capacity to catalyse impact</b> Amanda Welsh, Network Impact, joined by AfECN, ARNEC, ISSA and ANECD.</p> <p><i>“Networks are uniquely powerful vehicles for achieving ambitious goals. Grantmakers for Effective Organizations observed that networks “hold the potential for generating impact at scale exponentially greater than the sum of their individual parts.” Through their connections, networks can assemble and activate diverse people, gather and communicate vital information, develop and scale innovative solutions, influence policy and practice across sectors and confer legitimacy by engaging actors at all levels. A network’s unique ability to organise for increased impact is called the <b>network advantage</b>.” – from the report by Network Impact, which we encourage you to read ahead of the meeting: <a href="#">The Network Advantage - How Regional Networks Catalyze Impact in Early Childhood Development</a>.</i></p> <p><i>During this session, we will dive into the network mechanisms that allow ECD networks to catalyse impact for young children, looking at recent examples from the four regional networks that have been supported by the ECRN Fund.</i></p>
12:30-13:45	Lunch
13:45-16:00	<p><b>Thematic Workshop 1: Fatherhood and Male Engagement in ECD</b></p> <p><i>The ECRN Fund has just launched two new thematic funding streams: Male Engagement in Early Childhood, and Young Children in Crisis. Connecting the network mechanisms discussed in the morning’s session, we will spend the afternoon diving into the opportunities and challenges for networks to advance on the theme of positive male engagement in ECD.</i></p> <p><i>This session will follow the following format:</i></p> <p><b>Why does this issue matter?</b> – Simone Gregor, <a href="#">Heartlines-Fathers Matter</a>, South Africa <i>Simone will contextualize the issue and set the stage for the afternoon’s conversations, sharing insights on the barriers and opportunities to engaging men in early childhood.</i></p> <p><b>Why did we invest in this issue?</b> – Helena Duch, Oak Foundation <i>Oak Foundation has earmarked funding for this theme through the thematic project portfolio of the ECRN Fund. Helena will build off of what’s been shared and elaborate on how she sees networks best positioned to address this issue.</i></p> <p><b>What can networks do to catalyse action?</b> <i>Building off the morning sessions on network mechanisms for network impact, and the input by Heartlines and Oak Foundation, we will brainstorm together on what networks can do to catalyse, strengthen and promote male engagement in ECD services, policies and practice.</i></p>



	<p><b>What's next?</b> We will end our session by sharing insights, take-aways, and hopefully land on some tangible ideas for what networks can take forward, and the role of other participants in making that possible.</p>
16:00-17:30	<p>Closed session: <b>Workshop: ECRN Fund MEL Framework</b></p>
19:00-21:00	<p><b>Dinner: De Volkskombuis</b> Everyone attending the ECRNF Annual Meeting is invited to dinner. The restaurant is a 15-min walk from our hotels. For those wishing to leave with the group, we will meet at 18:40 in the Oude Werf Hotel lobby to walk to the restaurant.</p>

**Friday October 6 – Day 2:**

**Location: boardroom at [Stias Centre](#).**

9:00-11:30	<p><b>Thematic Workshop 2: Young Children in Crisis</b></p> <p><i>The ECRN Fund has just launched two new thematic funding streams: Male Engagement in Early Childhood, and Young Children in Crisis. Connecting the network mechanisms discussed in yesterday's session, we will spend the morning diving into the opportunities and challenges for networks to ensure ECD is central to humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery.</i></p> <p><i>This session will follow the following format:</i></p> <p><b>Why does this issue matter?</b> –Neil Townsend, Moving Minds Alliance <i>Neil will contextualize the issue and set the stage for the afternoon's conversations, sharing insights on the barriers and opportunities to ensuring ECD is prioritised in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery.</i></p> <p><b>Why did we invest in this issue?</b> –Jessica Hjarrand, Porticus <i>Porticus has earmarked funding for this theme through the thematic projects portfolio of the ECRN Fund. Jessica will build off of what's been shared and elaborate on how she sees networks best positioned to drive systems-level change on this issue.</i></p> <p><b>What can networks do to catalyse action?</b> <i>Building off the yesterday's sessions on network mechanisms for network impact, and the input by Moving Minds Alliance and Porticus, we will break off into smaller groups and brainstorm together on what networks can do to catalyse, strengthen and promote ECD in humanitarian response and action.</i></p>
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11:30	<p><b>Closing &amp; Next Steps</b> <i>The open programme of the Annual Meeting will conclude with reflections on what the Fund will do as a result of these conversations and how to keep the momentum going after this meeting.</i></p>
12:00-13:15	Lunch
13:15-14:00	<p><b>Network Health Framework: Part 1: Presentation</b> <i>This two-part session will introduce a draft framework for assessing network health and capacity that is grounded in the experience of the four Regional Networks. Network Impact will facilitate a discussion among participants on what other network infrastructure and capacity needs exist to support a strong ECD ecosystem. All attendees are welcomed to join Part 1 of this session.</i></p> <p><i>In a workshop in the second half of the session, the Regional Networks will discuss and refine the draft framework, including tools developed for ongoing annual data collection.</i></p>
14:00-14:10	Short break
14:10-15:00	<p><i>Closed Session (RNs only):</i> <b>Part 2: Workshop - Network Health Framework</b></p>
15:00-15:30	Coffee Break
15:30-17:30	<p><i>Parallel closed sessions:</i> <b>ECRN Fund Steering Committee Meeting</b> <b>RN Learning Platform Meeting</b></p>
19:00-21:00	<b>Dinner: <a href="#">Post and Pepper</a></b> (optional, RSVP required)