

ASSET Joint Funders Minutes
City Hall, 515 Clark Ave., Ames
Council Chambers

June 26, 2025

In Attendance: Pa Goldbeck, Lisa Heddens, Sandra King, Jenny Schill, Linda Murken, Ashley Thompson, Sarah Mansell, Gloria Betcher, John Haila, Anita Rowllins, Tim Gartin

Virtual: Emma Cassabaum, Latifah Faisal, Bronwyn Beatty Brown, Katelyn Proctor, Karen Kiel Rosser, Liz Zuercher

Heddens called the meeting called to order, 5:01pm.

Joint Funders Priority Discussion

Share Cross Walked Funder Priorities

Thompson shared the cross-walked priorities between the four Funders. Goldbeck pointed out that if comparing the priorities against one another seems confusing, it's because it is. Therefore, part of the goal today is to simplify this for the volunteers. Thompson asked if there are similar priorities that are just worded a little differently across the Funders. Beatty-Brown suggested it might be helpful to switch the Cities priority #1 and #2 to line up better with the other Funders. Haila asked if we are working toward all Funders having the same top priority? Cassabaum stated that as a volunteer there were too many priorities, and that it would be helpful to have one top priority and then sub priorities under that priority for each Funder. Haila stated that for the joint priorities, it would be helpful to have definitions to go with the priorities so volunteers and Funders know what is meant by each priority. Murken added that with shrinking funds this will also help determine where the money should be spent with limited funds available. This way, if other organizations are funding these services we can take them off the priority list.

Cassabaum mentioned that instead of lining up the priorities with the work panels, just focus on what the priorities are. Betcher added that instead of re-evaluating priorities each year a little, ASSET could possibly have a model where there's an impact year where a particular priority is focused on to make a larger impact in that area for the community. Faisal mentioned that the report may have had deceiving results because ASSET is funding so many services. Thompson stated that United Way is moving toward focusing funding on long term services and not one-time events. King said that a lot of this has been happening in the ASSET process. For example, childcare last year, funds left over at the end of the work sessions were distributed back to childcare to make sure each agency was fully funded.

Haila asked, with some agencies having so many services, how do the volunteers determine how much each of those services receives? Thompson replied that candidly volunteers probably level fund every service and then if there are leftover funds they will go back and add an increase to the top priority. Murken asked how do we simplify this? Zuercher said that she

really liked the cross-walked document and sees a lot of the common top priorities, but may just need to redefine some of the priority names. She also stated that it might also be helpful to go back and evaluate how the agencies providing these services are performing. Faisal added that she doesn't want volunteers making funding decisions based on what agencies were funded last year. She wants volunteers to fund the top priorities and top agencies providing those services.

Gartin added that as Funders, it's important to listen to the providers because they are boots on the ground providing the service. There is data in Scorecard, but agencies may see a change happening and change the way they provide the service. Gartin also asked, what are we trying to accomplish at today's meeting. Cassabaum said that a working group is probably a good idea and come up with the top three priorities agreed upon.

Keil-Rosser said that she liked the idea of having an impact year to focus on the top priority and make a larger impact. Then in future years have those three top priorities and move that direction. Heddens asked if we have a working group, who would be in that group? Thompson suggested that she would recommend Funder staff and a few of the ASSET volunteers who are versed in the process. Then they would bring their work back to the Joint Funders with those outcomes. Thompson stated that as we work to share top priorities, those priorities for each funder may look different. For example, transportation, each funder may fund different agencies based on where the service is provided.

Gartin added that with funding changes, we have done a great job of bringing funding to agencies and there are going to be some tough decisions in the future with funding changes coming. Haila added that it may make sense to move toward identifying the top needs or groups of people with high needs and then identifying an agency to take the lead on tackling that issue. They would collaborate with other agencies to offer all the services that are needed to address the need for a particular group.

Faisal added that she wants to make sure that we don't lose sight of services being delivered to all parts of the county, not just where the higher populations are. Murken stated that she wants to caution on depending on collaboration between agencies. Some agencies compete against each other and relying on them to collaborate may not work. Thompson added that as we discuss possibly moving from purchasing services to an RFP model, Funders are already doing some of this. When funds aren't allocated, Funders have been finding ways to open up that funding to agencies.

Heddens asked for clarification on next steps. Thompson replied that Funder staff will meet and clean up the cross-walked priorities and identify the top three priorities. A follow up meeting after that is complete, will be scheduled for July.

Gartin, Heddens and Murken spoke to agenda item d. Murken suggested that possibly a clause be added to the top three priorities that the Funders have the right to adjust where funding goes based on needs or changes in the Federal funding.

Murken also stated that ASSET possibly work on a vision/mission statement so if other organizations start contributing funds, ASSET can identify if they fit into the vision/mission statement.

Adjournment at 6:28 pm