

## LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: **CAMP FIRE**

LIAISONS: Mary Beth Golemo (City of Ames) and Seth Carter (ISU)

Meeting with Bob Reid, Executive Director, held at Camp Canwita in Ames on October 4, 2017

**1. Need for Program.** Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses.

- Camp Fire's target population is school age youth (1<sup>st</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade) in Story County, with most campers coming from Ames, Gilbert and Nevada. According to Bob Reid, numbers increased in 2017 with 245 unduplicated participants and 790 duplicated participants.
- Camp Fire is most similar to the Boys & Girls Club but is more nature-based and not club-based. Along with their summer camps, Camp Fire offers programs when campers and their families need them, i.e. school breaks and school days off such as MLK Day. Camp Fire also has a higher staff to camper ratio than the Boys & Girls Club (8:1).
- If funding ceased to exist, the camps in Ames (Canwita) and Boone (Hantesa) would be impacted. Fees would need to increase and less scholarships (given to campers in need) would be available.
- ASSET priorities addressed include childcare and youth development services and activities.

**2. Program Strengths.** Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength describe some supporting evidence.

- The 8:1 staff to camper ratio continues to be a strength. Retention of full-time staff and having international staff members have positively impacted the campers' "take away" experience (according to parents) and adds to the culture of the program.
- Mobility is a strength as Camp Fire now has two buses (one added this year) and two vans. The ability to transport campers adds to their program offerings and increases camper numbers.
- Camp Fire staff attends at least two American Camp Association trainings per year.

**3. Program Weaknesses.** Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.

- It has been challenging to find qualified bus drivers. Likewise, it has been a challenge recruiting camp staff. To address this, staff recruitment was started earlier this year. Camp Fire is using current staff to find new staff, hosting Sunday night pizza parties for students to learn about staff opportunities. Staff pay was increased and other incentives are being identified. Camp Fire booths were at the Farmers Market and several job fairs.
- Ongoing age of facilities is a concern. For example, the City of Ames holds the deed to Canwita but Camp Fire is responsible for all maintenance and upkeep. New siding on Canwita's main building is needed.
- Staff development is a focus; identifying pieces where staff need training and support.

**4. Financial Outlook.** Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.

- A budget request increase will exist due to increased costs. Monies are needed for an additional staff member as camper numbers grow. Van rentals are also needed as numbers increase.
- If resources decrease, the programs and facilities at Canwita and Hantesa would be impacted. As shared above, fewer scholarships would be available to campers in need and participant fees would need to be increased.
- Camp Fire staff is skilled at finding, applying for and receiving grants.

**5. Internal Management Practices.** Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

- We were not able to attend a Board meeting this year but learned that representatives from the Ames area are still needed. The Board is instituting a nominating committee to address

representation. They are also visiting Rotary and other community organizations to spread the word of their Board member needs.

**6. Agency Suggestions/Comments.** Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

- As shared in years past, Camp Fire's fiscal year does not blend well with the ASSET timeline but Bob has adapted a process for his request to address this issue.

#### **GENERAL ASSESSMENT:**

Additional information to share:

- Literacy is a big part of the Camp Fire program, keeping campers reading over the summer. One staff member is dedicated to literacy.
- A reported 10-12% of campers are on behavioral meds so this impacts staff. Camp Fire also utilizes a "3 X You're Out" discipline policy. They work closely with parents to help these campers (and their parents) be successful.
- Camp Fire enjoys a good relationship with Ames Community Schools in that Ames gives Camp Fire student addresses to send camp information. Bob would like to see similar relationships with Nevada and Gilbert.
- A grant was obtained to work with the Flynn Wright agency on Camp Fire's marketing and outreach efforts. With the aid of Flynn Wright, a better address list has been developed along with a new brochure. Social media is being better utilized as well as stronger word of mouth efforts.

As second year liaisons, it was interesting to see the continued growth of the program, how monies were used and how challenges identified last year are being addressed.