

AGENCY: Raising Readers
LIAISON: Karla Webb

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.

Per the ASSET FY20/21 budget, Raising Readers' mission and target population is to "improve language and literacy development for children from birth to age eight and nurture healthy parent-child relationships." Raising Readers is expecting an increase in the number of individuals served. No other program/services have been identified that currently are providing same or similar services as Raising Readers. Funder priorities: City of Ames Priority #3, Story County #2, United Way of Story County Education Result 1 and 2.

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.

Raising Readers has many partnerships throughout Story County including but not limited to elementary schools, service agencies, daycare, libraries, pediatricians. They utilize a small number of staff, several volunteers and Board Members to deliver and meet the mission of their programs. Raising Readers completed the Lectio process this past year and that process led them into examining further statistical and financial information. They will be restructuring Super K to be launched in Fall 2020 with the intent for the program to have a greater impact. Through additional analysis they determined the need to expand Story Time with YSS's Baby Bump and are in the process of having available developmental toys for parents to check out to play with their children.

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.

Raising Readers experiences challenges in having enough volunteers to serve all the children identified, as well as ongoing volunteer recruitment takes staff time. Some of the ways Raising Readers recruits volunteers is through Facebook, CyHire, talking with college classes, sending out flyers to professors, banks, churches, service groups, The Volunteer Center of Story County and through word of mouth. Another option for volunteer recruitment could be Central Iowa RSVP if this has not been explored yet.

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.

Grant funding for the Story County Reads Data Specialist is ending July 2020. Raising Readers is requesting an increase in funding across all programs to fund the Data Specialist position as well as are putting part of the position's salary into sponsorship programs, such as Harrison Barnes Reading Academy. The data specialist position is essential in the data collection for the programs provided by Raising Readers, the position currently has been working to develop a data exchange system with ISU and school districts in Story County. The system will be able to report out aggregate data to determine if steps/programs put in place are making a difference in early childhood literacy. Raising Readers will need time to process and address any funding shortfalls.

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

The Raising Readers Board and staff have transitioned to using a software product that will enhance the tracking of expenditures and revenues and provide useful reports. The Raising Readers Board is active and dedicated to promoting early childhood literacy. Raising Readers has a small staff and are offering several different programs to promote childhood literacy, they utilize several volunteers as well as Board Members to carryout various programming opportunities.

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.

Raising Readers is thankful for the support of ASSET. Lisa Reeves, Director, requested in the future to continue to have the same ASSET liaison for up to 6 or 7 years when possible as this provides opportunity for the volunteer to get to know Raising Readers well.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

As noted above, Raising Readers has a small number of staff and are managing many various early childhood literacy programs, volunteers and Board Members are essential in assisting the staff to carry out the various programs offered by Raising Readers. Raising Readers has a facilities committee that meets as needed and will be meeting this fall/winter to review space needs.