

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: FY 2020/21 ASSET PRIORITIES

BACKGROUND:

The ASSET funding process for FY 2020/21 will begin in August 2019. ASSET volunteers will conduct their agency visits to discuss services, gather information, and submit written reports that will be used for the agency hearings and work sessions scheduled in January 2020.

The City's current priorities are:

#1 Meet basic needs, with emphasis on low to moderate income:

- Housing cost offset programs, including utility assistance
- Sheltering
- Quality childcare cost offset programs, including daycare and State of Iowa licensed in home facilities
- Food cost offset programs, to assist in providing nutritious perishables and staples
- Transportation cost offset programs for the elderly and families
- Legal assistance
- Disaster response
- Medical and dental aid

#2 Meet mental health and chemical dependency needs

- Provide outpatient emergency access to services
- Provide crisis intervention services
- Provide access to non-emergency services
- Ensure substance abuse prevention and treatment is available in the community

#3 Youth development services and activities

- Provide services for social development

The Mayor and City Council members have been involved with a comprehensive review of the ASSET process. The review kicked off in May 2019 when the Joint Funders met and provided input to the ASSET Administrative Team with regards to establishing funding priorities, measuring outcomes, and allocating funds. One of the themes that came out of the meeting was the need for joint priorities or priority areas across the funders.

ASSET VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK:

In preparation for the funding cycle, the City's ASSET volunteers reviewed the priorities and expressed the following perspectives:

1. Add more specificity
2. Consider ranking or prioritizing sub-bullets
3. Continue allowing flexibility
4. Add sub-bullets to Priority #3 Services and activities for social and educational development of youth

In regards to suggestion 2 and 4, the Asset volunteers, offered the following prioritized sub-bullets for each of the three priority service categories and the addition of two sub-bullets for priority service category #3.

#1 Meet basic needs, with emphasis on low to moderate income:

- Quality childcare cost offset programs, including daycare and State of Iowa licensed in home facilities
- Food cost offset programs, to assist in providing nutritious perishables and staples
- Medical and dental services
- Housing cost offset programs, including utility assistance
- Sheltering
- Transportation cost offset programs for the elderly and families
- Legal assistance
- Disaster response

#2 Meet mental health and chemical dependency needs

- Ensure substance abuse prevention and treatment is available in the community
- Provide outpatient emergency access to services
- Provide crisis intervention services
- Provide access to non-emergency services

#3 Provide services and activities for social and educational development of youth

- Skill development and enhancement
- Summer enrichment/prevention of loss of learning

USE OF ASSET PRIORITIES:

In addition to the volunteers' specific suggestions regarding the priorities, staff has a few guiding comments as the Council considers how to proceed:

Role of ASSET Priorities – The funding priorities are used as the volunteers determine how to best allocate the City's designated ASSET funds. The Council should note that there are many ASSET agencies doing important work in the community. However,

available funds are limited, and not every agency provides a service that aligns with the needs as envisioned by the Council. Therefore, the more specific and narrow the priorities are, the more helpful they can be as a tool for the volunteers to shift funding to the services that are truly important to the Council.

Outcomes Measurement – Agencies are entering their third year of participating in the Clear Impact Scorecard, which the ASSET funders have agreed to incorporate into the ASSET process. This requires the agencies to identify at least one measure to be tracked, showing the benefit to clients made through ASSET funding. The funders are reliant on the leadership of United Way of Story County to manage this outcomes measurement system. The key staff member for United Way who has provided oversight to the Scorecard program left the organization earlier this summer. United Way is in the process of finding a replacement staff member, but the implementation of the Scorecard project is delayed.

Funding Environment – There is no doubt that ASSET is increasingly being relied upon as a source of funding for human services agencies in the face of shrinking state and federal funds. Since the funders typically allocate a percentage increase for the ASSET process each year, it is not a system that lends itself to new, large, transformational service proposals. This is because in order to fund such proposals, funding to other ASSET services would either need to be decreased or kept flat. One method to manage this is to focus the City's priorities on a list of fewer areas the Council wishes to make the most impact.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the City's current ASSET priority service categories for FY 2020/21, with the recommended prioritization of the sub-bullets.
2. Approve the City's current ASSET priority service categories for FY 2020/21, with no prioritization of the sub-bullets.
3. Refer this matter back the ASSET volunteers to suggest different priority service categories and/or prioritization of the sub-bullets.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The ASSET volunteers have discussed the community needs and have considered the City Council's ASSET priorities. In addition, it's important to take into account the current review of the ASSET process that is underway. **Since there is not yet a final work product or recommended set of revisions to the process, it would seem premature to establish new priorities for FY 2020/21. However, the first time prioritization of the sub-bullets for each priority service category would be helpful to all ASSET volunteers.**

Assuming the Council's current priority service categories reflect the desires of the Council, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt

Alternative No. 1, thereby approving the City's current ASSET priority service categories for FY 2020/21, with the recommended prioritization of the sub-bullets.