

## STAFF REPORT

### UPDATE ON CITY COUNCIL GOAL TO STRENGTHEN HUMAN SERVICES

AUGUST 12, 2014

In January 2014, the City Council set its goals for the next two years. Several of the goals required reports or information on Human Services. The information provided below will help Council determine next steps in the Human Services area.

#### **Objective: Increase accountability of funded services:**

#### Task 1 - Staff will provide a report regarding the current accountability mechanisms in the ASSET Process.

Below is a list of the ways that ASSET holds agencies accountable for their funded programs:

- ASSET Administrative Team (Administrative Team) meets monthly to discuss issues or concerns with agencies and or programs.
- The Administrative Team each April-July reviews processes and procedures for ASSET to anticipate and address the needs of funders, volunteers and the agencies for the next budget cycle.
- The Administrative Team reviews and vets all request for new or expanded services in August prior to the start of the next budget season.
  - The Administrative Team makes decisions for ASSET regarding the requests for new and expanded services each August. The decisions are shared with ASSET at its August meeting.
    - It is typical that the Administrative Team will meet with the agencies in person to discuss these new or expanded services. Often, the Administrative Team will require further information or will need to research programs prior to making a decision on whether or not to add or expand a service.
    - Considerable thought about how a service that already exists might be impacted by another program being added is also discussed, as it spreads limited dollars between more and more services.
    - Additionally, if a new agency is request to add a service that is already funded by ASSET, there is considerable discussion about the need for additional providers and the impact of the dollars for the community.
- The Administrative Team holds budget training for all ASSET-approved service agencies in August. The training helps agencies understand how to complete the ASSET budget forms and instructs agencies about the priorities of all the four funders. New agencies are given one-on-one time after the training to answer more specific questions about ASSET processes and procedures. Agencies receive copies of each funder's priorities.
- The Administrative Team hosts annual volunteer training in September on how to conduct agency visits to help ASSET make the best decisions possible in funding programs and services. Volunteers are provided a reference manual to help them prepare for agencies visits each fall, which include questions to be asked of the agencies. Volunteers also receive each funder's priorities.

- Volunteers visit all agencies between September and October each year and go over questions. Reports on these visits are submitted and shared with ASSET volunteers and the Administrative Team.
- The Administrative Team reviews all the budgets in detail prior to distribution to volunteers and makes requests to agencies for corrections should errors be found or if clarification is needed on the information that was submitted. Budgets include reporting of outcomes measures, which are reviewed to see if they provide information about the effect of each program and if the agency is meeting the needs of the population they serve.
- The Administrative Team reviews all agency audits and/or IRS Form 990s, which are required to be submitted annually to ASSET.
- ASSET volunteers and the Administrative Team review midyear outcomes reports in December, prior to the January budget allocation hearings.
- The information from the budgets, audits and volunteer visits are all taken into account and used to determine funding in January for each service.
- Materials for ASSET are a public record and the meetings are open to the public.

ASSET has the following manuals available online, which are reviewed and updated annually as necessary:

- Policy Manual
- Reference Manual

Visit <http://www.storycountyasset.org/index.cfm?nodeID=24573> to see the resources available online for agencies, volunteers and the community.

### **Other accountability mechanisms the Administrative Team has been working on:**

- The ASSET Administrative Team has required all agencies receiving Basic Needs dollars or Panel 2 dollars to attend ServicePoint training on June 23, 2014. ServicePoint is used by HUD to track information pertaining to homelessness and related continuum of care services. The training was to inform agencies about the software and how it is used to determine allocation of Federal dollars to the State of Iowa for homelessness related services. **Several agencies that receive dollars for housing, low income support and homelessness and or other related continuum of care services including homeless prevention already report on ServicePoint, however, the Administrative Team is working on 100% participation to ensure that Story County and Ames needs are accounted for in the statewide totals being submitted to HUD.** This will also ensure dollars are coming to the community from the federal government for homelessness services at the correct levels. Information on those participating in ServicePoint will be shared with ASSET volunteers to help volunteers understand further funding options for those requesting ASSET dollars and the impact of their participating or not participating in these processes.
- At the July 9, 2014 meeting, the Administrative Team added volunteer agency reports to the December 4, 2014 ASSET meeting agenda. This is part of the ongoing process improvements that are underway to ensure better accountability in the ASSET process. At the December 2, 2014 meeting, volunteers will be asked to provide updates on their assigned agencies to all volunteers. Previously, only the volunteer(s) assigned to the

agency had specific information about the agency. This limited the overall perspective or big picture as volunteers worked through the challenges of determining funding levels in January. This new step for the 2014-2015 process will enhance accountability to the funders by ensuring volunteers are informed of what is happening with all ASSET funded services for the budget allocation process.

- The United Way has recently hired a Community Impact Director who will be working with the community and partner agencies to establish community goals in the areas of education, income and health. Additionally, the Community Impact Director will be working to establish progress indicators and measurement tools. **The Administrative Team plans to work with United Way to incorporate their indicators into the ASSET process over the coming years.**

**Objective: Proactively engage with ASSET funders in understanding the needs in the community (including mental health and youth needs).**

Task 1 - Staff will provide a report to the City Council regarding the most recent (2010) Story County Community Health Needs Assessment.

- This is the link to the Executive Summary of the 2010 assessment, which summarizes the full report.
  - <http://www.storycountyqol.org/chna-executive-summary.html>

Task 3 - City Council will review the most recent Story County Community Health Needs Assessment, including mental health and youth needs, and determine if the assessment tool is adequate.

- **Story County Quality of Life Alliance or SCQOL group will be starting discussion on plans for the 2015 assessment. SCQOL will be looking data that is available and determining how best to use what is already available for guidance as well as gaps in data that SCQOL may need to seek out.**
- SCQOL is responsible for coordinating the Community Health needs assessment every five years. Here is its website with information about their organization. <http://www.storycountyqol.org/>
- The 2010 assessment was a joint effort through the Story County Community Coalition. The 2010 Community Assessment was paid for with contributions from Mary Greeley Medical Center (\$25,000); United Way of Story County (\$10440), Story County Medical Center (\$5,000), City of Ames (\$3,000), Story County Board of Supervisors (\$2,500), Story County Decat (\$2,500), McFarland Clinic (\$2,500), Story County Empowerment/Early Childhood Iowa (\$2,250), Story County Human Services Council (\$500), and Ames Education Foundation (\$100).
- The 2010 Needs Assessment cost \$53,790.

### **Other tasks to complete this goal**

This report completes the tasks outlined under the Council objective to “increase the accountability of funded services.” Should the City Council wish to further explore the topic of accountability, additional direction to City staff would be necessary.

Under the objective to “Proactively engage with ASSET funders in understanding the needs in the community (including mental health and youth needs)”, the Council has yet to receive a report regarding youth master planning. Once that report has been received by the City Council, the only remaining task under this objective is for the City Council to communicate suggestions to improve the Story County Community Health Needs Assessment to ASSET funders.