

City Council Regular Meeting

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Meeting Date: 11/04/2019

Recommended Karla Lange, Deputy City Clerk  
by:

Prepared by: Karla Lange, Deputy City Clerk  
Finance Celina Morris  
Director

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Review:

City Attorney Brett Wallace

Review:

Approved by: Larry Rains

Date

Submitted:

Type of Action Formal Action/Motion

Requested:

SUBJECT:

Consideration of the request from Pinal Alliance for Economic Growth and the Achieve Pinal Committee to serve as a "Host" for the AARP Foundation Experience Corps Pinal Third Grade Reading Initiative.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended the Mayor and City Council take formal action to serve as the Host of the Third Grade Reading pilot program, offering office space, organization through the Community Services Department, and allocation of financial support in the next two (FY21 & 22) budget years in an amount up to \$12,000 per year.

DISCUSSION:

The Pinal Alliance for Economic Growth organization has served as the non-profit entity for the Achieve Pinal initiative for the past year. The Achieve Pinal initiative is a regional grassroots effort dedicated to working with education, government, business and other interested community partners to develop a competitive workforce for future jobs by improving educational attainment in Pinal County.

Achieve Pinal has adopted strategies established by Achieve60AZ that are focused on the goal of 60% of Arizona adults, ages 25-64, will successfully acquire a professional certificate or a 2 or 4 year college degree by 2020. The strategies are:

- Strengthening the K-12 Pipeline –Increase college readiness and high school graduation rates

- Completing Credentials – Implement policies to make it easier for Arizonans to finish their certificates or college degrees.
- Increasing Access – Raise awareness about options beyond high school and make them more affordable.
- Aligning Workforce Needs – Engage businesses, governments and educators to identify and close the skills gap.

In an effort to obtain a successful result of the identified strategies, Achieve Pinal is proposing a pilot program in Casa Grande, with the guidance of the AARP Literacy Program, to implement a Third Grade Reading Initiative. As outlined in the Council Study Session, the focus on reading is driven by the fact that children first learn to read, then they read to learn. Being able to read by end of third grade is the crucial milestone in a child's future success. Children who cannot read well by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma and are more prone to engage in behaviors such as truancy and aggression.

It has been well identified through the Achieve60AZ progress meter that third grade reading in Casa Grande falls below both County and State averages and well below the overall goal of the State. The AARP Experience Corps Reading Literacy Program has resulted in significant progress in other Arizona cities such as Tempe and Phoenix. Multiple studies conducted by Johns Hopkins and Washington Universities show outstanding results in both reading for the students, as well as health and social benefits for volunteers.

The request of Pinal Alliance for Economic Growth and Achieve Pinal is to create a pilot program in Casa Grande that addresses challenges, establishes a foundation for expansion into other cities and the county, makes the program available to other school districts after it is on solid footing, and builds strong collaboration within the community. The program is managed by an advisory board that would consist of membership from the Host, Achieve Pinal, and the Elementary School District. The commitment from each group is as follows:

- Host: organization, offices, oversight and financial support.
- School District: tutor training, provide student test data, select students for program, and financial support.
- Achieve Pinal: fundraising, 501c3 oversight, outreach.

Pilot program costs have been estimated at \$49,500 for the first year. The timeline would include filing an application to AARP by December 2019, hire a program coordinator in March 2020, volunteer training during the summer of 2020, with the program commencing in September 2020.

The Achieve Pinal initiative and the Third Grade Reading Program both align with the Mayor and Council's Strategic Plan Education Focus Area. It is the recommendation of staff that the City of Casa Grande serve as the Host of the program, offering office space, organization through the Community Services Department, and allocation of financial support in the next two (FY21 & 22) budget years in an amount up to \$12,000 per year.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

In serving as the Host, the City would be responsible for providing in-kind service through office space and organizational support, as well as financial support for the next two fiscal years in the amount of \$12,000 annually.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Reject recommendation

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