

Reading Pays: \$1 Million Pueblo Summer Reading Challenge!

Pueblo will invest up to \$1 million this summer to support children's and young people's reading. The project will be administered by the Pueblo City-County Library District (PCCLD) in collaboration with the City of Pueblo, Pueblo County, and local banks and schools. The program will use funds allocated by the City and the County from the American Relief Plan Act (ARPA). The program will assist our community in responding to COVID-19's disruption of local education and support recovery of the local economy.

There is an adage: "Kids who read succeed." Studies and data back this up and show that young people who grow up reading will enjoy improved economic outcomes and upward social mobility later in life. Pueblo's support for this will shine through clearly with the announcement that \$1 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds will be made available to pay local children and young people to read this summer.

The program will be managed by PCCLD to support local young people practicing their reading skills this summer. The past year has been difficult for everyone. Our young people have suffered with reduced in-classroom school time and other restrictions on social activities due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. To encourage kids to read this summer and support the local economy, the Pueblo City-County Library District will pay each young person \$100 between June and August who checks out ten books from a neighborhood library and provide a description of their reading experience to the librarian. The program will be open to any Pueblo County resident under the age of 18. There are an estimated 37,000 Pueblo County residents eligible according to recent U.S. Census data and the library district plans to sign-up as many as 9,000 local young people this summer to be paid \$100 each to exercise reading skills and provide a synopsis report. The library district is working with a local bank to ensure secure and proper dispersal of authorized individual payments when young people complete their summer reading assignments. One goal is to teach early financial literacy skills so a \$10 bonus incentive will be provided for individual reader savings accounts when maintained at a minimum of \$50 for six months with the bonus to be assigned by the bank to appropriate accounts later in 2022. Books may be checked out inside the library, via the library's curbside delivery service, and/or library eBooks online. PCCLD also will check out mobile hotspots and laptops for in-home use to support online access.

PCCLD will use an online web form to enroll young people in the "Reading Pays: Pueblo Kids Read to Succeed: \$1 Million Challenge!" program with registration to include name, adult guarantor, contact information, and unique identifier (such as student ID or library card number). Enrollment will occur in-person at the library, online from the PCCLD website (www.pueblolibrary.org), or by calling PCCLD at 719-562-5600. The library district will work with local schools to publicize the program before the school year ends. The library district will track the books checked out to registered participants using its online catalog and work with local banks on the cash awards for successful reading completion. PCCLD has worked out most details now with partners on best methods for enrolling participants, tracking program progress, and paying out cash in a safe and secure fashion. The program will result in thousands of new local banking accounts and the money will help spur increased spending locally to benefit our community's economic recovery. PCCLD will gather enrollment and completion data and use other tools to evaluate outcomes of the program.

CURRENT TIMELINE

April 13

Internal announcements commence and program details agreed upon

May 3-4

Public presentation to City Council & County Commission

May 11

ARPA funds released/IGA approved

May 12

Marketing kickoff

June 1

Program participants sign-up begins

September 30

Public completion ends and all savings accounts designated

February 28

Savings incentives assigned

March 1

Post-program evaluation

