



BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Imagination Library

Request

- \$400,000 for FY11 to expand Imagination Library, which mails a free book every month to enrolled children, birth to age 5.
- Requested funds would expand the program to cover at least 14,000 Alaska children, about 28% of all children under 5. Leveraged local and private funding would increase the number of children served.

Rationale

- About 40% of Alaska children begin school unprepared to succeed. Alaska's dropout rate is among the highest in the nation.
- Early literacy is a key indicator of how a child will fare in school and in life. Children who have not developed some basic literacy skills *by the time they enter school* are three to four times more likely to drop out in later years.
- Imagination Library helps children develop the literacy skills they'll need to succeed ... in their own homes, with their families.
- Imagination Library in Alaska has grown by leaps and bounds since Best Beginnings became involved. Best Beginnings provides technical assistance and funds to launch Imagination Library in new communities and to continue and expand the program in communities already participating.

Accomplished to date

- Children impacted: Through the efforts of Best Beginnings and its partners, funds have been allocated to enroll 10,192 children in 32 communities. More than 1,500 additional children have graduated from the program when they turned 5.
- Private and local support: In most communities, volunteers raise funds locally to match grants from Best Beginnings. Best Beginnings has received major grants for Imagination Library from the private sector, foundations, and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. To date, \$471,130 has been contributed in private and local support. The total will rise further later this year when local contributions begin matching a second Rasmuson Foundation grant (for 2010 and 2011) of \$150,000.

Longer term goals

- Fully subsidize Imagination Library in communities with very limited resources.
- Enroll at least 80% of the children under age 5 in the current Imagination Library communities.
- Expand to additional communities so that every Alaska child, birth to age 5, would be eligible for Imagination Library.