



bookspring

Launching children into a world of reading

**BookSpring Strategic Plan
2020-2025**



BookSpring is proud to present the following Strategic Plan, developed between April and October of 2019 and revised during summer 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan sets a direction for the next five years of our organizational life for our fiscal years starting July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025.



Vision

BookSpring envisions a world of families reading and succeeding together.

Mission

BookSpring builds early literacy in children and families through healthcare, education, and the community.

Values

Excellence: We depend on exceptional people to provide exceptional quality services throughout our organization. We set high standards and we support each other as we strive to achieve them.

Integrity: We treat all individuals with respect and dignity. We respect the cultural heritage of each of our program participants.

Innovation: We embrace change, creativity, continuous learning, and

personal growth. We incorporate new ideas and methods to improve the services we provide. We anticipate future trends and we create strategic plans to ensure future growth and continued vitality.

Diversity: We recognize that a range of thoughtful perspectives is necessary for open inquiry, creativity, and a healthy organization. We seek and welcome diverse board members, volunteers, and staff. In order to foster a healthy and diverse environment, we act with compassion, communicate respectfully, and seek a multiplicity of opinions.

Collaboration: We collaborate with healthcare, education, and community partner organizations and nonprofits to improve children's access to literacy opportunities – *we reach families where they are and through people they trust.*



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Given the equity gap and its disproportionate effect on Children of Color in Central Texas, BookSpring is dedicated to working for underserved populations in the Greater Austin area. If educational achievement predicts future success and opportunities, then BookSpring commits to increasing opportunities for academic success for students facing these equity challenges.

We commit to:

- Adding representation of People of Color in the titles and characters in our inventory
- Continuing to serve people of low socioeconomic status
- Continuing to serve People of Color
- Increasing our awareness of what it means to serve these populations
- Engaging in dialogues with our community and stakeholders
- Providing opportunities to hear the voices of those who we serve

And we are going to address this by:

- Reserving four seats on the Board for members of the community
- Creating a Community Advisory Board



SUMMARY

Achieving optimal early literacy remains a steep challenge for Central Texas, and the lack of ability and interest in reading has profound impact on all aspects of our well-being. As a result, our regional **kindergarten readiness** and **3rd grade reading scores** are far below desired levels (E3 Alliance, CAN Dashboard). Moreover, there are pockets of our community that are **book deserts**, with neither libraries nor retail providers of printed books, and free access to high quality digital books are limited (Neuman, 2016). Research shows that there can be a **30-million-word gap** between the language young children hear in affluent families and those of their less affluent peers (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Two factors have been consistently shown through research to improve early literacy outcomes: a) **the number of books at home**, and b) **the frequency of being read aloud to** by a trusted, fluent adult. Having at least 20 books at home has a **statistically significant impact** on future educational success (Evans, 2010). A caregiver reading aloud to very young children between birth and age 3 creates **visible activity in the language centers of the brain** that aid in optimal development (Hutton, 2016). These foundational language development enrichment services are what BookSpring aims to reliably provide throughout Central Texas.

In 2018, the Central Texas Reading Survey, commissioned by BookSpring, found that **58% of homes with children 12 and under did not have 20 children's books at home**, regardless of income. The good news is that **we as a community are already moving the needle forward. In 2019, the same survey found that this number had dropped to 46%! We can't take sole credit for this remarkable improvement in the first line defense of books at home. Our key partners at United Way of Greater Austin,**

the Andy Roddick Foundation, Literacy First, Austin Independent School District, Half Price Books, Literati, and the Austin Public Library have all signed on to the **20 Books by 2020** campaign, helping to spread the word about the importance of owning 20 books and reading together at home. We aim to keep this trend going in the right direction through 2025 and beyond.

There are three overarching metrics that BookSpring will use to guide and track to measure our impact over the next five years:

1. The percentage of **low-income families** with children 12 and under who have **20 books in the home** will be *increased* from 40% to 70%.
2. The percentage of all families with children 12 and under who do **not** have **20 books in the home** will be *reduced* from 46% to 20%
3. The percentage of families who report reading together **2 or more times per day** is *raised* from 21% to 50%.

These metrics are already being tracked in our annual Central Texas Reading Survey conducted by Strategic Research Associates. Strategic Research Associates LLC are Jim Henson, PhD and Joshua Blank, PhD. They survey 600 residents living in Bastrop, Burnett, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties from a representative online panel who indicate that they are the parent or frequent caregiver of a child currently 12 and under. Results are presented with responses weighted by race to better match the target population according to U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year estimates of the presence of children under 18 years of age in households in the aforementioned counties. The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 4.00 percentage points.



Five Year Plan 2020-2025

Goal #1

Ensure sustainability

Goal #2

Enhance programs

Goal #3

Increase engagement

Goal #4

Demonstrate impact

Goal #5

Secure facilities

Overall Impact

Increase number of homes with
at least 20 books

Increase frequency of caregivers
and children reading together





RATIONALE

In the following pages, we present **five strategic goals** designed to build our capacity to serve and expand our programs to reach all the children most in need, while encouraging all children and their caregivers in our community to build home libraries of at least 20 books and read a book together twice a day. They are:

Goal #1 Ensure sustainability

As an organization with a 45-year history in Central Texas, BookSpring has shown a remarkable resilience, surviving the loss of national funding and a merger during the economic downturn of 2008. **With an average growth in revenue of 13% over the past five years** (but with a wide range of variation), it is important now that BookSpring moves away from a year-to-year funding strategy towards more **consistent long-term and sustainable funding**. The work of building early literacy does not happen in just one treatment, or even over just one month or one year. Both **infrastructure and strategy will grow our fundraising capacity** so we are able to provide a reliable, steady stream of books to the children most in need in our community from birth with each new generation. This plan details ways that we will achieve more consistent and sustainable sources of revenue for many years to come.

Goal #2 Enhance programs in alignment with funding and needs

According to the American Community Survey conducted annually by the U.S. Census, there are 80,000 children currently living in poverty in Central Texas. Despite our many regional economic successes, **that's nearly one out of every five children growing up without access to books**. In a perfect world, BookSpring would be able to sustainably reach 100% of those children with at least three books and a supported event each year, including read-

alouds, parent education, and motivational activities. BookSpring has analyzed the ACS Survey to determine which zip codes have the highest number and the highest percentage of children living in poverty, and that is how we are prioritizing our program partnerships to the zip codes most in need across our three areas of focus: healthcare (Rx), education (Ed), and community (Go). This strategy will ensure that our programs are growing not only in scope, but in the types of ways that our dynamic community most needs to build young readers.

Goal #3 Increase public awareness and community engagement

With an increased **commitment to equity and diversity**, BookSpring has embraced a respect for a home-based culture approach to children's literacy, and has worked consciously to diversify our staff, board, and program offerings. However, there is more work to be done to understand how **minority and economically disadvantaged people are co-creators** towards a world of reading. Through the establishment of an ongoing Community Advisory Council to provide a space for multiple voices in our programs and operations, along with continued efforts to **remind the community at large of the importance of 20 books at home and reading together twice a day**, we aim to increase public awareness not only of BookSpring, but of the transformative power of reading.

Goal #4 Demonstrate impact through stories and numbers

We track our work through a program database which provides real-time data. For instance, in our most recently completed fiscal year, we distributed 151,565 books to 103,567 children, 87% of whom were designated by our partners as low income. That means approximately 62,000 low income children attended BookSpring supported events, showing that



RATIONALE

we are **currently reaching more than three quarters of the number of children estimated to be living in poverty in Central Texas**. Moreover, program satisfaction reports consistently collect **heartwarming testimonials of the transformative power of reading together experiences and the gift of books on young children**. Partners apply and are prioritized for participation based on their zip code, and are asked to provide a variety of datapoints, up to and including de-identified student reading scores. We use this data to **demonstrate our program impact at both the individual program and the overall organizational levels**, which are updated monthly on our website. This plan will help us ensure that a rigorous approach to program evaluation is maintained and communicated to everyone who cares about positively improving early literacy.

Goal #5

Secure adequate facilities

Over the past 20 years, we have been steadily

growing our capacity to collect, sort, and curate new and gently used books for the good of our students. We are currently in three 50-year-old portable buildings in East Austin. We have frequent air conditioning, internet, and power outages, roof leaks, and other health and safety concerns associated with aging buildings. We don't know what the future will bring when our current lease ends in summer 2022. As such, we have begun to look for new options for future facilities to ensure that our mission continues. Our **wish list for a new facility includes 7,500 square feet of total space** (approximately 1/3 office, 1/3 open workspace and book stacks, and 1/3 meeting space) and **easy access to the street for loading and unloading** (not a dock, but wide doors and no stairs). It is important to us that we find a space where our **hundreds of annual volunteers feel comfortable** to come and work both during regular work hours and some nights and weekends. This plan will allow us to select and secure a long-term home for BookSpring.

Join Us

BookSpring can't achieve these goals alone.

We encourage anyone reading this plan to become part of the **army of book lovers** who are creating a better world for ourselves and our children through the power of literacy and reading for knowledge and pleasure, together.

Contact us at <https://www.bookspring.org> to learn how to get involved today.

Goal #1

Ensure Sustainability

1.1

Update fundraising plan annually

1.2

Increase Board involvement in fundraising

1.3

Build Sustainable Giving Programs

1.4

Engage more millennials as volunteers and donors

1.5

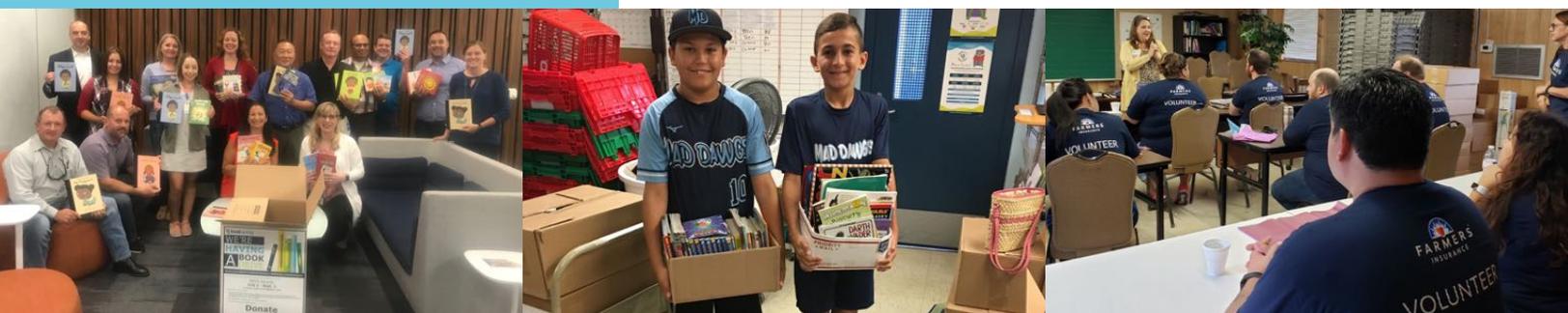
Explore funding partnerships and collaborations

1.6

Increase zip code based giving

1.7

Maximize event effort/revenue



Goal #2

Enhance programs

2.1

Assess the needs of clients by zip code in order to respond to changing client demographics

2.2

Increase volunteer opportunities especially in zip codes with expanding client needs

2.3

Increase partnerships, especially in zip codes with expanding client needs

2.4

Coordinate to increase donations in zip codes with expanding client needs

2.5

Continue to develop and increase the Parent Program

2.6

Study the feasibility and cost of each newly proposed program

2.7

Balance programs serving the economically disadvantaged with digital education programs

2.8

Analyze the feasibility of using digital materials for each program

2.9

Evaluate drop shipment program costs vs. in house packing and delivery



Goal #3

Increase engagement

3.1

Plan for, recruit and implement a Community Advisory Council

3.2

Clarify audience(s) and strategize as to how to reach them

3.3

Make space for community voices to have input

3.4

Increase Brand awareness

3.5

Increase Board diversity

3.6

Increase Staff awareness of diversity and equity issues

3.7

Increase Volunteer diversity

3.8

Review partnerships for strength and value



Goal #4

Demonstrate Impact

4.1

Set three primary impact and outcome goals

4.2

Continue to collect and analyze additional relevant output data

4.3

Ensure data is consistent and being recorded accurately

4.4

Analyze results of third-party measurements

4.5

Monitor and increase partner participation in collection of data

4.6

Compare data to American Community Survey from U.S. Census

4.7

Investigate research opportunities

4.8

Monitor progress on the Strategic Plan



Goal #5

Secure facilities

5.1

Convert existing Strategic Planning Committee to Facilities Committee

5.2

Determine program strategy as it relates to space

5.3

Determine facility requirements based on programmatic requirements

5.4

Determine facilities location(s)

5.5

Evaluate funding sources

5.6

Determine possible costs

5.7

Consider possible revenue streams from uses of the facilities

5.8

Decide upon lease vs. purchase

5.9

Use a detailed Facilities Plan



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Facilitators

Woollard and Nichols Associates
Sam Woollard and Carol Johnson

Strategy Committee

Madison Jechow, Chair
Jillian Bergman, President
Michelle Bourianoff, President-Elect
Emily Cicchini, Executive Director
Shalyn Bravens
Eric Negron

BookSpring Board of Directors

Velma Arney
Risé Candelaria
Carrie Conner
Mary Darby
Charlie Holleman
Arthur Johnson
Lauren Kalisek
Seth Koppel
Susan Patterson
Crystal Reynolds
Drew Scherz
Lindsey Stuart
Rakima Dolliole Parson
Suresh Pahwa
Lydia Valdes
Ginger Weber
Brian Wood
Brian Zimmerman
Teresa Zimmerman

BookSpring Staff

Andrea Francesca Angelo
Clare Bresnan
Lizet Martinez
Katie Mathews
Mariela Rodriguez
Evan Rosenblum
Shefali Tewari
Shannon Thorne

Layout

Reedesign



2006 Greenbrook Parkway
Austin, Texas 78723
512 472 1791
give@bookspring.org