**Toolkit Overview**

This toolkit is intended to assist you and your team with identifying and implementing a volunteer project for the IICF Early Literacy Initiative. If you are an individual looking to get involved in the community through the IICF Early Literacy Initiative, please contact your community engagement representative at your organization or your local IICF Division Executive Director [staff contact information can be found on page 8 of this toolkit or on our website: www.iicf.org].

Thank you for your interest in engaging your team in an Early Literacy Initiative volunteer project. Your volunteer contributions will have a meaningful impact on the early childhood literacy gap that exists in America. **Together, we can improve literacy in America**!

**The IICF Early Literacy Initiative**

The vision of the IICF Early Literacy Initiative is to provide every young child in America the opportunity to learn to read and write. Through unique programs and the expansive IICF network of insurance industry companies and employees, we can reach millions of families and young children. Helping to close the literacy gap in America is an IICF and industry national priority.

**The IICF / Sesame Workshop Partnership**

The first program of the IICF Early Literacy Initiative is a creative partnership with Sesame Workshop; the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street. This early literacy program, formally launched in October 2013, is called *Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day*. The innovative and research-based literacy content created by early childhood education experts at Sesame Workshop creates impactful and meaningful experiences for children, parents, caregivers and IICF volunteers. IICF is providing a three-year grant to Sesame Workshop, totaling $750,000, to fund the development and implementation of Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day.

**The Program**

*Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day* is a multimedia literacy program that leverages the power of beloved Sesame Street friends to reach and motivate young children and families to make the most of everyday opportunities to talk, read, and write together. *Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day* program elements include: Volunteer and Parent/Caregiver Guides, interactive educational videos, a dedicated online website on sesamestreet.org linked through the IICF website and a mobile site accessible to parents and caregivers via smartphones or tablets.
How You Can Help
Throughout the year, we encourage industry employees and companies to share, distribute, and highlight Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day print and online materials. The program materials are free to everyone [available in both English and Spanish] and can be distributed to schools, early childhood daycare centers, library systems, nonprofit agencies supporting young children/families, community and public educators, business leaders and partners, and industry associations.

This toolkit provides a step-by-step roadmap for how you and your colleagues can share and distribute the materials through a volunteer project of your own. Let’s get started!

Volunteer Projects - Examples

Small Event

**WHO:** Small Group; 4-10 Volunteers  
**WHAT:** Lead 2-4 activities lasting 15-20 minutes per activity  
**WHERE:** Local preschool classroom

Large/Community Event

**WHO:** Large Group; 10-50 Volunteers  
**WHAT:** Set up multiple activity stations for children to visit and assign each a theme: Talking, Reading or Writing. Project lasts 2-3 hours.  
**WHERE:** Local preschool [all classrooms], Library or Community Center

Event Lasting Multiple Days

**WHO:** Multiple groups from various offices or departments; number of volunteers will vary  
**WHAT:** Conduct same activity at multiple locations on multiple days to encourage maximum employee engagement.  
**WHERE:** Local preschools near each office or the same preschool with projects on different days of the week
Project Timeline & Checklist

5-6 months prior to the Project:

- Invite colleagues to volunteer on a project committee (if desired to have a committee) and establish meeting schedule for committee
- Determine nonprofit/school partner (see Available Resources section for guidance on selecting a nonprofit/school partner)
- Determine if partner organization will conduct background checks on your volunteers or if you will be required to (see Safety Guidelines under Available Resources)
- Determine event scope (small, large, multiple days) and date(s)
- Conduct first and second committee meetings (if applicable)
- Determine if you want an internal fundraising campaign attached to event
- Establish event date(s) and location details
- Send initial invitation to colleagues/employees to volunteer for project (see samples of volunteer invitations in Available Resources section)
- Determine strategy/want for company executives to engage in the project

3-4 months prior to the Project:

- Third committee meeting (if applicable)
- Promote event externally in partnership with IICF and/or the nonprofit where the project is taking place (if applicable/appropriate)
- Submit final budget needs/requests if necessary/applicable
- Order volunteer logo’d gear (t-shirts, hats, etc) if desired
- Secure photographer (professional or internal) to photograph the event

2 months prior to the Project:

- Final pre-event committee meeting (if applicable)
- Provide final project scope/timeline to volunteers (i.e. a one-page “Who, What, Where” document – template provided in Available Resources section)
- Confirm/secure all volunteers
- Distribute IICF Photo Release to confirmed volunteers and provide to partnering organization for their staff/children to complete
Confirm/secure any supplies or resources needed for the project(s) with the nonprofit partner (Please also see the “Every Day Is a Reading and Writing Day Volunteer Coordinator Guide” referenced in the Available Resources section for a list of potential supplies)

- Determine and secure food and transportation for volunteers (if desired/applicable) for the event day
- Draft post-event survey to send to volunteers after the event has been completed

Month of the Project:

- Track fundraising (if applicable), number of Volunteers and hours volunteered
- Confirm photographer and other vendors (if applicable)
- Print volunteer name badges (and participation certificates if desired)
- Send final press release day of event (if applicable/desired)
- Confirm/secure all volunteers

Post Project:

- Submit final photos [to IICF and your company], expenses and donations (if applicable)
- Close out volunteer database/tracking process
- Send post-event survey to volunteers
- Submit volunteer hours and total number of volunteers to IICF
- Share the success and feedback from your project(s) with your local IICF Division
Available Resources

Nonprofit Partner Identification/Selection Sources

- Local IICF Division [BEST BET!] – Contact your local IICF Division for a list of IICF Grantees working in the early childhood education space [See “IICF Contacts” section]
- United Way – Your local/regional United Way office will have a database of nonprofit organizations in your region and can help you identify those with an early childhood education focus. Visit: http://apps.unitedway.org/myuw/ to find your local United Way office.
- Child Care Aware – Searchable database by zip code for early childhood learning centers/daycares in your region. You will search as a “parent/guardian” to find centers near you that can provide you with regional facilities. Visit: http://www.childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians

Early Literacy Initiative Materials

- Every Day Is A Reading and Writing Day [EDRWD] Website – Program materials, videos and other program related resources provided by Sesame Workshop [http://www.sesamestreet.org/literacy]
- EDRWD Volunteer Coordinator Guide – Step by step guide to all program elements for your volunteer project [http://www.sesamestreet.org/cms_services/services?action=download&uid=efbb92f2-be0c-49f8-b418-af1b7ec6dfc8]
- EDRWD Marketing Brochure – Document that outlines the IICF Early Literacy Initiative’s first program, Every Day Is a Reading and Writing Day, as well as the partnership between the IICF and Sesame Workshop. Excellent document to share with your prospective volunteers and executives [http://iicf.com/images/IICF-Early-Literacy-Initiative-Brochure-2014.pdf]

Volunteer Communication & Recruitment Tools

- “Who, What, & Where” Template – a one page document to circulate to your volunteers that provides them with a board overview of the project and related details [http://iicf.com/images/ELI_Who_What_Where_Template.docx]
- Volunteer Recruitment/Announcement Email – sample email used to alert your colleagues to the project and guide them to the sign-up process
• IICF Photo Release – to provide to your volunteers as well as the staff/children at the organization[s] where you will be conducting your volunteer projects

• Safety Guidelines – Most (if not all) organizations that serve pre-school aged children require that volunteers submit to a general background check prior to working with the children. Additionally, it is advisable that a volunteer never be alone with a child to maintain a safe and positive environment for both the child and volunteer. The majority of organizations that work with children will have the ability to [and likely a system already in place] process volunteer background checks. There may be a fee that the nonprofit incurs, so be sure to check with the organization to see if you should make a donation to cover the costs incurred for them to do the background checks for your volunteers.

• Social Media Templates – templates and hashtags for use on your company’s Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts [if desired] to promote your project/community engagement

Frequently Asked Questions

When can we do our Early Literacy volunteer project?
Does it have to be during the IICF Week of Giving?

You can conduct an ELI volunteer project at any time during the year. While we encourage companies to engage in volunteer projects during the IICF Week of Giving, it is not mandatory that your project be conducted during the Week of Giving. However, you are welcome to conduct more than one volunteer project per year related to the Early Literacy Initiative – so in theory you could do one project during a corporate time of giving/volunteerism and another project during the Week of Giving!

When is the IICF Week of Giving?
The IICF Week of Giving is traditionally held in early/mid October. The 2014 Week of Giving is scheduled for October 11-18.
Are there any costs associated with conducting an Early Literacy Initiative volunteer project?

While this will largely depend on the scope of the event you anticipate hosting, the Early Literacy Initiative “Every Day Is A Reading and Writing Day” materials are entirely free and are available for immediate download on the “Every Day Is A Reading and Writing Day” resource page on Sesame Workshop’s website.

Therefore the only costs your company would incur are for copies of the materials that you will print to conduct your activities and any related supplies you may wish to purchase for the activities. We encourage companies to cover the costs of these minor supplies [copies, art/craft supplies, etc.] so the nonprofit you are providing the service to doesn’t have to incur the costs. Of course any food or transportation you provide for your volunteers, t-shirts, etc. will be a cost that you will need to budget.

If we choose to incorporate a fundraising element to our volunteer project, where/how do we encourage our volunteers to contribute?

We hope you will consider engaging your volunteers in a fundraising campaign for the Early Literacy Initiative! You can direct volunteers to the IICF Early Literacy Initiative donation page (below) and the IICF can provide you with reports so you can see how your fundraising campaign is performing. Please feel free to contact your local IICF Executive Director for ideas on fundraising contests and other ways you can raise awareness and funds for the Early Literacy Initiative [https://app.etapistry.com/onlineforms/InsuranceIndustryCharitable/literacy.html]

Will our volunteers need to submit to a background check to volunteer for an Early Literacy Initiative project?

Yes. The majority of organizations that work with/serve young children will require volunteers to submit to a basic background check. This is for the safety of both the children and the volunteers, so we strongly advise you to oblige and if the organization does not conduct background checks, that you conduct them on your end in advance of the project [if you don’t already have one on file for the employees involved].
IICF Staff Contacts
The IICF has four division/regions operating in the United States. Please contact the IICF staff contact in your region to notify them of your intent to conduct a volunteer project. They are available as well to answer any questions you may have as you plan and implement your Early Literacy Initiative volunteer project!

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