

About Reading Is Fundamental... [rif]

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization that has worked with local groups since 1966 to promote reading among American young people. RIF is associated with the Smithsonian Institution and maintains offices in Washington, D.C.

Our method is simple. RIF motivates youngsters to want to read by letting them choose and keep books they like and by showing them that reading is fun and important.

The program works effectively for youngsters of any age from infancy through high school, and can be adapted to suit the needs of young people from all backgrounds.

RIF projects operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.

A Grassroots Approach

RIF works through a nationwide network of some 5,000 community-based projects. These local projects are run by volunteers from all walks of life—parents, educators, members of service clubs, librarians, work-place mentors, community leaders, and others who want to encourage children to grow up reading.

Local RIF sites include schools, libraries, Head Start programs, parks, community centers, clinics—virtually any place that serves or draws children. A program may serve any number of children, depending on available resources. Programs may run year-round, during the school year, or for the summer.

RIF volunteers select and buy inexpensive books and offer them to youngsters at periodic "book distributions," festive occasions when kids are invited to choose a book to keep for their very own.

Volunteers also engage youngsters in activities that highlight the fun of reading. Storytellers, costumed characters, guest readers, and visits by local authors are some of the ways projects generate enthusiasm for books and reading.

Community sponsors are typically parent-teacher groups, service groups, and public agencies such as school districts and libraries. Businesses may provide support with volunteers, funds, and donated services.

RIF's National Network and Services

RIF headquarters provides wide-ranging assistance in conducting effective programs.

Technical Assistance. RIF staff help community groups organize and operate a RIF program. They offer guidance with such tasks as fundraising, book ordering, and volunteer recruitment.

Book Discounts. The national office negotiates nation-wide discounts and other services from over 300 book suppliers. A full listing is made available to local RIF projects.

Ideas and Information. Every RIF project receives the RIF Handbook, containing guidelines for running a RIF program, fundraising ideas, and activity suggestions. Projects also receive RIF's newsletter covering national and local events and featuring original ideas contributed by volunteers working with successful RIF projects across the country.

Publications. Local projects receive sample copies and discounts on RIF's growing line of publications for parents and children. These include a series of Parent Guide brochures, booklets, bookmarks, and posters.

National Programs and Events. All local projects are invited to participate in RIF's National Poster Contest, a mid-winter National Reading Celebration that challenges children to read for pleasure, and festivities during "Reading Is Fun Week." RIF also hosts reading rallies, workshops, and other special events around the country.

What It Will Cost

The full cost of running a RIF program depends on the number of children you want to serve. You can use these guidelines to estimate the cost of a typical program, which provides three books for each child over the course of a school year:

- The cost of books ranges from \$4.50 to \$6.00 a year per child (roughly the cost of three books per child).
- Order additional books-approximately 10% of the total-to ensure that children have a

real choice

- In addition to book funds, your project will want to consider operating expenses such as postage, Photocopying, decorations, refreshments, and materials for motivational activities. (Not all these are necessary expenses, and many projects try to get them donated.)

When you submit your proposal to RIF you must have hand at least 10% of your book funds and be prepared to raise the balance during the course of your program year.

Funding a RIF Project

Most RIF projects now starting up are 100% locally funded. Potential funding sources for a local project include:

Schools and PTAS. Parent-teacher organizations and schools now sponsor the largest number of RIF projects and are excellent sources for funding and volunteers for your program.

Corporations and Small Businesses. Many large businesses contribute money to benefit the communities in which they have offices or plants. Small businesses across the country are increasingly a source of money, equipment, supplies, and services for RIF projects.

Special Events. Many RIF projects raise money by holding bake sales, reading marathons, benefit concerts, fashion shows, car washes, suppers, and the like. Local events, especially those that draw on the culture and diversity of a community, can serve to generate awareness about the importance of reading as well as good will and funding for your project.

Special Funding. Some RIF projects receive matching funds from RIF to purchase books for their programs. These funds are very limited and in great demand. RIF will notify a project of its eligibility for such funding after reviewing the program proposal.

10 Fundamentals

Here are the minimum guidelines for starting up and running a RIF program.

1. Any public agency or private nonprofit group may apply to Reading Is Fundamental to start a program.

Upon request (see the tear-off coupon), we will send a simple proposal form and instructions. RIF staff is happy to answer questions as groups prepare their proposals. If RIF approves the proposal, the group enters into an agreement with Reading Is Fundamental to operate a 12-month renewable project.

2. RIF projects may elect to serve any number of children from infancy through high school age, but all youngsters in the group must be served equally.

For example, if you elect to serve an eighth grade classroom, all children in that class must participate. If you elect to serve children in a second grade Chapter 1 program, all children in that program must participate.

3. Projects must permit young people to select books for personal ownership.

The children must be allowed to choose their books freely, without adult interference.

4. Projects must offer a minimum number of books to each youngster:

* A year-round project must give at least five books through three distributions.

* A school-year project must give at least three books through three distributions.

* A summer project must give at least two books through two distributions.

5. Books must be inexpensive, either paper- back or hardbound.

RIF sets an annual per- book price ceiling, currently \$5.00. Projects serving visually impaired youngsters may also purchase and distribute audio tapes, records, and Braille books that may exceed the \$5.00 ceiling.

6. Projects must have a book selection committee of at least three people to select and order books for distributions.

Ideally, the committee will include a cross-section of the community-parents, teachers, librarians, students, and civic leaders.

7. Projects must provide a wide variety of books at each distribution.

Include different genres, interest areas, and age and reading levels. Ideally, your selections will reflect the interests and diversity of your community.

8. Projects must try to involve parents as much as possible.

The coordinator or a committee notifies parents and guardians about the RIF program before the first distribution or other major activity through letters, posters, or other means. The coordinator will also involve parents of the youngsters in planning and operating the project.

9. Projects must conduct motivational activities to reinforce the desire to read.

Activities should tie in with each book distribution and suit the youngsters' interests and the community's resources.

10. Projects must submit a year-end Program Report to RIF to let us know how your project operated.

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