

Reading Is Fundamental



Volunteer Guide: Recruiting and Supporting your Volunteers

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) recognizes that it is through the great work of volunteers across our communities that RIF and our program sites are enabled to collectively make an impact on children’s literacy. Our many committed and passionate RIF program coordinators, like you, are volunteers and rely on volunteers to support their efforts! However, we recognize that running a RIF program isn’t a one-person job. Recruiting active volunteers is often essential to the success of your program. The goal of this guide is to provide general support for your volunteer needs to help you implement a RIF program and support your local literacy efforts.

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Types of Volunteer Jobs

For help with the pieces that seem too time consuming, are new to you, or would be more fun with a group...just ask! Try to ask for very specific help – people are usually more than happy to help but they need to know exactly what they’re agreeing to support. There are many roles a volunteer can play to support your RIF programmatic work including:

- **Select and order books** - familiarize volunteers with children’s literature and the process of selecting titles that meet the needs of the children you serve for book celebration events.
- **Organize book celebration events** - volunteers can create themes and activities, decorate the area, stock book tables, and encourage children to select their own books.
- **Read books aloud and tell stories** - volunteers are encouraged to get into character when they volunteer to do a read-aloud, such as by dressing as a storybook character. Try to get local role models like firefighters, elected officials, police officers, grandparents, scientists and athletes, to take part in read-aloud activities. Read-aloud activities can be conducted in conjunction with a book celebration event or organized on a regular basis as a service to the school or group of children you support.
- **Plan reading activities** - volunteers can plan and conduct motivational activities such as reading-related games, art projects, field trips and more! Encourage them to visit RIF’s Literacy Central (RIF.org/literacy-central) for thousands of free supplemental literacy activities.
- **Publicize RIF** - volunteers can create and share posters, flyers, and newsletters, as well as reach out to traditional media outlets to generate awareness for your RIF program activities. They can also create and maintain a social media presence to publicize your fundraising and book celebration event efforts.
- **Seek donations** - volunteers can raise funds, write grant proposals, and solicit funding from local community donors as well as local businesses and organizations.

Finding Volunteers

There are many opportunities to find potential volunteers. We suggest reaching out to a variety of local contacts to explore volunteer interest and conduct outreach including:

- Community and civic organizations (Kiwanis Clubs, sororities, Girl Scouts, etc. – these types of organizations are often looking for projects to both fund and support through volunteers). (See Appendix 1 for a list of local organizations)
- Businesses of all kinds (from corporate entities that seek employee engagement opportunities to local bookstores)
- Retirement communities
- High schools
- Colleges/universities (see Appendix 2 for more detail)
- Libraries

If you are implementing a RIF program at a school, parents are often willing and enthusiastic volunteers. Try reaching out to the PTA as a start to see if they would be willing to support your activities.

Be creative in how you recruit your volunteers. For example, have the children write personalized invitations for RIF volunteer opportunities to parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors and other friends. Post volunteer opportunities on your social media and website, neighborhood listservs, library bulletin boards, bookstores, etc.

Please keep in mind that each organization may have its own screening and clearance process for volunteers. You will need to be aware of this requirement. The above are just some helpful ways to identify and recruit volunteers.

Supporting & Training Volunteers

We encourage you to ensure all your volunteers understand the program you are supporting. To kick things off with a group of volunteers, it is helpful to set up an orientation and make sure that all volunteers are familiar with RIF's mission and your specific efforts.

RIF offers several resources that could be helpful to your volunteer training efforts:

- We offer a comprehensive guide to RIF's flagship program, **Books for Ownership**. It may be helpful for any type of volunteer to review this guide to understand the goals and scope of this program.
- To help prepare volunteers to do read-alouds in the classroom or a book celebration event, please use our **Read Aloud Tips**.
- To support your volunteers that may be helping with your fundraising, we have a **Fundamentals of Fundraising Guide**.
- For volunteers creating or supporting related book motivational activities we have a **Motivational Activities Guide**.

Be as specific as possible when outlining a volunteer's responsibilities including the request, timing and the expected end result.

The more information you can provide to a volunteer, the easier and more satisfying the experience will be for them. Help your volunteers by removing all guesswork. For example, if you are prepping volunteers to support a book celebration event provide the following level of detail:

- Event schedule
- Expected attire (provide volunteer with a t-shirt, name tag, etc. so it is clear they are volunteering with you and RIF)
- Directions to event venue, with parking and public transportation information
- Any special requirements (lifting, standing, etc.)

Thanking Volunteers

It is important that you recognize and thank your volunteers. Follow-up ensures that your volunteers will be enthusiastic about your future needs and clearly understand the impact of their volunteer time. There are many ways to show your appreciation for volunteers:

- Request feedback from volunteers and involve them in program decisions and planning
- Give proven volunteers more challenging jobs
- Recognize your volunteers in your communications and social media
- Show your appreciation by sending your volunteers a simple “thank-you” note (see next page for some suggested language) or framed photo from an event.
- Provide your volunteer with a Certificate of Appreciation (see page 7 for a customizable certificate template)

Or, feel free to create your own unique way to thank your volunteers.

Thank You Letter for Volunteers

<Date>

<Your Name>

<Your Organization's Name>

<Street>

<City, State Zip>

Dear <Volunteer Name>,

Thank you so much for your time volunteering to support our <insert name of program> at <your organization name>. Your efforts helped us <main achievement of volunteer work- total money raised, children reached, etc.> We hope you had a great time supporting our efforts!

We are thrilled to be able to provide books for children who need them and inspire a lifelong love of reading. It's wonderful to see the community come together for our children and we were so happy to have you as a part of it.

We value your generous donation of your time and talent and hope to work with you again in the future. If you are interested in ongoing volunteer opportunities, please <provide information about getting in touch, getting on a mailing list, etc.>

With sincere thanks,

<Signature>

Customizable Volunteer Certificate Template

The following volunteer recognition certificate has been created for your organization to easily download, customize and print as needed.

- Download the certificate template: RIF.org/literacy-network
- Customize with the name of the volunteer you wish to recognize, adding in your logo or organization name
- Recommended print size: 8.5" x 11"
- Print in a horizontal format



Appendix 1

Literacy-Minded Community Organizations

RIF partners with a variety of service organizations to drive our literacy impact. Through national partnerships as well as work with grassroots service organizations, RIF and its local program sites receive volunteer and fundraising support to make our work possible.

Below is a list of literacy-minded, youth-serving and civic organizations that you may want to consider reaching out to for volunteer needs. The organizations that RIF has a national partnership with are starred.

4-H

Community development program targeting young people. Local councils conduct programming and informational services in the areas of leadership training and education. www.4-h.org

American Association of University Women

Membership organization dedicated to the advancement of women. Local groups sponsor community-based projects with a focus on lifelong learning. www.aauw.org

Alpha Chi*

Alpha Chi National College Honor Society is an American collegiate honor society recognizing achievements in general scholarship. alphachihonor.org

Alpha Delta Kappa

Honorary education sorority that sponsors grants and international education programs. www.alphadeltakappa.org

Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA)

Public service sorority of African-American women which focuses its efforts on community projects in education, leadership and employment. If your project is located near a college or university, call the school's public information or Greek office number to find out if there is an AKA chapter. www.aka1908.com

Altrusa International, Inc.

Professional membership organization that designs and implements community service projects in the areas of literacy, vocational training, and international understanding. www.altrusa.com

American Legion

Membership organization of honorably discharged veterans that sponsors projects focusing on education, children's services, veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, national security and foreign relations. www.legion.org

Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.

Organization of women's service clubs whose members promote community projects and volunteerism in the areas of education, leadership, health, children's and women's issues, conservation and historical preservation. Connect with your local League to explore their literacy interest. www.ajli.org

Boosters Clubs

Promotes amateur sports and physical education at all levels throughout the U.S. Many local clubs in K-12 schools use proceeds from sports concession stands to support the school's RIF project. If your program is in a school, check with your principal.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

A congressionally chartered national organization of clubs serving young people. Local clubs focus programs on health, social and education issues, usually in urban settings and may be open to supporting RIF programming for their children. www.bgca.org

Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

Honorary women's education society that promotes education. www.deltakappagamma.org

Delta Sigma Theta

Public service sorority of African-American women that helps establish community projects to promote education, leadership and employment. www.deltasigmatheta.org

Future Business Leaders of America

An American career and technical student organization that primarily helps students transition to the business world. As one of the largest student-run organizations in the U.S., local chapters take on philanthropy projects that may align to your RIF programming. www.fbla-pbl.org

Gen2Gen*

Generation to Generation (Gen2Gen) is Encore.org's campaign to mobilize 1 million adults 50+ to stand up for — and with — young people. www.generationtogeneration.org/about-us

Kappa Kappa Gamma*

A collegiate sorority that has a deep commitment to service to others and children's literacy. In 2004, they began a national philanthropy program with RIF and connecting with the local collegiate chapter or alumnae association is a great way to drive literacy impact for your RIF program. www.kappakappagamma.org

Kiwanis Clubs International

Membership organization of business and professional individuals. Local clubs support community-based programs in health, education and international understanding. www.kiwanis.org

Lions Clubs International

Membership service organization dedicated to community service. Local clubs focus attention on environmental, social and health issues. www.lionsclubs.org

National Association of Junior Auxiliaries

Women's service club organization dedicated to promoting responsible leadership through community-based projects. Areas of concentration include education, social services, and historic preservation. www.najanet.org

National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)*

Membership organization of local associations of parents, teachers, students, administrators and other members of the community. Local groups seek to strengthen the home-school-community link on behalf of young people and often raise funds for the school's RIF program. www.pta.org

National Urban League, Inc.

Community service agency that draws from a variety of groups and organizations representing a cross section of the community. Local groups develop and implement community-based projects in the areas of education, health, social welfare, housing and employment. www.nul.org

Phi Beta Sigma

Social service and cultural sorority of business and professional women that operates a variety of community-based charitable programs. www.pbs1914.org

Rotary International

International membership organization of business and professional executives that undertakes community development programs focusing on education, health and international understanding. www.rotary.org

Ruritan National Foundation

Membership community service organization dedicated to creating better understanding between rural and urban people. Local clubs work with young people in schools and colleges and sponsor community programs for the mentally handicapped. www.ruritan.org

United Methodist Women's Clubs

Women's church organization dedicated to community service. Member clubs sponsor a variety of social service projects and charitable causes. www.gbqm-umc.org/umw

YMCA, YWCA, YWHA

Network of organizations whose local chapters provide a variety of social services to the community. These include education, health and recreational programs. www.ymca.net



Appendix 2

Working with High Schools and Colleges/Universities

Local education institutions are a great place to find volunteers and resources for your RIF program. Here are some ideas to get you thinking about how to develop relationships with local high schools and colleges & universities. To get started, contact the Dean of Students, the Director of Student Activities, or the Director of Student Outreach at your local institution.

Service/Experiential Learning Programs

Across the country, many high schools and campuses are beginning to encourage or require students to participate in community outreach activities during their academic careers. In some cases, these activities are tied to a certain major or course; in others, students choose an outreach activity that interests them or fits their schedule. High schools with National Honor Societies have a group of enthusiastic students who must earn service hours to remain in the society. Your RIF program might be eligible to support these types of service-learning opportunities (be aware that you may be asked to track the students' time at your site to participate in this sort of program).

Campus Groups/Events

Most high schools and college campuses have a wide range of clubs, activities, and special interest groups. Often, the school or activities office will host an activities fair early in the year to showcase these groups — your RIF program could publicize its activities or solicit volunteer involvement at this event. Also, across many schools, clubs include a service component — ask if you might speak to a gathering of club leaders about ways they could become involved in RIF. Finally, you may be able to get permission to hold a fundraiser (perhaps a bake sale) in the student center or another high-traffic area.

Greek Organizations (specific to colleges/universities)

Sororities and fraternities (if your local college has them) are an excellent resource. Greek organizations are required to conduct philanthropic activities usually once a semester or quarter. Many organizations will be eager to work with local children, perhaps by helping to plan and host a special themed book distribution event or by serving as guest readers. These organizations often have social events and might be persuaded to use those events as fundraisers for your RIF program. One way to make contact would be to ask to speak at a meeting of the Greek Council (a group made up of the presidents of each organization) about RIF and the opportunities for their members to become involved.

Academic Departments

English or education students or faculty might be asked to serve as advisors to your book selection committee or to make a one-time presentation to your volunteers or staff on children's literature, tutoring techniques, or the educational development of children who are the age of the children your program serves. Public relations, business or design students/faculty might help with your program's material development, fundraising, or publicity efforts. Representatives from any department could be asked to serve as celebrity guest readers at a themed book event. For instance, someone from the marine biology department could come to speak at a "Books on the Beach" event (perhaps following up with a tour of the labs)!

Campus Media Outlets (specific to colleges/universities)

Many campuses have radio or television stations that broadcast to the local community. These media outlets are required by law to include periodic public service announcements (PSA's) as part of their programming. Consider publicizing start-up events for parents or volunteers on these stations, or work with the station's staff to create a PSA to raise community awareness of RIF (the more people who know about what you're doing, the larger the pool of potential volunteers or donors). A campus radio or TV station might also be an interesting destination for a field trip.

Athletic Teams/Events

Local high school and college athletes can be excellent "celebrity" guest readers. Consider contacting the college's athletic department about tours of the facilities or discounted (or free) tickets to games. Even a JV game can be an exciting outing for the children in your program and can be an excellent addition to a sports-themed reading challenge or other motivational activity. If you're near a smaller college, you may even be able to arrange to hold a fundraiser at a game or have your program be the beneficiary of an evening's concession sales (at larger campuses with higher profile sports programs, concession sales are generally heavily regulated).