

# Kiwanis<sup>®</sup>

International

Serving the Children of the World<sup>®</sup>

*A service idea for Read Around the World*

## RIF's background and mission

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), founded in 1966, works to build a literate nation by helping young people discover the joy of reading. RIF's highest priority is reaching underserved children from birth to age 8. A national, grassroots network of thousands of volunteers at nearly 20,000 RIF program sites provides 4.6 million children annually with 16 million new, free books and is engaged in motivational activities celebrating the joy of reading. RIF programs operate in 50 states, the District of Columbia, and all U.S. territories.

RIF is dedicated to motivating young children to read by working with children, their parents, caregivers and community members to make reading a fun and beneficial part of everyday life.

## Need

Educators nationwide agree that reading is the cornerstone of education. Without an ability to read and comprehend, children cannot be expected to learn and understand other subjects, such as math or science. Tragically, the children who are not performing at grade level in elementary school often do not catch up as they get older—these same children are often the ones who drop out of school prior to graduation. The lack of opportunities available to men and women without high school diplomas means the cycle of poverty continues.

## How does RIF impact these statistics?

RIF works to end the cycle of poverty. We put books in the hands of children, and we encourage them to read for fun. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Commission on Reading, reading motivation activities, books in the home, leisure reading and parent involvement are among the best ways to help children become fluent, able readers. The prestigious report acknowledged that the process of learning to read can be tedious, and advises that children should be given opportunities to experience the fun of reading. RIF is one of the key ways thousands of schools and community organizations are teaching children just that.



# Reading Is Fundamental

## SERVICE BULLETIN

### The (cold) facts: Children & Reading

- A child from a low-income family enters kindergarten with a listening vocabulary of 3,000 words, while a child from a high-income family enters with a listening vocabulary of 20,000 words. (Hard & Risley, 1995)
- Eighty-eight percent of children who have difficulty reading at the end of the first grade display similar difficulties at the end of the fourth grade. (Juel, 1998)
- In 2007, the National Center for Educational Statistics released its annual "Reading Report," which asserts that 33 percent of all fourth graders in this country still cannot read at even the basic level. (NCES, 2007)
- Among fourth graders, 58 percent of African-American, 54 percent of Hispanic and 52 percent of American Indian children scored below the "Basic" level on the NAEP.
- Fifty-four percent of all fourth graders eligible for free or reduced lunch scored below "Basic."
- Many students (75 percent) who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school. (Shaywitz et al., 1997)



### The role of Kiwanis

Kiwanis clubs can change the future by giving young children the gift of reading. Clubs should implement RIF projects in centers and schools that serve young children. Clubs can decide how many children to help, what books to order, what activities to provide, and how to raise funds.

All of RIF's program models have the following core components:

- **Books for ownership.** Children have the opportunity to choose and keep three books per year at no cost to the children or their families through book distributions.
- **Fun literacy-related activities.** Volunteers motivate children to read with a myriad of festive book activities that accompany each book distribution.
- **Family and community involvement.** RIF provides support to enable volunteer program coordinators to recruit and train additional volunteers, who help run their programs.

### Benefits and program support

- **Discounted books.** RIF has relationships with approximately 150 book suppliers who offer RIF programs a discount of 20-70 percent on high-quality new paperback books.
- **Access to national and corporate partnerships.** RIF has relationships with many organizations and corporations that provide expanded opportunities for RIF programs.
- **Web site.** RIF's Web site, [www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org), contains information on running a RIF program as well as interactive literacy games and valuable literacy resources for parents, educators, and children. RIF has created a password protected section dedicated to RIF coordinators in which they can fill out paperwork.
- **eNewsletter.** Sent monthly.
- **Program support representative.** A member of the RIF Programs staff, assigned to review your club's proposal, will answer questions and give advice on making your project effective.



### Organizing a RIF project

RIF requires potential sponsors to submit a program proposal for authorization to begin or renew a project. RIF staff can be contacted at any point for technical assistance. Kiwanis clubs that plan to undertake RIF projects will need to go through these steps.

**Contact local agencies to select a site.** A Kiwanis-sponsored RIF project should serve children age 3 through 5. A club might approach a preschool, childcare center, Head Start agency, or any facility that works with youngsters who are not ordinarily exposed to books at home. A club also could seek advice on an appropriate site from the state Association for the Education of Young Children and the regional Head Start office. Any program that serves low-income families is a likely place to find children who would benefit from a reading project.

**Gain approval from the targeted institution.** Explain RIF to the manager or administrator and obtain support to begin the program, pending RIF's approval of the club's program proposal. Explain there is no cost to the facility or the children's families.

**Decide how many children will participate.** Decide which children the club wants to reach and how many. The club may sponsor a RIF project that operates at more than one location. To determine how many children the club can serve, consider these factors:

- The number of children available in a selected group.
- The amount of money the club can spend or raise.
- The amount of work the club is willing to do.
- RIF's requirement that all children in a designated group be served, regardless of income, delayed language skills, or other factors.

**Draft a budget.** As part of the decision to start a RIF program, a club might want to draft a budget for the project. The club might decide whether to conduct a RIF project for the summer, the school year, or as a year-round program. Book distribution, depending on which program the club selects, will vary from at least two to five books for each child.

**If you are operating a program for:**

**You will need to give at least:**

- A school year . . . . . 3 books through 3 distributions
- The summer . . . . . 2 books through 2 distributions
- An entire year. . . . . 5 books through 3 distributions

*Order extra books to allow children a choice.*

$$\frac{\text{Children}}{\text{Books/Child}} \times \frac{\text{Books/Child}}{10\%} + \frac{\text{Books/Child}}{10\%} = \frac{\text{Total books needed}}{10\%}$$

*Assume that books for young children are about \$2.50 after discount.*

$$\frac{\text{Books needed}}{\text{Books needed}} \times \$2.50 = \$ \frac{\text{Total cost for books}}{\text{Total cost for books}}$$

To develop a budget, estimate the number of books you will need. Other expenses may include postage, photocopying, decorations, refreshments and materials for motivational activities. Not all these are required, and your club may find businesses that will assist. To make certain RIF projects

will be adequately funded, the proposal asks applicants to declare the amount of money on hand and the amount that will be raised. After a RIF budget has been developed, present it to the club’s board of directors for approval.



**Paperwork**

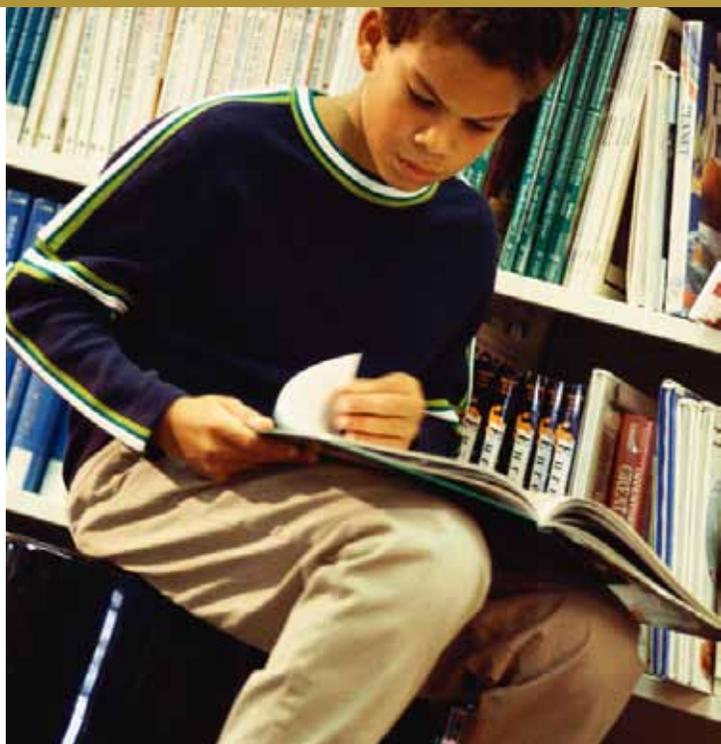
To ensure high-quality RIF programs and accurately report information to the Department of Education, RIF requires the electronic submission of the following documents:

- Service request (one time)
- Proposal (annually)
- Performance report (annually)

**RIF readiness checklist**

Please consider whether your club has the members and time available to fulfill the duties required of a RIF program. To be successful, a strong infrastructure and support system are essential. Will your club be able to:

- Recruit an account coordinator who will serve as the main contact person with RIF’s national office?
- Organize additional members, parents, and other volunteers who will be responsible for planning three book distributions a year? Responsibilities include:
  - Fundraising
  - Book ordering and processing book invoices
  - Planning and carrying out motivational activities at each distribution
  - Recruiting community members to assist and participate in the distributions
- Submit the necessary electronic documents to the national RIF office in a timely manner every year?



## Service request

Once your club feels it's ready to initiate a RIF program, designate an account coordinator to fill out the service request. A service request can be found on RIF's Web site from the following link:

<http://erams.rif.org/Markup/ServiceRequest/InitialInquiry.aspx>

The account coordinator must know the following information:

- Number of kids in the grade(s) funded
- Free and reduced lunch percentage for school
- Other information necessary for service request

As you complete the service request, please indicate the number of children who will be served yearly. In addition, check off the box that requests "private funds" (not "federal funds"). Once the service request is submitted electronically, the account coordinator will receive a link to the proposal. After the account coordinator submits the proposal, a RIF staff member will contact him or her to set up an approval conversation.

## Additional planning (after the program has been approved)

Many RIF programs choose to organize the project by having committees cover the various activities and involve other volunteer groups. Here's a list of committees:

**Book selection.** RIF requires a committee of at least three persons to select books for distribution and recommends that it include teachers, librarians and parents. Those who select and order books should try to match books to children and be sensitive to community standards. Thousands of new children's titles are published each year, so selection is a task that takes time and consideration. RIF arranges for more than 150 publishers and distributors to supply books to local projects at sizable discounts, and the book selection committee may order only from those suppliers. RIF also provides a book supplier profile that lists discounts and a description of the types of books in which each supplier specializes, such as particular reading levels, specific ethnic and religious heritages, sports or classics.

**Motivational activities.** Members in charge of motivational activities, which take place at book distributions, will want to emphasize fun to achieve the serious purpose of encouraging children to read for pleasure and information. They should plan imaginative activities to spark interest in reading, such as bringing in a local storyteller or inviting special visitors—an athlete, a firefighter, the mayor—to talk about their work and why reading is important to them. The special guest might read his or her favorite stories to the children. Other possible activities are puppet shows, reading marathons, poster or billboard contests, parades of costumed storybook characters, illustrating books on posters or bookmarks, inviting children

to pack lunch for a RIFnic, and videotaping book distributions to be shown over local television stations. The RIF Web site offers additional ideas.

**Book distribution.** Working closely with other RIF communities, the book distribution committee could hold the event in the facility's activity room, at the zoo, a park, or a playground. Not all distributions need to be elaborate, but members generally will want to decorate the site and serve refreshments. The chairman might invite parents, Key Club or Builders Club members, or senior citizens to help with a distribution. Book distributions are particularly rewarding because members see firsthand the positive effects of children choosing a book to take home and keep.

**Plan publicity.** Decide how the club will relay information about the RIF program to the children's families. The publicity chairman may wish to send letters home with the children, send news releases to local newspapers, or display posters.

**Involve parents and the community.** Decide how the club can involve parents in the program. Your club might invite them to help with the planning, fundraising, book selection, motivational activities, or refreshments. RIF recommends that the sponsoring group invite parents, librarians, and teachers to be involved in the book selection, as well as staff members from the facility the club chooses to serve.



Clubs outside the United States may access many resources for parents, educators, and children on RIF's Web site. Non-U.S. clubs, however, are not able at this time to purchase books for distribution through RIF.

**For more information about RIF**

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