

Starting a Family Literacy Program

Quality programs respond to community literacy needs using a strengths-based approach where each community and individual's experience, knowledge, and skills strengthen the capacity of the program. (Saskatchewan Literacy Network, *Family Literacy Standards*, p.9)

It is helpful to consider the following questions as a guide to develop, deliver, and evaluate family literacy programs.

Community Needs

- Have you completed a community assessment?
- What are the literacy needs of families in your community?
- What programs are currently addressing these needs?
- Are there gaps or any duplication of services to families?
- How would a family literacy program fill the gaps in family literacy services for your community?
- What program structure meets the needs of the community?
- What resources are needed to support this program?

Collaboration or Advisory Committee

- Have you established a committee based on the skills and expertise of your community to help guide and support your program?
- Have you partnered with other organizations to increase awareness, promote, and support the delivery of the program to ensure its success?
- Have you created formal and informal partnership agreements that outline roles and responsibilities?
- How will you plan for and implement continued funding and expansion?

Program Outcomes and Evaluation

- What specific outcomes do you expect for the families who participate in your program?
- How will the outcomes be measured?
- How will the results be shared with program participants, collaborators, and others?
- Who will be responsible for collecting the data and reporting to funders?
- Have you chosen a variety of evaluation tools that capture both quantitative and qualitative data?
- How will ongoing feedback be used to enhance program delivery and future program development?



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Budget

- Does your budget cover all components that support your program, including administration, team planning, and program costs and evaluation?
- What existing materials are you able to access to support the program?
- Have you documented in-kind contributions from your organization and partnership organizations?

Program Planning

- How will team planning be encouraged?
- How will you determine the program schedule for participants and staff and volunteers?
- Is your program designed to create a comfortable and inclusive learning environment?

Staff Management and Development

- Do you have a thorough screening process, including a criminal record check, to ensure staff and volunteers are suitable for working with families?
- Do your staff and volunteers have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for program facilitation and gathering evaluation?
- How will you strengthen those skills through ongoing professional development and networking opportunities?
- How will you provide support and encouragement for continuous program enrichment?

Program Considerations

- Is your program location safe, accessible and welcoming to all families?
- Are you able to provide transportation, child care, and meals as part of your retention plan?
- Do you have adequate insurance, first aid certification, and necessary equipment such as car seats if transporting families?

The Saskatchewan Literacy Network *Family Literacy Standards* is a guide for program consistency, credibility, and professionalism. The *Family Literacy Standards* document is available on our website.



“Although organizations are as diverse as the communities they serve, the *Family Literacy Standards* are rooted in our collective understanding of what it means to be effective in family literacy practice.”

Saskatchewan Literacy Network. (2012). *Family Literacy Standards*



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