

**Request for Proposals for Evaluating Sesame Street in Communities' *Social Circles*:
Learning for Living Course and Resources (working title)**
December 2022

Background

Children grow and learn from their experiences and in relation to themselves, one another, the caring adults who support them. Creating opportunities for children, their caregivers and educators to build children's self-esteem and healthy relationships with each other enriches young children's learning. For example, social competency, including a positive self-concept is a strong predictor of preschooler's success in school and beyond.¹ Studies have also shown a positive link between family involvement and children's literacy² math³, and social-emotional skills,⁴ and programs that succeed in involving primary caregivers may be even more effective for children and parents from low-income households than more affluent ones.⁵ In addition, research has indicated that when children are able to build positive relationships with each other⁶ and with their educators⁷, they are better able to learn and succeed.⁸

Sesame Street in Communities' *Social Circles: Learning for Living* (working title) is a set of resources that aims to help providers and educators build healthy relationships and a nurturing community as a way to enhance preschool children's learning and social-emotional competence. By creating an environment that promotes family engagement, and where children are able to build healthy relationships and a positive sense of self, providers and educators help ensure children's and families' well-being and long-term success. The resources include an online professional development course for educators, as well as materials that educators can share with parents and the children in their care. The *Sesame Street* online resources include videos, storybooks, articles for primary caregivers and educators, as well as printable activity sheets with the friendly and entertaining *Sesame Street* characters.

The special relationship that children form with the *Sesame Street* Muppets and the trust that parents, caregivers, and providers have for the *Sesame Street* brand create unique opportunities

¹ Van Voorhis, F. L., Maier, M. F., Epstein, J. L., & Lloyd, C. M. (2013). *The impact of family involvement on the education of children ages 3 to 8: A focus on literacy and math achievement outcomes and social-emotional skills*. MDRC.

² Hindman, A. H., and Morrison, F. J. (2011). *Family involvement and educator outreach in Head Start: Nature, extent, and contributions to early literacy skills*. *Elementary School Journal*, 111(3), 359-386.

³ Sheldon, S. B., Epstein, J. L., and Galindo, C. (2010). *Not just numbers: Creating a partnership climate to improve math proficiency in schools*. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9(1), 27-48.

⁴ Sheridan, S. M., Knoche, L. L., Edwards, C. P., Bovaird, J. A., and Kupzyk, K. A. (2010). *Parent engagement and school readiness: Effects of the getting ready intervention on preschool children's social-emotional competencies*. *Early Education and Development*, 21(1), 125-156. doi: 10.1080/10409280902783517.

⁵ Noble, K. G., Duch, H., Darvique, M. E., Grundleger, A., Rodriguez, C., and Landers, C. (2012). *Getting ready for school: A preliminary evaluation of a parent-focused school readiness program*. *Child Development Research*, 2012, 1-14. doi:10.1155/2012/259598.

⁶ Frejd, J. (2021). When children do science: Collaborative interactions in preschoolers' discussions about animal diversity. *Research in science education*, 51(1), 21-42.

⁷ Marvin, C. A., Moen, A. L., Knoche, L. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2020). Getting Ready strategies for promoting parent-professional relationships and parent-child interactions. *Young Exceptional Children*, 23(1), 36-51.

⁸ Halfon, N., Shulman, E., & Hochstein, M. (2001). Brain Development in Early Childhood. *Building Community Systems for Young Children*.

for children connect with themselves and each other and help providers and educators to connect with the families they support.

The Proposed Evaluation

Research is at the core of Sesame Workshop’s model for creating engaging and effective content for young children and families. To that end, we are seeking an evaluation team to conduct an evaluation (randomized control trial) of an **online intervention for early childhood educators of 4-year-old children focused on improving: children’s social-emotional competence, adult-child relationships, and family engagement among preschool educators and low-income families of the children they care for** over a 10- to 12-week period.

Children in the evaluation should be 4-years-old by October 1, 2023.

The evaluation team will be responsible for identifying and selecting qualified early childhood educators, particularly those serving low income and minority families, and parents/primary caregivers of 4-year-old children within the continental US for a “treatment condition,” and to also recruit a separate but relatively similar set of educators for the “control/business-as-usual condition.”

Our goals for the research are to assess the impact of the Sesame Street resources on:

- children’s relationships with each other and their adult caregivers, including interpersonal skills and social problem-solving skills
- educators’ knowledge, attitudes and self-reported behavior regarding ways to promote healthy relationships and communication with parents/primary caregivers (family engagement) and with the children they care for, as well as ways to support preschoolers’ development of: a strong sense of themselves, a sense of belonging, interpersonal skills, and social problem-solving skills.
- Parents’/primary caregivers’ knowledge and attitudes regarding educators’ efforts to promote family engagement and develop a sense of community for the classroom.

We encourage a quantitative methods approach, where adult responses will be collected via online surveys administered before and after exposure to the Sesame Street resources. Children’s data would be collected by educators and/or the evaluator in an agreed upon methodology. Qualitative methods may also be employed to complement the quantitative approach, if budget and timeline allow.

In addition to the evaluation, a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed publication based on the findings from the final report will be expected.

Timing

The intervention will take place over a 10- to 12-week period beginning in September 2023. Proposals should plan for completion of a baseline evaluation in August, 2023, and an endline

survey for December, 2023. A summary report of preliminary findings will be due on April 1, 2024. A final report will be due in June, 2024. Manuscript for submission to peer-reviewed journal will be due October, 2024.

Sample

The target sample for the intervention will include 4-year-old children (4-years-old by October 1, 2023) who are diverse ethnically and socio-economically, their educators, and their primary caregivers.

We request an oversampling of BIPOC children and low-income children.

Educators who participate in this study may work in center-based settings caring for multiple children in the desired target age (4-years-old by October 1, 2023). Evaluator will assist educators, their directors, and/or other relevant staff, with engaging parents/primary caregivers to participate in the study.

The sampling procedure must consider demographic variables such as child's current primary caregiver, race, socio-economic status, geographic region, child's age and gender, as well as educators' and primary caregivers' level of education. The analyses will examine the project's educational impact by SES, child's age, parent's/primary caregiver's age, race, gender, and other variables to be recommended by the proposer. A power analysis should accompany the description of sampling methodology.

Outcomes and Measures

The measures used in the evaluation must reflect the project's educational goals and be age- and culturally-appropriate. We expect researchers to pilot test the measures before fieldwork to ensure their validity and to make certain that other common measurement issues (such as a ceiling effect) are addressed. The evaluation will measure developmentally appropriate outcomes in adults, as well as outcomes in children.

The main outcomes of interest for providers will focus on:

- changes in attitudes, knowledge and self-reported behavior regarding: supporting children in developing a strong sense of self, building interpersonal skills, having a sense of belonging, and social problem-solving skills, and in engagement with primary caregivers to develop their young children's social-emotional competence.

The main outcomes for parents/primary caregivers will focus on:

- changes in attitudes, knowledge and self-reported behavior regarding engagement with providers to develop their young children's social-emotional competence.

Main outcomes for children will focus on:

- changes in knowledge and/or behavior regarding their interpersonal skills, and their social problem-solving skills.

Outcome for treatment groups will also include assessing appeal (educators, primary caregivers and children), as well as utility and relevance (primary caregivers and educators) of Sesame Street materials.

Proposal Components

Proposals shall include a provision for delivery of the following elements:

1. **Research Design:** Proposals shall outline the design of a potential study or set of studies including:
 - Description of implementation measurement
 - Suggested outcome measures
 - Data collection plan, including a description of monitoring and quality control measures for data collection; a description of how researchers are trained and ways in which researchers will ensure that they adhere to the ethical standards of research set forth by the Society for Research on Child Development (<http://www.srcd.org/about-us/ethical-standards-research>). We expect the evaluation team to obtain IRB approval for this work.
 - Data analysis plan that outlines how data will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the project's impact
 - Timeline
2. **Budget:** A detailed budget for the project shall be submitted with the research proposal. The budget shall include separate sections outlining costs associated with each data collection wave.
3. **Key personnel:** CVs or biographic summaries of key personnel.
4. **Past evaluations and references:**
 - A 1-2-page description of similar or comparable studies in which the agency has engaged in the past, or similar work sample
 - Contact information for at least 2 previous clients for references

Deliverables

Researchers will deliver the following for the evaluation:

1. **Baseline report:** After completing the baseline data collection, researchers will submit a report of findings.
2. **Data analysis plan:** Before endline data collection begins, researchers will submit a detailed data analysis plan that describes how data will be analyzed to draw conclusions about the project's impact.
3. **Endline report:** The researcher will submit a draft version of the report of the findings to Sesame Workshop for review prior to the completion of a final report (in English). The report must include an Executive Summary.
4. **Powerpoint summary:** The researcher will submit a summary of findings with appropriate graphics in Powerpoint created for a non-research audience.
5. **Manuscript.** The researcher will compose a manuscript based on the endline report that is formatted and appropriate for submission to peer-reviewed publication.
6. **Data, original instruments, videos, IRB approval document, consent forms, data and other material:** Researchers will be required to submit an electronic version of data (in SPSS or SPSS-compatible format), as well as original instruments, and any videos made

of children during the research sessions. Instruments will be in the local language (if applicable) and English. Quantitative data will be submitted in English and qualitative data should be submitted in the original language and an English translation. These items will become the property of Sesame Workshop. Note: The researchers selected will have access to instruments used in previous Sesame Workshop assessments, which can be used as a base for creating questionnaires and other data collection devices for the proposed study.

Deadline

Proposal should be submitted by **January 25, 2023**. A decision will be made by **January 31, 2023**.

Budget

The research proposal should not exceed a budget of US \$335,000

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Experience in conducting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative research and knowledge of media research methodologies
- Experience conducting educational research with young children
- Experience conducting educational research with families with young children and organizations who support these families
- Experience conducting research with early childhood educators, and on family engagement and children's social-emotional competence in particular
- Experience conducting research in low-resource contexts
- Experience conducting research in English
- A demonstrated capacity to work in a range of settings and to deliver products in a timely fashion under tight and strict monitoring, management and deadlines
- The ability to produce high-quality reports
- The ability to conduct high-level analyses such as multivariate analyses and multi-level modeling
- Feasibility of study within budget and time parameters
- Appropriateness of research design
- Capacity to execute proposed study

How to Submit Proposals

Submit proposal via email to: david.cohen@sesame.org. Please note the following in the email subject heading: **Proposal for Sesame Street in Communities Evaluation**. Upon submission of a proposal, bidders will be asked to submit a Contractor Information Form.

Questions are welcomed! Please contact david.cohen@sesame.org

Disclaimers and Terms of this RFP

1. Sesame Workshop will not compensate offerors for preparation of their response to this RFP. All expenses incurred in the preparation of the Proposal in response to this RFP is at your sole cost and responsibility.

2. This RFP does not guarantee a resulting contract and Sesame Workshop is under no obligation to offerors unless and until a written agreement is signed by Sesame Workshop and offeror.
3. Sesame Workshop may withdraw or amend this RFP at any time.
4. This RFP may result in one or more contracts for parts of activities.
5. Sesame Workshop may request additional rounds of responses based on more detailed instructions or requirements.
6. Information provided by Sesame Workshop in connection with the RFP process, including this document, is confidential to Sesame Workshop. Proposals produced under this RFP belong to Sesame Workshop. Any distribution of such Proposals must first have written authorization from Sesame Workshop.
7. Offerors are not entitled to any compensation or payment for any submission to Sesame Workshop or Sesame Workshop's use of such submission for any purpose. Offerors acknowledge that Sesame Workshop in good faith will have the sole discretion to determine whether any compensation is due to offerors for use of any submitted materials. Offerors recognize that any creative materials, concepts, ideas and techniques that are disclosed to Sesame Workshop may be similar or identical to, in whole or in part, to creative materials, concepts, ideas and techniques already developed, in development, or to be developed in the future by Sesame Workshop.
8. Offeror will retain a copy of its Proposal and hereby releases Sesame Workshop from any liability for loss of, or damage to the copy of the Proposal that is submitted to Sesame Workshop.
9. All intellectual property and related materials provided to offeror by Sesame Workshop shall remain the sole and exclusive property of Sesame Workshop and no license is granted to offeror other than as may be necessary for offeror to prepare and submit its Proposal hereunder. Offeror understands and agrees that Sesame Workshop is entitled to use any part of the Proposal which is not concrete or does not itself constitute protectable and/or copyrightable property without compensation to offeror.
10. No work may be sub-contracted out on this proposal, unless otherwise agreed to by Sesame Workshop.
11. Any contract to be entered into between Sesame Workshop and an offeror will be for work provided solely as work-made-for-hire, with ownership and all rights belonging to Sesame Workshop.
12. The cost estimate and proposed time-line and all other terms and conditions stated in your Proposal must remain valid for 180 days from the date of delivery of the Proposal to Sesame Workshop.