



# 2024 - 2025 My First Books Program Requirements and Application Guidelines

## What is My First Books?

My First Books (MFB) is a Read to Me outreach program designed to give underserved children the opportunity to take home age-appropriate books and build a home library. For many participating children these are the first quality books they can call their own.

My First Books targets children from birth to age six who are unlikely to have many books in their homes, have a library card, or utilize library services. The program provides an age-appropriate paperback book each month during the school year for each participating child (infants and toddlers receive a board book rather than a paperback book). My First Books parents receive a monthly newsletter, "The Bookworm," which suggests tips and strategies to support early literacy skills at home (also available in Spanish).

In addition to providing children with books, a goal of the My First Book program is to encourage contact between participating families and librarians to promote local library services. Each year the number of children the program can support is dependent on the Idaho Commission for Libraries' fiscal budget.

## Desired Program Objectives:

1. Participating children increase their access to books by starting a home library.
2. More underserved families have library cards and use the public library.
3. Participating children increase early literacy skills.
4. Parents of participating children increase their knowledge about early literacy and home literacy activities.
5. Strengthen partnerships between public libraries and community organizations.
6. Library staff develop personal connections with children and families.

## Program Eligibility:

- Participating libraries must be a **public library**. *School libraries are not eligible to apply for this program. School libraries may apply for a School Library Access mini-grant if they have not yet received one: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/school-libraries/elementary-school-grants/>*
- Each library must have a **community partner** who provides a childcare or education program for "underserved" children; that is, children who are unlikely to have many books at home and/or are not as likely to utilize library services, such as:
  - Children in lower-income families
  - English Language Learners
  - Teen parents
  - Children in daycare
  - Children with developmental disabilities
  - Refugee children
  - American Indian children, especially those residing on reservations
  - Children living in rural areas in which the library is a great distance away
- Community Partner must offer **consistent enrollment** for childcare or preschool services from September through May. Drop-in programs or summer programs do not qualify (i.e., Boys and Girls Club, Migrant Seasonal Head Start, etc.)\*

*\*You may apply for the Library Outreach to Children Program to give books to organizations with whom you conduct one-time outreach: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/outreach-to-children/>*

## Program Requirements:

### A) Groundwork:

- Library must agree to participate fully (see program requirements below) in the program from August 2024 – May 2025.
- New participants are expected to attend a half-day training in August (TBA). Returning participants

may attend a one-hour online training in August (TBA).

- Participants meet with community partners in August or September to plan and schedule monthly storytime visits.

#### **B) Book Distribution:**

- Books should go to the same children every month.
- **All children** in the classroom (school, daycare or preschool) must be included in the monthly distributions, rather than just a subset of identified children.
- Monthly book distribution **begins in October and ends in May** (8 books total).
- Monthly book distribution and storytime/book activity is by library staff (paid or volunteer), face-to-face with children (no mailing of books or leaving them at a center or classroom to be delivered later).
- Only the designated titles may be given to the designated age group during the designated month.

#### **C) Early Literacy Event:**

- Each library site must provide one **workshop for parents of participating children** or one **family event held for My First Books families** that focuses on early literacy skills and library services.

#### **D) Evaluation:**

- Distribute and collect the **"My First Books Parent Survey"** at the end of the nine-month program.
- Submit a Final Report and parent surveys by **June 1, 2025**.

**How to apply:** The application process is electronic and will be submitted through "JotForm.com". Please add this address to your "safe senders" list. DO NOT submit the program application until after you have received the completed Community Partner Information form/s from your prospective site/s. Before you apply:

**1) Read through all program requirements.** *Only publicly funded Idaho libraries may apply.*

**2) Contact community partner(s).** Each community partner with whom you plan to work must submit a Community Partner Information form, which obtains information about the type of organization, and the ages and demographics of the children they serve (including percentage of Free/Reduced Lunch recipients or Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) recipients.) No identifying personal information about families will be collected. The form also asks for the contact name and information of the person who will be working with the library, and the organization's director's or principal's contact information.

- a) **Print a copy of the Community Partner Information Handout** for each partner site found at <http://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/my-first-books/>. Fill in library and applicant's contact information. (The partner will use this information to submit the community partner information online form.) Include a deadline date.
- b) **Give to each partner you are including on your application and ask them to submit the online form.** The paper handout gives them information about the program, the library's contact information, and the link to the online form. When the partner submits the form, copies will automatically be sent to ICfL, the partner's administrator, and the library applicant (that's why you put the library's email information on the handout).

**3) When you've received your copy of the online Community Partner Information Form from each partner with whom you intend to partner (via the auto-emails), submit the MFB Application,** available at <http://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/my-first-books/> or at this link: <https://form.jotform.com/icfl/MFB-2024-2025-Application>.

**4) Submit applications by April 20, 2024. No late applications will be accepted.** (If you have a partner who has not submitted its form before the deadline contact [staci.shaw@libraries.idaho.gov](mailto:staci.shaw@libraries.idaho.gov).)

## To consider before applying:

**Age group guidelines:** The three age groups for the My First Books program are:

- Birth through age two (board books), infants and toddlers, generally up to 35 months
- Preschool, generally ages 3 through 5, have not yet entered kindergarten
- Kindergarten, ages 5-6, attending public/private kindergarten program (non-faith-based)

### Need Statement:

Question #5 on the application asks how participating in this program will fulfill a need in your community. You must include **data and statistics** for your demographic area. A list of sources is provided in question #5a. Choose at least one of these sources and include the data within your narrative response. The more sources and data you include in your response in #5b, the stronger your need statement will be.

### Choosing Partners:

Libraries may apply to work with **up to three** partners. A "partner" is **one site/location**. You can list two additional partners, and if we have funding we will go back and review those additional requests. We want to reach the neediest children, so we will especially look for partners who serve high percentages of the following families:

- **Low-income.** Based on free/reduced lunch rates for school; Idaho Child Care Program assistance (ICCP) rates for preschool/daycares; Head Start; Early Head Start; WIC; census data
- **English Language Learners (ELL).** Typically, newcomer families, or families whose home language is not English. This could also include **refugee families**.
- **Children with developmental delays.** Typically, developmental preschool programs.
- **Teen parents** in alternative schools, such as schools for pregnant or parenting teens, or programs in which parenting teens are enrolled. Library must have face-to-face contact with the teen parents, at which the librarian models literacy behaviors through storytimes.

### Other considerations:

Libraries are encouraged to sign families up for public library cards. When a community partner (like Head Start) serves families outside a library jurisdiction, some accommodation for nonresident library cards should be considered. Applications that include accommodations are ranked higher than those that require MFB families to pay a fee for nonresident cards.

Community Partner elementary schools that have received an ICFL "School Library Access to Books Minigrant" will be ranked lowest, as those children now have increased access to books with grant funding.

If several staff from one library plan to share the distribution responsibilities, please choose *one person* to submit the application and agree to be the point person for communication. You can list the other staff in the narrative of your application under #6, Description of Distribution Plan.

### How applications are weighted:

Applications will be reviewed by Read to Me Staff and other ICFL staff using a weighted scoring system. My First Books participants will be chosen based on their overall application and need statement.

**High priority** will be given to public libraries who:

- 1) Have never participated; who have participated for fewer than three years; have not participated in the past three years.
- 2) Are partnering with teen parent programs and/or providers who serve preschool children, especially those serving low-income children, ELL and tribal children, refugees, and children with developmental delays.
- 3) Can provide library cards to MFB families at no cost or very limited cost.

Applicants will be notified on the status of their application at the end of May/beginning of June. If funding is limited, application requests may be partially approved.

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