

Request for Proposals for an Evaluation of the Digital Wellbeing Course for Caregivers and Providers November 2024

Introduction

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We're present in more than 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through a wide range of media, formal education, and philanthropically funded social impact programs, each grounded in rigorous research and tailored to the needs and cultures of the communities we serve. For more information, please visit sesameworkshop.org.

Project Context

Sesame Workshop is committed to fostering healthy media habits and promoting digital literacy among children, families, and caregivers. To reduce the confusion and lack of understanding among families with young children about how to establish a safe and age-appropriate foundation for digital wellbeing, Sesame Workshop has developed the Digital Wellbeing initiative to provide families and providers with essential knowledge, practices, and resources to guide digital wellbeing in early childhood. This will help establish safe learning and exploration that serves as an important foundation for digital wellbeing.

As part of this larger initiative, Sesame Workshop has developed a Digital Wellbeing online course to help caregivers and education and health providers cultivate "habits of mind" that nurture healthy relationships with technology. By encouraging reflection on current media practices and promoting new strategies for safe, balanced digital behavior, the course empowers families and communities to build on the foundational principles established for early childhood digital wellbeing. The course includes the following components:

- Building on Strengths: Identifying and amplifying positive media habits already in place.
- Introducing New Practices: Encouraging participants to adopt new habits that promote mindful and healthy media use.
- Equipping Participants: Providing resources and frameworks to advocate for digital wellbeing within families and communities.

Through practical activities, digital tools, and reflective exercises, the course aims to empower participants to foster safe online environments and strengthen their capacity to engage with media responsibly. This course takes approximately three hours to complete and is designed to be finished within 1-2 weeks. However, participants may choose to complete it all at once, depending on their pace and availability.

The target audience for the Digital Wellbeing course includes:

1. Providers: Professionals working with children and families who take the course to disseminate the information to the communities they serve. This may include, but is not limited to the following:
 - Educational Specialists: Early Childhood Educators, Intervention Specialists, Parent Educators, and Librarians.
 - Therapeutic and Support Services: Social Workers, Family Support Workers, Child Life Specialists, and Art Therapists.
 - Caregiving Professionals: Childcare Providers, Home Visitors, and Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers (FFNs).
 - Healthcare Providers: Pediatricians, Child Psychologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Occupational or Physical Therapists (though they are not the primary focus).
2. Caregivers: Adults living with children without professional training but involved in daily caregiving, such as:
 - Parents, Guardians, and Grandparents.
 - Extended Family Members: Aunts, Uncles, and Kinship Caregivers.

The course is designed to provide these groups with practical strategies to foster meaningful connections between children and the adults in their lives through media. It emphasizes helping both providers and caregivers guide children's media use, share information to strengthen relationships, and prepare communities to navigate digital environments effectively.

This RFP invites proposals from experienced research and evaluation organizations to assess the program's impact on participants' knowledge, behavior, and ability to apply the course content in personal and professional contexts.

The Evaluation

The evaluation will follow a quasi-experimental design, focusing on knowledge acquisition, behavioral changes, and the application of course practices. The process will be carried out in the phases presented below. The timeline provided is subject to change and may be adjusted based on programmatic needs and developments.

Phase 1: Tool Development and Piloting (January 15 - April 15, 2025)

- Develop and finalize survey tools, interview guides, and data collection instruments.
- Pilot test tools with a sample group to ensure clarity and reliability.
- Refine instruments based on feedback from the pilot phase.

Phase 2: Baseline Data Collection (April 16 - May 16, 2025)

- Collect baseline data on participants' initial knowledge, attitudes, and media habits using the finalized tools.
- Ensure data is ready for comparison with post-course results.

Phase 3: Post-Course Data Collection and Analysis (May 17 - July 15, 2025)

- Administer post-course surveys and assessments for learners as they complete the course between May and June.
- Conduct interviews and focus groups with selected participants to gather qualitative feedback.
- Analyze data on a rolling basis as learners finish the course to identify trends early.

Phase 4: Final Data Analysis and Reporting (July 16 - August 31, 2025)

- Complete final analysis of all collected data, comparing pre- and post-course outcomes.
- Prepare key findings to assess learning outcomes, behavior changes, and overall program impact.

Phase 5: Reporting and Dissemination (August 15 - September 15, 2025)

- Submit a draft report to Sesame Workshop for review.
- Refine the report based on feedback and submit the completed version with an executive summary.
- Present findings to Sesame Workshop and stakeholders through a webinar or in-person meeting.

Important Note:

Since participants will begin and complete the course at different times between May and June, the data collection process will need to be adjusted accordingly. This flexible approach will ensure we capture all relevant insights and outcomes while accommodating the participants' varied schedules.

Outcomes and Measures

The measures used in the evaluation must reflect the project's educational goals and be age- and culturally appropriate. Researchers must pilot test the measures before fieldwork to ensure their validity and to ensure that other common measurement issues are addressed. The main objective of this course is for participants to be able to guide, share, and prepare for effective media use in early childhood settings. This evaluation aims to explore how the intervention influences the outcomes focused on participants' ability to:

1.1 **Guide** early learning environments to integrate media thoughtfully, ensuring it enhances children’s learning experiences by helping them learn more and in new ways.

1.2 **Share** developmentally appropriate information that fosters relationships and connections, enabling providers and caregivers to build stronger bonds with children in their care through media.

1.3 **Prepare** learning communities to navigate the complexities of the digital world by promoting online safety and literacy, equipping them to adapt to a future that continues to evolve.

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:
 - Sampling strategy, including sample size justification, and a description of how comparison/control groups will be determined and how the sampling will account for any attrition that may occur
 - Research 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
 - 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 and their roles in the evaluation.
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 in English.
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. **1-2 page summary:** The researcher will submit a 1-2 page summary of findings with appropriate infographics created for a non-research audience.
5. **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

The Proposal should be submitted by December 12, 2024.

Budget

The research proposal should not exceed a budget of US\$250,000.00, with a final report due on September 15, 2025.

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
- Experience conducting research in low-resource contexts
- 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 the proposed study

How to Submit Proposals

Submit the Proposal via email to Amin Marei, Senior Director of Impact & Efficacy, at amin.marei@sesame.org. Please note the following in the email subject heading: Sesame Workshop Digital Wellbeing RFP. Upon submission of a proposal, bidders will be asked to submit a Contractor Information Form.

Ethical Standards

Research involving human subjects must adhere to the highest ethical standards to ensure participants' wellbeing, privacy, and dignity. The evaluation of the Welcome Sesame program must follow Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidance and address the following:

1. **Informed Consent:** Obtain informed consent from all participants, including children, caregivers, and educators. Ensure understanding of participation risks and benefits.
2. **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Safeguard participants' information through secure storage and anonymization. Maintain confidentiality throughout the research process.
3. **Beneficence and Non-maleficence:** Prioritize participant wellbeing and avoid harm. Mitigate potential risks, including psychological discomfort.
4. **Respect for Participants:** Respect participants' rights, autonomy, and dignity. Avoid coercion and ensure the right to withdraw from the study.
5. **Protection of Vulnerable Populations:** Take special care with vulnerable populations, such as children and displaced persons. Consider their unique needs and circumstances.
6. **Conflict of Interest:** Disclose any conflicts of interest and minimize bias. Ensure research integrity and objectivity.
7. **Compliance with Regulations:** Adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines governing human subjects research. Obtain approval from an ethics review board prior to commencing the study.

Disclaimers

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 are 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 about 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 the offeror by Sesame Workshop shall remain the sole and exclusive property of Sesame Workshop, and no license is granted to the offeror other than as may be necessary for the 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 the offeror.
10. No work may be subcontracted 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 timeline, 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.