

Request for Proposals for an Evaluation of the Sesame Workshop *School Readiness Through Outdoor and Play-Based Learning* Resources

June, 2026

Introduction

Sesame Workshop is the global impact nonprofit behind *Sesame Street* and so much more. For over 50 years, we have worked at the intersection of education, media, and research, creating joyful experiences that enrich minds and expand hearts, all in service of empowering each generation to build a better world. Our beloved characters, iconic shows, outreach in communities, and more bring playful early learning to families in more than 150 countries and advance our mission to help children everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Learn more at www.sesame.org

Project Overview

Sesame Workshop and [PNC Grow Up Great](http://PNC.org) have collaborated nationally and locally to support children's learning in literacy, math, science, and social-emotional development. This work emphasizes school readiness, family engagement, and educator capacity, especially in under-resourced communities.

Building on this foundation, Sesame Workshop—supported by the PNC Foundation—has launched a program focused on *School Readiness Through Outdoor and Play-Based Learning*. This initiative centers experiential, play-based, and outdoor learning as accessible pathways to early science, math, and literacy development.

Sesame Workshop seeks proposals from qualified research organizations to design and conduct an impact evaluation of the educational resources, including a web-based adult learning app, developed through this initiative.

The evaluation should assess change over time in the practices of child care providers, caregivers, child learning experiences, and family engagement, and examine how outcomes vary across contexts.

Project Context

Young children's learning depends on exploration, play, physical activity, and engagement with their environment. However, many children—particularly those in economically marginalized or urban communities—face limited access to outdoor and experiential learning opportunities. Despite strong evidence that outdoor and play-based learning supports early development across multiple domains, educators report barriers including lack of access to safe spaces, weather constraints, and insufficient training. This program aims to present outdoor learning as an extension of everyday learning that can occur across contexts.

Project Background

The goals of the program are to develop new learning materials for young children ages 3- to 5-years-old and the adults who care for them that:

- Support educators, families, and communities in embedding learning into everyday

environments

- Center children’s curiosity as a driver of learning

The core component is a [web-based app](#) designed to build adult learning. The app is intended to support professional development by giving providers and caregivers flexible, on-demand access to practical strategies, modeled activities, and implementation ideas they can apply in everyday routines and learning environments. Because the platform does not generate backend usage data, the evaluation design must incorporate alternative strategies for assessing engagement and implementation.

The target audience for the resources includes:

- Providers, such as center-based early childhood teachers, family day care providers, and family childcare providers (FCCs)
- Caregivers, including adults living with children without professional training but involved in daily caregiving, such as: Parents, Guardians, and Grandparents and extended family members, such as Aunts, Uncles, and Kinship Caregivers

The Evaluation

Research is at the core of Sesame Workshop’s model for creating engaging and effective content for young children and families. We expect this evaluation to use primarily a quantitative approach, and experimental design (pre/post) that compares participants’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors before and after exposure to the resources. We encourage use of qualitative methods to augment the findings (e.g., focus groups, individual interviews, or other qualitative data collection methods). We propose quantitative data will be collected through repeated, pre-test (before exposure to the resources) and post-test (after exposure to the resources) web-based surveys administered online. Qualitative data will be collected with a subset of the survey respondents to provide additional detail and supplement the quantitative data. Where feasible, proposals should include a comparison strategy (e.g., comparison group, staggered rollout, or analytic approaches to approximate counterfactuals). All data collection efforts will adhere to the principles in the ethical standards of [research guidelines](#) set forth by the Society for Research in Child Development’s Governing Council (2021).

The evaluation will focus on the Sesame Workshop resources, and should aim to assess Providers’ and Caregivers’:

- Satisfaction with Sesame Workshop’s resources
- Implementation of Sesame Workshop’s resources
- Changes in caregivers’ and providers’ knowledge, attitudes, and reported behaviors regarding support of young children’s school readiness through play-based and outdoor learning.

Outcomes and Measures

The evaluation will examine the impact of the Sesame Street resources over time on provider and caregiver practices, child learning experiences, and family engagement, as well as variation across contexts.

Proposals must address the following evaluation outcome questions and clearly describe how each will be measured, including data sources, instruments, and analytic approaches.

Provider Outcomes

To what extent do the Sesame Street resources influence Providers’:

- knowledge of outdoor and experiential learning strategies
- attitudes toward value of outdoor learning as part of overall learning
- confidence and frequency in using outdoor and non-traditional spaces for learning
- instructional practices related to:
 - Science, math, and literacy learning
 - Play-based and experiential approaches
 - Use of outdoor or non-traditional learning spaces

Child Outcomes (as reported by Caregivers and Providers)

- How do Sesame Street resources influence children’s curiosity, engagement, and skills in science, math, and literacy?

Caregiver Engagement (as reported by Caregivers and Providers)

- How do the resources influence parents’/primary caregivers’ engagement with and support of children’s learning, such as:
 - knowledge of outdoor and experiential learning strategies and ways to connect everyday moments and environments to learning experiences
 - confidence and frequency in using outdoor and everyday indoor spaces for learning.

Equity and Context

- How might diverse contexts support or hinder impact and/or implementation of the Sesame Street resources – do outcomes vary across:
 - Community contexts (e.g., urban, rural, under-resourced, local climate)?
 - Children and families from diverse backgrounds (e.g., racial, ethnic, socio-economic)?
 - Times of year/seasons?

Implementation Measurement

- How do providers and caregivers use the resources?
- How useful are resources to providers and caregivers?
- Are resources implemented with fidelity?
- To what extent are providers and caregivers engaged with the resources?
- How does implementation influence outcomes for providers, children, and caregivers?

Given the absence of backend analytics for analyzing use of the online resources, alternative approaches must be specified (e.g., logs, self-report, observation, or other method recommended by evaluator).

Sampling

Participants will include Providers and Caregivers of children 3-to 5-years-old. The sampling procedure must consider demographic variables. For example, for providers variables include: providers’ role, level of education, years of experience, specific experience with supporting children’s outdoor learning, familiarity with media-based resources to support teaching, race, geographic region, ages of children they support, native language(s) spoken (English, Spanish),

as well as demographic variables of children and families they support, such as race, geographic region, income of families they serve, native languages.

For parents/caregivers, variables include: caregivers' role, level of education, age, specific experience with supporting outdoor learning, familiarity with media-based educational resources, race, geographic region, age of child, race of child, native language(s) spoken (English, Spanish).

The analyses will examine the research participants' responses by providers' and caregivers' role, level of education, years of experience (for providers), age of children being served, geographic region, and caregiver gender. A power analysis should accompany the description of sampling methodology. Where feasible, proposals should include a comparison strategy (e.g., comparison group, staggered rollout, or analytic approaches to approximate counterfactuals).

Implementation and Scope & Sequence Plan for Providers

Implementation Plan Requirements

The selected vendor will lead the development of a comprehensive Implementation Plan and a detailed Scope & Sequence to support research participants' use of the Sesame Workshop resources. Plans should reflect best practices in educational media implementation, including integration with existing programs, support for providers and educators, and alignment to instructional goals.

The Implementation Plan must include:

- Clear project phases (e.g., onboarding, trainings, pilot, ongoing support)
- A detailed timeline aligned to the intervention period and schedule of participating providers' programs
- Roles and responsibilities of research vendor staff
- Training and training plan for providers
- Communication plan for stakeholders and user support
- Strategies for ensuring high adoption and effective usage across
- Risk identification and mitigation strategies (e.g., technical issues, adoption challenges, access inequities)
- Ongoing monitoring strategies
- A visual project timeline (e.g., Gantt chart)
- Training materials and user support resources (e.g., guides, presentations, virtual office hours, etc.)

Scope & Sequence Requirements

Sesame Workshop will lead in providing a detailed Scope & Sequence that outlines how implementation will progress over time. The selected vendor may be asked to support Sesame Workshop in development of the Scope & Sequence as needed. The Scope & Sequence will include:

- Sequencing of onboarding activities, training sessions, and distribution of resources
- Estimated duration and pacing for each phase
- Key milestones (e.g., training completion, usage benchmarks)

- Differentiated supports for various provider groups (e.g., center-based, family-based, home-based)

Proposal Components

Proposals shall include a provision for the 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
 - Plan for Implementation and Scope and Sequence, as outlined in the appropriate section above
 - 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>)
 - 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. **Interim reports:** After each phase, researchers will provide an interim report summarizing findings and adjustments needed in program design for the following phases.
3. **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.
4. **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. The researcher will compose a manuscript based on the endline report that is formatted and appropriate for submission to peer-reviewed publication.
5. **1-2 page summary:** The researcher will submit a 1-2 page summary of findings with appropriate infographics created for a non-research audience.

6. **Data, original instruments, final implementation and scope and sequence plans, videos, IRB approval document, consent forms, 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 **July 27, 2026**. A decision will be made by **August 19, 2026**.

Budget

The research proposal should not exceed a budget of **US\$390,000** with a final report due on **March 15, 2028**.

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 families with young children
- Experience conducting research with child care providers of young children
- Experience conducting research in low-resource contexts
- Experience conducting research in the area of outdoor learning with young children
- Experience conducting research on implementation of online initiatives with childcare providers and caregivers
- Experience evaluating use and impact of digital media educational content with young children, parents/caregivers, and child care providers.
- The ability to recruit desired sample (e.g., primary caregivers and child care providers of young children of diverse backgrounds and locations within the U.S.)
- The ability to produce high-quality reports for both researcher and non-researcher audiences
- 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 School Readiness Through Outdoor and Play-Based Learning**. 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' well-being, 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 well-being 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 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 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 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.