

2027 APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Prime Time Family Reading is a [national program](#) serving 6- to 10-year-old kids and their families. Participants build early literacy skills, engage in critical thinking, and connect with each other through the act of reading and discussion.

These discussions encourage kids and adults alike to find personal connections to the themes in the story and talk through big ideas like empathy, justice, and compassion.

... ELIGIBILITY ...

- New Jersey-based public libraries and other youth-serving organizations may apply to be Prime Time Family Reading host sites. These organizations may work in partnership with other nonprofit organization(s) in their communities, but the award will be made to and must be administered by the applicant.
- Organizations with an open NJCH grant or other program award are not eligible to apply for this program until the final report has been approved and the award has been closed.
- Eligible host sites must have facilities with ADA-accessible spaces for approximately 30-50 participants to gather in-person and share a meal, as well as a separate area for younger children to gather for their stories and activities. The applicant may hold their sessions at a separate site that meets these criteria.

... TIMELINE ...

Prime Time Family Reading programs take place over six consecutive weeks in either the fall or spring of 2027. Applicants can indicate their preference for fall or spring programs in the application and must attend training prior to the program's implementation. Applicants who wish to conduct their programs in the spring should apply ahead of the October application deadline to receive their award and training in time for program implementation in spring 2027.

	Spring 2027 Programs	Fall 2027 Programs
Applications open	September 1, 2026	February 1, 2027
Application deadline	October 29, 2026	March 31, 2027
Award notification	By November 30, 2026	By April 30, 2027
Implementation period (Sessions must take place between these dates)	March 1-July 30, 2027 or September 1, 2027-December 31, 2027	September 1, 2027- December 31, 2027
Final report	Within 30 days of final session	Within 30 days of final session

Exact dates for gatherings will be determined by each host site and are subject to approval from NJCH.

... PROGRAM TEAM ...

Host sites are required to staff a program team fulfilling the following roles. The team may be made up of staff, volunteers, or community members. NJCH recommends having most program team members identified at the time of application.

Training through the Prime Time national network is required before any individual may serve in any role in the program. Team members will receive manuals and other training materials in advance of training workshops. Virtual trainings take place through the national network in January and July each year. In addition, NJCH will host at least one in-person training session each year.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Manages the planning and implementation of Prime Time at the host site by gathering the program team, coordinating all logistics (book purchase, meals, door prizes, etc.), promoting the program and recruiting participants, and handling all administrative needs with NJCH. This person must be an employee of the applicant organization.

SCHOLAR

Facilitates post-story discussion of humanities themes and issues found in the books and eagerly transmits their love of reading and talking about books to audience by modeling techniques for initiating and encouraging conversation. Must be comfortable working with participants with limited reading skills and those who may not have experience talking about books.

PRESCHOOL COORDINATOR*

Attends to the needs of younger siblings who attend the programs. Presents age-appropriate books and activities related to the theme that will engage this age group during stories and discussion for older siblings and their adults.

STORYTELLER

Reads the stories at each session, demonstrating read aloud techniques for parents. Assists the Scholar with preparation and facilitation of the post-story conversation. While this person should feel comfortable presenting to a large group, it is recommended that they not be a trained actor or storyteller.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER*

Assists the program coordinator with recruitment of families to participate in the program. Assists with the preparation of the space for each session. Welcomes families and assists with their needs during each session (serving food, making nametags, giving directions, troubleshooting problems).

**These roles are recommended but optional and may be combined with another role depending on the needs of the host site, provided responsibilities for program implementation do not conflict.*

Beyond the program team, host sites may recruit volunteers to assist with program activities such as checking families in, sharing information, serving food, or wayfinding.

... BOOKS ...

At the heart of every Prime Time program is a series of thematically grouped children's books that serve as a jumping off point for humanities-focused discussion. Host sites are required to choose one of the curated book series created by the Prime Time national program.

Host sites may either purchase their own books with program funding or borrow books from NJCH. Purchased books are generally given to the participating families to supplement their home libraries. Borrowed books must be returned to NJCH.

Series options may be viewed at <https://primetimefamily.org/prime-time-reading-providers/#book-series>.

... FUNDING AND EXPENSES ...

Prime Time Family Reading hosts receive an award of \$5,000 - \$6,500 to support the planning and implementation of their programs. The application requires a budget estimate showing how expenses will be allocated for each host site's program. Sample budgets are included in the application.

Host sites are responsible for covering the following expenses:

- Program team stipends (as needed, particularly for non-staff).
- Food for each meal and serving materials (plates, cups, utensils, napkins, etc.).
- Marketing and outreach for the program.
- Program supplies, including prizes and giveaways.
- Expenses associated with the site (for example, rental fees, security, overhead).
- Translation (if needed).

NJCH is responsible for covering the following expenses in addition to the program award:

- Annual participation fees to national network for each site.
- Training fees.
- Any expenses related to NJCH staff's attendance at program events at each site, including transportation, parking, and staff time.

Each site will report on how funds were spent as part of the final report. No match of awarded funds is required. However, host sites must track any funds matched by the host site (both cash and in-kind) and include that information in their final report.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Eligible expenses include:

- Salaries and benefits
- Fees and honoraria
- Local travel
- Books
- Book bags
- Publicity and marketing expenses (including postage, printing, video/audio recording, or photography related to the program)
- Food and beverages
- Gift cards
- Other supplies and equipment directly related to the program (check with NJCH staff if you're not sure what might fit in this category)

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Ineligible expenses include:

- Travel not directly related to program implementation (for example, to professional conferences or workshops)
- Academic courses, workshops, or training
- Capital expenses, including construction, preservation, or renovation
- Purchase of equipment not directly related to or necessary for the completion of the program
- Acquisitions or cataloguing outside established Prime Time curriculum
- Lobbying and fundraising activities
- Expenses incurred before the established award period
- Ticket fees
- Food or beverages not directly connected to Prime Time programs

... SELF-FUNDED PROGRAMS ...

There will be a limited number of spaces available for organizations that wish to participate in this program and are able to self-fund its implementation. NJCH will cover the fees associated with joining the network and training, but will not provide any additional funding to sites that choose a self-funded option. If you are interested in going this route, please reach out to us to discuss.

CONTACT US

If you have questions about this program, please contact:
Gigi Naglak, Director of Programs, at gnaglak@njhumanities.org