



DREAM IT \* BE IT   
CAREER SUPPORT   
*{for girls}*   

# Planning Toolkit





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A SOROPTIMIST/LIVEYOURDREAM.ORG RESOURCE

## Welcome to Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls!

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### I. Introduction

*Dream It, Be It Goal: Through education and access to role models, girls will be empowered to pursue their career goals and reach their full potential.*

Welcome to the Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org global program for girls – [Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls](#). Dream It, Be It targets girls in secondary school who face obstacles to their future success. It provides girls with access to professional role models, career education and resources to live their dreams. The topics covered include career opportunities, setting and achieving goals, overcoming obstacles to success and how to move forward after setbacks or failures.

Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org conducted research around the world to discover what girls need and what Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org could do to address those needs. We received 412 survey responses from girls in 22 countries, conducted 50 focus groups with girls in seven countries, consulted secondary research and interviewed experts working with girls.

We found girls faced myriad barriers to living their dreams. However, girls and experts agreed that girls need access to mentors and trusted adults who can share their knowledge and guidance. This was the perfect intersection of the needs of girls and what Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org is able to provide. Together, we will build Dream It, Be It into a worldwide-recognized program to empower girls to reach their full potential and live their dreams.

Secondary school is defined as schooling that follows elementary and middle school and is followed by higher education or vocational training. Typically, girls in secondary school are aged 14 to 18.

### Career Support:

Help and assistance, including financial, to pursue an occupation that will offer opportunities for long-term success. Although we don't think all girls will know what they want to do for the rest of their lives, the skills they learn in Dream It, Be It will help them regardless of the career they choose to pursue or when they choose to pursue it.

### Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org Dream Programs

Dream It, Be It joins Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org's long-running program Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. As the Live Your Dream Awards is our cornerstone program for assisting women, Dream It, Be It is the primary way we assist girls.

These Dream Programs of Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org provide significant assistance to women and girls so that they may have access to the education and training they need to reach their full potential and live their dreams.

Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org is committed to investing in programs that demonstrate a sustainable, measurable change for women and girls. For more information about our impact, visit our website.

## II. Planning Process

### Step 1

- Introduce Dream It, Be It to other volunteers and gauge their interest in participating
- Form a planning committee of volunteers

### Step 2

- Conduct a community assessment (see Section III)
- Select a model: small group mentoring sessions or a conference
- If you're already working with girls, plan ways to adapt your project to support the goal of Dream It, Be It
- Create an advisory group of girls to support project development
- Finalize dates, community partners, and locations
- Identify speakers, supporters and sponsors

Form a committee made up of passionate, dedicated volunteers to drive the planning, implementation and evaluation of your Dream It, Be It project.

### Step 3

- Determine what background checks are required by your state and community partner(s) to work with youth (US and Canada only)
- All Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org volunteers working on site with girl participants must complete state required background checks and read the [Training on Standards for Abuse Prevention When Working with Youth](#)

### Step 4

- Review the [Dream It, Be It Curriculum Guide](#) which helps volunteers understand and effectively use the curriculum
- Review the [Dream It, Be It Curriculum](#) with your planning committee
- Adapt the curriculum sessions as needed based on culture and life experiences of participants
- Work closely with an advisory group of girls to gain input and feedback from girls themselves to fit the curriculum to your specific audience

## Step 5

- Review the other Dream It, Be It resources including:
  - Planning Resources
    - [Dream It, Be It Frequently Asked Questions](#)
    - [Dream It, Be It Video](#)
    - [Research Paper](#)
    - [Participation Summary](#)
    - [Customizable Community Partner Proposal](#)
    - [Sample News Release for Conference](#)
    - [Sample News Release for Small Group Mentoring Sessions](#)
    - [Promotional Flyer for Girls](#)
    - [Sample Letter to Parents](#)
    - [Parental Consent Form](#)
  - Supplemental Resources
    - [Career Inspiration PowerPoint](#)
    - [Tips for a Successful Project](#)
    - [Tips for Facilitating Groups](#)
    - [Dream It, Be It Merchandise](#)
    - [Dream It, Be It T-Shirts](#)

## Step 6

- Review the Dream It, Be It evaluation materials including:
  - [Evaluation Guide](#)
  - [Evaluation Form for Girls](#)
  - [Reporting & Evaluation Worksheet](#)
  - [Online form to submit evaluation data](#) of your project to Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org

## Step 7

- Hold your Dream It, Be It Project!

## Step 8

- Complete the Reporting and Evaluation Worksheet
- Use the online form to submit evaluation data within one month of your project ending

## III. Conducting a Community Assessment

At the beginning stages of the research and design process for Dream It, Be It, Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org conducted research and a global needs assessment in its 19 countries and territories. The program focus of career support was selected primarily because it was a need identified by girls around the world. But the specific needs and services available to girls differ from one location to the next. Now it is your turn to conduct local research and a community assessment.

### The goals of the community assessment are to:

- Determine available support services for girls, and whether or not they include career support.

- Determine the needs of girls in your community and how Dream It, Be It can address these needs.
- Identify potential community partners for the project and begin to develop relationships with these potential partners. Partners may be able to help identify girls who can benefit from the project or possibly assist with the project by acting as speakers or mentors.
- Explore local businesses that may be able to provide financial or material support. Ensure you are not replicating the good work of other organizations.
- Build support for your project as you begin to engage stakeholders.

Possible partners will be schools, government offices, Girl Scouts or Girl Guides, girls clubs, YMCA, YWCA, other non profits, universities, and girl's crisis centers/homes.

#### To help guide the assessment, ask questions such as:

- What organizations or agencies are already working with girls?
- Are local agencies, schools or organizations providing career support for girls?
- What type of girls do these programs target? Are any girls excluded?
- What other groups, businesses or types of individuals would be interested in supporting Dream It, Be It?
- Do schools have college and/or career counselors? What kind of support do they provide?

A great place to start your community assessment is with people you already know. Ask other volunteers or people in your social network if they have connections with local organizations working with girls and/or local schools. Have them reach out to these connections to find answers to the above questions. These connections will likely be able to point you in the direction of even more potential partners or sources of information.

Keep track of contacts made during the community assessment. Even if you do not choose to work with some of the organizations, schools or businesses you identified, you may need them at later stages in the project as resources or supporters for girls participating in Dream It, Be It.

## IV. Partnering with Girls\*

As you begin to plan your Dream It, Be It project, it is important to include girls not just as beneficiaries but as planners as well. As with any project, getting the input of the population you are seeking to help is vital. This is especially true with girls who often struggle to have their voices heard. To accomplish this, create a partnership with girls by forming a Girls Advisory Group to help plan, implement and evaluate your project. This partnership means that both groups – volunteers and girls – should have the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions regarding Dream It, Be It.

### Why Should We Partner with Girls?

When girls are actively involved in the planning of projects for them, the project is more likely to be a success. Take advantage of the expertise girls can offer. Letting girls have the authority to make decisions about Dream It, Be It helps to develop important skills such as leadership, planning and teamwork. Also, being a part of a partnership can build a sense of belonging and the feeling of being needed and valued. This in turn helps girls build self-esteem and confidence.

### How to Build a Girls Advisory Group

Your advisory group should be reflective of the girls you are hoping to reach through Dream It, Be It. For example, if you are planning to work with a particular school in your community, girls for your group should be selected from the student body. They can also help recruit program participants and help conduct follow up with their peers.

Include a girl on the planning committee. The Girls Advisory Group can select their representative.

There are a number of different ways to find girls to participate. Volunteers can partner with schools, social service agencies, community organizations, or they can reach out to sports teams or religious centers. During your community assessment, you probably identified a number of organizations working with girls.

In the future, your best candidates will come from past Dream It, Be It participants.

### Tips for Working with Girls:

Working with girls may be new to you. Use the following tips when working with girls to ensure a good relationship:

- Ask girls for their opinions and seriously consider and value their input. If their ideas cannot be implemented, explain why.
- Adult volunteers are initiating the program, but important decision-making should be shared with girls.
- Give girls challenging, responsible roles, as well as the training and support they need to succeed in those roles.
- Treat girls as individuals and assure them you are interested in their unique opinions. Don't assume one girl represents the views of all girls.
- Don't move too fast. Remember it takes time to develop trust and rapport with girls.
- Schedule meetings when girls can attend and in a location that is accessible to them.
- Remember girls will have other interests and responsibilities. Don't overwhelm them with responsibility and understand if they have to say no.
- Don't expect more from the girls than you would from another adult or hold them to a stricter standard.
- Remember that your role in a partnership with girls is not to parent. We want to give girls different ways to relate to adults.
- Don't talk down to girls – encourage them with patient love and support.
- Make sure girls have parental permission to participate in the project.
- Provide girls with a public transportation stipend to get to/from Advisory Group meetings, small group mentoring sessions, or a conference.

\*When working with girls, it is [necessary to get background checks](#) based on the rules of your state. This is required by Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org's insurance company to protect the organization and volunteers from liability that can arise from working with young people.

We asked volunteers working with girls what was one thing they wished they had known about girls but had to learn during their project:

- "I learned to understand and expect cultural, generational, socio-economic differences between the girls and Soroptimists." — **Ana Neal, Garden Grove, CA**
- "I learned that girls go through stages of complete confidence to absolute despair and that the mentorship relationship is so critical for girls and their families – especially in the teen years." — **Susan Hollandsworth, Ashland, OR**
- "I learned that girls' intelligence and feelings are intense." — **Elissa Wilson, Evanston, WY**
- "We found highly motivated young women with an enthusiasm for helping others. Teens are sometimes portrayed as self-centered but we found the more they were involved in the community, the more they wanted to contribute." — **Carole Celler, Upper Montgomery County, MD**
- "I learned how incredibly multi-faceted the problems and challenges young women are facing and the complexity of helping them in a modern world." — **Monica Dixon, Sequim, WA**
- "I wish I had known how starved for attention the girls would be. I expected disinterest and a view that we were just old ladies. Instead, they were very responsible and happy to spend time with us." — **Dorothy Pierce, Centre County, PA**

## V. Selecting a Model: Small Group Mentoring or a Conference

The [Dream It, Be It curriculum](#) provides information to help girls understand and reach their career goals. Volunteers can select one of two models to deliver this information – small group mentoring sessions or a conference. The decision is driven by the outcomes of the community assessment and what volunteers are interested in doing. Both models will involve similar work and preparation.

### Small Group Mentoring

Small group mentoring involves volunteers meeting with a small group of girls for an hour or so over a series of weeks or months. One session of the curriculum is addressed at each meeting. The number of girls able to participate is determined by the number of interested girls as well as the number of interested volunteers. We suggest no more than four girls per volunteer.

### Conference

A conference may accommodate a larger group of girls who come together to learn the curriculum in a shorter time period. A conference setting would require volunteers to find the right space to host the

conference, design the conference program based on the curriculum, secure speakers and make sure you can get an audience for one day. You can reach a larger group of girls in a shorter time but will not build as deep of relationships as those in the small group mentoring sessions. A weekend or a school break or holiday is the best time for a conference.

Both models will include fun, team-building activities for girls and can be repeated year after year with new groups of girls.

## VI. Building Partnerships

During the community assessment, you identified other organizations, businesses, individuals and contacts at schools that are working with girls. Once you have chosen a model, it is time to contact potential partners. This may be the first time volunteers are working with girls or on the topic of career support. Partnership with schools or other local organizations that share your goal of helping girls can increase the impact of your project.

In addition:

- Partnerships can enable you to reach a larger audience of girls and accomplish work you could not have done alone.
- Partnerships can make better use of resources by dealing more effectively and thoroughly with a social issue.
- Partnerships can increase the number of organizations that are aware of and working on issues affecting girls.
- A project can gain credibility by having established groups and partners associated with it.

When talking with other groups, also identify individuals who could serve on the planning committee. Involving important stakeholders in the planning will help you achieve a successful project.

Review your community assessment to determine what you will need for your project. Then identify local businesses, organizations or schools that can be most helpful to you and also have something to gain from partnering with you. Reach out to them and start to build a relationship.

The two most essential qualities of a successful partnership are clearly defined expectations and ongoing communication. Work with your partners to define expectations and responsibilities. You may want to draft a written agreement to clearly outline the roles and expectations. Plan multiple opportunities for communications so all the partners stay informed. Also, be sure that indicators of success have been agreed on by all partners. All the stakeholders should have the same agreed upon definition of success.

## VII. Finding Girls to Participate in Dream It, Be It

Dream It, Be It aims to reach girls who do not have access to the resources or information to live their dreams. The program focuses on girls in secondary school – or the schooling before they receive a degree or diploma. In most cases, the girls will be between the ages of 14 and 18.

Girls of other ages might benefit from the program, but yearlong research done by Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org to create the program identified this specific need for this specific population of girls.

Although all girls face barriers because of their gender, we are trying to reach girls that have additional obstacles, such as coming from low-income communities, unstable home lives, a minority, immigrant or

refugee family, foster care, or a teen parent situation. Helping these girls identify their career goals and path to success will help them to overcome the barriers and obstacles they face in their future. Specifically, these girls:

- Face obstacles to their success
- Are at risk for having their dreams derailed
- Lack access to professional role models
- Do not have access to career education
- Do not know what steps to take to accomplish their goals

In general, think broadly about the needs of your community in order to determine a target audience that would benefit most from involvement in this program. Similarly to the way you identified girls to participate in your Girls Advisory Group, you can reach out to schools or community organizations or reach out to sports teams or religious centers. Consider contacting a school guidance counselor to reach girls who may be at risk of dropping out of school prior to graduation, or the staff of girls' organizations, girls' summer camps, teen programs, teen pregnancy shelters, or foster care organizations.

Also, when you conducted your community assessment, you should have identified other organizations working with girls. Use these resources to find girls or to advertise your project.

As you begin to identify girls, keep in mind the two options for delivering the project – a conference or small group mentoring series. The size of the group and the specific needs of girls may determine which method is a better fit.

(See IV. Partnering with Girls, "Tips for Working with Girls")

### **Background Checks Needed to Work with Youth**

In some countries, there are rules about working with youth. It is necessary for you to check your state and/or country laws to find out what background checks or other clearances are needed for volunteers to work with girls. In the United States and Canada, all volunteers working on site with girls in Dream It, Be It need to have background checks completed. This is required by Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org's insurance company to protect the organization and volunteers from liability that can arise from working with young people.

We recommend the screening provider [Info Cubic](#), but another background check source may be used. Please reference our [Procedures for Working with Youth documents](#) for more information.

### **VIII. Finding a Location**

It is important to find a space that is conveniently accessible and fits the size and availability of your group. Try to find a casual, comfortable space that is not far from the center of town or from most girls' schools or organizations. If the location is too far away, transportation barriers might prevent some girls from participating

There are many different community resources to consider when deciding upon a location. First, check with local schools to see if they have available classrooms, gymnasiums or auditoriums during lunchtime, after school, or on weekends.

Local community centers - a YMCA, YWCA, or fitness/yoga center - may have suitable rooms available for public use. Additionally, halls or centers affiliated with local religious communities might be available to rent.

Clubs may also contact local universities, which typically have large lecture halls and classrooms available during off-hours. Nearby hotels, retreat centers, summer camps, and conference centers are feasible locations as well.

Once you have secured a location, set date(s) and times for your project.

## IX. Creating a Budget & Raising Funds

### Creating a Budget

Once your plan is in place, create a budget. Identify both expenses and revenue. When creating a budget, itemize with as much detail as possible. Once an initial budget has been created, compare it to your resources. Chances are the budget is greater than the available resources. At this point, you must decide how to raise funds to make up the difference.

### Raising Funds

As fundraising requires considerable time and energy, identify three to five volunteers to form a fundraising committee. There are four main ways to raise funds for a project:

- Hold a community fundraiser
- Solicit sponsorship from local businesses
- Apply for grants
- Request donations from community members

**Community fundraisers** are an excellent way to raise funds and to also raise the community profile of Soroptimist/LiveYourDream.org.

In your community assessment, you identified businesses that might be interested in supporting your project. Sponsoring a Dream It, Be It project provides businesses a chance to show they are committed to giving back to the community. Solicit **sponsorships** by making a request for cash donations, in-kind donations such as food or giveaways for the girls, or discounts on materials and/or services. Provide a brief description of the project and offer reasons why the business should sponsor it. What will they get in return? How will you acknowledge and publicize the sponsorship? Let them know if there are other sponsors.

Another option for funding is **community grants**. Research possible grant opportunities and apply for funding.

Additionally, donations can be requested from **individual community members**. If you identified individuals in your community assessment who might be willing to financially support your project, follow up with them for a cash donation. You can also solicit donations from other volunteers, but remember that volunteers are already giving generously with their time and energy.

## X. Next Steps

At this point, you will have formed a planning committee and a Girls Advisory Group, selected a small group mentoring or conference model, identified community partners, considered where to find girls to participate and the location of your project, as well as how to raise funds for your project. The next step is to plan for the project details in your community. Some issues to consider:

- Review the additional Dream It, Be It resources (see II. Planning Process, Step 5)
- Brainstorm, research, and contact guest speakers for relevant curriculum sessions
- Identify and order additional Dream It, Be It materials including [journals](#), [bracelets](#), [stickers](#), [pens](#), [t-shirts](#), etc.

**Congratulations! You are now prepared to review the [Dream It, Be It Curriculum Guide](#) and the [Dream It, Be It curriculum](#) and implement your project!**

