



SKPL

Science Kits for
Public Libraries

IEEE

Program Manual

An Impact You Can Scale

At Science Kits for Public Libraries (SKPL), we've built our program so volunteers can jump in and help at any stage of the process – with the amount of time their schedules allow! In this document, you will learn about the 5 biggest areas where you can help libraries and librarians apply for a SKPL grant and develop their program – including many of the “what’s worked?” tips we’ve learned along the way.



Grant Application Process



Research Kits



Assemble Kits



Raise Awareness



Grow the Program

**Whether you are able to help out with individual tasks as a
Plug-In Volunteer or take on a high impact role as a Dedicated Volunteer
– all assistance is valued and welcomed!**





Mission

SKPL is an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE) program that raises funds for public libraries to make science kits as easy to check out as a book! With access to a public library and valid library card, children can check out high-quality, hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) experiences at zero cost to their parents.



Grant Application Process

- Take 30 minutes to educate your public library about SKPL & their grant process
- Work with your local library fill out the SKPL application form

What's Worked?

Approaching your local library to teach them about SKPL and its application process is a great way to bring a science kit collection to your community. BUT! If you want to go one step further, you can reach out to your library system's foundation, to see if they would help coordinate a branch-wide application process. This was wildly successful for the Chicago Public Library system, launching SKPL programs in each of their 80+ library branches.

Application form and application samples are available at sciencekitsforpubliclibraries.org



Research Kits

- Help research kits and make kit recommendations for purchase
- Help research & test kit carriers for your library
- Help develop curriculum and instructions for the kits

What's Worked?

KIT CARRIERS

While we don't have a formal recommendation on kit carriers, we've found that the most successful carriers and containers have included:

- Mesh backpacks
- Clear, plastic tote bags

When picking the carriers for your science kit collection, it's important to think through what will be easy to clean; easy to transport; what will fit in the space available and what will best showcase the kits so kids can see inside!



Sample Kits



Assemble Kits

- Assemble the kits
- Help develop processes around check-out & returns
- Help name your library's SKPL program
- Think through a depreciation plan

What's Worked?

TAGGING

Kits must include tagging with the SKPL and IEEE logo, in addition to any major funders that sponsored the collection.

CHECK-IN PROCESS

Existing SKPL libraries have found that making 1 person the dedicated check-out and return resource, makes it easier to ensure all pieces are returned, that the kit is in good functioning order and that batteries are replaced (if necessary).

LOST OR DAMAGED PIECES

We've found that science kit manufacturers are typically willing to resend a missing piece, or replace it for a fee – so be sure to keep an index of who and where you purchased your kits from!



Sample Tag

Ideas!

- Because batteries die out quickly, their replacement can become a surprise expense to libraries. To help off-set the cost, we recommend including verbiage or a laminated card that reads:

“Enjoyed your Science Kit? Consider returning it with 2 new AA or AAA batteries or a value pack to help keep it powered!”

- Include a feedback card with the kits so patrons can make suggestions or report problems.



Raise Awareness

Raise awareness for a library's science kit collection by helping librarians think through how they can best advertise their collection – and how you can raise awareness for SKPL as a whole!

For Libraries:

We encourage you to think through what would attract the most visibility for your kits by asking:

- Is this on a page on the library's website?
- Is it in a monthly email blast?
- Is it sharing the kit names & curriculum with local educators?
- Does this mean you should have posters or signs in visible places throughout the library?
- Does it mean hanging posters at your local Starbucks?
- Does it mean you should develop bi-lingual advertising – to reach to all members of your community?



Raise Awareness

For SKPL:

Help us raise awareness for the program by sending us fun content for social media and PR! The 3 biggest assets we're looking for are:

- Photos of children interacting with the kits
(Smiling faces make the best advertising!)
- Photos of SKPL checks being presented to grant recipients
- Success stories or patron testimonials

Photos, success stories and testimonials can be sent to John A. Zulaski at johnzulaski@ieee.org. Please be sure to include your public library's name and physical address!

What's Worked?

Promoting your SKPL collection on your library system's website is a great way to raise awareness for the collection, as is in-library signage with photos of the kits! A main focus for the program is to make sure the kits are getting checked out and inspiring the next generation of STEM thinkers – so, it's important to let patrons know they're available, at zero cost to the public!

Idea!

Include verbiage or a laminated card in your kit curriculum that encourages borrowers to send pictures of their children playing with the kits or fun testimonials to John A. Zulaski at: johnzulaski@ieee.org





Grow the Program

- Find donations from like-minded organizations like Lions, Rotary, etc.
- Find Corporate Sponsors

Beyond the Grant!

SKPL provides catalyst grants to get science kit collections started, BUT the fun doesn't have to end there! Many libraries have gone on to fundraise, find corporate or individual donors to build out and expand their kits.



Looking to help out a little more?

Help us grow the SKPL program by adopting a high impact role!

Dedicated Volunteer Roles

Advocate:

An ADVOCATE spreads the word of SKPL within their networks and helps to identify like-minded sponsors or organizations who can support a local library or library branch.

- Much of this role is committing to getting people engaged at the application, fundraising and volunteer level.



Ambassador:

An AMBASSADOR develops and maintains a relationship with their local public library on behalf of SKPL.

- Much of this role is ensuring that your library or library system is informed on the grant opportunities; meeting the requirements of an awarded grant & helping them make their science kit collection a long-term success
- Maintains the kits
- Assists with in-house STEM programs

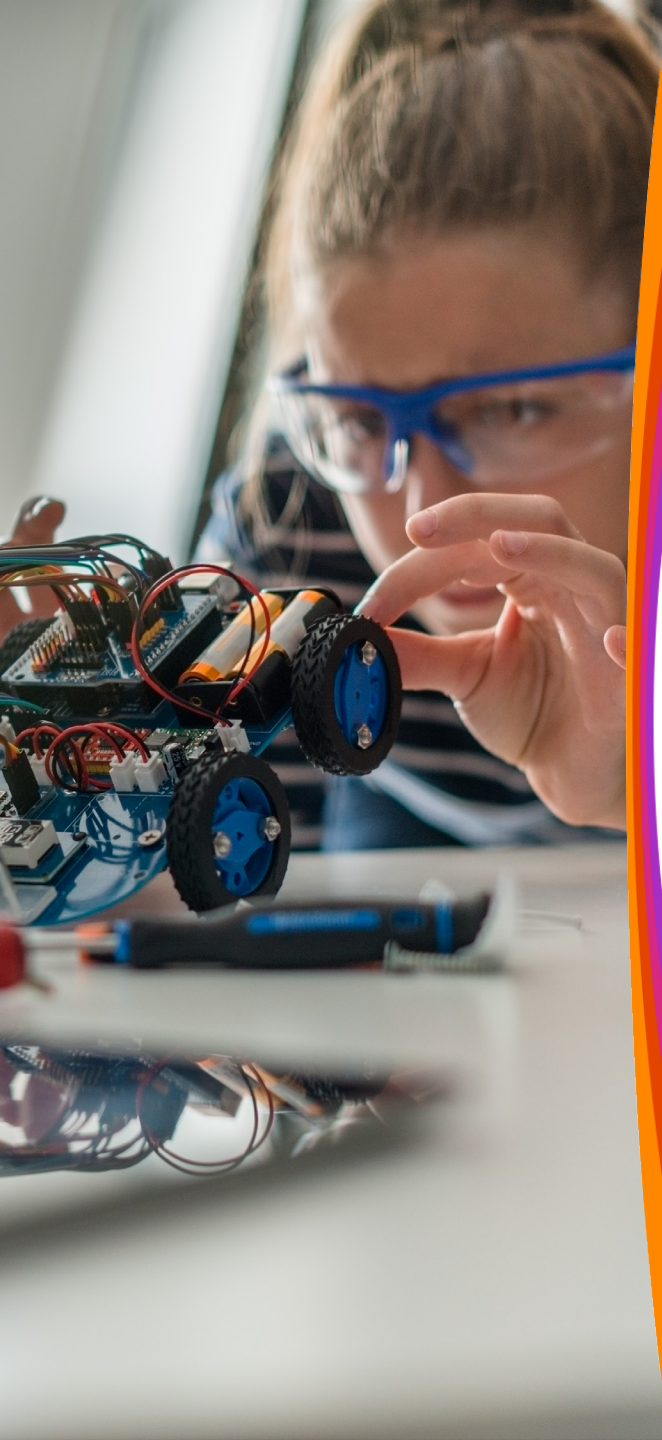


Champion:

The CHAMPION supports the SKPL Committee by independently taking on high value projects.

Such projects may include:

- Sourcing new volunteers
- Training new volunteers
- Securing corporate sponsorship or individual donations
- Helping groups set up a peer-to-peer fundraising page
- Making initial introductory calls to Public Library Foundations or Public Library Systems
- Educating like-minded organizations on SKPL's impact
- Promoting the SKPL program
- Handling Grant distributions



Want to bring hands-on STEM experiences to kids everywhere?

Contact John A. Zulaski at johnzulaski@ieee.org to get started.