

LIFE in YOUR County

How to Get Started

- Contact State Park in your area (find out if there is a park ranger or specialist in charge of interpretation) and/or school district/principal/science teachers to determine interest.
- Determine which age group you will work with. LIFE began as a program for grades 6-8 in Title 1 schools. There are many prewritten labs available for these grade levels if you work with a State Park. In Sarasota, we implemented a program for grades 4-5 which required identifying curriculum, revising available LIFE labs and, in many cases, writing our own and developing all our educational materials. Grade level may also be determined by need in your county, or willingness of individual teachers or schools to participate. In Sarasota, partnerships began with a 5th grade science teacher who identified a need for further supporting 3rd-5th grade science standards to achieve greater FSA science test success.
- Determine whether you wish to implement a single module or multi-module program, recognizing that the 4H model indicates that a minimum of 6 hours of engagement with youth is preferred.
- Determine how many labs you want to deliver in your module (1, 2, or 3)- consider timing, staffing, how the labs flow together, site, and season. Is it doable? And do your choices make sense together? Does it fill an identified need?
- Determine which labs you will offer.
- Determine site(s) for field trips.
- Determine staffing needs.
- Determine equipment and educational materials needs. Purchase or develop as needed.
- Consider timeline for curriculum and educational material development, coordination of staffing, and training.
- Meet with partners. Promote your program and get commitments on site reservations and staff/volunteer assistance. Your partners may also be advocates to develop partnerships with teachers or a school district, or that may fall on you.
- Reach out to volunteers in your county. think outside the box, maybe there's a Master Naturalist, a Master Gardener, a 4H leader, a retired teacher, a nature or environmental center that would be interested in assisting. Follow appropriate procedures for volunteering with youth.
- Will you do a volunteer training prior to field trips?
- Will you go into classroom prior to field trips? If so, what materials do you need to develop?
- How will you clarify communication and logistics? (see example documents available on web page)
- How will you evaluate your program, collect data, and analyze? (see example documents available on web page)

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Tips

- Start small!
- Start planning early.
- Get commitments from partners and staff/volunteers. Confirm with EVERYONE!
- Labs need to be aligned with curriculum standards for teachers to take the time out of their day.
- Consider doing a needs assessment or meet with a team of teachers prior to curriculum (lab) development.
- Create a rotation schedule, emails, staffing spreadsheets, evaluations to help stay organized.
- Designate lead instructors and have helpers that keep instructors on time, take photos, clean-up, keep students interested, etc. Not all volunteers are good interpreters/educators.
- Find opportunities to assist teachers to find funding for bussing, as transportation is very expensive.
- Make sure you have appropriate liability releases, 4H special event insurance, and background screening for volunteers as per UF and your county requirements.
- Try to get school district and media recognition to grow program.
- Is there a go to place where teachers look for field trip opportunities?

Resources

- http://rebrand.ly/ufsarasotaext_life (Sarasota County Extension web page for LIFE, in development but I materials referenced here should be available soon)
- <http://www.cpalms.org/Public/search/Standard> (link to curriculum standards for all grades and subjects, focus on science- usually life science and nature of science)
- https://web03.fldoe.org/Schools/schoolmap_text.asp (Florida public school districts and contacts)
- <https://www.floridastateparks.org/> (to find a Florida State Park near you and contact numbers)

Contact Information

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