



INTERNATIONAL
STORYTELLING CENTER

Connecting the World through the Power of Storytelling

**National Storytelling Festival and *Storytelling Live!* Outreach and Digital learning
Program Proposal**

2018-2020

Introduction

The power of storytelling is unquestionable. We are all storytellers and we experience our lives through an interconnected network of stories. The cornerstone of the International Storytelling Center is a belief in a single, immutable principle of life—storytelling. People crave, remember, and honor stories. And now, after years of scientific research in 17 different fields, analysts conclude that storytelling is our most powerful tool for effective communication.

Each of us has the power to tap into our stories, our narrative assets, to become better communicators—to entertain, to share our history and culture, to spread knowledge, to persuade, to advance a cause, to teach, and to dream a vision of the future.

The International Storytelling Center furthers these ideals through two main activities – the National Storytelling Festival, considered the world’s premier storytelling event, and *Storytelling Live!*, the Center’s annual teller-in-residence series.

With support from the Niswonger Foundation, the National Storytelling Festival greatly expanded its outreach from 2015-2017 by providing young people with unprecedented access to the Festival and professional storytelling. Live streaming from the festival stage allowed the more than 20,000 young people throughout the region and in communities across the world to engage with the festival performances, including over 30 hours of video available for continued viewing on ISC’s website.

Now in its 17th season, *Storytelling Live!*—the International Storytelling Center’s renowned teller-in-residence series— is ISC’s fastest growing program, which features a lineup of 26 nationally-known storytellers. From May to November, a different artist appears each week in live matinee and evening performances at the Center’s theater. Each season includes pro bono performances for school-aged students throughout East Tennessee.

From 2015-2017, we reached over 4,400 students through our TIR outreach, for a total benefit of over \$48,000. This effort was underwritten by ISC. While the 6-month *Storytelling Live!* series is an economic boon to our region, it operates on a marginal basis and must depend on support beyond ticket sales. Therefore, without funding to help support a youth outreach effort, we would be unable to sustain this part of the program at its previous levels.

Funding is requested to continue live streaming from Festival while also increasing the quality and user experience; to help underwrite and expand *Storytelling Live!*'s outreach to children and students; and to provide a storytelling training workshop for area elementary school teachers who can then utilize storytelling and storytelling technique in their classrooms. All facets benefitting from this funding impact children in our region.

Goal

Our goal is simple, to bring live, professional storytelling into the lives of as many young people as possible. With funding from the Niswonger Foundation, ISC can reach students who might not otherwise ever visit the International Storytelling Center or attend the National Storytelling Festival.

Live streaming the National Storytelling Festival is one excellent avenue for accomplishing this goal. Strengthening support for the outreach of our Teller-in-Residence program to students is another. Reaching elementary school teachers is a third way. All utilize professional storytelling by the foremost artists in the field.

Project Activities

National Storytelling Festival Livestream:

While visitors travel from around the country and the globe to attend the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee each year, many local students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, never witness these professional storytellers in live performances. Continued live streaming of the festival, with specialized marketing and communications development, including improved quality and viewing standards, will ensure that local students and young people in surrounding communities have access to the event regardless of their location.

Storytelling Live! Outreach to Youth and Teachers:

ISC is committed to helping our region's rural and underserved youth access our program of live storytelling. We work annually with area schools and organizations such as Coalition for Kids, Washington County Library, and Girls, Inc. to provide complimentary programming. Continuing this pro bono programming for youth gives area children access to professional tellers in a live performance setting. In 2018, we will continue to offer a complimentary workshop, an in-service opportunity to benefit East Tennessee elementary school teachers.

With the Niswonger Foundation's support:

- ISC will continue to livestream parts of the National Storytelling Festival, reaching even more young people. ISC will improve the quality and viewing standards of the livestream feed by making the following modifications:
 - Dedicated high speed internet access
 - Additional stage lighting focused on the storyteller
 - Adding a black backdrop to the stage
 - Closer camera placement
 - Additional microphone dedicated to audience reaction, i.e. clapping and laughing
- ISC's *Storytelling Live!* youth outreach, which is a pro bono program, will be partially underwritten. The 2017 program reached nearly 1400 school-aged children and

included outreach to Johnson City's Coalition for Kids, Washington County Libraries' summer reading program, and multiple area elementary schools.

- ISC will provide a two-hour workshop to area elementary school teachers in order to teach storytelling skills for use in the classroom. The workshop will be free of charge to teachers. The participating teachers are provided a Professional Development Certificate of Completion and receive required in-service credit.
- Utilizing our video live stream archive, ISC will curate two storytelling educational platforms per year, to be used in classroom lesson plans – click link for an example <http://racebridgesstudio.com/city-of-hope/#more-1216>
- ISC Website Learning page creation providing greater access to these collated educational content.

Participating tellers for the livestreaming, outreach, and training will be specially selected to ensure that they possess the skills and expertise to both mesmerize their young audiences and provide quality professional development learning experiences for students and their educators. Programming will be diversified to include as great a breadth and depth of expertise across content areas as possible, while placing Storytelling as a cross disciplinary STEM learning tool.

Evaluation of Program Impact

Through the festival livestream outreach, an estimated 7,000 school-aged children per year will be reached. In addition, through Storytelling Live's outreach program, approximately 1400 students per year will be reached. And finally, up to 100 elementary school classroom teachers will be impacted each year. Quantitative outcome measures will be based on the number of tellers participating and the number of children reached. Qualitative outcomes will be gauged through audience feedback, quality of engagement feedback from ISC partners and participants, a media impact report and by interviewing teachers regarding the impact that the tellers and such programs have on the children as well as feedback from the educator's workshop.

Through this feedback, we will collect the stories of the impact of the outreach program in order to publicize its results and to make the case for continuing support, to enrich the overall programming and opportunities for young people in our region and beyond. We plan to develop and pilot this work to support teachers, to enhance in-class learning, combined digital Storytelling access development and to reflect changes in needs of teachers and student learning environments.

Funding Request

Funds are requested in the amount of \$24,000 at \$8,000 per year for three years. This equates to \$4,500 yearly to support live streaming of the festival, which includes expanded marketing, archiving, and technical upgrades; \$500 yearly for the free teacher workshop; \$2,000 yearly to support ISC's youth outreach programming that is implemented through our *Storytelling Live!* series; and \$1,000 yearly to curate educational video content.