



Soroptimist is a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS, INC.®

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Video Series

Dream Program Tips

General Dream Program Tips

If a participant has a negative reaction to something, don't take it personally. It may be completely unrelated to you and a result of an earlier interaction or related to a trauma-response.

Ask before touching! Cultural norms about what kinds of touching vary greatly and even if you assume you have a shared definition of when a hug is appropriate, someone simply may prefer not to be touched in that way.

Be encouraging of all levels of education, all career paths, all steps forward. Remember that there are many paths to success and career fulfillment, and we want to encourage any of them that move our participants closer to their dream and economic empowerment.

Unsure how to pronounce someone's name? Simply ask (and write down phonetic spellings if it's an unfamiliar name for you). This small gesture can go a long way in showing you are trustworthy and empathetic, and it can show that you value the culture and lived experience of each woman and girl you meet.

Think about how you describe an individual and their experiences. Avoid words like victim and aim for person-first language (for example: say a student experiencing homelessness instead of "she's homeless," or a woman who uses a wheelchair instead of handicapped woman).

Live Your Dream Award Tips

Be aware that applicants may not be strong writers or even writing in their native language, so be kind with grammar and spelling mistakes.

Don't force them to share details of their experiences if they don't want to—especially *Live Your Dream Award* recipients at banquets or other events with an audience.

Applicants may not have reliable or consistent computer or internet access, so please be sure to provide them with the resources they need to complete the application, such as a paper application or the PDF application if they can access a computer.

Provide recipients with an opportunity to review anything you'll be writing and sharing publicly about them and their story. They may want to keep certain parts of their story private, even if they shared it in their essay, and it is important to be respectful of that.

When you invite them to an event, [take their needs into account](#)—ask about how you can support childcare, transportation (especially if they will be taking public transit or perhaps by paying for their parking), dietary restrictions, and more. We have a resource that addresses some of these ways that you can support award recipients.

If your club requires additional verification steps for the award such as proof of enrollment or income, do away with these extra steps. Applicants can find the application daunting on its own, and these additional measures can be unnecessary and discourage eligible women from applying. Additional verification steps are not a federation-wide requirement and should not be part of the *Live Your Dream Award Process*.

After the recognition of your recipient, consider [Going Beyond a Cash Award](#) to further encourage and support your recipient. This resource has ideas and suggestions for how your club can support your recipients on an ongoing basis. Many of them are ideas that won't require additional club funds, but that can be encouraging to recipients, such as reaching out around finals time to encourage her.

Dream It, Be It Tips

An easy way to make all *Dream It, Be It* girls feel included is to provide lots of options and ability to choose—food choices, ways to participate in different activities, ways to process and receive information (verbally, visually, auditorily), ways to get to the event, and levels of physical interaction.

Provide space to opt out if girls need a break. This could be a physical space for girls to take a break outside of the main room, or it could be just allowing them to opt out of an activity.

If a participant doesn't want to talk or share her experiences or participate in a certain activity, do not force her. Provide space for quieter, more introverted girls to find ways to participate.

Make sure everyone is included—reach out to girls on the outskirts or who do not seem to have friends in the group and engage them in conversation one-on-one.

Take into account different religious practices—if you're doing an all-day conference, some girls may need time and space for prayer, or may not eat certain foods. When in doubt, just ask politely! A good way to inquire is: “Is there anything we can do to make you more comfortable and able to fully participate?”

We have worksheets and permission slips in six languages, so if you have girls who speak a language other than English or whose parents may not read English, we are happy to provide you with them! [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Korean](#), [Japanese](#), and [Chinese](#) are all available.

Be open to learning from the *Dream It, Be It* girls! From new technology to different cultural practices, they can teach you a lot as well.