

Official Elves Across America Training Guide

Elf Approved Businesses • 2026

Your role in the movement

Elves Across America brings individuals, families, businesses, schools, civic groups and nonprofits together to spread holiday cheer and meet essential needs through kindness, giving and volunteering. An Elf Approved Business gives people a friendly local place to discover that movement and get involved.

What your team should be able to do

- Explain the partnership in one sentence.
- Welcome a visitor and help them find the location check-in.
- Describe an optional local activity accurately.
- Explain Candy Canes without inventing rewards.
- Know who to contact when a link or check-in needs help.

The one-sentence introduction

"We're an Elf Approved Business with Elves Across America, helping our community discover ways to spread holiday cheer and support local needs."

Choose your Elf Lead

Name one staff member and a backup to keep the display current, answer team questions and coordinate with EAA. Put their names on your internal shift notes. All staff can welcome guests; the Elf Lead handles changes to the location setup.

A warm welcome from the Head Elf

Thank you for making room for a little more kindness in your business. A smile at the door, a helpful introduction or a team volunteer shift can be someone's first step toward getting involved. Let's help them take it.

Maria Tofts • Head Elf, Elves Across America

Prepare your location

A practical launch sequence for the Elf Lead.

1 Confirm your business details

Check the displayed name, full address, county and state, hours, website and social links. If a listing is available, verify that its map pin points to the correct entrance. Use separate check-in links for separate locations.

2 Set up your display

Place the window sign where customers can see it before entering. Place the check-in sign at an accessible, well-lit counter with enough room to pause. Keep the QR flat, uncovered and free of glare.

3 Test the check-in

Use the QR Creator with your assigned live URL. Confirm the destination shows this location, complete a permitted test and verify the record in the actual EAA system. Test on two phones if available. Confirm any test-record cleanup with the EAA team.

4 Brief the team

Allow 15 minutes to review the welcome script, demonstrate a check-in, choose this week's activity and name the person who handles problems. Role-play a guest without a smartphone.

5 Announce your participation

Personalize the launch caption, customer email and newsletter blurb. Share the business website or verified listing link. Add the badge to your email signature and profile artwork.

6 Check weekly

Scan the sign, review the hours and look for damage or stickers covering the QR. Remove expired activity details. Share any schedule or location changes with EAA before reprinting.

Welcome elves and guide check-ins

Make it easy, friendly and optional.

The 20-second welcome

"Welcome! We're part of Elves Across America. You can scan this sign to check in at our location and discover the campaign. There's no purchase required. Would you like a hand?"

The guest journey

1. The guest scans the code or opens the written link.
2. They confirm the business name and address on the page.
3. They follow the live check-in prompts and current participation rules.
4. They wait for the actual confirmation before treating the check-in as complete.
5. They may take an Elfie, explore local needs or join an activity if they wish.

When a code does not work

Check the sign's link on your own device. Offer the written address or general campaign website. If the check-in cannot be confirmed, say so and contact the Elf Lead. Do not tell a guest that a scan has earned credit when the system has not confirmed it.

When a guest has no phone

"You're still welcome to take part. Let me show you our activity information." Ask EAA about an approved alternative verification method when needed. Do not collect passwords or ask a guest to use a staff account.

When a family visits

Speak to the accompanying adult about participation. Keep photos and public location sharing optional. Follow the campaign's current family participation rules and your location's normal supervision practices.

Before check-ins are active

Display the welcome sign and use the separately labeled campaign information QR. Tell guests it opens the campaign website. Replace it with the location-specific sign once that check-in flow is active.

Candy Canes and thoughtful sharing

Recognize participation accurately.

The confirmed volunteer rule

Approved volunteer time earns 10 Candy Canes per hour. Two approved hours earn 20 Candy Canes. The nonprofit or authorized host confirms the service using the campaign's current process.

The eligible social bonus

A qualifying, approved social post may earn an additional 10 Candy Canes. Use the required image or approved alternative, tags and permissions for the related activity. Posting by itself does not automatically establish eligibility.

Business check-ins

Use the amount, timing, limits and verification requirements shown in the current live program rules. This kit intentionally prints no fixed check-in award. A QR scan opens a page; the platform's confirmed check-in is what matters.

No custom point promises

Do not assign a Candy Cane value to a joke, purchase, review, challenge card, donation amount or staff activity. Activities in the mini book are for fun. Approved volunteer time and qualifying social participation follow the official rules.

An optional Elfie invitation

"Want to remember your visit with an Elfie? You can use our frame and tag us if you'd like. You're just as welcome if you prefer to keep your visit private."

Share with care

Ask before photographing or reposting anyone. Get the appropriate adult's permission for children. Focus on the activity and the people who choose to be pictured; do not expose the circumstances or identifying details of families receiving help. Use confirmed business and campaign handles.

Celebrate together

Share verified team participation and collective kindness. Keep the tone welcoming, with no rankings, leaderboards or naughty-and-nice labels.

Plan a useful local activity

Let the nonprofit's actual needs shape the idea.

Start with a need

Choose an EAA-participating nonprofit and ask what it needs now. Confirm the requested items or volunteer role, dates, drop-off instructions, capacity and a contact person. Do not assume every business is a toy drop-off location.

Choose a manageable format

Team volunteer shift: arrange an approved shift that fits your staff's availability.

Requested-item collection: collect only the items and quantities the nonprofit has agreed to accept.

Kindness counter: invite customers to write optional encouraging notes approved by the receiving organization.

Community spotlight: share a current need or volunteer opportunity with a clear link.

Make the invitation specific

"Our team is supporting [NONPROFIT] with [CONFIRMED ACTIVITY] on [DATE]. Here's how to join: [LINK OR INSTRUCTIONS]." Include access details, hours and any age or supervision requirements supplied by the host.

Close the loop

Confirm delivery or attendance with the host. Thank participants and share only verified totals. Keep any record needed for verification through the approved process, and avoid public lists of personal participant details.

If someone asks for help

Listen kindly and offer the nonprofit's published contact information or the campaign's local needs resources. Do not promise eligibility, appointments or assistance on another organization's behalf.

Suggested weekly rhythm

Monday: check the sign and current need. Midweek: share one useful update. Weekend: host or join a confirmed activity. Afterward: thank people and verify the outcome.

Your team is ready

Use this final rehearsal before welcoming the first elf.

Five questions to practice

1. What does Elf Approved mean? Campaign participation recognized by Elves Across America.
2. Does a customer need to buy something to check in? No.
3. Does scanning the code automatically prove a check-in? No. Look for the actual confirmation.
4. How many Candy Canes do two approved volunteer hours earn? 20.
5. Who fixes a wrong address or broken link? The Elf Lead coordinates with EAA.

Team readiness checklist

Our business approval and location details are confirmed.

The correct signs are displayed and the live QR has been tested.

Staff can explain the partnership and help a guest who cannot scan.

Our activity details and nonprofit contact are current.

We know that photos and social sharing are optional.

We have removed all unfilled template fields from public materials.

Internal handoff

Elf Lead: _____

Backup: _____

Location: _____

Last QR test date: _____

This week's activity: _____

Campaign support

headelf@elvesacrossamerica.com

elvesacrossamerica.com

Keep this guide current

2026 business toolkit • Version 1.0 • Prepared September 9, 2026. Live campaign rules govern verification and awards. Contact EAA when a program detail or location setup changes.