

An Invitation to Innovate
Request for Proposals from Synagogues/Congregations in the Greater Denver Area
May 2010

Rose Community Foundation believes that building strong Jewish communities depends on supporting a welcoming, vibrant and diverse quality of Jewish life. The Foundation believes in the importance of connecting Jews to Judaism and to each other through institutions and an emerging network of communities providing innovative programs. Rose Community Foundation's Jewish Life program area has consistently funded new programs and services in response to the changing demographics and needs of the Denver/Boulder Jewish communities. Providing risk capital to fuel innovation and experimentation has been a hallmark of the Foundation's grantmaking in the Jewish communities of Greater Denver.

Over the past 13 years, Rose Community Foundation has worked closely with many synagogues through grant initiatives such as The Endowment Challenge, Live On: Build Your Jewish Legacy and MazelTot. The Foundation also funded projects for synagogues working together, such as Synagogue 2000 and STAR. Large grants were made to the Colorado Agency for Jewish Education for synagogue supplemental school teacher training and recruitment. These grants for synagogues total \$5.3 million over 13 years. Now the Foundation is experimenting with a new way to work with synagogues that are interested in innovating and responding to changing demographics. The Foundation will entertain proposals to support synagogue efforts to be places where more people, especially younger generations, feel welcomed and can be active participants in a sacred community. The Foundation invites synagogues to apply for funds to innovate, enhance and improve their programs and institutional culture.

Situational Analysis: Changing Demographics

Synagogues today are challenged by the general disinterest or alienation of Jews, and especially younger Jews, from institutions and the proliferation of more personal, individual and participatory approaches to Jewish life. Research shows that 80 percent of American Jews belong to synagogues at some point in their lives but only about 30 percent are synagogue members at any given time.

Many people see the institutional Jewish world as divisive and off-putting. Denominational affiliation is in decline with greater numbers of younger Jews identifying as "just Jewish." Synagogue membership and financial contributions to Jewish organizations are experiencing a general decline (Cohen and Kelman, 2006). A major theme in American religious life today is the search for meaning, spirituality and community. The 2007 Metro Denver/Boulder Jewish Community Study (Community Study) revealed that 81percent of all Jews report that spirituality is very important or

somewhat important to them, but only 19 percent report that Jewish congregations contributed a lot to their spiritual life, down from 28 percent in 1997.

The Community Study found that congregation membership is strongly related to newcomer status, household income and denominational self-identification. In Greater Denver, 46 percent of people 25 to 39 are newcomers to the area in the past 10 years (one-third arrived in the last five years). The Community Study found that relatively new arrivals to Greater Denver are half as likely to join congregations as those who have lived in the area for 10 years or more. They are also much less likely to contribute to local Jewish causes. These statistics suggest that members of the next generation under 40 make up a substantial portion of those Jews who are not attached to institutions, including synagogues.

Intermarriage also affects synagogue participation. Seventy percent of Jewish households with a respondent under 40 are intermarried compared with 50 percent of those 40 and over. Among in-married couples, only two percent report never attending services, compared to 44 percent of the intermarried-not-affiliated couples.

Grant Priorities

The Foundation will entertain grant proposals from synagogues only in response to this Request for Proposals. The Foundation requests grant proposals from synagogues for new programs or projects, or significant improvements to existing programs or projects, intended for synagogue members and/or the wider Jewish community that:

1. Promote new Jewish connections and participation

- Connect Jews, and other members of their households, to Jewish life and each other, especially for those who are unengaged and on the margins of Jewish life
- Promote Jewish growth for the largest possible number of Jews including cultural, social, recreational, spiritual, educational and heritage-related activities
- Respond to trends and findings from the 2007 Metro Denver/Boulder Jewish Community Study

2. Create new ways to deliver meaning, purpose, spirituality and welcoming

- Create synagogue communities of inspiration, spirituality and tikkun olam, providing meaning and purpose to people's lives
- Create welcoming, participatory and inclusive environments and cultures
- Experiment with new approaches to worship services and rituals for life events
- Mobilize members and others to create new programs, new ways to volunteer, and new approaches to worship, social justice and community service
- Respond to real-life contemporary issues facing the Jewish and wider community and help people understand how Judaism, Jewish teachings and Jewish values can help navigate these issues
- Train rabbis, synagogue professionals and lay leaders to promote new thinking and approaches to synagogue life

3. Transcend traditional boundaries

- Connect and link congregations with grassroots Jewish organizing and creativity, for example, partnering with spiritual communities such as independent minyanim

and other emergent Jewish communities, social justice efforts like the Jewish food movement, etc.

- Promote multi-denominational efforts and collaborative action and programs among and between congregations
- Remove barriers to participation and minimize boundaries between people, programs, institutions, groups and space
- Reach out beyond institutional walls to meet the needs of underserved populations and underserved geographic areas (identified in the Community Study) to provide entry-points to Jewish people who may not participate in programs taking place in traditional Jewish venues

We will give higher priority to programs that:

- engage Jews outside of the congregation in addition to synagogue members
- welcome and engage interfaith families
- meet unconnected Jews where they are and make an effort to understand and value their interests

We will not fund:

- capital costs or campaigns or equipment costs
- operating costs for existing programs or services
- general operating costs
- one-time events (such as High Holiday services)
- multi-year grants

How to Apply

This is a two-stage grant review process. The first stage is a four-page concept paper and proposed budget for the requested program. Requests for up to one year of programming will be accepted. For selected programs, the Foundation will invite synagogues to submit full proposals for final grant consideration.

Application Timeline

May 5, 2010 Request for Proposals distributed

Concept papers must be received by 12:00 noon MDT Tuesday, July 6, 2010.

By September 16, 2010, Rose Community Foundation will invite selected synagogues to submit full proposals, which will be due October 25, 2010.

Final decisions will be announced by December 16, 2010.

Application

The four-page concept paper should include the following:

1. Synagogue Information

- a. Mission statement, brief statement of organization's goals and/or objectives
- b. Description of current programs, activities and accomplishments
- c. Descriptions of professional and lay leadership. Please attach a list of the board of directors.

2. Purpose of Grant - this section should include the following:

- a. Brief statement of the issue to be addressed and how it relates to this RFP; description of constituency served (include number served) and how they will benefit

- b. Description of goals and objectives for the purpose of the grant and how they meet this RFP's priorities
- c. Description of activities planned to accomplish these goals - whether this is a new or existing program. If it is an existing program, be specific about the significant improvements you propose.
- d. Timetable for implementation
- e. Other organizations, if any, participating in the program
- f. Expected outcomes and results during the funding period
- g. How you would define and measure success

3. Program/project budget including:

- a. Itemized budget line items and costs
- b. Total cost of program
- c. Funds available for program –all revenue, donations, including volunteer and in-kind support
- d. Balance required (total cost minus total funds available)

Rose Community Foundation has a preference for electronic submission but will accept applications electronically or by mail up until 12:00 noon on July 6, 2010. Complete applications, including all attachments, may be submitted via email to **grantsmanager@rcfdenver.org**. Applications submitted via email must be Microsoft Word and/or Excel documents, or can be in .pdf format. Scanned documents accompanying the proposal must be in .tif, .jpg, .bmp, or .pdf formats. Applications must be *either* electronic *or* hard copy — no combination of the two formats is acceptable. Incomplete applications may not be reviewed. All electronic submissions will be acknowledged within 24 hours. If you do not receive an email acknowledgement, please contact Cheryl McDonald, grants manager, at 303.398.7446.

If you are unable to submit electronically, applications must be printed on one side, without staples, and mailed to: Rose Community Foundation c/o Grants Manager 600 South Cherry Street, Suite 1200 Denver, CO 80246

Notification

All applicants submitting a concept paper will be notified by September 25, 2010.

Questions

Contact Lisa Farber Miller, Senior Program Officer, 303.398.7420 or lfmiller@rcfdenver.org