

## **Proposal for Impact Focused Funding Pilot – Jewish Camp**

### ***Grant type 2: addressing community-wide challenges***

#### Overview – “In Minneapolis, Jewish camp is for everyone”

Study after study has documented the positive impact of Jewish camp on lifelong engagement and identity. Camp attendance – both day camp and overnight camp – is a high indicator of Jewish involvement later in life.

Ours is not the only community to raise the “cost of being Jewish” as a concern for the health and diversity of Jewish life. With a week of day camp costing a few hundred dollars and a session of overnight camp nearing or exceeding a thousand dollars, families with children must make significant investments for their kids to benefit from Jewish camping experiences.

The Discovery Phase of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding reiterated affordability of Jewish camp as the initial funding priority.

Applications for support through our community’s existing camp scholarship program far outpace available dollars each year. Furthermore, the amount available for scholarships is not confirmed until the March of the camp year – a timing that makes it very difficult for either families or camps to plan effectively.

The Pilot on Impact Focused Funding will establish data-driven goals for annual scholarships available, with the aim of stabilizing available scholarship dollars at a higher level and expanding the number and diversity of children who can have a Jewish camping experience.

#### Why this focus?

The Discovery Phase surfaced a wide range of creative options for expanding the impact of Jewish camping in our community. These included:

- All-community family camps and off-season events
- Community-wide marketing and communication on the value of Jewish camp
- Support for camps to expand their facilities, staff training, or programming
- Recruitment and retention support to enable Jewish camps to attract the best and brightest staff

As appealing as new ideas are, scholarships remain the most direct method for expanding the impact of Jewish camp experiences for the kids in our community. Scholarship dollars support families to send their children to any Jewish summer camp in the country. With minimal administrative or reporting burden, scholarship dollars are the simplest path to community impact.

Furthermore, pursuing impact focused funding for camp scholarships offers the opportunity to address some of the shortcomings of the current process:

- Not enough funds to address the financial needs
- Instability of funding (can vary wildly from year to year)
- Focus solely on the mechanism of awarding scholarships rather than the larger objective of helping more kids get to Jewish camp.

The Pilot on Impact Focused Funding can start to address these challenges and enable us to measure progress towards bigger goals.

**Funding**

During the Discovery Phase of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding, MJF undertook a closer analysis of the actual demonstrated need for camp scholarships in our community.

Funding for camp scholarships has traditionally come from two primary sources:

1. **Unrestricted local funds of the annual campaign:** For many years, the Board of Directors has approved recommendations to fund the camp scholarship pool at \$100,000 out of the unrestricted campaign designated for local needs.
2. **“Impact Dollars”:** In the past 5 years, our community has been able to direct donations to “impact dollars” – additional funds raised during the annual campaign but designated to one of our four impact areas (Jewish Identity & Engagement, social services, education, and overseas). The amount raised is different every year, and the committee on Jewish Identity & Engagement has successfully recommended that these dollars be used for camp scholarships.

Through these two primary sources, MJF has been able to grant between \$119,000 and \$178,000 in camp scholarships. The table below shows three recent years as examples:

Year	From unrestricted campaign for local needs	“Impact Dollars”	Total scholarship pool	Notes
2019	\$100,000	\$39,000	\$139,000	N/A
2020	--	--	--	COVID year – limited scholarship funds distributed to pay back deposits and pay for virtual camp sessions
2021	\$100,000	\$78,000	\$178,000	Impact dollars for this year’s scholarships included unused money from 2020’s unrestricted campaign and impact dollars
2022	\$100,000	\$19,000	\$119,000	N/A
2023	\$100,000	\$41,500	\$145,000	N/A

As part of this analysis, we reviewed a five-year history of:

- Demonstrated need in applications submitted
- Gap between scholarships granted compared with demonstrated need
- Number of families, children, and camp sessions supported through MJF scholarship dollars
- Distribution of scholarship funds across day camps and overnight camps attended by Minneapolis campers

For example, in the 2022 camping season, approximately \$119,000 in scholarships supported 366 children:

- 197 children attending day camp
- 169 children attending overnight camp

However, the **need demonstrated by the applications submitted for that summer was more than double the amount available.**

Consistently, the need demonstrated through applications has been around \$280,000 per year. Although we cannot completely close the gap, we can make a start, as well as “raise the floor” of available funds consistently, year over year, to establish greater certainty in the availability of a minimum amount of funding.

For Year 1 of the Pilot, we propose a fundraising target of \$70,000, with a commitment for the same or more in 2024 and 2025. By committing to this target, we raise the floor of available scholarship dollars to \$170,000.

Even with this target, the pool of scholarship funds will not cover the demonstrated need of around \$280,000. To increase the community's impact on par with our commitment to financial accessibility of Jewish camp, this proposal asks the Board of Directors commit to supplementing the initial target of \$70,000 with up to a 1:1 match, creating a pool of \$140,000 impact dollars and resulting in total scholarship dollars of \$240,000.

Then, in the second and third years of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding, it requests the Board to commit to a similar match, maintaining at least \$140,000 in impact dollars for camp scholarships throughout the Pilot.

**Approval of these matching funds is at the discretion of the Board.** The intent is for the Board to determine a source and strategy for these matching funds that do not impact the annual campaign achievement and/or other philanthropic priorities.

### Scholarship Eligibility

MJF has an established process for applying for scholarship, assessing eligibility, and granting funds, which will continue through the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding.

All Minneapolis families are eligible to apply for camp scholarships, to be used for any Jewish day camp or Jewish overnight camp experience for their children.

### Beyond (and Before) Financial Aid

Financial aid is only one element of a complex system of programs, organizations, and processes that families navigate in order to give their children a Jewish camp experience. In order to fulfill the vision that “In Minneapolis, Jewish camp is for everyone,” we need to consider a holistic strategy that underscores our commitment to Jewish camp as a community value.

At the same time, we need to analyze and address the non-financial barriers that prevent families from considering (let alone choosing) Jewish camp:

- Assumptions many families make that they would not qualify for scholarships
- Unclear, inconsistent information about where and how to apply for scholarship funds

- Limited knowledge of the full range of Jewish camp experiences available, to find the right fit for each camper
- Low visibility of the value of Jewish camp during the non-summer months.

During the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding, we will assemble an advisory board made up of parents, camp professionals and volunteer leaders, other youth professionals and additional stakeholders to identify and propose responses to the pre-application barriers.

Examples of how to address these barriers include:

- Clearer communication on the scope of eligibility
- Coordinated communication efforts throughout the community on scholarships
- Envisioning and prototyping approaches to simplify the application process
- Testing methods of making some dollars available with limited or no application process.

These are only examples, and all recommendations would need us to work in close partnership with families, camps, and other community organizations to test and put into practice.

By attending not only to the cultural as well as the financial components of camp scholarships, we can have a bigger impact towards the community vision of “In Minneapolis, Jewish camp is for everyone.”

### Grant size and scope

As in the past, scholarships will range from a minimum of \$100 to a maximum of \$2,000 per camper. If this proposal is approved, the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding commits to these targets for a minimum of 3 years (scholarships to be awarded in 2024, 2025 and 2026).

“In Minneapolis, Jewish camp is for everyone” sets a goal for us as a community. The intended impacts of increasing investments in scholarships are:



Additionally, we will partner with day camps and overnight camps with at least five scholarship-supported campers to gain a fuller understanding of the need for scholarships to support Minneapolis campers.

### Timeline

Once approved, the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding will follow the timeline below. Between April 2025 and March 2026, the cycle of partnership, application, grants, and reporting will repeat.



This timeline does not change the current application and approval cycle for families applying for scholarships:

- **Round 1 - Overnight camp only:** Applications open early October with an early December deadline; up to 50 applications reviewed in this first round, with decisions made and communicated to families and camps by end of December
- **Round 2 – Overnight camp and day camp:** Applications open early October with a deadline of late February; applications 51 and beyond reviewed with decisions made and communicated to families and camps by end of March

For more information on the criteria for funding scholarship applications, please contact the Community Impact department of MJF.

### **Proposal supplement: Beyond the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding**

The purpose of the Discovery Phase of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding is to identify a limited number of areas of investment focus for a three-year period. However, the process unearthed a range of creative ideas, needs, and opportunities for strengthening our community, now and in the future.

Although these opportunities lie beyond the scope of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding, we will continue to explore and develop them through further partnership with organizations, community dialogue, and research.

#### [Additional investments in camp](#)

The Discovery Phase raised many other potential areas of impactful investments to increase the reach and quality of the summer camp experience for Minneapolis campers, such as:

- Community-wide family camp and off-season camp experiences
- Fellowships, college credits and other recruitment/retention incentives to attract the best and brightest Minneapolis young adults to work at Jewish summer camps
- Community-wide Jewish camp fair

Although the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding has the singular focus of stabilizing and increasing scholarships, we will continue to investigate other creative ideas based on community interest, funding and likely impact.