

Proposal for Impact Focused Funding Pilot – Community Professionals

Grant type 1: direct to eligible organizations

Overview – “We invest in community professionals”

The world of work has changed dramatically since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The competition for talented professionals in every role, at every level of experience, has never been greater.

Organizations—and especially nonprofits—are constantly trying to “do more with less,” expand programming without adding staff, and at the same time, find meaningful ways to recognize and reward the hard work of their most important resource: their people.

Organizations serving the Minneapolis Jewish community are no exception. Their teams need to be creative and agile in making the best use of their limited capacity. What’s more, our community professionals have a bigger job than designing and delivering excellent programs. They are also a central force in reinforcing and deepening engagement with Jewish identity. That’s nuanced, emotional work, requiring a unique set of skills and characteristics:

- An authentic relationship with Jewish identity, based on engagement with the Jewish community.
- The ability to communicate and build partnerships across stakeholders with different perspectives and priorities, across denominations, across generations, and across town.
- Commitment to the mission of Jewish identity and engagement, while making room for diverse expressions of that identity among community members.

And all of this is in addition to the role-related expertise professionals at Jewish organizations need to bring to their work—twenty-first century fundraising, marketing, operational and financial planning, education, government affairs, community security, and so on.

In other words, we ask a lot of our community professionals.

The Discovery Phase of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding identified recruitment, retention, and development of professionals in Jewish organizations as a consistent urgent need across our community.

With a focus on investing in community professionals, we will build a stronger, more resilient, healthier, and more secure community.

Why this focus?

Our community’s organizations echo the national trends of:

- Difficulty attracting candidates for open positions created by staff turnover and demand for services.
- Staff burnout in the face of overwhelming workloads and intensified job stressors.
- Potential for employee disengagement due to limited communication and culture-building from capacity-poor leadership.
- Limited options and resources for professional advancement, continuing education and development that are so critical to maintaining relevance for our community’s organizations and the mission of deepening Jewish identity and engagement.

A valuable national resource for understanding the larger context of these challenges comes from the research consultancy Leading Edge.

Since 2016, Leading Edge has surveyed employees at Jewish nonprofit organizations to assess engagement. The most recent report, published in the fall of 2022, identified professional growth and workload management as priority areas of investment for Jewish nonprofits. In particular, their analysis teased out an “engagement crater” that hits employees between their 1-year anniversary and their 10-years-of-service celebration.¹

The quality and sustainability of the services, programs, and institutions our community depends on are fully subject to the capacity, skill, and commitment of the professionals providing them.

Funding

A common industry standard for a healthy organization’s retention and development budget is 1% of salaries and benefits. Organizations often use this as a guideline for gauging what they need to invest in fostering a healthy and engaging work environment.

We used 1% of salaries and benefits for eligible roles as a starting point for setting an initial fundraising target for investing in community professionals. We further refined that target through close partnership between Community Impact and Philanthropy, to assess sustainable giving capacity in our community.

The resulting fundraising target for Year 1 of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding is \$40,000, with a commitment for the same or more in 2024 and 2025.

To increase the community's impact on par with our commitment to professionals without fatiguing or overextending our already generous funders, this proposal asks the Board of Directors commit to supplementing the initial target of \$40,000 with up to a 1:1 match, to create a total funding pool of \$80,000 available for Impact Focused Funding grants in 2024.

Then, in the second and third years of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding, it requests the Board to commit to similar matches to keep the funding pool to a minimum of \$80,000 for each of the years.

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.

Note that this funding and grant process is distinct from what is traditionally referred to as “core allocations” to these partners—the unrestricted funding allocated annually from the community campaign. Impact Focused Funding grants will not impact unrestricted allocations for the duration of the Pilot.

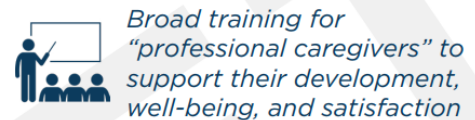
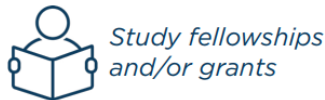
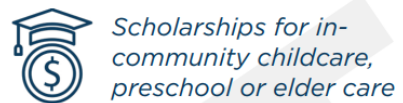
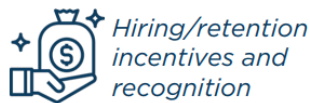
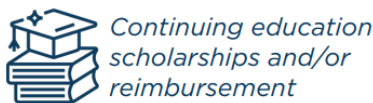
Grants eligibility

¹ For more on Leading Edge’s research, please see the 2022 Employee Experience Survey report at <http://www.leadingedge.org/re-source/are-jewish-organizations-great-places-to-work-employee-experience-survey-2022/>

Initial eligibility for these funds will be these organizations dedicated to creating a rich, engaging, diverse Jewish community where identity is defined and deepened:

- Hillel
- JCRC
- Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest
- Minneapolis Jewish Federation
- Minnesota JCC (selected roles and departments not covered by the grant program to invest in professional caregivers)

These organizations may apply, individually or in collaboration with each other, for grants to support such things as:



These are intended as examples only; organizations have full discretion on how to use the funds to invest in professionals, provided they explain their plan/program and their method for measuring its effectiveness over a 2- to 3-year period.

Organizations are encouraged to build on initiatives they already have in place, provided these funds are treated as plus-dollars.

Partnership

For the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding to be successful at any level, it is essential that MJF and organizations work closely together to ensure:

- The burden on partners for application and reporting is minimized
- The amount of work involved to apply for and use grants is commensurate with the size of the grant
- Organizations that want/need technical assistance in establishing simple impact metrics have timely access to expertise at no cost to them
- The community achieves the benefits of visioning, executing and learning at a community scale, through centralized resources and analysis of results.

As a pilot effort, participating organizations will also have annual opportunities to provide their formal feedback on the Pilot and recommendations for improvements. We anticipate in fact that annual reporting will be a two-way process, in which both sides of the partnership report to the other and provide direction/feedback to improve the process.

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.

Timeline – post-approval



Grant size and scope

The fundraising target of 1% of relevant salaries and benefits is not intended to translate into each organization receiving an amount equal to 1% of its costs. However, organizations should keep this guideline in mind when considering the scope of their requests.

Through close partnership, Community Impact and eligible organizations will develop both proposals and process that match effort with grant size and intended impact.

If this proposal is approved, the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding commits to a minimum of 3 years of funding (grants to be awarded in 2024, 2025 and 2026). Our intention is to expand and continue impact funding in caregivers beyond this pilot period.

Measuring success—what’s the impact?

Grant recipients may use any logical benchmarks for success, as long as they are measurable. Examples include:

 <p><i>Reduced caregiver turnover</i></p>	 <p><i>Increased number of qualified applicants for open positions</i></p>	 <p><i>Reduced time-to-hire for open positions</i></p>
 <p><i>Participation in development programs</i></p>	 <p><i>Organizational reports of closing the gap between capacity and demand</i></p>	 <p><i>Increase in ratings on staff satisfaction surveys</i></p>

We intend the reporting burden to be minimal, and assistance is available for developing viable approaches to measurement.

Achievement of target metrics is NOT a requirement for continuation of funding in Years 2 and 3 – we are as interested in learning from what hasn't worked as we are in documenting what does work.

In addition to measuring success at the organization level, we will also collect and review data at the community level. Measures of success may include:



More qualified applicants for all open positions across the community



Reduced caregiver turnover across the community



Every participating organization self-reports satisfaction with its use of funding

Proposal supplement: Beyond the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding

The intent of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding is to identify one area of investment focus for a three-year period while we test and evolve the process. 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 Support for Community Professionals

The Discovery Phase affirmed that our Jewish community organizations face workforce challenges common to all sectors: limited talent, need for greater attention to employee development and well-being, and healthy workplace relationships.

We have an opportunity as a community to take a more proactive stance in developing and reinforcing careers in Jewish organizations as rewarding, meaningful, and respected.

Some of the ways we might address this opportunity include:

- “New to your job” resources and events for professionals in Jewish organizations
- Mid-career transitions into jobs in community organizations
- Mental health and social support for community professionals
- Expanded availability of grants and vouchers for professionals to use community preschools, elder care, memberships, etc.
- Recruitment, retention, and professional development incentives
- Community-wide public health resources
- Community-wide “Jewish careers week”
- Intern/adjunct/paraprofessional programs to activate the skills, energy, and commitment of young adults in our community (ages 22-35).

Further exploration and development of approaches to building a robust pool of community professionals requires further dialogue and partnership with organizations, professionals themselves, and the broader community outside of the scope of the Pilot on Impact Focused Funding.