

Guidelines; prepare Request For Proposals (RFPs) and Grant Application; collaborate on list of potential grant recipients.

January-February Distribute RFPs and collect proposals.

March-April Complete fundraising; evaluate proposals and invite presentations; deliberate and make grant decisions.

May-June Incorporate the grant decision announcements/presentations into school graduation or end-of-year ceremonies.

Also please note: *Tzedakah in Action* is designed as an adjunct to an existing curriculum. To expand it into a comprehensive full year program would require significant additional programming. The following is a rough estimate of the amount of classroom time you can expect to spend on each phase of the project (though this is highly dependent on how extensive you make the study phase and how many organizations submit proposals):

- Presentation and voting 2 hrs.
- Study 8-10 hrs.
- Board Mtgs./Fundraising 3-4 hrs.
- Proposal Eval./Decision-Making 10-12hrs.



CONVINCING THE COMMUNITY THIS IS A GOOD IDEA

FIRST OF ALL, it is a good idea and all you need to do is help the community realize that. Certainly there will be some resistance that you will need to overcome, but in all but the most unusual cases, that resistance will result from confusion and misunderstanding and not from genuine opposition to the goals and objectives of the project.

So what's the first step? Find allies! There are a number of different constituencies who will be impacted by the project and it will be to your advantage to recruit members of each group to advocate within their spheres of influence. This means that parents, professional staff (e.g. rabbis, education directors/principals, teachers, etc.), and lay leadership should all be involved in the strategy sessions **before** the issue is put to any kind of vote and before final decisions of any kind are made.

A question which invariably arises here is whether or not students should be involved during this phase. To a large extent, this depends on the particular circumstances of your community. As a general rule, with younger students (e.g. middle school), it is probably better to set the ground rules before students are invited to participate. The inexperience of younger students makes it more likely that they will have a harder time grasping the broad range of issues presented by the program. The risks of involving them too early include misunderstanding the necessity of compromises and potential

disappointment/disillusionment if the project does not go forward. By the same token, once the ground rules are set and the institution's commitment to the program is clarified, involving students in the process can help fine-tune the pitch to appeal to student concerns and can develop a fifth column constituency of advocates within the class.

With older students, early involvement will likely have a positive impact on the ultimate degree of buy-in by students once the project is adopted. When peer pressure is oriented toward a positive goal, it can be a helpful force. There are risks here, too, that should be addressed. It's crucial that students appreciate the logistical constraints of working within a large institutional setting and every effort should be made to help them understand why certain compromises are made.

While it is very important to have a clear plan and program developed before presenting the project to the class as a whole, there is always a risk that students and their parents will feel ambushed by having a huge new program that seems to cost money dropped in their laps. In order to mitigate this challenge, go for the soft sell and make sure that no one feels railroaded into the project. In practical terms, families should be given time (a week between classes should be sufficient) to discuss the proposal before they are asked to vote.

Another decision that needs to be resolved before the project comes to a vote is how the Foundation will be funded. You'll read more about this in Chapter 2, but it's

important to be clear in advance what kind of financial commitment will be asked of students' families. If family contributions will be part of the income stream for the foundation, you'll need to decide if those contributions will be in the form of voluntary donations or compulsory fees.

There are pros and cons to each of these choices, though the voluntary donation format is probably the best. By framing family contributions in terms of donations, you'll maintain the feeling of independent choice among families in the class. By going this route, however, it's important that members of the class understand that the program will not succeed (and they should not vote for it) if they aren't willing to meet their voluntary commitment to contribute.

Once the groundwork is complete and the program you're going to propose is clear, it's time to present the project to the class for a vote. This presentation should be prepared carefully and every effort should be made to have 100% attendance by students and their parents – a well-publicized, regularly scheduled class session is probably the best context for the meeting. During the session, the following topics should be covered:

- Brief introduction to *tzedakah* and the goals and values that underlie the project. (See sample FAQ sheet on p.83.)
- Overview of the project's mechanics, including schedule, sources of revenue, educational programming, grant cycle process, and especially student and parent responsibilities.

The presentation is a wonderful opportunity to involve many people in promoting the project. Invite your rabbi to introduce the principles of *tzedakah*. Ask a parent who helped design the proposal to address parental concerns. If students were involved with the development of the proposal, have them speak to other students about their particular concerns and questions. If people make particularly valuable suggestions or comments, don't hesitate to incorporate them into the project. If the vote is not successful, you can solicit different perspectives in an effort to repackage the project for another vote.

The first year you attempt to implement the program will obviously be the most challenging. After you've got one grant cycle under your belt, you'll have additional resources you can bring to bear in each year's presentation. These include:

- Students and parents who have already participated in the program. *Tzedakah in Action* alumni are particularly effective at assuaging the concerns of students and parents who may feel that staff are not entirely objective.

- Brief presentations by previous years' grant recipients. Most grant recipients will be thrilled to attend a class session the year after they receive a grant to talk about how valuable *Tzedakah in Action's* work is. These presentations are such a powerful source of goodwill that Temple Isaiah's Seventh Grade Fund started including a tentative request for future presentations in its grant award letters. See sample and letter on page 91.

The voting threshold you set for implementation of the program should be sufficiently high that a vote in favor equates with a commitment to participate. At Temple Isaiah, that threshold was an 80% majority. This meant that a few naysayers could not torpedo the program, but implementation was predicated on a near-consensus class commitment.

CREATING A TIKKUN OLAM CULTURE: *TZEDAKAH IN ACTION* IN A BROADER CONTEXT

DEBATES ABOUT THE role of *tikkun olam* within the Jewish community aside, the project will benefit from and also encourage a culture of social action within your school or synagogue. At Temple Isaiah, it fit naturally within a synagogue-wide culture already strongly committed to volunteerism and social justice. A community can embrace social action in many ways and an organization faces many decisions in order to encourage this kind of culture. While these changes are not prerequisites for *Tzedakah in Action* to be successful, they will complement and add to the overall effectiveness of the project. What follows is a brief list of suggestions that any Jewish school can implement to encourage a social action culture.