

of the RFP and Application. In this case, you can give them an opportunity to explore sample RFPs and Grant Applications online. Through surveying the standard formats these documents take, they should be able to craft a suitable RFP and Application for *Tzedakah in Action*.

Some key elements that your RFP should contain include:

- Amount of maximum grant.
- Stipulation that grants will only be given to 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Issue area (e.g. poverty, homelessness, human rights, etc.).
- Submission deadline.
- Contact information for your foundation.

The Application should definitely request the following information (at least):

- Contact information.
- Description of the organization.
- Description of project, including budget and amount of grant request.
- Verification of 501(c)(3) non-profit status.

FINDING AND WORKING WITH ORGANIZATIONS

IDENTIFYING AND SHEPHERDING POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

ONCE THE CLASS has settled on a theme, the students should take responsibility for identifying potential grant recipients. This is the occasion of the second homework assignment. Immediately after the theme has been selected, students should be given a week or so to identify different organiza-

tions whose work falls within the issue area. Depending on the size of the class, each student should be expected to generate 5-10 organizations.

Assuming a reasonable amount of overlap among student lists, a list of 50-100 organizations is a good goal. You, as teacher, should also feel free to seek out organizations. The more RFP and Application packets you send out, the more proposals you'll receive. You should know that return rates can be as low as 5-10%, so don't get frustrated if you don't get as many proposals as you'd hoped. Also remember that proposals tend to come in at or near the deadline, so be sure to give yourself enough time after the deadline to read through and prepare proposal packets for the Board.

It's a good idea to set aside some time during the first Board Meeting to brainstorm ways for students to find organizations and to clarify what kind of information they should be collecting about them. Clearly, the internet is going to be a primary resource for many students to pursue their research.

During this conversation, it will also be valuable for you to discuss the pros and cons of working with non-local applicants. While casting a wide net may bring in some very interesting proposals, distant organizations are less likely to be able to present directly to the Board and form a close relationship with your community.

As the teacher, you will need to serve as the contact person for grant applicants. In this capacity, you'll need to answer

questions about the Application and offer advice about how to tailor proposals to the unique interests of the Board you represent. This is a perfectly appropriate and ethical role for you to have and you should be as up front and direct with applicants as you can be. In addition, you should read each of the proposals as they come in and make sure they meet the criteria spelled out in the Application. It's especially important that each proposal include proof of 501(c)(3) status – make sure you get this and that it's valid and current.

As proposals come in, you should offer each organization the opportunity to make a presentation before the Board. If you include information on the presentations in the RFP, some organizations will contact you directly, but it's a good idea to suggest it to each organization as long as you have time slots available. If an organization takes advantage of this opportunity, be sure that whoever is presenting knows that s/he will be presenting to students and that a standard foundation pitch may not be appropriate. Give them whatever advice you can about the dynamics of the group, questions they can expect, etc., in order to help them prepare an interesting and informative presentation.

This phase of the process also offers an excellent supplemental opportunity for older students. In order to bring the class up to speed on the theme, students could be assigned to do background research and prepare a short "briefing book." This could include a brief history of the issue, a

list of terms and definitions, and other background that would familiarize the class with the issue. The project could be taken on by a small group of volunteers or each student could be assigned a small part to contribute.

DEALING WITH PROPOSALS

THIS IS A FAIRLY straightforward part of the process, though one which will occupy a significant amount of time and work for students. Once all the proposals have been collected, you should produce a photo-copied packet for each student. (HINT: Write each student's name on his/her packet so you can return those that get left behind or otherwise misplaced.) It's not a bad idea to include a cover sheet that briefly summarizes all of the proposals and the amount of each grant request (see *p.90* for an example).

If you want to get very professional, you can assemble all of the proposal information into a two-pocket folder, with the proposals on one side and an evaluation form and copies of the RFP and Grant Application on the other. This is essentially the way that professional foundations prepare their grant officers, and it will help to enhance the seriousness of the undertaking for your students.

FACILITATING PRESENTATIONS

THERE IS PROBABLY no more inspiring element in this entire project than the organization presentations to the Board. There's nothing quite like seeing an adult with a title like Chairperson or Director of Development make a respectful and intelligent presentation requesting the financial support and investment of a roomful of thirteen-year-olds. It turns the traditional child-adult relationship on its head in a profound and wonderful way. Instead of adults telling children what to do and children using petty exercises of power to bewilder adults, the normal power relationship is reversed. The result is a mechanism for positive change instead of a tool of rebellion for the sake of rebellion. The impact of this reversal is remarkable, both for the students and for the adults who stand before them.

The keys to a successful presentation day are good planning and good organization. Make sure students bring their packets (even consider having them leave them at school during the class session before) so they'll be able to take notes directly on each proposal. Fifteen minute presentations, including Q&A, seem to be a good baseline. If you are scheduling several presentations on the same day be sure to schedule time for a break in the middle so students will stay fresh through the whole session.

Make sure that the presenters know where to go and at what time they will present, and ask them to come fifteen minutes early. It's probably not a good idea to have them sit in on each other's presentations – the

temptation to compare/contrast with a previous presenter can be extreme. Also make sure that you have ready any A/V equipment (overhead projector and screen, TV/VCR, etc.), that they've requested.

MAKING THE DECISIONS

THE DECISION-MAKING mechanism you implement will depend greatly on the number of proposals you receive and the number and amount of the grants you are able to fund. First of all, if there are more than ten proposals on the table, it's going to be helpful to do a first-cut vote to narrow the options down to ten at the most. Discussing and voting on more than ten proposals is unwieldy at best. The class should obviously be given an opportunity to consider all of the proposals before any voting takes place, but this initial discussion and vote should happen fairly quickly so more time can be given to in-depth deliberation on the most serious proposals. Reviewing the grant guidelines before this process begins will help students use concrete criteria in these deliberations.

After the list is narrowed down to a more manageable number, significant time should be dedicated to the discussion and evaluation of proposals. You may choose to consider each in turn and allow Board members to advocate or critique proposals one at a time, or you may simply open the floor for general discussion.

Before proceeding to a vote, it's important that you clarify what decision-