

SLINGSHOT

Slingshot Guide 2017 Application Information

Applications are due no later than November 7th at 5pm EST.

Introduction

The first Slingshot Guide was published in 2005 as a tool for Next Gen funders to find the most innovative projects and organizations in Jewish life. At the time, our search took us to the fringes of Jewish life to find the kinds of programs we were looking for. Now, as we prepare for our 12th Guide, innovation is no longer elusive. We find it not only in new, start up organizations, but also as innovative organizations are maturing into the mezzanine stage, and through the creation of new programs by some of our longest-standing institutions. Innovation is emerging as a part of the fabric of our community. It can be found in every type of organization and is now considered a necessary component of Jewish life.

In creating a 2017 Slingshot Guide that recognizes the reality of how far we have come as a field, we are making some changes to the structure of the Guide. Organizations and projects will be featured in sections based on stage of life: Start Up; Mezzanine; and Legacy. This differentiation paints a clearer picture of the field today drawing attention to the specific realities that exist at each stage.

When you begin your application, you will self-select which stage you are in based on the definition we provide. The selection criteria remain the same as it has always been. Organizations will be evaluated for inclusion in the guide based on Innovation, Impact, Strong Leadership, and Organizational Effectiveness. This new approach allows us to tailor the application, asking you questions that are sensitive to where you are and celebrates your accomplishments and results. It also gives us the opportunity to be more specific about what evaluators should be looking for based on age and stage.

Below you will find information about the application form for the twelfth edition of *Slingshot: A Resource Guide for Jewish Innovation*, which will be published in the Spring of 2017. The application was written to give you an opportunity to portray a full picture of your project or organization to our evaluators. *Note: This is not an application for funding from the Slingshot Fund. Organizations appearing in the guide will be eligible to apply to the Slingshot Fund in the year of guide's publication (in this case, 2017), and will be invited to update their form at that time.*

Application Guidelines

1. **Geographic Scope:** The *Slingshot* guide is directed to a North American audience. Organizational activities must involve and benefit North American Jews in some major way.
2. **Age of Organization:** A demonstrated impact is a key evaluation criterion for the Slingshot guide. In order to better observe impact, organizations and projects must have launched or been in progress a minimum of one year prior to the time of application.
3. **Organization/Project:** Applications may be submitted for an entire organization, or a project/initiative hosted by that organization, but not both. One organization may submit multiple applications for different projects; however, multiple projects from the same organization will be competing against one another. We encourage Legacy Organizations to apply for a specific program rather than for their organization as a whole.
4. **Repeat Applicants:** Organizations/projects that have applied and/or appeared in past editions of *Slingshot* may reapply.
5. **Not Eligible:** The following are not eligible for consideration in the Slingshot Guide:

- Next generation programs mainly focused on fundraising will not be considered unless the organization demonstrates that it is innovative, effective, impactful, and possesses strong leadership.
 - Global organizations without significant North American activities —*beyond fundraising*— will not be considered. Fundraising is not considered a significant North American activity for our purposes.
6. **Supplemental Documents**
 - **Operating Budget:** Applicants must submit an operating budget (including income and expenses) with their application.
 - **Photographs/DVDs/Other Materials:** Please do NOT include photographs, DVDs, or other materials unless they are requested.
 7. **Word Limit:** Applications that greatly exceed word limits may not be considered.
 8. **Incomplete Application:** Please ensure that your application is fully completed by November 7, 2016. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. If you have questions as to whether or not you have submitted fully, please email info@slingshotfund.org.

By submitting an application to *Slingshot*, you agree that your information may be shared with other funders. With questions, please contact info@slingshotfund.org

Selection Criteria Defined

For each of the 4 criteria you will find two definitions; first, a broad definition of the term and second, a specific life-stage explanation.

Innovation: Innovation is a mode of operating, of finding new ways to create impact. Innovative organizations and programs are ones that are able to act efficiently, adapt to current demands in the community, and create new models for achieving positive outcomes; the drive for relevancy and impact is built into their DNA.¹ Innovative organizations have a culture of perpetual improvement, where calculated risk is in service of always trying to do better. These organizations are not content to sit back and continue successful programming; they are always seeking to experiment and try new things. Innovation can be seen through WHAT the organization does (i.e. the programmatic tactics used to address an unmet need), or HOW it is done (i.e. the approach used to work with or on behalf of its constituents). Innovation is different at each life stage of an organization.

- **Start Up Organizations** are innovative in why they were created. They are groundbreaking, inventive, pioneering, or creative in their response to the changing needs of the Jewish community and the world around it.
- **Mezzanine Organizations** are innovative because of their continued culture of constant improvement. As they grow, they continue to find new ways of doing business, and maintain a thrust towards risk taking.
- **Legacy Organizations** express innovation through projects that have been born from an established structure that has taken a risk to operate in a new way(s) to best address the changing needs of the Jewish community.

Impact: Impact considers how the organization/project affects the attitudes and behaviors of its constituents and the Jewish community.

- **Start Up Organizations** have identified a need and developed a compelling mission and vision around addressing that need. They have rudimentary systems to identify if their programs/services are working, but may not have a formal evaluation process.

¹ "Funding Jewish Innovation: A Resource Guide," 2011

- **Mezzanine Organizations** have shown proof of concept in addressing a specific need and have a theory of change or logic model that is guiding their work. Evaluation systems are more mature, and data is used to infuse growth plans.
- **Legacy Organizations** are implementing, working through, or creating a strategic plan around the program, with a specific focus on target goals and measures for evaluating impact. They are evaluating the viability of the project for best practices and scalability.

Strong Leadership in the Field: An organization with strong leadership is a model for the field. It may possess a strategy, an approach, or programmatic content that could be replicable elsewhere and/or that is elevating the work of its peer organizations. Examples of strong leadership are: the organization/project may share resources, knowledge or best practices with the community; may strategically partner with other organizations; and/or serve to network or convene similar organizations/projects.

- **Start Up Organizations** with strong leadership have significant buzz around them. Articles are written about them, staff/lay-leaders are asked to present on the organization, Momentum is beginning to build around their work and other partners are beginning to come to the table.
- **Mezzanine Organizations** are regarded as having expertise in the field and have begun building brand recognition amongst its peers. Marketing plans begin to formalize.
- **Legacy Organizations** use their brand recognition to help provide leadership in the field around particular issues. They have formal marketing plans and structures in place.

Organizational Effectiveness: Otherwise known as sound operations, an effective organization is strategic in the way it conducts business. It is financially efficient and responsible and has the appropriate infrastructure (staff, board, volunteers) in order to effectively serve its mission.

- **Start Up Organizations** have a small board whose primary role is to work, and is often, but not always personally connected to the founder; a small, nimble, and multi-functional staff; and a budget that is sufficient to cover the operating costs of the organization.
- **Mezzanine Organizations** have grown their board, which now has more governance responsibilities, and professional expertise within it; a staff with more differentiated and specific roles; a larger budget; and a diversified and increased funding base.
- **Legacy Organizations** have an established board with formal committees and roles and is primarily responsible for ensure longevity and well-being of the organization; staff is diversified and hired for their programmatic expertise and staff structures are more hierarchical; and funding is stable, and includes an operating reserve or an endowment.

Accessing the Application

Based on the definitions below, please choose which application you will complete: Start Up; Mezzanine; or Legacy and click on the appropriate link, listed on our website: **www.slingshotfund.org/application**

- **Start-Up:** “A start-up organization is in its earliest stages of development. It typically has a founder with a vision or idea but has just begun to establish a funding stream, employee structure, business model, and practices and approaches. Its programming is highly experimental.”
- **Mezzanine:** “An organization is in the mezzanine phase following its start-up phase. By this point, the organization may have pilot tested its organizational idea, document outcomes, and developed a written plan for growth, but it has not yet achieved large geographic scale or wide adoption. Sometimes known as post-start-up, [these organizations] have established a track record of funding, engaged a set of people in defined roles, formed a board, written a set of policies, and defined its business model.”²

² “From First Fruits to Abundant Harvest: Maximizing the Potential of Innovative Jewish Start-Ups,” 2012

- **Legacy:** Legacy organizations are “marked by greater brand awareness – of the organization and its programs and services. The nonprofit is larger and has more hierarchy, with clearly defined management roles. In this stage, the fundraising program has become more sophisticated, perhaps including an endowment or planned giving. The nonprofit has established a strategic plan and is governed by a more diverse board of directors.”³

If you have questions about which stage you fall under, please email info@slingshotfund.org to set up time to have a conversation with Slingshot staff.

Selection Process

A panel of at least 4 evaluators will be asked to rate your application based on the following criteria: innovation, impact, leadership in the field, and organizational effectiveness (operations). Your application will be evaluated by at least four readers, two who are knowledgeable or work in your area of the field/category, and two who do not. Use your application as an opportunity to educate your evaluators about your area of the field, the need you are working to address, and your solution. Don't assume your readers know about your space/category.

Applications are due no later than November 7th at 5pm EST. If you have any questions or concerns, please email info@slingshotfund.org.

³ “Thriving Throughout the Stages of a Nonprofit Organization,” 2011