



Leader's Guide
to the
Ramah Philanthropy Initiative (RPI)
Kayitz 2010

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Introduction

The first time the Ramah Philanthropy Initiative (RPI) was explained to me, it seemed easy enough. I would teach 13 year olds about philanthropy and non-profit organizations. The first time I spoke with the national coordinator for RPI, I took pages of notes, asked a few questions, and at the end of the hour-long phone conversation, I realized that this was more than just teaching about tzedakah and donating money. This was serious work. I had lots of questions, which my predecessor, Eytan Hammerman, answered clearly and accurately. Throughout the summer, I referred back to my notes from that first phone call. The pages of notes grew, adding comments, questions, and ideas that carried me through the summer.

When I was asked to be the national coordinator for RPI, I thought about what I wanted my contribution to this project to be. I thought about those pages of notes and how it would have been so much easier to have many of those questions answered before that first phone call. That is what this guide is intended to do. I still plan to talk to each of the lead educators and offer any guidance necessary. Some pieces of this guide may still require explanation. People learn in different ways and my hope is that this will help those who learn by reading through the material and then asking questions. Please feel free to ask any questions or offer suggestions. This guide is a draft and can be changed in coming years.

I am looking forward to working with you over the next few months. Please know that I am always available to help you make RPI a successful endeavor at your camp.

B'hatzlacha,
Abbi Sharofsky
National Coordinator, RPI 2010

“What is a Non-Profit Organization?” and other questions you may have about this project

What is RPI?

The Ramah Philanthropy Initiative (RPI) is a program that is designed to teach our chanichim about what it means to be a philanthropist and how it is different than giving tzedakah. Giving tzedakah is a mitzvah and a very important one. But there is more that goes in to tzedakah than just putting a penny in the pushke before Shabbat. When one is a philanthropist, he or she is giving money to organizations or people who have requested funds from them for very specific reasons. It is up to the philanthropist to determine if that person or organization deserves to receive those funds. In some cases, they do not. Part of philanthropy is learning how to make educated decisions about which people and organizations deserve money.

The goal of this program is multi-layered: we are teaching our chanichim about giving away money, but we are also teaching them to make informed decisions about that giving. They will learn to read a budget, review a grant proposal, and interview the potential recipients of the grants. They will be philanthropists.

This program is one of many programs throughout the country that are striving to teach teens about philanthropy. This program has been generously sponsored and supported by the Feilbogen family and by the Jewish Teen Funders Network, an organization that works to help programs like this one educate teens about philanthropic giving.

What is a non-profit organization?

Many of the chanichim may not be familiar with the idea of a non-profit organization. It may be something that you the educator have heard of, but are still unclear as to what that actually means. A non-profit organization is one whose goal is not to make money for its shareholders, but to use the money that is brought in to enhance the organization. A non-profit

organization is typically staffed by paid employees and unpaid volunteers. Non-profit organizations can be as small as a local animal shelter and as large as a network of medical programs throughout the world. It can be a museum, a community center, a food bank, a youth village, or an overnight camp. Non-profits are a huge part of our lives. This is something that is very important to explain to the kids. In a time when they have many material things and are consumed with being consumers, this is a chance for them to look at organizations that are not making things, but helping people. Often, the result of a non-profit organization is not a good, but a service.

What are a mission statement, a grant proposal, and all of these other things we need to teach our kids?

Many of these items will be explained in the lesson plans. Please take time to read the lesson plans carefully before each session. Make sure you will have enough time to complete the lesson or allot time in the next session. Many of the lessons cannot be rushed.

The development of a mission statement, learning to read a grant proposal, reaching consensus, and other skills that will be developed throughout this program seem tricky at first. They are all pieces of developing your group of kids from people who signed up for a class or a chug into a team of philanthropists.

Why do they need a mission statement?

Everyone stands for something. Everyone has a set of principles and beliefs that guide them. A philanthropist does not just give away money because he or she thinks an organization has a good idea. They give the money because the goals of the organization fall in line with the goals of the philanthropist. Developing a mission statement helps the group identify their goals and intentions for allocating funds. It does not say explicitly “We give money to organization xyz” but it may say “We are dedicated to funding

organizations that work to improve the quality of life for others.” By working on a mission statement as a group, it helps the program participants learn about what they personally feel is important and learn to integrate their personal feelings with the ideas of others.

Will they really give away real money?

Yes! The goal is that each camp will give away \$1000. Some of this money will come from the National Ramah Commission. Some will come from each individual camp. Some many may come from the group itself. The amount of money each group has may vary from camp to camp. Please speak with your camp director about available funds.

The organizations you contact will be encouraged to request a grant for up to \$1000 or your camp’s specific amount of money. After the site visits and hearing about two other organizations that have requested funding, your group will have to allocate the funds. There is no right or wrong way to allocate the funds. They can give all the money to one organization, decide that each organization deserves the same amount, or decide to give to three out of the four. It is up to the group. Something that is important for you, as the educator to remember is that it is not your decision. You may disagree with their decision, but it is theirs to make. You may help guide the decision making process, but not the decision.

This looks like a big job and I'm a little confused. What now?

This is a big job, but it is also a lot of fun and extremely rewarding. As someone who has taught this program before, I can say that it was one of the highlights of my summer and an amazing learning experience. It may not always run smoothly, but there are people who can help you. Your camp directors are supporting you in this program, as well as the grant coordinator. These people are excellent resources at your camp. I am available by phone, email, and Skype. Please never hesitate to contact me

with a question or suggestion about the program. My job is to help you succeed in teaching your chanichim how to be the next generation of philanthropists in their Jewish communities. I am here for you and I am looking forward to working with you this summer.

How to Find a Site

There are several ways to do this. It is preferred that you have your site visits planned and confirmed with the camp and the site before camp starts. If this is not possible for both of the sites, you have the option of asking the chanichim for input on local organizations and possible site visits.

A great place to start is with your camp directors and program directors. They may know of organizations that have worked with the camp in the past and are understanding of camp schedules.

Any non-profit organization in your area is eligible to take part in this, not just Jewish organizations. This may include a local hospital, a center for people with disabilities, a food bank, or a museum. The possibilities are only as limited as the organizations in your area. A key part of this program is the site visit, so it is crucial that the organization is local. I will be presenting the option of donating to organizations that are not local, so please make sure that the two sites you choose are local. Keep in mind that each organization must complete a grant application and return it to you before the site visit.

The Internet is a great tool for finding non-profit organizations in your area. One website that is very helpful is Charity Navigator www.charitynavigator.org. This website evaluates non-profit organizations based on their financial health and efficiency. It has a lot of information about the non-profit world and can give you more insight to what goes in to an effective non-profit organization.

Once you have picked possible organizations, call the executive director or the person who is responsible for grants at the organization. You do not want to call the volunteer coordinator; this is not about volunteering. Remember that you need to call during working hours. Camp hours are sometimes different, so please keep this in mind. **It is important that you call the organization, not just email.** Explain who you are, the program you are running, and the goal of the site visit. Be very clear that you do not want to volunteer at the organization when you visit, but will be meeting with people who run the organization, touring the site, and interviewing people. Also, you will need to explain that this is a grant you are inviting them to apply for and their participation is dependent upon receiving all parts of the grant application.

Things To Remember

Clear the date with your program director or camp director, the Rosh Edah, other camp staff who handles transportation and trips.

Make sure you have enough staff to go with you. Find out how many staff members are needed for the amount of kids you are taking and make sure that staff is available.

Make sure there will be transportation for the site visit.

How to Have a Site Visit

As was stated, a site visit is not a time to volunteer at the organization. If you are visiting a local food bank, your group should not be helping pack boxes of food or make meals when you visit. This needs to be made very clear to the people at the organization. Volunteering is a wonderful program and kids should have an opportunity to do that, but this is not that time.

The purpose of the visit is for the kids to present themselves as philanthropists – people who have money to give to that organization. Your kids have a newfound amount of power on these visits. It is their decision whether or not the organization will receive money and the visit impacts their decision.

The site visit should consist of at least two parts: a tour of the site and time to speak with the director and ask questions. The organization may have an informational film to show you, a short program, or meetings with two or three different departments. Ask your contact person at the site what they will be showing you before you go. If you have any changes or suggestions to make, do it before the visit. A typical site visit lasts approximately one hour. It may be more depending on the size of your group and the size of the site. In my experience, my group of seven campers and two staff were able to tour a local food bank and talk to the director in about one hour.

Before the site visit, prepare your campers for talking with the adults who run the organization. Depending on the age of your campers, they may not have had this experience before. Some campers may be comfortable talking with adults and asking questions, but others may need more practice. Help your campers formulate a list of questions before the site visit and assign questions to the campers. While you do want to help your campers if they get stuck on questions or become shy, it is important that the questions come from them and not you, the educator. The person from the organization should also direct answers to the kids, not to you. They are the ones giving the money, not you.

Things to do to prepare

Review the grant proposals. The kids should know the amount of money being requested and the specific program the money will be supporting. They should have already reviewed the budget of the organization and be able to ask questions about it, if necessary.

Give the kids folders or notebooks so they can keep the grant proposals in one place and take notes on the visit. Campers should also have pens or pencils and extra paper for notes.

Get directions to the sites. You may only have an hour to meet with people at the site, so don't use up that time getting lost.

Take the phone number of the site with you when you leave camp, in case you get lost.

Goals of the Mifgash

In previous years, the mifgash has been placed as the peak experience of the Ramah Philanthropy Initiative. This year, it is my hope that we will reimagine the mifgash. If your camp does not have a mifgash, please do not stop reading this section. There is information in here for you, too.

In previous years, the goals of the mifgash have ranged from learning together to allocating funds together. To be very clear, **the allocation of funds will not take place at the mifgash**. This year, I am encouraging the camps that are having a mifgash to find a time earlier in the summer to meet, rather than at the end of the summer. This is being done with the hope that the mifgash will focus on another component of RPI.

Four of the camps participating in RPI Kayitz 2010 will have a mifgash. These camps, Nyack with Poconos and Berkshires with New England, will have the chance to interact and learn from each other. There is time dedicated for group learning, but there should also be pe'ulot organized for the group, which will encourage bonding, finding common ground, and allow for fun.

Possible Learning Experiences for the Mifgash, based on the curriculum

- Building a Mission Statement
- Learning about creating consensus – this can be a trial run of fund allocation with mock funds and organizations
- Discussion on Particularism and Universalism

We will work together to plan the mifgash and create a program that works with the places each group has reached in the curriculum as well as provide guidance for the program beyond the mifgash.

The mifgash is an important part of the curriculum, but not the most important part. **The peak experience or focal point of the curriculum and learning experiences of the summer should be the site visits.**

The site visits provide the information needed for the allocation of funds. The mifgash is a great opportunity to learn with teens from different communities, but the program can exist without it and be very successful.

For those camps that will not have a mifgash, you can follow the curriculum as it is presented and not worry that you are missing out on a part of the experience. However, I do encourage those camps to find another experience for the campers. It may be a special program that involves a discussion with camp leadership about the work they are doing. It may be the creation of a peulat erev for an edah about tzedakah by the RPI participants. There is an opportunity for creativity with this and I am happy to help you develop a program.

Checking In & Visiting Your Group: What I am Looking For When I Visit or Contact You

Throughout the summer, I will be contacting you via email and phone. This is not about me checking up on you, but so that you know that I am available to help you and support you in this endeavor. Please respond to my communication. It helps me to know how your group is doing and lets me know if modifications to the program are needed. This program is a lot of fun to teach and very rewarding, but can run into issues as you try to fit it into a hectic camp schedule. If I know that you are having problems, I can help you work through them.

I will be attending both mifgashim and may be visiting one or two camps to observe a session. At the mifgash, I am looking to see how the curriculum and learning experience has affected the campers. What have they learned? Are they internalizing key points of the curriculum? Can they explain what they have learned to their peers? I am not judging your teaching skills. I am looking to see if you are conveying the material clearly and accurately to the campers and helping them engage in the material.

Troubleshooting

I called an organization and they never returned my call. Should I move on?

Yes. You are trying to give them money. You need to make it clear from the first phone call that your goal is to help them. If they don't respond, this may be an indicator of how the rest of the process could go. Move on.

The organization never returned the grant proposal. Can we still visit?

I strongly urge against visiting an organization that has not returned its grant proposal. This process is one that occurs every day in the professional world. If an organization did not submit their proposal on time, major funders and philanthropists (think Steinhardt, Bronfman, Covenant Foundation) would no longer consider the organization eligible and neither should you. Deadlines are important.

I can never find time to meet with my group. They are always on trips or have special programming. What do I do?

You may need to get creative with some of the programming. Maybe it won't happen during the set time for shiur or chug or whenever it is planned. It may happen during a peulat erev, on a Shabbat afternoon (assuming it is a Shabbat-friendly lesson), or during another activity. It is up to you to talk to the Rosh Edah and the other camp staff involved with this program to find time to go through the entire curriculum. If you are still having problems finding time or people are not helping you, please let me know so I can address the issue.

Some of the lessons look really long. I only have 35 minutes by the time my kids get to me. What do I do?

I will make suggestions in each lesson of what to do if you do not have a full hour for each lesson. Some lessons can be shortened and others may have to

happen over two sessions. The curriculum includes 14 lessons, which may take place over more than 14 sessions. Be prepared to be flexible. Also, if you find a different way to teach a lesson that is more effective for your group, go for it. Your suggestions are always welcome.

Communication is an issue. I don't have time to get to the computer and my cell phone does not have reliable service at camp. How do I get in touch with the organizations and with you?

Communication from camp to “the outside world” is an issue for many programs. Your camp may have a computer lab for staff, but it is always busy. You may have time to make calls, but cell phone service is spotty. This is where communication within your camp is crucial. Speak to the year-round coordinator for this program about getting access to a landline in an office so you can make calls. If there is a Wi-Fi network at your camp, see if you can get the password for it. If you do not know who to speak to, ask me and I can tell you who to speak to at your camp.

Another thing to keep in mind is that your camp may run on a different schedule (i.e. camp time) and you may be calling an office while the person is at lunch or the office is closed. Be sure to double check the times you are supposed to leave camp and arrive at the sites and that they are set in the actual time for your time zone, not camp time.