

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
IRWIN DANIELS SCHOOL OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

MASTERS PROJECT

by

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Program Proposal:

MANY PEOPLE, ONE COMMUNITY TRAVELING EXHIBIT

**for: My Jewish Discovery Place Children's Museum
of Jewish Community Centers Association of Greater Los Angeles**

Table of Contents

A. PROGRAM PROPOSAL	3
1. Overview of My Jewish Discovery Place	4
2. Program Objectives	6
3. Implementation Strategy	10
4. Program Components	13
5. Preparation and Evaluation	17
6. Proposed Budget	19
7. Suggested Grant Addendum	21
 B. PROGRAM ANALYSIS	 22
1. Structure	23
2. Marketing and Communication	25
3. Empowerment	26
4. Concerns	30

**MANY PEOPLE, ONE COMMUNITY TRAVELING EXHIBIT
PROGRAM PROPOSAL**

OVERVIEW OF MY JEWISH DISCOVERY PLACE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

My Jewish Discovery Place (MJDP) is a unique, hands-on Jewish children's museum created in response to the changing needs of both the North American Jewish community as a whole and the families that compose it. It was designed to replicate for children and their parents the experiential and Jewish learning that may have been lost in daily life as each generation becomes more and more assimilated. It is the goal of the museum that these kinds of learning, when shared with adults, reinforce the strong emotional influence of the experience, bringing Judaism to life for the family and promoting the continuity of the Jewish people. The interactive displays are designed to transform all visitors, young and old alike, into participants, offering parents and children a unique opportunity to discover jointly the wonders of their Jewish heritage.

The concept of MJDP was developed by the Jewish Community Centers Association (JCCA) of North America for demonstration projects at several centers throughout the United States, including the newest museum at Jewish Community Centers Association of Los Angeles. Although only open for visits since the summer of 1992, MJDP quickly

was praised as the most innovative, professional and advanced in the country.

The program has originally been funded in part by grants from the Avi Chai Foundation, Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles, Metro Region Jewish Federation Council, and the Ammado Foundation. MJDP is housed in the Westside Jewish Community Center, 5870 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036.

MJDP has been specifically developed for children between the ages of 3 and 7 and their parents, although the range varies with individual children. It is an excellent learning center for schools and camps, promoting positive Jewish identities in all who come to explore. In addition to Jewish schools, the museum is available to non-Jewish public and private schools as a way to reach unaffiliated Jewish children and teach non-Jews about Jewish traditions, culture and history in a non-threatening environment.

Positive meaningful experiences in the exhibits and learning areas are presented on two levels: first, as a series of interactive experiences which introduce children to key elements in Jewish life in a joyful, celebratory manner; and second, as a teaching resource which instructs and prompts parents, reinforcing and structuring their own

Jewish learning, prompting their own Jewish memories to surface and be passed down to the next generation. Such a bi-level approach affords the entire family the opportunity to share in the entire adventure.

MJDP is governed by a lay board of directors who have input in the decision-making that exists surrounding the museum and is responsible for any fundraising that occurs. An advisory board of prominent members of the community with expertise in a variety of areas ranging from education to the arts also exists as an important resource. Other volunteer opportunities exist for more direct service in the form of a docent program, training and educating community members to facilitate group visits and public hours.

Special workshops, concerts, exhibits, lectures and forums are conducted by Jewish educational, musical, artistic and literary specialists. Community wide special events are held to introduce each new exhibit. All events are available to museum board members, patrons, docents and the Jewish community at large as a celebration of the richness of the Jewish way of life.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Many People, One Community Traveling Exhibit will enhance the concept of My Jewish Discovery Place Children's Museum (MJDP) as a "museum without walls", bringing a traveling interactive museum exhibit into the multicultural curriculum of Los Angeles County's kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms. **Many People, One Community** will expand the MJDP mission to specifically include increasing multicultural understanding through the use of positive, interactive, multisensory experiences.

Many People, One Community will show the diversity of groups who make Los Angeles their home, teaching children to respect people who look or speak differently from themselves during their crucial early childhood years. Through knowledge and understanding, **Many People, One Community** will create a foundation for acceptance and community, at a time when individuals and groups are exploring and reflecting on the disastrous events of the urban uprising that occurred in April 1992 and its aftermath. **Many People, One Community** will shape and give strength to the future of Los Angeles, both by beginning with young children in the classroom, and by creating complimentary educational materials for teachers and parents.

Many People, One Community offers a unique approach to multicultural education, recognizing that young minds are eager and uninhibited to learning and discovery. There is simplicity and honesty within the hearts of young children that plays a great role in their development. The timing during this stage of early childhood development is the most appropriate for allowing them to explore the richness and beauty the cultural world around them has to offer without the biases typically developed over years of life. **Many People, One Community** also recognizes the strong impact adults have on the images and opinions children acquire, thereby including them in the experience through supplemental materials distributed before, and after Their children's participation in **Many People, One Community**.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Many People, One Community will take one year in development prior to classroom implementation. The project will require the hiring of a full time program coordinator with an advanced background in education or child development, and a variety of experiences working with different cultural groups. A part-time administrative assistant will also need to be hired to fulfill supporting functions, and a variety of specialists will serve as consultants to the project in its developmental stage.

The coordinator of **Many People, One Community** will be supervised by the director of MJDP and be accountable to a newly created **Many People, One Community** lay board of directors as its staffperson. S/he will be responsible for the development of all primary (child oriented) and supplemental (teacher and parent oriented) educational curriculum, the preparation of the exhibits, and the coordination of a volunteer docent program. S/he will also work with an advisory committee comprised of knowledgeable members of the greater Los Angeles community, holding expertise in the areas of multiculturalism, education, the arts, the city of Los Angeles, and specific ethnic, religious, or cultural communities. The representatives of the new **MPOC** board of directors and new **MPOC**

advisory committee will have input in the development of **Many People, One Community**, and will assist in establishing an endowment fund for the project through various means of fundraising. Once established, **Many People, One Community** will be implemented in the schools by volunteer docents from all segments of the greater Los Angeles community, trained specifically for this program of MJDP conjointly by the director of **Many People, One Community** and the lay docent chairperson, assigned by and part of the new board of directors.

Many People, One Community will be made available for one dollar per participating child to Los Angeles public and private schools beginning the school year after the developmental process has been completed (the second year of the grant). It will be publicized through the distribution of promotional materials to school administrators, and will be available on a year round basis. Each administrator will be responsible for passing on the information to their kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers and parent groups, and making reservations to have **Many People, One Community** brought to their school.

Many People, One Community will be comprised of several traveling exhibits promoting a better understanding of ethnic, religious, and cultural communities to be brought into the Los Angeles County Schools. It will broaden the currently existing relationship between JCCA and several Los Angeles school districts at the high school level, a partnership which began over a decade ago. It will help promote the position of the organized Jewish community as concerned and active participants in the daily events facing the multi-cultural city of Los Angeles today by focusing on the idea that we must understand each other if we are to live together peacefully.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Many People, One Community Traveling Exhibit will be transported to the school sites in several large trunks, designed to hold a large amount of materials yet easily transportable. **Many People, One Community** will feature:

1) An ongoing collective "Photo Album"

Self-portrait drawings/collages will be drawn by the children, using People Colors™ crayons and swatches of material. Each participating class' portraits will remain on display with the traveling exhibit for one month before being returned to the school, in order for other classes to explore differences and similarities, and allowing excellent follow-up opportunities for the teachers and parents.

2) A mini-library

Picture and storybooks promoting pride in individual cultures and an understanding of those different from themselves will be set up in a reading corner display with specially designed and labeled "buildings

of Los Angeles" throw pillows on the floor.

3) A "children speak" video presentation

Using a customized, painted sheet-mural of the world as a canopy, a prepared video documentary will play continuously as ethnically diverse children detail what it is like to grow up in Los Angeles both as members of their specific cultural community and as part of the larger Los Angeles community. Each segment will be backed by different musical selections matching the child's cultural background.

4) A giant map of Los Angeles neighborhoods

The children will be able to leave their mark showing in which area of the city they live and what their cultural background is. They will also be able to view markings made by children from other schools around Los Angeles.

5) A giant timeline

The children will be able to leave their mark showing when their family came to Los Angeles, where they came from, and for how many generations they have lived in Los Angeles. They will also be able to notice the length of time and place of origin of their families compared to others.

6) A "tour of Los Angeles" listening center

The children can listen to a guided tour of the city of Los Angeles, describing the things they might see and allowing them to listen to what they might hear if they were traveling through different areas of the city. It will be accompanied by a photo book through the use of which they can follow the route and experience parts of the city of which they may never have known.

7) A puppet theater

The children can use their imaginations to act out what happens in a variety of settings in Los Angeles. It will include backdrops and hand-puppets for creating scenarios in the park, school, home, and city.

8) A wishing well and "Mural of Hope"

The children will be able to write their own wishes for the people of Los Angeles on large paper pennies to be placed inside the well. These pennies can be used to create a "Mural of Hope" for the city.

These proposed exhibits use a variety of venues to capture the attention of the children and put their creativity to use in unique ways. It brings knowledge and understanding to open minds, and encourages and empowers them, both as individuals and as a class, to act responsibly as part of a larger community by educating themselves about many cultures.

PREPARATION AND EVALUATION

The trunks carrying the exhibits will be available to travel to two classes per school day, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon. The experience will require approximately one to one and one-half hours of interactive time for the children per-class, with some preparation by the teachers before the visit with the students in the classroom and some follow-up afterwards (the before and after do not need to be on the same day as the experiencing of the exhibit). Set up and clean up time will each take approximately one and one-half to two hours per school. Only one class, with a maximum of 30 children will be able to experience **Many People, One Community** for one hour at a time in order to keep the experience meaningful and intimate. Although, more than one class may participate on any given day the exhibit is at the school site. It will need to be set up in an uncluttered space, like an auditorium, for the maximum benefit. Teachers, assistants and perhaps parent volunteers will be needed on hand to assist the docents who accompany **Many People, One Community** during each class visit.

Teacher training will take place in the form of a staff meeting prior to the visit, in order to brief the teachers on the goals, concepts and experiences of the program, so that they can best implement the

curriculum into their classrooms and prepare the students for the experience before **Many People, One Community** arrives at the school sites. Parent information will be given out at a special parents meeting, if possible, or through the distribution of descriptive take-home materials, in efforts to keep the channels of communication open and encourage at home discussions throughout the process.

Evaluations will be filled out by each participating class collectively from the students' perspectives, and individually by each participating teacher after the visit in order to receive feedback and determine how to best improve the project for future use. Part of the materials to be distributed to the parents also involves an easy, mail in evaluation of how they viewed the program and its content.

Docents will also fill out evaluations of the sessions, from their perspective, after each class visit. These strategies allow all four perspectives involved in **Many People, One Community** to be explored: children, teachers, parents, and docents, giving a well rounded view of the program as a whole.

This program is to be submitted to a variety of funding sources in the form of a grant proposal, as it is a unique and innovative project.

PROPOSED BUDGET:

Many People, One Community Traveling Exhibit

(a two year proposal)

EXPENSES:

A. Personnel

Full-Time Project Coordinator	\$60,000
(at \$30,000 per year)	
Benefits (at 25% per year)	15,000
Consultant and Contract Services	
(First year only)	
Artists	5,000
Cultural/Education Specialists	12,000
Audio/Video specialists	5,000
Researchers	2,500
Part-Time Administrative Assistant	26,000
(at \$13,000 per year)	
Benefits (at 25% per year)	<u>6,500</u>

Total Personnel \$127,000

B. Non-Personnel

Audio/Visual Equipment	7,500
Concrete Materials	4,000
Consumable supplies	3,500
Special Events/Fundraisers (at \$8000 per year)	16,000
Printing, Promotion and Phones (at \$5,000 per year)	10,000
Trunks	<u>2,000</u>

Total non-personnel \$37,600

Total Expenses \$164,600

Total grant request over the course of two years = \$160,600

Many People, One Community Traveling Exhibit

Suggested Grant Proposal Addendum

(outline)

- A. My Jewish Discovery Place Board of Directors Listing
- B. Letter of Program Approval from MJDP Museum Chairperson
- C. Letter of Recommendation from Los Angeles School Districts
- D. Letter of Recommendation from City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department
- E. Letter of Recommendation from Rebuild Los Angeles
- F. Program Coordinator Job Description
- G. My Jewish Discovery Place Operating Budget and List of Funders
- H. My Jewish Discovery Place staff job descriptions and profiles
- I. JCCA Tax Exempt Status Verification

MANY PEOPLE, ONE COMMUNITY TRAVELING EXHIBIT
PROGRAM ANALYSIS

STRUCTURE

Many People, One Community is based on the same administrative structure as MJDP. It has both professional and lay components that take the roles of coordinators, chairpeople, board members, volunteer docents, advisors, and consultants. As a non-profit organization representing Jewish communal interests, this type of structure has proven effective in the past in terms of goal accomplishment and representative democracy. Lay chairpeople, backed by professional and support staff, and supported by volunteer committees and individuals lead the community's projects and determine priority. This is a system not likely to change in the future, despite the current developmental stage of any program.

Although the concept of **Many People, One Community** was conceptualized by the professional staff at MJDP, it grew out of the expressed concerns of the MJDP board of directors who hoped that the museum would be able to reach out into the general Los Angeles community in the hopes of giving further life to the idea of "a museum without walls" while providing service to the vast multicultural community in existence. It was only with the consent of the board, then, that this program would be able to be developed, a new staff person hired, and the implementation process begun. In this light, the

organization of MJDP and the creation of its new branch, **Many People, One Community Traveling Exhibit** can be viewed metaphorically as an organism, or a parent: breathing life into a new concept/program and reaching with outstretched arms to the children of Los Angeles, taking them in, teaching them, and encouraging them to grow and develop a new understanding in their next role stage. Concern, nurturing and patience are all adjectives that can be used to describe MJDP and its new extended mission. Even in the lay-professional administrative structure described, the concept of taking care of each other and ensuring that the job gets done is a key part of the process and occurs on many levels, both visibly and behind the scenes.

MARKETING and COMMUNICATION

Many People, One Community has a built in audience: the formal network of public and private schools in Los Angeles County. The children are the primary beneficiaries of the program, but the teachers are the ones who will be most concerned with the exchange of services existing during participation in the program. They are asked to invest preparation time in terms of teacher training and the implementation of lesson plans other than their own, classroom time in both the preparation and processing of the experience, and energy assisting docents and facilitating the experiences of their students during the course of the program. They must buy into the goals and objectives of **Many People, One Community** in order for it to be effective. In other words, the benefits must be seen as greater than their investments, if they are to willingly become potential users, and overcome any ambivalence that might arise.

Communication between the administrative office of **Many People, One Community** and the teachers/administrators must be clear and ongoing, and the program must be seen as beneficial, if a reliable reputation and a positive working relationship is to be built. There are four aspects that are essential to consumer buy in of the service offered, in this case, **Many People, One Community**

Traveling Exhibit: product, promotion, price, and place.

Reputation and relationship, are two core components of the product MJDP is trying to market to the schools, and through effective communication and correspondence, will come successful promotion of the program.

In these trying times when school budgets are constantly being cut, more administrators are likely to desire this type of program, because there is only a minimum monetary charge of one dollar per participating student, and they will be more apt to participate. Because there is minimal financial commitment required of the schools, there is strong incentive to become interested, involved, and aware not only of this particular program, but multicultural education in general. The fundraising strategies of the board, and other future funding sources will make the continuation of **Many People, One Community** an important part of the education of the children of Los Angeles for many years to come. Finally, it requires little effort for the administrators, as the trunks come to the school premises without the classes having to leave the building. This quality also makes the project attractive, as classes simply have to walk out their door to become encompassed in the experience.

Because **Many People, One Community** involves children from all cultures, recognizing differences as well as similarities, and encouraging knowledge and understanding of all types of individuals,

there is no attempt at segmentation (the division into logical sub-groups) either in the marketing strategy or in the actual exhibits themselves. This, too, is a unique approach in the promotion of a product.

EMPOWERMENT

Through the language of **Many People, One Community**, as expressed by the teachers, the docents, the exhibits, and the written materials, the message of pride in individualism and strength in understanding differences will be clearly articulated verbally and nonverbally to the participants in the program. To ensure that this occurs, the post visit classroom discussions and evaluations will be created and collected as part of the evaluation process. This project is an awareness building activity, a sensitivity training, of sorts, to encourage the belief in, and understanding of our diverse Los Angeles community. Like the mission of MJDP, the Black is Beautiful movement, and the Gay Pride movement, **Many People, One Community** seeks to empower children to be proud of who they are: to develop positive self and cultural identities and identifications. Recognizing that they are part of a larger community, it encourages exploration of the beauty in differences and strength in diversity. **Many People, One Community** empowers children through knowledge and understanding giving them a sense of a world filled with unique individuals and diminishing their fears of those different than themselves.

The layout of the **Many People, One Community Traveling Exhibit** is designed specifically with young children in mind,

focusing on their short attention spans, enthusiasm for hands-on learning, and affinity for bright, colorful displays. It uses age appropriate language and concepts to impart both the content as well as the underlying message. Children will again be empowered by being able to masterfully use their skills in an appropriate setting geared specifically with them in mind. They will also be able to feel good about being able to use a variety of means of expression as they freely explore the multi-sensory, interactive displays.

CONCERNS

There are two major issues of concern that surround the development and implementation of **Many People, One Community**. Both involve working relationships with other groups. The first begins with the program in the developmental stages, and focuses on the issue of coalition building. It is a question of whether other ethnic and religious groups will be open to participating in the proposed advisory committee, inputting information, and steering the direction that the program will take.

It is here that it is essential to promote and focus on the important purpose of bringing an experiential, multicultural experience into the schools. Without constant reminders relating to the mission and goals of **Many People, One Community**, in addition to the collective purpose of the group, misunderstandings are more apt to occur between individuals that may be involved in the project. Such individuals may have their own agenda in mind, and may not focused on the group goals.

If representatives from different groups do agree to participate, however, there can be very positive outcomes, only one of which is the collection of excellent resources into a cohesive working for the concept of what **Many People, One Community** stands for and the benefit of the children of Los Angeles.

The encouragement of this type of expert coalition (advisory committee) or the use of individual consultations with recognized authorities also sets the stage for more informal types of interactions to occur between representatives of specific groups on both professional and personal levels. It is a wonderful opportunity for networks and inroads to become established, bringing together people who may not have had the opportunity to meet or work together previously. It allows groups who may feel disenfranchised, or out of the loop to become more empowered through individual and collective representation of the group to which they belong. Such a think tank of knowledgeable, concerned individuals is also highly likely to lead to the creation of other innovative projects, not necessarily related to **Many People, One Community** or MJDP.

There may be resistance to such partnerships, though, for fear that because the project is sponsored by a Jewish organization, the presented material may be biased and only representative of one objective and viewpoint. Several groups in recent history have suggested a difficulty recognizing the cultural aspects of Judaism, rather than solely a religious identification, hindering the ability to form multicultural coalitions in the past. Yet, the 1991 National Jewish Population Survey clearly describes the majority of Jews in the United States as identifying mostly as a culture, rather than as a

religious affiliation. There is a great deal of distrust that has historically developed over the course of many years between many other cultural groups as well. Securing interactions between them, therefore, may prove a difficult task.

It is clear that coalition building involves the concept of power and image. The second concern focuses on this idea as well, and takes place in the implementation stage of the program. Power issues are very sensitive and explosive issues with many groups. A second concern involves the response of other groups to a Jewish group (MJDP/JCCA) bringing a multicultural project into a public school setting. The issue of the separation between church and state is likely to arise. Again, the understanding of committee and staff members, both lay and professional, about the significance of **Many People, One Community** must remain clear and free of confusion. It is essential that this be communicated throughout all levels of the administration and support structures, to ensure everyone working to achieve the same objective.

There is no religious agenda in the conceptualization of this project. As such, it is similar to two other programs run for older children (teens) in public school settings by Jewish Organizations: "A Campus of Difference" is sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, and the "Mobile Resource Unit" (MRU) is sponsored by First Step and JCCA. Again the question of how to categorize Judaism

arises, but that is external to the goals of the project. In the case of **Many People, One Community**, the concern lies with creating greater understanding of the diversity existing in the community of Los Angeles and encouraging enhanced self-esteem, through interactive exploration in a comfortable environment. Redirection back to that focus is critical if the children of Los Angeles are to benefit from all **Many People, One Community** has to offer.