



# Call for Letters of Inquiry

Deadline: January 9, 2015 @ 4:00pm

1. About SVP Boulder County
2. Selection Criteria
3. The SVP Philosophy of Funding Levels
4. Frequently Asked Questions
5. Application Process
6. Timeline for Prospective Investees

## **1. About SVP Boulder County – Investing in Nonprofits**

SVP Boulder County believes that strong nonprofits deliver better results. That's why we invest capacity building consulting, education, coaching, and cash grants to build the strength and sustainability of local organizations.

SVP Boulder County has provided over \$2 million worth of education and management consulting and \$1.4 million in cash grants to 24 nonprofits in Boulder County. We are an active group of volunteers and givers working collectively to impact our community.

We have a team of members, we call 'partners,' who are both our donors and pro bono consultants. These individuals serve on our Portfolio Grants Committee which reviews Letters of Inquiry, chooses finalists, conducts capacity assessments, reviews full proposals, conducts site visits and then makes a recommendation to the full SVP partnership on investments. All of our partners weigh in to make a decision on which groups we support with contributions of consulting and cash. Once chosen for investment, a nonprofit will typically receive pro bono consulting support valued between \$150,000 and \$225,000 over a three-year period. We seek to support organizations that will benefit from a long-term relationship with SVP Boulder County.

SVP partners are not your traditional volunteer. We ask that you think out of the box when you elaborate on ways partners can help strengthen your organization. Partners are successful businesspeople, consultants, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. They can consult in numerous areas – from accounting to marketing. So when you look at how to best use SVP, think outside the realm of traditional volunteers, and think big: how could you use a consultant to effectively strengthen your organization? *This is one of the most important components of your Letter of Inquiry, and what makes your LOI to SVP different from a typical LOI to a more traditional funding organization.*

### **IMPORTANT - Please Note**

**To be eligible to submit a Letter of Inquiry, all prospective applicants must RSVP for and attend one of these Information Sessions at Impact Hub Boulder:**

- December 4 at 3pm  
([Register Now](#))
- December 10 at 2pm  
([Register Now](#))
- December 16 at 9am  
([Register Now](#))
- January 5 at 12pm  
([Register Now](#))

SVP makes initial single-year awards with the intent of establishing longer-term partnerships with its investees (typically lasting 3 years). At the end of each year of support, the program and organizational outcomes and relationship potential with each investee are re-evaluated for further support. Re-investment for up to three years is likely but not automatic.

An important element in our proposal review process is finding organizations that are ready and willing to benefit from SVP on capacity building projects. The areas in which SVP Boulder County partners currently provide consulting include:

- Strategy and Planning – i.e. a strategic or business planning process, lifecycle assessments, etc
- Management – i.e. breaking down organizational objectives and developing systems for monitoring and accountability at all levels of the organization; executive coaching
- Outcome Measurement and Program Evaluation – i.e. planning, reviewing and enhancing current tools, assisting in tool development, training board and staff on tools (i.e. logic models)
- Human Resources – i.e. assisting in the development of job descriptions, coaching investee staff through the interview process, advising staff on what to look for in a new hire, auditing employee benefits and handbooks; developing full organizational restructuring
- Replication and Expansion – i.e. leveraging capital, develop feasibility study to assess best strategies for expansion, scaling models
- Information Technology – i.e. auditing databases; researching solutions for data, web, or network systems; IT planning
- Finance and Accounting – i.e. developing cash flow analysis; developing new budgeting systems; transitioning an investee's accounting system to updated software, training staff on the new system, and facilitating data conversion
- Boards and Governance – i.e. Board recruitment, training, and development; board coaching
- Marketing and Communications – i.e. branding and marketing plans; collateral materials
- Legal – i.e. reviewing legal documents, providing legal counsel on various issues
- Real Estate – i.e. assisting with market analysis, real estate negotiations
- Fundraising, Earned Income & Social Enterprise – i.e. fund development planning, developing earned income strategies, development coaching
- Board Leadership & Development – i.e. auditing and/or developing a board recruitment and training process, board education, board member coaching

## **2. Selection Criteria**

Eligible nonprofit organizations will need to address one or more of SVP's focus areas. **In 2015 SVP Boulder County will support one new Investee focused on serving local needs in Education, Health Care, Housing & Homelessness, Social Enterprise, or Youth Programming.** *(Please find SVP's complete social enterprise definition [online](#).)*

We recognize that there may be overlap among focus areas. Proposals that achieve the best fit within one area's highest priorities receive greater consideration than proposals that marginally address several priorities. Proposals that show a strong fit with one of the areas and address at least one other of our full list of focus areas will receive the highest consideration.

**SVP Boulder County seeks to partner with organizations that have the following characteristics. Those items listed below followed by an \* are required.**

- Nonprofit organization - 501(c)(3) status, or has a fiscal sponsor\*
- At least 50% of services must be provided in Boulder County\*
- Attend one of our Information Sessions\*

- In need of and committed to incorporating SVP volunteer support to build and strengthen their organization’s internal capacity to deliver programs and services\*
- Committed to using outcomes measurement/evaluation to provide effective programs\*
- Strong and passionate leadership, demonstrating qualities of a social entrepreneur
- Have a long-term perspective on their impact on the client population
- Collaborates with other nonprofits
- Organizations must demonstrate either:
  - A track-record of successful program/service implementation, making measurable impacts on populations served and/or issues addressed;
  - Reasoned methodology, i.e. needs assessment or replication of a model program, to demonstrate potential for success;
  - Or provide a revolutionary approach to solving a community issue.

**Recognizing that organizational infrastructure is a necessity, SVP welcomes requests for general operating support, or specific program/project support if aimed at building organizational capacity.** SVP Boulder County does not fund requests for endowments or capital campaigns.

**3. The SVP Philosophy of Funding Levels during an Investee’s Life-Cycle**

It is the intent of SVP to establish long-term partnerships with investees (*typically lasting 3 years*). SVP will provide varying levels of volunteer and financial resources over the life of its relationship with an investee and cash grants are specifically intended to be ‘in service of’ the time and energy it takes to work on capacity building. The first year of funding provides an opportunity to learn about each other and begin our work on capacity building projects. Over year two, the SVP/investee partnership is strengthened and capacity building efforts move forward in earnest. By the final year of investment, SVP anticipates a focus on sustainability for the investee. Funding levels mirror this changing relationship. In general, an investee with a three-year relationship with SVP may expect to receive between \$35,000 and \$75,000 in funding.

SVP Funding Levels Model

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>High</b>	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$25,000	\$75,000
<b>Low</b>	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$35,000

- Funding levels and investments in capacity building are based on the needs of the investee and the available resources within SVP. Each investee will benefit from support tailored to their unique situation and should expect to receive different funding levels than other investees.
- Ideally, the percentage of SVP funding will be a smaller portion of the Investee’s total revenue over time. It is SVP’s mission to support the development of sustainability in local nonprofits.
- From time to time, SVP may chose to fund an organization at an amount outside of these ranges.
- Each year the SVP/investee relationship is reviewed and evaluated. Although reviewed annually, the likelihood of a grant continuing for three years is high if the SVP-investee relationship is sound.

## 4. Frequently Asked Questions

### What is capacity building?

SVP Boulder County defines capacity building as the development of core skills, management practice, systems, and strategies.

### What can you say about your investees? What are their characteristics?

The organizations in which SVP Boulder County currently invests are in need of and committed to an infusion of pro bono consulting to build and strengthen their organization's capacity. These nonprofits are committed to learning and change and are typically facing significant challenges that they are willing to explore with SVP. Most have strong leaders and are either in a growth stage or have been mature and need a turnaround.

### What kind of people do you look for in the investees you fund?

SVP Boulder County's investees are led by social entrepreneurs -- innovative, passionate leaders with vision and ideas about effecting change and solving problems in the community, and creating more social value from their limited resources. They often use traditional business skills to achieve their goals and desire to improve their use of best practices. Most make creative use of limited resources to doggedly pursue their social mission. They deeply value volunteer involvement in their organizations and have a mechanism to work effectively with volunteers.

### What criteria will SVP Boulder County apply to choose investees?

SVP Boulder County seeks potential investees with strong leadership, bold ideas that have achieved success, people with vision to have a broader, growing impact on the community, and measures of performance. An important element is finding organizations that are ready and willing to partner with us and benefit from SVP through capacity building projects.

How many investees will SVP select in spring of 2015? SVP will most likely select one new investee to work with in 2015 and re-invest in three organizations. Assuming the relationship is strong, and benchmarks are achieved, SVP will support the new investee for up to two additional years following the initial year's investment.

## 5. Application Process

**Attendance at an information session is required and several** are scheduled in December and January at Impact Hub Boulder. Please click on the links at the beginning or end of this document to register. The goal of this session is to introduce you to the concept of partnering with SVP Boulder County, address any questions you may have about the application or selection process, and ensure you submit the most successful Letter of Inquiry. Questions are welcome any time.

To be considered for support, organizations should submit a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) electronically **by 4:00pm on January 9, 2015**. LOI's should not exceed two pages and should include **no attachments**. Some of us have well-used eyes, font may not be smaller than size 11 and margins should be one inch.

### **The letter of inquiry must include the following information:**

- Your organization's name, address, and website along with a contact name, email address, and phone number.
- One paragraph summarizing your organization's mission and history.

- A summary of your organizational goals and specific activities. Please include details around the population you serve, the number of clients served, and how it addresses one, or more, of the focus areas SVP will fund in 2015.
- A **specific** description, including **two to five proposed projects, or ways** in which you could use SVP partners' strategic consulting assistance (**this is a critical component of your letter**).
- A description of how you will know – and measure – if the partnership with SVP Boulder County is a success, *and* your organizational objectives/program objectives are met.
- A one-sentence description of your Executive Director's philosophy of leadership and a one-sentence description of your board chair's philosophy of leadership.
- Budget figures: a) the amount of financial support requested from SVP in 2015; b) the total budget for the requested project, if project-specific support is sought; c) the organization's total 2015 operating budget. **Please note:** *Do not submit a line item budget. For example, applicants need only state, "We are requesting \$15,000 in general operating support from SVP. Our total agency budget for FY2015 is \$524,000."*

**Please submit Letters of Inquiry by 4:00pm on January 9, 2015, via email**, with the Letter of Inquiry attached in PDF format. (Attachment file named the same as your organization's name followed by *LOI 2015*, i.e. *Best Nonprofit Ever LOI 2015*), to [jennie@svpbouldercounty.org](mailto:jennie@svpbouldercounty.org).

#### **6. Timeline\* for Prospective Investees**

- December and January: Information Sessions at Impact Hub Boulder. **Attendance** at one of the workshops by prospective investees is **required**.
- January 9, 2015, 4:00pm: Letters of Inquiry Due
- February 2, 2015: All applicants notified of finalist results. Three finalists will be selected.
- February, 2015: Prospective investee finalists complete SVP Capacity Assessment Tool
- March 6, 2015: Full Proposals Due from Finalists (*based on Colorado Common Grant App*)
- March or April, 2015: Two reps from SVP attend part of each prospective investee finalist's board meeting in one of these months to ensure Board support of a relationship with SVP.
- April, 2015: Site Visits (*scheduled individually*)
- May 29, 2015: SVP selects one new investee. Finalists notified of investment decisions.

#### **IMPORTANT - Please Note**

**To be eligible** to submit a Letter of Inquiry, all prospective applicants **must RSVP for and attend** one of these **Information Sessions** at Impact Hub Boulder in downtown Boulder:

- **December 4 at 3pm** ([Register Now](#))
- **December 10 at 2pm** ([Register Now](#))
- **December 16 at 9am** ([Register Now](#))
- **January 5 at 12pm** ([Register Now](#))

Questions? Contact [Jennie Arbogash](#)