



Call for Letters of Inquiry

Deadline: January 8, 2016 @ 4:00pm

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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 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.*

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

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**:*

- December 3 at 9am
([Register Now](#))
- December 15 at 12pm
([Register Now](#))
- January 4 at 3pm
([Register Now](#))

Questions? Contact [Jennie Arbogash](#)

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.)

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
- 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

SVP has historically found the most success in conducting capacity building with organizations that demonstrate a number of key characteristics. Therefore, we will give strong preference to nonprofits serve pressing needs* in Boulder County that have the following features:

- Nonprofit organization - 501(c)(3) status or fiscally sponsored ✓
- At least 50% of services must be provided in Boulder County ✓
- Budget at \$200,000 or more ✓
- A paid staff of three or more (may be part-time) ✓
- A board of six or more members ✓
- In a growth, mature, or turnaround stage (no start-ups) ✓
- Applicant attends one of SVP’s Information Sessions ✓
- Applicant is in need of and committed to incorporating SVP volunteer support to build and strengthen their organization’s internal capacity ✓
- Applicant is committed to using outcomes measurement/evaluation ✓
- Applicants has strong and passionate leadership, demonstrating qualities of a social entrepreneur ✓

If you’re concerned that your organization is close to, but doesn’t quite meet, one or two of these criteria, please contact Jennie Arbogash at 303.840.0165 to discuss.

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.

** Please Note: SVP Boulder County no longer uses focus areas and will accept Letters of Inquiry from organizations serving an array of pressing needs. SVP primarily uses The Community Foundation's Trends Report to identify pressing needs.*

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

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
High	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$25,000	\$75,000
Low	\$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 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 ad solving problems in the community, and creating more social value from their limited resources. Tey 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.

How many investees will SVP select in spring of 2016? SVP will most likely select one new investee to work with in 2016/17 and re-invest in three organizations.

5. Application Process

Attendance at an information session is required and several are scheduled in December and January . Please click on the links at the beginning 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 (contact [Jennie Arbogash](#)).

To be considered for support, organizations should submit a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) electronically **by 4:00pm on January 8, 2016**. LOI's should not exceed three 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, website, contact name, email address, and phone.
- One paragraph summarizing your organization's mission and history.
- A summary of your organizational goals and specific program or service activities. Please include all of the following details: the number of clients served, client service area, key requirements for service provision, the number of paid staff, the number of volunteers, the number of donors, and what size donation you use to determine a major donor.
- A summary of other community support enjoyed by the organization.
- A **specific** description, including **two to three proposed projects, or ways** in which you could use SVP partners' strategic consulting assistance (**this is a critical component of your letter**).
- One paragraph summarizing your leadership's vision for the organization and where you see the nonprofit in three to five years.
- A list of board member's names.
- Budget figures: a) the amount of financial support requested from SVP in 2016; b) the organization's total 2016 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 FY 2016 is \$524,000."**

Please submit Letters of Inquiry by 4:00pm on January 8, 2016, via email, with the Letter of Inquiry attached in PDF format. (Attachment file named the same as your organization's name followed by *LOI 2016*, i.e. *We Are Passionate LOI 2016*), to jennie@svpbouldercounty.org.

6. Timeline* for Prospective Investees

- December and January: Info Sessions at Impact Hub Boulder. **Attendance** at one is **required**.
- January 8, 2016, 4:00pm: Letters of Inquiry Due
- February 2, 2016: All applicants notified of finalist results. Three finalists will be selected.
- February, 2016: Prospective investee finalists complete SVP Capacity Assessment Tool
- March, 2016: Full Proposals Due from Finalists (*based on Colorado Common Grant App*)
- March, 2016: Two reps from SVP attend part of each finalist's board meeting
- April, 2016: Site Visits (*scheduled individually*)
- May 16, 2016: SVP selects one new investee. Finalists notified of investment decisions.