



Grant Application Cover Sheet

Applicant Organization: CAJE/Jewish Federation

Program Title: *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel*

Program Start Date: Fall 2008

Program End Date: Ongoing

Grant Amount Requested: \$8,250

Total Program Budget: \$10,000

Grant Summary, including description of program, need addressed and expected outcomes/benefits (please limit to space below):

A very talented Israeli educator, Itai Tennenbaum, has created an interactive software package to teach others about the sites and people of Israel. *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel* provides educators with specific lesson plans that offer interactive Israel education experiences for students that will bring important issues to life and help foster a strong Jewish identity. Interactivity is accomplished through stunning visual, turn-key, multi-media presentations that incorporate active role playing and dialogue, thereby engaging and impacting all involved. The curriculum is built on the philosophy that the only way to develop a strong identity among Jews is to personalize the story of Israel, i.e. make it belong to them.

Teaching Israel has become an important part of our schools' curricula. Research indicates that today's Jewish student is losing his/her connection with Israel. These young people do not relate to Israel as their parents and grandparents did, as a safe haven for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust or fleeing countries where they are being persecuted. Rather, they are bombarded with negative media images of Israeli soldiers mistreating or killing "innocent" Palestinians. Our shaliah/Israeli emissary program has done much to address this and expose children to the history, culture and vibrancy of Israel and create personal connections with our "homeland". *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel* can be a valuable teaching tool to support this important initiative.

The short-term outcome of the program is an increase in knowledge about Israel among our students, young and old alike. The long-term outcome is greater engagement in Israel programming, including travel to Israel. An evaluation component is built into the program.

Students of all ages will benefit from this powerful educational tool, which will increase understanding and strengthen their bond with Israel.

If program is successful will organization assume future costs? X Yes ___ No

REQUEST OF FUNDS FROM THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

A. Name and Address of Applying Organization

CAJE/Jewish Federation
5801 W. 115th Street, Suite 201
Overland Park, KS 66211

B. Application contact person, title and phone number

Alan S. Edelman, Associate Executive Director, Jewish Federation
(913) 327-8104

C. Title of proposed program

Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel

D. Description of program

A very talented Israeli educator, Itai Tennenbaum, has created an interactive software package to teach the sites and people of Israel. *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel* provides educators with specific lesson plans that offer interactive Israel education experiences for students that will bring important issues to life and help foster a strong Jewish identity. Interactivity is accomplished through stunning visual, turn-key, multi-media presentations that incorporate active role playing and dialogue, thereby engaging and impacting all involved. The curriculum is built on the philosophy that the only way to develop a strong identity among Jews is to personalize the story of Israel, i.e. make it belong to them.

Formed in 2007, Israel Interactive is an innovative communications company providing leading-edge computer and internet-based instructional programs about Israel to Jewish and secular educational institutions in the United States. Their uniquely user-friendly programs provide educators with specific lesson plans that connect students with critical information and issues designed to help foster strong Jewish identity.

The curriculum is based on their core philosophy: The only way to develop a strong Jewish identity among young Jews today is to personalize the story of Israel ... to have them own it. *Israel Interactive* gives them the magical opportunity to do just that, right in their classroom seats, and at just the right time in their lives.

The idea for *Israel Interactive* was born after Itai spent four years as an emissary in Minneapolis teaching Israel within the Jewish and secular communities and after more than fifteen years of guiding Americans through Israel. Throughout his experience, he found that there is a thirst for knowledge about Israel but a severe lack of inspirational programming that adequately quenches this thirst. He felt there had to be a more visually stimulating way to bring Israel to life for all students, youth and adult, Jews and those not Jewish, in a more exciting, interactive manner.

In June 2007 he gathered a team of educators who have had similar experiences and founded Israel Interactive. It is an educational company that seeks to provide leading-edge, DVD- and internet-based instructional programs to Jewish and secular educational institutions. The programs teach Israel-related topics in a manner

that is much more straightforward, comprehensive, and engaging than conventional Jewish education approaches. By supplying turn-key Macromedia Flash presentations, Israel Interactive provides ready-to-go educational resources that are easy to use, instructional, poignant and fun.

Itai Tennenbaum was born in Tel Aviv in 1964 and lived in Israel until age ten, when his family moved to the U.S. After graduating from the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, he returned to Israel and joined the army, where he served as a tank commander during the 1982 Lebanon War.

After the Army, Itai earned a bachelor's degree in Jewish History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1990 his passion for both history and his homeland led him to earn his license from the Israeli Ministry of Tourism to be an official tour guide for the State of Israel. Over the next fifteen years, Itai became one of the premier and most requested guides in Israel, serving as a tour educator for Consortium Israel Experience groups, United Jewish Communities, Jewish Community Center Association and National Council of Christians and Jews, among others.

In 1998, in honor of Israel's fifty year anniversary, Itai wrote and published a book titled *Living the Dream: Israel at 50*. The book sold thousands of copies.

In October 2000, Itai embarked on a lecture tour throughout the United States, addressing Israeli issues including the Middle East Conflict, media coverage, history of the land, and more. In 2002, he was invited by the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, in cooperation with the World Zionist Organization, to become the community shaliah (emissary), where he served for four years representing the voice of Israel through education, cultural events, lectures, media appearances and more.

While in Minneapolis, Itai introduced many new inspiring programs, including an Israeli pop artist concert series, "virtual tours" of Israel, "The Israel Update Series" and numerous speaking engagements, all designed to promote knowledge and understanding of Israel and the Middle East throughout the Twin Cities' Jewish and secular communities.

Itai's four years in Minneapolis also made him realize that there is a critical need for more inspiring Israel education material in the U.S. In 2007, he returned to Israel to develop Israel Interactive (www.israelinteractive.com), a company providing leading-edge, computer-based curriculum material for teaching Israel in an engaging, interactive manner. The company's first turn-key interactive software program, *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel*, is now available in the United States.

Itai's contact information is:

Itai Tennenbaum

Israel Interactive

Itai@israelinteractive.com

Telephone: 866.378.3223 or his cell phone in Israel (when dialing from the U.S.): 011.972.52.473.1306

Itai presented the program to a group of school directors and informal educators and everyone was enthusiastic about utilizing the materials. The software would also greatly enhance the work of our shaliah. In addition to the software package, Itai will come to the community for a training session, so that teachers and youth workers can take full advantage of the program.

The goal of this proposal is to increase the effectiveness of Israel education through the purchase of more sophisticated interactive software. In order to motivate our students to learn, we must keep up with the technology. The software would be made available to all students (ages 10 years to adult). This potentially represents over 15,000 people in our community. It might also be used in inter-faith settings, which would increase the number of people taking advantage of the program. Presentations would take place in classrooms and informal settings (congregations, Jewish Community Campus, people's homes) throughout the community.

The program will be marketed through our shaliah/Israeli emissary as well as our school and education directors. The shaliah/Israeli emissary will be responsible for administering the program. We have been fortunate to have two outstanding shlihim/Israeli emissaries who have been creative educators and understand the value of a resource like *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel*.

E. Describe the extent of the need for this program and how it came to your organization's attention.

Teaching Israel has become an important part of our schools' curricula. Research indicates that today's Jewish student is losing his/her connection with Israel. These young people do not relate to Israel as their parents and grandparents did, as a safe haven for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust or fleeing countries where they are being persecuted. Rather, they are bombarded with negative media images of Israeli soldiers mistreating or killing "innocent" Palestinians. Our shaliah/Israeli emissary program has done much to address this and expose children to the history, culture and vibrancy of Israel and create personal connections with our "homeland". *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel* can be a valuable teaching tool to support this important initiative.

F. How will the Jewish community ultimately benefit from the implementation of this program?

Students of all ages will benefit from this powerful educational tool, which will increase understanding and strengthen their bond with Israel.

G. Has this program been implemented before by your organization?

No, but the software program has been used in other communities (including Cleveland, Denver, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Providence, West Palm Beach) with great success. The following are two testimonials from professionals whose communities are using the software:

"Itai has developed a very cutting edge, interactive Israel education curriculum that we plan on. I saw his materials a few weeks ago and was blown away; I think Itai really gets how to engage young people today in Israel education."

Steven Schauder, Executive Director, Friedman Commission for Jewish Education, West Palm Beach

"There are only a handful of entrepreneurial Jewish educational products for which I'd even consider risking redirecting the interests of precious infrastructure fund raising prospects; this is truly one of those rare ones."

Daniel W. Bennett, Executive Director, Colorado Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE)

H. How does this program relate to the ongoing goals and activities of your organization?

The mission of CAJE/Jewish Federation is to assist every member of the community in becoming Jewishly literate and Jewishly identified.

I. Financial Information

The cost of the program is \$2,000 per license. However, if a community educational institution coordinates the use of the software in ten or more settings, they can receive a 50% discount. At least ten institutions in our community who reviewed the material have expressed interest in the program, therefore, it would cost \$20,000. But since CAJE/Jewish Federation is serving as a central address through its shaliah/Israel emissary program, the software will cost only \$10,000. At this point in time, seven institutions were in a position to contribute \$250 per school/congregation. We will continue to seek contributions from other institutions and, possibly, be able to return some funds to the Jewish Community Foundation should they agree to fund the request.

BUDGET

INCOME

Contributions from seven congregations and schools (\$250/congregation) \$1,750

EXPENSES

1 Community License for *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel* \$10,000

TOTAL REQUEST: \$ 8,250, which is 82.5% of the total cost of the software.

CAJE/Jewish Federation will provide internal fiscal resources through the work of the shaliah/Israeli emissary and the administrative support staff, who will check out the software and make sure it is returned.

If we only receive partial funding, we will have to seek funding from different sources.

J. Evaluation

The short-term outcome of the program is an increase in knowledge about Israel among our students, young and old alike. The long-term outcome is greater engagement in Israel programming, including travel to Israel. An evaluation component is built into the program. When Itai comes to train the teachers, school directors and youth workers, he will demonstrate how to evaluate the impact of the program. This includes traditional forms of formal classroom, as well as informal evaluations. We track the number of students participating in Israel programs.

K. Why should the Jewish Community Foundation fund this program?

The Jewish Community Foundation has been committed to enhancing Jewish education in our community. *Israel Interactive: The Story of Modern Israel* will reinforce their support of Israel programs. The software can be used in many settings, including preparing students for Israel travel. It is an effective tool that will be used throughout the community, particularly by our shaliah/Israel emissary.