



SVARA

Director of Development

Chicago, USA

(Remote Position)



Background

SVARA is a traditionally radical yeshiva dedicated to the serious study of Talmud through the lens of queer experiences. SVARA's unique pedagogy makes Talmud study in the original accessible—for the first time in Jewish history—to all who want to learn. At SVARA, everyone—queer, straight, trans, alef-bet beginners, experienced talmudists, secular, religious, Jews, non-Jews—everyone learns together in a mixed-level bet midrash that recognizes as crucial the insights of all those on the margins.

SVARA's mission is to empower queer and trans people to expand Torah and tradition through the spiritual practice of Talmud study. Through this, SVARA envisions a future in which liberatory expressions of Judaism equip individuals and communities to realize a just and healed world.

Our yeshiva is named for a 2,000-year-old talmudic term, meaning “moral intuition.” Svara is the only source of law that can overturn even the Torah itself. SVARA's work follows the direction of Chazal, the Rabbis of the Talmud, who were willing to make radical moves—sometimes uprooting the Torah itself—to make Judaism more meaningful, compassionate, and responsive to the human condition. When you have svara (moral intuition) and gemara (learning), you are qualified to be a player, changemaker, and radical innovator in the Jewish project and the world at large.

Position

SVARA believes that the spiritual practice of Talmud study, particularly as it's done at SVARA, shapes learners into the kind of people who are moved to, equipped to, and courageous enough to bring about a more just and equitable world. Through their strategic focus areas, SVARA supports a growing base of people for whom Talmud study is a transformative spiritual practice, a roadmap for making radical change rooted in tradition, and the grounding force behind a bet midrash-centered movement made up of leaders of the Jewish future.

SVARA's Director of Development (DOD) is committed to secure the necessary investment of resources to achieve the organization's strategic vision. The DOD's scope will include designing, implementing, and evaluating all fundraising strategies relating to foundations, corporate, individual & digital supporters, including annual and legacy giving. The DOD will create and execute a development plan that details how SVARA will identify funding sources and cultivate supporters. The DOD will also be responsible for creating and implementing an external communications and public relations plan, using social and other media, and supporting the ED on time-sensitive communications. The DOD will attract excellent volunteers to contribute their talents and meet needs identified by program leadership. The DOD will be a member of the Executive team and will be required to perform the duties and responsibilities listed below.

Competencies

- Ambassadorial talent to fuel passion and understanding for the need to support SVARA's mission.
- Successful track record of developing and executing comprehensive development plans, achieving fundraising goals, and a passion for diversifying a donor base – racially, socio-economically, etc.
- Superb interpersonal and persuasive communication skills; an ability to relate to diverse groups of people from all social and economic segments of the community
- Confidence sharing SVARA's work and stories with Board members, donors and community partners; experience in cultivating, closing, and stewarding gifts at every level
- Creative problem solving, decision making and strategic planning skills; a self-starter who believes in the power of community and working together to achieve goals
- Excellent project management and organizational skills, and the ability to gracefully manage tight timelines in a fast-paced working environment and multiple projects concurrently
- Demonstrated ability to build a culture of philanthropy within an organization.
- Proven ability to successfully engage major donors in stewardship events and solicitation meetings.
- Strong attention to detail, especially in getting to know individual donors, their interests and connections to the organization
- Strong management, budgeting, and reporting experience.
- Creative, strategic, and analytic thinking skills.

Responsibilities

Development & Team Management

- Serve as a passionate, knowledgeable ambassador on behalf of SVARA's mission in philanthropic communities.
- Create and support a culture of philanthropy that fosters a collaborative, organization-wide team approach to development.
- Develop and execute a comprehensive annual development plan and community engagement strategy in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Board of Directors
- Work with Executive Director and the Board of Directors to fundraise with a specific fundraising target to be agreed

- Manage contractors, volunteers, and interns, as needed to achieve development goals by seeking funding and/or resources for operational and programmatic activities; build out a development function and team (in the future)
- Create, lead and work with Executive Director on all internal and external development communications
- Devise and execute a multi-faceted fundraising strategy inclusive of campaign gifts, foundation fundraising, individual giving, grants, planned giving, digital fundraising, and event support
- Conduct broad-based and in-depth prospect research to further build Master Prospect List
- Manage workflow of grant cycles and develops strategy around grant cycle; keep track of grants that the organization has received and ensure all reporting requirements are met on time
- Finalize the Development calendar - including annual report, pitch decks, and various fundraising materials throughout the year
- Identify and support professional development opportunities to help strengthen the development work and capacity of the organization
- Collaborate with the Communications Director on all development-related marketing materials and communications
- Organize and structure fundraising activities in preparation for a major campaign in support of SVARA's strategic plan.

Donor & Board Relations

- Oversee planning of donor cultivation and fundraising events
- Prospect, steward, and manage relationships with all levels of donors & Board of Directors
- Help develop strategies for cultivating and engaging multifaceted donor groups, including Corporations, Foundations, Public Sector, Individual Donors, etc.
- Serve as the primary business contact; in collaboration with the Director of Communications, send regular updates of special accomplishments & events taking place at the organization to various constituents
- Assist the Executive Director in establishing and cultivating relationships with key individuals at corporate institutions and major donors in SVARA network
- Plan, organize and coordinate special events, including but not limited to an Annual Benefit, service days, investment pitch events, funding circles, and other special initiatives

Management & Administrative

- Participate in regular Leadership Team meetings and provide leadership throughout the organization as it relates to development, building a culture of philanthropy, and setting organizational goals aligned with SVARA's organizational mission and values
- Improve infrastructure of fundraising systems and outreach
- Report out regularly on fundraising benchmarks met to date, including contributed income, institutional funding, donors renewed, reactivated, and acquired
- Strategize, advocate for, and support the roll out, onboarding, and evaluation of organization-wide data collection systems that support development / fundraising efforts
- Develop SVARA's Annual Report
- Assist with large-scale organization-wide events as needed

Qualifications

- Passion for SVARA's mission and the ability to serve as an ambassador for the organization
- Strong experience working on LGBTQ+ community issues, through an intersectional lens, and a passionate commitment to fighting for the rights and welfare of LGBTQ+ people.
- Evidence of supporting staff members through a climate of collaboration and transparency that supports a positive and inclusive work environment.
- Collaborative, team-driven nature with the ability to partner internally with cross-functional teams and externally with SVARA's partners and affiliates
- A proven track record of success, innovation, and progressive accomplishments in fundraising with experience in all or most areas, with a focus on building a major gifts program.
- Experience with successful solicitations of individual donors to secure 5- and 6- figure gifts
- Previous experience leading teams and the proven ability to motivate, influence, and hold teams accountable to high standards and goals, as well as to develop themselves as professionals in the field
- Ability to conceptualize and describe funding needs – verbally and in writing – in a way that is compelling to prospects, donors, Board members, and other stakeholders, and builds in the attributes of our new branding messaging
- Significant experience with board development and board member retention
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, with an emphasis on the ability to shape communications creatively to persuade and influence others around ideas, decisions, and financial support; understand the need for a high level of discretion

- Able to organize, prioritize and execute responsibilities intuitively in the face of concurrent and essential projects and tasks
- Experience working collaboratively and transparently with a Board of Directors or similar volunteer leadership group.
- Experience fundraising, with some experience in a leadership position.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office, donor databases, web-based applications, and use of the internet required.
- Willingness to work occasional evenings and weekends.

Salary and Benefits

The salary range for this position is \$130,000– \$150,000, plus benefits.

DEI Statement

SVARA welcomes applicants from all backgrounds and walks of life, as is reflected in our largely diverse staff. SVARA is proud to be an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing equal opportunity for all employees and applicants. SVARA recruits, hires, trains, promotes, compensates, and administers all personnel actions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, gender, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, ancestry, medical condition, marital status, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, or any other status protected by applicable law.

This position description is based upon material provided by SVARA, an equal opportunity employer.

To apply to this position, please click [HERE](#).

Sarah Raful Whiston, Principal

Raven Stubbs, Talent Consultant

Sarah Jones, Senior Associate

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