

THE MASKERADE FOUNDATION

Private Family Foundation

"Community is the performance.

Everyone has a part to play."

<https://maskeradefoundation.org>

Profile prepared for: Temple Shalom



THE MASKERADE
FOUNDATION
ARTS · CULTURE · COMMUNITY

Total Assets: \$32.1M (2024) | **Grants Paid (2023):** \$1,430,000 | **Avg Grant:** \$61,500

Geographic Focus: Regional — Pacific and Mountain West, with Arizona as the primary state

⚡ WORTH PURSUING?



Pursue with Strategy

Mission Alignment

Medium — Arts education and community belonging are strong fits. The faith-based identity is the friction point — Maskerade's language is secular ('community anchors,' 'cross-cultural connection'). Temple Shalom's interfaith programming and preschool bridge the gap if the framing leads with community, not congregation.

Accessibility

LOI-First — Semi-annual LOI review cycle — March 1 and September 1. Full proposals by invitation only. The foundation takes unsolicited LOIs, which is notable for a family foundation of this size.

Relationship Status

Cold — Marian Nitt attended a Temple Shalom interfaith arts event in 2019 as a community guest. That is a soft thread, not a relationship. No prior grants. No board overlap identified.

Ask Size Fit

Strong Fit — A target ask of \$40,000–\$50,000 (program grant) sits squarely in the foundation's \$25K–\$75K sweet spot.

Geographic Fit

Yes — Maskerade is Scottsdale-based and prioritizes Pacific and Mountain West grantees. Phoenix qualifies directly.

Competitive Landscape

Moderate — Community arts in Phoenix is a competitive funding pool. Maskerade's emphasis on cross-cultural and interfaith programming narrows the field and plays to Temple Shalom's strengths.

Bottom Line: The Maskerade Foundation doesn't fund synagogues — but it does fund community anchors that bring people together through the arts. Temple Shalom qualifies on those terms. The LOI needs to lead with community impact, not congregation identity. With Marian Nitt as a soft point of entry, this is a two-cycle strategy: cultivate the connection in fall 2026, then submit a March 2027 LOI.

PART 2 — RESEARCH DETAIL

Three years of 990-PF Schedule I reviewed — consistent Pacific and Mountain West focus on community arts, early childhood education, and cross-cultural programming. Seven comparable grantees identified.

GIVING SNAPSHOT

2023 Grants Paid: \$1,430,000 (24 grants)

2022 Grants Paid: \$1,385,000 (22 grants)

2021 Grants Paid: \$1,410,000 (21 grants)

Average Grant: \$61,500

Median Grant: \$42,000

Largest Grant on Record: \$150,000 — Salt Lake City Civic Arts Collaborative (2021); Capital: construction of a new community performance space

Multi-Year Grants: Yes — Two-year grants are available to established grantees with a prior Maskerade award. First-time applicants receive single-year grants only. Renewal requires a brief progress narrative — no full re-application needed.

GRANT TYPES

- **✓ General Operating Support** — Reserved for repeat grantees only. First-time applicants receive program grants.
- **✓ Program / Project Grants** — Primary grant type. Must be tied to a specific program with defined outcomes.
- **X Capacity Building** — Not a current focus. The 2021 capital grant to Salt Lake City was a one-time exception.
- **X Capital / Facilities** — Rare. One capital grant on record. Not an active program area.
- **X Planning Grants**
- **X Challenge / Matching Grants**
- **X Seed / Startup** — Prefer established organizations with at least two years of operating history.
- **X Emergency / Rapid Response**
- **X Fellowship / Individual Awards**

First-time applicants should plan on a program grant, not unrestricted operating support. The path to unrestricted support is a second funding cycle.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Stated Priorities

- Cultural vitality — arts and community performance as shared civic experience
- Community belonging — programs that bring people together across difference
- Early childhood arts education — arts integration in preschool and kindergarten settings

Actual Priorities (from public grant records)

- Community arts and cultural programming — approximately 52% of grantmaking by dollar
- Early childhood arts education — approximately 28% of grantmaking by dollar
- Civic engagement through the arts — approximately 20% of grantmaking by dollar

⚠ Stated and actual priorities are consistent — the foundation follows its own language closely. No significant divergence between the website and what the 990-PF Schedule I (the required annual list of all individual grants paid) actually shows.

Will Not Fund

- Religious organizations applying for faith-based programming
- Individual artists (organizations only)
- Schools or universities as lead applicants
- Organizations outside the Pacific and Mountain West regions

Typical Grantee: Established nonprofits with at least two years of operating history and a community-facing arts or education mission. Secular framing is strongly preferred. Faith-based organizations are not automatically excluded, but must lead with community impact, not religious mission. Arizona-based organizations receive preference, but Mountain West and Pacific states are funded regularly.

RECENT GRANT HISTORY

Source: 990-PF Schedule I (the required annual list of all grants paid), 2021–2023

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- **Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective** (2023) — \$60,000 | Phoenix, AZ
General operating support — cross-cultural community arts programming ★
 - **The Bucket Community Arts Center** (2023) — \$45,000 | Tempe, AZ
General operating support
 - **Maricopa Early Childhood Arts Initiative** (2023) — \$50,000 | Scottsdale, AZ
Program grant — arts integration curriculum for preschool settings ★
 - **Christine School of the Arts** (2023) — \$35,000 | Phoenix, AZ

Program grant — early childhood music education ★

- **Plinge Community Theater** (2022) — \$25,000 | Mesa, AZ

Program grant — emerging directors fellowship

- **Southwest Folk Music Preservation Society** (2022) — \$35,000 | Albuquerque, NM

Program grant — regional oral tradition archive and community performance series

- **Ogg Memorial Folk Archive** (2022) — \$30,000 | Tucson, AZ

Program grant — Appalachian and folk music documentation and community performance

- **Denver Cultural Bridges Project** (2021) — \$55,000 | Denver, CO

Program grant — cross-cultural community arts programming ★

- **Salzella Academy for Young Artists** (2021) — \$40,000 | Flagstaff, AZ

Program grant — youth performing arts training and summer intensive ★

- **Salt Lake City Civic Arts Collaborative** (2021) — \$150,000 | Salt Lake City, UT

Capital grant — construction of a new community performance space

Comparable Orgs Funded: • **Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective** — closest parallel: faith-adjacent, cross-cultural, community-focused arts programming in Phoenix; received a general operating support grant in 2023

- **Denver Cultural Bridges Project** — cross-cultural community arts with a belonging framing closely aligned with Temple Shalom's programming goals
- **Maricopa Early Childhood Arts Initiative** and **Christine School of the Arts** — both signal that early childhood arts education, like Temple Shalom's preschool, is a fundable program area
- **Salzella Academy for Young Artists** — youth arts training; comparable on the youth development and community arts angle

Prior Giving to Client: No

★ = Organization comparable to Temple Shalom

PART 3 — HOW TO PURSUE

Temple Shalom needs to apply as a cultural institution and civic anchor, not as a congregation. The entry point is Marian Nitt, who attended the 2019 interfaith arts event — that warm thread is the difference between a cold LOI and a personal introduction.

GRANT STRATEGY

Probability Assessment: **Medium**

Recommended Program to Lead With: Temple Shalom's interfaith arts programming — specifically the annual Interfaith Arts Festival and the early childhood preschool arts curriculum. These two programs together cover both of Maskerade's strongest priority areas (community belonging through the arts + early childhood arts education) without requiring Temple Shalom to foreground its identity as a congregation.

Recommended Ask Size: \$45,000 — a program grant for the Interfaith Arts Festival and preschool arts programming combined. This sits in the foundation's median range and is appropriately sized for a first-time applicant.

Timing: Target the March 1, 2027 LOI deadline. This allows time for a fall 2026 cultivation step — a personal outreach to Marian Nitt or the Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective — before the submission.

Relationship Entry Point: Two parallel paths: (1) Ask Temple Shalom's executive director or rabbi to reach out personally to Marian Nitt, referencing the 2019 interfaith arts event she attended. Keep it conversational — this is a relationship touchpoint, not a grant conversation. (2) Contact the Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective about making a peer introduction to Perdita Nitt-Evans.

LOI Emphasis: Lead with Temple Shalom's role as a community institution: the number of people served, the breadth of interfaith programming, the preschool enrollment, and the community partnerships. The congregation context belongs in the 'about us' paragraph, not the opening. Close with specific outcomes the grant would fund.

Gaps to Address Before Applying

- Document attendance and participation numbers for the Interfaith Arts Festival before submitting — Maskerade will ask for outcome metrics in the full proposal
- A letter of support from the Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective would strengthen the application significantly

Red Flags

- ⚠ LOI language that reads as a congregation asking for faith-based programming support — the framing must lead with community impact
 - ⚠ Requesting unrestricted operating support on a first application — Maskerade does not fund GOS for new grantees
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→ **Recommended Next Action:** By September 2026: identify the connection path to Marian Nitt and make a personal outreach — not a grant request, just a conversation. Use that relationship to position the March 1, 2027 LOI as a warm submission rather than a cold one.

HOW TO APPLY

Submission Type: LOI-First

Unsolicited Proposals Accepted: Yes

Letter of Intent (LOI) Required: Yes — Letter of Intent (LOI — a short letter asking whether a full proposal is welcome) should be no more than three pages. Include: one paragraph on the organization, program description, requested amount, expected outcomes, and a specific connection to one or more of Maskerade's three priority areas. Attach a current budget and the IRS determination letter (the letter confirming tax-exempt status). Do not send a full proposal unless invited.

Full Proposal: Full proposals are by invitation only, issued after LOI review. Invited applicants receive a detailed request template directly from Perdita Nitt-Evans. Do not submit a full proposal unsolicited.

Submission Email: grants@maskeradefoundation.org

Required Attachments

- IRS determination letter (confirms tax-exempt status)
- Current operating budget
- Most recent annual report (if available)

Word/Page Limits: LOI: 3 pages maximum, 12-point font, 1-inch margins

LOIs are submitted by email only — no portal. Perdita Nitt-Evans reviews all incoming LOIs personally and responds within 6–8 weeks. Phone calls are not the primary communication channel at the LOI stage.

GRANT CYCLE & TIMING

Current Status: **Open** · Semi-annual Cycle

LOI Deadline: March 1 (spring cycle) and September 1 (fall cycle)

Full Proposal Deadline: By invitation — typically 6 weeks after LOI notification

Next Cycle Opens: LOIs accepted on a rolling basis up to each deadline

Decision Timeline: LOI submitted → invitation or decline within 8 weeks → full proposal (if invited) → grant decision within 12 weeks of full proposal submission

The spring cycle (March 1 LOI) has historically funded more community arts programs. The fall cycle

(September 1 LOI) has leaned toward early childhood education grantees. This is a pattern in the grant record, not a stated policy.

KEY CONTACTS

Perdita Nitt-Evans

Executive Director

Focus: All program areas; primary relationship contact for all applicants

Email: perdita@maskeradefoundation.org

Phone: (480) 555-0143

Marian Nitt's daughter-in-law. Joined the foundation in 2018 after a career in nonprofit theater management. Reviews all LOIs personally. Described by grantees as direct but warm — she gives real feedback to organizations that don't advance. Values personal relationships over cold outreach. A connection through Marian Nitt would carry significant weight.

Marian Nitt

Board Chair and Co-Founder

Focus: Strategic direction; not involved in day-to-day grants

The arts patron and primary philanthropic voice behind the foundation. Harold Nitt (commercial real estate) built the wealth; Marian shaped its philanthropic direction. She attended a Temple Shalom interfaith arts event in 2019 as a community guest. She is not a grantmaking decision-maker, but a personal connection to Marian could open the door to Perdita.

RELATIONSHIP INTELLIGENCE

Board Overlap: No confirmed board overlap between the Maskerade Foundation board and Temple Shalom's board or leadership.

Shared Grantees: • The Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective has received grants from Maskerade and likely knows Temple Shalom's programming staff — a peer organization that could provide a warm reference

- No other confirmed shared grantee relationships identified

Warm Intro Potential: 1. Determine whether Temple Shalom's rabbi or executive director has any connection to Marian Nitt or her social network — the Scottsdale arts philanthropy community is small

2. Reach out to the Phoenix Interfaith Arts Collective, a current Maskerade grantee, and ask whether they would make an informal peer introduction to Perdita Nitt-Evans

3. If neither path materializes, a well-crafted cold LOI that references the 2019 event attendance is a reasonable fallback — Perdita Nitt-Evans has funded cold LOIs before

Values Alignment: • The foundation's emphasis on 'bringing people together across difference' and interfaith community aligns with Temple Shalom's stated values

- No political giving history identified — the foundation appears philanthropically nonpartisan

- The secular framing in Maskerade's guidelines is procedural, not values-based — it is about how the application is framed, not a rejection of Temple Shalom's identity

Known Deal-Breakers: • An LOI that leads with religious mission or congregation identity — the application must open with community impact

- First-time applicants requesting unrestricted operating support rather than a defined program grant
- Organizations outside the Pacific and Mountain West region (not applicable here)

Reputation in Sector: Regarded as a relationship-forward family foundation that takes its time with new grantees. Once in the portfolio, renewal is straightforward and often becomes unrestricted support. Getting in requires patience — the LOI-first process is genuine gatekeeping, not a formality. Perdita Nitt-Evans is known for honest, useful feedback to organizations that don't advance.

*Prepared for: Temple Shalom • Report Date: June 2026 • Prepared by: Giving Geek Consulting •
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