

ADULTS EMERGING:

NEW PARADIGMS FOR MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT



The Jewish Federations[®]
OF NORTH AMERICA

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DEAR COLLEAGUES:

The oldest Millennials—born in the early 1980s—are nearing their mid-thirties. The youngest are in the thick of their teen years. A generation of almost 80 million, they have already both been greatly influenced by and left their mark on our rapidly shifting world.

In partnership with Millennials, and also in response to them, the Jewish institutional landscape has already begun to change. And in some ways, there is still a great deal of change to facilitate.

The Jewish Education and Engagement Office of The Jewish Federations of North America commissioned this report to tell the story of an evolving transition within Federations from one young adult engagement paradigm to another.

The report was constructed from interviews with approximately thirty professional and volunteer leaders as well as program participants from eight Federations of varied sizes located throughout North America. Semi-structured interviews covered various topics, including the history and evolution of the NextGen projects, strengths and challenges, and success factors and best practices. Dr. Beth Cousens led this work as a consultant external to JFNA with support from Alana Kinarsky (Ph.D. candidate, UCLA).

The report aims to document the effective strategies developed by several communities, to raise conversation within the Federation system, and to motivate us all to consider work that is bigger, bolder, and of sacred importance to the Jewish people.

The report is meant to propel movement.

The report highlights a critical idea—engaging young adults is a priority for which the Jewish community is collectively responsible. That is, as the report discusses, the work of engaging younger adults in Jewish life is not Federations' alone.

However, the report also demonstrates Federations' critical role in building, convening, and nurturing a table at which true partners collaborate in a shared vision. Our future is integrated, co-reliant. Federations' role is one of facilitative leadership at its best. To that end, we hope that this report is of great benefit not only to Federations but also to the larger field, as we all strive to increase the engagement of adults in their twenties and thirties.

The last pages of this report offer suggestions for individual Federations' immediate work as well as a larger agenda for the field as a whole. This report is meant as a starting point and not a complete conversation. There is significant additional work to do in our local communities and to propel movement across our continental community.

“ We are not the generation of tomorrow. We are the generation of today.

– Bryan Fenster, volunteer leader, Detroit

Most specifically, following the publication of this report, JFNA will:

- Be available to build and support learning circles for communities of different sizes and in different stages of this work that are devoted to the work's growth in their communities;
- Provide individual coaching and group learning opportunities for communities interested in advancing in this area;
- Develop additional research and promote the possibility of evaluation research and the subsequent development of a set of universal outcomes available to all interested communities.

The work of the communities documented in this report is not the only innovative work taking place in this space. We look forward to learning from and about the work of additional communities as we build this work together.

Younger adults bring creativity and vitality to Jewish community. Jewish life, overall, will be better for their engagement, and Judaism can bring richness and meaning to their lives now, in the present. They are also, of course, the next generation.

Federations can and should lead communities that engage younger adults in Judaism's rich tradition, history, and culture, but on their terms and in ways that make sense in their lives, bringing the past to the present and the present to the future.

Cindy Shapira, *Chair, Jewish Education and Engagement*

Beth Cousens, *Associate Vice President, JFNA*



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INTRODUCTION

Millennials have a different way of doing things. They are digital natives: no landlines, no TVs, lots of Facetime. Many are wanderers, moving from job to job and place to place, testing and experimenting. They seek diversity; they are disinterested in Jewish-only relationships; they are cultural relativists. Perhaps most significantly, their personal experience reigns. They push away inherited behaviors, such as belonging to synagogues or JCCs or giving to Federation. Instead, they spend resources and capital as an expression of their sense of self. They are influenced by the era in which they came of age (the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries) and by the freedom that their life stage, emerging adulthood, brings them.¹

¹ As Millennials have come of age, a new life stage has developed in the Western world, that of the emerging adult. After college, many twenty-somethings now spend a few years or even as much as an entire decade exploring professional opportunities, moving around the country and sometimes the world, building who they will be. Particularly for more educated, more resourced twenty-somethings, marriage increasingly occurs later in life; child-bearing and -rearing also are later. “Adult” choices happen in one’s thirties or even forties. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)



The central existential threat to Jewish life is young people deciding not to be Jewish. ... For the past forty plus years, Jewish connection has been changing in a dramatic way, and the community has not been paying attention, was not adapting. We have these institutions, and we continue to try to bang square holes into round pegs. It's a pragmatic bet. It's not the intermarriage rate; it's the number of Jewish families who decide to live Jewish lives. We've got to make sure that people stay engaged meaningfully throughout their lives.

... I felt like this was a laboratory. We immediately prioritized young people, twenties to early forties, making them part of what we mean that our number one job is to build community."

– Jay Sanderson, executive, Los Angeles



We have to take care of Jews everywhere and engage people, and we elevated the second because, in order to do the first, [we] need to do the second. If we don't attract and retain young people in a meaningful way, we're going out of business."

– Scott Kaufman, executive, Detroit

Neither Millennial attitudes nor the untethered nature of emerging adulthood has been good for Jewish institutional life or, more specifically, for Jewish institutional life as we have known it in the twentieth century. Without anchors and without personal engagement in Jewish institutions, many or most younger adults do not seem prepared to join synagogues or give to traditional Jewish charities or serve on committees or engage in public Jewish communal life in the previously typical ways.

Yet their Jewishness isn't always weak. Rather, they often feel Jewish, even deeply Jewish, but their Jewishness is personal. Or they engage in a newly developed infrastructure in Jewish life — for example, Birthright Israel and other immersive experiences and Moishe Houses and other local experiences—that has arisen in the recent past to help younger adults develop their Jewishness.

There are more than half a million alumni of Birthright Israel alone and countless more alumni of additional experiences. Yet they make up only a small group relative to the larger population of younger adults. In that context, the institutional Jewish community, particularly Federations, has not done enough for and with younger adults. We still face a challenge, potentially an existential one:

- Not enough younger adults engage in powerful immersive experiences or engage repeatedly and frequently enough. To build enduring senses of Jewishness and to help them be active in Jewish life in the long-term, younger adults will benefit from **greater numbers of experiences**.
- They might have one or a few experiences, but unlike their parents, they will **need support to stay engaged throughout their lives**.
- Even with these experiences, their Jewishness does not necessarily encompass feelings of community in its most profound sense, community beyond only whom they know directly in their own lives, including a sense of responsibility for others locally and around the world. They will benefit from **experiences of thick, deep Jewish community**.

In this context, and perhaps most significantly, the half-million alumni of Birthright Israel and the many countless other program participants represent opportunity, possibly unprecedented opportunity. Federations have already invested extraordinarily in Birthright Israel as a signature initiative. In many communities, Federations can be equally proud of their investments in Moishe House and in other initiatives for younger adults. There is great potential for even greater return on these investments. With such a tremendous population of alumni and since Federations have already begun their investment, the time to act is now; the reason to act is great.

Some Federation leaders recognize the scope of the challenge and the opportunity. They have moved with a sense of urgency toward a new understanding of their responsibility for work with younger adults. If “Young Leadership” once meant training younger adults as donors, solicitors, and board or committee members, the emphasis has shifted to something much broader: younger adult engagement.

NEW FEDERATION GOALS INCLUDE HELPING YOUNGER ADULTS TO:

- **Build a sense of attachment to home and to their Jewish community;**

- **Build their own Jewish community;**

- **Develop a personally meaningful Jewish life, whatever that life might include; and**

- **(For some younger adults) Understand and participate in Federation’s role in building vibrant Jewish community.**

In their new paradigms for work with younger adults, **Federations help younger adults to be engaged in an interdependent Jewish community, where Jews care about being Jewish, about being Jewish with others, and about taking responsibility for others; where younger Jewish adults put roots down in their Jewish community; and where they propel themselves into ongoing Jewish engagement. Through all of these paradigms, working not alone but doing unique work, Federations focus on an imperative to build Jews and not donors, recognizing that building Jews will be simultaneously good for Judaism, for Jewish community, for the younger adults themselves, and, ultimately, for Federations and for philanthropic giving.**

MEETING MILLENNIALS

MILLENNIALS, BORN 1982–2002, ARE THE LARGEST GENERATION LIVING IN NORTH AMERICA TODAY. THEY:

- Move fast and are accustomed to nimble organizational life;
- Were empowered at a young age to access information and manage their own choices; they like to do it themselves;
- Move fluidly among communities and between urban and suburban environments;
- Push against inherited behaviors;
- Celebrate an integrated identity, leading them to push against barriers; they don't feel a strong or inherent loyalty to the Jewish community or that they are a part of the collective;
- Are included in broader society, even as Jews, and have little daily or personal experience of anti-Semitism;
- Are unattached to late-twentieth-century Jewish collective and iconic memories such as liberating the Western Wall or the rescue of Soviet Jewry; and
- Have trouble with the Jewish communal narrative: For example, as the "Start-Up Nation," why does Israel need North American Jewish philanthropic dollars?



Engaging the next generation is not just a task that Federation takes on; it's a posture that we take as a community from merely focusing on the present challenges facing our community to looking toward the future and possibilities it holds.

Today's open society presents us with one of the greatest gifts in the engagement of the next generation, and that is the fact that we can no longer rely upon negative external forces in the world to drive our young people back to our communities or keep them there long term. Instead, we have to sell the value of Jewish life itself and what that brings to the table. What makes us so lucky is we've got a lot of value to sell."

– Ezra Shanken, executive, Vancouver



It's too easy to confuse the discussion we're having with a simple focus on Birthright follow-up and Birthright NEXT. ... Birthright is the catalyst for massive new opportunities, but beyond that, it's our responsibility to reach the next generation of Jews. As Federations, we need to accept that the responsibility is ultimately ours. Beyond Hillel, there is no existing organization in Jewish life with primary responsibility for this generation that presents unprecedented opportunity. The role of the Federation in all this must be to create an ecosystem that coordinates, encourages, and helps fund a wide and ever-changing array of young adult opportunities.

We have never had so many people coming back. We can change the course of a generation."

– Barry Shrage, executive, Boston





Thinking about life outside the campaign is key for our generation. My connection and my involvement happened much before I ever gave a dollar, for my peers as well. In the world today, if we don't like what we see, we'll say screw it and build it ourselves or get involved with someone who's building it themselves."

– Jay Hack, volunteer leader, Detroit



The Young Leadership Division's primary goal was fundraising, engaging people in the campaign. But it wasn't addressing a broader need and the fact that young adults from this generation are interested in moving through community in a different way. They're transients; they're moving in and out of Boston and through Boston, building an identity in an entrepreneurial way. The idea of someone working [volunteering] in one single club wasn't working."

– Abby Goldenthal, professional, Boston



Jewish organizations need to do a better job of recognizing and responding to the different—and often non-traditional—ways young adults identify Jewishly today. We often hear from young adults that they don't see themselves as part of the Jewish community because they don't connect with any Jewish institutions; they don't relate to what these organizations are offering. We need to ask ourselves how we can reach young adults in ways that are meaningful to them and in ways that speak to how they connect Jewishly. What kind of engagement strategies and programs can we create that address these challenges?"

– Tal Gozani, professional, Los Angeles

ON LANGUAGE AND “YOUNG ADULTS”

Who are we talking about here?

“Young adults” is pejorative and not terribly descriptive. The sociological term, “emerging adults,” alludes to the seeking in which many twenty-somethings are engaged; but it’s pretty technical. Moreover, often, we’re talking not only about recent college graduates but also about those who are more settled and who, because they have figured out their professional and social lives, can now turn to exploring their ideological lives and opportunities. We’re also talking about young families. Younger adults often become interested in an exploration of Jewish life and community only when they find life partners and begin their families.

Fundamentally, then, there are multiple sub-cohorts within the “younger adult” framework, each making its own choices and with its own specific needs and interests. The choices and needs of recent college graduates differ from those of individuals in their late twenties, and their choices and needs are different from those of individuals in their early thirties. Those in long-term relationships have different needs and interests than those not in such relationships; those with kids have needs and interests different from those without kids. We talk here about “younger adults,” but we really mean many cohorts, and in this work, precision is important.

Moreover, there is also experiential and identity diversity, referring to those in interfaith relationships, or who are Jews by choice, or who immigrated, as well as those born or raised Jewish. There is cultural diversity, including those who are first-generation Americans and those who also celebrate immediate Russian or Persian or other identities.

Ideally, we would call them who they truly are: adults in their twenties and adults in their thirties, single adults, and couples and families, those in interfaith or intercultural relationships, single parents and coupled parents, Russian-Speaking Jews, and so on. Since that’s really long, in this report, we call them “younger adults” (versus older adults). This is far from ideal but workable for the report, and we hope you’ll understand the underlying message: We mean all of these cohorts, and we urge distinction when possible.



Many Federations are leading innovations in this work with younger adults. Of these Federations, the following communities are featured in this report.

BIRMINGHAM: YOU BELONG IN BIRMINGHAM

You Belong in Birmingham provides a series of educational and engagement events that connect younger adults to Jewish life, with a focus on social, social action/service, and engagement, to enable younger adults to connect to Jewish life in diverse and plentiful ways. It emphasizes welcoming those new to Birmingham, offering one-on-one or two-on-one first meetings with newcomers to help them develop connections to community, including strong friendships. The program is led by a professional with a volunteer team.

BOSTON: YOUNG ADULT INITIATIVE AND IACT

Focused on building a movement for a stronger Jewish future through a strategy for young adults, Boston's Young Adult Initiative creates change in four ways: 1) Building awareness and changing perceptions about Jewish life; 2) Opening doors for young adults to try something new, perhaps beyond their comfort zone; 3) Deepening Jewish engagement and providing young adults with high-quality opportunities to learn, do, or lead in a more focused way; and 4) Encouraging entrepreneurial leadership to emerge, where young adults are able to create positive change and know that the Greater Boston Jewish community is welcoming these innovations. Including an engagement team, grants to stimulate and support the landscape of opportunities, facilitation of PresenTense and Birthright Israel, adult learning opportunities, and other projects, this program is led by an integrated planning and development team of young professionals within the Federation. A web of more than seventy organizations called The Network, with its own brand and identity, offers a comprehensive and diverse set of Jewish opportunities from organizations focused on engaging and developing younger leaders and organizations that also directly serve young adults. The Network offers a series of educational/training opportunities for leaders of Network organizations; CJP markets Network organization opportunities and makes grants to Network organizations. Significant professional resources dedicate time to one-on-one engagement of younger adults, including Birthright Israel alumni, participants in organizations' programs, those recommended to staff, and those new to Boston.

CJP also facilitates IACT, its Israel Campus Initiative (IACT stands for Inspired, Active, Committed, and Transformed). Currently on twenty-four campuses across the country, including twelve in Boston, a trained, Jewishly knowledgeable, personally engaging IACT coordinator with no other programming responsibilities works on campus (usually for Hillel) to recruit students for Birthright Israel. She builds relationships with students, particularly with younger students, focused on Birthright Israel but not exclusive to the experience, and is responsible for follow-through from the experience. She works extensively with social networks and students who are not familiar with Hillel or with Jewish life on campus generally. She builds pre-trip educational opportunities and post-trip continuing education and engagement, all focused on Israel engagement and continued Israel travel, Jewish learning, service, and building a positive atmosphere related to Israel on campus.

MORE ON IACT

Boston's IACT initiative began approximately ten years ago in Boston. It recently expanded nationally, operated on twenty-four campuses during 2015–2016, including those campuses with the largest Jewish populations: As a result, estimates indicate that its campus reach includes more than 50,000 students. Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies is working in partnership with Hillel International to expand IACT widely.

IACT relies on and well exemplifies several of the strategies discussed in this report, including the leveraging of relationships and the leveraging of Birthright Israel (IACT was developed specifically to leverage Birthright Israel). At the same time, IACT is quite different from the initiatives profiled here, in its national scope and in that it partners with campus Hillels, pivots around Birthright Israel, and focuses heavily (although not exclusively) on Israel education and engagement. The initiative's story is integrated into this research and complements it when possible. In addition, because the bulk of the research does not necessarily bring out the nuance of the initiative, that nuance is captured in an Appendix to this report.

COLORADO: YAD

A Jewish experiential-social-social action-leadership initiative of Federation, YAD offers Jewish opportunities to varied younger adult audiences, providing diverse ways to connect Jewishly. Programming fits into “live” Jewishly, “give” Jewishly, and “lead” Jewishly, including, for example, Shabbat programming, campaign events, and leadership development opportunities. YAD convenes “Tribe” organizations, organizations that work with younger adults in Colorado.

DETROIT: NEXTGEN DETROIT

The “hub of young Jewish Detroit,” NEXTGen Detroit is meant to help younger adults identify as members of the Detroit Jewish community. NEXTGen provides a series of opportunities to cultivate Detroit's younger Jews as community members, donors, and leaders, each implemented with attention to detail and impact. NEXTGen facilitates Jewish opportunities that help participants to experience Jewish life positively. (For example, NextWork offers networking opportunities with major donors; opportunities are designed intentionally with 75% NEXTGeners and 25% major business leaders in the community.) Micro-grants support participant-created initiatives, often focused on

contributing to the city of Detroit. A Federation-led Birthright Israel program, and recruitment and integration of alumni into Federation’s other initiatives for this population support the goal that, within a year, Birthright Israel participants are “Jewish Detroiters,” not (only) Birthright Israel alumni. Elevate, a Board leadership program, prepares younger adults for genuine leadership of Federation, of NEXTGen, and of other projects throughout Federation. The EPIC event helps younger adult participants become donors though gifts are also raised through ongoing marketing and relational efforts. NEXTGen focuses on working with community members as individual clients, creating opportunities for them to connect with Jewish community and Jewish life through their own interests. Partnerships are pursued with other organizations in order to increase opportunities available to NEXTGeners.

LOS ANGELES: YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND NUROOTS

Los Angeles has developed a multi-faceted approach that allows young adults to connect to Jewish community, that creates meaningful, diverse, immersive, social, and networking experiences, that helps grow and develop emerging leaders, and that establishes the Federation as an important and welcoming point of connection to Jewish identity and community for young adult LA Jews. A campus grants program supports opportunities on campuses through Hillels and other organizations and helps ensure that effective, innovative, student-centered, and collaborative Jewish programs are available through a mosaic of experiences. Federation convenes campus practitioners to help them learn from each other and create synergy among their resources. Participants in a full complement of Birthright Israel buses (twenty/year) have opportunities to create “follow-up” programs for their bus/peers/networks that make the LA Jewish community and its multiplicity of opportunities more accessible and help participants create the types of Jewish community they want. Federation also supports and recruits participation in other immersive experiences, including Masa, JDC Entwine trips, Onward Israel, and Honeymoon Israel. YALA (Young Adults of Los Angeles) offers networking, volunteer, educational, and social activities for those looking for Jewish community. From each of these opportunities, those who are ready apply to the Community Leadership Institute (CLI), which offers a sophisticated and intensive fifteen-month program for young professionals to become knowledgeable, strategic, and passionate community leaders for Jewish organizations throughout Los Angeles. A full complement of opportunities for young families and young professionals, including intellectual, holiday, and social events, are created by and targeted toward Russian-Speaking Jews, including a cohort of the Community Leadership Institute. NuRoots also convenes the Next GenEngagement Initiative (NEI), a monthly networking and skill-building table at which all organizational leaders who work with this population meet to exchange ideas, sharpen their skills, and collaborate and build their community’s work in this area together.



NORTHEASTERN NEW YORK: NEXTDOR

NextDor is a decentralized set of programming clusters, each with chairs who create multiple events per month and who compose the NextDor Cabinet. For each cluster, there is an emphasis on breadth and depth, diversity, and opportunity, rather than on channeling all participants into the same opportunities. Clusters include outdoor activities, arts and culture, PJ Library, Shabbat, LGBT, social action, and others. The Young Leadership professionals also offer engagement, leadership, and strategic trainings to area organizations, trying to strengthen the capacity of other organizations to create opportunities for this population to engage Jewishly.

ROCHESTER: THE SHERUT PROJECT

The Sherut Project is a bottom-up initiative where the lead Federation professional spends her time cultivating the interest of and relationships with younger adults in the community. Through the suggestions of younger adults, they build programming together. The Sherut Project currently has a number of directions, including conversation-based classes (“The Table”), networking opportunities, a book club, and ongoing service projects. Federation also connects with younger adults through an exchange with younger Israelis from Rochester’s Partnership2Gether region (the “RAMIM” program). Federation’s Partnership2Gether Committee supports the program, which is staffed by the Federation’s executive and the Sherut Project professional.

VANCOUVER: AXIS

Axis is a network of dynamic Jews in their twenties and thirties committed to building a vibrant young Jewish community in Metro Vancouver. It facilitates a broad range of social, cultural, educational, and philanthropic initiatives to engage young adults and nurture their interest in and commitment to Jewish communal life locally, internationally, and in Israel. Axis leads service learning opportunities, Birthright Israel alumni programs and initiatives, and leadership development programs. Through an active and engaged network of young adult program staff who coordinate and leverage activities and events, Axis facilitates local communal engagement. The more engaged young adults become in Axis, the more it is hoped that they will, by extension, be committed to Jewish Federation and Jewish community broadly. Axis is expected to help reposition Jewish Federation from a purely philanthropic arm of the Jewish community to an engager, convener, and thought-leader in the engagement space.

FINDINGS:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1** **Build Jews.** Engage younger adults for their entire contributions to Jewish life and community, not only as potential donors.
- 2** **Build Jewish community.** Help younger adults find their place in the Jewish people and in Jewish community.
- 3** **Be authentic and transparent.** Be genuine about building community and Jewishness. It's not about a campaign ask.
- 4** **Build diversity.** More is better, inside and outside Federation. Stimulate plentiful opportunities in the community. True diversity leads to more engagement.
- 5** **Build a pyramid, with many at the bottom and fewer at the top.** Follow the pyramid of engagement.
- 6** **Know the audience.** Target programs. Design initiatives for specific niche audiences within the larger younger adult market.
- 7** **Empower.** Help younger adults build Jewish life for themselves with support and resources that we provide to them.
- 8** **Make place matter.** Intertwine the culture and initiatives of a larger NextGen project in the narrative of the community.
- 9** **Emphasize blended identity.** Engage and educate. Content can be engaging.
- 10** **Be memorable. Work with excellence.** Rise above the noise and competition by being outstanding.

AT A GLANCE

STRATEGIES

- 1** **Cultivate a diverse Jewish landscape.** Build personal relationships with organizational leaders. Provide tactical organizational support. Convene organizational leaders. Incubate new projects. Make strategic, purposeful grants. Make the whole greater than its parts.
 - 2** **Leverage relationships.** Make time available. Create unique training opportunities and find the right engagers. Be open to relationships; follow up. Build infrastructure. Connect to, guide through, and build Jewish life.
 - 3** **Leverage assets.** Facilitate Federation immersive experience cohorts and work on follow-through. Integrate campus work. Work with partners; recognize their program participants as ripe for more.
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GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS

Embedded in all of these initiatives is a set of guiding assumptions, principles by which Federations can engage younger adults.



Participation itself is the message we're looking for. Involvement in Jewish community is deeply participatory. That's what we're trying to teach. We're not sure where that participation will take them. But we'll take participation [over non-participation] every time."

– Ezra Shanken, executive, Vancouver



If you engage them, and they like you and trust you, they will give you money at some point. Strengthening Jewish identity and Jewish community will grow Jewish philanthropy. But if you start with Jewish philanthropy, you're going to turn them off. ... If you have real goals and speak honestly to your stakeholders, they'll get to the same place we are [as donors and believers in Federation]. We spend too much time being afraid. We still do it sometimes."

– Scott Kaufman, executive, and Miryam Rosenzweig, professional, Detroit

1. BUILD JEWS.

Engage younger adults for their own sake, for their entire contribution to Jewish life and community, not only as potential donors. Make programs, conversations, and initiatives about engagement in Jewish life and Jewish community broadly rather than about engagement in Federation specifically. Connect people to Judaism in all kinds of ways. Know that through that engagement, within the context of the right relationships, some will become donors. Evaluate success based on how many Jews are connected to Jewish life and on how deeply they are connected. Given their non-engagement in every aspect of Jewish life, at this point, their entire engagement matters to Federation, not only their position as donors.



We want everyone who's Jewish to have a Jewish experience, whether you give to our campaign or not."

– Samantha Dubrinsky,
professional, Birmingham



“

Birthright is affecting half a generation. It’s actually cutting the intermarriage rate. ... We can move the needle on critical disintegration of Jewish ethnicity.”

– Barry Shrage, executive, Boston

2. BUILD JEWISH COMMUNITY, PERSON BY PERSON.

Make Jewish community palpable for younger adults. Introduce them to people involved in Jewish life, not only to their peers but also to those of all ages engaged in Federation. Help them see people they know in the deli, at synagogue, and at the gym. Help them feel a sense of roots in their community. Help them know that they belong, that they matter to the larger project of Jewish life. Help them find a place in the Jewish people. Help them develop a place for the Jewish people in their sense of self.



The Six Day War was a galvanizing experience. The founding of the State of Israel, the Holocaust. There was geographic proximity. In Detroit, everyone lived in the same neighborhood in the '50s. You didn't have to talk about building community. It just was. The country club, restaurant, hospital, it was all Jewish; you had all these structures building community. Now, this generation didn't have any galvanizing Jewish events. ... Everyone's Jewish by choice, they go wherever they want, there's no daily anti-Semitism. We're recreating the shtetl, that feeling of community."

– Scott Kaufman, executive, Detroit



We find so often it's not simply that people are unaware of programs — although many are. We need to reinvent what it means to connect, to give people an understanding they can find community here. And as a Federation, we have a responsibility to work to ensure the programs are diverse and inclusive and welcoming. You can't just introduce people to programs and expect they'll show up."

– Sara Allen, professional, Los Angeles



Community is seeing people at restaurants. Staying late at the High Holidays to say hello. There's a sense of being part of something bigger than yourself, which is always a wonderful feeling. I'm doing this not for me, Adam, but for the Jewish community of Detroit and the city of Detroit."

– Adam Blanck, volunteer leader, Detroit



Federations have to be prepared to change who we are. We're not going to get young people to show up by changing the marketing. There has to be a fundamental change in how we're approaching interactions with them. They'll see right through it. They'll show up and see immediately, Oh, I got suckered."

– Robb Lippitt, volunteer leader, Detroit

DEVELOPING A DONOR BY PROVIDING A GENUINE CONNECTION

In Boston, a twenty-something's CJP-involved family connected him to CJP staff. The second time they met for coffee or drinks, the CJP professional noticed he was wearing a rugby hat. The twenty-something played rugby in college. Serendipitously, a Jewish rugby team had been started one year prior, and CJP had supported the team financially and with technical expertise. A light bulb went off for the CJP staff that the best way to connect him to the community would be to introduce him to the founders of the rugby team. A year later, the twenty-something is living with two members of the team, is the membership chair for the team, and has staffed a Birthright Israel trip for CJP. He emailed his CJP staff: Because of you, I have a Jewish community and feel more connected in Boston. He made his first donation to CJP soon after sending that email.





3. BE AUTHENTIC AND TRANSPARENT.

Be genuine about building community and Jewishness. Avoid, at all costs, a “bait and switch.” Let opportunities that are about education or building community or volunteering or otherwise connecting to Jewish life be—simply—about those purposes. Don’t always include a campaign ask. At the same time, always feel free to acknowledge that Federation facilitates, supports, and convenes these opportunities. Practice transparency and honesty, clear communication.

Create opportunities for participants to connect to and explore their authentic selves. Make Jewish life and community safe spaces for participants to explore who they are, Jewishly and in general, helping them to grow as human beings: The more whole they are, the more they are able to be their best selves, the better a world we will build and the better a Jewish world we will build.



We’re not interested in dictating what it means to be Jewish. We are interested in helping young adults find outlets for their Jewish interests. We need to create multiple experiences that help young adults figure out how they want to be Jewish rather than push out opportunities that tell them how they should be Jewish.”

– Tal Gozani, professional, Los Angeles

4. BUILD DIVERSITY. MORE IS BETTER, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE FEDERATION.

Stimulate as many diverse opportunities in the community as possible to facilitate as much Jewish involvement as possible. Work inside and outside Federation as is appropriate for your community. More kinds of program opportunities lead to more engagement. Recognize the varieties of identity and expression in this generation. Help younger adults test and retest, explore and embrace or abandon, and have something else to go to next week.

Younger adults don’t live in a world of scarcity or forced choice. Competition isn’t relevant. Multiple options exist for any choice, and they can move among these options freely. This is not to say that loyalty doesn’t exist; younger adults might have preferences and attachments. Still, they like to browse and dabble. A niche project or program attracts them, something that plays in the rest of their lives or lets them experiment with something new. With diverse lifestyles and opportunities available to them, they demand Jewish opportunities that are similarly diverse and even quirky, speaking to who they are in the fullest sense.

Within this context, in many communities, the productive younger adult landscape of the future is an integrated one, where opportunities are offered by a variety of organizations. Federation plays key roles as convener, catalyst, financial backer, and strategic planner (among others), but in most cases, because younger adults crave diversity, Federation cannot work alone.



We want to be the Amazon.com for Jewish life, to deliver products that people want and no one cares what the sources are.”

– Scott Kaufman, executive, and Miryam Rosenzweig, professional, Detroit

5. BUILD A PYRAMID: LOTS AT THE BOTTOM, FEWER AT THE TOP, WITH MOVEMENT FROM BOTTOM TO TOP.

Not everyone will be a donor, but Federation—Jewish community—needs donors. Follow a pyramid of engagement principle, to quote Colorado’s parlance—from “live” to “give” to “lead,” with many, many engaged at the bottom, some engaged in the middle as donors, and fewer, but enough, engaged as leaders at the top. Make leadership refer to concrete, specific activities, not to general participation in Federation activities or committees. Develop leadership intentionally; focus on those with real leadership potential. Make the concept of “leader” mean something.

In Boston, Combined Jewish Philanthropies has developed a pyramid of engagement with multiple steps, from “build awareness” to “committee chairs,” intending to help those who want to move through the steps of the pyramid while also respecting the track of those who aren’t seeking leadership but continued engagement overall. They work through relationships to help younger adults find their place in Jewish networks, to connect deeply to something in the Jewish community, and, for some, to become creative, entrepreneurial leaders.



How do we create a funnel, engage as many Jewish people as we can, have them walk away feeling as good as they can about Jewish Detroit? Some of them will end up moving more closely into Federation ... more involved in terms of giving and leading. It starts with their engagement.”

– Marty Maddin, volunteer leader, Detroit





The way that you do that is to help them be Jewish in a way that's relevant to them, not tell them in order to be Jewish you must give a gift, or volunteer ... Understand that when people connect, that doesn't mean that they are ready to jump down the rest of that funnel. They might need to find a friend, or connect multiple times. ... We tried to do away with calling anyone who shows up for anything a leader. People roll their eyes when you call them a leader, and it devalues actual leaders."

– Robb Lippitt, volunteer leader, Detroit

6. KNOW THE AUDIENCE. TARGET PROGRAMS.

Design programs and initiatives for specific niche audiences within the larger younger adult market. Recognize that a twenty-three-year-old who is just starting her career actually has little to do with a thirty-seven-year-old with two small children who has worked for fifteen years—even while each one might be Jewishly disconnected, disenfranchised. Although they share a generational identity, they do not belong together programmatically. Understand your audience according to three kinds of diversity: life-stage diversity, experiential diversity, and cultural diversity.

In Detroit, “know your customer” is a mantra. They divided their NEXTGen audience into fourteen discrete demographic groups. All programming is specifically targeted and marketed to its discrete group: Programs happen in bars for singles in their younger twenties and in homes or playgrounds for those in their thirties and with families. Similarly, in LA, networking events are very specifically targeted: to recent college graduates who are just beginning their careers or to each industry and sub-industry. In smaller communities, interests drive sub-audiences, and programs are held even if the audience is small. Programming attracts the most people and has the greatest influence on them when people can participate in opportunities that are right for them.



There's a sense of community. Living in Detroit, I feel very connected to the rebuilding of the city of Detroit on a personal level. I like to tell this story. I was leaving law school and had the opportunity to go to New York, London, or Detroit, and my friends were like, What are you crazy [for choosing Detroit]? But in the Jewish world, people are jealous of being from Detroit."

– Jay Hack, volunteer leader, Detroit

7. EMPOWER.

Support the DIY (do-it-yourself) generation in building Jewish life for themselves with support—expertise, resources, and partnership—that we provide to them. Respect their almost life-long ability to access information immediately and personally. Don’t assume that they will express their Jewishness through institutions or by watching a leader perform rituals or interpret texts for them. Help them incorporate ritual into their own daily lives and spaces. Give them the texts and create opportunities for discussion and for their own interpretations and reactions. Younger adults want and expect not to step out and into separate spaces—institutions—to do Jewish but for their Jewish lives to be integrated seamlessly with the rest of their lives. Help them not to choose by rooting Jewish in their own lives.

In the traditional Federation (and Jewish communal) infrastructure, Jews get “hands-on” by planning programs and initiatives or soliciting funds. Empowering this generation adds to this organizational work the opportunity to live Jewishly. Particularly in LA, in Boston in IACT, and in Rochester, professionals trained in community organizing sit with younger Jews and ask them, What do you want from your Jewish life? Then, they offer, Let’s create that Jewish life together. They don’t hand already-made opportunities to younger adults but empower, prepare, and support them to take their Jewishness into their hands.

8. MAKE PLACE MATTER.

Connect younger adults to a strong sense of place, to their Jewish home. Intertwine the culture and initiatives of a larger NextGen project in the narrative of the community. Help the community’s Jews to have a strong sense of home, of attachment, of place; help them believe in their communities and want to build the fabric of their own strong Jewish community.

In the cases of Birmingham and Detroit, this has been true in profound ways: The future of each of these communities has depended on the extent to which young people choose to return to or stay in their hometowns, build their lives, and spend their resources. What these communities found is that if younger adults can be helped to build community (to know people and develop relationships, to create place-related memories, to know the history of their surroundings, to extend roots), younger adults will develop pride in their community and become personally invested in their community’s vibrant futures. They’ll want to stay, strengthen their home institutions, and help others have the same place-based experiences that they have. In these communities, place was deeply woven into the very strategies for the initiatives. For example, “You Belong in Birmingham,” the name of Birmingham’s initiative, is clearly designed to proclaim to constituents, “We want you here! You matter to us—you are a part of us.” This kind of connection will not be right for every community, but many communities with history can learn from the intertwining of place, narrative, loyalty, and the building of Jewish community.



"EMPLOYEES
MUST
WASH HANDS"

KID'S

Place also matters when Federations shape their initiatives in the culture and image of their communities. In Detroit, partnerships with synagogues are paramount: The community has one of the highest synagogue affiliation rates in the country, and even when younger adults don't belong as members, they often still identify with their childhood synagogue. Synagogues have come to play an important role in NEXTGen: Good Shabbos Detroit takes place monthly in a different synagogue and serves as a key place to see others and be seen, to connect to Jewish life, to enjoy Shabbat dinner with friends. Yet, in Birmingham, synagogues as settings were intimidating, as were pulpit rabbis. After trying the same events in the synagogue and receiving critical feedback, Birmingham now sponsors Shabbat events and Torah study outside the synagogue. Jewish ideas and Shabbat play a role in each community's NextGen initiative but in ways tailored to each community.



Identity and community aren't separate. We talk a lot about follow-through. If it's just a [program], what happens after? It has to be part of a continuum."

– Scott Kaufman, executive, Detroit

9. EMPHASIZE BLENDED IDENTITY. ENGAGE AND EDUCATE.

Build Jewish identity while building community, helping younger adults to build holistic senses of their Jewishness. Recognize that the boundaries between commitments to Federation and other Jewish agencies and causes are porous and that these commitments are complementary. Engage and educate: Design initiatives to help participants grow Jewishly, simultaneously learning cognitively, developing emotionally, changing their behavior, and deepening their attachments. Recognize that some of the best programs to help younger adults engage in Jewish growth are also good for Federation and that none of this is mutually exclusive. The IACT Israel Innovation campaign is a strong example of this integration: It fosters a positive environment about Israel, while engaging more students in conversation about Israel, while offering opportunities to learn more about Israel.

Make any initiative part of a larger continuum of initiatives. Always ask, "What's next? What is the journey of Jewish engagement, from less to more, from one point of contact to many points of contact, in which we might engage younger adults?" Embrace the relationship between education and engagement, creating moments of Jewish learning or learning about community as part of engagement opportunities, and making sure that educational opportunities are also chances to build relationships.



EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT, IDENTITY, COMMUNITY

In Colorado, a signature program designed for the Ben-Gurion Society donors brings senior donors in the community to speak with younger donors about philanthropic issues, including giving portfolios. The program honors participants' multifaceted identities: their Federation giving, Jewish giving, non-Jewish giving, and Jewish commitments generally. Another Colorado program blends education and engagement when it offers opportunities to talk about Israel. In Boston as well, through Israel 360, conversation salons are led by CJP and cosponsored by varied Jewish organizations, offering an in-depth opportunity for participants to express and shape ideas about Israel. Federation offers educational opportunities because of the substance and meaning of the opportunities, though they also offer a chance to connect to Federation.



Every program has an ATW, an ‘And then what?’ plan. We actually put it in writing.”

– Miryam Rosenzweig, professional, Detroit



We just started requiring that we be better at what we were doing. We stopped being mediocre. We had the courage to say, ‘We’re not going to do this anymore. What we’re going to do, we’ll do really well.’ We can’t get people to show up to mediocrity.”

– Robb Lippitt, volunteer leader, Detroit

10. BE MEMORABLE. WORK WITH EXCELLENCE.

Rise above the noise and competition by being outstanding. Hire professionals who can execute with great skill and who understand and can implement sharp strategy. Create events and opportunities that are deep, purposeful, and obviously compelling. More than that, build into every opportunity a “Facebookable moment,” a selfie or postcard for the fridge, something that will stick with participants, help them feel good about their connection, and help encourage them to come back. “Details matter,” says Detroit, and others agree. It’s the details that add up to make something extraordinary, that make someone say, in Miryam Rosenzweig’s words, “I got to do this with Federation.”



“

Federation historically focuses on connecting you to its own programs. Young adults don't differentiate between the brands. They don't care what's at a JCC or a Federation. They just see [the program] as something Jewish. We said anything Jewish we will provide you or connect you to.”

– Miryam Rosenzweig, professional, Detroit

As Federations have shifted their work with younger adults from a “build Federation leaders” paradigm to a “build Jews” paradigm, they have done so according to three key strategies.



Some see it as a loss of control. For generations, Young Leadership Divisions have been the ones to provide all of the programming. We're saying we'd rather put the onus on the community. ... These non-profits become an extension of us. ... All together it's a much richer community because we all work together and learn from each other."

– Abby Goldenthal, professional, Boston



Engaging our next generation is a whole community activity. It's not just relegated to Jewish Federation. That is why it is reliant upon us to maintain great relationships with our partners across the community. Our young people don't see the walls we see. They only see one Jewish community and the opportunities that it holds, so wherever they land, it's good for all of us."

– Ezra Shanken, executive, Vancouver

1. CULTIVATE A DIVERSE AND ROBUST JEWISH LANDSCAPE

In the community that engages as many younger adults as possible, opportunities abound for engagement and education, for deep Jewish living, learning, and expression. This robust, ideal landscape holds all kinds of opportunities, unique and even quirky, tapping into the nooks and crannies of Jewish tradition, history, and life to find elements relevant to us today in countless ways. Moreover, this landscape empowers younger adults to lead for themselves, to pursue their own ideas for expression of their own Jewishness.

In many or even most communities, Federations cannot act alone to build such robust landscapes of opportunity. There's too much to do. Moreover, younger adults often want the diversity. They will move from activity to activity with curiosity, only infrequently attaching themselves to a single organization or project. In cultivating diversity, Federation takes a strategic eye to the landscape, curating and stimulating it as much as possible: supporting existing organizations, helping older organizations refresh their missions and stay focused on the population, and incubating new projects. Federation ensures that the landscape maximizes and maintains its health and its breadth of opportunity.

Specifically, Federation has an opportunity to make the whole greater than its parts through six approaches.



If we're looking at young adults as holistically as possible, if we help partners engage with each other, not even with CJP but with each other, then we're helping more young adults make Jewish decisions and build a vibrant community. It should feel somewhat seamless for young adults. It doesn't matter how you come in the door. It's permeable. And you can really go in and out. There isn't a straight path and one way of participating in the community. We all have the community's best interests at heart. We can negate stepping on each other's toes, work to collaborate and not just programmatic collaboration but thinking about how we can all help young adults find their place. We have to think about how we are showing young adults there is this broad-based community, and being Jewish means something different to everyone, being part of a community means something different to everyone and there is a place for them."

– Dani Weinstein, professional, Boston

BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS.

Their strong personal relationships with organizational partners help Federation leaders understand trends and needs in the community. The trust that they develop also allows them to influence the organizations, to support the organizations to make decisions in the best interest of their growth. They also can convene the organizations and lead them in building a pluralistic, inclusive community. Federations are resourced enough that their professionals have the necessary time needed to cultivate these relationships.

It is worth noting that Federations engaged in this work take an inclusive stance on networking, looking for reasons to include and not exclude organizational partners. There are some red lines (approaches to Israel need to be in line with Federation's approach to Israel), but there are not necessarily guidelines about how often or in what ways a partner might work with younger adults. The network exists specifically in order to encourage more partners to work in this space, not to rule out potential players.

PROVIDE TACTICAL ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT.

The rich relationships that Federations develop and maintain with organizational leaders, both volunteer and professional, allow Federations to work inside an organization's vulnerabilities, helping them to grow through concrete tactical support. Often, partner organizations are under-resourced: They are just launching (they are start-ups), or they are organizations built on good ideas but with little capital. Federations provide support that the organizations need to make things happen.

In Boston, that support might come in the form of recruitment and connections to partner organizations: If an organization wants to make an event happen, and the event plays a valuable role in the larger context of the younger adult landscape, Federation professionals will design and implement a recruitment plan, even communicating with other partner organizations as part of that plan



Federations need to create an infrastructure within which this stuff can be contained. It means that the Federations are taking responsibility for the growth of this thing. They don't have to do everything."

– Barry Shrage, executive, Boston

In Los Angeles, support might be related to organizational growth: A volunteer-run organization, for example, needed an executive director in order to reach the next stage of productivity and contribution, and the organization's Board had little experience with hiring sophisticated talent. Federation incentivized the organization to become more professional and then walked the organization through the hiring process, even working with the organization to find viable candidates, ensuring the organization's successful growth. In another case, with an organization in a similar place of high potential and low structure, Federation incentivized that organization to hire a development professional and provided funds for marketing infrastructure, also providing in-kind services by way of guidance in recruitment and engagement plans.

In all of these cases, Federation is helping to maximize the role that other organizations can play in the younger adult landscape, making sure that the landscape is truly complex and diverse. Federation acts as a start-up incubator, not letting organizations fail or succeed only by their own efforts but intervening and sharing a commitment to their success.

CONVENE ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS.

Federation also offers more formal support to partners. In Boston, the group of more than seventy organizations that work with younger adults (partners who may work with this population even part-time, as part of their overall mission) is called "The Network," and CJP convenes this Network four times annually as a Young Jewish Leaders Council. In Los Angeles, a similar group meets monthly—the first Thursday of every month for breakfast, like clockwork—as the NextGen Engagement Initiative, or NEI. In Colorado, their group of about ten organizations is the "Tribe Engagement Network."

Each community creates the meetings of its groups using similar principles:

- **Significant thought is put into the content for the group.** Lead professionals listen during their conversations with younger adults for what's going well in the community and for how

organizations can strengthen their work. Lead professionals and volunteers also meet one-on-one with partners (lay and professional) to learn more about the dilemmas they may be facing. Trends and areas for growth are identified, and they become topics for learning. There is a curriculum, rather than episodic sessions; the meetings of the group sequence and build into a larger body of knowledge and skills. The best speakers possible are found: Federation professionals have time in their portfolios to find the right teachers, and they have the resources to compensate them if necessary. The groups also consider challenges and strategic questions facing the field and the community; for example, What is the role of free programming in this space, and as a community, how does the network of organizations encourage financial investment in Jewish life? For many or even most participants, this is the only professional development they have access to.

- **Relationships among participants are pursued.** The lead professional of the group makes connections in a classic shadchan (matchmaker) kind of way, in areas of interest and common approaches and work responsibilities. When new network members join, the lead professional helps to orient them by introducing them to others and asking others to meet with them one-on-one.
- **Hand-offs are sought.** That is, the lead professional tries to help young adults navigate all of the organizations by connecting them to organizations through the network’s members and asking one organization to introduce a program participant to another organization based on the participant’s interests.
- **The group has an identity.** In each larger community, being a part of NEI, or “The Network,” or “the Tribe” is recognizable, and it means something.
- **There is a rhythm to the meetings.** In LA, they meet over breakfast on the first Thursday of the month for conversation and learning. In Boston, they participate in quarterly, evening workshops with break-out sessions; organizations bring multiple participants, each of whom participates in a different break-out session. In LA, they meet at Federation or at a space that works for the content; in Boston, they meet in a conference space, in a “third space that all organizations own together,” intentionally in a neutral space outside CJP or any of the partner organizations.

In total, in addition to providing valuable skill development, these convenings create opportunity for ongoing buy-in into the larger project of collaboration and younger adult engagement. They foster ongoing relationships that then allow the community as a whole to work together seamlessly to engage younger adults at the maximum level.



It’s a collaborative, open architecture model.”

– Dirk Bird, professional, Colorado



It's a matter of teaching and inspiring and pushing and incentivizing organizations to do things differently, creatively, openly and with more meaning and deeper relevance. NEI is more than a community of practice."

– Sara Allen, professional, Los Angeles



We are working in an evolving world. We need to make sure they're evolving, too. The table needs to be a place for change. It's messy. But everyone wants to sit at the table."

– Jay Sanderson, executive, Los Angeles



We really do listen, we do surveys, read and aggregate, offer a plus delta discussion after each meeting. Then we go to the next meeting and say this is what we learned. You wanted to see this, you didn't like this. So it's really transparent, and it shifts all the time based on who they are."

– Dani Weinstein, professional, Boston



Being a small nonprofit, there's not always that time for staff development. It's nice to have a dedicated space. It's fantastic for networking. I've definitely met people at NEI who I've gone on to do events with or given advice to. In a fairly small community of people doing the work ... I can count on seeing people there who owe me an email or I owe an email... And there's an element of collegiality to it—you're not just a person who's adding one more thing to my inbox. We're all in this together. ...Once you're part of NEI, you see the people who are trying to do what you're do. ... We don't step on each other's toes. I know what I do; it's not what someone else does. ...There's a nice sense of what people's skill sets are, a nice sense of generosity. Of course I can be helpful to you in this way. I can feel a better sense of who I need to talk to about things."

– Zan Romanoff, Silver Lake JCC, Los Angeles



INCUBATE NEW PROJECTS AND SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS.

To create true texture and diversity in the community and to give power and opportunity to younger adults themselves, Federations incubate new projects by building structured opportunities for such projects and reaching out to entrepreneurs individually, engaging creative self-starters as project leaders. In several communities, Federations' sponsorship of PresenTense has led to a cornucopia of new opportunities for and by this population. In Detroit, Federation leaders have supported diversity by identifying agents for change, asking them for ideas, and then supporting these ideas in a nimble fashion, even outside the Federation process, with no strings to stop them. Through these means, the landscape in these communities has expanded dramatically. The twenty- and thirty-something entrepreneurs have developed ideas that Federation leaders never would have developed.

MAKE STRATEGIC, PURPOSEFUL GRANTS.

Federations use the allocation of funds to stimulate and support the landscape. Rather than make traditional allocations to agencies based on their relationship with the agency, Federations make these grants for specific initiatives or programs within the context of community need, trends, and opportunities. Federation leaders themselves notice relevant shifts or happenings, gaps in what exists; they study the community, are in conversation with practitioners about potential program growth and possibilities, and target grants toward specific, needed ends.



We began with small projects, like ‘Jews and Tattoos.’ And then there was a grant pool, up to \$5,000, to shake up the grant model and what was available in the field for twenties and thirties. We wanted to deliberately incubate a field of opportunities. ... Incubating organizations can be scary. Federation is expanding the landscape. ... We take risks ourselves to practice what we preach, like the Jewish rugby team. It’s become an incredible cohort of guys who are Jewish and not Jewish celebrating holidays together. We would never have started a rugby team. We don’t know the talent; there’s insurance issues. But [by] funding them, we can take that risk and get something out of it. And when it’s not interesting or trendy or guys move on, we can stop funding it without failure. We can do a lot more without being so stuck in the programming itself.”

– Abby Goldenthal, professional, Boston

A grants program that is open to any organization also allows space for any potential partner to apply for funds: Emerging organizations can receive support as can organizations that do not typically work with younger adults but that want to develop new initiatives for this population.

Federations use strategic grant-making to stimulate the younger adult landscape in different ways. Some make dozens of grants ranging from \$5,000 to more than \$200,000 within the same basic process. Others (Boston, Los Angeles) create different types of grant processes to meet different needs:

- Very **small**, program-oriented grants (“micro-grants”) that allow organizations to facilitate specific programs;
- Grants for **innovations** within new or traditional organizations or for **capital** for start-up organizations;
- Grants to “mezzanine” organizations or projects that are **beyond the start-up phase** but not established enough for a multi-year grant; projects that should not compete in the innovation or micro-grant space and that need Federation funding to exist;
- Grants to established organizations, offering **multiple years** of ongoing funding; and
- Capacity-building grants for **emerging, start-up** organizations.

The impermanence of strategic grants allows Federations to take risks and to test waters. They can easily stop and start their relationship with initiatives as they stop and start a grant award. Federations use strong relationships and deep and frequent communication to explain the change in grant status: If an organization no longer receives a grant, their leaders understand why, and Federation works with the organization to help change circumstances so that they might receive a grant in the future.

In strategic grant-making, Federations integrate their typical allocations processes into their entire work with younger adults, creating a comprehensive planning, engagement, program, and grants department, using all of these means equally to create a more dynamic landscape. A new and highly collaborative network evolves.

With Federation as catalyst and convener, the network's efforts with younger adults are centralized in one department that cuts across resource development, engagement, and planning and allocations. Federation adds its strategic eye and support for organizations' transitions and growth. The holistic, comprehensive, collaborative approach leads to a rich and diverse landscape with opportunities for many to connect in layered, creative ways to Jewish life. It also introduces the emerging leaders who become involved in the process to Federation's community development work.



We're a multi-year grant recipient. It's \$7,000. It's not massive, but it's enough that it makes a difference in our budget, and if we had to apply every year, we would be drowning. It's helpful to know that it's coming."

– Laura Mandel, the New Center for Arts and Culture, Boston

MAKE THE WHOLE GREATER THAN ITS PARTS.

Ultimately, as Federations build networks of organizational leaders, they also have an opportunity to create synergy among opportunities. Sometimes this is practical, as when Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Boston holds Yom Sport and the other organizations each provide resources for the event: CJP recruits volunteers, often asking their partner organizations to recruit groups to volunteer together, and Big Brother Big Sister recruits athletes who are adults with special needs. Sometimes, this is more conceptual, as when both Boston and Los Angeles created events throughout their communities for Hanukkah.

Infinite Light in Los Angeles was a series of events during the week of Hanukah 5776. That there was such a breadth and richness of opportunity meant that there was momentum around the program as a whole and participants might learn about one event because they participated in an earlier event. Moreover, participants felt like they were part of something much larger than themselves, engaging in a true community happening, even if they participated in only a single event.

In Boston, through a partnership with the New Center for Arts and Culture, proposals were solicited from artists to create public art projects for Hanukkah and events around those projects. On some Hanukkah nights, there were larger, more communal events, as when the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston held a menorah lighting with a multi-faceted and interactive event taking up the majority of the museum. Through the prompting of CJP and the support of Network organizations, the evening drew nearly 3,000 participants.

In each of these cases, Federation wove the pieces together to create presence and Jewish community. A larger force developed out of collaboration and collective vision.



We found Jordan Wolf at a start-up conference. Here was this twenty-something guy. I introduced myself, our existential issue. I said I think you're addressing it, I'd like to pick your brain, can I take you to lunch? That started the conversation. And that started Community Next. We got a donor to take a leap of faith, \$250,000 to launch this thing. There were a few people in a basement. There was no lay component. ... Very quickly it started working. Within three weeks, there were three hundred kids coming, 90% were Jewish, a young major donor's kid went, 'Wow, there's all these people.' ... It's about letting people have a greater say, be more creative about how to approach things. ... If you put talented young people in a room and say we're going to support you, really good things are going to come out. ... We pushed down the levels of responsibility, autonomy, and leadership, which fostered an environment of creativity and collaboration and energy about what was possible."

– Scott Kaufman, executive, Detroit



Grant funding is a start, and it doesn't take much to begin, maybe \$15,000 or \$20,000, and we gave grants of \$3,000. That showed organizations that we were serious and wanted to hear from them. There wasn't a wizard behind the curtain making decisions. We actually wanted to hear from them. And volunteers were making decisions about real money."

– Abby Goldenthal, professional, Boston



It requires a patient professional and knowing the right moment to say, 'Hey, would you like to learn more?' There's a dating analogy: You can't walk up to someone you meet in a bar and say, 'Hey, will you marry me?' Once in a blue moon, someone might say yes. But it's not the best way to do it. It requires getting to know someone, dating, letting them learn about you. Truly connecting people to their Jewish identity and the Jewish community works no differently. We, as a community, need to have the patience to let them do that."



2. LEVERAGE RELATIONSHIPS

The mandate to leverage relationships to connect a greater number of younger adults to Jewish life is rooted in two fundamental truths.

- Judaism is complex, and Jewish life is complex. Its web of opportunities and organizations, the social code, is hard to enter and navigate. Many younger adults have impressions and interpretations of how Jewish organizations and structured Jewish life work and what is required (money, knowledge) to participate. They do not see Jewish life as belonging to them, as possible to be learned, or as an opportunity. They feel Jewishly inadequate: This thing is part of them but not for them.
- The best tool to help people cut through these impressions, to help them enter or reconnect with Jewish life, is personal conversation focused on where people are and what they know, believe, and want. Leveraging relationships involves connecting with someone one-on-one to help them find their Jewish place and to help them understand that, whoever they are and whatever they come with, whatever their sexual orientation or their ethnic, racial, and religious background, whoever their partner is, Judaism is still theirs.

Several steps are involved in Federations connecting younger adults to Jewish community and their sense of Jewishness through relationships.

DIVERSITY AND SMALLER COMMUNITIES

Larger communities can rely on a network of other non-profits to create plentiful opportunities. In other cases (in smaller communities but also sometimes in larger communities), Federations facilitate the diversity themselves. The partners simply don't exist. Northeastern New York has done this by building meet-up groups, "clusters," around various interest areas (social justice, LGBT, Shabbat, young families, arts and entertainment, the outdoors). These clusters, which can be launched and then closed easily, offer Federation the chance to engage younger adults according to their own interests and through diverse portals.

In Rochester, the same diversity is built differently. The professional responsible for this work spends her time meeting with younger adults and learning about their interests; she then develops ongoing initiatives in response to their interests. This "Sherut Project" brings people together and takes them on a journey, according to the Federation; participants get to learn, serve, give philanthropically, and travel to Israel, and they can engage as individuals, couples, or families. In each of these cases, there is a larger brand—Federation—in which participants engage, but there are diverse options, and participants can engage in one or many options, experimenting and dropping in and back, as they would with diverse organizations in a larger community.



When I started working here, there were fourteen people in the YL Cabinet, and we got the same fourteen people at events. We rebranded and broke into clusters. We started working with a wide net and narrow focus. There are now nine clusters that are life-cycle or interest-based. . . . We have three to four clusters doing four to six programs a month, so it's regular and a part of people's lives. We wanted the cluster chairs to take the reins, to take ownership of their community and make it what they want it to be. Our region is somewhat aging and our target population can be quite transient, but we gather the young people to allow for a positive exposure to the work Federation does and assist them in creating a community they can feel good about. And one day down the road with this positive feeling they will want to be associated with Federation."

— KB Goodkin, professional, Northeastern New York





This is at the forefront of what Federation is. It's about relationships. There's no campaign ask."

– Marisa Kaplan, professional, Los Angeles



If someone new moves to Birmingham, we take them out for coffee, drinks. We get to know them and try to figure out what they're interested in, to connect them to the JCC, to religious organizations. We have a presence within the broader Birmingham community. If there's an organization they're interested in, we can help them get involved with that. We're their home base. We have a lot of young people who can give up their time for this. They love Birmingham; they care about it. They want other young people to be engaged and love Birmingham as much as they do."

– Samantha Dubrinsky, professional, Birmingham



We have eight people on our team. They go to a ton of different events. They try to network as much as possible. Others start to recognize us and come up to us. That one-on-one is pivotal for some people, and some just don't need it. They're more comfortable with organizational life. Some just want to be more rooted in community and can make an effort to learn more. They sign up for an event; they see a program. They don't ask questions; they just kind of do it. They're a little bit louder than the others. But others are quieter. You need to poke around and see, this person's got promise for whatever reason. Somebody talks to them, and you realize that this is a conversation that should really continue. We never say no to a meeting. It doesn't matter if it's someone who comes from a family who gives a ton of money or they come from somewhere we know nothing about. If someone meets with someone, they are much more likely to show up again."

– Dani Weinstein, professional, Boston

MAKE TIME AVAILABLE.

Federations create robust teams that have the time to allocate to the task of connecting with people.

- In some communities (Boston and Detroit), their professional teams are sizable, in part because each professional is responsible for varied projects and for spending time building relationships, having coffee and drinks and meals, with people they meet who are just connecting to Jewish life. They are held accountable for fulfilling this responsibility as they are for completing their other projects.
- In Birmingham, which has just one professional working in this area, a team of volunteers is responsible for this kind of engagement. When someone new moves to town, or someone wants to connect more deeply, they find the right team member for the meeting, bringing someone in the same profession as the engagee, or someone who also just moved from the same place.
- In Detroit, professionals particularly are sure to take time to reach out personally to younger adults, sending handwritten birthday cards, for example.
- Los Angeles tasks individuals with the specific responsibility of one-on-one engagement, and this is their only responsibility for Federation. Their Birthright Israel experiences, for example, have bus staff or participants who are responsible for cultivating relationships during and then following the trip. In the NuRoots initiative, Federation employs a team of full-time community organizers, Fellows, whose job it is to find those the least connected to Jewish life and help them connect in ways that work for them, for the engagees.
- In Boston, IACT is successful precisely because the coordinators' starting point is building relationships related to recruitment for Birthright Israel. Because that is their first responsibility, they can fulfill that before they move on to other things.

It takes time to build and maintain relationships. When it needs to be fit around a full portfolio of desk-based responsibilities, it often falls to the bottom of a to-do list. In these communities, building relationships and building Jews is not something the engagers have to fit into their primary responsibilities. Relationships are their primary responsibility.

CREATE UNIQUE TRAINING AND FIND THE RIGHT ENGAGERS.

Relationships are pivotal, but we can't ask just anyone to work in relationships.

- Good engagers are active listeners and emotionally intelligent, sensitive to interpersonal dynamics, and good at picking up conversational cues.
- They are in touch with their Jewishness and able to draw from their own Jewish and life experiences to inform their work, even while they also recognize appropriate boundaries with their engagees, when to step forward and when to pull back, how to share their personal lives appropriately.

- They are charismatic and have good energy, are outgoing and somewhat confident, are compelling enough for a stranger to be interested in conversation with them.
- They are also intellectually and creatively confident, able to be a thought partner with engagees about their Jewish lives.
- They are Jewishly creative and not afraid to access resources and experts when they will help strengthen the relationship.
- If the entirety of their jobs is engagement, as in the NuRoots initiative, they work alone and therefore need to be self-starters, able to engage in outreach day after day with little external feedback.

Often—in IACT and NuRoots, for example—engagers are “inside-outside” people, working for a mainstream organization but able to be part of non-mainstream settings and connect with those on the fringes of community. They are comfortable being part of both types of spaces and with Jews of all backgrounds.

Engagers are genuinely themselves with engagees. They wear what they would otherwise wear, act as they would otherwise act; engagees will sense anything disingenuous. Engagers look for what animates people, when people’s “eyes light up,” for the intersection of who engagees are with their greatest passions and questions and with Jewish tradition and resources. Engagers help engagees enter Jewish life and Judaism at a place of true excitement and interest.

In Boston, training for connectors has often included narrative storytelling as used in community organizing,² exploring the asking of questions to help get to the roots of an individual’s stories and listening to key words and ideas in conversation. Training isn’t about CJP, but it does review Jewish community resources, organizations, and projects to which prospects can be connected. Connectors learn to make “hand-offs,” to connect prospects smoothly to others with opportunities for them.

It takes time for any community to learn the unique profile of their engagers. In CJP’s IACT initiative, the precise combination of sharp and deep interpersonal skills, community organizing strengths, and educational depth took time to identify, as did the concept of their being “savvy navigators,” able to find and connect resources. Similarly, the idea that the coordinators needed to match the campus, and how to build a successful interview process where that could happen, took trial and error.



There is no list that they first get. They have to hustle, to hit the pavements.”

– Marisa Kaplan, professional, Los Angeles

² An excellent overview of the ideas related to the role of sharing one’s own narrative in community organizing is found in Marshall Ganz’s *“Telling Your Public Story: Self, Us, Now”* (worksheet, Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, MA, 2007).



I'll say, 'Hi, we're doing community building in Venice, if this is something that interests you, here's my contact info.' Some weeks I'm pulling my hair out. How am I going to meet anyone new? Where is everyone, and how do I find them? That's when I get creative, or I brainstorm with my boss, like, They just opened the new Snapchat office in Playa Vista. I think there's a new Whole Foods. Maybe I'll go at lunch. That kind of thing. Sometimes it's really awkward, trying to meet people, trying to figure out if they're Jewish. Sometimes I reach out to people in my network. Do they know anyone? Or if I have an event, we have room for more, I ask, 'Do you have friends you want to invite?' ... I already see people I know at [the Venice] Whole Foods and at Groundworks [the coffee shop next door]. So people introduce me, 'Oh, this is my coworker, this is my friend.' This is the best way for me to go about that. It's the least awkward, the most successful. People trust you instinctively if they know you're connected to people they already know and trust. ... I look at jewelry, or a tattoo, or a hamtza necklace, or there's Hebrew. I strike up a conversation. I'm pretty chatty. I would do that anyway. Sometimes those conversations go somewhere, and I can say, 'Hey, let's grab coffee.' And sometimes it's just a two-minute conversation."

– Jen Green, NuRoots Fellow, Los Angeles



IACT coordinators are role models that these students can relate to who also talk and live a Jewish mission and vision for Jewish life. Their passion for the Jewish people, lifelong Jewish learning, service, and love of Israel presents a compelling authentic path that appeals to students and can be sustained over many years."

– Cheryl Aronson, professional, Boston

BE OPEN TO RELATIONSHIPS; FOLLOW UP.

To build relationships, Federation leaders need to be open to and pursue leads that they receive that refer them to potential connections. When someone calls to ask, “Please reach out to my grandson,” engagers follow up and then call again; usually, according to those interviewed, they succeed in making a meeting.

(Emails aren’t returned, they’ve found, but phone calls are.)

They design the right first meeting for the engagee, making building that relationship a priority.

In some cases (in the NuRoots initiative, in Boston’s Network Connectors, in IACT), Federation leaders look for people to get to know. They begin with friends of friends, sitting down with someone they know and asking, “Can I meet some of your friends?” They try to get to know people new to them at events, working the room. In NuRoots, they sit outside cafés and listen and look, striking up conversations and seeing where they lead. They look for Hebrew tattoos or Jewish-themed necklaces. They know the cultures of their communities, the “third spaces” in which people meet, and they frequent them in order to launch relationships.

As they do this, they are careful to be genuinely true to who they are. They present themselves as their natural selves: outgoing, interested, but not overeager. They need to build their relationships based on a foundation of authenticity.

It’s not easy. Some weeks, their success feels slow and stagnant. Occasionally, there’s a phenomenal week, where everywhere they turn they meet someone who wants to follow up. It takes patience and discipline, a return to the work every Monday.



It’s very, ‘Come with me, let’s do this together.’... It’s not passive.”

– Cheryl Aronson, professional, Boston

BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE.

Some Federations have created opportunity within their existing staff and volunteer infrastructure to build relationships with younger adults. Some have created separate initiatives in order to maximize this opportunity to reach the unengaged through relationships; others structure their entire Young Leadership initiatives in order to maximize the number of younger adults possible.

In Northeastern New York and Vancouver, Young Leadership programs offer “clusters,” a series of opportunities associated with one interest or life stage or identity (Shabbat, the outdoors, wine-tasting, young families, or LGBTQ community members). The cluster model allows Federation to create diverse opportunities in a community, to create small groups with loose boundaries into which participants can come in and out, and to charge some members of the cluster with leadership responsibility, making them a small core that can reach out personally to those new to the cluster. The cluster model also lets Federations put Jewish life into participants’ hands, since they can form clusters or let them dissolve based on their own interests. In this paradigm, Federation becomes a platform for opportunities in which hundreds can participate but in small groups that allow personal connections to be made.

The NuRoots initiative in Los Angeles is designed deliberately to connect the most disengaged from Jewish life, those most on the fringe, to Jewish community and to senses of their own Jewishness through personal relationships.



We sit down, and they say, ‘Just so you know, I’m not Jew-ish. I mean, my dad is, but I’m not.’ And we say, ‘No, you are who you are. We’re all about that.’”

– Marisa Kaplan, professional, Los Angeles

NuRoots currently employs four Fellows, each of whom brings a background in some kind of community organizing, and each of whom works in a distinct neighborhood in Los Angeles. They have identified goals: to meet five to eight new people each week and to have twenty “interactions” each week (an interaction is a face-to-face meeting, a text, a Facebook message, a phone call—something with substance, something more than an invitation). The Fellows build relationships with those not engaged in typical Jewish life. They spend time talking about who they are and what Judaism and Jewish community are and can be for them and in Los Angeles more broadly. The Fellows connect engagees to existing Jewish opportunities when possible and suitable, or they build opportunities together. Fellows then maintain relationships with engagees, helping them to have repeated Jewish experiences and to further explore and build their Jewishness. In total, NuRoots Fellows have connected with more than 1,000 previously disengaged younger adults and, through their relationships, helped these younger adults build their Jewishness in personally meaningful ways. Moreover, they have found those who frequently have few to no other Jewish contacts, who were curious about Judaism but had little idea of how to explore their tradition. They have succeeded in organizing around Jewish life.

LAUREN: NUROOTS ENGAGED

Lauren (twenty-six) lives at home with her parents in a community where Jewish life is targeted primarily to young families. In addition, because of a physical disability, she feels isolated and disconnected and has been turned off by previous attempts to connect Jewishly. She met a Fellow through a colleague. Through one-on-one conversations, she expressed a desire to meet Jewish friends who could accept her. She and the Fellow co-created a women’s brunch in Lauren’s community and from there built a network of Jewish female friends. The Fellow also went with Lauren to a Moishe House event, which she otherwise did not know about, and where she continues to attend events and feels like she found a space that meets her needs.

CONNECT TO, GUIDE THROUGH, AND BUILD JEWISH LIFE.

In any of these situations (for Federation leaders who build relationships as part of their larger portfolios or for Federation Fellows and connectors who spend their time exclusively reaching out to engagees), a primary task is to help younger adults, engagees, find their place in Jewish life—not (only) in Federation but also in Jewish life.



Our job is helping young people find their way into their place in the Jewish community. That place I don't define as Federation specific. I define it as their place in the Jewish community. For some, that's kickball games. For others, that's being an agency board member. For others, it's volunteering at a food bank two times a year. It involves understanding and accepting that if people feel invested in Jewish community, that's good for community, and if we can be in the position to make the Federation case, and we can make it well, people will buy into it."

– Robb Lippitt, volunteer leader, Detroit

As described earlier, many come to Judaism and Jewish community feeling excluded. They don't have a sense that Judaism is theirs to explore. In some cases, this is because they weren't raised with it: They are the children of intermarriage, raised with no religion or with a loose connection to several traditions, and they literally don't have a sense that they belong. In other cases, this is because some aspect of their behavior or life choices might not match their perceptions of what Jewish institutions look for: They are dating a non-Jew, or aren't affluent, or don't want to become a member of an institution. In many cases, that they don't have Jewish social capital—they lack an understanding of the norms and language of Jewish communal life—means that they feel uncomfortable and even insecure in many Jewish spaces.³ Jewish spaces are too high barrier for them. They can't find their place.

³ Beth Cousens, "A Key to Jewish Engagement: Developing Jewish Social Capital," accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.bethcousens.com/2014/10/wheni-was-fourteen-i-went-to-bbyo.html>.





We're making it easier to navigate the community. We won't check your Jewish ID at the door. People say, 'I don't know if I can come,' or 'I wasn't involved in Hillel,' or 'my boyfriend isn't Jewish,' or 'I don't know if I'm Jewish enough to get started or where to begin.' The programming feels like these insider clubs, and you have to speak the language in order to join. So, our focus is on empowering people to make decisions for themselves. In the same way that somebody tries a new restaurant, you read Eater 38 and you just go, or you join the November Project, there's no hesitation in being part of that and finding your people. So, we want to make sure there are as many options as possible. ... And to make it easy for people who don't want to ask any questions."

– Dani Weinstein, professional, Boston

Regularly, relationships become the context for talking through all of these layers. They give the engagers opportunities to open up Judaism and Jewish community and to break down ideas about what it takes to belong, and they give engagees the confidence needed to begin to explore. In IACT, the coordinators ostensibly are to focus with students on Birthright Israel, but because they build relationships with students, they can become much, much more to the students. Most significantly, it is the relationship that allows the coordinator to move with the student from a question about Birthright Israel participation to engagement in Israel exploration and Jewish life more broadly.

The engagers also play crucial roles as guides, as concierges. They connect engagees to Jewish opportunities that might be right for them. In some cases, these are events with the Federation. In other cases, they are outside Federation, with partner organizations. In Los Angeles, the NuRoots Fellows participate in the events with their engagees, giving them the support they need to show up.

Federations also create structures and projects within their larger initiatives to do the guiding.

In Boston, the "Open House Party" is an event where all Network organizations can table and get to know people. CJP also holds smaller gatherings before larger community events so that those newer to Jewish life can have a softer, easier entrance to a larger event, so they can walk into a larger room already knowing others. CJP also experiments: At the High Holidays, they filmed walking (literally) through the doors to different synagogues so that those new to the synagogue would have some familiarity before participating in prayer services that Rosh HaShanah. They are releasing a series of podcasts by leaders of different organizations talking about issues in Jewish life. All of these efforts make Jewish community more transparent, easier to break into.

Many communities emphasize that the ultimate way to break down Jewish community is to make it one's own.

In Detroit, Federation looks actively for great ideas from younger adults, projects that can add to Jewish community and Jewish life and be facilitated directly by younger adults. The Detroit Federation's Community Next initiative was launched as an incubator for younger adults by younger adults.



This whole population ... who intentionally pulled out, who might have had a bad experience growing up, who have a sense of Jewish inadequacy, who don't even know that there is a sense of Jewish community, who don't care and aren't looking."

– Sara Allen, professional, Los Angeles

In Los Angeles, the NuRoots Fellows are meant to help their engagees design and lead Jewish opportunities that mean something to them. Nearly one hundred opportunities have been designed. There are a lot of Shabbat dinners, and there are also brunches, holiday events, meet-ups, and also singular events that are always designed around engagees' own interests and their curiosity about Judaism. A Fellow helped a storyteller organize an evening centered on Havdallah where participants told Jewish stories. On another evening, someone interested in yoga and meditation created a meditation event with a Fellow. By co-building their own opportunities, engagees learn that they can create Jewish life in their own spaces and on their own terms. Moreover, the opportunities that they create serve to strengthen their sense of Jewishness, to help them form Jewish memories that can sit at the foundations of their Jewishness and to help them explore Jewish life and its meaning for them. The more they plan and the more they attend, the more their Jewish life might develop momentum and take root, existing even beyond the Fellows. They co-create Jewish life for the sake of their ultimate Jewish independence; they develop skills and confidence for themselves through relationships.



I grew up Jewish-ish; I grew up culturally Jewish. There's a lot of Jews like me. They don't necessarily feel like they would be welcome. I've had people say to me it's wrong not to marry Jews. It shouldn't be encouraged. You're going to do what you're going to do, but the community shouldn't accept that. But why lose someone like me and my wife, who's clearly comfortable with Jews enough to marry one? Miryam said I'm clearly welcome. She was doing outreach with intermarried couples. She's very supportive of integrating intermarried couples in the community. The feeling of NEXTGen is that they're very welcoming."

– Jonathan Schwartz, participant, Detroit



One of our leaders met him at a Michigan Bar Association event and called me and said, ‘You have to meet with him.’ When I met him, he said, ‘How much will the meeting cost me?’ I said, ‘I don’t solicit on the first date. I have to get to know you first.’ I quickly realized that he’s in an interfaith marriage and feels very disconnected and frustrated, Detroit is a traditional community, and he hasn’t felt included. I said, ‘I don’t want you to make a gift. [But] There’s a couples event you should come to.’ He said, ‘My wife isn’t Jewish.’ I said, ‘OK, but she’s part of a couple, isn’t she?’ He had never heard those messages. I said, ‘Come as my guest, you don’t need to make a gift. I just want you to know that you’re welcome.’ He and his wife were at Good Shabbos Detroit [at a synagogue], at a synagogue they were [once frustrated with]. That’s what we’re trying to do, to change the experience of Jewish community. Over the next year, he and his wife not only came to events but also recruited other interfaith couples to join programs. Two years later, he’s a BGS-level donor, he’s in a solicitor training program, he’s joined the NEXTGen board, he’s gotten involved in chairing programs all over the community. But my goal for him was to be part of Jewish community.”

– Miryam Rosenzweig, professional, Detroit



People have such strong ideas about what Judaism is supposed to be, and if they’re not doing those ideas, think they are bad Jews. ... I had a conversation with someone about how she’s getting certified to be a yoga instructor. And forty-five minutes into the conversation, she says, ‘My dad is Jewish, but I guess that means I’m not really Jewish because your mom has to be Jewish.’ And she just came to her first Shabbat dinner. It never occurred to her that she could be part of this group, that she could be Jewish. ... In Judaism, people get so bogged down by what they think they should do. I want them to let go of that and to dream big. If you want to make up your own ritual, let’s dream our own ritual. How you want to make this, it’s all you.”

– Jen Green, NuRoots Fellow, Los Angeles



3. LEVERAGE ASSETS

Jewish younger adults today swim in a web of other Jewish opportunities. It is true that many more younger adults can be attracted to participate in programs like Birthright Israel and that hundreds of thousands have participated in them. If Federations worked only more intensively with the more than half-million Birthright Israel alumni, it would be a huge step forward. Federations also can leverage assets by maximizing them as opportunities, by increasing the numbers of participants in programs like Birthright Israel.

More specifically, Federations leverage younger adult assets in several ways:

- Facilitate Federation immersive experience cohorts and make follow-through easier.
- Integrate campus assets into younger adult work.
- Work with partners (recognize other program participants as ripe for more).
- Recognize opportunities.

FACILITATE FEDERATION IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE COHORTS; MAKE FOLLOW-THROUGH EASIER.

In building an array of diverse opportunities for younger adults, immersive experiences serve as a foundation of Jewish exploration for this population, providing some of the richest, most transformative experiences for them. By facilitating these programs directly, Federations can embed these programs in their larger initiatives for younger adults. Almost every community that has built a larger NextGen initiative has incorporated direct responsibility for Birthright Israel into its initiative, and establishing the Birthright experience as a Federation priority has often been the first step in expanding and deepening NextGen work.

In Detroit, the Birthright Israel experience is a powerful Israel experience. It is also a Detroit experience in Israel, something that advances the Federation's goals to build community members, donors, and leaders. It is the "most expensive, exhausting outreach meeting" the professionals have. This frame changes who staffs the trip, making the staff not professionals who know Israel but professionals who know Detroit. The Birthright experience lives not in Federation's Israel and Overseas office but in the NEXTGen department. To support the relationship work that happens before, during, and after the experience, Federation provides for the participation of an additional staff person for a total of three per bus from the community. This outreach meeting begins at recruitment, when Federation leaders can get to know large numbers of people because they are looking for the right participants. The interview is a get-to-know-you meeting and a first or second personal interaction, a way to help them find the right Jewish opportunities for them, which might include something even beyond Birthright. Activities during the experience are geared toward the community, and a community identity is built. When they return, staff help participants become integrated into NEXTGen activities. They go to a first Shabbat dinner (as part of Good Shabbos Detroit) as Birthright alumni (it is a natural immediate reunion when they return), but they continue to participate as community members because it becomes a part of their lives. They go from being a Birthrighter to being a Detroiter. Since Detroit made this change (to integrate the Birthright Israel experience into their NEXTGen initiative), their rate of alumni involvement has gone from 5% to more than 90%. Birthright Israel has become a foundation of their entire initiative.

In Los Angeles, Federation is now sending eight hundred participants on its Birthright Israel/LA Way experiences each year. Federation leverages the initiative by employing a Fellow—a participant, who receives a programming budget and a stipend as well as a financial incentive to participate in another immersive program—or a bus staff person to continue to connect with participants upon their return. The Fellows work through relationships with participants to help them build their own Jewish lives, interacting with institutions and doing it themselves, exactly as they do with other younger adults in the community. They also build opportunities alongside their friends from Birthright (at least ten during a year), and those events become additional Jewish opportunities in which all alumni and their peers/networks, from any buses, can participate. Birthright Israel

becomes a foundational experience on which Federation helps alumni build stronger senses of their Jewishness and more active Jewish engagement. For this reason (because the immersive experience can be such a powerful way to launch or deepen Jewish engagement), Federation creates cohorts for other immersive experiences, including in Onward Israel, Honeymoon Israel, LA-based JDC Entwine trips, and Masa programs.

In Boston, Birthright Israel is maximized when an IACT coordinator works on area campuses, one on every significant campus in Boston, and is devoted to Birthright Israel recruitment and follow-through. As noted elsewhere, the lines are blurry, so IACT coordinators also build Jewish life for the unengaged more broadly, but the coordinator's most significant task is to connect with younger students who come from less engaged backgrounds and who, by going on a Birthright Israel experience, can bring Judaism into their lives and their social networks for the bulk of their college experience. The deliberateness of the IACT initiative ensures that Birthright Israel is used to build Jewish life on campus in the broadest and most textured way.

Because organizational leaders recognize the value of layered time in Israel, a deliberate attempt is made to leverage the Birthright Israel experience into a second and third Israel experience. It is recognized that Onward Israel is a good bridge between Birthright Israel and the truly open-ended Masa experience, and so IACT coordinators recruit in targeted ways, sequentially, for these experiences: Birthright alumni for Onward Israel and Onward Israel alumni for Masa.

Follow-through—building Jewish life as a layer on top of the immersive experience—also happens when Federations build infrastructure in response to trends that leaders see on the immersive experiences.

In Colorado, the “It’s Real Israel” series of conversations about Israel came directly out of alumni interest in continuing to talk about their relationship with Israel. It is now an important pillar of their work with younger adults.

IACT “campaigns” also exemplify this kind of infrastructure, where comprehensive initiatives are developed that comprise an overarching educational message and individual programs and other opportunities for students to explore Judaism and Israel to build on the Birthright Israel experience. The campaign paradigm—a launch event, a set of initiatives, marketing, a social media campaign, all during a set time period—is applied to a variety of themes, and the same campaign is used on many campuses. IACT itself is infrastructure in that it provides the professional resources necessary to make effective, relationship-based follow-through happen. Through IACT, more than 80% of Birthright Israel alumni remain engaged in Jewish life for at least one year following their trip.



If you're not falling in love, nothing's going to happen, and Birthright is the only thing we have to help people fall in love. It's a love poem to the State of Israel. We still have to emphasize everything else, but if you want to change the dynamic of Jewish life, push back on the dynamic that's pushing us in the wrong direction, you need something massive. Birthright is the thing that's massive. And then you need to do something when they get back, in order to push very strongly on Jewish life, to move the young adults when they return. They're open for the first time in their lives to some kind of experience."

– Barry Shrage, executive, Boston

INTEGRATE CAMPUS WORK INTO YOUNGER ADULT WORK.

This work begins on campus: Strong Hillels, and strong Birthright Israel work on campus, facilitate ready student engagement upon graduation. Federations are able to create seamless transitions between their areas of work, finding synergies between campus work and their younger adult work. They apply the same principles to both areas, using the same approach and set of smart practices with each population. Boston, for example, places relationship-based engagement at the heart of its IACT initiative and its Young Adult Initiative and uses the same strategies related to the building of organizational capacity and excellence in order to build area Hillels. In Los Angeles, campus work is part of young adult work, the campus coordinator working closely with the Birthright Israel coordinator and the manager of NEI. Hillel and other campus professionals participate actively in NEI; the campus coordinator can build on NEI and shape the NEI experience for campus participants because she is the NEI coordinator's colleague. The multi-faceted grants paradigm—awarding smaller grants to stimulate and support texture in the landscape and larger grants to support organizational capacity—works similarly for the campus and younger adult populations. Ultimately, the same efforts at landscape excellence are made with college students as are made with younger adults, Federation leveraging campus investments to support Millennial engagement.



WORK WITH PARTNERS (RECOGNIZE OTHER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AS RIPE FOR MORE).

Sometimes, current program participants also are laying a foundation in their programs that could benefit from greater Jewish engagement. PJ Library registrants are the clearest example. The thousands of young families enrolled in the PJ Library program are in a stage of transition, raising babies and then beginning preschool or elementary school. By nature, they are open to new community and to building family memories. Federations leverage PJ Library as an asset by creating Shabbat dinners with PJ Library families or hiring Fellows—young parents themselves, “connectors”—who weave together those who might enjoy playdates together. Other work with partners includes joint programming when an organization brings an audience: with single Jewish parent or LGBTQ organizations, for example. In Los Angeles, Federation works with campus organizations as it works with younger adult organizations more generally, making strategic grants to foster Jewish opportunities and creating connections between organizations. Federation invests in any organization that can offer strong Jewish experiences to college students, regardless of historical relationships. In this way, Federation leverages the expertise and assets of campus organizations and partners, ensuring a robust experience on campus by reaching out to many possible partners.



[About JBaby] Not only do they learn, but you have an entire cohort of people who went through a tremendous stage of life in a Jewish communal way. And we end up with feeders into our early childhood programs. We’re connecting the dots of Jewish life.”

– Miryam Rosenzweig, professional, Detroit

RECOGNIZE OPPORTUNITIES.

Leveraging assets involves more than connecting to initiatives; it also suggests that Federations should build Jewish life around interest areas and younger adults’ needs. New parents want to meet other new parents; newly married couples want to meet others in the same place. Detroit particularly finds “natural groups” that can be “maximized.” JBaby, for example, is modeled after hospital birthing classes. Offered four times during a year, it provides an experience similar to a hospital seminar but within a Jewish framework, such as Jewish naming traditions and naming rituals, and offers elements that help participants get to know each other so that their relationships will extend beyond their class.



BUILDING A CHANGE AMONG FEDERATIONS

The work described here is at once a natural extension of our existing investments in younger adults and also a true change. Yet the change is sometimes subtle and not easily apparent. In some cases, a program—a Federation’s Torah study at a bar, for example—might not itself change. However, the program is contextualized by crucial shifts: In the frame of “Build Jews” or “Live, Give, Lead,” the way we evaluate that program—based on those newly connected to Jewish life and not on the campaign—might change, as would the way we follow up from that program or the way we train professionals to work at that program. More generally, this work asks that the staffing complement for work with younger adults changes. Ideally, all work related to younger adults, from campaign to planning to allocations, would be integrated. As a result, this is change that asks Federation to take on an unfamiliar structure. It is a significant shift.



The change needed to be made. These younger people needed to be encouraged to become part of the Jewish community. Forget the money. If they’re not around, they’ll be nobody to run the institutions, nobody to take care of me. It is the future of our community.”

– Doug Bloom, volunteer leader, Detroit

CHANGE THAT STARTS AT THE TOP

The idea that Federations should build Jews and then donors is contrary to the message that many Federation professionals received as their Federation careers evolved: Their job is to raise funds, not to engage Jews broadly. Campaign leaders are accustomed to evaluating success based on dollars raised and donors included. This work asks us to take a long view that is challenging to adopt in the face of immediate needs. As a result, many Federation leaders raise doubts about this work, particularly as these projects are launching. It is often the CEO’s job to advocate for these initiatives, to champion this project and its potential continuously, in the face of concern and even fear. This change demands support from the top, from the most senior professional and volunteer leadership.



Scott [Kaufman, the Federation CEO] being able to promote within the lay community the importance of NEXTGen and having donors step up and support the initiatives was huge. It can happen only if the leadership thinks this is important. If they don't believe in it, they're not going to talk to the donors to fund it."

– Josh Levine, volunteer leader, Detroit

LEADING RADICAL CHANGE

Some of the lessons about combating the fear that exists are common in change literature. For example, Federations engaged in this change should engage past Young Leadership leaders in the work early and often; they should create time for volunteer and professional leaders to grieve and adapt. Several executives note the importance of continual honesty about results: Just as there cannot be a bait and switch for participants, there cannot be for donors, either. Although the conversations may be uncomfortable, donors need to understand that these initiatives will not raise dollars (immediately), but they will prompt more Shabbat participation. Some executives note that this isn't, in fact, terrifically hard to sell. It's inherently exciting, it involves donors' children and grandchildren, and it brings energy and success quickly in its stories and numbers of participants.

The path for change has been paved in several additional ways. In some communities, to give the initiatives credibility and protection as they developed, senior community leaders served as volunteer leaders of the initiatives. They became the projects' lay champions, volunteer leaders who can, like the CEOs, represent the projects in the face of fear and concern, privately and at Board meetings. In Vancouver, the project is a separate allocation and not a part of Federation's overhead so that it can compete with other projects that Federation supports. As a result, the project has valuable independence, and it goes through a vetting process, asking Federation's leaders to believe in it in the context of other community priorities.

In addition, the initiative leaders—staff, probably—need to do their own communication at all levels of the organization. This entity will be foreign to many working at Federation, and in some communities, sibling rivalry has developed as a new, exciting initiative has launched. All staff need to be helped to understand what the new entity is and how they might interact with it; they need to be helped to feel a part of its success. In Detroit, NEXTGen sat physically in the middle of the Campaign Department at first, even while in other ways the Campaign connection was being submerged by the project's larger work. By sitting in Campaign, the two departments contributed to each other, the energy of one rubbing off on the other. The NEXTGen professional leader had a dual report, to Campaign and to the CEO, ensuring open communication and inclusion. In Los Angeles, the NuRoots Fellows connect regularly with other staff in the Federation, building relationships as they do with their engagees. They are working to build a larger mindset and foundation of success for this work.

A RISK MINDSET

Fundamentally, even with support from Federation leaders, past Young Leadership leaders, and Federation colleagues, making this change asks for comfort with risk. It asks for experimentation. Every community engaged in this work has taken chances, with individual programs and with the overall approach to the work. In every case, there has been failure, and in every case, failure did not close the initiative. Rather, those involved asked about lessons learned from the work, integrated those lessons into their work, and moved on to their next challenge. The reflective aspect of their work and their capacity to make change each are also important. Community leaders must recognize that this is all research and development work, all experimental, that ongoing feedback and reflection can point to needed change and that change can be made productively. A community engaged in this work, in designing through informed testing the right model for the community, needs to be comfortable with risk, missteps, change, reflective practice, acknowledgment of imperfections, and wholesale non-success.



This is a laboratory. That's foreign to Federations."

– Jay Sanderson, executive, Los Angeles

THE WORK AHEAD (CHALLENGES)

This work is not finished. The initiatives in these Federations are a few years old at most, and they have been evolving continuously. Although there are enough facts on the ground to see these initiatives as important for our field, we also have more to do together in building their potential.

Specifically, we can work together to think through:

- How do we work with organizations whose population has aged in place, that once worked with twenty-somethings but that now serve forty-somethings? Do we help them include a younger population, or do we seed new organizations?
- More generally, how do we help start-up organizations continuously be refreshed?
- If we seek strong engagement in our initiatives, how do we ensure that the initiatives also offer a high-quality Jewish educational experience? How do we help those engaged take the next steps toward additional Jewish engagement (and learning?), creating a ladder of steps through Jewish life?



- What are the new spaces we need in our community to offer a robust set of Jewish experiences? If engagees aren't comfortable in traditional institutions, do we build different spaces or make greater use of existing facilities outside the Jewish communal infrastructure?

We also note as a collective challenge and responsibility the need to expand the conversation about younger adults, to make the numbers and quality of experience of those engaging in Jewish life our goal, to make sewing the pieces of community together our collective goal, and to make the allocation of resources for this work something for which we all take responsibility. As we are building diverse and inclusive landscapes locally, we need to do so across North America as well. Changing the game for Jewish life needs our collective time and our creativity.

EXAMPLES OF RISK AND “FAILURE”

AN EVENT: In Detroit, a moment at an Epic event (with hundreds of people) imploded when a livestream of a greeting from Partnership2Gether friends at the Kotel simply looked terrible and fell completely flat. The leaders of the event set the tone with laughter, picked up the pieces, and moved on, learning more about program design for next time.

AN INITIATIVE: In Los Angeles, Federation wants an easy-to-use virtual system to share events in the community with engagees (likely an app). Federation worked for months with a company and ultimately realized that it wasn't the right vendor for their needs, and they left the process to look for another vendor. It took time to work through this, and they could have seen the time as wasted and stuck with the project for that reason. But they would rather be good than right, and they left the process with greater awareness of their needs.



A CHARGE FOR THE SYSTEM

BUILDING LOCAL FEDERATION INITIATIVES

This work is too complex to have a checklist. At the same time, any Federation eager to use the ideas shared in this report can do so by exploring these questions.

- **What are our goals for younger adult engagement?** Are we the kind of community that builds a few tight social networks? Are we a loosely knit community that needs to build many micro-communities? Do we want to emphasize connection to institutions or building of grassroots Jewish life?
- **What is our pyramid of engagement?** How can we learn from Colorado's "Live, Give, Lead" model or Boston's move from participation to entrepreneurial leadership? What structures are in place to help participants move through the pyramid?
- **How can we build diversity in our landscape?** Should we adopt a cluster approach? Can we cultivate entrepreneurs in our community? Should we pursue a relationship with PresenTense or a similar project?
- **How can our initiative have a sense of place?** How can we help younger adults build roots in our community? How should we be tying the narrative of our city or area to our initiative?
- **How can we use grants to stimulate and support a diverse landscape of opportunities for younger adults?** How can we integrate our grants program and our existing allocations with the rest of our work?
- **What kind of infrastructure can we build to dedicate time to build relationships with younger adults?** Do we have a significant "fringe" of truly unengaged younger adults, with no connections to Jewish social networks? If so, do we need community organizers? Can we connect easily to many Jews in our community? Is our challenge more of helping them to become engaged in Jewish life? If so, do we need a corps of educators and coaches to help them find their place in Jewish life?
- **How should we integrate Birthright Israel, PJ Library, and other immersive experiences and assets into our initiative?**
- **How do we build a campaign strategy appropriate for the rest of our work?** How can it be integrated into our work without becoming all of our work?
- **Are we allocating enough resources for this work? How can we shift priorities or identify new funding sources to support expanded efforts?**
- **How can we work together at every level of the organization, lay and professional, to support our new paradigm?**

A best-in-class Federation initiative for younger adults provides rich responses to these questions and more, providing a significant platform and environment to build Jews.



Everyone's convinced that this is someone else's problem. Our numbers are dropping; we don't have enough young people. I do think it's existential. We've done a good job of raising money from fewer and fewer people. I don't walk around and see people in crisis mode the way I would like them to be. The sky is falling, and I'm going to keep jumping up and down if Federations don't change."

– Robb Lippitt, volunteer leader, Detroit

CHANGING THE GAME: A NORTH AMERICAN COLLABORATION

As much as there is work to be done locally, a North American collaboration can elevate the entire landscape, building what are currently disparate efforts and too-quiet ideas into a true field. Launching from JFNA, this collaboration can:

- **Support Federations** just beginning this work of shifting their Young Leadership paradigms. Give them resources in professional and volunteer leaders who can help them design and work toward their visions and with their transitions, moving from what was to what will be. Manage a learning circle of Federation leaders working at this level to help them support and learn from each other.
- **Develop a working group** of more advanced Federations to sharpen their programs together; work together on open challenges; and (continue to) put forth a vision for the field.
- Facilitate an **ongoing conversation of organizational partners**, contributors to this space. Explore how we can work together to create wholesale change in this generation's engagement with Jewish life and in how typical Jewish institutions interact with younger adults. Work on issues we can only work on together (such as sharing lists and facilitating hand-offs). Determine whether a collective impact approach is possible and desired; then work toward that approach, particularly goals, outcomes, and measurement strategies, if so.

- Commission and curate **additional research**, building our collective understanding of the nuances of this population's Jewishness and the complexity involved in their engagement in Jewish life. Document the detailed stories of the communities that are leading in this space and the voices of younger adults themselves, including portraits of their Jewish growth and demonstrations of impact. Collect **expansive reflections on methodologies beyond Federation**; invite leading practitioners in this area to share their understanding of what they do, building a new and comprehensive sense of what Jewish engagement and education are for this generation. **Share research** as widely as possible through in-person and web-based conversation and writing. In total, start to build a field through research.
- Include evaluation research in the commissioned research. Use **evaluation research** to build logic models for programs that can then be teaching tools for additional communities. Learn from evaluation research about the influence of initiatives and how to shift initiatives to strengthen their role and reach.
- Through conversation, research, and identification of additional financial support, **seed data-driven experiments** within the working group, expanding the group as necessary. Study the experiments and use the findings to lead change within the field.



APPENDIX

FOCUS ON IACT

IACT is included in this research because of its importance in the young adult landscape and its uniqueness in the Federation system. It is, though, different from the initiatives featured here and worth separate, focused attention.

IACT leverages the Birthright Israel experience to engage as many college students as possible in Jewish life. Through one-on-one relationships, the IACT coordinator meets students, recruits for Birthright Israel, and then supports follow-through engagement after the experience. Through IACT, at least 80% of Birthright Israel alumni on a campus remain engaged in Jewish life for at least a year following their experience. On some campuses, 100% of alumni remained engaged in Jewish life.

But Birthright Israel serves only as the coordinator's starting point. Because so many students are interested in Birthright Israel, the experience serves as a calling card of sorts and helps the coordinator through a variety of doors. Even when students do not ultimately go on the trip, their curiosity about the trip lets them say yes to an initial meeting with the coordinator. Moreover, the coordinator connects with larger social networks, meeting one student and then her friends. Because she focuses only on building relationships, and because she is without other responsibilities or ties to more engaged students, the IACT coordinator often finds herself in the midst of social networks that Hillels have trouble tapping.

Once she has built student relationships, the IACT coordinator is responsible for helping as many students go on Birthright Israel as possible and for building Jewish life with students prior to, after, and outside their Birthright experience. Her connections with students who go and who don't go on Birthright Israel allow her to connect many students and not only Birthright alumni to the Jewish opportunities that are created. Her work is about Birthright and also about much more.



Each year, 40,000 young adults are coming back to U.S. colleges from Israel, and CJP's Campus Initiative [IACT] is the key to keeping them engaged in Jewish life. Jewish history depends on each generation to carry our story forward."

– Barry Shrage, executive, Boston

Because IACT is on many campuses in Boston and, now, throughout North America, CJP is able to develop off-the-shelf initiatives that coordinators can implement on their campuses, as follow-through opportunities but, again, open to anyone. "Campaigns," for example, offer a targeted message with related programming, mobilizing students toward specific ends. A "Go Back to Israel" campaign encourages the all-important second trip, an "Israel Innovation" campaign seeks to educate everyone on campus about innovation in Israel, a "Break the Hate" campaign combats BDS and anti-Zionism, and a "Kindle Your Judaism" campaign focuses on helping students—again, alumni and not—read more Jewishly.

IACT is highly strategic. The IACT coordinator focuses on students earlier in their college careers because follow-through can be maximized with younger students. The longer they are on campus, the longer the IACT coordinator has access to them to help them grow Jewishly. When they finally graduate, they have had a series of intensive Jewish experiences that make them more likely to engage Jewishly after college. Birthright Israel can be leveraged as it is intended—as a first immersive experience of many, a serious step on a deepening Jewish journey.



IACT is about building a Jewish future. Our program is a strategic vision that uses students' passion from Birthright and transforms that positive feeling into action consistent with Jewish values and participation in community on campus. Young adults feel a connection and sense of excitement about their newly found affinity with the Jewish people and Jewish identity."

– Cheryl Aronson, professional, Boston

Similarly, the IACT coordinator focuses intentionally on less engaged students. Birthright Israel was originally intended for the less engaged. It is a product that can successfully engage those less interested, and research shows it is more effective with those who are less involved. The less involved grow Jewishly through Birthright Israel more than the more involved do. Moreover, the less engaged are less likely to go on Birthright Israel on their own initiative than are the more engaged, and Jewish organizations on campus—Hillel and others—will be less likely to find them. The IACT

coordinator intentionally uses her resources, her time and creativity, to engage those least likely to want to be engaged.

IACT also leverages the thousands of students reached through IACT to build an Israel-positive atmosphere on campus. That atmosphere includes the opportunity to explore and talk about feelings about Israel, learn more about Israel from various perspectives, and express love for Israel. The campaigns described help the energy about Israel from Birthright Israel participants to spread throughout campus, making the campus a safe place for alumni and all students to keep talking about, learning about, and supporting Israel.



During my first two years as the IACT coordinator ... we helped transform Israel activism on campus. Where once there had been no students willing to hold a pro-Israel event, or recruit for an Israel trip, we now have a strong Israel presence on campus.”

– Rachel Frank, IACT coordinator

The pre- and post-trip opportunities that the IACT coordinator develops follow established understood effective practices in Jewish engagement and education. IACT offers an Israel Ambassadorship in which hundreds of students (across all IACT campuses) create an Israel-positive atmosphere and are mobilized to act when challenges arise. These students are ripe for fellowships offered by partner Israel engagement organizations. IACT offers pre- and post-trip education that focuses on general Jewish learning and on Hebrew language development, adapting other Boston initiatives to the campus environment. IACT stresses certain follow-through opportunities, trying to help alumni go on a second and third Israel experience. The largest contingent in Onward Israel from any community comes from Boston because IACT coordinators can focus on finding the right students for the experience. CJP has developed a website, Get Back to Israel, that provides information for students’ next Israel experience.

IACT has a great deal in common with the initiatives discussed here. Its strategy exactly leverages relationships and Birthright Israel in order to engage younger adults and build a movement of Jewishly committed Millennials. At the same time, its campus focus, its focus on Birthright Israel, and its use of Birthright Israel to energize campus Jewish life are unique and have important implications for the way that Federations support Jewish campus life.



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