



INITIAL OUTCOMES ACROSS COMMUNITIES:

First Fruits from the
Jewish Teen Education
and Engagement
Funder Collaborative

Executive Summary

JUNE 2017



JEWISH TEEN
Education & Engagement
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

Rosov
CONSULTING

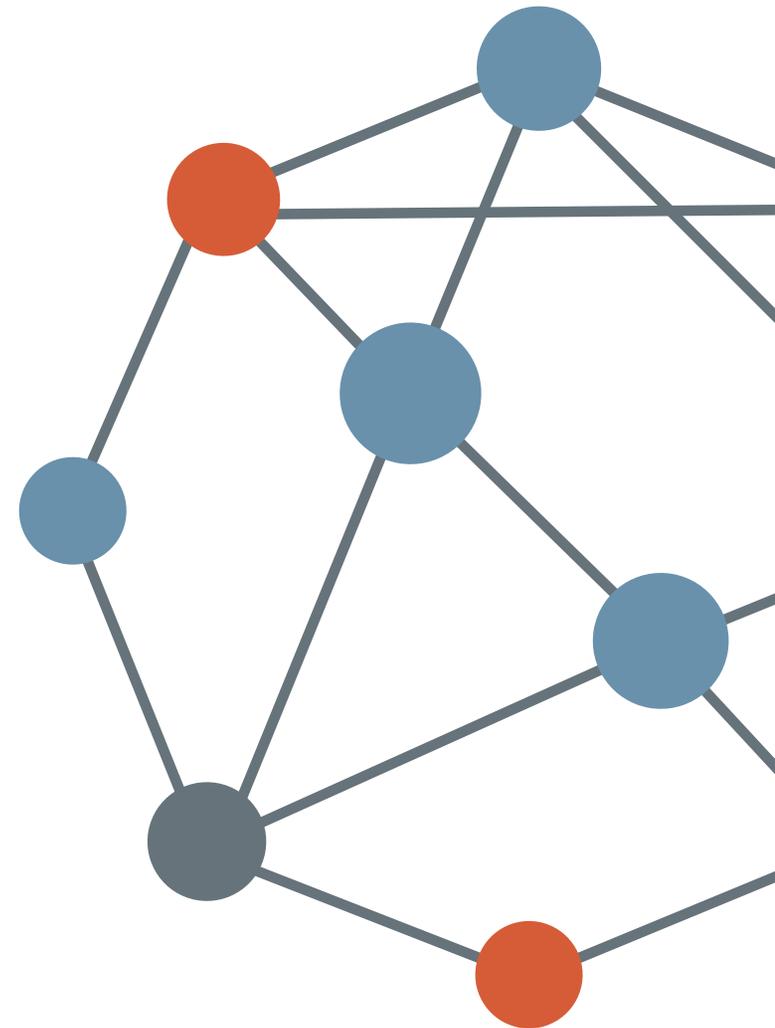
Information
Insight
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ABOUT THE CROSS-COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

The formation of the Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative began in 2013, when more than a dozen local and national funders of Jewish teen programming were brought together by the Jim Joseph Foundation for an ongoing series of discussions about expanding teen involvement in Jewish life. Over the next two years, this group developed into a more formal Funder Collaborative, with the expressed aim of making grants to support comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable new community-based initiatives in ten communities across the United States: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, and San Francisco.

In order to understand the process and outcomes of teen programs, both in individual communities and across multiple regions, two concurrent evaluation efforts were undertaken alongside the community initiatives. In each community, local evaluators were contracted to study regional initiatives; and, on a national level, a Cross-Community Evaluation (CCE) was initiated in 2015.

The CCE is designed to answer a set of primary evaluation questions centered on the learning and growth of Jewish teens in different communities, as well as to facilitate and encourage continual communication and sharing of lessons across communities. At its heart is an exploration into how, and to what extent, local initiatives are successfully engaging teens in Jewish learning and growth.



SHARED MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Early in its work, the Funder Collaborative developed a set of Shared Measures of Success, a common practice used to help steward the formation of effective collaborations:

1

NUMBERS OF ENGAGED TEENS

Dramatically increase the number of teens in targeted geographic areas engaged in Jewish learning during their high school years.



2

DIVERSITY OF ENGAGED TEENS

Involve Jewish teens who come from diverse Jewish backgrounds.



3

TEEN LEARNING AND GROWTH AS JEWS

Provide Jewish teens with experiences that will contribute to their Jewish learning and growth during their high school years.



4

FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE MODELS

Build models for Jewish teen education and engagement that are sustainable.



5

TEEN EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT A PRIORITY FOR LEADERS AND PARENTS

Establish Jewish teen education and engagement as a priority for local Jewish community leaders and parents.



A **sixth measure of success**, focusing on strengthening teen education as a valued and durable profession, as well as increasing the knowledge and competency of teen educators in key areas, is also currently being developed and is under consideration by the Funder Collaborative.

The CCE team was also tasked with developing shared outcomes for teens and youth professionals as well as common measurement systems for both (and an additional measurement tool to assess parents' perspectives, knowledge, and behaviors regarding teen involvement).

Overall, the CCE was tasked to work in concert with local evaluators to generate and analyze data that will speak to three core evaluation questions:

- 1 How and to what extent are the community-based Jewish teen education and engagement initiatives collectively achieving the goals outlined in the Shared Measures of Success?**
- 2 What best practices and learnings emerging from the work of these initiatives (both anticipated and unanticipated) can be applied across the communities and to other Jewish education and engagement settings?**
- 3 How does variability across communities influence the design, implementation, and outcomes of the local community-based Jewish teen education and engagement initiatives?**



“Not surprisingly, establishing and using effective shared measurement systems is easier said than done... it takes time and energy to gather and submit data [and] even the most committed and talented groups run up against a host of challenges...”

– Mark Cabaj, Tamarack Institute

This is the first report of the CCE, representing what we might call “preliminary” and baseline data from four communities that began collecting data in 2016. (For more details about the history of the Funder Collaborative and the participating communities, please visit teenfundercollaborative.com). As Mark Cabaj, independent consultant and Associate of the Tamarack Institute writes, “not surprisingly, establishing and using effective shared measurement systems is easier said than done... it takes time and energy to gather and submit data [and] even the most committed and talented groups run up against a host of challenges...” (Cabaj, 2012).

We want to express our gratitude to the teams of local evaluators working in each community for their willingness to engage in this collective measurement effort. With increasing amounts of data collected and more communities launching local initiatives, subsequent reports of the CCE will be much more robust, aggregating ever-increasing amounts of data gathered each year through 2020. As well, these reports will likely focus on specific emerging themes and areas of interest.

DATA COLLECTED

Teen, parent, and youth professional survey instruments were developed by the CCE team with input and consultation from local evaluators and the Funder Collaborative’s Evaluation Advisory Group. Of note, the teen survey went through a battery of statistical validation tests with over 5,000 teens.

Data were collected by local evaluators in four communities in 2016: **New York**, **Los Angeles**, **Chicago**, and **Denver/Boulder**. Each evaluator employed a combination of quantitative (i.e. surveys) and qualitative (i.e. interviews and focus groups) data collection among three categories of stakeholders: teens, parents, and youth professionals. All four communities surveyed teens (N = 787) and either interviewed teens individually or conducted focus groups (N = 66). Three communities surveyed youth professionals (N = 169), and two communities conducted interviews with these professionals (N = 10). Finally, two communities surveyed teens’ parents (N = 150), and three communities interviewed parents (N = 29).

The CCE also incorporates into its findings a variety of additional data collected by local evaluators, including conversations with program providers and initiative staff, and budget allocations in each community, among other things. Taken together, these data allow the CCE to assemble the broadest possible portrait of Jewish teen engagement in the participating communities.

TEENS



YOUTH PROFESSIONALS



PARENTS



Quantitative Data (Surveys)



Qualitative Data (Interviews & Focus Groups)

KEY FINDINGS: TEENS

➤ 14,600 Teens Reached to Date:

An estimated 1,800 teens participated in a variety of programs directly funded by the four initiatives in 2016, and a further 12,800 were reached indirectly through either youth professionals or participation in other locally funded programs. This means that about 14% of Jewish teens in these communities were reached by initiatives in some capacity — though only about 2% actually took part in initiative programs.

➤ Programs are Helping Teens Grow as Jews:

Two-thirds of surveyed teens felt that their program influenced their involvement and connection with Jewish life. Teens report that initiative programs expanded their Jewish horizons and made them more reflective about their own Jewish practices.

➤ Initiatives Take Time to Start Up:

Although ambitious in scope, a variety of factors can inhibit progress during the first years of initiatives, communities generally got off to a slow start. Chief among factors slowing down progress were extended searches for initiative directors and challenges in recruiting participants to programs that are new to the teen landscape.

➤ Backgrounds Make a Difference:

Teens with more traditionally engaged Jewish backgrounds are more likely to be Jewishly engaged currently and take advantage of initiative programs. Teens in this category were more likely to have Jewish friends, participate in Jewish activities regularly, and say that being Jewish was important to them.

➤ Diversity Remains Limited:

One of the Funder Collaborative's key measures of success involves reaching and engaging Jewish teens from a variety of Jewish backgrounds — not just those closely involved with Jewish life already. On this score, work remains to be done: The majority (76%) of teens in initiative programs come from traditionally more engaged backgrounds. It should be noted, in this regard, that a number of providers have plans to target less involved teens once newer programs have been established in their communities.

“We had deep discussions about how people see each other, how people have different perspectives – there’s not just one way to think about things and everyone has their own way. This made me stop and think about different points of views. There was probably something Jewish in there.”

– Los Angeles Teen

KEY FINDINGS: YOUTH PROFESSIONALS

▶ A Wide Range of Age and Experience:

Youth professionals surveyed span the spectrum of age and experience levels. More than half had post-graduate education. A majority of professionals in the field five or fewer years earn less than \$50K a year.

▶ More Training is Needed, Especially for New Professionals:

Youth professionals in general desire more training, and this is especially true among those working in the field five or fewer years. These less experienced professionals generally do not feel well prepared to develop new Jewish activities, address adolescent development-related issues, facilitate teens in exploring their own Jewish journeys, infuse Jewish content into their work, promote teens' wellness, or communicate with parents of teens about sensitive issues. These are areas in which professional development appears to be both needed and desired.

▶ Veteran Professionals Want More Training:

In contrast to their newer colleagues, experienced youth professionals (in the field more than five years) feel well prepared to cultivate youth leadership and infuse Jewish content into programming. Nevertheless, they still expressed a need for training in several areas: use of technology and media, teen wellness, adolescent development, and reaching more diverse groups of teens.

▶ YP Feel Valued in their Community:

A majority of youth professionals agreed that they were satisfied with the compensation and public recognition of their field. They also agreed that professional development contributed to their satisfaction with their work, especially when it came to a sense of having a professional network and feeling confident in doing their job.

▶ So Much to Do, So Little Time:

Youth professionals want to take advantage of opportunities for networking and development, and almost 3/4 have participated in professional development over the past 12 months. But time constraints and limitations in capacity remain an issue for this group: this is especially true for the 1/3 of professionals who do not work full time in this capacity.

"I enjoy the challenge of making Judaism fun, relevant, and meaningful for teenagers who are figuring themselves out."

– Youth Professional

"[I wanted] a feeling of meaning in my work and making an impact."

– Youth Professional

KEY FINDINGS: PARENTS

► Are Parents Being Reached?:

One of the Funder Collaborative's measures of success is to ensure that teen education is a priority for parents in the community — and that, consequently, parents remain engaged in initiative efforts. To date, Communities have adopted a handful of efforts to engage and inform parents, most commonly the creation of a web platform to provide information about community programs. Across communities, however, parent engagement represents a very small share of initiative efforts.

► Parents are Satisfied With their Teens' Experiences, But Want More Options:

Slightly more than half of parents are highly satisfied with their teens' experiences in Jewish programs. At the same time, only a quarter of parents are highly satisfied with the Jewish options available to teens in their community overall, suggesting a continued desire for more quality Jewish programs. In that sense, parents are already aligned with the initiatives' goal to provide more opportunities for Jewish teens — but they are not yet totally satisfied with the options available.

“[The] main goal for me was to bring my teens closer to other Jewish teens and understand that they are the chosen people and they have an obligation to their people and their grandparents who went through the Holocaust but managed to preserve their Judaism.”

– Parent

“[I want my kids to get] the strong sense of Jewish identity and the strong sense of community. I'm going to hope that they develop ... a desire to lead adult Jewish lives.”

– Parent

BROADER THEMES FOR EXPLORATION

Going forward, as more communities collect data, the CCE intends to expand its focus to several broad themes and commonalities between communities. These themes collectively encompass many of the Measures of Success, especially around questions of teen learning and growth, and financially sustainable program models. Themes to be explored more deeply include:

Complex and Multifaceted Initiatives

Every community initiative has a different and unique combination of moving parts. Which initiative structures are gaining the most traction, and which have been the most challenging to execute?

Growing Existing Programs and Launching New Ones

Communities need to balance support for existing teen programs with incubation funding for new ones. What structures are helpful in supporting programs at different stages?

Branding and Visibility

What are the effects of promotional work in communities?

Recruitment

What recruitment efforts can prove (or are proving) effective at engaging a broader profile of teens, not just those with strong Jewish backgrounds and previous involvement?

Relationship Between Program Providers and Funders

What do agreements look like in different communities? What is required of each party, and what are the implications for data gathering?

Networking Within Communities

How are communities working to connect program providers, youth professionals, and teens to each other?

Micro-Granting

Several communities have instituted programs of micro-grants to seed grassroots, teen-driven leadership. What forms have these programs taken in these various communities?

Professional Development

What are the challenges faced by communities in instituting these programs? How can PD offerings be more variegated and segmented to better serve the needs of youth professionals?

Giving Teens a Voice in Initiatives

Making teens partners in planning and leading is a common goal of initiative programs. How are teen voices being incorporated so far?

Where Are Initiatives “Housed?”

Depending on the community in question, initiatives may be housed within a federation, a JCC, or another institution entirely. Does this make a difference in the “ownership” of initiatives?

Scholarships and Price Points

What do programs cost to run in different communities? How much is borne by families, and how much is subsidized (either through front-end subsidies to programs or scholarships for families)?

What is the impact on program enrollment, particularly for more immersive programs?

Breadth vs. Depth in Programs

Is there a difference in impact of teen programs that aim for different levels of “depth” in their programming, either through program length or intensity of curriculum? Are there differences in the teen and parent populations who are drawn to in-depth programs?

LOOKING AHEAD

Over the next few years, the CCE team will continue to work closely with local evaluators, the Evaluation Advisory Group of the Funder Collaborative, and the Funder Collaborative as a whole to support the shared measurement of initiative outcomes. We will continue to support the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; and, importantly, help to ensure that the requisite time and expert facilitation required to make sense of and use the data is foremost in our efforts.

Cabaj reminds us that many collaborative efforts “stall, stagnate and even implode in part because their participants can’t agree on which community level activities are important to target and track; ...fail to devise a way to measure and report them; and.... unwilling or unable to use the feedback to inform their thinking and planning.” It is the goal and role of the CCE, in concert with the Funder Collaborative and local evaluators, to ensure that this effort puts its best foot forward in overcoming these challenges. It’s certain that this effort will be a first in the Jewish education and engagement sector, broadly conceived.



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