



SIGNS ALONG THE WAY:

A Funder Collaborative Assesses its Influence

JUNE 2020



JEWISH TEEN
Education & Engagement
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

Rosov | Information
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Impact

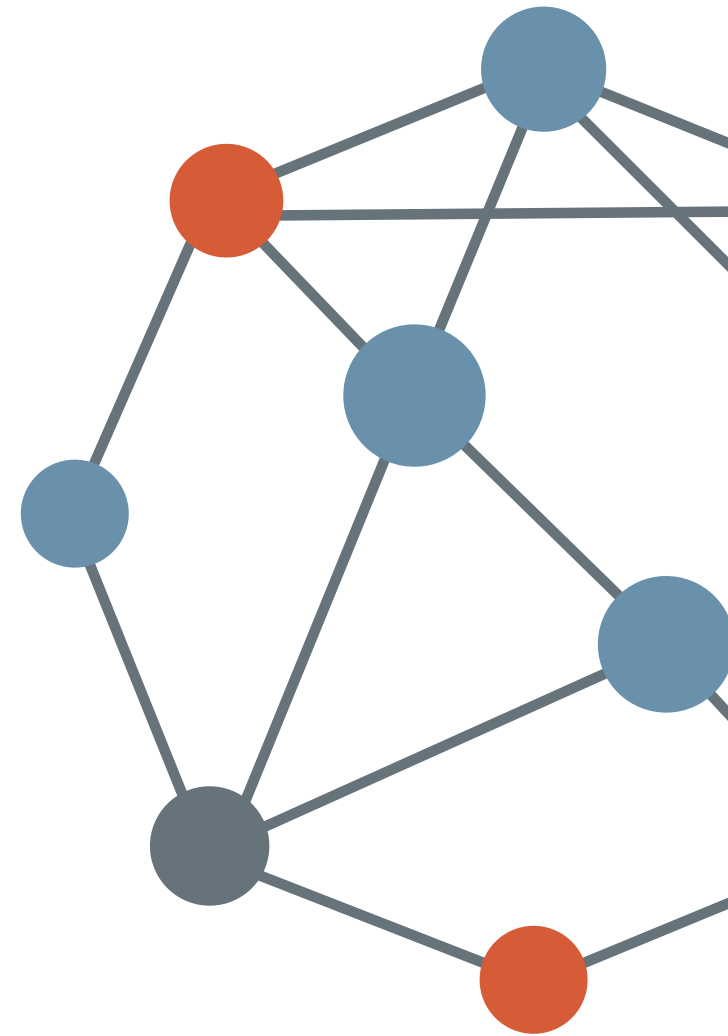
INTRODUCTION

When the Funder Collaborative committed to documenting its processes and products over the course of its multi-year investment, it was taking a stand on behalf of building the field of teen engagement through shared learning. It was also taking a risk. *Would the field be built upon shared successes along with shared failures? Would it honor the hard work of all its grantee partners? Would transparency prompt commitment to this work beyond the 10 communities or would it prove too daunting to undertake?* This risk-taking ethos and a commitment to sharing its learning has remained a constant, and this case study is a tangible result.

Since 2015, there have been two case studies documenting this work ([Informing Change, 2015](#); [Rosov Consulting, 2017](#)). The trajectory of these cases loosely follows the phases of a Funder Collaborative—Discovery, Action, Impact—as described in *Harnessing Collaborative Technologies: Helping Funders Work Together Better*, issued by the Monitor Institute and the Foundation Center in 2013 (see top of page 6 for a graphic depiction).

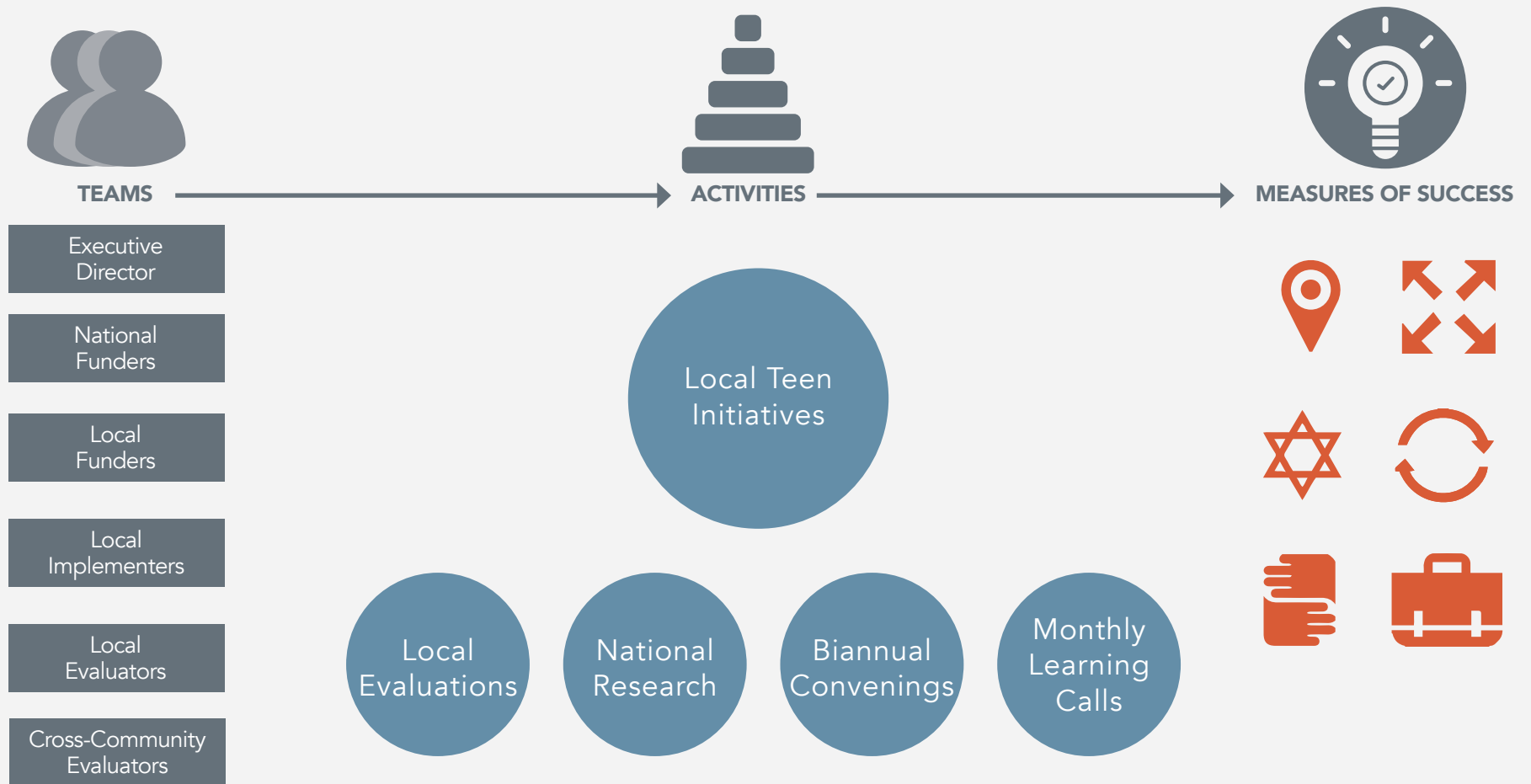
This case study is being prepared for publication as much of the world is still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. The story we tell here captures a time before each of the communities pivoted to ensure that their work on behalf of teens can continue to be meaningful even as the usual tools for connection are having to be reimagined. The Funder Collaborative communities are finding that their relationship-building work on the ground to date has been critical.

The first case study focused on the formation of the Funder Collaborative and the discovery and learning process that formed the basis for its future work. The second case study documented the collective work of the Funder Collaborative to solidify its governance, develop shared metrics, design local initiatives, and carry out its work. This final case study covers a three-year period roughly from November 2016 through the end of 2019 and attempts to answer the questions posed by the final phase in the trajectory of a funder collaborative: *How might the Funder Collaborative begin to assess its impact in the field of teen engagement and how, if at all, are ideas spreading between and beyond the work of the funders?*



GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

Starting in 2013, when the Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative came into existence, the Jim Joseph Foundation along with 10 Local Funders and 4 National Funders came together to make a noticeable difference to the outcomes achieved by Jewish teen education and engagement. Coinvesting with the Jim Joseph Foundation, each of the 10 communities crafted local initiatives, while the full group identified measures of success and hired an evaluation firm to assess the extent to which those measures were being achieved. To start the reader off, we offer an overview of the various stakeholders who have a critical role to play (The Teams), and a mini-glossary to acquaint the reader with the Funder Collaborative’s landmark studies and language (The Terms).



THE TEAMS

Local Funders

In each of 10 communities, there is a local funding organization who has partnered with the Jim Joseph Foundation to cofund a multiyear community-based teen initiative. The representing staff member of the funding entity is the Local Funder.

The 10 Local Funders are:

Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston

Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund (San Francisco Bay Area)

Jewish Federation of San Diego County

Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago

Rose Community Foundation

The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore

The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta

The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati

UJA-Federation of New York

National Funders

The Jim Joseph Foundation brought together five other national funders who joined the Collaborative and coinvested in several research studies on Jewish teens as well as on several allied efforts to support national organizations in the field of Jewish teen engagement.

The five National Funders are:

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation

Jim Joseph Foundation

Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah

The Marcus Foundation

The Crown Family

Executive Director

Drawing on pooled funds from each of the Collaborative members, the Executive Director sets annual goals for the group, designs and facilitates all gatherings, supports individual communities as necessary, and represents the work of the Funder Collaborative to the broader field.

Local Implementers

In the parlance of the Funder Collaborative, the implementers are the directors of each local community's initiative— often a new role created specifically for the initiative; in many cases, this person supervises a team of staff members who liaise with multiple stakeholders in the community.

Cross-Community Evaluators (CCE)

Since 2015, Rosov Consulting has been an evaluation thought partner to the Funder Collaborative and has been annually aggregating, analyzing, and reporting on evaluation data from the 10 communities.

Local Evaluators

Each of the 10 community-based teen initiatives have been working with a local evaluator to design and implement an evaluation of its activities. Five of the communities are working with Informing Change, and five of the communities are working with Rosov Consulting in this capacity.

THE TERMS

Effective Strategies for Educating and Engaging Jewish Teens

This [2013 research report](#) commissioned by the Jim Joseph Foundation and conducted by Informing Change and Rosov Consulting launched the efforts of what became the Funder Collaborative.

Generation Now

This [2016 study](#) of Jewish teens commissioned by the national funders and conducted by The Jewish Education Project serves as the transformational underpinnings of the Funder Collaborative's mission for Jewish teens.

Outcomes That Positively Impact the Lives of Jewish Teens (aka 14 outcomes)

An outgrowth of the *Generation Now* report, the 14 outcomes are a distillation of the research conducted by The Jewish Education Project and revolve around four underlying constructs: personal, tribal, universal, and sacred. (See page 20)

Teen Jewish Learning and Engagement Scales (TJLES)

The TJLES are a validated instrument developed for the Funder Collaborative by the American Institutes for Research and Rosov Consulting in consultation with The Jewish Education Project, and they are used to measure the 14 Outcomes as well as classify a teen's background characteristics and assess current engagement.

GenZ Now

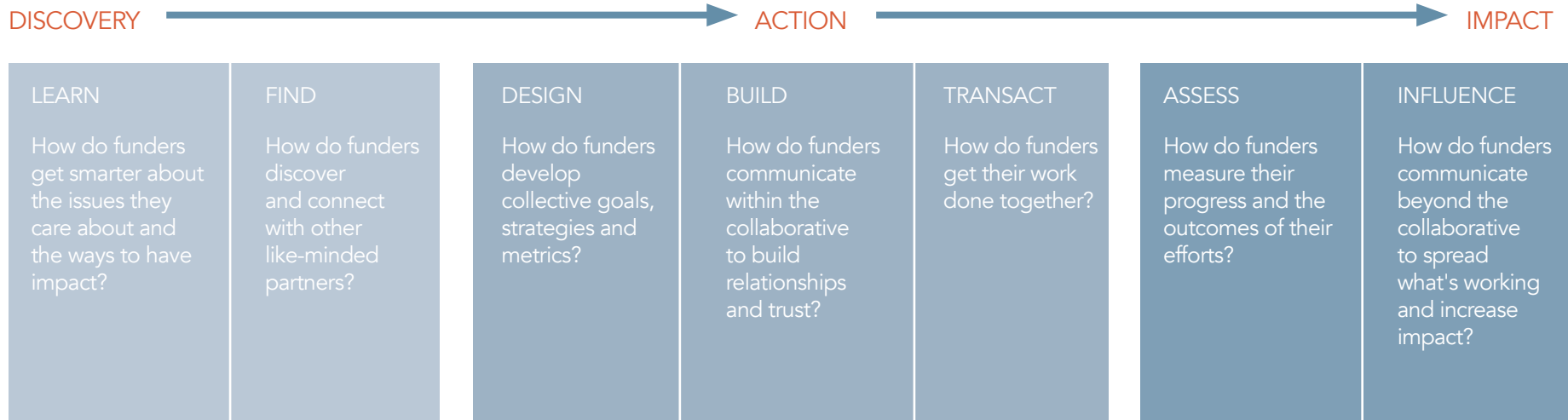
This is a [2017 study](#), supported by the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and the Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah, and conducted by The Jewish Education Project and Rosov Consulting in partnership with 14 national youth-serving organizations. The study set out to learn about a broad cross-section of teens using the TJLES.

Measures of Success

The Funder Collaborative identified six measures of success to which it is holding itself accountable, community-by-community and collectively, as it implements its work.

- 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 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.
- 6 SUPPORTING YOUTH PROFESSIONALS**
Ensure youth professionals feel well-prepared with appropriate skills and knowledge, and feel valued as professionals.

Stages of a Collaborative and its Needs



Source: "Harnessing Collaborative Technologies: Helping Funders Work Together Better", Key Findings Report, Monitor Institute and the Foundation Center, 2013.

The story we tell revolves around four strategic shifts in the landscape of Jewish teen education and engagement as advanced by the Funder Collaborative:

Shift #1: *From a Program-Driven Focus to Teen-Centric Investment Experiments with new models that are personally resonant to teens and thereby activate their engagement.*

Shift #2: *From Bolstering Singular Programs to Supporting a Sustainable Ecosystem Creating a more supportive and sustainable ecosystem for teen education and engagement.*

Shift #3: *From Subjective Assessments of Success to Shared Outcomes Acculturating communities to a research and outcomes-based approach.*

Shift #4: *From Designing Local Initiatives to National Field-Building Inspiring a broad cross-section of actors to adopt and adapt their successes.*

Along the way, we will also share some of the persistent challenges that currently inhibit the various shifts we describe from fully taking root.

SHIFT #1:

From

A Program-Driven Focus

to **Teen-Centric
Investment**

SHIFT #1

Over the last several decades, many successful teen programs have been spawned and nurtured by investing in youth-serving organizations, synagogues, youth groups, and the professionals who run them. The Funder Collaborative, on the other hand, inspired by the first piece of research commissioned by the Jim Joseph Foundation on the topic of teen engagement, fashioned their initiatives from the ground up, privileging the voices, needs, and interests of the consumers of teen programs—namely, Jewish teens and their families. As we will describe, the Funder Collaborative has sought to invest in structures and processes that put teens at the center.

Putting teens in the driver’s seat of their own engagement can mean many things. As we look across the 10 communities, we see new roles being developed for professionals to better connect with teens, and a range of approaches to empowering teens themselves to create opportunities for Jewish engagement.

Informed by research and powerful examples being enacted in other domains like the college campus, the Funder Collaborative came to understand relational engagement² as a critical lever for activating teens. Several communities have invested in ensuring that the right people were in place to build relationships with teens and their families:

In Chicago, the Jewish Federation created the role of a Teen Engagement Specialist (TES). These young professionals meet teens and parents for coffee, set up tables at events likely to attract Jewish teens, and make an effort to have real conversations to learn more about what teens want. They also present at home receptions in the service of connecting “teens and parents to amazing Jewish education, leadership and community building opportunities.”

Some teens thrive upon opportunities to have a stake in the work, not be passive recipients, which can increase the likelihood and relevance of their involvement. This is particularly true if peer-to-peer engagement is part of the strategy; teens are less likely to engage others without feeling personally empowered. This can range from young people driving the vision and design of the work, such as providing leadership or serving in governance roles, or teens participating in developing content, leading events or activities, being responsible for giving or receiving grants, or simply providing participants with choice in what they do.

— *Effective Strategies for Educating and Engaging Jewish Teens*

² See: Ron Wolfson, *Relational Judaism* (Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013); Ilana Schacter, “Relational Engagement as Strategy, Philosophy, and Pedagogy: How a Synagogue Can Build Community through Coffee Dates (and More),” *eJewish Philanthropy*, November 21, 2017, <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/relational-engagement-as-strategy-philosophy-and-pedagogy-how-a-synagogue-can-build-community-through-coffee-dates-and-more/>; Wendy Verba, “The Power of Belonging,” Ideas in Jewish Education & Engagement, Jewish Federations of North America, June 2017, <https://jewishfederations.org/education-and-engagement/ideas-in-jewish-education-and-engagement/the-power-of-belonging>.

In New York, too, under the auspices of The Jewish Education Project, Jewish professionals are deployed as [Ambassadors](#) to help direct Jewish teens to summer programs that will be right for them. Supported by training and a monetary incentive for both the professional and their organization, these Ambassadors are tasked with meeting one-on-one with at least 15 teens over a 6-month period.

“Nothing about us without us” is a concept that may have originated in social justice movements, but it is increasingly being taken as a principle of philanthropic investment and one the Funder Collaborative is embracing.³ In San Francisco, applicants to the Federation’s Innovation Accelerator designed to scale innovative programs for teens must demonstrate the ways in which teens played a role in the design of the program. In Baltimore, where the teen initiative is housed at the JCC, there is now a fully functioning Teen Advisory Board. While this teen-populated board was constituted to advise the teen initiative work, their value to the JCC as a whole is catching on as other departments in the JCC have started to vet their ideas for teen-oriented programming with the teen board. In fact, the JCC has opened up two permanent spots for teens on its board of directors.

“My parents are supportive, but they don’t always get it, they don’t know about everything I’m involved in... The [Teen Engagement Specialists] encourage me to pursue what I like to do. It’s nice to have people who are encouraging me when my parents aren’t always.”

— Springboard Teen

“[The FindYourSummer Ambassadors program] is the smartest thing [NYTI has] done... People used to go to original camps, and everything was a word of mouth... There was never the idea that you had choice and option. With the FYS website and the Ambassadors, [parents/families are] getting over the idea that they need to go to ‘your Jewish experience’ but [rather that they could] go to a Jewish experience.”

— Find Your Summer Ambassador

³ Fay Twersky et al., “Listening to Those Who Matter Most, the Beneficiaries.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2013, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/listening_to_those_who_matter_most_the_beneficiaries.

Some communities have taken the stance that true activation of teens happens when teens not only have a voice but are the primary architects of their own experience. In [Los Angeles, San Diego, and Baltimore](#), as well as in Cincinnati and Boston, grants are being directed toward teens to design and implement peer-to-peer programming. In some cities, there is also a teen selection committee to help decide who is eligible for these grants. In other cities, there is a scaffolded support system with adult mentors guiding the teens through the various stages of the work from ideation to implementation.

Five of the ten Funder Collaborative communities have joined forces to adapt and implement a program, started in Boston, known today as the Peer Leadership Fellows (PLF) program: San Diego, Cincinnati, Baltimore, and New York (along with Boston). Built on the model of relational engagement developed first by Hillel International, PLF has adapted Hillel's peer intern training for teens. In Boston where it all began, the Federation has now created a [new internal position](#) for the founder of the PLF that will elevate relational engagement strategies beyond PLF into all young adult and teen engagement work at the Federation. Several communities also collaborated on a joint training for teens and included two communities outside of the 10 Funder Collaborative communities (Pittsburgh, PA and Rochester, NY).

The [Peer Leadership Fellows] program trains teens to connect and build relationships with individuals in their peer networks so that more teens continue to engage with the Jewish community after their b'nai mitzvah.”

— *Building Leaders, Building Networks: Model Documentation & Evaluation of the Boston Peer Leadership Fellows Program (Informing Change)*

CHALLENGES OF THE SHIFT

While the local initiatives are seeing evidence of a new level of energy among teens when they are given more information and more control over their Jewish journeys, bringing along the community's youth-serving organizations is still a work in progress in large part because committing to a relational engagement approach is a slow, deep, and arguably expensive way to increase the number and diversity of engaged Jewish teens.

Additionally, existing programs are not always ready to pivot in response to new information about what teens want, and new programs are not always equipped with the infrastructure to deliver on teens' innovative ideas. Finding the right level of support for program providers to be more customer centric is an ongoing challenge.

Finally, a challenge that plagues many of the shifts described here is the inevitable turnover in teen-facing staff. Even when staff are appropriately trained to work with teens in relationally powerful ways, those relationships can't be sustained if the teen professional moves on.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. If, in fact, "activating" consumers—teens—is a winning strategy, how can communities best prepare professionals to align with the strategy, invest in the necessary skills, and help co-create it?
2. Which, if any, of the Funder Collaborative's strategies to build its own memberships' capacity can be leveraged for broader audiences?
3. What can be learned from other domains of Jewish life in which communities are activating consumers or responding successfully to the voice of the customer?

SHIFT #2:

From

**Bolstering Singular
Programs**

*to Supporting a
Sustainable Ecosystem*


SHIFT #2

In the 1990s, in the wake of the National Jewish Population Survey that documented a 52% rate of intermarriage among Jews, and the resulting continuity commissions, there was a surge of investment in Jewish education and engagement as an “antidote” to what some decried as the likely demise of the North American Jewish community. Those who were closely involved with investments in Jewish teens at the time⁴ reflect on the fact that, among other things, collaboration was forced upon communities. Not enough attention was given to the hard work of strengthening the teen ecosystem such that the parties involved could see for themselves the value of working together on behalf of teens.

Fast forward 25 years as the Funder Collaborative chose to focus on the entire teen “ecosystem”—parents, youth professionals, and broader communal leadership—both volunteer and professional. The assumptions that have guided their approach have been confirmed not only by lessons learned from past efforts but by a recent study of Jewish teens today.

And yet, as the 10 communities began rolling out their strategic initiatives, they came up against persistently siloed, and in many cases competitive, program providers and teen advocates. Bringing people together across the programmatic and denominational landscape was still not the norm, and there was a great deal of mistrust.

To that end, the Funder Collaborative has intentionally invested in strategies that involve a cross-section of stakeholders in the teen ecosystem—beginning with youth professionals and extending to parents and lay leaders.



Multiple influences contribute to the totality of teens’ existence—no single power alone, such as a youth group or summer camp, shapes teens today. Family, school, society at large, and the many number of organizations to which teens belong comprise the milieu in which teens live

— *Generation Now: Understanding and Engaging Jewish Teens Today*

⁴ Funder Collaborative Convening, Baltimore, 2016. Notes from Presentation by Chip Edelsberg, Jon Woocher z”l, David Bryfman, and Wendy Rosov.

YOUTH PROFESSIONALS

Seeing youth professionals as a critical linchpin in a culture-changing effort for teen engagement is not new. What is new is the purposeful way in which all 10 communities are bringing youth professionals together, often with their supervisors and senior staff. One of the more promising silo-busting structures is, what some communities are calling, coworking days. In Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, and Chicago, generational and denominational boundaries are dissolving: Chabad educators sit with NFTY advisors, rabbis sit with teen educators, and camp leaders are sitting with synagogue educators. Like their entrepreneurial counterparts in the for-profit arena,⁵ these coworking spaces provide low-bar opportunities for learning and collegial connection.

In New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Atlanta, where the teen initiatives are supporting a cohort of grantees with professional development, the cohort connections are spurring collaborations across the community. San Francisco reports that BBYO brought its teens to a fellow cohort member's synagogue-based program on spirituality, and cohort participants are cross-promoting each other's programs. In Los Angeles, partnerships have developed between synagogues and youth groups or camps, and between independent organizations like Challah for Hunger and established organizations like a JCC and a youth group.

“From the time this started to now, there is a dramatic difference in how siloed the teen work is in the community. The norm was agency or synagogues did their own things in their own lane. [At the coworking days] these people were around a literal kitchen table and were able to say, ‘hey, let’s apply for a grant.’ They self-reported a lack of infrastructure around pre-teen engagement in their respective synagogues, so they started talking about how to approach this collectively.

— Boston Teen Initiative Staff

“I think another big thing that we have now is shared language... We have a shared language that I can use and engage leaders and all these types of things which again goes back to the silo-ization versus partnership. It’s huge.”

— San Diego Educator


⁵ Sanchita Dash, “Beyond Real Estate: How Co-Working Spaces Aren’t Just About Rental Benefits Anymore,” *Entrepreneur*, September 29, 2018, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/320883>; Gretchen Spreitzer, Peter Bacevice, and Lyndon Garrett, “Why People Thrive in Coworking Spaces,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 29, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2015/05/why-people-thrive-in-coworking-spaces>.

LAY LEADERS

In the Funder Collaborative's effort to build broadly supported sustainable models for Jewish teen education, it has paid particular attention to its investment in volunteer leaders and parents. Each initiative began with a volunteer committee guiding its efforts; these committees were focused on driving their local initiative toward results that were community-based and didn't just accrue to the funding organization they represented.

From the start, the New York Teen Initiative benefited from several strong volunteer committees at the Federation who were already committed to prioritizing investment in Jewish teens. Committees such as "Experiments in Teen Engagement" and "Immersive Jewish Experiences" had been and continue to be a driving force in the Jewish Life department of the Federation as it shepherds the teen agenda across the region.

Some communities leveraged their participation in the Funder Collaborative to further strengthen volunteer commitment to teens. Chicago has reaped the benefit of this strategy as the volunteer chair of the teen initiative now sits on the Federation board and has been able to elevate the importance of teen investment more broadly, resulting in new investments to youth-serving organizations for peer-to-peer engagement programs. One community, Baltimore, deliberately set out to shift its teen ecosystem by investing in volunteer leaders across the community to be empowered champions for teens. After piloting a [Lay Advocates](#) program to empower community champions for teens, they are now experimenting with new strategies aimed at forging partnerships to engage lay advocates, parents, and supervisors of youth professionals.



“Our job is to support the Jewish community and not the Federation. For me the teen initiative is not a thing ‘out there,’ it is in here. It is authentic to us and how we see the world. This has been a lay-professional partnership.”

— Los Angeles Federation board member

PARENTS

The focus on parents as critical to the teen ecosystem was a natural consequence of paying attention to teens. Evaluation data from the early years of the Funder Collaborative's work demonstrated that parents played an important role in the lives of younger teens through at least the end of 10th grade. As the Funder Collaborative communities began to focus their initiative strategies on parents, they signaled to others in their community the importance of this population to overall health of the teen ecosystem.

Early on, Los Angeles' initiative professionals noticed that parents were struggling to loosen the reins on their teens who were participating in a new internship program. So began the impetus for a series of parent workshops across the community on a variety of parenting topics including mindfulness, sexuality, body image, communication, and screen time. The Los Angeles Teen Initiative's focus on, and success with, parent education has prompted other youth-serving organizations in the region to begin to think about how they might best serve parents of teens.

In Atlanta, synagogues are asking initiative staff to bring the teen initiative's "Navigating Parenthood" series to their premises. Both San Diego and Atlanta are experimenting with parent-oriented book clubs as well as connecting parents of older teens with parents of younger teens for support and mentorship. The Baltimore teen initiative has also been asked by its partner organizations for support with parent-focused programming.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

We close our discussion of this shift with a focus on a seminal product of the Funder Collaborative's work that may ultimately prove to be the strongest arrow in its quiver as it aims to strengthen the teen ecosystem. The [Sustainability Diagnostic Tool](#) (SDT) is a qualitative assessment tool that enables communities to see the extent to which there are people and systems in place—beyond the Local Funder's initiative—for continuing to prioritize and deliver on the Jewish teen education and engagement agenda. As with most assessment tools in the early days of its use, the Funder Collaborative is mostly seeing the gap between where they hope their communities will be and where they actually are. Nevertheless, communities are using the tool as an intervention as much as an assessment tool. Atlanta has begun to assemble parents in a Think Tank to broaden the base of community-wide support for teen programs. Denver/Boulder and New York are both hiring a third-party consultant, UpStart, to work with youth-serving organizations to examine their programs through the lens of sustainability.

"The UpStart Accelerator program focuses on giving these professionals the tools and resources needed to go beyond the day-to-day of high-volume task-driven work and take a larger visionary step. By teaching them to drive the design of their programs towards on-going and long-term sustainability, it empowers them to become more strategic, not just tactical."

— UpStart

TEEN WELLNESS EMERGES AS A RALLYING CRY

Sometimes, all it takes to shift the culture is a cry around which all can rally. In the case of the Funder Collaborative, that cry has been teen wellness (see more below in Shift #4). It turns out that elevating the challenges of teen wellness and addressing them for teens, parents, and youth professionals can galvanize a community toward an “our teens,” ecosystem-wide approach. It is real, it transcends a parochial “Jewish” focus, and no one entity has all the answers. With Los Angeles first picking up the baton and convening a [wellness conference](#) in April 2018 for over 250 parents and educators, many other communities have joined the relay.

A year later, the San Francisco Teen Initiative, with the support of its professional development delivery partner Jewish LearningWorks, convened the [Bay Area Teens Thrive Un-Conference](#) which held sessions at five different Jewish and secular community spaces in the region. Implementers from all 10 Funder Collaborative communities chose to attend the Un-Conference, using it as their opportunity to convene together that year and strengthen their own approaches to wellness.

“We watched the priority on wellness emerge in LA and that was pretty influential. It was an important reminder of our ‘why’ and if we want to have an impact, that should be a priority.”

— Baltimore Teen Initiative Director



CHALLENGES OF THE SHIFT

The Funder Collaborative's efforts notwithstanding, there are precious few philanthropic efforts in the Jewish world that take a systemic view to addressing a current challenge and thus there are few models to learn from. As in the 1990s, the work is dependent on early adopters and ideologically committed partners. Collaboration—sitting together to address shared goals—takes time. Under-resourced and sometimes geographically dispersed youth-serving organizations barely have the capacity to design, deliver, and recruit for their own programs let alone do this with and for others.

Even when parents and lay leaders are interested in serving as advocates and champions for teens, they often lack the infrastructure, access, and time to show up at meetings where their voices could make a difference and, importantly, community leaders need to remember to prioritize parental involvement.

The Sustainability Diagnostic Tool, while potentially powerful, is still a new tool in the early days of its use. To date, few community partners have been exposed to it not only as a measurement tool but as an ethos for working together on behalf of teens, and it could be years before its principles are widely adopted.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Should certain partners be considered more critical levers to building a healthy and sustainable ecosystem for teens than others (e.g., teens, parents, youth professionals, funders, youth-serving organizations, legacy organizations)? Is there a logical sequence to engaging these partners?
 - a. How can lay and professional enthusiasm be maintained when systemic change is a long-term project?
 - b. Are there systemic strategies that work in the face of inevitable turnover in its lay and professional leadership?
 - c. What will stimulate these partners to come together to collaborate on behalf of shared outcomes?
2. What are the most effective communal structures to sustain the work of teen education and engagement?
3. How can we best educate our partners about the needs and realities of adolescents today?

SHIFT #3:

From

**Subjective Assessments
of Success**

*to Shared
Outcomes*


SHIFT #3

The disciplined and, initially, daunting task the Funder Collaborative set for itself was to define a set of teen education and engagement outcomes that would inform and animate new potential investments in the teen space. The Funder Collaborative has embraced this research-based outcomes framework as its North Star and has supported the development of tools to assess teens' progress toward those outcomes.

Generation Now: Understanding and Engaging Jewish Teens Today successfully defined a set of shared outcomes for Jewish teens that has been crystallized into [14 Outcomes that Positively Impact the Lives of Jewish Teens](#) (see page 22). These outcomes marked a shift in the field's understanding of what it looks like for Jewish teens to be engaged—moving away from body counts at events and simple behavioral measures towards seeing teens as thriving Jewishly in more holistic ways to include their personal well-being, their access to spiritual meaning, their connection to tradition, and their concern for the wider world.

The Generation Now research was taking place at the same time as each of the 10 communities was already engaged in community-based planning for their initiatives, and thus many communities began to fund strategies and programs before the outcomes were fully fleshed out. As is evidenced by the [descriptions](#) of each community's initiative, new and creative approaches were explored and designed with the teen in mind but without clear direction about what would define success.

The definition of shared outcomes led to the development of the Teen Jewish Learning and Engagement Scales (TJLES), a [measurement tool](#) that would allow communities and their programs to assess the extent to which these outcomes were being achieved. Each Funder Collaborative



Rather than only being able to measure how many teens show up for an activity, Jewish professionals can begin to consider opportunities for their programs to enable teens to flourish. The 14 outcomes are meant to help guide and inform a wide range of professionals who work with Jewish teens. Organizations will choose to emphasize some more than others.

— *GenZ Now: Understanding and Connecting with Jewish Teens Today*

GEN NOW OUTCOMES


- 1 Jewish teens have a strong sense of self.
- 2 Jewish teens feel a sense of pride about being Jewish.
- 3 Jewish teens have learning experiences that are both challenging and valuable.
- 4 Jewish teens engage in learning that enables them to be more active participants in various Jewish communities.
- 5 Jewish teens learn about and positively experience Jewish holidays and Shabbat.
- 6 Jewish teens establish strong friendships.
- 7 Jewish teens develop strong and healthy relationships with their families.
- 8 Jewish teens develop significant relationships with mentors, role models, and educators.
- 9 Jewish teens are able to express their values and ethics in relation to Jewish principles and wisdom.
- 10 Jewish teens develop the capacity (skills and language) that allows them to grapple with and express their spiritual journeys.
- 11 Jewish teens feel connected to their various communities.
- 12 Jewish teens develop the desire and commitment to be part of the Jewish people now and in the future.
- 13 Jewish teens develop a positive relationship to the land, people and State of Israel.
- 14 Jewish teens are inspired and empowered to make a positive difference in the various communities and world in which they live.

For more information on the outcomes and their development, please visit <https://JewishEdProject.org/GenerationNow>.

community committed to fielding the TJLES to the teens participating in programs associated with their initiatives. It took some time for community partners and grantees to fully understand these outcomes, and the local youth-serving organizations did not always know what to do with the corresponding data. Over time, however, as local evaluators have worked closely with each community to report and review the data, and as the Cross-Community Evaluation team has annually aggregated the data and reported on [findings](#) to the Funder Collaborative as a whole, allegiance to these outcomes is getting stronger.

Local Funders came to see that if youth-serving organizations were really going to align their programs with these outcomes, it would be important for them to understand them, selectively choose the outcomes around which they would design their programs, and measure them in their own programs so that they can begin to see the virtuous cycle that can result.


Several communities have been proactive in their efforts in this regard. New York, Denver/Boulder, Baltimore, Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles have all convened youth professionals for specially designed sessions to learn about the outcomes, see locally generated data, and build the capacity of those in attendance to engage in outcomes-driven program design.



“Wanting people to buy in to this takes an excruciatingly long time. But as [the Funder Collaborative] matures, we are slowly getting to the shared language. Every community has its own needs but finding ways to come together for common purpose is helpful.”
— Jim Joseph Foundation

San Francisco, Denver, and Baltimore have now asked all grantees to identify, in their proposal requests, which of the 14 outcomes they will be gearing their programs toward achieving. Cincinnati has woven a focus on the 14 outcomes into their professional development programs delivered by their partner Hebrew Union College.

Atlanta, San Diego, New York, Chicago, and others are incentivizing their teen program providers with special grants that would accrue if they track their teen data and participate in fielding the TJLES to all the teens in their programs, so that information about a broader cross-section of teens can be taken into consideration for future community-based program design work. Some communities are also working with their local evaluators to offer individualized tutorials to program providers to review the data about their own teens and consider the implications.



“It took 5 years to get the right people in place and the outcomes articulated, and [youth-serving organizations] are just getting what this is all about. This may have been about our not being clear enough about this at the start. They are starting to understand why strong outcomes is more important than more kids.”

— Denver/Boulder Initiative

CHALLENGES OF THE SHIFT

Although outcomes-oriented program design is a staple of training programs in formal education, despite the recent proliferation of masters-level programs in Jewish experiential education, youth professionals in the field are less likely to be accustomed to this way of designing programs and assessing their impact. Thus, youth-serving organizations require new skills and new ways of working to be able to systematically unpack outcomes data and reverse engineer their offerings to generate desired outcomes.

Additionally, organizations and program providers are used to evaluation data being used to “grade” their performance and are less accustomed to a funder who wants to help them learn about how to redesign their programs to better achieve the desired outcomes.

Finally, Foundations and Federations don’t always have the staff in place who are equipped to take on the role of educating grantees about outcomes-oriented program design. As described, there are some third-party providers rising to the demand, but this is a growth area. Along with the fact that the outcomes driving the Funder Collaborative’s work are new to most involved, acculturating professionals to attending to them requires dedicated effort.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Going forward, which combination of philanthropic entities, training institutions, or communal partners are most likely to take up the mantle of outcomes-driven program design and implementation?
2. While many of the national foundations who joined the Funder Collaborative at the start are staunch advocates for evaluation and outcomes driven design, not even funders have been able to shift the culture around this topic among program providers.
 - a. What approaches are most likely to support outcomes-driven design among program providers?
 - b. Where is it already happening in ways that can be considered bright spots to learn from?

SHIFT #4:

From

**Designing Local
Initiatives**

to **National
Field Building**

SHIFT #4

The previous case study described how the 10 communities were devising and iterating “linked experiments” and were grappling with how to collectively build the field of Jewish teen education and engagement. It was a challenge for the, then new, Executive Director of the Funder Collaborative to grapple with. Three years into the tenure of the Executive Director, there is new energy for amplifying successful experiments and for spawning new national experiments to be supported by the Funder Collaborative.

As they have done from the start, the Local and National Funders who comprise the Funder Collaborative have continued to gather biannually. These meetings have been augmented by annual meetings of the initiatives’ program directors and by monthly virtual learning sessions on topics of concern to all. These forums have facilitated the spreading of ideas and the replication or adaptation of certain types of investments from one community to the next. Three national experiments, funded by the Collaborative’s pooled funds⁶ and, in some cases, augmented by the National Funders, merit our focus here: one focused on the 14 Teen Outcomes, one focused on Teen Wellness, and a final one, in its nascent stages, to help scale successful teen programs beyond the 10 Funder Collaborative communities.

14 TEEN OUTCOMES: SPREADING THE WORD

As each of the 10 communities of the Funder Collaborative invested in new or promising programs, they often partnered with local chapters of national youth-serving organizations. As we have described, by virtue of being grantees in the community-based initiatives, the teens who participated in the programs of these youth-serving organizations were being assessed relative to the Teen Jewish Learning and Engagement Scales (TJLES).

In 2017, recognizing the power of the tool and seeking to expand the learning about how today’s youth-serving programs are contributing to Jewish growth, the National Funders who supported the original Generation Now research turned to The Jewish Education Project and Rosov Consulting (both ongoing partners in the Funder Collaborative) to conduct an unprecedented study of what ultimately was nearly 18,000 teens associated with 14 different national youth-serving organizations. The study resulted in the *GenZ Now* [report](#). Having learned the importance of this in each of the 10 Funder Collaborative communities, the report’s release was followed by individual consultations with each organization to help their staff better understand the implications of the results.

⁶ When the Funder Collaborative was constituted, the members agreed to allocate a percentage of their investment toward a fund that was available for Funder Collaborative use. A percentage of these funds were expended on the Cross-Community Evaluation work and on the costs associated with biannual gatherings. Beyond these uses, there was little clarity or alignment around how best to use the funds.

As an outgrowth of the study, and in an ongoing effort to spread the use and understanding of the 14 Outcomes, The Jewish Education Project, in partnership with the Funder Collaborative and with a grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation, launched the [Generation Now Fellowship](#), which by its conclusion will have oriented and deputized 40 new youth professionals (including half from new communities not included in the Funder Collaborative) to become ambassadors for outcomes-driven teen engagement. Taken together, this complex set of investments is serving to systematically shift the lens through which the field of teen education and engagement views its work. It might even be said that the Funder Collaborative has catalyzed a national conversation around the importance of data.

The participating organizations of both the *GenZ Now* study and the Generation Now Fellowship are asking for access to additional measurement tools developed through the efforts of the Funder Collaborative. In response, the Funder Collaborative is planning to lead a series of “[Data Days](#)” around the country as it takes a first step in putting these measurement tools into the public domain. It hopes to increase understanding of and enthusiasm for data as critical to innovation and improvement of teen programs.


HELPING JEWISH TEENS THRIVE

As described already, teen wellness is an issue that has [galvanized the communities](#) as they sought both to equip youth professionals to better support an increasingly stressed teen population and as they have invested in more parent-focused interventions. Today, thanks

to the investment of the Funder Collaborative, there is a new website—[Jewish Teens Thrive](#)—which, as the name implies, offers a rich array of print and web resources about teen mental health, resilience, and other topics. It also serves as a portal for accessing Youth Mental Health First Aid training and a [corresponding guide](#) specifically geared to Jewish professionals. The guide, a certification course for Jewish professionals, educational resources drawing on Biblical texts as well as modern Jewish sources, and an ongoing Community of Practice for those who deliver this training in the Jewish community have all been funded by the Funder Collaborative. There was an intentional effort to brand the website in a neutral and separate space (although it is accessible from the [Collaborative’s website](#)) so as to clearly mark this resource as publicly available to all those who care about Jewish teens and not keep it in the exclusive domain of the Funder Collaborative. The Funder Collaborative expects to create additional relevant materials as needs emerge, including the adaptation of these guides into workshop modules for parents. As a neutral convening body, the Funder Collaborative is playing an important role in weaving together practitioners and organizations who might not be aware of each other to better utilize existing resources and who may pick up the mantle in leading more coordinated responses and programs that serve the entire field. To that end, its most recent effort has been to [convene national professionals and funders](#) interested in the adolescent and young adult wellness space to more deeply explore the topic, create a shared language and understanding across organizations, as well as orchestrate a collaborative visioning process to address potential national interventions.

SCALING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Over the life of the initiative, and as per the Funder Collaborative's commitment from the start, the component programs of each initiative's strategy are being evaluated annually. At this time, three communities have moved into a more focused renewal phase investing in only the most successful elements of their initiative. With all communities focused on sustainability and seeking to ensure that good programs get traction even beyond their own region, the Executive Director took the initiative to solicit a grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation to explore a consultancy with [Spring Impact](#), an organization specializing in scaling of social impact initiatives, to learn about how best to scale good programs. As a result of the pilot, the Funder Collaborative is now poised to support the 10 communities in selecting programs that are ripe for scaling (and moving beyond the 10 communities) and documenting the process such that a broader field-facing guidebook can be developed.



“For us it is about learning how to scale. How can the Foundation and those who participate in the scaling work strengthen that muscle so they can apply this to other projects? This is a good way to bring new communities into the fold.”

— Jim Joseph Foundation

CHALLENGES OF THE SHIFT

Arguably, this shift from “local” to “field” is a central risk taken by the Funder Collaborative, as it is related to the ways in which the broader field will ultimately benefit from and ideally carry on its work. Much of the passion and persistent energy required is coming from the efforts of a focused professional employed by the Funder Collaborative. This calls into question the extent to which the Funder Collaborative or any other player in the arena will continue to support these efforts as the local initiatives wind down their work.

With regard to the specific field building efforts described here:

For the Funder Collaborative, teen wellness has been a coalescing topic at both the local and national level. The Funder Collaborative’s holistic approach to teen wellness in the Jewish world has not yet brought together other players in the field who have also rallied around the topic and who have been pursuing parallel efforts.

There are many hurdles for organizations to clear before a program can scale effectively. Sustainable funding, the commitment of community-based funders to grow and expand a program, and the time and talent of a professional to steward the effort are but a few of these hurdles. It is too soon to tell how many more promising programs of the Funder Collaborative will have the staying power to pursue the effort

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Is there a need for a centralized address for teen education and engagement? What would its functions be? How would the field benefit?
2. How might interested partners across the country come together and find each other to collaborate on teen focused initiatives that address perceived needs?

CONCLUSION

There are very few examples of funder collaboratives in the Jewish philanthropic space and possibly none whose members represent the particular mix of private foundations, community foundations, and Jewish Federations found in the Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative. The Funder Collaborative members came together around a shared mission to expand, deepen, and maybe even disrupt community-based Jewish teen education and engagement. It is unmistakable that with the support of their national partners, these 10 anchor funders are, in their respective communities, slowly acculturating their grantees and community collaborators toward a new approach—one that is more customer centric, systemic, and outcomes oriented. The ripple effect of this work is already being felt fieldwide.

Although this is the final case study, the work of the Funder Collaborative and its communities continues. As of this writing local funders are actively engaged in expanding the impact and reach of the Funder Collaborative both within and beyond the 10 communities.





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