CROSS-COMMUNITY EVALUATION FINDINGS 2019

for the Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative

JULY 2020

JEWISH TEEN Education & Engagement FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

ROSOV CONSULTING | Information Insight Impact

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues —

I began this work in 2016, three years after the initial formation and growth of the Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative. Immediately, I was energized by the group's commitment to experimenting, learning, and sharing insights in real time with all.

In a true mark of the collaborative and generous spirit imbued in this effort, the Funder Collaborative invests in the development of shared outcomes and aggregated evaluation efforts. These are designed to both support each community's thoughtful process of program design and intended outcomes, as well as be helpful to any engagement effort. Each day, the 10 communities of the Funder Collaborative endeavor to enrich youth professionals, support parents, and empower teens to expand and provide meaningful connections to Jewish life.

Four years into this collective effort to aggregate and analyze our data, we are beginning to yield some findings that are consistent year-over-year—and actionable. I am pleased to share the full report with you. It presents the findings of evaluation work completed during the 2018–2019 program year and homes in on those findings most ripe for appreciation and action.

We see a strong correlation between teens' connection to Jewish values and and the influence those values have on the lives teens choose to lead. Substantive Jewish content creates a sense of belonging, a desire to do good in the world, and a platform for teens to build friendships—these peer relationships also contribute to strong Jewish outcomes overall.

Importantly, the report concludes with recommendations applicable beyond the 10 community-based teen initiatives, informing any organization committed to effective teen programs, professional development for youth professionals, and affordability of programs for parents.

I am grateful for the wisdom of the Rosov Consulting Cross-Community Evaluation team, whose skills allow us to draw such clear insights. I want to thank our Operating Committee for their leadership and ongoing contributions to all of our groundbreaking efforts. We are deeply appreciative of the continued support of the Jim Joseph Foundation, whose commitment and foresight drives this work forward in deep and meaningful ways.

The report draws from a variety of sources to offer a snapshot of a moment in time, and evaluation alone cannot provide the full picture of tectonic shifts occurring on the ground in these 10 communities. Extremely complex efforts involving stakeholders, implementers, and the communities are making lasting and positive changes to the culture impacting teen engagement. We encourage you to read the complementary case studies documenting the work, along with previous reports, all found on the Learnings page of TeenFunderCollaborative.com.

During this time of uncertainty and upheaval, we hope that sharing learning from years of on-the- ground experimentation may help others accelerate their engagement efforts—now, more important than ever before.

In gratitude,
Sara Allen

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 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.

2018–2019 DATA SOURCES

TEENS

Data compiled from 9 communities. Quantitative only in Denver/Boulder, New York, and San Francisco. Quantitative and Qualitative in Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

1449 — 115

YOUTH PROFESSIONALS

Data collected from 7 communities. Quantitative only in San Diego. Quantitative and Qualitative in Cincinnati and Los Angeles. Qualitative only in Baltimore, New York, and San Francisco.

120 — 82

PARENTS

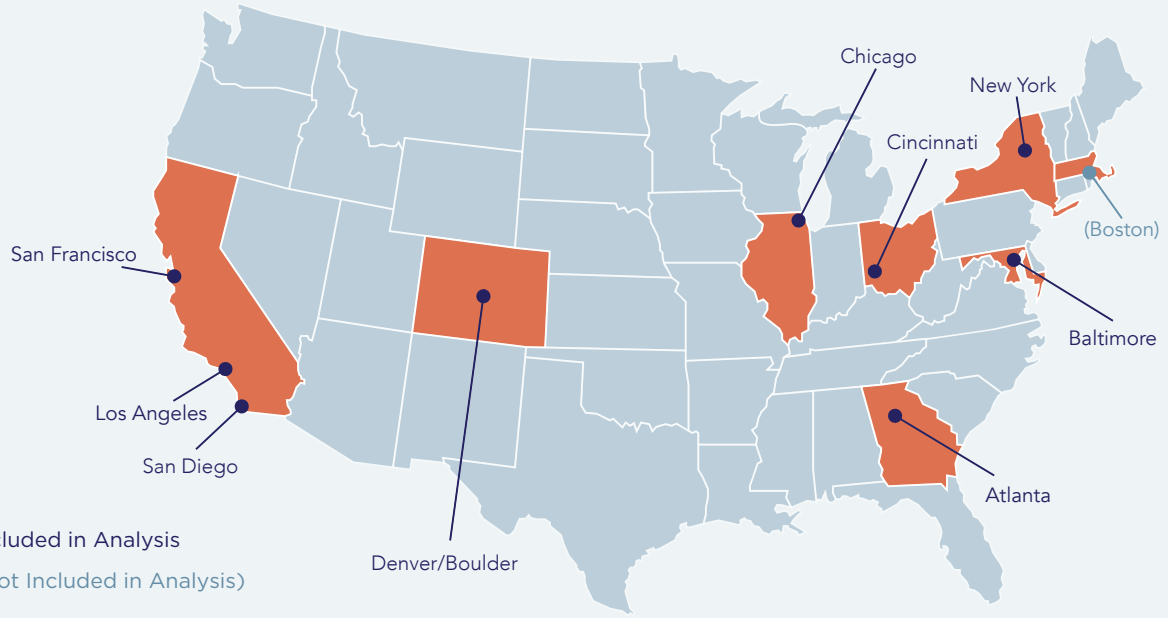
Data collected from 7 communities. Quantitative only in Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, New York, and San Francisco. Quantitative and Qualitative in Atlanta and Los Angeles.

1036 — 35

ACROSS 9 COMMUNITIES

2605
Quantitative Data Total (Surveys)

232
Qualitative Data Total
(Interviews & Focus Groups)



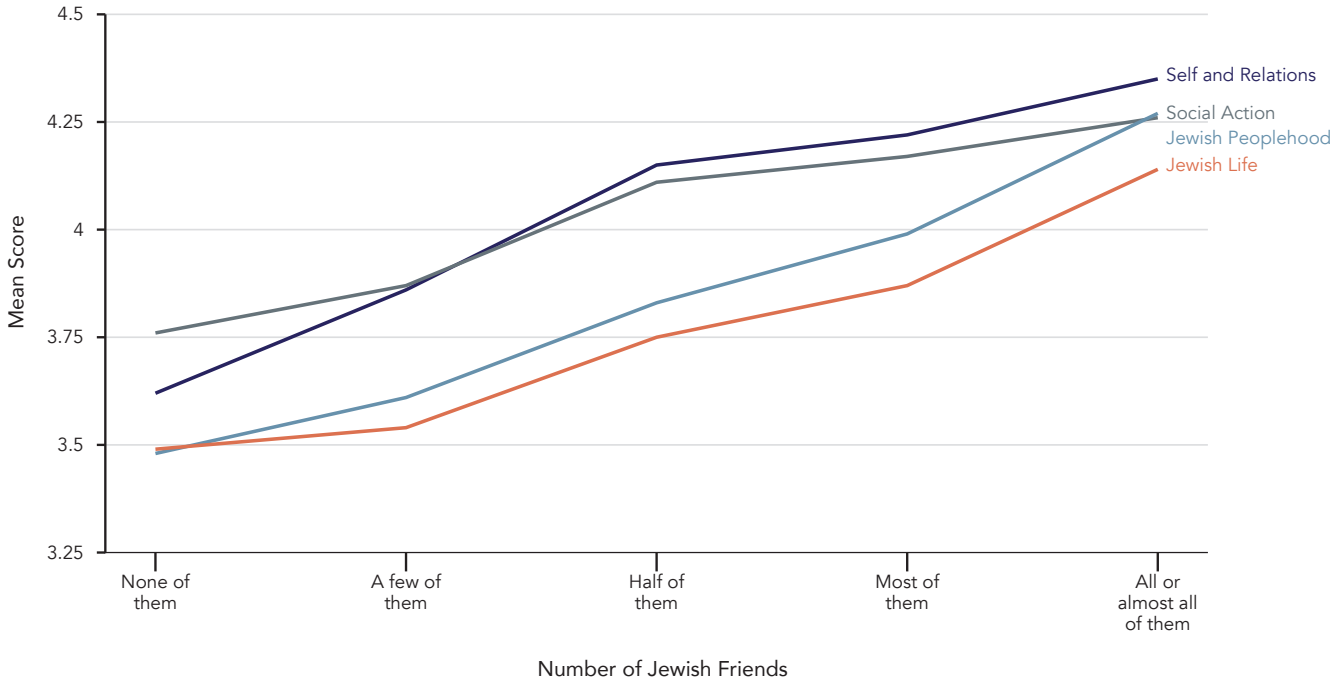
FINDINGS

1

Establishing strong teen friendships is a critical lever for strong Jewish outcomes for all teens

There is a positive correlation between the number of close Jewish friends and higher rankings on all outcomes. Simply put, Jewish friends matter for Jewish impact.

Exhibit 1: Correlation between Outcome Areas and Number of Jewish Friends



The correlation between number of closest Jewish friends and the outcomes holds true when taking into account the different Jewish backgrounds teens had growing up and their most recent level of engagement in Jewish activities.

Additionally, there is a synergy between parents' goals and outcomes for teens. Meeting and developing friendships with other teens is among parents' top three goals for their teens' participation in programming associated with the initiatives.

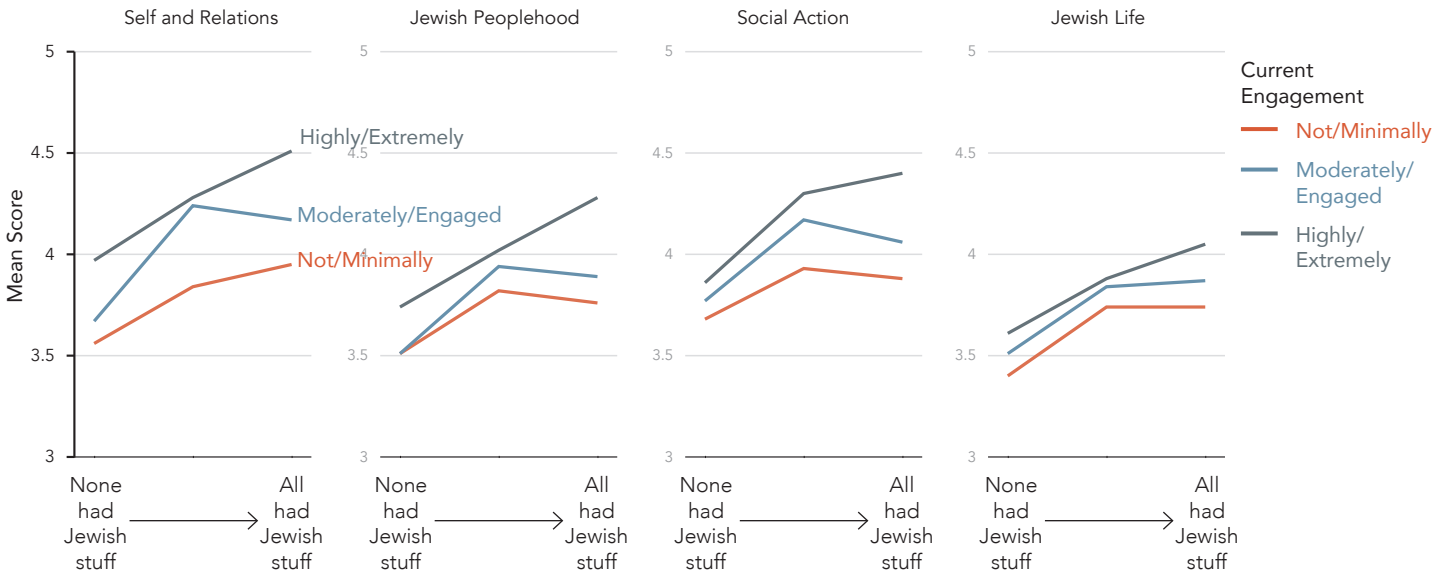
2

The more programs that teens attend with Jewish content, the stronger the overall outcomes—regardless of teens' current involvement in Jewish programs

Across all four outcome areas (Self and Relations, Jewish Peoplehood, Social Action, and Jewish Life), teens across the current engagement spectrum (from not at all/minimally to highly or extremely engaged) show positive growth associated with participation in more programs that have Jewish content. This finding is consistent with aggregate findings from prior years as well as the *GenZ Now* study.

This represents a clear message to youth professionals as they plan their programs.

Exhibit 2: Jewish Content Makes a Difference



"Belonging. Everyone is Jewish [on the program] and there is a strong sense of belonging. The activities that I do in school aren't necessarily Jewish, as opposed to this—it's with people who think similarly to you. It's good to feel like I'm a part of the Jewish community."

—Teen

"Because of my positive experience [on the program] I've grown more comfortable in the Jewish community and gotten more involved in the Jewish community. The staff at Springboard is fantastic. Through the programs I was able to foster a greater sense of community, and it has been a factor in my wanting to continue my activities in the Jewish world."

—Teen

"A lot of Jewish people around me are Reform, I wasn't knowledgeable about Conservative and Orthodox people who live here. It was interesting to me to meet them, sit down, and plan events with them. Events where everyone's welcome, the food is for everybody. It was an important goal for us to bring different types of Jewish people to be together."

—Teen Peer Leader

"That's when I realized I actually really loved leading services, and so I do it a lot now. And then I became a religious school teacher and presently I'm just involved in a lot of different Jewish leadership things, so those are very important to me."

—Teen

"This is the type of Judaism I like being a part of…. I interpret things a little differently than what my community has taught me to interpret it as, and I want to connect to the type of Judaism that I believe in."

Teen

3

Teens, in line with parents' desires, are developing strong connections to their Jewish heritage and believe that Jewish concepts inspire them to make the world a better place

Parents ascribe a high level of importance to their teens feeling a strong connection to Jewish heritage and to be inspired by Jewish concepts to work at making the world a better place. They look to Jewish teen programming to drive these outcomes. The initatives appear to be delivering—teens express strong levels of agreement that participation in Jewish programs leads them to both of these outcomes.

Exhibit 3: Jewish Heritage: Importance for Parents and Outcomes for Teens

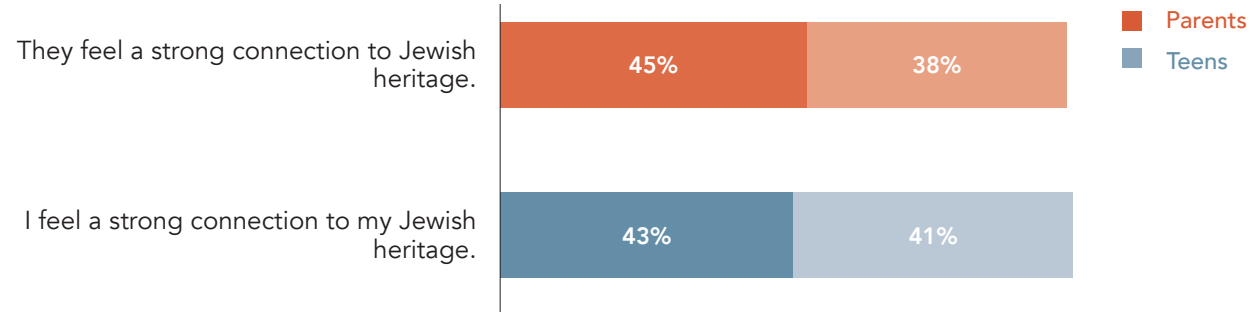
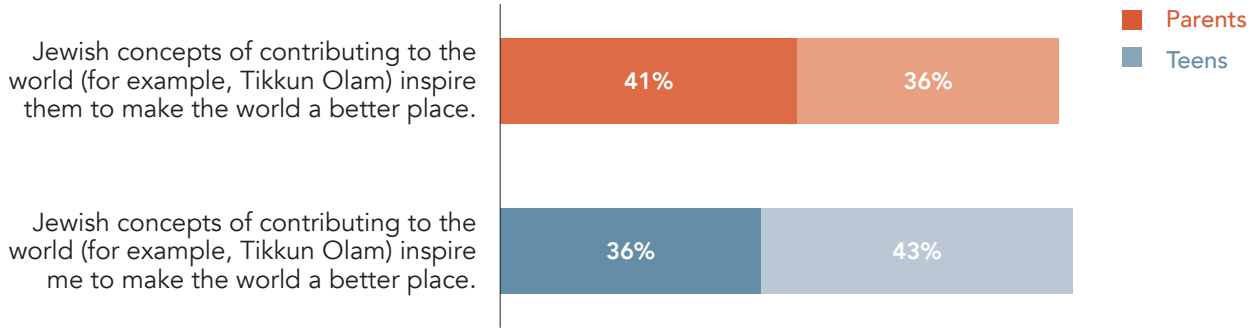


Exhibit 4: Tikkun Olam: Importance for Parents and Outcomes for Teens



Note: These numbers represent the two higher ends on 5-point scales: for parents, an importance scale (When thinking about your teen's connection to "things Jewish," how important is each of the following?; % extremely important, % very important); for teens, an agreement scale (To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?; % strongly agree, % agree).

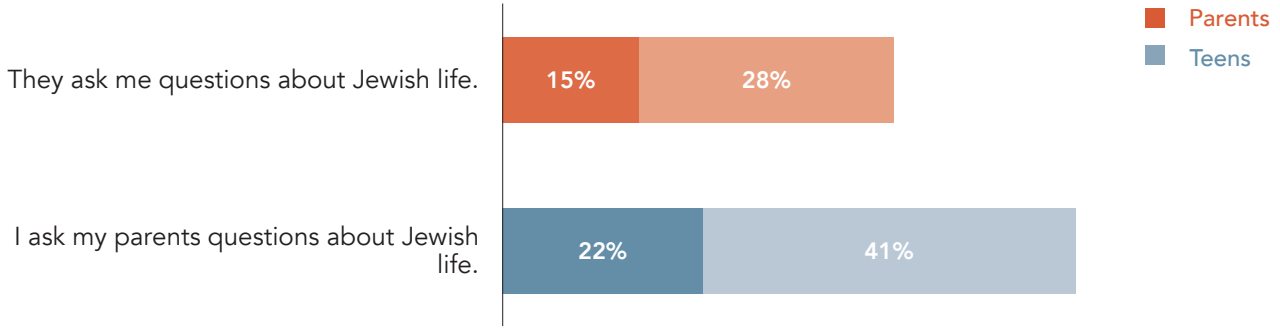
4

Parents and teens talking with each other about Jewish life is, comparatively speaking, not a high priority for parents and yet two-thirds of teens report asking their parents about Jewish life

It is not clear if this finding represents a gap to be filled by better equipping parents to respond to their teens' questions or simply a snapshot of parenthood—parents understand that it is more important for teens to develop their connection to Jewish life than to place themselves in the position of educator or arbiter.

While in recent years community initiatives have begun to incorporate more parent-focused programming, the topic of discussing Jewish life with their teens has not been a prominent feature. Given that two-thirds of teens report asking their parents about Jewish life, there may be an opportunity for youth professionals to work with parents around inviting and engaging those questions and conversations.

Exhibit 5: Questions about Jewish Life: Importance for Parents and Outcomes for Teens



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5

As youth professionals across a community meet and learn with each other across denominational and organizational boundaries, they are modeling a move toward an ecosystem supporting teens

The qualitative data from youth professional interviews and focus groups shows that two aspects of PD have been the most powerful: networking and exposure to different perspectives on Jewish life and observance. Content acquisition is valued much less than the community and collegiality that develops locally when youth professionals learn together.

> *"In general, it's being at the table with educators from across party lines. To have Reconstructionists, Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative at the same table is a big deal."*
>
> —Youth Professional

> *"Another reason is networking—knowing other people doing this work and us knowing each other. It really adds a lot to what we can potentially do … I want to know what other people are doing so I can recommend it and be an expert to the families I work with."*
>
> —Youth Professional

> *"[I] really enjoyed last year and the professionals we spoke with, but networking is invaluable, across programs. [The Initiative] connected me to a pluralistic group of people who work [with a range of teens] … both networking and brainstorming."*
>
> —Youth Professional

6

Youth professionals want to better understand teens developmentally and learn how to respond to their needs

This finding has been consistent year after year. The content that youth professionals feel is most relevant to their work today includes increasing knowledge around mental health, adolescent development, gender identity, and sexuality.

> *"For me, the area I'd like to see most is mental health. Psychology is important … It's being able to understand what's happening in their brains and lives where I need more support. These are challenges they are going through; I want to be able to help."*
>
> —Youth Professional

> *"Thinking back to Mental Health Day—that was amazing, and I want to take it again. That really gave me tools—some things common sense, having it solidified and brought back to my community. Now I want to do that training for our own staff."*
>
> Youth Professional

> *"We had someone from Keshet come in and talk about LGBTQ—in today's society that one could have been longer than what it was. A lot of that stuff is ever growing and becoming a regular part of society today. We could have had a 4-hour discussion/learning session."*
>
> —Youth Professional

7

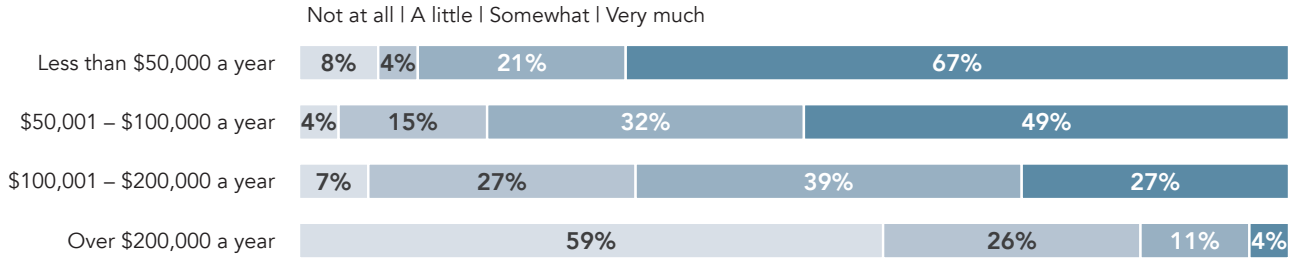
Initiative programs are still largely attracting middle-class families who can afford Jewish programming

Since 2016, over a third of the families whose teens participate in Initiative programming earn more than $200,000 before taxes. Not surprisingly, the more a family earns, the less the cost of Jewish programming is a factor in their teen's participation. In a post-COVID-19 world, many more families are likely to experience financial stress, which is likely to have an impact on program affordability.

Exhibit 10: To help us better understand the financial situation of the families interested in teen programs, which best describes your household's income before taxes?

	2018-2019		2017-2018		2016-2017	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
Less than $50,000 a year	24	4%	3	2%	7	3%
$50,000 - $99,999 a year	85	15%	28	20%	49	21%
$100,000 - $200,000	153	27%	56	40%	85	36%
Over $200,000	299	53%	54	38%	95	40%
Total	**561**	**100%**	**141**	**100%**	**236**	**100%**
Prefer not to say	204		72		66	

Exhibit 11: To help us better understand the financial situation of the families interested in teen programs: To what extent is cost an issue in your family's decision to enroll your teen to participate in Jewish programming



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since the number of close Jewish friends is a lever for strong Jewish outcomes overall, teen program providers should be working toward **strengthening social connections before, during, and after an experience so that relationships are deepened and sustained.** Additionally, one of the Funder Collaborative's measures of success is attracting new teens from diverse backgrounds. To ensure that all feel welcome and are able to form friendships in these Jewish programs, special attention should be paid to **creating a welcoming environment, fostering one-on-one connections, and explicitly working to integrate diverse teens,** thereby mitigating any possible insider/outsider dynamic.

2. There are several areas of professional development for youth professionals that should continue to be offered and enriched. These areas have been named consistently year after year, and we've found that across the communities and levels of experience of the professionals there is an opportunity to centralize and standardize the following:

   a. **The skillset of youth professionals to build the capacity of teens to establish healthy, strong relationships.**

   b. **The pedagogical content knowledge to ensure that teen programs are infused with Jewish content.**

   c. **The latest research, trainings, and best practices addressing teen mental health, adolescent development, gender identity, and sexuality.**

3. In light of the value which youth professionals accord to learning with a broad cross section of their peers, for their personal learning and for the strengthening of communal bonds, professional development offerings should **transcend movement and organizational learning and intentionally bring together youth professionals across the spectrum** to learn with each other and support collaborative activity.

4. As a growing sector of the Jewish population struggles with the affordability of Jewish programs, **needs-based scholarships, subsidies, and other affordability strategies should top the priority list for teen programs.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are deeply grateful to the Funder Collaborative for the honor and opportunity to have worked so closely together over these past five years. Through our collaboration with the Funders, Directors, and evaluators associated with each of the 10 communities, we have been able to successfully generate learnings that have implications for the broader field of Jewish Teen Education and Engagement.

We want to give a "shout-out" to the talented evaluation teams from both Informing Change and Rosov Consulting that have steadfastly carried out their work in the 10 communities over these past several years. We are especially grateful for the time that these exceptional professionals have devoted to helping us, the Cross-Community Evaluation team, draw out larger lessons and truly make meaning of the data that has been aggregated across the communities.

This has truly been a case where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Finally, we want to express appreciation to the Operating Committee of the Funder Collaborative, professionals at the Jim Joseph Foundation, and the collaborative's Executive Director Sara Allen, all of whom have offered insights and perspectives that have informed our work.

—The Cross-Community Evaluation Team at Rosov Consulting (Wendy Rosov, Pearl Mattenson, Liat Sayfan, Shai Weener)

APPENDIX: 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.

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