



CRAFTING BBYO'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE: YEAR 2 INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT

12/2/2009

Lessons Learned

This report, supported by the Jim Joseph Foundation, highlights the BBYO Professional Development Institute's interim successes, identifies lessons learned, and provides recommendations for growth.

Crafting BBYO's Professional Development Institute: Year 2 Interim Evaluation Report

With support from the Jim Joseph Foundation (JJF), BBYO launched the Professional Development Institute (PDI) to create a workforce of experiential Jewish educators who will engage Jewish teens in vibrant Jewish learning experiences. The expectation is that PDI will *increase the capacity and commitment of talented, early-career Jewish professionals to build careers in Jewish communal institutions.*

The creation of PDI addresses a number of challenges faced by BBYO and the field of Jewish educational institutions as a whole:

- Recruit and retain talented Jewish professionals in the Jewish communal field who have skills in management, possess the ability to impart Judaic knowledge, model enthusiasm for living a Jewish life, and create pathways for teens to find personal relevance in Jewish traditions.
- Prevent difficulties with recruitment and retention from undermining program and service quality.

The goal of PDI is to provide its fellows with Judaic knowledge and management skills development simultaneously, and the opportunity to immediately put them to practice. As of December 2009, there are two cohorts with 14 and 10 fellows respectively. The award from JJF includes support for a third and last cohort recruited in 2010. Each fellow commits to three years of employment with BBYO and an additional two years working in the Jewish communal field.

While at BBYO, fellows earn an MBA from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University (a top 20 business school in the US) and a Certificate in Jewish Experiential Education from Hebrew College in Boston, designed to further the participants' Jewish skill sets.

In addition to the academic program, the Professional Development Institute is designed to support fellows through mentoring, social/professional networking, and post-graduate job placement in Jewish community. PDI professionals are dedicated to further craft and refine the program using marketing and communications dissemination, adapting PDI best practices, and targeted recruitment of fellows as key institute-level strategies.

The Jim Joseph Foundation contracted with BTW Informing Change (BTW) to co-create the PDI theory of change with BBYO and JJF professionals (See BBYO PDI Theory of Change) and conduct an evaluation of PDI development and outcomes.¹ The lessons learned presented here represent an interim report only, designed to share the progress PDI has made as it develops. The evaluation continues to gather quantitative and qualitative data through materials review, key informant telephone interviews, online surveys, and focus groups to assess the progress of PDI.

Understanding the life cycle of PDI provides an important context for how to measure its accomplishments at this midterm point. PDI has evolved beyond the initial development phase and is facing challenges typical of a program emerging from its start up phase: communicating the program vision to staff, stakeholders and participants; identifying and engaging participants and mentors; and continuing to improve key program elements.

¹ BTW Informing Change prepared the *Evaluation of the JJF/BBYO Professional Development Institute: Year Two Report for the Jim Joseph Staff & BBYO* which provided the basis for this document.

According to BTW, “PDI’s challenge is that it is riding it’s bicycle while it is building it”. An outcome of this challenging start-up phase is the need for significantly more integration of PDI components. PDI stakeholders (those formally involved in the program) have not yet experienced program elements as fully connected components. In fact, the complexities and demands of program operations have to some extent impeded holistic thinking about program integration. Significant and meaningful integration of disparate program elements are an important focus at this point in the institute’s development. **The critical lesson learned at Year 2 of PDI, according to BTW and BBYO, is that meaningful integration of program elements will further PDI success along both short and long term outcomes.**

INTERIM SUCCESSES

- BBYO and JJF are building a model professional development program to encourage innovation and change in Jewish communal institutions.
- BBYO recruited and engaged talented mentors who are leaders in the Jewish community.
- BBYO worked closely with the Kelley School of Business to tailor the MBA program to nonprofit business management.
- BBYO worked intensively with Hebrew College to develop and implement an informal Jewish education curriculum for PDI participants.
- PDI participants made several significant improvements to BBYO teen programs and operations.
- BBYO successfully cultivated a large applicant pool for Cohort 2 through professional networks, online social networking and traditional career fairs.
- Cohort 1 participants have strengthened their preexisting professional and personal relationships and report that they expect to remain close as peers for years to come.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Clarity and communication between program components within PDI are critical to success.

PDI participants reported satisfaction with the Kelley School of Business MBA program and appreciated that the program expectations and structure were clear. The Kelley Executive MBA was extant previous to PDI and participants benefitted from the well-developed structure. On the other hand, Hebrew College developed its certificate program specifically for PDI. Stakeholders have differing ideas of what constitutes rigorous Judaic curriculum and PDI participants themselves enter the institute with varied levels of Judaic knowledge. Hebrew College’s efforts to be flexible and accommodating have served to increase uncertainty around curriculum requirements and expectations. BBYO professionals worked with Hebrew College over the last year on curriculum development to create a structure and three year plan. As a result of conversations about these evaluation findings, a curriculum expert was hired by Hebrew college and assigned to PDI to further support development.

Recommendations: Increase connections between program components and provide clarity for all stakeholders (especially first year PDI participants) on all elements of the program focusing on the integration of different components. Streamline communication and dissemination of program information to participants and other stakeholders.

2. Mentoring and peer support are significant strengths of PDI.

Mentorship and peer support in academic and professional work are very valuable to PDI fellows. Fellows appreciated being part of a peer learning group and developing important professional networks they can depend on in the future. Connections among Cohort 1 participants were especially strong, as would be expected given that they knew each other prior to their PDI participation. Cohort 1 fellows reported that they expect to remain close to their cohort peers for years to come. Relationship and network building will continue to be a priority in future years, with extra attention to Cohorts 2 and 3.

Overall, participants and mentors felt they benefitted greatly from their relationships. Mentors offered participants perspective on the nonprofit and Jewish world, exposure to new fields, professional networking connections, and time management strategies. All of the mentors requested more consistent communication and information about BBYO strategic direction and PDI coursework. They also expressed interest in connecting with other mentors. Since mentors' roles can vary from personal coach to career counselor; mentors were unsure how to best support mentees in order to accomplish PDI goals. BBYO professional staff are increasing contact with mentors in order to improve structure and coordination of mentor program.

Recommendations: Improve communication and linkages between key stakeholder groups (PDI participants, mentors and supervisors), focusing on the application of academic learning, career path and BBYO "big picture". Further define stakeholder roles and contributions to the program.

3. Intentional effort must be made to integrate PDI fellows into BBYO organizational functioning in order to have a significant positive impact as expected.

The impact of PDI participants' management skills and Judaic knowledge on BBYO program differed by participant, position within BBYO and supervisor support. PDI has already had a positive effect on BBYO's retention rate. Before the establishment of PDI, BBYO's major challenge was high staff turnover which adversely impacted the quality and consistency of its teen programs. There was a lower overall turnover in the first year of the PDI program, which along with a number of socioeconomic reasons that may have contributed to this effect, included the impact of the PDI fellows who make a three year commitment to BBYO.

In its initial interviews, BTW found that the majority of the participants were committed to continuing to work in the Jewish community long-term and wanted to move into senior management positions. Almost half of the participants intend to work in youth serving organizations. Still, PDI participants struggled to recognize opportunities to apply new skills in their current work at BBYO.

In future years, it must be determined how to leverage the new skills of PDI participants to maximize benefit to BBYO as an organization. The year three Capstone program, taught by Kelley faculty and the BBYO Executive Director, will focus on key challenges facing BBYO and provide an actionable real world case study. BBYO Action projects will also provide opportunities to apply academic learning in a professional context.

Recommendations: Continue to look for meaningful ways to integrate PDI participants into BBYO operations. Provide PDI participants opportunities to reflect on learning and apply skills within BBYO.

4. In order to attain PDI program outcomes, it is critical to elevate the profile of PDI to potential applicants and likely future employers of PDI graduates.

Compared to the Cohort 1 internal BBYO applicant pool, the Cohort 2 external applicant pool was dramatically larger. Cohort 2 also had a very different profile than Cohort 1: they were slightly older, more experienced and predominantly male. Though Cohort 1 and 2 were very similar in their academic preparation, Cohort 2 appeared to be more prepared to take advantage of PDI based on their age and previous job experience. Reflecting on the two different recruitment strategies will be useful for Cohort 3 recruitment. Additional alternative recruitment processes may be support PDI and BBYO goals.

PDI participants were aware of the challenges of charting a career in Jewish communal work. Both Cohort 1 fellows and mentors were concerned that the Jewish communal world did not know about PDI. This could impede the ability of PDI graduate to easily find jobs in Jewish organizations. Mentors and supporting organizations can provide necessary support to assist PDI fellows find meaningful work for the required two years in Jewish organizations.

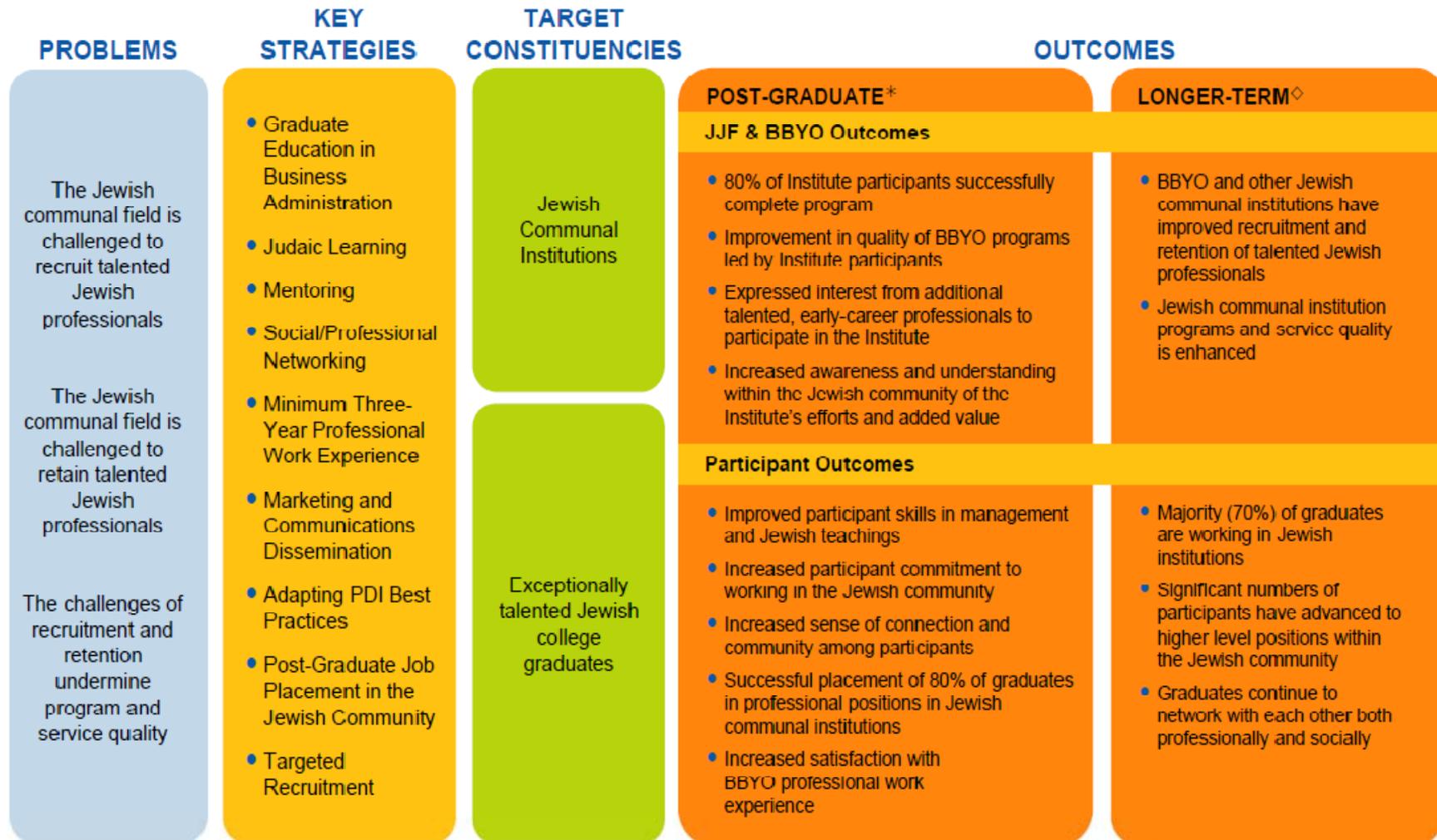
Recommendations: Reflect on the present recruitment process' match with PDI goals, consider alternative recruitment models, and develop a detailed plan to identify appropriate candidates. Develop and implement an outreach plan to inform the Jewish community about PDI and to begin to cultivate job opportunities for PDI participants' two-year Jewish communal work requirement.

CONCLUSION

The Professional Development Institute was designed to increase the capacity and commitment of talented, early-career Jewish professionals to build a career in Jewish communal institutions. Much has been accomplished by Year 2, but with an additional Cohort to recruit, and the obligation for further program integration and clarity, there is considerable work to be done. Recommendations documented here will serve to guide PDI to further develop the rigorous training and strong professional support that will prepare a third cohort of Jewish communal leaders.

Jim Joseph Foundation/BBYO PDI Theory of Change

PURPOSE: Increase the capacity and commitment of talented, early-career Jewish professionals to build a career in Jewish communal institutions.



* End of 3-year BBYO placement ◇ 5-10 years after completion of 3-year PDI program