CONTEXT: This theory of change builds on what the Jim Joseph Foundation has learned since its inception. As an established grantmaker, the Foundation is well positioned to continue some of its previous work while also proactively helping to shape the field of Jewish education today and for the future.

MISSION: The Foundation’s mission honors the legacy of Jim Joseph, who identified educating Jewish children, youth, and young adults as key to the Jewish future. To foster compelling, effective Jewish learning experiences for young Jews, the Foundation continually evolves its strategy to create meaningful and purpose-filled lives. Effective learning experiences have long-term influence on the ways learners think, feel, and behave. They empower learners to integrate the learning with their varied interests and identities. Compelling learning experiences enable learners to wrestle with topics of relevance to them in new and nuanced ways. They incorporate diverse voices and perspectives into the conversation.

The available array of Jewish learning experiences must constantly evolve and expand to serve current and future audiences of learners. They can take place in a wide range of settings including classrooms, homes, offices, camps, campuses, synagogues, retreat centers, community centers, service and travel experiences, and other public spaces. They are facilitated through various forms of interactive activities and content both online and offline. Through collaborative designing learning experiences, and through one-on-one conversations and relationships.

For learning experiences to have deep and enduring impact, the learners must have a sense of purpose and dedicate time over days, weeks, months, or longer.

YOUNG JEWS: The Foundation’s core audience for Jewish learning is all Jews from the United States recognizing that it is increasingly important to purposefully include the families and friends of these young Jews—whether they are Jewish or not—to create the most meaningful Jewish learning experiences for all.

CONNECTION, MEANING AND PURPOSE: These three complementary needs address our innate human desires to be in relationship with one another, to understand ourselves and what matters to us, and to make our own unique contributions to the world.

EXCELLENCE: The Foundation holds itself and its partners to the highest standards, routinely drawing upon best practices and expertise from outside the Jewish world.

TAKE RISKS, BE BOLD AND EXPERIMENT: Private independent foundations like the Jim Joseph Foundation have a unique role to play in supporting risk-taking and experimentation.

SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS: The Foundation seeks to maximize its impact through leading and partnering on large-scale, field-wide efforts to address important areas within Jewish education that are primed for change.

EFFECTIVE GRANTMAKING PRACTICES: The Foundation is dedicated to building close relationships with grantee partners and co-funders and to investing in multi-year support for organizational infrastructure, planning, and capacity building.

LISTEN, LEARN, AND BE ACCOUNTABLE: The Foundation promotes strategic decision making by actively listening to its beneficiaries and allowing their insights guide its work and by investing in research, evaluation, ongoing measurement, and the dissemination of learning.

DIVERSE VOICES AND PARTNERS: Jewish learning and the Jewish community will be richer when educators, educators and participants reflect the full diversity of today’s Jewish population. There is important work to be done to address a range of diversity, equity, and inclusion dimensions to attain this objective.

INTENTION: (Kavanah הָכוֹנָה): The Hebrew phrase chaz-kem יָשִּׂית בְּכָל הָעֵדֶֽוֹתָּם means strengthen and encourage. It is a reference to God’s words to Moses in Deuteronomy 31:6: “Give Joshua his instructions, and imbue him with strength and courage, for he will go before the head of this people, and he shall give them the land that you may only see.” This phrase highlights the Foundation’s ongoing intention to elevate the work of others in realizing its vision.

THE POWERFUL JEWISH LEARNING EXPERIENCES strategic priority expresses the Foundation’s commitment to strengthening and scaling the impact of programs and organizations that have outstanding track records for effectiveness in delivering high-quality Jewish learning experiences.

THE EXCEPTIONAL JEWISH LEADERS AND EDUCATORS strategic priority focuses on the key people who make Jewish learning possible: the educators themselves and the leaders of the Jewish professional organizations and communities who serve as change-makers and champions for Jewish learning.

THE R&D FOR THE FUTURE OF JEWISH LEARNING strategic priority recognizes that it is imperative for the Foundation to continuously generate fresh ideas to ensure that the menu of Jewish learning opportunities will remain relevant and exciting to a changing audience of learners.

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Leaders of all kinds—new and seasoned, professional and volunteer, CEOs and those in other leadership roles—play pivotal roles to play as catalysts, bridge-builders, influencers and thought leaders to help organizations evolve and strengthen to meet our communities’ changing needs.

Skilled Jewish educators are essential partners in the design and delivery of Jewish learning experiences. Many individuals may find themselves unexpectedly in the position of facilitating Jewish learning experiences for others. The Foundation considers all of these individuals to be Jewish educators, even if they do not see themselves in that role. The Foundation supports professionals, volunteers, rabbis, teachers, youth advisors, counselors, students, mentors, artists, trip leaders, peers, children, partners, grandparents, and other adult role models.

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