



# LEVERAGING SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

## SCALING A SUCCESSFUL HILLEL PILOT PROGRAM

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# Executive Summary

In 2008, **Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life**, with generous support from the **Jim Joseph Foundation**, began testing an innovative program that leveraged peer networks and relationships to help Hillel achieve its goal of “doubling the number of Jewish students who are involved in Jewish life and who have meaningful Jewish experiences.” Piloted at 10 colleges, Hillel’s **Senior Jewish Educators and Campus Entrepreneurs Initiative (SJE/CEI)** recruited and trained student interns to engage their campus peers in Jewish conversation and activities; it also featured “Jewish educators” whose role was to help stimulate deeper learning and growth among students interested in exploring their Judaism.

The idea of leveraging social networks to increase social impact is not new, but it has received heightened focus in the last few years.<sup>1</sup> Networks of individuals can be mobilized to produce specific outcomes, exchange information, facilitate learning and growth, share resources and services, and align action toward a common goal, among other things. Indeed, it was the mobilizing potential of networks that prompted the Jim Joseph Foundation to provide nearly \$11 million of support for the pilot over five years — the largest single investment ever made to impact Jewish student life. (The program began in 2008 and runs through the end of 2012.)

Fortunately for its investors, the Hillel SJE/CEI pilot program has proved extremely successful in its first four years; by the end of 2012, an estimated 22,000 Jewish students will have been newly engaged on 10 pilot campuses through the program. A two-year external evaluation found that increased student interaction with the program’s interns and educators was positively correlated with their learning and growth. Consequently, **Hillel’s Schusterman International Center (Hillel’s SIC)** — the “hub” of the federated Hillel network — has now decided to scale this program to many more campuses beginning in 2013. In preparation, SIC spent the last year stepping back, taking stock of the current program, assessing lessons learned, and planning for adaptation and scale.

Hillel’s current aspiration is to scale a slightly modified version of the pilot program to 60+ more campuses in the next five years, training roughly 2,400 interns and educators to meaningfully engage an additional 133,000 students in Jewish life. It also hopes to inspire another 90+ campuses to adopt a lighter-touch, lower-cost engagement model, reaching an additional 64,000 Jewish students. Together, these efforts would impact nearly 200,000 Jewish students — approximately one half of the entire Jewish higher-education population in the U.S. In order to achieve this goal, Hillel will need to raise close to \$40 million over

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<sup>1</sup> Monitor Institute has published several other reports and case studies documenting the use of networks for social change, including “Catalyzing Networks for Social Change,” “Connected Citizens,” and “Transformer: A Case Study of the RE-AMP Energy Network.” These reports, along with resources from others, can be found on our website and blog at [www.monitorinstitute.com](http://www.monitorinstitute.com).

five years. When compared to the original investment of nearly \$11 million (for 10 campuses over five years), the economies of scale become apparent: while the initial cost was roughly \$1 million per campus, now it will be roughly a quarter of that amount. Yet the hope is that the overall outcomes and impact will be similar.

This case study summarizes the lessons learned from the first four years of the SJE/CEI pilot program, as well as additional learning surfaced during the “planning for scale” project. Many of these lessons are relevant to any group — nonprofit or funder — seeking to scale its impact by leveraging social networks:

- 1 Networks can generate multiple layers of impact in a human system.** The SJE/CEI pilot program had positive outcomes at many levels: on participants (engaged students); on network leaders (interns); on Jewish educators; on the campus Hillel culture and approach; on participating Hillel directors; on Hillel's SIC as the hub; and, on the overall national network of Hillels.
- 2 Optimizing networks can require making tradeoffs.** Because networks have many kinds of impact, they can be optimized for different goals. Funders and grantees should be clear about what they want to achieve, then optimize the network for those outcomes while helping participants manage various tensions, such as balancing breadth and depth of reach.
- 3 Design for scale from the outset.** The SJE/CEI pilot was designed to minimize risk and maximize quality; for example, the Jim Joseph Foundation and Hillel invested significantly in hiring Jewish educators — a costly input. But scaling the program *without* reducing these costs would not be feasible. Hillel was thus challenged to find ways to address this new hurdle without diminishing the impact of its program.

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- 4 Manage the tension between standardization and customization.** One of the challenges of any distributed network of organizations is that program design must be standardized enough to enable adaptation across affiliates and create similar quality of outcomes, while also being flexible enough to fit the local campus context.
- 5 Build in measurement and evaluation.** It's important for any program scaling to multiple sites to establish shared metrics that align with the program's goals and then evaluate progress. Hillel's SIC created software for tracking "engagement" and paid for a third-party evaluation, but could have done more to create a common data baseline from the outset.
- 6 Learn and share together.** In order to maximize learning across campuses, Hillel's SIC established "communities of practice" (CoPs) for each of the pilot program's participant cohorts: interns, supervisors, Jewish educators, and directors. Every single group reported that these CoPs contributed greatly to their own learning, growth, and development.
- 7 Over-communicate your progress.** Some Hillel affiliates that were not part of the pilot program complained that the lessons learned weren't being shared more broadly, and that they'd been excluded. In hindsight, Hillel's SIC and the Jim Joseph Foundation could have used some of their seed funding to create a strategy for communicating the pilot program's progress and findings more broadly.

Monitor Institute was asked to write this case study based on its involvement helping Hillel's SIC develop a strategy for scaling the peer engagement pilot program. Monitor Institute was not involved in the program's initial design or implementation, nor was it involved in formal program evaluation. Rather, the Institute was asked to help Hillel take stock of the lessons it has learned over the past four years — and formulate a strategic approach to scaling its engagement model to an additional 150+ campuses in the next five years. All information in this case study comes from work conducted during this "planning for scale" project, including direct observation of sites, analysis of existing and new data (including interviews, conversations with Hillel staff and leaders, and field surveys), and Hillel's own internal program documentation, including an external program evaluation. Where appropriate, we have cited additional sources of information. Further information about the program is available on Hillel's website; greater detail from the formal evaluation is available in the *Senior Jewish Educator and Campus Entrepreneur's Initiative Two-Year Evaluation Summary Report*.

# Using Existing Social Networks to Reach the Unengaged

Founded in 1923 at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, **Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life** is the world's largest Jewish campus organization and network. In 2006, in support of its vision “for every Jewish student to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life,” Hillel’s Schusterman International Center (Hillel’s SIC) — the “hub” of the federated Hillel network — set a bold goal to “double the number of Jewish students who are involved in Jewish life and who have meaningful Jewish experiences.” While research showed that most Jewish students were proud of their heritage, only a minority were actively involved in their campus Hillel.<sup>2</sup> Yet involvement in Hillel during undergraduate and graduate studies has been shown to increase students’ enrichment and commitment to Jewish life and values; hence, engaging more students was critical to both Hillel’s campus goals and its overarching global aspiration.

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To help “double the number of students,” Hillel’s SIC decided to create a campus-based program that would leverage Jewish students’ social networks to engage their peers, including those typically not involved in Jewish campus life. In 2008, Hillel received a \$10.7 million grant from the **Jim Joseph Foundation** to pilot this program — called the **Senior Jewish Educators and Campus Entrepreneurs Initiative (SJE/CEI)** — on 10 campuses over five years; the program will conclude at the end of 2012. (Outside of the Jim Joseph Foundation grant, Hillel’s SIC also

<sup>2</sup> According to two national student surveys conducted in 2006 and 2012 by the polling firm Penn, Schoen, Berland. The first survey results are published in a monograph, “Distinctively Jewish, Universally Human,” by Beth Cousens, 2007.

chose to adapt a looser and less expensive program on 40+ other campuses.) The pilot program was designed to test whether leveraging students' peer networks would engage more uninvolved students in Jewish life and help them to grow as Jews. Key components of the pilot program model are outlined in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: KEY COMPONENTS OF THE SJE/CEI PILOT PROGRAM MODEL**

### JEWISH EDUCATORS

Jewish educators were recruited, hired, and placed on the 10 campuses to engage in conversations with students, build student learning communities, and infuse Jewish content and conversation into the activities of the campus Hillel. These educators were paid a competitive salary and were recruited from rabbinical schools and other Jewish education programs. Their function on campus was different from that of a traditional rabbi and more focused on Jewish education, broadly defined. They also worked closely with local Hillel directors.

### STUDENT INTERNS

Student interns (sometimes called “campus entrepreneurs”) were recruited, trained, and paid a small stipend to target uninvolved student networks on campus. Twelve interns per campus were asked to build relationships and catalyze conversation about Jewish learning with 50 to 60 unique students each year. Initially, there was a focus on hiring interns who could reach students not typically engaged in on-campus Jewish life by connecting with them through more peripheral social networks; however, this focus expanded over time.

### CROSS-CAMPUS LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND CENTRAL SUPPORT

Hillel's SIC also provided centralized capacity-building and technical assistance to support implementation and help the 10 campuses share their learning through facilitated communities of practice. Hillel's SIC also provided general administrative support, including centralized training for program leaders (Jewish educators, Hillel directors, intern supervisors, etc.), a formal external evaluation, and communications and marketing support.

### CAPACITY AND INNOVATION GRANTS TO SUPPORT MODEL ADOPTION

To encourage other campuses beyond the original 10 to experiment with peer engagement methods, Hillel's SIC offered small “capacity grants” of \$10,000 to \$30,000 per campus. Over the pilot program's five years, a total of 46 campuses received these grants (which, notably, were too small to enable them to hire a full cadre of interns or a Jewish educator). These early adaptation efforts represented a less comprehensive version of the original pilot program. While they had some success, results were not as significant as those of the full pilot program.

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# Getting Results with Networked Approaches

Leveraging networks — of individuals and institutions — to scale social impact has received heightened focus in the last few years.<sup>3</sup> It is now widely understood that networks of individuals can be mobilized to produce outcomes, exchange information, facilitate learning and growth, share resources and services, and align action toward a common goal — among other things. As a recent Jim Joseph Foundation publication states, “The embrace and mastery of networks by organizations is a key to imbuing the multifaceted identities of today’s Jewish youth with meaning and connection, and connecting them through relationships to Jewish tradition, community, and values.”<sup>4</sup>

It was an interest in nurturing networks of young Jewish adults that prompted the Jim Joseph Foundation to fund Hillel’s pilot program. The hypothesis was that vibrant networks of Jewish students on campus would increase both the *breadth* and *depth* of students’ overall engagement in Jewish life. Breadth, because networks create a multiplier effect — the more students from diverse networks on campus were engaged, the more they would recruit and draw in their peers. Depth, because embedding Jewish content and conversation in these networks of personal relationships would create greater individual learning and growth and appeal to the Millennial generation more than some traditional approaches.

In 2008 — when the pilot program launched — the Jim Joseph Foundation also hired Research Success Technologies (ReST) and Ukeles Associates to conduct a formal two-year evaluation in order to determine whether this theory was working in practice.<sup>5</sup> The evaluation sought to answer several fundamental questions: *Did greater numbers of students engage with Jewish life on campus because of the program’s Jewish educators and student interns? Did students grow Jewishly as a result of this interaction? How?* A few of the evaluation’s key findings are summarized below:

■ **Greater student engagement.** As a direct result of the program, about 14,000 students on the 10 campuses engaged in Jewish life during the two-year evaluation period. Local campuses were required to document and track the students they engaged; both the educators and the interns came close to hitting their target numbers on each campus. These initial findings provided important validation of the effectiveness of the peer engagement approach in increasing the *breadth* of Hillel’s reach.

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3 Monitor Institute has published several other reports and case studies documenting the use of networks for social change, including “Catalyzing Networks for Social Change,” “Connected Citizens,” and “Transformer: A Case Study of the ReAmp Network.” These reports, along with resources from others, can be found on the Institute’s website ([www.monitorinstitute.net](http://www.monitorinstitute.net)) and on its blog, [www.workingwikily.net](http://www.workingwikily.net).

4 From “Senior Jewish Educator and Campus Entrepreneur’s Initiative Two-Year Evaluation Summary Report,” by Jennifer Zwilling and Adene Sacks.

5 The Jim Joseph Foundation hired Research Success Technologies and Ukeles Associates, Inc. to conduct a formal two-year evaluation. The evaluation was carried out by Professor Steven M. Cohen, Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz, Dr. Jack Ukeles, and Dr. Minna Wolf. For greater detail, please see the evaluation summary cited in the previous footnote.



- **Greater Jewish learning and growth.** Students engaged via the pilot program reported that they grew Jewishly as a result of their interaction with a Jewish educator and/or intern — in other words, the program provided *depth* as well. The more meetings they had with an educator, the more Jewish growth students reported on all measures. Notably, self-reported Jewish growth was greater for students who had weaker Jewish backgrounds. For those students who participated in Taglit-Birthright Israel trips, follow-up with a Jewish educator or intern enhanced the impact of these trips.
- **Greater leadership development.** Evaluation data also showed that educators' interactions with highly engaged students (including, in some cases, the interns) moved them to become *connectors* of students and *organizers* of Jewish life even after their participation in the program ended. This suggests that knowing a Jewish educator was an important precursor to students stepping up further as leaders in Hillel. While this was an unintended positive result, it proved an important point of consideration in Hillel's decision to scale its program to additional campuses.

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# Recommendations for Scaling Peer Networks to Other Campuses

The evaluation data provided compelling evidence that the SJE/CEI pilot program produced measurable outcomes around both *breadth* of student engagement and *depth* of student growth. The findings also pointed to peer networks as an important component of developing next-generation Jewish student and community leaders. Given these outcomes, Hillel's SIC and the Jim Joseph Foundation became interested in taking this pilot program to scale. In mid-2011, the Jim Joseph Foundation hired Monitor Institute to help Hillel's SIC determine how to scale its peer engagement program to other campuses. The Monitor team worked side-by-side with the professional leadership of Hillel's SIC, as well as a steering committee that included a member of Hillel's Board of Directors and local Hillel directors. The insights presented below emerged from this collective planning process.

The biggest overall challenge that Hillel faced was one of optimization, or doing more with less. Hillel's SIC and potential funders wanted to increase the number of campuses adopting peer engagement while maintaining high levels of quality and impact and significantly reducing program costs. While scaling the original core model to all 150+ of the campuses that Hillel's SIC hoped to reach would achieve both breadth and depth, it would be cost-prohibitive if funded at the same per-campus level as the pilot. Instead, the group decided that Hillel's SIC would offer a “core” program model (a slightly modified and less costly version of the pilot program) to campuses that demonstrated criteria associated with success and that agreed to adhere to stricter implementation guidelines and evaluation;

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it was estimated that about 60 to 70 campuses would meet these criteria. Hillel's SIC would also offer “open source” resources (manuals, training, etc.) to other campuses interested in adopting a lighter-touch version of the program with fewer hurdles, less oversight, and more room to innovate. This two-tiered solution would meet Hillel's goals for breadth and depth while also minimizing its financial investment. This modified model would allow campuses to select the approach that worked best for them.



The planning group also set realistic scaling targets for Hillel. If an estimated 60 to 70 campuses adopted the core model, Hillel would train 2,400 interns as leaders, reaching 133,000 Jewish students over five years. By Monitor's estimates, 60,000 of those students reached through the program would be actively engaged. If an additional 90+ campuses adopted a lighter-touch model (without a paid Jewish educator), then another 65,000 students would be reached (32,000 of whom would be meaningfully engaged), resulting in substantial progress toward Hillel's overall goals. In order to achieve this goal, Hillel would need to raise close to \$40 million over five years. When compared to the original investment of nearly \$11 million (for 10 campuses over five years), the economies of scale became apparent: whereas the pilot program cost roughly \$1 million per campus, the cost per campus would now be roughly a quarter of that amount. The hope was that the overall outcomes and impact would nevertheless be similar — but this remains to be proved.

The planning group also decided that each local Hillel adopting the core program model should aspire to hit certain engagement targets in order to reach these larger goals. These core campuses would be required to engage 40 percent of Jewish students on campus (defined as three or more meaningful interactions with a Jewish educator or intern over three years). To achieve this, these campuses

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would first need to identify nearly 70 percent of Jews on campus — significantly more students than most campus Hillels currently know by name. Lastly, it was estimated that participating campuses would likely cultivate roughly 20 percent of these Jewish students into “leaders and learners.” These targets created a “ladder of engagement” for each campus adopting the core model, with corresponding metrics: 70 percent, 40 percent, and 20 percent.



In addition to helping Hillel clarify its aspirations for scale and set specific growth targets, Monitor also helped the organization understand and codify essential elements of the program model and made specific recommendations for scaling, including the following:

- **Optimize for both breadth (reach) and depth (growth).** The evaluation findings underscored the ways in which the pilot program’s two key cohorts — interns and educators — interacted to greater effect. While interns were successful at reaching their peers, they were less effective at promoting real Jewish growth without the help of a Jewish educator. But students who had contact with an educator grew more on all dimensions. Thus educators were a critical element to achieving the overall *depth* of program impact. Jewish educators also increased the leadership potential of interns and were responsible for greater institutional change at the campus Hillel. *We recommended that the program combine its goals of breadth and depth, leveraging both interns and educators on campuses to the extent possible.*
- **Create a less costly “Jewish educator” role and build a talent pipeline.** Full-time Jewish educators were the main cost driver in the pilot program — but they were also a key driver of impact. So the group explored less costly ways for campuses to incorporate Jewish learning in order to make scaling financially

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feasible. Several modifications to the full-time educator model were proposed — including part-time educators — and will be piloted and evaluated. This may necessitate developing a national talent pipeline and partnerships to cultivate and place more Jewish educators. *We recommended testing variations on the Jewish educator model designed to reduce costs without significantly decreasing impact.*



- **Include student leaders and target diverse campus networks.** While the pilot program was originally intended to increase the engagement of *uninvolved* students, targeting only this group became problematic. First, some students were involved in Hillel but less “advanced” in their Jewish growth, while other students were uninvolved but had stronger levels of Jewish identity. Second, all students, including leaders, were on personal Jewish journeys that the program advanced, no matter their starting point. *We recommended expanding the target group to include “diverse networks of students” and making more explicit the leadership development component.*
- **Expand from a tight program model to a looser engagement methodology over time.** On pilot campuses, the program’s engagement practices — such as building relationships, “talking Jewish,” and promoting student-led activities — became embedded in the campus Hillel after a few years. In fact, for most of the pilot campuses, engagement became an overarching approach to their work. Still, it was noted that it would be easier for new campuses to implement a defined program first, then begin to innovate and embed this approach in other areas over time. *We recommended that Hillel’s SIC offer program guidelines to new campuses; over time, these campuses can innovate around the core model and incorporate principles of engagement into other activities.*

“ On pilot campuses, the program’s engagement practices—such as building relationships, ‘talking Jewish,’ and promoting student-led activities—became embedded in the campus Hillel. ”

■ **Continue to support and enable peer learning.** Hillel holds a summer institute to train engagement interns and supervisors and convene peer-based communities of practice. These trainings and peer learning serve to prepare interns and supervisors to implement the program, but they also allow them to create their own professional networks and capture, codify, and share their learning more effectively. Once established, these networks and relationships can be leveraged to transfer best practices around the Hillel network more quickly. Training pilots will be conducted during the coming years to experiment with timing and location and to ensure accessibility to the greatest number of campuses. *We recommended that Hillel's SIC continue to provide network-wide training, cross-campus learning, and communities of practice.*

■ **Centralize some capabilities and services at the hub (Hillel's Schusterman International Center).** While program implementation happens locally, other capabilities can best be delivered “at scale”; in addition to training, this includes evaluation, knowledge management and sharing, overall communication, and some fundraising. Hillel's SIC already has a national database and software program that campuses use to track progress against their engagement targets. Additionally, Hillel's SIC should support ongoing evaluation across the network to capture learning and measure success; it should pay particular attention to measuring the relative impact of different program variables. Lastly, Hillel's SIC should conduct a national fundraising campaign to underwrite scaling the program to additional campuses, and it should manage the associated branding and communications. *We recommended that Hillel's SIC continue to provide for network-wide evaluation, knowledge management, overall communication, and some fundraising.*

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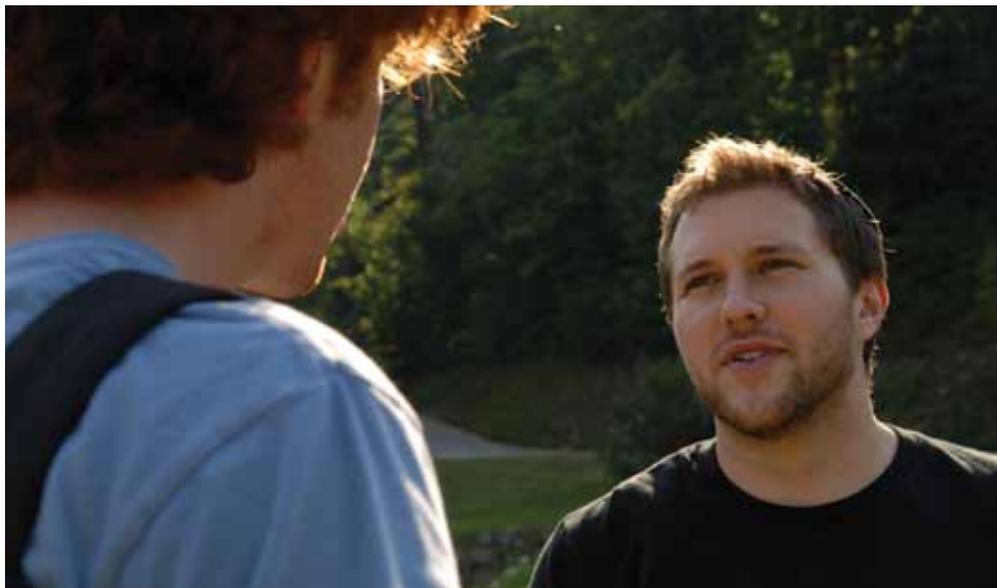
# Lessons Learned for Funders and Practitioners

Stepping back from the specific program details and recommendations for scaling, several overarching lessons from piloting and running this type of network-based program stand out. Indeed, a number of interesting discoveries during this process are worth sharing — including some ideas that, while not new, serve to validate existing research on social networks.

**1** **Networks can generate multiple layers of impact in a human system.** Because there are many layers of network impact, and because networks are dynamic human systems, it is often much harder to tease out cause and effect relationships or effectively measure the various outcomes of using a network approach. In fact, systems mapping or network mapping might be better tools for illustrating these different dynamics than more linear models like “theories of change” or logic models. In this case, the SJE/CEI pilot program’s multiple layers of impact include:

- The impact on *participants* in terms of their own connectivity, learning, and Jewish growth, as validated by the formal external evaluation
- The impact on those tapped as *network leaders* (including, in some cases, student interns) in terms of their own growth as leaders, connectors, and organizers of Jewish life on campus
- The impact on *Jewish educators* stemming from being part of a national community of practice, accelerating the transfer of knowledge from campus to campus, and producing a pipeline of future educators and leaders for the Jewish community

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- The impact on each pilot *campus Hillel's* culture, mindset, and approach of shifting from more traditional programs to a more decentralized, student-led approach to engagement
- The impact on local Hillel *directors* from participating in the program and working with Jewish educators; most felt reenergized and motivated by the wider impacts of the program and enjoyed collaboration with the educators as their thought partners
- The impact on *Hillel's SIC* from acting as a convener of this network; in fact, this program and approach have now become central to Hillel's strategy going forward

**2 Optimizing networks can require making tradeoffs.** Because networks have multiple layers of impact, they can be optimized for different goals and outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Regardless, funders and grantees should be clear about what it is they hope their network will achieve and then try to optimize for those outcomes — which might sometimes mean focusing more on some aspects and less on others. In this case, the primary goal was to engage more students (breadth/reach), more deeply (depth/learning) — but each pilot campus had to hold both these goals in tension and not be pulled too far in either direction. If they overemphasized reach, they would end up just counting the number of students touched and neglect the important qualitative element of human growth. If they only focused on depth, they might go deep with an elite subset of students but not reach more peripheral or diverse networks on campus. It's also worth noting that from the outset, Hillel's SIC wasn't seeking to impact the Jewish educators and directors or the campus Hillel culture and mindset; these were all positive unintended consequences of the pilot program — some of which haven't even been formally evaluated or documented. Going forward, Hillel will need to continue articulating the primary goal(s) of its networks, help campuses understand these desired outcomes, and help them manage the various tradeoffs.

**3 Design for scale from the outset.** Hillel's peer-network engagement program represents a successful social innovation in the Jewish world — one with potentially greater application beyond this organization and sector. However, the initial pilot program was designed to minimize risk and maximize quality, and was based on a “slow hunch” without proof of concept. As a consequence, the Jim Joseph Foundation and Hillel spent a lot of money hiring talented Jewish educators at market-rate salaries and investing significantly in a robust pilot program that only reached 10 campuses — effectively designing a Lexus for a Toyota market. In fact, the Jewish educators were the single most costly program element (costing nearly half a million dollars per campus over five years). While the educators did indeed have substantial impact, the cost also makes it

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<sup>6</sup> Others have explored in more detail the various purposes and types of networks — including learning networks, engagement networks, innovation networks, and “production” networks. A useful reference is Madeleine Taylor and Pete Plastrik's “Net Gains: A Network-Builder's Handbook.”

more difficult to scale the program to other campuses, where raising even an additional \$50,000 might represent a significant portion of their operating budget. When piloting a program, it is helpful to give careful consideration to the overall capacity of the network — including budget levels and ability to absorb and sustain an expensive program. (Of course, had the Jewish educator component not been included, it's also possible the pilot program wouldn't have produced such impressive results.)

**4** **Manage the tension between standardization and customization.** One of the challenges of any distributed network is that program design must be standardized enough to enable adaptation across affiliates and ensure similar quality outcomes, while also being flexible enough to fit the local context. In the business sector, taking a tightly controlled cookie-cutter approach to franchising is important for quality control; in the nonprofit sector, adapting a program model to the local context is important for creating greater relevance and buy-in. This means managing the tension between control and letting go, between “top down” and “bottom up.” In the case of scaling networks, this is doubly true — each human system will be slightly different, so being tight on “expected outcomes” (setting a high bar on anticipated results) while staying looser on process (how you get there) is more important. Contrary to popular opinion, networks don't all have to be completely bottom up; they can also benefit significantly from facilitated strategic planning, detailed codification of a model, top-down evaluation, and knowledge sharing.

“ One of the challenges of any distributed network is that program design must enable adaptation across affiliates and ensure similar quality outcomes, while being flexible enough to fit the local context. ”



**5 Build in measurement and evaluation.** It is important for any program seeking to scale to multiple sites to establish shared metrics across the system that align with the program's goals. This is true for nonaffiliated groups seeking to align action around shared goals as well as affiliates that share a similar mission and vision. In this case, Hillel's SIC created a shared software platform called REACH to track "engagement" metrics on each campus (though there were some challenges to adopting this platform). Hillel's SIC also paid for a formal third-party evaluation, which validated the model and captured important lessons learned. At the outset, Hillel's SIC could have done more to create a common baseline of data that campuses used as a starting point, as well as a shared understanding of anticipated results and corresponding methods for measuring both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

**6 Learn and share together.** One of the biggest benefits of supporting social networks — particularly when learning is explicitly embedded in the design — is the ability of these networks to help people share information and develop a collective intelligence across a larger system. To that end, one of the most high-impact actions that Hillel took early on was to create "communities of practice" (CoPs) for the pilot program's various cohorts: interns, supervisors, Jewish educators, and directors. Every single group reported how beneficial these CoPs had been to their own learning, growth, and development, as well as to the success of the program. They have all advocated for continuing this approach to peer learning. This is an experience that others seeking to scale network approaches should take to heart: just because a network is focused on "production" (outcomes) doesn't mean it can't also benefit just as greatly from shared learning.

**7 Over-communicate your progress.** In decentralized networks, local sites (in this case, Hillel campuses) can become isolated silos if they aren't given opportunities to communicate and connect. Many Hillel affiliate campuses that were not part of the pilot complained that they didn't know what was happening with the peer engagement pilot program, that lessons weren't being shared more broadly, and that Hillel's SIC wasn't scaling the program quickly enough. Within the Hillel ecosystem, this created a dynamic of "haves" and "have-nots." Much of this was due to a lack of greater communication capacity at Hillel's SIC headquarters. But in hindsight, Hillel and the Jim Joseph Foundation could have spent more funding on a communications strategy that would share their progress and learning with other campuses and manage expectations about rollout. Now that the scaling process is underway, it will be important to communicate to all stakeholders through a variety of communication strategies. The communities of practice, along with the annual summer institute and online platforms, will be important mechanisms for sharing knowledge within the network.

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## Conclusion

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The Jim Joseph Foundation and Hillel's Schusterman International Center took a risk with their initial peer-engagement pilot program — a risk that has paid off significantly. Their emerging approach to leveraging networks as a vehicle for social change was so new that there were very few roadmaps for such work five years ago; even today, the roadmaps are few and far between. As this area of study continues to emerge, our hope is that this case study will both contribute to the research base and inspire other funders and nonprofits to try similar network-based approaches to constituent engagement as a way of magnifying their social impact. Meanwhile, this report's authors and contributors welcome both your feedback and your stories.

## About the Authors

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# About the Institutions

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## ABOUT MONITOR INSTITUTE

Monitor Institute is a social-purpose, for-profit company that surfaces and spreads *best practices* in public problem solving and pioneers *next practices* — breakthrough approaches to addressing social and environmental challenges. We partner with mission-driven organizations and their leaders, helping them make the hard choices and take the necessary actions to reach a new level of impact. Our approach marries our deep grounding in strategy, networks, social innovation and human systems with the fundamentals of professional advisory services — effective project management, skilled facilitation and well-timed intervention. As part of the global strategy firm Monitor Group, we are able to draw on the strategy, innovation, marketing and change management expertise as well as the knowledge and experience of our global colleagues in over 20 offices worldwide.

## ABOUT THE JIM JOSEPH FOUNDATION

The Jim Joseph Foundation, established in 2006, is committed to a sustained program of grant making in pursuit of a vision that leads to ever-increasing numbers of young Jews engaged in ongoing Jewish learning and choosing to live vibrant Jewish lives. The Foundation uses all of its resources to foster compelling, effective Jewish learning for young Jews in the United States. It has awarded \$250 million in its first six years of existence.

## ABOUT HILLEL: THE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMPUS LIFE

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world that provides opportunities for Jewish students at more than 550 colleges and universities to explore and celebrate Jewish life through its global network.

Hillel's mission is to enrich the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich Jewish people and the world. Hillel student leaders, professionals, and lay leaders are dedicated to creating a pluralistic, welcoming, and inclusive environment for Jewish college students, where they are encouraged to grow intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

Hillel's Schusterman International Center is the headquarters for the global Hillel network. Its mission is to support the larger field of affiliates.

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or the Jim Joseph Foundation: [info@jimjosephfoundation.org](mailto:info@jimjosephfoundation.org)



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