



# EMERGING TRENDS: INSIGHTS FROM THE

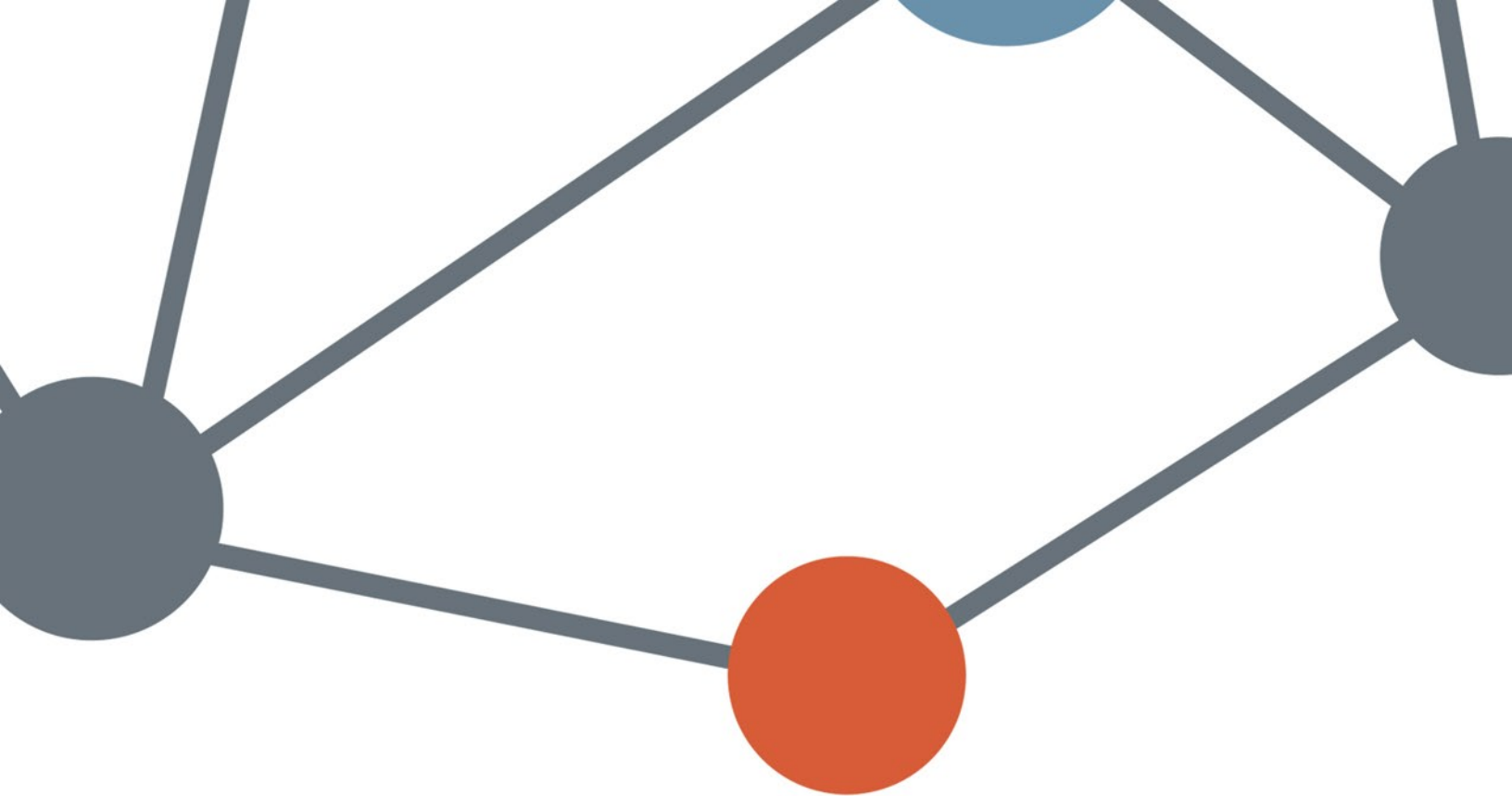


**JEWISH TEEN**  
Education & Engagement  
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE

A companion to the  
Year 3 Cross-Community  
Evaluation Report



SEPT 2018



## OVERVIEW

The Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative is an unprecedented collaboration of national and local funders working together to develop, nurture and scale new approaches to teen engagement.

Teens today live in a rapidly-changing world, impacted by monumental sociological forces. In recognition of this, more than five years ago the Jim Joseph Foundation brought together 10 communities to begin co-investing in new teen engagement efforts that would be informed by up-to-the-minute research and data. The communities led intensive community-wide planning processes and designed multi-faceted initiatives sensitive to local needs and featuring strong local partnerships. The participating communities today are united by six shared Measures of Success and are guided by Outcomes Which Positively Affect the Lives of Jewish Teens, a paradigm shift that demands that educators and the institutions in which they work deeply consider their core mission and now ask “how can our work help this teen thrive as a human being in today’s complex and challenging world?”

We invite you to read more about each of the communities at the end of this report.

- Sara Allen

Director, Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative



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## SHARED FRAMEWORKS

The communities invest in both a local evaluation and a Cross-Community Evaluation (CCE) to understand the impact of the multi-community system through which they are linked. We encourage you to read the [companion CCE Report](#), a set of 18 findings stemming from an analysis of quantitative and qualitative local data from 8 communities in 2017.

While the initiatives are still in the early stages and responding to real-time learning and observation, we are eager to share five emerging trends we have identified with the field:



## 1 EMPOWERMENT

Communities put teens in the driver's seat of their own experiences.

- Today's teens are comfortable finding and using their voice to make change.
- They expect - and demand - to be heard.
- In the world of Jewish engagement, empowering teens to authentically shape their own Jewish experiences for themselves and friends can increase relevance and meaning.
- Funder Collaborative community initiatives embrace the notion of creating ways to allow teens to architect their own journeys in a variety of ways: by creating programming for their peers, in reaching out to their friends to make sure they're aware of opportunities, and even making decisions about major grants for teen programming.
- While putting teens in the driver's seat may present some challenges if they are unprepared or unsupported, this approach also yields tremendously positive outcomes.

Read more about what we're learning in our article

[\*\*"Beyond a Seat at the Table: Real World Models That Empower Teens."\*\*](#)



## 2 DISCOVERY

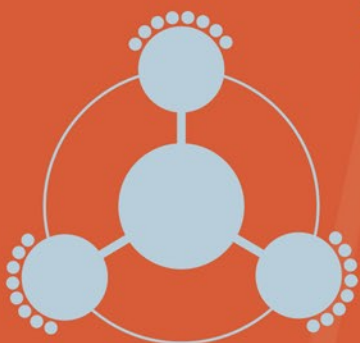


Discovery is a critical part of engagement

- A recurring theme is the difficulty teens, parents and even Jewish professionals have in finding out about local Jewish opportunities.
- By developing online portals and searchable digital databases, the communities are the marketing power of all local organizations who post their events, and creating genuine value for the community.
- The efforts aim to drive traffic, create useful digital experiences such as community calendars, and aspire to measure and prove that these robust online initiatives can result in greater in-person Jewish engagement.
- While a primary goal of these portals is to create a hub for teens to connect with each other, quite often parents are primary users of the sites. Thus, communities adjust their marketing and content-generation strategies to serve this audience.
- An excellent example of this trend is FindYourSummer.org a searchable database of summer experiences and a cornerstone of the New York Teen Initiative.

Read a candid [behind-the-scenes look](#) at the challenges and successes to developing an ambitious portal.

## 3 ECOSYSTEM



Success means building and nurturing an ecosystem

- As the initiatives evolve, it is increasingly clear that an ecosystem surrounds the teens themselves: community partners, supervisors, lay leaders, professionals and parents all directly and indirectly impact teen engagement.
- Each of these stakeholders warrant an engagement strategy themselves to ensure they are inspired and equipped to advocate for teens' needs and spur teens' involvement in Jewish life.
- As the CCE report details, a teen's Jewish engagement in high school is closely related to the level of engagement of tweens in middle school; several communities are therefore expanding their outreach and programming into middle school to develop early relationships with teens and their parents.
- Parents' active role in program decision-making for teens is a reflection of the vastly different role parents play in teens' lives today. Research shows that today's teens are closer to their parents than previous generations. Especially in the early teen years, parents require targeted marketing and outreach.
- Critically, the initiatives have recognized that parents themselves are often seeking a supportive community to support parenting today's teens, and many of the initiatives now offer workshops and community-building activities for parents.



## 4 EDUCATORS



Creating lasting change requires skilled and capable educators

- After uniting around a new paradigm of teen-centric engagement, the initiatives quickly understood that developing a cadre of knowledgeable and capable educators and youth professionals would be critical to achieving their desired outcomes.
- One of the six Measures of Success focuses solely on increasing the ability and competency of youth professionals in key areas, and aspires to position teen education as a valued profession.
- Evaluation surveys of youth workers capture their commitment and genuine love for helping Jewish teens see value and meaning in Jewish life, as well as the vital skills they seek to develop.

Read more about the initiatives' commitment to professional development in **"Training the Educators We'll Always Remember"** and the youth professional survey results in the companion CCE report.

## 5 WELLNESS



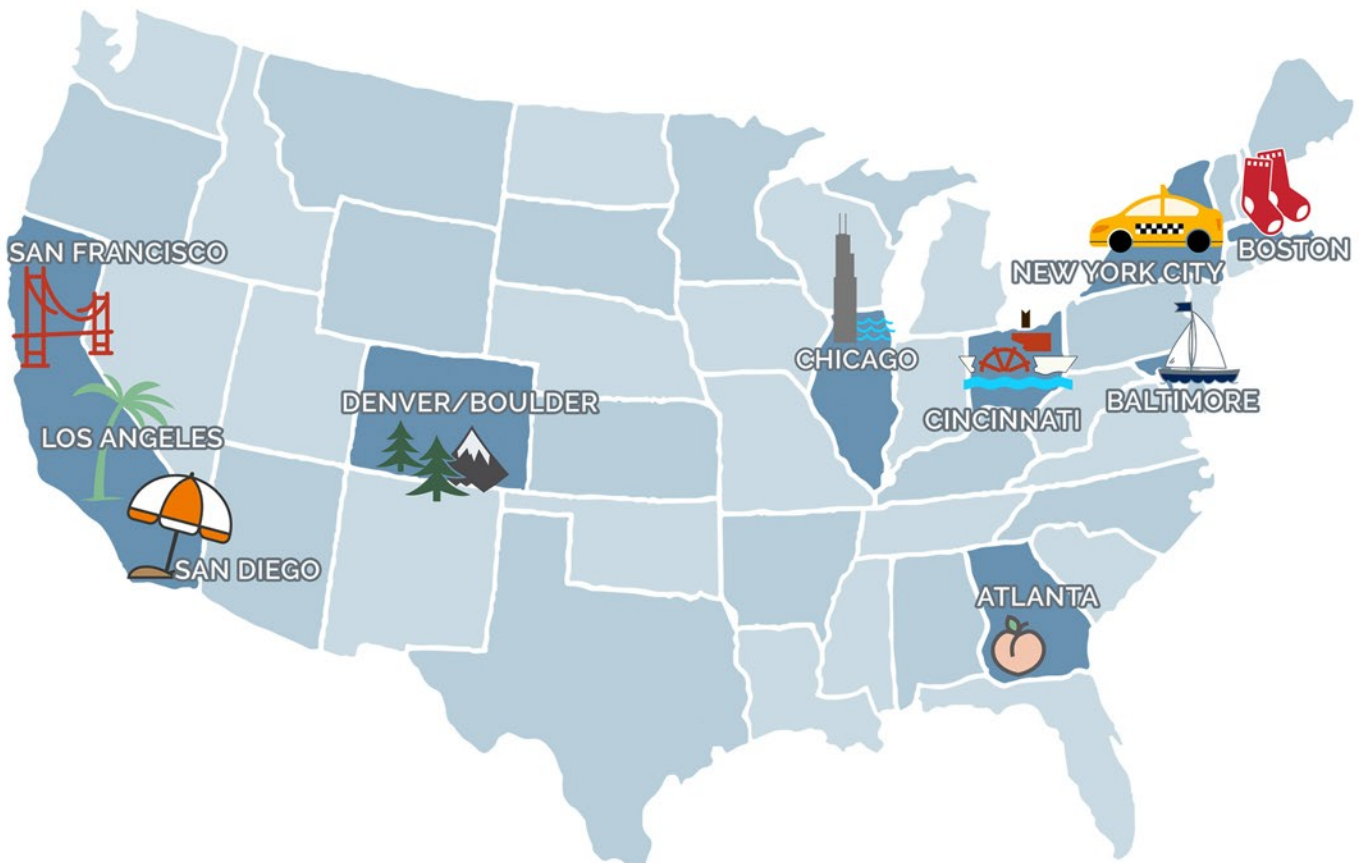
Wellness is fundamental to achieving positive outcomes for teens

- Adolescents are searching. During the teen years they begin to figure out who they are and who they want to be; how they fit within the larger community and where they may belong.
- One purpose of Jewish education today is to help teens answer fundamental - and eternal - questions: Who am I? To whom am I connected, and responsible?
- How can I bring about positive change in this world? Woven throughout many of the initiatives is a core belief that the Jewish community and tradition can offer teens and parents a sense of belonging, purpose, and meaning.
- Focusing on the whole teen, including their mental health and overall wellness, is emerging as foundational to effective Jewish teen education and engagement.
- Several communities offer workshops or conferences on adolescent development and family systems, deeper understanding of the social forces impacting teens today, and specialized training for educators in youth mental health first aid.
- While each community offers something unique to support teens, there is one common link: community and connections among parents, educators and teens.

By addressing and elevating teen wellness, Funder Collaborative communities are pioneering a new, holistic view of engagement work, with healthy, balanced and resilient teens at the center.

## MORE ABOUT THE COMMUNITY-BASED TEEN INITIATIVES

Each of the ten communities are building strong connections with teens, parents and local organizations.



### ATLANTA

Atlanta Jewish Teen Initiative (AJTI), JumpSpark, turns teens' passions into realities, connects them with networks surrounding their interests, and offers experiential learning and social opportunities inspired by a Jewish lens.

- JumpSpark seeks to create paths into the Jewish community for all teens.
- New, interest-based programming and social opportunities use innovative resources in the Atlanta community and beyond.
- JumpSpark Professional provides networking and educational development for youth professionals across the city.

A collaborative partnership among The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, The Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA) and the Atlanta Rabbinical Association (ARA), JumpSpark is powered by the AJTI.

Launched in 2016

[JumpsparkATL.org](http://JumpsparkATL.org)



### BALTIMORE

Baltimore's 4Front initiative (advocate, innovate, educate and collaborate) is a gathering place and open channel for Jewish teens and the adults who care about them.

- A concierge service matches teens' interests to a wealth of local programs.
- A Social Innovation Fellowship empowers teens to tackle community issues through social entrepreneurship, develop an innovative mindset and cultivate sustainable solutions for social issues.



- 4Front workshops, seminars, and coaching helps educators deepen skills, broaden their networks, creatively integrate Jewish life into their work, address teens' needs with knowledge and confidence, and grow personally as Jewish professionals.
- A Lay Advocacy program trains a cohort of influential lay leaders to advocate for Jewish teens across the community.

Directed by the Jewish Community Center of Baltimore, 4Front is supported by The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore.

Launched in 2015

**4FrontBaltimore.org**



## BOSTON

Combined Jewish Philanthropies' (CJP) Commission on Jewish Life and Learning leads a coalition of partners to transition the teen engagement community to a more teen-centric culture.

- A new grant pool spurs innovative teen engagement strategies from diverse partners who convene regularly.
- Matching grants increase the sustainability of current partners and programs.
- A relationship-building approach connects teens to their peers and motivates participation in Jewish experiences.
- Professional development and co-working days expands learning opportunities for educators.

The initiative is funded by CJP and directed by lead implementer Boston Jewish Teen Initiative (BJTI).

Launched in 2014

**JewishTeenInitiative.org**



## CHICAGO

Chicago's Springboard aims to involve more teens in Jewish life by creating new engagement points and strengthening the organizational infrastructure that supports teen programming.

- Springboard develops and incubates a compelling menu of immersive experiences over school breaks, with built-in follow-up programming.
- Teen Engagement Specialists act as concierges, reaching out to teens and their parents to help identify relevant organizations and programs.
- Networking opportunities, cooperative community programs and collecting, analyzing and sharing data about teens enhance the work of community organizations.
- Professional development for youth professionals, including subsidies, strengthen existing teen programs and partners.

Springboard was created in partnership with the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Chicago, The Crown Family and other local funders.

Launched in 2015

**JUF.org/Springboard**



## CINCINNATI

Cincinnati's Jewish Teen Collective supports teens and works to create an ecosystem of interconnected programs with a greater focus on the individual Jewish teen experience.

- A dedicated Outreach Advocate guides teens to Jewish opportunities best suited for them.
- Venture Awards empower teens to shape opportunities for their peers by fostering and funding new programs.
- Professional development is designed through the lens of 'relational engagement' and mentorship.
- A partnership with The iCenter for Israel Education offers professionals a fully-integrated approach to Israel education.

Operated by the Mayerson JCC in partnership with The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, The Jewish

Foundation of Cincinnati, The Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, local congregations and teens themselves.

Launched in 2016

**CincyJewishTeens.com**



## DENVER/BOULDER

The initiative aims to increase the capacity of partners, provide resources to youth professionals, and put teens in the driver's seat of their Jewish journeys.

The initiative aims to increase the number and diversity of participating high schoolers and to deepen the quality and diversity of those experiences, by:

- Expanding Denver's Jewish Student Connection's (JSC) high school clubs, starts new clubs in middle schools, and expand clubs into Boulder.
- Expanding Moving Traditions' gender-based monthly discussion groups and b'nei mitzvah program.
- A innovation hub powered by Upstart offering professional development opportunities for adults working with teens
- A PresentTense Fellows social entrepreneurship program, now a part of UpStart, offers teens on-the-ground experiences to learn and practice with innovation experts.

Launched in 2014



## LOS ANGELES

The Los Angeles Jewish Teen Initiative (LAJTI) provides teens meaningful and compelling Jewish experiences that support them leading healthy and fulfilled lives, with four primary focus areas:

- Engaging teens through Teen Program Accelerator, powered by UpStart, Community Internship Program in local Jewish non-profits and Teen Innovation Awards, which helps teens bring their creative ideas for Jewish engagement to life.
- Empowering teen educators via a community of practice and professional development opportunities, resources and networking.
- Focusing on Teen Wellness with workshops and trainings on critical topics for teens, parents and educators and showing how the Jewish community can help foster balance, joy and meaning.
- Creating connections through an online portal, incentive grants and financial aid for short-term immersive Jewish programs.

LAJTI is spearheaded by the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, in partnership with the BJE: Builders of Jewish Education

Launched in 2015

**JTeensLA.org**



## NEW YORK

The New York Teen Initiative (NYTI) creates new models of immersive summer experiences, which respond to the life stage of Jewish teens, and expand participation and engagement.

- A four-year incubator offers personalized coaching, marketing and recruitment assistance, professional educational workshops and opportunities and a community of practice for new program leaders.
- More than doubling the available dollars, scholarships and incentives for a broad range of Jewish summer experiences addresses the challenge of affordability.
- FindYourSummer.org, a place for families to find more than 350 programs that appeal to different interests and backgrounds, greatly improves the visibility, awareness and marketing of Jewish summer experiences.

The NYTI is jointly funded by UJA-Federation of New York; The Jewish Education Project serves as lead operator.

Launched in 2014

**FindYourSummer.org**





## SAN DIEGO

San Diego Jewish Teen Initiative (SDJTI) connects teens to programs, college scholarships, summer internships and the local community.

- A new Peer Leadership Fellowship trains and empowers teens to be develop peer relationships and connect them to Jewish opportunities.
- Motiv, an initiative cornerstone, expands meaningful volunteer learning experiences by finding and connecting diverse teens with service opportunities. Its digital dashboard curates local service experiences, and allows teens to both log and verify service hours.
- Professional development enhances the quality of teen programs via both cohort learning and follow-up, and strives to retain and inspire local educators and leaders.

SDJTI is operated by a new center at the Lawrence Family JCC and funded by The Jewish Federation of San Diego County.

Launched in 2015

[SDJewishTeens.org](http://SDJewishTeens.org)

[MotivSanDiego.org](http://MotivSanDiego.org)



## SAN FRANCISCO

The San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Teen Initiative (SFJTI) builds our community's capacity to expand the landscape of Jewish teen engagement through innovative, high-quality programming and increased access to these programs through five interwoven strategies:

- Innovation Accelerator: To scale, expand, and diversify innovative programs for teens with grant funding, entrepreneurial training, and individualized coaching to a cohort of nonprofit organizations;
- Professional Development: High caliber offerings delivered through multiple modalities with varying approaches to develop and support well-trained, confident Youth Professionals;
- Micro-Grants: To encourage experimentation and risk-taking by organizations to pilot and test new ideas that will expand their reach and attract new participants;
- Information Hub: A centralized resource for teens, parents, and youth and community professionals on being and supporting a Jewish teenager in the Bay Area; and
- Experiential Incentives: Need-blind incentives to encourage teen participation in immersive experiences and Israel travel.

The SFJTI is a product of the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund, in partnership with Jewish Federation and The Jewish Community Foundation of the East Bay.

Launched in 2017

## CONNECT WITH US

We welcome you to **join us on this journey** of learning and practice.

Please visit [TeenFunderCollaborative.com](http://TeenFunderCollaborative.com) for the latest updates and to subscribe to our newsletter.

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