What are the biggest inputs guiding the R&D strategy?
The latest developments in technology, societal trends, and advancements will continually inform our R&D strategy. Analogous thinking will help us to look wide and stimulate new thinking for different results.

We are committed to bringing together top talent from a wide variety of sectors to be leveraged towards our toughest problems and most inspiring opportunities.

The people we are designing for will always be at the front and center of our focus. Jews, their friends, and families are increasingly diverse with Jewish identities and connections that are both clear and obscured. Understanding who we are as a people, how individuals and collective lives will serve as the most significant directive to our work and pursuits.

We are looking for transformative potential. We are excited and attracted to big and Wild thinking with scalable applications. Approaching opportunities with large aspirational aims, armed with operational discipline, will allow us to depart from a narrower scope we have become accustomed to working within.

What areas/Issues are being addressed by the Foundation’s R&D strategy?
Rather than narrowing the R&D strategy to specific issues or problems, we will focus on developing a discipline, process, and system to address a very wide range of opportunities that we face as a learning community. A systemic and process-driven infrastructure will allow us versatility to engage with a wide range of opportunity sets.

At the outset, we are focusing our discipline, process, and system on the following three areas of activity:

- Evolution: assist and support current and new grantees to embrace an R&D mindset and practice to encourage more experimental and exploratory activity in our field.
- Co-Creation: partner with entities, individuals, or organizations to address a specific compelling opportunity to benefit the broadest demographics of the North American Jewish community.
- Development: build a systemic R&D engine to explore and reimagine offerings, services, and/or experiences that tap a critical need. This engine will be powered by a systematized application of data, ideation, design, prototyping, testing, and eventual adoption.

Through these activities, we are positioned to engage in a range of issues and opportunities to increase the relevance, reach, and impact of Jewish educational experiences.

How do you measure success with an R&D strategy?
We will know we are successful when we have a fully operational R&D engine that can serve as an ongoing resource to explore new ideas.

Success in an emergent R&D strategy is achieved by the larger outcome of building a sustained and high-functioning mechanism for continual invention and experimentation rather than hoping for a fluke discovery of one great idea.

The purpose of this system creation is to enable us to strategically and efficiently develop many new ideas and try many new things. Once fully built, the R&D effort will be able to engage in critical research and ideation to yield a host of new possibilities, perspectives, and concepts to be tested and explored with a wide variety of partners in different environments and platforms.

This is not an academic exercise for the Foundation; instead it is a functional engine for action.

Additionally, failures will also be a measure of success. Success is a byproduct of numerous iterations of what came before. We can call them tests, learn, iterate, or any number of things. Arriving at inspiring and transformative possibilities is never a product of magic. Excellence and success are outcomes of being dedicated to a generative, strategic, and thoughtful process of continual development and experimentation. If we haven’t failed, we haven’t succeeded.

More broadly, we hope we can assist in inspiring and supporting others to also act and invest in R&D activities, whether that be other foundations, organizations, or individuals. The Foundation sees itself as a contributor to a larger communal conversation and evolution to push ourselves, and each other, to learn, experiment, and take risks to co-design our future together.

Will the R&D operation share learnings from their research and experimentation?
Yes.

The impetus for the Foundation embarking on its R&D strategy is not only to position the Foundation to achieve its aspirational goals for the future, but also to play a role in encouraging others to learn alongside us as we collectively imagine our future.

As we reach key inflection points in our work, we will actively seek out the best ways to socialize learnings, insights gained, and potential new futures to consider. We hope these sharings can serve as opportunities for communal dialogue, comparing notes, and collaborative efforts.

What is not included in the R&D efforts?
An R&D strategy is not about creating more initiatives, programs, or the next shiny object. R&D is not a quick fix, silver bullet, or a prayer for hitting home runs. Rather, R&D is about creating an environment, a process, and a discipline where the best solutions and most transformative ideas become possible and can emerge. R&D is a verb, not a noun.

R&D will not follow the status quo. We are not afraid to question some of our most basic working assumptions. And we are not looking to engage in the same modalities, talent, and behaviors. Our aperture is wide.

R&D will not be a low-risk effort. We will not hesitate to take the necessary risks to learn and gain new understandings, insights and try out new ideas. We will take risks on new processes, platforms, and people. We will act on insights and hunches to test and learn, knowing that the outcomes will be uncertain. We will experiment.

How might I receive funding as part of the Foundation’s R&D strategy?
The goal of the R&D operation at the Foundation is to build a mechanism for learning and ideation that is open sourced to seek out and discover a diverse set of partners and ideas to engage with.

Our operation is designed to be open sourced, to locate new experimental opportunities and talent. As we move forward, guided by the principle that “good ideas can come from everywhere,” our funding in this arena will be geared towards the potential for transformative impact and the exploration of new frontiers. We foresee, through a variety of different grantmaking mechanisms (challenge grants, RFPs, prizes, etc.) funding a variety of organizations and individuals. The Foundation at this time does not accept any open applications for R&D funding.

Is there something specifically Jewish about R&D?
Yes.

Jewish life has been on a steady path throughout history of looking into, learning from, and integrating with the world community. As a people and culture, we have imported and incorporated the learnings of our changing environments and circumstances to adapt, evolve, and thrive amidst great instability and uncertainty. We did not complete this unique feat by shying away from change and risk. Quite the opposite. Our history is paved with incredible ingenuity, bold decision making, wild beliefs and gutsy leadership.

Arguably, we have been at our best when we have been our most innovative, creative, and embracing of calculated risk. It is my hope and belief that we are at our most storied and Successful when we become adventurous, inclusive, and skeptical of change, new ideas, and unfamiliar voices. Fear is never a winning strategy. Optimism, curiosity, and creativity have always been in our DNA and key to our survival, and foundational to our ability to thrive.