

FROM KEDEM TO KADIMAH

10 Lessons from 10 Years of the Jewish Teen Education & Engagement Funder Collaborative



JEWISH TEEN
Education & Engagement
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE
Powered by The Jewish Federations of North America



**Jewish
Federations**
of North America



**JIM JOSEPH
FOUNDATION**
Shimon ben Joseph



INTRODUCTION

By Sara Allen

Executive Director, Jewish Teen Education & Engagement Funder Collaborative

Associate Vice President, Community and Jewish Life, Jewish Federations of North America

A grand experiment was born more than a decade ago. In 2013, the [Jim Joseph Foundation](#) convened more than a dozen local and national funders of Jewish teen programming for a series of discussions on expanding teen involvement in Jewish life. The funders learned together and commissioned groundbreaking research—and ultimately began to design responsive local teen education and engagement initiatives in communities across the country. United by a dream of creating and nurturing contemporary approaches to Jewish teen education, engagement, and growth, a network of national and local funders and practitioners worked side by side with teens to reimagine the youth-serving ecosystem.

[The Jewish Teen Education & Engagement Funder Collaborative](#) (Funder Collaborative), now powered by Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), is comprised of 10 communities of varying sizes and demographic composition. This innovative learning and sharing network has created an environment that fosters risk-taking, experimentation, and ongoing reflection. From the outset, this group of professionals committed to sharing the unvarnished lessons they learned.

Today, the teen-serving ecosystem in this network of 10 communities across the country looks vastly different than a decade ago. This evolution was always the vision. New programs were incubated and unconventional partnerships took root. Scaling the most successful ideas was baked into our original DNA; impactful programs launched in one community were adapted by others or brought to a national audience via the Funder Collaborative itself. In this way, the impact of the best ideas was amplified to reach hundreds and sometimes thousands of teens.

Why scale in this way? We saw how adapted programs could be delivered more efficiently and carry less risk. Because of the resources, tools, and training offered by the Funder Collaborative, organizations adapting these programs had a supportive peer network of professionals leading similar programs—they could focus on *delivering* a great product and tailoring it for their audience, rather than expending resources on *developing* an entirely new and unproven one.

As our impact grew, we crystallized this method of dramatically expanding impact through scale. By partnering with [Spring Impact](#), a global organization that specializes in scaling social impact, we developed a [methodology and step-by-step playbook for scaling in the Jewish community](#). At its core, the playbook helps leaders and organizations understand how to get their best ideas and programs to reach more people in a sustainable way.

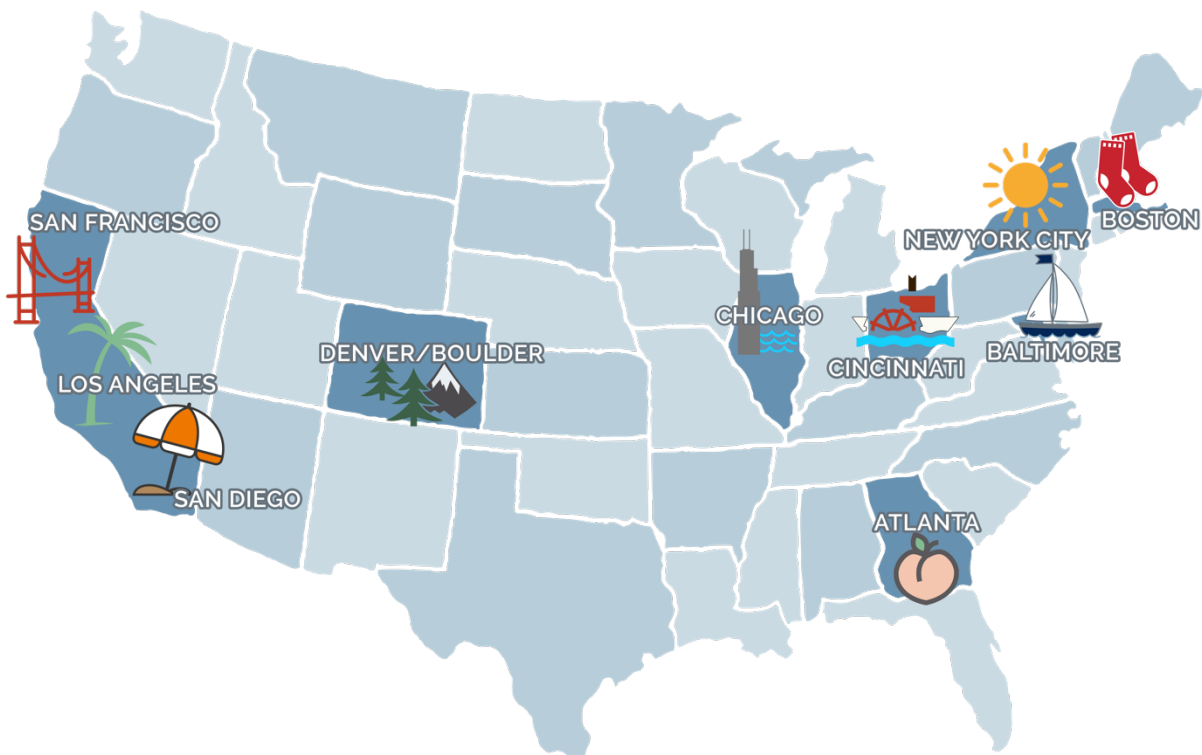
We often wonder, why don't innovations scale more often? We've learned firsthand that it's often due to the lack of a champion with a vision for broader impact, scaling expertise, and/or a wide network. To address these roadblocks, we sought out a platform where we could bring our expertise, tools, and network to help some of the groundbreaking innovations spread, in the teen space and beyond.

With this lens of amplifying our scaling impact, the Funder Collaborative [merged](#) in 2022 into [Jewish Federations of North America](#), which raises and distributes more than \$3 billion annually through planned giving and endowment programs to support [social welfare, social services, and educational needs](#). We found a natural home in the newly-formed Community and Jewish Life division, whose mandate is to increase and reshape



engagement in community and Jewish life in North America. Of note, since the merger, we have offered six Scaling Masterclasses where Jewish professionals from more than 70 organizations learned about best practices and strategies for scaling, many with innovations successfully scaling across the country. We are eager to advance this work by further sharing our expertise, for the benefit of the field at large.

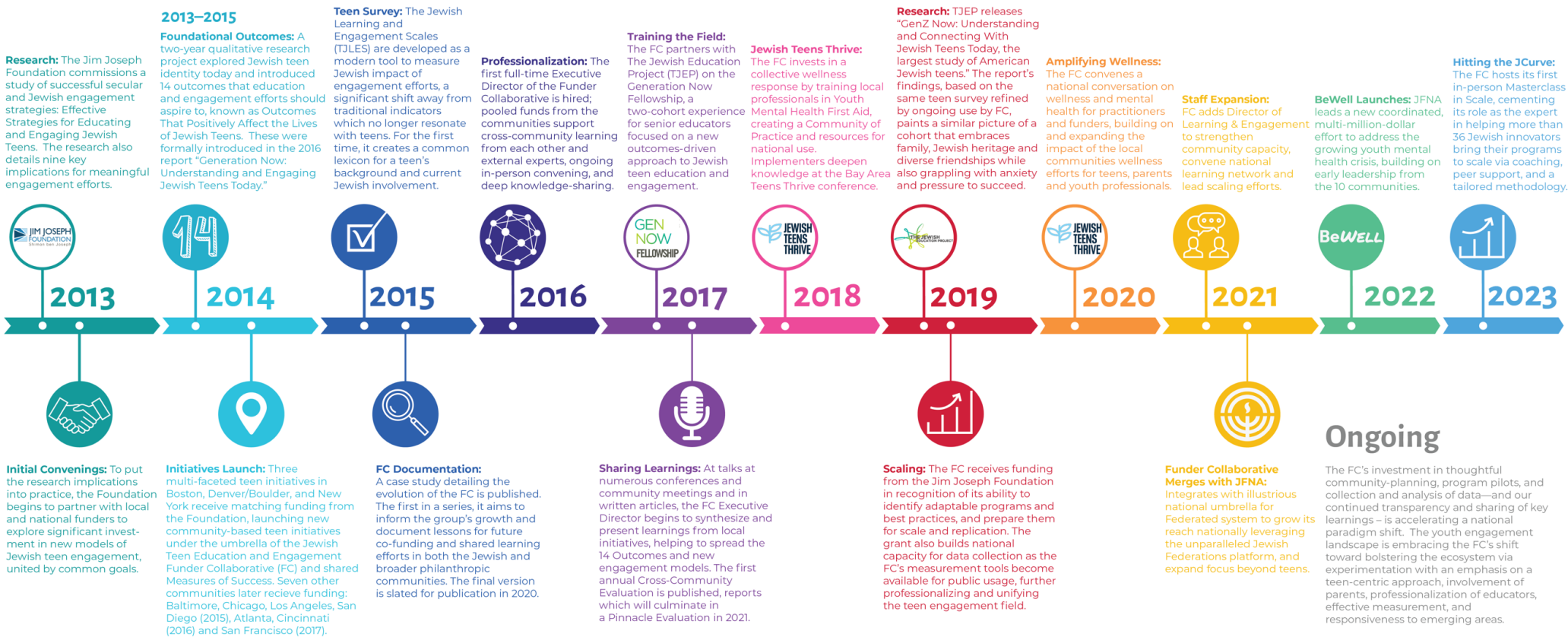
The story that unfolds over the following pages is one of deep, productive, and sometimes challenging “R&D” in the teen-serving ecosystem. It is the communities’ unwavering commitment to experimentation and iteration that led to new frontiers: new models of engagement, the elevation of youth-serving professionals, and renewed prioritization of this complicated and inspiring generation. It is a collection of stories and lessons over the last decade. We are humbled to see and share the impact of our partnership and learning over the past 10 years. As we look back, we also look forward with hope for what can be, over the next decade and beyond.





FROM COLLABORATIVE TO CULTURE SHIFT: A BRIEF HISTORY

The past and the future are inextricably linked; these 10 years of investment have seen the Funder Collaborative grow, and its philosophical underpinnings spread fieldwide. Here is a brief timeline of key milestones and outcomes of this philanthropic endeavor.





OVERVIEW

1 Upon Which We Build

The following report paints a rich picture of key lessons learned, important successes, unexpected challenges, and the Funder Collaborative's operational structure that produced some of the positive outcomes of this philanthropic endeavor—all with an eye towards how others can benefit from this knowledge.

2 Looking Back to Look Forward

The past and the future are inextricably linked; these 10 years of investment have been tremendous *and* tremendously fruitful and represent a new *kedem*—a new foundation from which to learn and renew our commitment to teens.

3 Sharing to Inform the Next Decade and Beyond

The 10 lessons included herein cover a decade of learning and multi-million-dollar investment. They are meant to help chart a path forward—*kadimah*—with insights on everything from collaboration, mission clarity, leadership development, patience, and much more.



UPON WHICH WE BUILD

A CRITICAL STEPPING STONE

The Jim Joseph Foundation was just six years old when we began laying the groundwork for what would become the Funder Collaborative. As we reflect on this work now, there is a profound realization that as much as we shaped the Funder Collaborative, the Funder Collaborative shaped the Foundation itself.

By the Jim Joseph Foundation Team

Essential elements of the Funder Collaborative’s evolution and operations—research, sharing lessons learned, relational grantmaking, collaboration, growing a network, scaling best practices, and more—are now often defining elements of philanthropic endeavors in which the Foundation invests. We learned so much from the Funder Collaborative that not only informs our work today but also is imbued into the DNA of the Foundation.

We concretize our approach to philanthropy in our First Principles, which we note “help us make decisions and lead to actions. These principles are an operating system through which the Foundation team holds itself accountable.”

Our First Principles articulate our intentional, strategic approach shaped in significant ways by the Funder Collaborative. In our investments and collaborations in all areas—Jewish early childhood education, Israel education, young adult engagement, efforts to build and advance fields, and elsewhere—you can easily see the Funder Collaborative’s impact. Within these five principles, each of which is central to what the Foundation is today, the seeds were sown by the Funder Collaborative:

1. CENTER YOUNG PEOPLE

Our work focuses on young people and those who work with them. We center them as end-users as we forecast and solve for unmet needs and challenges. Their ideas and actions will shape the future.

From the Funder Collaborative’s earliest days—including the research that preceded it—to the development of each community’s initiatives, teens were and are engaged meaningfully in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of Jewish experiences. Our Foundation, and others in the Jewish philanthropy space, previously did not always include our targeted beneficiaries in these critical stages. Today, from teens, to college students, to young adults, and young families, we engage our audiences in research and are proud that our grantee-partners also center their audiences in initiative design phases. Young people offer a wealth of knowledge and we need *them* at the table to co-create a vibrant Jewish future.



2. BUILD MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Connecting meaningfully to other people and organizations honors our shared humanity and accelerates the change we seek. When we know our partners in genuine ways, we can better support efforts toward a common good.

From the Foundation's outset, we prided ourselves on a relational approach to grantmaking. Certainly, the Foundation has always, to varying degrees, provided grantee-partners with more than just financial support. And yet, the Funder Collaborative was the first instance in which deep, sustained relationships became an integral part of a broad initiative. Relationships with local and national funders, in which we have space to learn and brainstorm together, are today integral to the Foundation's work. Additionally, relationships the Foundation now has with youth serving professionals and leaders around the country, which were first developed through the Funder Collaborative, positively influence our investments in all areas. Most importantly, we understand that knowing the whole person with whom we work on a project fosters more open, honest, and transparent conversations—enabling all of us to pursue common goals more collectively, effectively, and efficiently.

3. LOOK AROUND CORNERS

Bold and transformative solutions come from peering into the future and being eager to take risks. Failing is part of our risk-taking and experimenting. Learning from failing leads to new ideas and greater impact.

Risk-taking may seem like a given today—a necessary approach in order to create real change—but it was “anything but” in 2012. The Foundation was young and so too was our mindset around failing. In hindsight, what we perceived as big bets simply were not pushing the envelope and breaking new ground. The Funder Collaborative was a real big bet, a new experiment in which we did not know where the finish line was, or what that finish line looked like. But this investment set the Foundation on a course to be comfortable with these types of unknowns, understanding and appreciating that we need to experiment more, fail more, and learn more to unlock new ideas. As we modeled this, leaders in Funder Collaborative communities felt empowered to do the same. Today, Common Era, the Foundation's R&D initiative, along with the Foundation's traditional grantmaking areas, both embody this approach and mindset.

4. BE CURIOUS

Our journey to creative ideas and smart planning is steeped in a diversity of perspectives, research, personal stories, and results from our work in the field.

The Foundation has always been a proud “learning organization.” Yet, who we learn from and how we learn has evolved. The early days of the teen research and the work of each community revealed to us just how diverse the younger generation of Jews is. They reflect a diversity of thought, race, gender, geographies, lived experiences, ambitions, and worldview like never before. Any funder, certainly the Foundation, seeking to engage young people in meaningful ways must embrace this full diversity to inform investments from their earliest conceptual stage. We carry this principle with us in all our endeavors today, recognizing that the diversity of our community is a strength that must be leveraged as we support initiatives, planning, and design.



5. LEVERAGE TIME

In different contexts, we use time to create urgency or provide space for deeper thinking and learning. Going fast or going slow is a choice we make with intentionality.

Throughout the evolution of the Funder Collaborative, we came to understand the benefit, indeed *the need*, of allowing grantee-partners to have a long runway (funding initiatives ranged from 8 to 10 years!). Creating real, sustainable change requires research, thoughtful planning, careful implementation, and inevitably includes trying, learning, and trying again (yes, many of the concepts encompassed in our principles above). At the same time, we learned that a sense of urgency is healthy—our community’s challenges are big and are of this moment; our actions must reflect that. We have conditioned ourselves to embrace both of these mindsets simultaneously, prioritizing one over the other in different scenarios and to work toward different ends. This outlook informs how we interact with grantee-partners and the expectations we place on investments.

Our approach to philanthropy today connects directly to the Funder Collaborative. We are forever grateful for all of the learnings through the more than 10 years of this work. Today, our grantee-partners, peer funders, researchers, and evaluators—and certainly the beneficiaries of our investments—all can benefit from these learnings and hope these lessons will continue to inspire in the years to come.



UPON WHICH WE BUILD

UNPACKING A DECADE OF LEARNING

Sometimes a goal, an idea, a vision can feel so big—such an enormous mountain of accomplishment to climb—that you’re not sure where to begin. That’s a bit how the leadership of the Jim Joseph Foundation felt when we first identified Jewish teens as a space—as a people—we wanted to invest in. The following narrative shares our approach to, and experiences in, this work through the lens of the Funder Collaborative.

Sara Allen, Executive Director of the Funder Collaborative, paints a rich picture in the pages that follow of key lessons learned, important successes, unexpected challenges, and the Collaborative’s operational structure that produced some of the positive outcomes of this philanthropic endeavor. She shares it all with an eye on the future—for those who might consider this type of effort as well.

As much as we are excited to unpack our learnings here, we also know that this story is not yet finished. For all we know (and all we hope), we are still in the early pages of a book that has an ending we can only imagine. In this ending, Jewish teens across the country feel supported, are connected to each other and community, and engage in experiences that add great value and meaning to their lives.

We hope the story plays out this way for the same reason we chose to invest in teens in the first place: adolescents are a critical demographic and *adolescence* is a moment of inflection. We sought to center this life period of change when teenagers explore the world and look to build connections with peers. Their generation faces immense mental health challenges, and meaningful Jewish community and experiences can support them, helping them to develop and become resilient adults. At the same time, teens are holders of great insights and have the ability to articulate those insights and the realities they hope those insights can create. They are futurists and optimists that our world needs. Anyone who works in a multigenerational community can ill afford to ignore this demographic, tokenize them, or treat them as “lesser than.” Rather, our community (and others) should listen to and embrace teens, should empower them to lead and create meaningful experiences—not because it’s good for the teens (although it certainly is) but because it’s good for the *community*.

WHY IT BEGAN

We started this work in earnest in 2013, when our efforts began to morph from general ideas about philanthropic partnerships and teen engagement into a fully formed bold ambition. Back then, our perspective still centered largely on organizations more than teens. We had so many blind spots yet to see (such as the integral role of supporting both parents and professionals in teens’ lives). Early research began to yield these learnings. But the substantial learning occurred as we seeded initiatives around the country through the Funder Collaborative. We worked closely with local funding partners to help create the space and structure to run these initiatives as experiments, each tailored to their own local communities. These local funders were significantly



engaged—equal financial contributors to their multi-million-dollar initiatives—and all as local leaders and visionaries rallying others for support. With partners on the ground, we were confident we could build community buy-in and support and would gain deeper insights about the different ways communities reimagined Jewish teen education and engagement. We knew early on that a single program would not dramatically change the Jewish teen experience nationally. Programs come and go and are often limited in scale and reach. The Funder Collaborative was designed for more.

DESIGNED FOR IMPACT

Specifically, because of the unique cross-country local/national funder design and because of the robustness of this national network and its impact, there is much to learn from the Funder Collaborative’s story. Sara artfully uses the Funder Collaborative’s Sustainability Diagnostic Tool (SDT, see below and Appendix) as a guiding framework to share lessons learned. The full framework was designed for communities to assess if initiatives were positioned for lasting change. She covers everything from collaboration to mission clarity, to leadership development, to patience, and much more.

She does not gloss over challenges that we believe are important to consider too. For example, as we experienced, funders and local organizations have different appetites for risk. This manifested itself in different ways—and to varying degrees—in different communities. At the Foundation, we are also very aware of and work to minimize power dynamics between ourselves as a funder and our grantee-partners. Testament to this awareness, we developed an equal governance structure of “one community, one vote.” An important lesson, to be sure.

Work on this scale and with this number of partners is not to be entered into lightly. A long runway is needed for trust-building, vision, design, failures, and learning to lead to outcomes. But of course this opportunity cost is a heavy burden on funds and bandwidth. Yet as we reflect on the 10 years of the Funder Collaborative, we certainly see deep and lasting impact.

Initiatives that grew directly out of the Funder Collaborative such as [BeWell](#), a JFNA initiative to address the growing youth mental health crisis, and [Expanding Your Reach](#), a national professional development initiative, changed the course of Jewish education and engagement across the country. These started out as minor projects and were scaled effectively—a model for other programs now too. The Funder Collaborative’s leadership demonstrated [how to effectively scale impactful models](#), lessons we continue to internalize and apply across our entire portfolio. Our Foundation also learned a lot about funding collaboratives and how this approach can amplify philanthropic work in communities and serve as an important vehicle to share learnings and grow networks.

Most important, however, is the impact of this work on tens of thousands of Jewish teens and their families. This has always been the story we’re most interested in, and we’re excited to share it to help others drive this impact in their own work.



Sustainability Diagnostic Tool (SDT)

Domain	Indicators
Clearly Stated Mission Aligned with Goals and Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ecosystem has articulated clear goals for teen engagement and education over the next three-to-five years. 2. Key players in the ecosystem feel like active partners in and <u>share the goals</u> of teen education and engagement efforts. 3. The ecosystem has a clear and coherent roadmap for achieving its goals vis-à-vis teen education and engagement.
Strong and Stable Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ecosystem has a core and sustained group of lay and professional champions for teen education and engagement who occupy influential communal positions. 2. Community leadership effectively articulates a coherent vision of teen education and engagement for various constituencies and stakeholders (parents, teens, and educators/engagers). 3. The ecosystem has the quantity and quality of professionals necessary to execute its stated goals in teen education and engagement.
Secure Financial Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The community has diverse and numerous funders that allocate both restricted and unrestricted dollars for teen education and engagement programming (including but not limited to the current Initiative). 2. Teen education and engagement programs have a diversified revenue strategy (e.g. earned revenue, endowment, etc.) 3. The community has at least one entity or a partnership of organizations that have a three-to-five year financial plan for supporting teen education and engagement programming.
Evidence of Demand for Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ecosystem markets teen education and engagement in ways that generate interest among parents and teens. 2. Teen programming is regularly filled either to capacity or with critical mass to deliver programs effectively. 3. Teens/Parents are asking for/approaching organizational leaders to develop more offerings (new and/or increased capacity of existing).
Centrality of Teen Voices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is teen representation on communal teen education and engagement planning bodies. 2. Teens are regularly solicited to give input as new programs are being considered and developed. 3. Teens are utilized as resources for peer recruitment.
Strategic Partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diverse community organizations are significantly invested in teen education and engagement efforts. 2. There are incentives and structures in place to support communication and coordination among diverse youth-serving organizations and programs. 3. Youth-serving organizations and programs are collaborating effectively to increase economies of scale and eliminate redundancies.
Opportunities for Growth, Support, and Enhancement of Youth Professionals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The community has a coherent and comprehensive plan to support youth professionals in their development, growth, and wellbeing. 2. Youth professionals are participating regularly in high quality professional development opportunities with the full support of their supervisors/organizational leadership. 3. Financial resources exist to support the compensation for, and ongoing professional development of, the community's teen educators and engagers.
Responsiveness to Changing Landscapes; Circumstances and Lessons Learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communal leadership is flexible, and positioned to pivot in response to changing circumstances and new research on adolescent development, wellness, and evolving modalities for best educating and engaging teens. 2. The ecosystem invests financial resources to support high quality program evaluation that generates usable knowledge for community leadership. 3. New research and evaluation results inform ongoing implementation and future planning (i.e. data-driven culture) for the entire teen ecosystem.



LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

WALKING INTO THE FUTURE FACING BACKWARDS

These 10 years of investment in Jewish teen education and engagement have been tremendous and tremendously fruitful. They represent a new *kedem*—a new precedent. We have developed a new foundation from which to learn and upon which to renew our commitment to honor and create a special place in Jewish community for young people, and the adults who care about them.

FROM KEDEM TO KADIMAH

By Sara Allen & Rabbi Dena Shaffer

The Hebrew language offers speakers and students a rich array of layered and embedded meanings to its words and phrases. By revealing the common roots of certain words, we can also uncover uncanny connections ripe with interesting, didactic lessons. An outstanding example of this quality is “Kedem & Kadimah.” The root *kuf, daled, mem*: vocalized, this root spells the word *kedem*, which literally translates to “before.” With just a slight alteration to the root, the addition of a mere two letters (*yud* and *hey*), we can render the exact opposite meaning. *Kadimah* means to go forward, a future-oriented word if ever there was one. In spoken Hebrew, it is often used to indicate urgency, “*kadimah, come on, let’s go!*”

What lesson can be derived from the connection between *kedem* and *kadimah*? It may be that it is in fact a small leap from what once was to what will be. The past and the future are inextricably linked and what we have previously achieved ought to influence where we go from here. *Kadimah*—informed and inspired by the past, let us go forward with urgency and purpose, towards the future!

קדם Kedem * Kadimah קדימה

In this work, sustainability refers to a community’s ability to continue to prioritize teen engagement. We use our Sustainability Diagnostic Tool (SDT), designed for communities to assess how initiatives are positioned for lasting change, as a framework and meaningful opportunity to reflect on progress towards important dimensions: clearly stated mission, strong and stable leadership, secure financial future, evidence of demand for service, centrality of teen voices, strategic partnerships, opportunities for growth and enhancement of youth professionals, and responsiveness to changing landscapes, circumstances, and lessons learned.

It is this focus on continuous learning and iteration that compels us to share the 10 lessons herein. Drawn from 10 years of essential experimentation, we offer the following lessons as a beacon for all who share our mission.



SHARING TO INFORM THE NEXT DECADE

THE 10 LESSONS

- 01 RALLY STAKEHOLDERS WITH A MEANINGFUL VISION**
A Clearly Stated Mission Reflects and Involves the Community

- 02 INVEST! TEEN EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT IS WORTH IT**
Data Support What's Been Long Observed: Even Minimal Engagement Makes a Difference

- 03 QUESTION "HOW WILL THIS LAST" EARLY, OFTEN, & TOGETHER**
Vision, Trust, and Patience Are Essential to Build Sustainable Change

- 04 LEADERS AND VISIONARIES COLLECTIVELY BRING IDEAS TO LIFE**
New Ideas Excite; Leadership Shepherds and Grows Complex Initiatives

- 05 EVALUATE AND AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF THOSE YOU SERVE**
Your Audience Holds Valuable Insights and Answers

- 06 GO ALONE TO GO FAST; GO TOGETHER TO GO FAR**
While It's Possible to Do Anything, It's Not Possible to Do Everything

- 07 CREATE DEMAND BY INFUSING NEW ENERGY & VARIED MARKETING**
Invigorate a Stagnant Market by Fueling Discovery and Connection Points

- 08 PRIORITIZE A COMPETENT & REPRESENTATIVE YOUTH-SERVING WORKFORCE**
Success Lies in Supporting a Motivated but Overtaxed Professional Field

- 09 STAY RESPONSIVE, STAY FLEXIBLE, STAY THE COURSE**
A Learning Mindset and Strategic Pivots Help Navigate the Long Arc of Change

- 10 APPLY THESE LESSONS WIDELY**
Each Hard-Won Lesson About Teens Unlocks the Potential to Impact Other Demographics



1

RALLY STAKEHOLDERS WITH A MEANINGFUL VISION

A Clearly Stated Mission Reflects and Involves the Community

In 2011, the Jim Joseph Foundation and a few other funding partners sought to better understand effective strategies in teen education and engagement. To this end, the Foundation commissioned research that included a broad scan of teen and young adult education and engagement efforts from a variety of spheres, including those outside of the Jewish community. The [release of this research](#), conducted by Informing Change and Rosov Consulting (two firms that stayed involved for over a decade), catalyzed a larger group of funders coming together in 2013 to form the Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative. Comprised of 10 local and four national funders, this groundbreaking group mobilized to forge new outcomes to be achieved by Jewish teen education and engagement—setting forth an inspiring new vision. Existing programs were not engaging the vast majority of Jewish teens, and it was clear that there was a gap between current realities and a long-term vision for a radically altered teen engagement landscape. To move closer to this vision, the next step was to [invest in another significant research study on Jewish teens](#).

The research was designed to *first* identify a [new set of shared outcomes](#), ensuring a common vision and a new understanding of teens. It was these outcomes, and the *Shared Measures of Success* (see discussion in Appendix) that preceded them, which united 10 disparate communities. While each community enacted their own approaches that met local needs, critical and universal lessons were learned in how to set forth a new vision:

- **Engage senior leadership from the start.** New community initiatives must involve and reflect the full community. Local initiatives mirrored the national approach by investing first in local research or a comprehensive planning process, often with senior staff retaining strategists or consultants to survey the landscape and identify gaps and opportunities. Buy-in at the top ensured an ambitious new initiative was prioritized.
- **Multiple touchpoints center connections and renew commitment.** The initiatives are multi-faceted, complex efforts with a variety of stakeholders, each with their own priorities and agendas. Professionals closest to the Funder Collaborative participated in bi-annual convenings and monthly calls and kept the shared frameworks top of mind. Organizational partners and those a few steps removed posed a different challenge. One of the most effective solutions was the multiple touchpoints local communities instituted, in the form of gatherings, community-wide meetings, frequent communications by publishing blogs and newsletters, and convening groups of active lay leaders. This approach enabled communities to:
 - clearly and frequently articulate and reinforce the vision of a cohesive teen ecosystem.
 - ensure continued prioritization, helping to alleviate potential fatigue and reinvigorate interest.
 - inspire hyper-local organizations to proudly feel connected to a game-changing movement.
- **Clarity matters.** Initiatives were tasked with accomplishing something no one had yet achieved. Clarity brings a vision to life; it is a fuel for action and a unifying force. At each stage of the multi-year initiatives, communities elucidated the goals of each phase, clarifying the goals and purpose: Experiment (taking massive risks during the early years); Refine (during grant renewals, focusing on the most effective interventions); Sustain (as communities embedded the work into the organizations).

Shared Measures of Success

1. Number of Engaged Teens
2. Diversity of Engaged Teens
3. Teen Learning and Growth as Jews
4. Financially Sustainable Models
5. Teen Education and Engagement a Priority for Leaders and Parents
6. A Network of Confident and Competent Youth-Serving Professionals
7. Meeting the Needs of Parents and Caregivers



- **Adaptability is key.** While shared measures can effectively bind diverse stakeholders and rally the local community, flexibility ensured that communities would adopt the frameworks in ways that were most resonant for them. A number of tools supported this “customizability,” such as a guided process led by evaluation partners [Rosov Consulting](#) whereby local leaders articulated—with specificity—their goals for both increasing the numbers and diversity of teens they engaged in the initiatives. This process culminated in a detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) unique to each community.

Outcomes That Positively Impact the Lives of Jewish Teens

1. Jewish teens have a strong sense of self.
2. Jewish teens feel a sense of pride about being Jewish.
3. Jewish teens have learning experiences that are both challenging and valuable.
4. Jewish teens engage in learning that enables them to be more active participants in various Jewish communities.
5. Jewish teens learn about and positively experience Jewish holidays and Shabbat.
6. Jewish teens establish strong friendships.
7. Jewish teens develop strong and healthy relationships with their families.
8. Jewish teens develop significant relationships with mentors, role models, and educators.
9. Jewish teens are able to express their values and ethics in relation to Jewish principles and wisdom.
10. Jewish teens develop the capacity (skills and language) that allows them to grapple with and express their spiritual journeys.
11. Jewish teens feel connected to various communities.
12. Jewish teens develop the desire and commitment to be part of the Jewish people now and in the future.
13. Jewish teens develop a positive relationship to the land, people, and state of Israel.
14. Jewish teens are inspired and empowered to make a positive difference in the various communities and world in which they live.



Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool

- The ecosystem has articulated clear goals for teen engagement and education over the next three to five years.
- Key players feel like active partners in, and share the goals of, teen education and engagement efforts.
- The ecosystem has a clear and coherent road map for achieving its goals vis-à-vis teen education and engagement.



2

INVEST! TEEN EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT IS WORTH IT***Data Support What's Been Long Observed: Even Minimal Engagement Makes a Difference***

By making multi-year commitments to organizations empowered to network and share with each other, the Funder Collaborative facilitated the development of field-changing tools. Traditional ways in which the Jewish community had previously measured teen learning and growth no longer resonate for contemporary teens; over a two-year period (2013–2014), a team of researchers conducted a comprehensive qualitative research project to explore Jewish teen identity, culminating with the identification of 14 Outcomes Which Positively Impact the Lives of Jewish Teens and Tweens (see Appendix). These became foundational to the new approaches to educate and engage, with the primary objective of equipping Jewish teens to flourish in today's world. These all remain relevant with this new generation of teens.

The [Teen Jewish Learning & Engagement Scales](#), or TJLES, were developed as a set of measures to assess progress toward the outcomes and Jewish impact on teens. Now in national use with a [seminal report](#) after fielding by 14 national youth-serving organizations, and by diligently fielding the TJLES in communities year over year, we've been able to measure what has long been suspected but only observed: even minimal engagement makes a positive difference. There is a strong correlation between teens' connection to Jewish values and the influence those values have on the lives teens choose to lead. Substantive Jewish content creates a sense of belonging, a desire to do good in the world, and a platform for teens to build friendships. These peer relationships also contribute to strong Jewish outcomes overall.

We've now been able to distill [the biggest drivers of Jewish impact](#):

- **Programs that establish strong friendships.** Establishing strong teen friendships is a critical lever for strong Jewish outcomes for all teens. Simply put, Jewish friends matter for Jewish impact. The correlation between number of closest Jewish friends and the outcomes holds true when considering the different Jewish backgrounds teens had growing up and their most recent level of engagement in Jewish activities.
- **Programs that have “Jewish stuff/content.”** There is a positive relationship between Jewish content and the 14 Outcomes: making friends, developing a strong sense of self, and feeling empowered to make a change in the world. The more programs that teens attend with Jewish content, the stronger the overall outcomes—regardless of teens' current involvement in Jewish programs. We see a strong correlation between teens' connection to Jewish values and the influence those values have on the lives teens choose to lead.
- **Even minimal engagement makes a positive difference.** This is especially true for those with limited Jewish education, engagement, and family backgrounds. A “foot in the door” to get teens to be more engaged, in turn, might lead to even higher outcomes.



3

QUESTION “HOW WILL THIS LAST” EARLY, OFTEN, & TOGETHER

Vision, Trust, and Patience Are Essential to Build Sustainable Change

As the communities and the Jim Joseph Foundation jointly determined their six [Measures of Success](#), long-term sustainability of the prioritization of the teen ecosystem across the Collaborative emerged as a central priority. Working toward this expectation began early and took on various forms and strategies in each community.

Stakeholders were engaged throughout the process so that local funding partners, often Federations, designed initiatives that reflected the community’s actual needs and wants. Communities held conversations with program providers at the beginning stages of the grant period about expectations around sustainability. This led to:

- **A Culture Shift:** As communities embraced a culture shift around experimentation, local funders had space to embrace designing for impact and pivoting as needed. This complex planning process helped develop teen initiatives with broad buy-in from the start, thus enhancing the likelihood of their sustainability.
- **A New Way to Measure Sustainability:** A critical tool in working towards this measure is the [Sustainability Diagnostic Tool](#), which offered clear indicators and a qualitative sliding scale for communities to gauge progress, as well as a protocol for conducting interviews with local stakeholders. Each community assembled and interviewed a variety of stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives on each of these dimensions as they planned for the renewal phase of the initiatives. They posed open-ended questions such as: “To what extent would you say that the leadership of the community’s teen ecosystem has a clearly stated mission for its work? Strong and stable leadership? A secure financial future? Evidence of demand?”
- **Importance of Patience and Flexibility:** Importantly, community leaders worked to compel stakeholders to support initiatives at different stages with a goal of diversifying funders and supporters. After moving past proof of concept, communities also explored options for earned revenue to offset costs. Neither of these developments could have occurred without the anchor national funder exhibiting genuine patience, along with the contributions of local funders. The Jim Joseph Foundation’s grants reflected a new model of long-term investments with flexibility to be adaptive and extend grant periods.

Over time, a new model of sustainability took root, moving beyond simply financial or continuation of the status quo. There were long discussions among funders about how to capture this expansive view of sustainability: moving beyond thinking about the perpetuation of a program and instead into the shift in culture required to achieve the measures of success. The sustainability of the culture shift the initiatives catalyzed requires a strategic commitment—a [mindset embraced at all levels](#)—to sustain teen initiatives that have both breadth and depth. The sustainability process was transformative for both lay and program leaders, and is [publicly available for all to use](#).

**Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool**

- The community has diverse and numerous funders that allocate both restricted and unrestricted dollars for teen education and engagement programming (including but not limited to the current initiative).
- Teen education and engagement programs have a diversified revenue strategy (e.g., earned revenue, endowment, etc.)
- The community has at least one entity or a partnership of organizations that have a three- to five-year financial plan for supporting teen education and engagement programming.

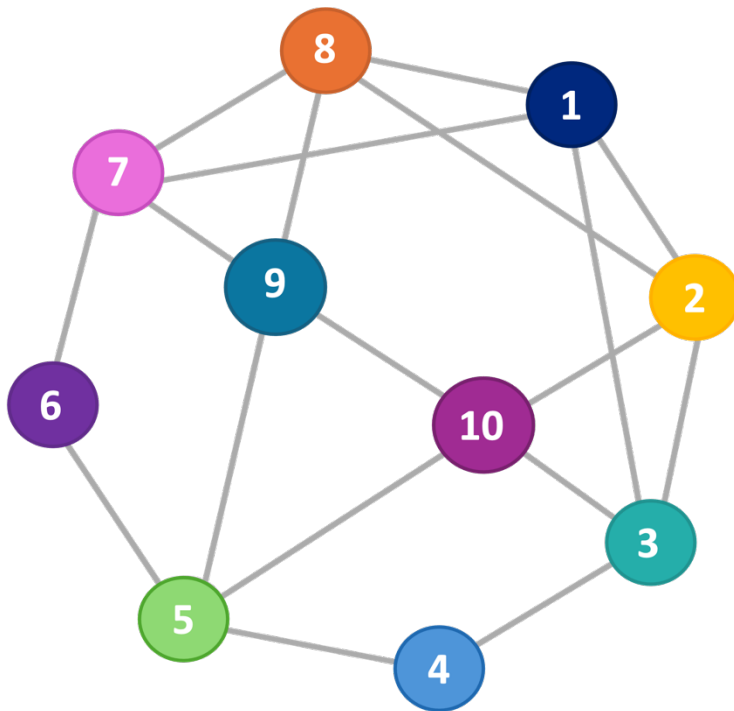


4

LEADERS AND VISIONARIES COLLECTIVELY BRING IDEAS TO LIFE

New Ideas Excite; Leadership Shepherds and Grows Complex Initiatives

In a dynamic landscape, effective leadership plays a pivotal role in driving success. Key aspects of the communities' journeys are tied to several intertwined factors: the credibility of a prestige anchor funder and supportive benefits of a relational grantmaking approach, the stabilizing force of network leadership, representative shared leadership models, and involved lay stakeholders.



- 1** **Jim Joseph Foundation:** national anchor funding partner
- 2** **Local Funding Partner:** Jewish Federation or Community Foundation
- 3** **Local Funders:** individual donors and foundations
- 4** **Implementers:** dedicated professionals overseeing initiatives
- 5** **Local Partners:** providers of teen engagement opportunities
- 6** **The Funder Collaborative:** backbone and national representative
- 7** **National Youth-Serving Organizations:** partners and participants in Professional Development
- 8** **Youth Professionals:** fieldworkers and front-line pros working with teens
- 9** **Parents:** key population that both informs and influences
- 10** **Evaluators:** both local and cross-community evaluation and strategy

- **The Role of an Anchor Funder:** One of the fundamental pillars has been the steady presence of a prominent national funder. This relationship has not only provided essential financial support—allowing communities to dream bigger—but also acted as a beacon for local funders. Communities have leveraged both the vision and commitment of the Jim Joseph Foundation, assuring and inspiring local foundations, donors and lay leaders due to the credibility and stability the Foundation’s ongoing partnership and endorsement offered.
- **Program Officers Play Multiple Roles:** While conventional grantmaking relationships can focus solely on “monitoring,” the Foundation assumed multifaceted roles, extending beyond traditional responsibilities. Program officers have become valuable external thought partners for initiative leadership, contributing fresh perspectives, strategic insights, and innovative ideas—and probing challenges as they arise. This availability and collaborative approach has enriched decision-making processes and fostered a culture of transparency, support, and continual improvement.
- **Hire Right, at the Right Time:** One of the pivotal moments in the Funder Collaborative’s journey was the strategic hiring of an Executive Director (ED) at a moment of inflection. The communities—seeking a neutral governance structure—searched for an ED with qualities essential for supporting and growing networks. The priority of the ED was to nurture the ecosystem through network-weaving and professional development. The gravitas that an experienced, dedicated professional offered opened up new areas of



opportunity and growth, and positioned the Funder Collaborative as a thought leader and contributor to the entire education and engagement field.

- **Leadership Evolution Can Be Healthy:** While communities experimented with new models for engagement, the Funder Collaborative and local initiatives also pioneered models of collaborative leadership. Locally, initiatives engaged stakeholders in the early planning, development, and ongoing guidance of the initiatives. For the Funder Collaborative, a shared leadership model in the form of an Operating Committee—drawn from rotating members across the 10 initiatives and one from the Jim Joseph Foundation, each serving for two years—was crucial to ensuring that different perspectives were heard and represented and that a diversity of experiences and perspectives continually meets the evolving needs of local communities. It is an adaptive approach; radically distributing power and responsibilities enabled us to harness a broad spectrum of expertise and fresh ideas.



Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool

- The ecosystem has a core and sustained group of lay and professional champions for teen education and engagement who occupy influential communal positions.
- Community leadership effectively articulates a coherent vision of teen education and engagement for various constituencies and stakeholders (parents, teens, and educators/engagers).
- The ecosystem has the quantity and quality of professionals necessary to execute its stated goals in teen education and engagement.



5

ELEVATE AND AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF THOSE YOU SERVE

Your Audience Holds Valuable Insights and Answers

One of the core values of this endeavor has been to center the voices and experiences of Jewish teens. The original design process insisted on having teens at the table from the beginning. From teen advisory boards, consulting roles, content generators (via blogs, vlogs, social media, and websites) to community connectors and peer-to-peer engagers, [teens hold a central role and voice in each initiative](#). This created a sense of ownership and empowered authentic discovery for both their *own* Jewish experiences *and* that of their less engaged peers.

In his treatise, [From Tokenism to Citizenship](#), psychologist and children’s rights activist Roger Hart explained, “The highest possible degree of citizenship, in my view, is when we, children or adults, not only feel that we can initiate some change ourselves but when we also recognize that it is appropriate to invite others to join us because it affects them too.” Hart’s sentiment was internalized: ensuring a meaningful and influential role for teens to play in shaping and promoting community initiatives was viewed as crucial for maximizing impact.

When their voices and experiences are properly centered, teens emerge with a sense of contribution in the here and now. Too often, stakeholders are drawn to invest in young people because of what they represent for the future, such as Jewish continuity or future affiliated membership. Shifting the perspective illuminated the gifts and talents that young people possess, such as:

- **Relevance and Authenticity:** When teens have been able to share their unique perspective with adult stakeholders, the initiatives have, in turn, addressed their real concerns, aspirations, and needs, resulting in new programming, ventures, and projects that were more relevant, authentic, and resonant.
- **Representation and Diversity:** Because we know that adult professional leadership is far less diverse than the teens they serve, centering the voices and experiences of teens from a variety of Jewish backgrounds and intersecting identities—and sharing decision-making power—has proven vital to promoting a sense of belonging. [The Gesher Teen Board](#) in Baltimore’s 4Front initiative does this quite well. Belonging is a key factor for engagement.
- **Fresh and Relevant Ideas:** Teens bring fresh perspectives, creative ideas, and innovative approaches to problem solving. By helping them to improve their skills in these areas, such as a [Social Innovation Fellowship](#), an entrepreneurship program that inspires and empowers Jewish teens to be changemakers, and [supporting teens’ creative solutions through microgrants](#), the initiatives are conduits of grass-roots innovation.

While adult leaders must be sensitive to and supportive of teens’ capabilities and capacities, it is clear that success moving forward must always include a seat at the table for young people from the very start. Teens aspire to be challenged and seek programs that imbue their lives with meaning and long-term value—and therefore central to this “seat at the table” is the appreciation that teens traverse *multiple* communities and identities daily, with ambition and fluidity.

**Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool**

- There is teen representation on communal teen education and engagement planning bodies.
- Teens are regularly solicited to give input as new programs are being considered and developed.
- Teens are utilized as resources for peer recruitment.



6

GO ALONE TO GO FAST; GO TOGETHER TO GO FAR

While It's Possible to Do Anything, It's Not Possible to Do Everything

The story of the teen initiatives is one of effective partnership on several different levels:

- **National:** The Jim Joseph Foundation held deep partnerships with the local funding partners. Over the course of several years, Program Officers became trusted thought-partners, steeped in local nuance and yet able to hold a macro view of the full cross-community endeavor.
- **Local:** The funding partners held a variety of relationships with organizations entrusted to achieve the outcomes; when engaged effectively, these program providers began to see themselves as part of a larger movement impacting the entire field.
- **Cross-Communal:** The individuals representing the participating communities developed supportive, meaningful relationships across their communities, Federations and local Foundations, operating with a high level of trust and transparency.

It is often said that collaboration moves at the speed of trust. To that end, the governance of the Funder Collaborative charted the course. The role of the Operating Committee was to explicitly provide leadership, strategy, and vision; implicitly, it was to model and [“cultivate and foster open communications.”](#) As two members shared, *“As is so often true, getting behind a culture of openness, premised on trusting and strong relationships was key to being effective leaders for the Funder Collaborative, to advance its support of our colleagues, communities’ teen initiatives, and the field. We both sought to bring a spirit of transparency to this role and felt comfortable sharing our own concerns with our colleagues...[in] our role as supporters and advocates, open and honest communicators.”*

It was precisely this transparency tackling tricky topics ranging from evaluations, programs, team building, lay leadership engagement, risk, and failure that created a field-wide movement. The Funder Collaborative quickly established itself as a representative and neutral body, one that openly shared its findings with “radical generosity.” By internalizing a view that the teen initiatives were valuable experimentation for the field, the Funder Collaborative embraced a mission of continually sharing what it learned in real-time: in blogs, at conferences, and other venues.

While these acts established the Funder Collaborative as a neutral—and therefore trusted—body, that neutrality did have unanticipated consequences. The design of the Funder Collaborative lent itself to a new model of collective action in the teen space by co-investing in new cross-community interventions or other bold acts that harnessed the full power of the collaborative. In just a few years, the communities leveraged their shared vision to co-invest in one common theme: youth mental health. After an [emotionally charged group viewing of *Dear Evan Hansen*](#) and debrief at a 2019 annual convening, the funders jointly prioritized addressing the growing youth mental health crisis and decided to make their first foray into collective action. Those early steps laid the groundwork for a [prioritization of teen mental health](#) in several local communities and a major national initiative, [BeWell](#), a new [well-being initiative led by JFNA](#) in partnership with the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies and supported by national funders.



Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool

- Diverse community organizations are significantly invested in teen education and engagement efforts.
- There are incentives and structures in place to support communication and coordination among diverse youth-serving organizations and programs.
- Youth-serving organizations and programs are collaborating effectively to increase economies of scale and eliminate redundancies.



7

CREATE DEMAND BY INFUSING NEW ENERGY & VARIED MARKETING

Invigorate a Stagnant Market by Fueling Discovery and Connection Points

Each community has embraced innovation, adaptability, and the spirit of community-building. At their core, they are drivers of culture change. This is a role that requires lead professionals to seamlessly move across multiple responsibilities: from convener to program developer, marketer to mentor, grantor to partner. It is a daunting set of responsibilities, and in some ways no role is more challenging than helping to garner awareness for new offerings and attract teens to meaningful new opportunities. This required several dynamic approaches.

- **Embracing the Role of Convener:** Locally, communities leverage their role as a convener of the teen landscape for several purposes. First is to [bring together leaders](#) for shared understandings and professional development opportunities. Secondly, this bridge-building allows for understanding and enhancing existing options for teenagers. The communities were able to ignite change by forging partnerships and encouraging local collaborations. Lastly, they were able to move to a *holistic* view of teen education and engagement, meeting the needs of the “pipeline” (middle schoolers) and other decision-makers (parents).
- **Expanding Audiences:** An ecosystem-level view of teen engagement serves not just teens’ needs but also the adults who care about them. While originally designed for teens during their high school years, communities understood there were important on-ramps and off-ramps. Several communities now have dedicated professionals working with middle schoolers, smoothing a path toward continued engagement, as well as serving [parents of older teens](#), supporting them through the transition to high school, graduation, college or gap years, and beyond. The Funder Collaborative itself invested heavily in the post-high school period, with [programs uniting families during this liminal period](#) as well as a virtual college road trip, to help families explore Jewish perspectives and options for their next educational step.
- **Navigating Differing Priorities:** Our research uncovered that parents want their teens to feel connected to the Jewish community, both locally and globally, and to gain knowledge about Jewish heritage and traditions. Young people, on the other hand, seek lifelong skills, self-confidence in their Jewish identity, meaningful friendships, and a sense of personal growth. Finding common ground requires sensitivity.
- **Creating Multi-Layered Marketing Magic:** Effective marketing is a mix of word-of-mouth, peer influence, digital marketing, and proactive outreach to parents. Crafting messages that resonate differently with each audience has been key, as well [as one-stop websites](#) that simplify the process of finding meaningful programs for teens and parents alike. Our [relational training programs](#), both peer-to-peer and staff-to-teen, have shattered territorial boundaries, especially for teens who often do not hold strong loyalties to any particular organization. This aligns with a core philosophy of relationships before recruitment and “people before programs.” Although significant strides have been made, there remain challenges in attracting diverse socio-economic participants to programs, an area that is gaining focus in initiatives. These best practices and others help increase program awareness and attendance, which ultimately helps put an initiative on a path towards sustainability.



Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool

- The ecosystem markets teen education and engagement in ways that generate interest among parents and teens.
- Teen programming is regularly filled either to capacity or with critical mass to deliver programs effectively.
- Teens/Parents are asking for/approaching organizational leaders to develop more offerings (new and/or increased capacity of existing).



8

PRIORITIZE A COMPETENT & REPRESENTATIVE YOUTH-SERVING WORKFORCE

Success Lies in Supporting a Motivated but Overtaxed Professional Field

Youth professionals can play a pivotal role in Jewish teens' lives, supporting their growth and providing support, guidance, and role modeling. They can be a teen's "person," a non-parental trusted adult, and provide a safe space to wrestle with the challenges of adolescence (struggles and resilience in navigating life decisions and preparing for adulthood) and for their spiritual journey (exploring identity, discovering beliefs, meaning, and purpose).

To best support youth professionals, communities aim to understand how their needs are being met, from compensation to equitable hiring, onboarding, training, supervision, mentorship, and career-planning. Cohort-based professional development (PD)—year-round opportunities to learn from experts, build new skills, and develop peer relationships—is [the one universal investment](#) across the communities. There has been tremendous value in convening ([and surveying](#)) youth professionals to understand the evolving demands of the role:

- **Networking leads to increased collaboration and positive outcomes.** Each community implemented [low-cost, low-barrier efforts to unite their youth professional ecosystem](#) (co-working days, co-locating professionals from across different organizations, and powerful tech-driven networking like the [Name Game](#)). As educators meet and learn with each other across denominational and organizational boundaries, they [model a move toward a non-competitive ecosystem supporting teens](#). Funder Collaborative's research highlights two most powerful aspects: networking and exposure to different perspectives on Jewish life and observance. Content acquisition was valued less than community and collegiality.
- **Investing in professionals can mitigate the effects of turnover.** Youth professionals often stay in the roles for a limited number of years, and inevitable turnover (accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic) can have significant impacts by slowing or derailing well-crafted partnerships and a loss of institutional memory. Investment in key youth professionals to retain them in their roles has meant filling gaps in knowledge, offering upskilling and learning subsidies, and contributing to a sense of community and focus on mission.
- **Well-trained and confident youth professionals can offer teens a sense of community and belonging.** Educators who organizations invest in can [exemplify values and healthy relationships](#), create thoughtful opportunities for young people to connect Judaism to daily life, and help teens develop the crucial skills necessary for thriving in young adulthood and beyond, increasing their well-being and potential to thrive.

The Funder Collaborative launched [Expanding Your Reach](#), supporting more than 500 professionals across the country. Historically the role of youth professionals has been undervalued and understudied; to advocate for their rightful recognition, the Funder Collaborative and Rosov Consulting led the [first national research project](#) into their motivation and needs. It provides insight into who youth professionals are, what their career journey looks like, and the ecosystem they work in, sharing what it's like to be a youth professional today, perceptions around teen wellness and parent engagement, and emerging demands of the roles.



Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool

- The community has a coherent and comprehensive plan to provide high-quality professional development for youth professionals.
- Youth professionals are participating regularly in high-quality professional development opportunities with the full support of their supervisors/organizational leadership.
- Financial resources exist to support the compensation for, and ongoing professional development of, the community's teen educators and engagers.



9

STAY RESPONSIVE, STAY FLEXIBLE, STAY THE COURSE

A Learning Mindset and Strategic Pivots Help Navigate the Long Arc of Change

The lasting power of the 10 teen initiatives is a testament to the power of culture and an embrace of adaptability. While any long-term endeavor requires the necessary time for meaningful work to unfold, an extended timeline presents its own challenges. Identifying partners, allocating funds, staying true to a vision, and continuing to align strategies are difficult in a rapidly changing world. Balancing the long arc of projects with the need for flexibility remains an ongoing challenge. Many of the communities report that patience was critical because initiatives took longer than expected to plan, launch, and iterate. To that end, they also point to the best-kept secret to success: [a strategic pivot](#).

- **A FAIL (First Attempt in Learning) Is a Part of the Journey:** Fearless experimentation was a guiding principle of the early years of the initiatives. Each community, all balancing multiple on the ground stakeholders, embraced this to varying degrees, some feeling more liberated than others to truly experiment widely. Significant learning and sharing did help create a mindset that “FAIL” is part of a learning cycle—recognizing that every misstep is a “first attempt in learning.” Communities viewed failures as data points, enabling future informed decisions.
- **Data First...Sometimes:** Cultivating a data-informed culture, particularly at the local level, has been both a Funder Collaborative priority and a challenging journey. New evaluation tools including parent, youth professional, and teen surveys were used by each community and [adopted by the field](#). A cross-community evaluation conducted by Rosov Consulting enabled the Funder Collaborative to understand the effectiveness and outcomes of the initiatives in their entirety. Additionally, initiatives each invested in robust evaluations and experimented with creative formats, such as [ripple effect mapping](#), which combines elements of appreciative inquiry, affinity sorting, and visual mind-mapping activities. However, communities quickly encountered barriers from organizational partners: scant record-keeping, lack of streamlined technology to capture information, minimal incentives to systematically keep or analyze data, and a mistrust of sharing it. It was clear that initiatives initially overestimated the readiness and interest of program partners in collecting and effectively using data. Two strategic shifts effectively helped overcome this resistance, contributing to improved quality, reach, and impact of programs:
 - fostering strong relationships and sense of trust amongst partners.
 - technical assistance and incentives, sharing back community-wide data to the benefit of all.
- **Change Creates Momentum:** The best-laid plans are not immune to change, especially during earth-shattering events such as the tumultuous era of COVID and the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. While many programs grappled with uncertainty, the initiatives were positioned to respond, learn, and adapt—and support others in the network. Initiatives had already internalized the lesson that pivots—strategy shifts that still allowed the organization to achieve its desired impact—weren’t a signal of failure, but instead a healthy evolution. Sometimes, they catalyze new programs and ideas, as several teen programs that were launched in response to COVID continue to this day.

**Aligned Sustainability Indicators from the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool**

- Communal leadership is flexible and positioned to pivot in response to changing circumstances and new research on adolescent development, wellness, and evolving modalities for best educating and engaging teens.
- The ecosystem invests financial resources to support high-quality program evaluation that generates usable knowledge for community leadership.
- New research and evaluation results inform ongoing implementation and future planning (i.e., data-driven culture) for the entire teen ecosystem.



10 APPLY THESE LESSONS WIDELY

Each Hard-Won Lesson About Teens Unlocks the Potential to Impact Other Demographics

After a decade of tireless work, the most valuable lesson we learned was how transferrable this work is.

These lessons are shared with tremendous gratitude to the professionals of the 10 initiatives, committed colleagues, outstanding educators who lead the programs on the ground, thoughtful organizations that envision and realize the work, and the foresight of the Jim Joseph Foundation.

The insights herein hold the power to revolutionize how we approach education and engagement. The principles of transparency, adaptability, and data-informed decision-making, which have been instrumental in our journey with teens, are universally applicable. Every insight along the way matters: understand the landscape, unite around shared vision, balance innovation and experimentation with an eye toward sustainability, nurture the ecosystem, emphasize people before programs, and invest in educators and professionals.

We continue to harness the collective wisdom and power of joyful innovation to bring [Jewish impact to scale](#). The Funder Collaborative [merged into Jewish Federations of North America](#) to bring these lessons and opportunities to new audiences. Scaling has always been baked into the DNA of the Funder Collaborative, with successful models highlighted and designed to spread across the network of 10 communities across the country. The Jim Joseph Foundation, one of the largest philanthropic supporters of Jewish education and engagement nationally, recognized that adaptable programs can be delivered more efficiently, carry less financial risk, and mitigate challenges around achieving outcomes. It invested in helping the Funder Collaborative hone its expertise in scaling. While this can be a complex and sometimes daunting endeavor, it has potential to help other communities or organizations adapt your proven model, exponentially growing your reach and impact.

Building on the years of experience of [Spring Impact](#), the global leader in social replication, the Funder Collaborative co-created an accessible, step-by-step process to equip Jewish innovators with the practical tools, skills, mindsets, and supportive peers necessary to help ideas spread. Masterclasses, workshops, coaching, and a practical and accessible playbook provide a framework to guide any innovator. We invite you to join this journey.

By adopting these lessons into your own work, you open the door to reaching a broader audience, making a more profound impact, and fostering positive change. Imagine the transformation that can occur when we harness the wisdom gained from our experiences with teenagers and apply it to wider spheres of influence, such as with young adults or young families. We hope these lessons serve as a road map as you work to drive outcomes that matter, for any population.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

- **FACTS & FIGURES: AGGREGATE DATA 2015–2020**

- **OUTCOMES THAT POSITIVELY IMPACT THE LIVES OF JEWISH TEENS**

- **MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

- **SUSTAINABILITY DIAGNOSTIC TOOL**

Aggregate Data 2015–2020*

Funder Collaborative Communities Timeline



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

1

NUMBERS OF ENGAGED TEENS

27,635
unique
teens
engaged



219
new teen
programs



3,420
teen
scholarships
awarded

2

DIVERSITY OF ENGAGED TEENS

440
microgrants awarded to
teens and youth professionals

\$2,376,189

Jewish education and
engagement growing
up (pre-teen years)

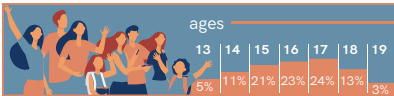


27%
substantial

54%
modest

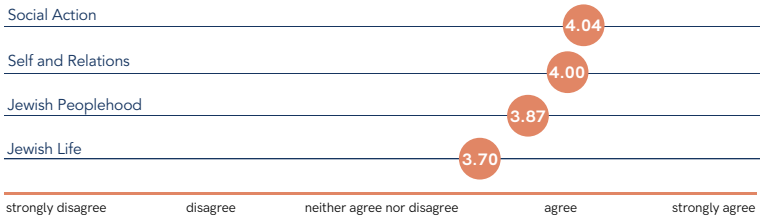
19%
nominal

current Jewish
education and
engagement
(past 12 months)



3

TEEN LEARNING AND GROWTH AS JEWS



4+5

SUSTAINABLE MODELS AND COMMUNITY PRIORITY

710,382
website visits

69,858
social media followers

504
new organizational
collaborations/
partnerships



1,292 unique sources of
funding for teen
initiatives

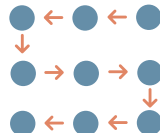
6

SUPPORTING YOUTH PROFESSIONALS

1,000+ unique youth
professionals
engaged



64% say that the network of Jewish
youth professionals in their community
has been a great resource for them



56 professional
development
series

289
professional
development
sessions



*Not all communities gathered and reported on each and every data point for each year

Outcomes That Positively Impact the Lives of Jewish Teens



JEWISH TEEN
Education & Engagement
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE
Powered by The Jewish Federations of North America

After extensive research and focus groups, The Jewish Education Project developed these 14 Jewish teen education & engagement outcomes. The outcomes build on four core questions and are organized into eight dimensions—structured to be a helpful tool for professionals and lay leaders as they design and assess teen programs.

Core Questions	8 Dimensions	Outcomes
Who am I?	Bein Adam L'Atzmo/a The Self Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Jewish teens have a stronger sense of self. 2 Jewish teens feel a sense of pride about being Jewish.
	Bein Adam L'Hochmato/a The Knowledge Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Jewish teens have experienced learning that has been both challenging and valuable. 4 Jewish teens have learned things that enable them to be more active participants in Jewish communities.
With whom and what am I connected?	Bein Adam L'Zmano/a The Time Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Jewish teens learn about and positively experience Jewish holidays and Shabbat.
	Bein Adam L'Chavero/a The Human Connected Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Jewish teens establish strong friendships. 7 Jewish teens develop strong and healthy relationships with their families. 8 Jewish teens develop significant relationships with mentors, role models, and educators. 9 Jewish teens are able to express their values and ethics in relation to Jewish principles and wisdom.
	Bein Adam L'Makomo/a The Spiritual Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Jewish teens develop the capacity (skills and language) that allows them to grapple with and express their spiritual journeys.
To whom and for what am I responsible?	Bein Adam L'Kehillotav The Communal Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Jewish teens feel connected to their various communities.
	Bein Adam L'Amo/a The Jewish People Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Jewish teens develop the desire and commitment to be part of the Jewish people now and in the future. 13 Jewish teens develop a positive relationship to the land, people, and state of Israel.
How can I bring about change in this world?	Bein Adam L'Olam/a The Global Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 Jewish teens are inspired and empowered to make a positive difference in various communities and the world in which they live.

For more on the development of these Outcomes visit <http://JewishEdProject.org/GenerationNow>.

Measure of Success #1

NUMBER OF ENGAGED TEENS



Dramatically increase the number of teens in targeted geographic areas engaged in Jewish learning during their high school years.

In most Jewish communities, the number of teens who are involved in programming for Jewish teens ranges between 10 and 25 percent of the local Jewish teen population. Through targeted investment in select Jewish communities, we seek to fund strategies that, by the end of 2020, will enable communities to influence the Jewish learning and growth of 40 percent of their Jewish teens during their high school years.

Measure of Success #2

DIVERSITY OF ENGAGED TEENS



Involve Jewish teens who come from diverse Jewish backgrounds.

Most of the teens who currently opt into Jewish involvement have previous Jewish experience from their families, schooling, summer camp, youth group, and/or travel to Israel. This Funder Collaborative seeks to co-invest in strategies that will influence the Jewish learning and growth of teens from a range of backgrounds — those who have not had previous Jewish experiences as well as those who have, and those from diverse socio-economic, demographic, and geographic communities.

Measure of Success #3

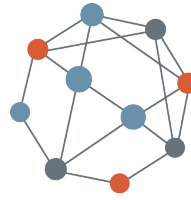
TEEN LEARNING AND GROWTH AS JEWS



Provide Jewish teens with experiences that will contribute to their Jewish learning and growth during their high school years.

The field of Jewish social science is becoming increasingly sophisticated at measuring the development of young Jews' knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs as indicators for future Jewish involvement. Specifically, this Funder Collaborative seeks to co-invest in strategies that will:

- Empower Jewish teens to develop a sense of what being Jewish means to them, why it is important to them, and its relevancy to their everyday lives.
- Increase Jewish teens' skills and involvement in personal and Jewish communal life such as Shabbat, Jewish holidays, life-cycle events, Israel and cultural activities, volunteer service, and ongoing learning and discussion on Jewish topics.
- Deepen Jewish teens' connections to their Jewish peers, Jewish adult role models, the Jewish community, and Israel.
- Increase Jewish teens' interest in continuing to learn, explore, and be involved with Jewish life during their college years and beyond.



JEWISH TEEN
Education & Engagement
FUNDER COLLABORATIVE
Powered by The Jewish Federations of North America

Measure of Success #4

FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE MODELS



Build models for Jewish teen education that are sustainable.

The Funder Collaborative recognizes that it will take both time and significant communal investment to get teen engagement right. At the same time, as we seek to co-invest in initiatives that are moving toward wide acceptance by and integration into the local Jewish community, we are aware that it is important to monitor and provide feedback on developments in the structural and operational aspects of the initiatives. Positive developments may include, but are not limited to, realistic fundraising plans; diversified revenue sources; a clearly stated mission aligned with goals and objectives; strong and stable leadership; opportunities for staff and board growth; evidence of a demand for services; strategic partnerships; and an ability to respond to changing needs.

Measure of Success #5

TEEN EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT A PRIORITY FOR LEADERS AND PARENTS



Establish Jewish teen education and engagement as a priority for local Jewish community leaders and parents.

Appreciating that new initiatives will only be as strong as the systems that support them, members of the Funder Collaborative seek to build broad-based coalitions within our communities that support, in word and deed, efforts to engage teens Jewishly. We will seek to engage key stakeholders including, but not limited to, Federation professionals and lay leaders; rabbis and congregational lay leadership; youth professionals; families of teens and pre-teens; and teens themselves. We will seek evidence of this support in some or all of the following:

Continued/increasing/guaranteed financial support from the local Federation; public statements from varied stakeholders about the importance of community-wide teen engagement; multi-institutional collaborations to engage teens; financial and/or volunteer involvement of families of teens; increasing numbers of teens on boards of local Jewish communal organizations; and strategic communications and outreach tools that foster the development of broad community support.

Measure of Success #6

A NETWORK OF CONFIDENT AND COMPETENT YOUTH-SERVING PROFESSIONALS



Youth professionals working with Jewish teens feel well-prepared and confident to do their work; have appropriate skills and knowledge to do their work; exhibit core competencies as required by their career stage and position, and feel valued as professionals in their organization and by the Jewish community at large.

Understanding the importance of role models in teens' lives and recognizing that new teen initiatives are built upon the quality of the education and experiences they provide, we support the professional development of youth professionals and aspire to establish teen education as a valued and enduring profession. Youth professionals (defined as those who work directly with teens on a full-time, part-time, or volunteer basis in programs associated with community initiatives) should be able to influence the Jewish growth and learning of teens in some or all of the four areas captured by the TJLES: supporting the development of a healthy self in relation to others (Personal); elevating caring about social justice and community service (Universal); strengthening connections to Jewish peoplehood and Israel (Tribal); and strengthening the connection to Jewish heritage and rituals (Sacred).

Knowing that different communities have different goals for professional development, as well as different content areas relevant to their teen programs, we encourage youth professionals to increase the competencies most relevant to their communities, roles, and job duties. At the same time, we appreciate the importance of a common set of skills and competencies that are essential for youth professionals across communities. To that end, we intend to increase youth professionals' knowledge of adolescent development, and their ability to build strong relationships with teens, provide substantive programmatic content, and help teens explore how Judaism can help them lead more meaningful, productive lives. We intend to increase youth professionals' competency to serve as Jewish role models for teens and to see themselves as an important part of teens' lives as emerging Jewish young adults. We intend to equip youth professionals to communicate and work with the parents of the teens they serve, as well as to reach out to parents of teens who have never, or rarely, participated. We aspire to empower youth professionals by establishing that role as one which includes appropriate compensation, benefits, and opportunities for professional growth and advancement.

Emerging Unified Goal #7

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS



Engaged, Supportive and Supported Parents and Caregivers.

Creating opportunities for teens to connect with Jewish life is a communal and family affair, with parents continuing to influence their teens' behaviors, beliefs, and activities throughout the high school years. Yet, parenting a tween and teen can be challenging and often isolating. The Funder Collaborative will encourage communities to provide experiences that connect parents and caregivers meaningfully to one another (community-building), create spaces to share struggles and seek advice (support), and participate in new and relevant learning to build their skill sets to better parent adolescents and guide them towards resiliency (education). When parenting is expressed through the lens of Jewish values and teachings, new layers and contemporary relevance of Jewish wisdom will unfold.

We will utilize tools to assess parents' and caregivers' needs for parenting education and skills; the wellness challenges their teens face; their hopes for their children's Jewish future and participation in communal life; and their satisfaction with current Jewish programming. We aspire to equip parents and caregivers to become effective advocates for their teens' personal thriving as well as influential ambassadors for effective Jewish teen education and engagement. Additionally, we seek evidence that better connected, supported, and Jewishly engaged parents and caregivers will inspire teens to explore their own Jewish identities and growth more readily and deeply.



Sustainability Diagnostic Tool

Updated February 2022

MOS #4: Build Models for Jewish Teen Education that are Sustainable

The Funder Collaborative recognizes that it will take both time and significant communal investment to get teen engagement right. At the same time, as we seek to co-invest in initiatives that are moving towards wide acceptance by and integration into the local Jewish community, we are aware that it is important to monitor and provide feedback on developments in the structural and operational aspects of the initiatives. Positive developments may include, but are not limited to, realistic fundraising plans; diversified revenue sources; clearly stated mission aligned with goals and objectives; strong and stable leadership; opportunities for staff and board growth; evidence of a demand for services; strategic partnerships; and an ability to respond to changing needs.

Background

In order to operationalize the FC's aspirational statements in this measure, the CCE sought to identify field-validated instrumentation that might serve as the basis for the development of what was originally envisioned as a CCE administered assessment. To that end, we identified and adapted the [PSAT: Program Sustainability Assessment Tool](#) (Center for Public Health Systems Science at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis). Through an iterative process we came to understand that this tool might be more appropriately rendered as a diagnostic of sorts – that will enable communities in the FC to assess their own progress toward various dimensions of sustainability.

About the Tool

Although the instrument from which this is adapted includes a numeric scale for measurement, we have developed a qualitative rubric that allows communities to place themselves on a continuum of sustainability in each of the domains.

The diagnostic process should provide a meaningful opportunity for community leadership to reflect on progress towards these important dimensions of sustainability. When used in this diagnostic format, it is hoped that communities would develop action plans to move them further toward continuous improvement.

Proposed Guidelines for Use

1. FC representative and initiative director along with local evaluator identify 5 to 10 community members each of whom is well positioned to provide an honest and candid assessment of one or more dimensions included in the SDT. (These could include committee members, donors, significant program partners, etc.)
2. Each community can choose its preferred method for conducting the diagnostic: (i) the local evaluator conducts the diagnostic, or (ii) a task force of community-based initiative leadership conducts the diagnostic.

Glossary

Jewish Teen Education and Engagement Funder Collaborative

A network of 10 communities throughout the country that have signed on to prioritize teen programming and use shared data gathering instruments to evaluate progress towards shared Measures of Success for their work.

Teen Ecosystem

The full network of local Jewish organizations involved directly or peripherally with Jewish teen programming and engagement in a community.

CCE

The Cross-Community Evaluation team of the Funder Collaborative. This team, comprised of staff at Rosov Consulting and led by Sara Allen of the Teen Funder Collaborative, was responsible for developing quantitative and qualitative instruments to assess progress toward the Collaborative's six shared measures of success, aggregating and reporting on teen, parent, youth professional, and community stakeholder data gathered and submitted to the CCE by community-specific evaluators, and documenting the "story" and "journey" of the Funder Collaborative over time.

Sustainability

In this context, sustainability refers to a community's ability to prioritize teen engagement by offering high-quality and well-funded teen programming, professional development, and other activities as indicated by the eight CCE Sustainability Domains, beyond the terms of the initial funding for their local teen initiative.

Domain	Indicators
Clearly Stated Mission Aligned with Goals and Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ecosystem has articulated clear goals for teen engagement and education over the next three-to-five years. 2. Key players in the ecosystem feel like active partners in and <u>share the goals</u> of teen education and engagement efforts. 3. The ecosystem has a clear and coherent roadmap for achieving its goals vis-à-vis teen education and engagement.
Strong and Stable Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ecosystem has a core and sustained group of lay and professional champions for teen education and engagement who occupy influential communal positions. 2. Community leadership effectively articulates a coherent vision of teen education and engagement for various constituencies and stakeholders (parents, teens, and educators/engagers). 3. The ecosystem has the quantity and quality of professionals necessary to execute its stated goals in teen education and engagement.
Secure Financial Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The community has diverse and numerous funders that allocate both restricted and unrestricted dollars for teen education and engagement programming (including but not limited to the current Initiative). 2. Teen education and engagement programs have a diversified revenue strategy (e.g. earned revenue, endowment, etc.) 3. The community has at least one entity or a partnership of organizations that have a three-to-five year financial plan for supporting teen education and engagement programming.
Evidence of Demand for Service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ecosystem markets teen education and engagement in ways that generate interest among parents and teens. 2. Teen programming is regularly filled either to capacity or with critical mass to deliver programs effectively. 3. Teens/Parents are asking for/approaching organizational leaders to develop more offerings (new and/or increased capacity of existing).
Centrality of Teen Voices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is teen representation on communal teen education and engagement planning bodies. 2. Teens are regularly solicited to give input as new programs are being considered and developed. 3. Teens are utilized as resources for peer recruitment.
Strategic Partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diverse community organizations are significantly invested in teen education and engagement efforts. 2. There are incentives and structures in place to support communication and coordination among diverse youth-serving organizations and programs. 3. Youth-serving organizations and programs are collaborating effectively to increase economies of scale and eliminate redundancies.
Opportunities for Growth, Support, and Enhancement of Youth Professionals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The community has a coherent and comprehensive plan to support youth professionals in their development, growth, and wellbeing. 2. Youth professionals are participating regularly in high quality professional development opportunities with the full support of their supervisors/organizational leadership. 3. Financial resources exist to support the compensation for, and ongoing professional development of, the community's teen educators and engagers.
Responsiveness to Changing Landscapes; Circumstances and Lessons Learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communal leadership is flexible, and positioned to pivot in response to changing circumstances and new research on adolescent development, wellness, and evolving modalities for best educating and engaging teens. 2. The ecosystem invests financial resources to support high quality program evaluation that generates usable knowledge for community leadership. 3. New research and evaluation results inform ongoing implementation and future planning (i.e. data-driven culture) for the entire teen ecosystem.