

Twin Cities Jewish Community Cooperation Panel

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I. INTRODUCTION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Twin Cities' Jewish Community Cooperation Panel was formed in the Fall of 2014. It is the product of initiatives originating in each community aimed at enhancing collaboration between the Jewish communities in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The scope of the Panel is about improving collaboration and cooperation between the communities, not only between the Federations.

The principal purposes of enhancing cooperation are threefold, in no particular order:

- Enhancing the “community” aspect of Jewish life in the Twin Cities.
- Enhancing the quality of community programming.
- Achieving greater economic efficiency.

The work of the Panel is guided by the following principles:

- Changing the narrative. The Panel hopes to change what for some has been a negative narrative which dwells too often on perceived differences and past grievances. The Panel wants to shine a light on the many collaborative communal activities that are working well, as well as offer solutions for how the communities can work better together in the future.
- Honesty. The Panel seeks to elicit honest assessments of both the benefits and challenges of cooperative community endeavors, both what has worked and what has not worked.
- Mutual Respect. Success will require building greater trust between the communities and a growing respect for the essential integrity and worth of each community. The Panel recognizes that change is likely to be incremental not sudden and radical. The Panel hopes to see ambitious efforts to move the communities forward toward an achievable vision of greater cooperation, a vision which will be shared and measured, corrected where it falls short, and celebrated where it succeeds.
- Positive tone. The goal of the Panel is to face issues head-on and come up with solutions which will inspire the community toward greater collaboration and cooperation. The focus of the work should be positive and outcome-based.

II. ORIGINS, FORMATION AND COMPOSITION OF THE PANEL

The importance of collaboration between the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Jewish communities was identified as one of five top communal priorities that emerged from St. Paul's Community Planning Process listening sessions. In Minneapolis, the desire to find new ways of collaborating with St. Paul emerged from a valuable "grass roots" initiative spearheaded by Steve Lear, a long-time active community member from Minneapolis, together with Yoav Segal from St. Paul.

In addition, the Harry Kay Foundation, whose mission is to enhance Jewish life in the Twin Cities, expressed an interest in the project and support for the goal of enhancing collaboration and cooperation between the two communities.

Since the objective of this Panel is to enhance cooperation between the St. Paul and Minneapolis Jewish communities, it was obviously of great importance to have meaningful input from both communities in the composition of the Panel. Accordingly, the President of each Federation was asked to name to the Panel three individuals who were active members of each of their respective communities and who were highly respected and had extensive involvement in a variety of Jewish community events over a long period of time.

Jewish Federation of Greater St. Paul President Susan Minsberg appointed Jon Parritz, Holly Brod Farber and Mark Adelman to the Panel from St. Paul. Minneapolis Jewish Federation President Linda Ketover appointed Kris MacDonald, Todd Lifson and Jacy Grais from Minneapolis. All Panel members have many years of volunteer and leadership experience in the community with a number of different agencies.

The Panel was co-chaired by Jon Parritz, a past President of the St. Paul Jewish Federation, and Kris MacDonald, a past President of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation.

The Panel was supported by David Milavetz, coordinator of the St. Paul Community Planning Process.

III. PROCESS AND METHODS

The Panel began Phase One of its work in October, 2014. This phase was aimed at studying the history and current state of cooperation between the two communities: what has worked/is working; what has not worked/is not working; and why. The focus of this work was to interview our Jewish community professionals to explore what they see as both the successes and weaknesses with respect to “cross river” collaboration between the two communities. In the course of this work, the Panel interviewed 22 Jewish agency professionals from across the Twin Cities, as well as the Minnesota Rabbinical Association. The Panel issued its Phase I Report in September of 2015. The Panel’s full Phase I Report is available at Appendix A to this report. The Appendix is available on request.

Immediately upon issuance of the Panel’s Phase I Report, the Panel began Phase II of its work. Phase II was focused on gathering information from comparable Jewish communities across the country. The Panel began this process by consulting with Gail Zucker of the Jewish Federations of North America (“JFNA”). Ms. Zucker has extensive experience in consulting and helping to facilitate collaborative efforts in Jewish communities across the country. The Panel also benefited from the extensive experience and connections of the new Minneapolis Jewish Federation CEO, Stu Silberman, as well as Jewish Federation of Greater St. Paul Executive Director, Eli Skora, as well as the extensive experience and contacts of Panel members.

The Panel maintained ongoing contact with both Stu Silberman and Eli Skora, as well as St. Paul Federation President, Susan Minsberg, and Minneapolis Federation President, Linda Ketover. The Panel also reported its progress to the boards of each Federation.

During Phase II, the Panel selected the following Jewish communities to study in more detail:

1. Central Florida: (Tampa, Orlando, Pinellas County)
2. Dallas/Fort Worth
3. Massachusetts (Worcester and surrounding Federations, and Boston (“CJP”))
4. Northern California (San Francisco, East Bay, Silicon Valley)
5. South Florida

The Panel conducted this phase of its research by interviewing key community professionals in each of these communities. The following people were interviewed by Panel members:

| Regions/Organizations | Interviewees | Interviewer(s) |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Central Florida (Tampa, Orlando, Pinellas County) | Gary Gould, Chief Executive Officer, Tampa Jewish Community Center & Federation | Kris MacDonald, David Milavetz |
| Dallas/Fort Worth | Bradley Laye, President & CEO, Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas Bob Goldberg, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Fort Worth & Tarrant County | Mark Adelman, David Milavetz |
| Massachusetts (Worcester and surrounding Federations and Boston (“CJP”)) | Howard Borer, Executive Director, Worcester Jewish Federation; Barry Shrage, President, Greater Boston Combined Jewish Philanthropies | Jon Parritz |
| Northern California (San Francisco, East Bay, Silicon Valley) | Joanne Neuman, Director of Development, Jewish Federation of the East Bay Julie Golde, Interim Senior Director of Community Impact, Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco Jyl Jurman, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Federation of Silicon Valley | Jacy Grais |
| South Florida | Rabbi Fred Klein, Greater Miami Jewish Federation | Holly Brod Farber |

The Panel members followed a script which they jointly prepared. A copy of the script is at Appendix B. A summary of the interviews is included at Appendix C.

At its meeting on March 31, 2016, the Panel met to discuss the results of these interviews. Prior to the meeting each Panel member reviewed the Panel summaries prepared by fellow Panel members. Each Panel member who conducted an interview presented the key conclusions from the interview. The Panel members then unanimously agreed upon their recommendations and contributed in drafting this Final Report.

IV. OVERALL NATURE OF COLLABORATION AMONG STUDIED COMMUNITIES:

The interview summaries at Appendix C contain a wealth of information about the communities which were the subject of the interviews. In summary, this is a description of the overall nature of collaborative efforts in the communities studied:

- Tampa and Pinellas County (St. Petersburg) have formed a “strategic alliance” which they consider successful and which has resulted in marked improvement in collaboration between the two communities. Initial efforts to include Orlando have not been as successful.
- Dallas-Fort Worth and Worcester-Greater Boston do not currently have structures in place to facilitate collaboration and do not currently engage in a high level of cooperation. Collaboration is ad hoc and is limited to discrete activities and projects. Boston has absorbed several small Federations which were close to Boston, and Worcester collaborates with other small Federations in surrounding communities. Proposals to merge Worcester with Boston have been explored but rejected.
- San Francisco-Oakland-East Bay engage in a variety of collaborative efforts, but again limited to areas of common interest. Collaboration is a bit more strategic than in other communities. Proposals to merge San Francisco and East Bay have been explored but rejected.
- Worcester and Boston currently engage in little collaboration, except some joint funding of its Community Relations Council. The possibility of merger was explored but rejected. Additional opportunities to engage more Worcester residents in Boston programming are being explored.
- South Miami is divided between several different Federations. Given the difficulties of traffic and distance, and the large populations supporting each community, collaboration is pursued when feasible but is not viewed as a priority.

V. SPECIFIC AREAS OF COLLABORATION AMONG STUDIED COMMUNITIES

Even though most of the communities studied lack formal structures for collaboration, most do collaborate across several areas, including:

- Hillel;
- Public affairs (lobbying, governmental relations);
- Interfaith/intercommunal relations (JCRCs);
- Chaplaincy services to unaffiliated;
- Arts;
- Fighting BDS and anti-Semitism;
- Support for Israel (rallies and celebrations.)

In the course of our interviews we learned about various specific collaborative structures, some enduring, and some ad-hoc, which we found interesting. These include the following:

- Texas Jewish arts collaborative;
- Texas joint Federation “mini General Assembly”;
- Texas shared Federation campaign dashboard;
- Massachusetts Association of Jewish Federations (a consortium of Jewish Federations in Worcester, Springfield, New Bedford and Boston which focuses on support of the JCRC and other public policy issues);
- South Florida Jewish chaplaincy program;
- Silicon Valley/East Bay/San Francisco regional Hillel collaboration;
- Shared scholarship assistance program between San Francisco and Silicon Valley;
- Northern California “mega mission” for Israel’s 70th anniversary;
- Central Florida joint marketing of multi-Federation events like Cardozo, Maimonides, with sharing of corporate sponsorship revenue;
- Central Florida Alliance Governing Committee, consisting of equal numbers of people from each community and a single “president.”

VI. KEY TAKEAWAYS

There is a “sweet spot” of conditions which favor collaboration. Factors favoring collaboration include:

1. Geographic proximity of one hour or less travel time;
2. Mutual perceived benefit of collaboration;
3. Joint and strategic planning of collaboration initiatives;
4. Follow-up, including continued communication;
5. Commitment of both staff and lay leaders.

Factors disfavoring collaboration include:

1. Perceived self-reliance/lack of need to collaborate;
2. Substantial imbalance of wealth and size (e.g., Dallas/Ft Worth; Boston/Worcester);
3. Difficult transportation issues: distance and traffic (E.g., So. Florida, Boston/Worcester, No. California).

VII. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The following represents the Panel's general conclusions based on both phases of its work:

- The St. Paul and Minneapolis Jewish communities are currently involved in a wide range of collaborative efforts, many of which are extremely successful. The two Federations have re-doubled their efforts over the last 18 months, and are currently pursuing several new joint initiatives, including Life & Legacy, Young Leadership, back-office IT services, and joint purchase of a JFNA-sponsored donor management database. The two JCC's are also currently engaged in a serious effort to integrate more of their functions.
- More needs to be done to publicize and celebrate these successes. Doing so will promote and encourage further collaboration, and enhance our sense of being one community.
- Successful collaboration requires agreement and trust in a lead agency with clearly defined roles for participating agencies.
- Collaboration needs to be a strategic objective adopted by community agencies, including each of the two Federations, and made part of ongoing accountability and performance reviews.
- Attention must be paid to developing future leaders in the Federations and agencies who are skilled at and committed to both preserving communal culture and fostering creative and open collaboration.
- Geography is, and will remain, an issue, and will require conscious efforts to balance competing community interests in having events at convenient locations.
- Inter-Federation collaboration is extensive but has been hampered by lack of clear guidelines and procedures, particularly for sharing registration information. This situation is being addressed but needs ongoing support and follow-through.
- Oversight and funding of bi-city agencies is hampered by lack of coordination and cooperation between Federations.
- Collaboration generally is hampered by obsolete and counterproductive attitudes about the "other" community: this needs to be addressed head-on and diffused at every opportunity.
- We should strive to develop a cohesive sense of a single Twin Cities Jewish community. This can occur without interfering with either community's autonomous organization or unique "sense of self."
- Collaboration can and should take different forms: No one model is appropriate for all circumstances.

- Collaboration does not mean elimination of separate communal organizations. Having separate organizations operating in each community helps outreach efforts and serves to broaden communal involvement and fundraising. While the benefits of collaboration and cooperation can be achieved without eliminating existing organizations, community organizations can, and should, look for opportunities to avoid unnecessarily duplicating functions and services, and to achieve operating efficiency by combining programs where appropriate.
- Key opportunities for achieving efficiency goals through collaboration include joint contracting for vendor services, such as property maintenance, security, information technology, accounting, and marketing.
- There is wide community buy-in and interest in enhancing collaboration and cooperation. Not every area is a fruitful one for collaboration. For example, certain activities are likely to remain localized in nature, such as early childhood and elementary education.
- While it is true that the cultures of the St. Paul and Minneapolis Jewish communities differ in certain important respects, differences can be overstated and become a barrier to collaboration. Positive distinctive differences between the communities should be celebrated, not used as an excuse for avoiding collaboration.
- It is important to develop concrete communal structures for the purpose of fostering collaboration. Improving collaboration requires intentionality.
- There is a need to establish an agreed-upon matrix for measuring the success of collaborative efforts to enable follow up and continuity.
- Agencies engaging in collaboration need to pay more attention to having events take place in the “other community.” Successful examples include the boards of Sholom and the JCRC which deliberately meet on an alternating basis in each community.
- The community needs to join hands in fighting BDS and antisemitism.
- Collaborative events should consistently be co-branded, such as “Brought to you by the Jewish Federations of Minneapolis and St. Paul.”

VIII. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel makes the following three recommendations for specific actions steps.

Recommendation No. 1: Establish a “Minnesota Jewish Collaboration Council.”

The Panel recommends that the two communities establish a new entity called the “Minnesota Jewish Collaboration Council.” The Council would assure that the current collaborative efforts continue and expand, and that these efforts are not interrupted by changes in staffing and leadership. The council would be focused on enhancing collaboration and cooperation across the Twin Cities, as well as Greater Minnesota, such as Rochester and Duluth. The charge of the Council should be to enhance and support collaboration efforts with the aim of creating a more cohesive, successful, and harmonious Jewish community.

The Council should include each of the two Federation executives, plus an equal number of members who will be appointed by each Federation president, and have two co-chairs, one from each community. The size of the Council should be no more than 10, including the two Federation executives.

The Council should establish its own operating parameters. The Panel expects that the Council will meet several times per year.

The Council will have the authority and responsibility to make recommendations to the Federations and other community agencies to enhancing collaboration and cooperation, and to consider new initiatives and proposals for how to address joint communal needs.

The council’s authority will be persuasive, not “directive.”

The Panel recommends that the Council initially study and make recommendations regarding:

1. The feasibility of further efforts to consolidate community “back office” functions, such as accounting, information technology, facilities management, and community security, including spear-heading selection of a lead agency to coordinate joint purchasing and contracting for shared services.
2. The costs and benefits of sharing of staff between the Federations.
3. Establishment of accountability metrics to measure and reward collaboration.
4. Implementation of measures to enhance generally the visibility of collaborative efforts in the community and among donors.
5. Whether the St Paul and Minneapolis Federations have an opportunity to collaborate in funding bi-cities agencies by assessing the whole process to maximize efficiency and support throughout.

As noted above, serious efforts are currently underway now between the two Federations and JCC's in many of these areas, which the Panel applauds. The Panel envisions the Council's role to be to lend advice and assistance to the professionals involved in these efforts, and to help to maintain continuity of these efforts during organizational staff transitions.

Recommendation No. 2: Convene Periodic “Mini-General Assemblies” for Minnesota Jewish Professionals and/or Lay Leaders.

In its Phase I report, the Panel suggested that the community should consider establishing periodic meetings of agency professionals and rabbis from across the Twin Cities, convened by the two Federations, for the purpose of discussing ongoing collaboration and new ideas for collaborative ventures. Such meetings currently occur with varying regularity within each community. These intra-city meetings should continue, but bi-city meetings should be added.

As part of its research during Phase II, the Panel learned that such an approach was tried recently by various communities in Texas, which was found to be very successful and useful. They called it a “Mini-GA”, modeled after the national “GA”, or General Assembly convened every year by JFNA. We think this idea would work well here, and can include agency professionals beyond the Twin Cities, including Duluth and Rochester.

In addition, we believe that such gatherings should include lay leaders, though not at each meeting. Agency professionals should convene several times a year. Lay leaders could be included once a year or once every two years.

Recommendation No 3: Appoint Collaboration Liaisons.

Each Jewish agency should designate a liaison for collaboration. This individual will report to the appointing agency's board and will coordinate that agency's participation in collaborative communal projects.

IX. CONCLUSION

The Jewish communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in 2016 are a thriving hub of Jewish activity and engagement. Both communities have recognized that they would mutually benefit from increasing collaboration. To be successful, such collaborative efforts must be carefully planned and executed, and be based upon mutual respect and appreciation for each community.

It is our sincere hope that our work on this Panel and the ideas presented in this report will help strengthen and expand the existing bridges between the communities and will foster and enable an ever-increasing sense of common purpose and greater Jewish identification and affiliation.