

Focus Groups

Summary Report

January, 2025

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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Background & Objectives

As part of its engagement with The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland (JFGP), Panoramic Strategy conducted a series of focus groups with various cross-sections of Jewish community members from across the Portland area.

The overarching objective of these focus groups was to utilize the information from the Community Study and Impact Team Reports to confidently move forward with direction and guidance for the future.

Specific objectives included:

- Understanding impressions of the Jewish Community of Portland and its organizations,
- Identifying barriers to participation and potential solutions to the barriers, and
- Evaluating several new ideas and concepts.




Methodology

Ten in-person focus groups were conducted at four different locations across greater Portland between November 10 and November 14, 2024. Each group lasted two hours and followed a similar format. Nine out of ten groups had at least twelve participants (total participants = 125).

Focus group participants were recruited by JFGP and compensated with a \$50.00 gift card. All groups were conducted by a senior consultant from Panoramic Strategy.

The ten groups were designed to include a representative cross-section of community members aligned with the community study outcomes and based on age/lifestyle, engagement, and geography:

Group	Group Definition	Location of Group	Number of Participants
1	Young Adults with Young Children	Mittleman JCC	7
2	East Side Residents	East Side Jewish Commons	12
3	Young Adults Without Children	East Side Jewish Commons	13
4	Adults Over 60	Mittleman JCC	14
5	Limited/No Engagement	Mittleman JCC	13
6	Limited/No Engagement	East Side Jewish Commons	12
7	Adults in 40's and 50's	East Side Jewish Commons	13
8	Lay Leaders	JFGP Offices	13
9	West Side Suburbs Residents	JFGP Offices	14
10	Clark County, WA Residents	Congregation Kol Ami	14

	Age Based Groups
	Engagement Based Groups
	Geographic Based Groups

It is important to keep in mind that this research is qualitative and directional in nature. Results reported from this research, while stated as conclusions, are hypotheses based on observations and informed analysis. Any quotations used in the report are presented to clarify points; they represent the words of individual contributors to the discussions.

Executive Summary

Understanding Portland and its Jewish Community:

- **In general, Portlanders are perceived as progressive, independent, and friendly, giving the city a distinctive identity and unique character.** Portland has an outdoor appeal including parks, proximity to the ocean and mountains, a robust biking and hiking culture, and a renowned culinary scene.
 - Challenges in Portland include increasing homelessness, economic disparity, and a perceived lack of racial and ideological diversity. In addition, there are concerns regarding transportation infrastructure and city governance.
- **Portland's Jewish community is characterized as diverse, eclectic, and dynamic.** The community offers multiple engagement opportunities beyond traditional institutions, including grassroots initiatives and informal gatherings.
 - Participants noted a geographic imbalance, with most Jewish services and resources concentrated on the West Side, despite a significant Jewish population residing on the East Side.
 - Larger than expected and growing, the Portland Jewish community includes a large number of non-native Portlanders.
- **Perceptions vary as to how warm and welcoming the Portland Jewish community is.** Seniors, those from the West Side, and Lay Leaders suggest the community is egalitarian, welcoming and accepting, while many on the East Side suggest the Portland Jewish community is challenging to break into.
 - Some expressed feelings of invisibility within Portland's broader landscape.
- **Learning programs and social or cultural events, combined with religious services, are the primary sources of community engagement.** Volunteering and donating to Jewish causes are also mentioned as common ways in which the community engages.
- **The limited availability of kosher food and Jewish delis** was identified as a gap for both new and existing community members.

Engagement with Jewish Organizations in Greater Portland:

- **When asked to name formal and informal Jewish organizations in Portland, focus groups shared the following (in alphabetical order):**
 - Those organizations mentioned by more groups suggests a higher level of awareness, not necessarily indicative of usage.

Mentioned By All Groups	Mentioned by 5-7 Groups	Mentioned by 3-4 Groups	Mentioned by 2 Groups
Chabad	BB365 (Camp)	Film Festival	Alberta Shul
East Side Jewish Commons	Co-Lab	Friends/DIY Judaism	Bagel Shop
Jewish Federation of Greater Portland	Hillel	Hadassah	Jewish Burial Society
Mittleman JCC	JCFS	Holocaust Memorial	Jewish Review
Oregon Jewish Museum	Jewish Voices for Peace	Israeli/Folk Dance Groups	Portland Jewish Connection
Portland Jewish Academy	Kosher Brewery	J Street	TISH
Synagogues	Moishe House	Jewish Cemetery	TIVNU
	PJ Library	Jewish Community Foundation	
		Mikvah	
		One Table	
		Robeson Homes	
		Youth Groups	

- ADL, JADE, JCRC, and Portland State University are among the organizations that were each only mentioned in one group.
- **When looking at actual engagement with the organizations you see some differences:**
 - **The Oregon Jewish Museum** is utilized by substantially more people than any other organization, apart from synagogues which are used more for religious activity than engagement.
 - **The East Side Jewish Commons** is also highly utilized and surpasses the JCC in engagement for many.

- **Informal, grassroots gatherings** are preferred by younger participants and those on the East Side, which explains the high utilization of DIY and Friends as sources of engagement.

Barriers to Participation in the Portland Jewish Community:

- **Participants looked back at the most recent Jewish events they attended, as well as those they decided not to attend, and shared the rationale for their go/no-go decisions.** Understanding the factors used when deciding whether or not to attend an event, and their relative importance, can potentially lessen participation barriers.

Factors, in order of mentions; from most mentions to least mentions; are listed below:

1. Level of Interest in Program or Speaker
2. Logistical Issues (Date, Time of Day, Distance, Parking, transportation)
3. Cost/Value/Donation Requested
4. Age/Life Stage/Lifestyle (Cohort) Programming
5. Knowing someone who is going, being invited by friend
6. Organization Sponsoring
7. The current political situation, in Israel, the United States and Portland
8. Childcare/Child/Family Friendly
9. Safety/Security
10. Cultural or religious event
11. Knowledge necessary to participate/understand/enjoy
12. Accessibility (Handicapped, Immunocompromised, etc.)

Jewish Literacy:

- **While insufficient Jewish literacy was not widely reported as a barrier to engagement, there is a strong interest in educational opportunities.**
 - Topics of most interest from a prepared list include:
 - Jewish thought and text study
 - Death and dying
 - Aging
 - Parenting and practical knowledge such as holiday observances and synagogue protocols followed in importance

- Additional topics of interest mentioned revolve around four main areas:
 - Jewish and Israeli history
 - Jewish arts and culture
 - Judaism practices
 - Jewish ethics and values

New Concepts Evaluated:

Gather Grants and Service Team Volunteering both received positive responses and should be considered for implementation. As is normal, and noted here, questions about concepts arise when there are high interest levels.

- **Gather Grants which provide subsidies for hosting DIY Jewish events**, was valued as a means of reducing financial barriers, fostering connections, building community, and encouraging friendships.

Questions arose about:

- Content requirements
- Location
- Guest requirements
- Strings that may be attached
- Who the funder is
- How much money is included in the grant
- How events will be organized
- Who organizes the events
- **Service Team Volunteering which is designed to encourage group volunteering within and beyond the Jewish community**, resonated with participants interests because it aligns with some of their personal reasons for volunteering: meeting people, building relationships and giving back to the community.

Questions arose about:

- Logistics
- Organization and project selection
- Team composition
- Activity alignment with Jewish values
- Family-friendly options

Suggested Changes to the Community

Focus Group participants ultimately are looking for a community that is more unified. When asked what changes they would make about Jewish life in Greater Portland, responses fit in several buckets: programming/education; communications and community; and geography.

- **Programming and Education**

- Activities and events designed specifically for **affinity groups**
- **Creative, cultural, and informal** ways to celebrate their Judaism
- More **Jewish related education** options for adults and children

- **Communications and Community**

- Coordinated community **calendar**
- **Integration** into Portland community
- **Less cliquey** Jewish community
- Ability to have **difficult conversations** about Israel and other controversial topics

- **Geography**

- **Increased programming** in the East Side and Vancouver
- **More collaboration** between geographic areas

Understanding the Portland Community

Overview:

To gain a better understanding of the Portland Community and how it differs from other communities across the country, participants were asked to share the best thing about living in Portland, as well as what they would change about Portland if they could.

Best Things About Portland:

- In general, Portlanders are perceived as progressive, independent, and friendly. Many of those living in Portland are non-native, leading participants to suggest people who live in Portland do so because they want to be there.

"Portland is accepting of everyone – we are liberally tolerant."

"We want to 'keep Portland weird'."

"Portland has a creative spirit, we are quirky."

- The restaurant and food and beverage choices available here are considered to set Portland apart from other cities.

"There are food options to meet all needs."

"No other city that I know of has the 'food pods' that Portland does."

"The local beer and wine are excellent."

- Portland is known for its outdoor charm; a place with parks, greenery, and a location that is close to both the ocean and the mountains. The city is easy to get around; walkable with a neighborhood vibe and good public transportation options.

"This is a great place to be, it is an easy drive to the ocean if you want the sun, or to the mountains to ski."

"It is a bike riding and hiking city."

"Portland is a small big city. It is the perfect size."

- Focus Group participants also shared the quality and quantity of the cultural activities to do in the Portland area.

"There is a great music and arts scene here."

"People who live here value books; there is a reading culture."

Things to Change in Portland:

- The environment in downtown Portland is perceived by some as needing to "be cleaned-up."

"There is too much homelessness in the city, which is caused partially by the high level of drug addiction."

"The graffiti, or tagging, and vandalism need to be stopped."

- Portland is known as the "whitest city" in the country. Focus group participants suggest that Portland would be better with more diversity.

"Portland has a monoculture by design; we need to change that."

"It's not only race, Portland needs more diversity in thought and background, we need to be more tolerant of non-progressives."

- The weak economy in Portland is thought to be something that needs correcting. The high level of income tax and increasing cost of living are making Portland less affordable.

"Portland has lost its affordability, there is now a large economic divide."

"We need more affordable housing."

- It is not easy to transverse the city. The transportation infrastructure, including roads, highways, and public transportation are in need of improvement.

"It is very difficult to commute between the East and West sides of the city."

"The city is too car centric; we need better and easier to use public transportation."

- Several shared that the city government model is in need of change, citing that there is a 'local city leadership crisis'.

Perceptions of the Jewish Community of Greater Portland

Overview:

Focus group participants shared their thoughts and impressions of the Jewish Community in Portland. In particular, what would be most important for a newcomer to know about the community, how 'warm and welcoming' the community is, and how it can be more welcoming.

Important to Know About Jewish Community Greater Portland:

- Multiple grassroots and collaborative organizations are available to the Jewish community of Portland, above and beyond numerous synagogue options.

"This is not your typical Jewish community; it is eclectic with lots of options."

"There are many different ways and flavors of being Jewish here. There is something here for everyone, a variety of people and types of organizations."

"There is a plethora of options, and they are not all institutions."

- There is a concentration of Jewish community organizations on the West side of the city, including the only JCC in Portland.

"There is a large Jewish population on the East side, but most Jewish services are on the West side."

"The only vibrant Jewish community is in the city, there is nothing in the suburbs."

- The Portland Jewish community is "larger than expected, and growing."

"The community includes a lot of uninvolved Jews."

"There are a lot of transplants."

- While some are comfortable to display their Judaism in Portland and feel supported, others say they feel like "an invisible minority" in a city that does not do much to accommodate Jewish community members.

"Portlanders who are not Jewish do not know anything about Jewish holidays or traditions."

"There is hatred for Jews once you leave Vancouver proper."

- While the city of Portland is noted as a “foodie” town; a lack of Jewish delis and Kosher food options are mentioned as things important for newcomers to Jewish Portland to know.

Warm and Welcoming:

- Participants used words such as: comfortable, non-judgmental, tolerant, inclusive, and accepting to define what would make an organization feel “warm and welcoming” to them.

“Inclusivity is all encompassing, including gender identity, culture, and mixed marriages.”

“Being welcoming to broad diversity of people, including LGBTQ and all types of families.”

“Organizations need to have inclusive events and then follow through when interest is expressed.”

- Perceptions vary as to how warm and welcoming the Portland Jewish community is.
 - Seniors, those from the West Side, and Lay Leaders suggested the community is *egalitarian, welcoming, and accepting*.

“Shuls are open to different lifestyles (LGBTQ).”

“You do not need to be a big macher to get involved.”

“Newcomers can get involved quickly and can make a difference.”

“The Jewish community is diverse- there is something here for everyone.”
 - Participants from the focus groups held on the East Side suggest that the Portland Jewish community is *challenging to break into*.

“Showing up is hard because people only talk to who they know.”

“People all know each other in the Jewish Networks, you have to work hard to be connected.”

“The key players control the funding, if you don’t have the money, it is difficult.”

- A variety of ideas to make the Portland Jewish community feel warmer and more welcoming were shared.
 - Develop a program specifically designed to welcome people:
 - "How about a matchmaking service for new community members, maybe like a Jewish Welcome Wagon."*
 - "Organizations can be warmer and more welcoming if they assign people to be the "welcoming person" at events, or creating a community concierge or ambassador."*
 - Conduct more secular programs in places that are not associated with a specific denomination:
 - "Make it more natural, so people are not afraid to be Jewish."*
 - "Provide access to Judaism through non-religious organizations."*
 - "Offer high quality pluralistic adult education, it will be an opportunity to make friends."*
 - Be accepting of all political viewpoints, particularly related to Israel.
 - "The Israel issue is dividing the community."*
 - "All institution politics need to be inclusive and transparent."*
 - "Anti-Zionists do not feel welcome."*
 - "My opinion is that having an opinion about anything controversial is not good in this community."*
 - Provide training for community leadership on how to be more welcoming.
 - "Educate leadership on sexuality."*
 - "Remember to treat each person as a Jewish soul entering the room."*
 - "Be welcoming of ethnic, culturally, racially mixed families."*

Engagement with Jewish Organizations in Greater Portland

Overview:

Participants shared how they find out about activities and events in Jewish Portland and the ways in which they engage. In addition, focus group participants created lists of Jewish organizations in the area and then indicated those they do and do not interact with.

Information Sources:

- Communication methods that do not require much effort (such as emails and texts) appear to be used the most to learn about events in the community.
- Using a search engine, or looking at the Jewish Review, community calendar or social media (Facebook, Instagram) require a dedicated effort, and are used less frequently.

"I get an email from Mark, if I want more information I go to the Federation website."

"I am part of the Portland Jewish Moms Facebook Group, so I look there."

"I hear from my friends."

Current Engagement:

- Attending holiday or Shabbat services is the most mentioned way participants engage in the Jewish community. This includes utilization of synagogues, Chabad and virtual options.
- Learning and education are the second most mentioned way in which participants and their families participate in the Portland Jewish community.

"I attend the Introduction to Judaism class."

"My kids go to Portland Jewish Academy."

"I do one-on-one Tanya studies at Chabad."

- Giving time (volunteering) and/or donating money to the community are how several shared they engage with the community.

"I participate in the Jewish Museum volunteer program, and I donate to Federation and my temple to support the Jewish community."

- Being with other Jews through social or cultural events and activities is how some engage.

"I socialize with my Jewish friends."

"The Jewish symphony is excellent."

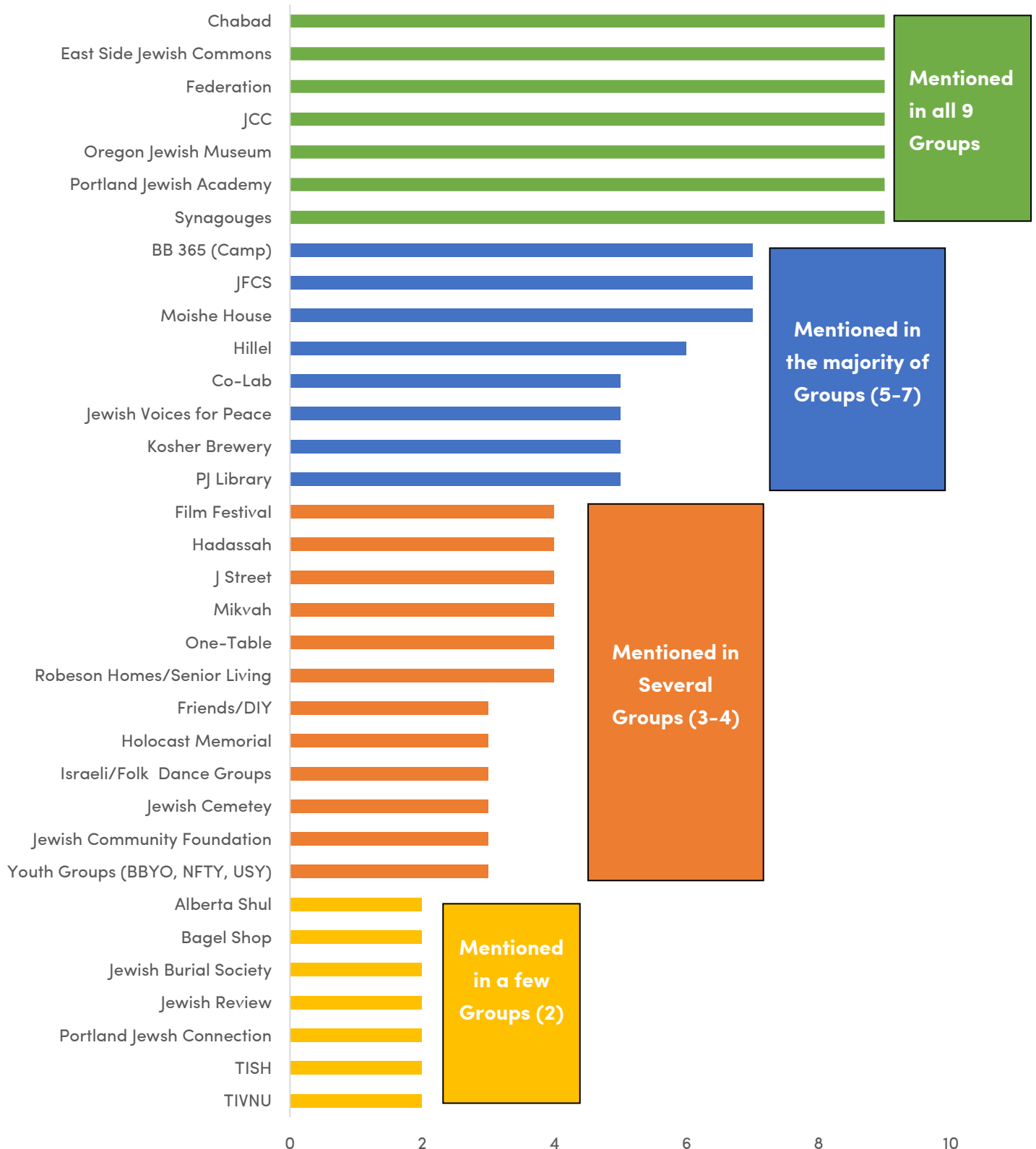
- A few suggested their engagement occurs through participating with specific organizations, such as the JCC, Jewish Museum and Camps.

Organizational Interaction:

- Focus group participants¹ shared the organizations, both formal and informal that they consider to make up the Jewish Community of Greater Portland.
 - It is important to point out that there was not a master list utilized, but instead each group developed their own list, based on their experience and community knowledge and participation.
- Please see list below for notable findings:
 - The Oregon Jewish Museum is utilized by substantially more people than any other organization (with the exception of synagogues).
 - More people indicated that they utilize the East Side Jewish Commons than the JCC, and this is across all demographics.
 - The high number of people who rely on friends and DIY Judaism, particularly those who are younger and live on the East Side.
 - Just about the same number of people indicated they utilize the JCC as those who indicated they do not.
 - Synagogues, mentioned in every group, and utilized by the most people are used more for religious needs and less for engagement.
 - Chabad, has a widespread familiarity, but is not used by twice as many as use it; suggesting it may be utilized by a more specific demographic.
 - ADL, JADE, JCRC, and Portland State University are among the organizations that were each only mentioned in one group.

¹ The Lay Leader Focus Group (#8) did not participate in this exercise

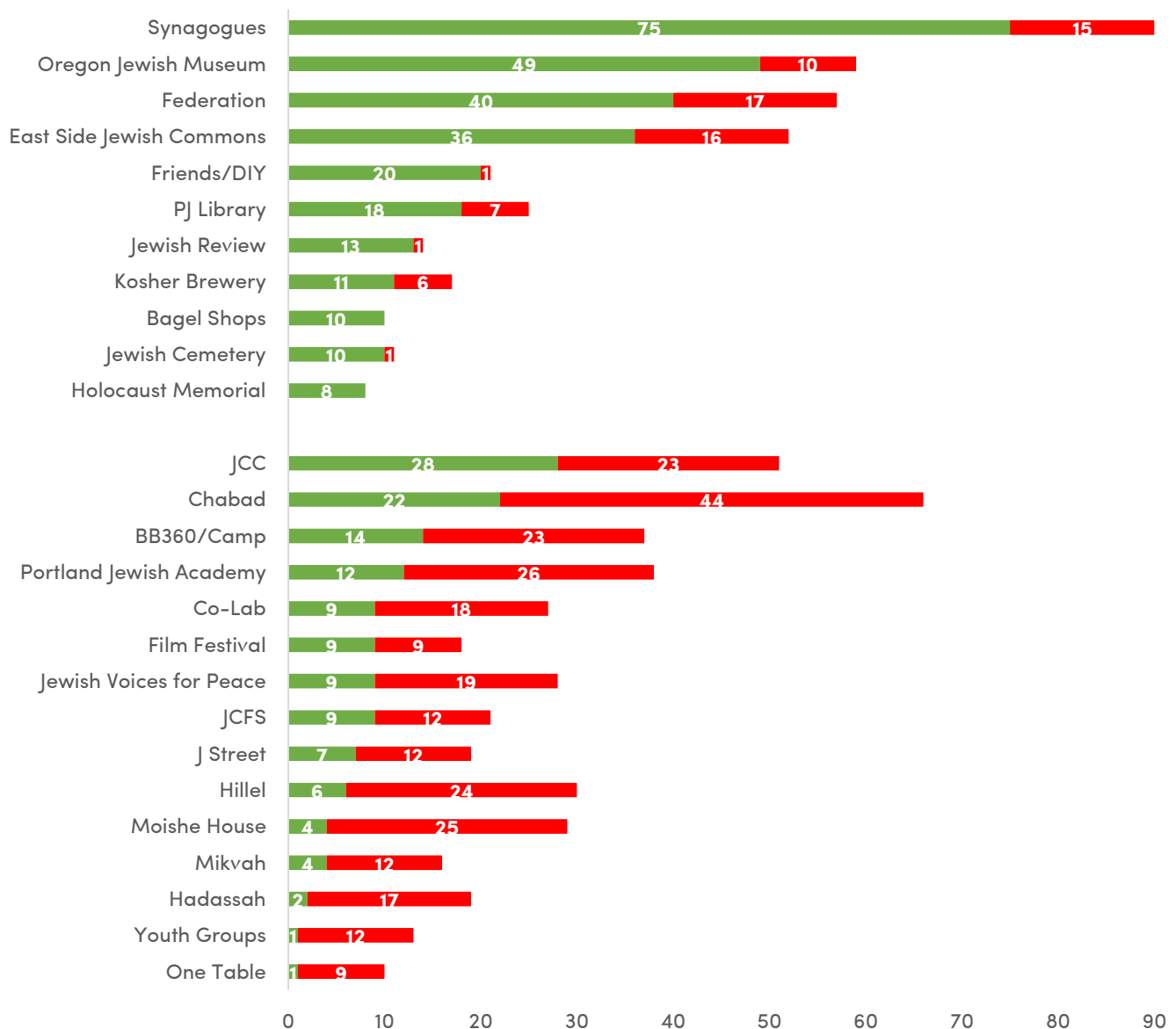
Organizations Mentioned in 2 or More Groups



Once the lists were compiled, participants were instructed to put a **green** sticker next to the organizations they or their family interact with on a regular basis, and a **red** sticker next to the ones not utilized².

NOTE: Participants were given a limited number of stickers. They were told they did not need to use all of their stickers, but they would not receive any additional stickers. This method forced people to use their stickers judiciously when selecting organizations.

Interaction with Portland Jewish Organizations



²Pictures of charts are included in the appendix.

Barriers to Participation in the Jewish Community of Greater Portland

Overview:

Understanding the factors used when deciding whether or not to attend an event, and their relative importance, can potentially lessen participation barriers.

Participants looked back at the most recent Jewish events they attended, as well as those they decided not to attend, and shared the rationale for their go/no-go decision.

Factors, in order of mentions; from most mentions to least mentions; are listed below:

1. Level of Interest in Program or Speaker
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12. Accessibility (Handicapped, Immunocompromised, etc.)

The impact each factor has on participation and the real-life examples follow on the next page.

Reminder: These focus groups occurred in early to mid-November, which explains the references to High Holidays, October 7th memorials, and other events from the Fall.

1. Level of Interest in Program or Speaker		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> If content is perceived to be stimulating, educational, or worth the time. If the topic is relevant, and the speaker is a known entity and knowledgeable.	<u>Barrier</u> Uninspired by topic or lack of knowledge of the speaker.
Real-Life Examples	<i>"I went to a lecture with Rabbi Josh Rose at Co/Lab because I wanted to learn from him."</i> <i>"I wanted to gain tools of self-protection and safety, so I went to a Jewish self-defense class at EJC."</i> <i>"I read Dara Horn's books and wanted to hear her speak because I appreciate her perspective, and the topic of antisemitism was important."</i>	<i>"I didn't go to Comedy for Peace because I was not interested in Muslim Comedy."</i> <i>"The topic and speaker at the Federation banquet in the Fall did not relate to my life as a Jew at all."</i> <i>"Some woman gave a talk at the JCC. I can't recall her name and I didn't go because I didn't know who she was."</i>
2. Logistical Issues (Date, Time of Day, Distance, Parking, Transportation)		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> If the event is geographically based, the participant may feel more likely to attend, however that alone will not be the reason.	<u>Barrier</u> Driving at night, parking constraints, distance to drive, lack of transportation options; all reasons to say no.
Real-Life Examples	<i>"I went to Pushcart Judaism and Havdalah at EJC. I like the artists and the music, and it was a convenient location."</i>	<i>"I didn't go to Dara Horn because the timing did not work for me."</i> <i>"I bought tickets to go to the Oregon Jewish Museum to see Jewish Voices but there was no safe transportation for me to use to get there."</i> <i>"There are many events at EJC that sound great, but it is too far away from me."</i>

3. Cost/Value/Donation Requested

Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> Low or no cost eliminates this as a reason for not attending.	<u>Barrier</u> If cost is higher than perceived value, or if cost is not within budgetary restrictions or if there will be an additional donation required.
Real -Life Examples	<i>"I went to Josh Rose's class at the Co/Lab because I wanted to learn from him and the cost was reasonable."</i> <i>"The Havurah Shalom Kabbalat Shabbat was free to attend, my friends were going, and there was free food."</i>	<i>"I didn't go to the Dara Horn event because there was a significant donation required to commit to."</i> <i>"The upcoming Jewish Comedy for Peace event is too costly."</i> <i>"I wanted to hear Dara Horn at the JCC, but just the cost was way too expensive."</i>

4. Age/Life Stage/Lifestyle

Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> More likely to attend if they will be with "others like me".	<u>Barrier</u> Less likely to attend if they're concerned that "everyone else will be different from me" (older/younger; with/without partner/children; interfaith/inmarried; etc.)
Real -Life Examples	<i>"I will go to the Moo Shoo Shabbat dinner at the end of December because my non-Jewish husband will feel comfortable."</i> <i>"I attended an intergenerational Simchat Torah service at my shul. It was a fun service."</i> <i>"I went to Women's Torah Study because it was stimulating, my friends were going, and it helps me to feel connected."</i> <i>"I went to a Yom Kippur Break the Fast dinner that was sponsored by the Lewis and Clark Jewish Legal society."</i>	<i>"I don't go to many events because many are family oriented, and I don't have any family here."</i>

5. Knowing Someone Who is Going, Being Invited By a Friend		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Barrier:</u>
	More likely to attend if they are certain they will feel comfortable (with a friend) and therefore accepted.	Will not attend if there is a fear of not knowing anyone.
Real -Life Examples	<p><i>"I went to the Dara Horn event because a friend invited me to go."</i></p> <p><i>"I went to Pushcart Judaism to access Jewish Art and to see my friends."</i></p> <p><i>"Attended High Holiday services with friends. People I knew were present"</i></p> <p><i>"Going to the Co/Lab lecture gave me the opportunity to spend the evening with a friend and engage in Jewish life outside of a synagogue and not on a holiday."</i></p>	<p><i>"I did not go to a play at EJC because I could not find anyone to go with me."</i></p> <p><i>"I did not attend the sisterhood event because I would not know anyone."</i></p> <p><i>"I wanted to go to the Sukkah Building at Kol Ami, but I was worried I wouldn't know anyone or feel welcome."</i></p>
6. Organization Sponsoring		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Barrier</u>
	More likely to attend if they agree with or support the organization	Will not attend if the organization has differing values.
Real -Life Examples	<p><i>"I went to the Jewish Voices for Peace Art Build because I am actively involved in the organization and feel passionate about ending war violence with people who I share kinship and culture with (Jewish folk)."</i></p> <p><i>"I went to the JFGP Annual meeting because I wanted to support Federation."</i></p> <p><i>"I went to the JFCS annual dinner because it is worthy cause."</i></p>	<p><i>"I cancelled my membership at the JCC and will not go there because of rude behavior my staff and members."</i></p>

7. The Current Political Situation in Israel, The United States and Portland

Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Barrier</u>
	Desire to show support for Israel, hostages, etc.	Fear of political conversation, fear that viewpoint will not be accepted.
Real -Life Examples	<p><i>"I went to a post-election discussion at my synagogue because it was a community gathering and a way to share our angst."</i></p> <p><i>"I went to the October 7th memorial at my synagogue to show my support for Israel."</i></p> <p><i>"Federation sponsored a parent advocacy meeting on antisemitism in schools. The topic was important to me."</i></p>	<p><i>"I am interested in Jewish history, but I often avoid gatherings of Portland Jews because so many are aggressive Zionists, who want to argue, not listen."</i></p> <p><i>"I did not go to an event at EJC because I perceive the EJC as a hive of anti-Jewish politics."</i></p> <p><i>"I did not go to the Dara Horn event because I did not want to deal with a potentially right-wing audience."</i></p>

8. Childcare/Child/Family Friendly

Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Barrier</u>
	If looking for a family friendly event, this may entice people to attend.	If looking for an adult only event, this would be a barrier.
Real -Life Examples	<p><i>"I went to a tot-Shabbat because I had friends going and my kids would have fun."</i></p> <p><i>"I went to the EJC event for Rosh Hashana with my kids. There were lots of activities for them and lots of kids."</i></p> <p><i>"I am planning to go to Wee Kol Ami next month because I want my children to learn songs and me other Jews their age."</i></p>	<p><i>"I skipped a dinner at EJC because there would be kids there. I don't have kids and prefer events that are for adults only."</i></p> <p><i>"I wanted to do something for Sukkot, but I couldn't find any events happening for a family with a baby."</i></p> <p><i>"I wanted to go to the upcoming Comedy event, but I need childcare, and it is not being provided."</i></p>

9. Safety/Security		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> This can be a game changer, much more likely to attend if they feel safe.	<u>Barrier</u> Topic, speaker, and location all impact the level of security needed for people to feel safe.
Real -Life Examples	<i>"Knowing there would be extensive security I felt comfortable to attend the 20th Anniversary at the Oregon Holocaust Memorial and support Holocaust survivors."</i>	<i>"Did not attend the October 7th commemoration because of safety concerns."</i> <i>"I did not attend the Dara Horn speaker event because I don't feel particularly safe at Israel/Antisemitism events in today's climate."</i>
10.Cultural or Religious Event		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> Most will feel comfortable at a cultural event.	<u>Barrier</u> Religious events stop some because of lower desire to participate in a religious activity.
Real -Life Examples	<i>"I went to the Jewish Community Orchestra event – it was cultural, and I liked it."</i> <i>"Hearing Jewish Klezmer music with community allows me to be around other Jews and support the community."</i> <i>"I took my son to see "Uspizin" at EJC so that we could do something together to keep in touch with the Jewish community that is not religious in nature."</i>	<i>"I did not take my kids to a Rosh Hashana kids' event because I have never been in a synagogue before and was scared, I wouldn't know what to do."</i>

11. Knowledge Necessary to Participate/Understand/Enjoy		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> Those with a high level of knowledge of Judaism and traditions do not consider this an issue.	<u>Barrier</u> Those who believe they lack knowledge may decline an invitation out of fear of now knowing.
Real -Life Examples	<p><i>"I attended High Holidays with friends who kept things casual and there was not a lot of knowledge required."</i></p> <p><i>"I took my non-Jewish Mother-In-Law to Simchat Torah services at a reform temple in Lake Oswego. They were welcoming and we didn't feel there were any issues because we were not knowledgeable."</i></p> <p><i>"I have been enrolled in the Intro to Judaism class to learn more about religion, since I was raised secular."</i></p>	<p><i>"Skipped High Holiday services because of my shaky knowledge of Hebrew and a fear of feeling out of place."</i></p>
12. Accessibility (Handicapped, Immunocompromised, etc.)		
Impact on Participation	<u>Positive</u> More likely to attend if they are certain they will feel comfortable.	<u>Barrier</u> Will not attend if they are uncertain of accessibility protocols.
Real -Life Examples	<p><i>"I chose to attend Simchat Torah at my synagogue because it was accessible."</i></p>	<p><i>"I wanted to attend an evening of Jewish Folk music at EJC, but because there was no mask requirement it was not accessible to me."</i></p>

Jewish Literacy³

Overview:

The community study suggested that a measurable number of people do not attend events because they feel they are lacking in Jewish Literacy. While many in the focus groups expressed a desire to strengthen their Jewish literacy, in most cases, it was not because they perceived Jewish literacy as a barrier to participation.

Jewish Literacy Definition:

- Participants defined Jewish Literacy generally as having a *basic understanding of the culture and religion* and *knowing what is expected of them* in various situations.

"Jewish Literacy is having a competent knowledge base of information about Israel, Religion, and Jewish life."

"Jewish Literacy is knowing all things Jewish, knowing how to engage, and what is expected from the traditions."

- Some suggested Jewish Literacy included specific knowledge, such as *prayers and pronunciation*.

"It would be good to have explanations of the holidays, and their connection and relevance to today."

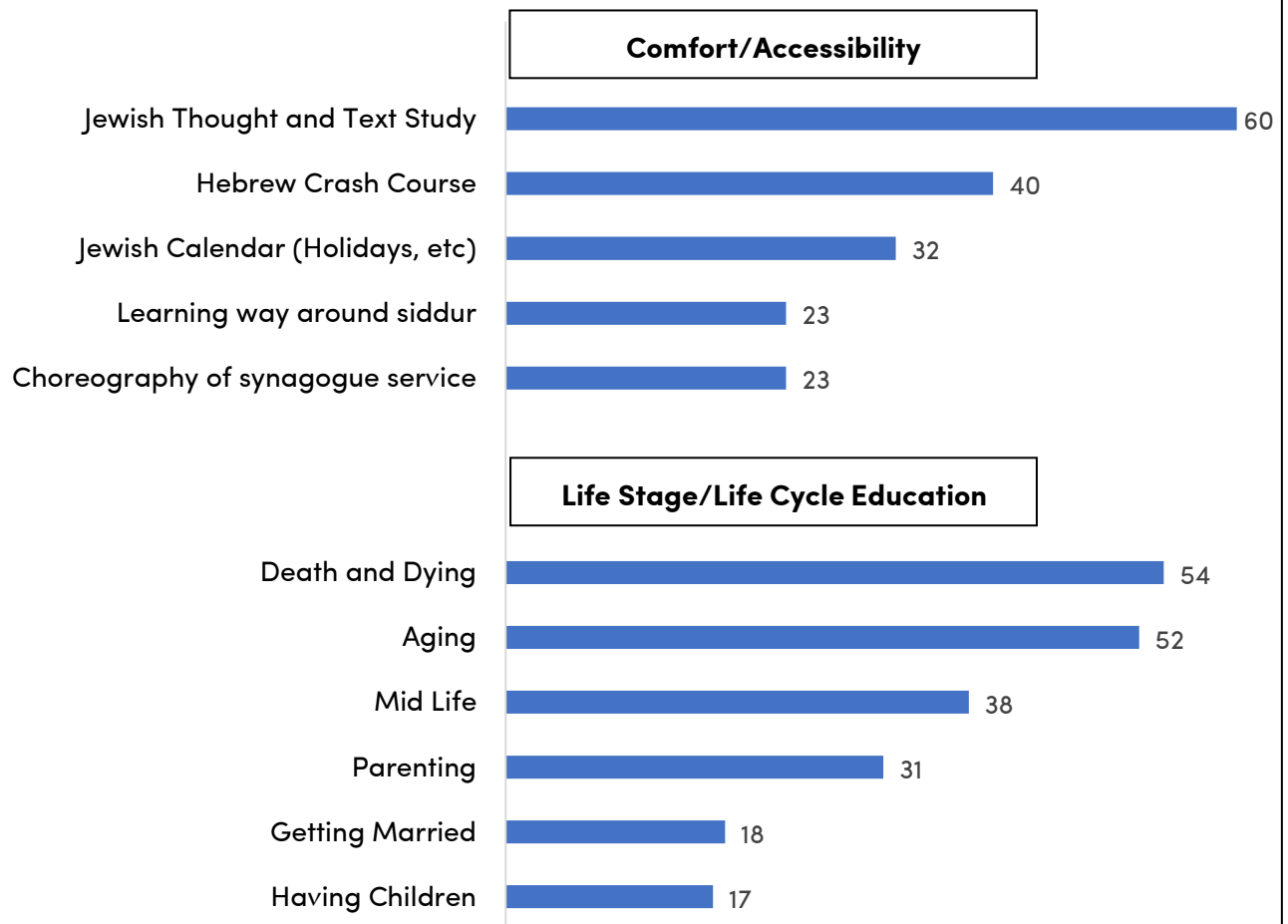
³ The Lay Leader Focus Group (#8) did not participate in this exercise

Jewish Literacy Topics of Interest from Prepared List:

Participants were asked to indicate interest in a variety of Jewish Literacy topics from a prepared list.

Interest in Literacy Items from Prepared List

Total number of people interested at the end of each bar



Interest in Literacy Items from Prepared List

[By Group]

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(9)	(10)
	Young Adults with Kids (n=7)	East Side Residents (n=12)	Young Adults Without Kids (n=13)	Adults 60+ (n=14)	Less Engaged (JCC) (n=13)	Less Engaged (EJC) (n=12)	Adults 40's and 50's (n=13)	West Side Residents (n=14)	Clark County Residents (n=14)
Having Children	6	2	6	0	3	0	0	0	0
Getting Married	4	1	8	0	3	0	1	1	0
Parenting	7	5	8	1	3	0	0	3	4
Mid Life	5	4	9	1	4	1	9	1	4
Aging	3	3	12	8	3	7	6	5	5
Death and dying	5	5	12	6	4	7	5	3	7
Choreography of synagogue service	4	2	5	0	3	1	3	2	3
Learning way around siddur	3	2	4	0	4	1	4	3	2
Jewish Calendar (Holidays, etc.)	5	3	6	4	5	1	4	2	2
Hebrew Crash Course	2	5	8	4	5	3	5	4	4
Jewish Thought and Text Study	4	7	12	6	6	6	9	5	5

	Topic of interest to at least half of group
	Topic of interest to some of the group
	Topic of little/no interest to the group

Notable Findings:

- Topics with the most interest are:
 - Jewish Thought and Text Study
 - Death and Dying
 - Aging
- Young Adults with children have the most interest in Jewish Literacy.
- Young Adults without children are particularly interested in the life stage/life cycle topics.
- With the exception of aging and death and dying, Seniors and the Less Engaged Adults (on the East Side) have the least amount of interest in Jewish Literacy.

Jewish Literacy Additional Topics of Interest:

In addition to the prepared list, participants were given the opportunity to suggest other topics they may be interested in. Although some of these topics do not meet the previously shared definition of “Jewish Literacy” – there is interest in learning.

- History: There is a notable desire to learn about all types of Jewish and Israeli history. Specific history ideas suggested include:
 - Learn about Jews in history
 - History of Jewish arts and artists
 - Cultural and ancestral Jewish history
 - Palestinian/Middle East history
 - Jewish history Pre-Holocaust
 - History of Jewish traditions
 - History of Jewish cultural norms
- Arts and Culture: Multiple Focus Group participants expressed an interest in learning more about all aspects of Jewish Culture, including:
 - Jewish literature (books, comics, graphic novels)
 - Jewish films
 - Judaica (art)
 - Jewish humor
 - Jewish food and cooking
 - Israeli folk dancing
 - Jewish song, music, melodies
- Judaism Practices: Expanding understanding about such things as:
 - Kabbalah
 - Jewish Mysticism
 - Pirkei Avot
 - Mussar
- Jewish Ethics and Values:
 - Importance of Torah and Social Justice
 - Applying Jewish ethics to daily life and the larger culture
 - Jewish Philosophy

New Concepts Evaluated

Overview:

Based on outcomes from the Community Study, JFGP developed two new concepts to be evaluated during the focus groups. Gather Grants and Service Team Volunteering both received positive feedback, along with questions and the desire for details.

GATHER GRANTS

A subsidy available to community members to host a DIY program or celebration around a Jewish holiday or event, such as a Shabbat dinner, a Hanukah party, or a Passover seder.

Gather Grants received many positive reactions – suggesting it should be pursued.

This concept has the potential to build community, encourage friendships, and remove cost barriers. As a result of their interest, participants have questions. They want to know more about content, location, and guest requirements as well as what strings may be attached, who the funder is, how much money they will receive, and how the events will be organized (and by whom).

POSITIVE REACTIONS

- *"This encourages people to meet people and build community."*
- *"This is good for people with no family in the area."*
- *"This will get Jews who don't know each other together."*
- *"Provides more opportunities to connect with people."*
- *"The funding removes the cost barrier and encourages participation."*
- *"This has the potential to break down the barriers between synagogues."*

QUESTIONS

- *"Does this event have to have Jewish content, or can a bunch of Jewish people go out to do an activity together?"*
- *"Is there a program list of what ideas to include?"*
- *"What level of knowledge is needed; will someone teach me what I need to know?"*
- *"Can this be at an outside venue if I am not comfortable having strangers in my house?"*
- *"Can non-Jewish community members be included?"*
- *"Other than the money, what other supports are available to help?"*
- *"How is this marketed, how do people find out about it?"*
- *"Who does the connecting?"*

Volunteering:

- A majority of participants, across all focus groups, shared that they spend at least some of their free time volunteering. Tikkun Olam, Jewish values, and fulfilling Mitzvot are among the primary reasons given for volunteering. Others, including those who are less involved, shared that they volunteer to make friends, create relationships, teach their children, and build community by giving back.

SERVICE TEAM VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering together with a group of other Jewish individuals at a particular organization or at rotating organizations. The organizations could be in or outside the Jewish community.

Service Team Volunteering received many positive reactions – suggesting it should be implemented. Participants noted that this concept aligns with some of their personal reasons for volunteering: meeting people, building relationships and giving back to the community. As a result of their interest, participants have questions about logistics, organization and project selection, and team composition that will need to be considered prior to the concept being fully implemented.

POSITIVE REACTIONS

- *“This provides an opportunity for socialization and giving back.”*
- *“I like the community aspect of this, helping non-Jewish organizations.”*
- *“This may help to demystify Judaism and combat Jewish stereotypes in the community.”*
- *“This is a great way to build community.”*
- *“We can meet new people, make new friends and help the community – ideal.”*

QUESTIONS

- *“I volunteer with my kids; will this be family friendly?”*
- *“Where [physically] will these opportunities be? Will they all be in Portland or will some be in Vancouver?”*
- *“What input do we have into where we are going and what we are doing?”*
- *“Who vets the organizations prior to sending us there?”*
- *“Will the assignments align with Jewish values?”*
- *“What types of activities will we be doing?”*
- *“Who will be on the teams with us, do I have input into that?”*
- *“What is the time commitment; is this weekly or monthly?”*

Suggested Changes for the Community

Overview:

Focus group participants were asked to share a wish list of “what they would do more of if it was available” and if they could “wave a magic wand, what one thing they would change about Jewish life in Greater Portland.”

Responses fit in several buckets: programming/ education; community; geography; and communications; together paint a picture of possibilities for future engagement in Portland.

Programming/Education:

Participants are searching for creative and informal engagement options with and without an educational component in an environment where they feel comfortable and fit in.

- Participants are looking for more events where they will fit in and feel comfortable. Activities specifically for affinity groups will make it easier to meet people.

“We are looking for opportunities to build relationships and we need a portal to do so.”

“Monthly social networking circles or gatherings.”

“Activities and events based on demographic group would be great.”

“I’d love for there to be an active Young Adult group.”

- Participants are looking for more creative, cultural, and informal ways to celebrate their Judaism. Specific suggestions include:
 - Jewish community events (plays, orchestra concerts, etc.)
 - Non-synagogue programming
 - Outdoor events (nature themed, hiking, sports)
 - Informal gatherings (DIY, Chavurah)
 - Israel and Jewish festivals
- More Jewish related education options are requested for children and adults. For children in particular, suggestions began with preschool and continued through high school.

"I wish we had a kids Jewish education program that is not affiliated with a synagogue. Maybe we can look into Jewish Kids Group, an afterschool program."

"It would be nice if PJA went back to offering afterschool Hebrew School."

"I'm looking for Yiddish classes for me."

Community

Participants are looking for acceptance and collaboration within both the general Portland Community and the Jewish community.

- Being Jewish and living in Portland is not always easy; participants are looking to feel more integrated into the community, eliminate the fear of being openly Jewish and of Antisemitism. Jews are looking to feel welcome in Portland."

"I wish I could feel comfortable to wear Jewish jewelry in public."

"It would be nice if the general public was educated on Jewish holidays and practices, especially the High Holidays."

"Secular schools should consult the Jewish calendar when scheduling things."

"Eliminate Antisemitism so we feel safe."

- The Jewish community itself can be cliquey and fractured; participants are looking to "wave a magic wand" and create a more collaborative Jewish community.

"We need opportunities for integration with all people and identities welcome."

"We need more collaboration between the various organizations."

"Stop the cliquey behavior; stop asking who you know; welcome everyone."

- There is a desire to find a way for the Jewish community to come together and have difficult conversations about Israel and other controversial topics.

"There need to be acceptance of voices critical of Israel."

"It would be nice if the intolerance within Jewish community of people who don't think the same way was eliminated."

"We need to facilitate discussions about what is dividing us."

- The absence of a Jewish deli and Kosher food availability in the community was noted by many participants.

Geography:

More Jewish events, infrastructure, and organizations on the East Side and in Clark County will go a long way to increase participation in those areas.

- Geographic dispersion of events is important. Participants are looking for the *East Side and West Side to work together more*; to offer more events and activities in the suburbs, on the East Side and in Vancouver.

"Open another facility on the East Side that is not as polarizing as the EJC."

"It would be nice if Vancouver is not an afterthought for Portland."

- Specifics requested:

- East Side

- Programming for children and families at EJC
- Early Childhood education
- Programming for adults (Mahjong, Book Groups, Film Festival, Discussion Groups)

- Vancouver

- Day School
- Reform Preschool
- JCC
- Summer Camp

Communications:

- Jews in Portland may be more likely to engage more in activities that they are interested in if there were more coordinated communications. Although a community calendar exists, it appears it is not well known.

"Maybe they should have one neutral referral source with information about everything Jewish in Portland. I am not sure Federation is neutral."

"There should be one centralized source of events detailed and coordinated."

"Email lists should be shared between organizations and then they can create one large database of email addresses."

APPENDIX

Formal

Federation ●●

Synagogen

PJA ●●●

JCC ● ● ● ●

3JC ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Chabad ● ● ● ●

BB 365 ● ● ● ● ●

JFCS ●●●

Oregon Jewish Museum

Community Foundation ●●

Jewish Voice for Peace

PJ Librdey ●●●●●

Senior Living ● ●

INFORMAL

FACEBOOK GROUPS/FRIENDS

Kosher Brewery ●●●●

Isaaru Restaurant ●

Co-LAB ● ● ● ●

Alberta Shal

One-Table

Jewish Thorapists + ● ● ● ●

Klozmer ● ● ● ●

~~Liberty~~

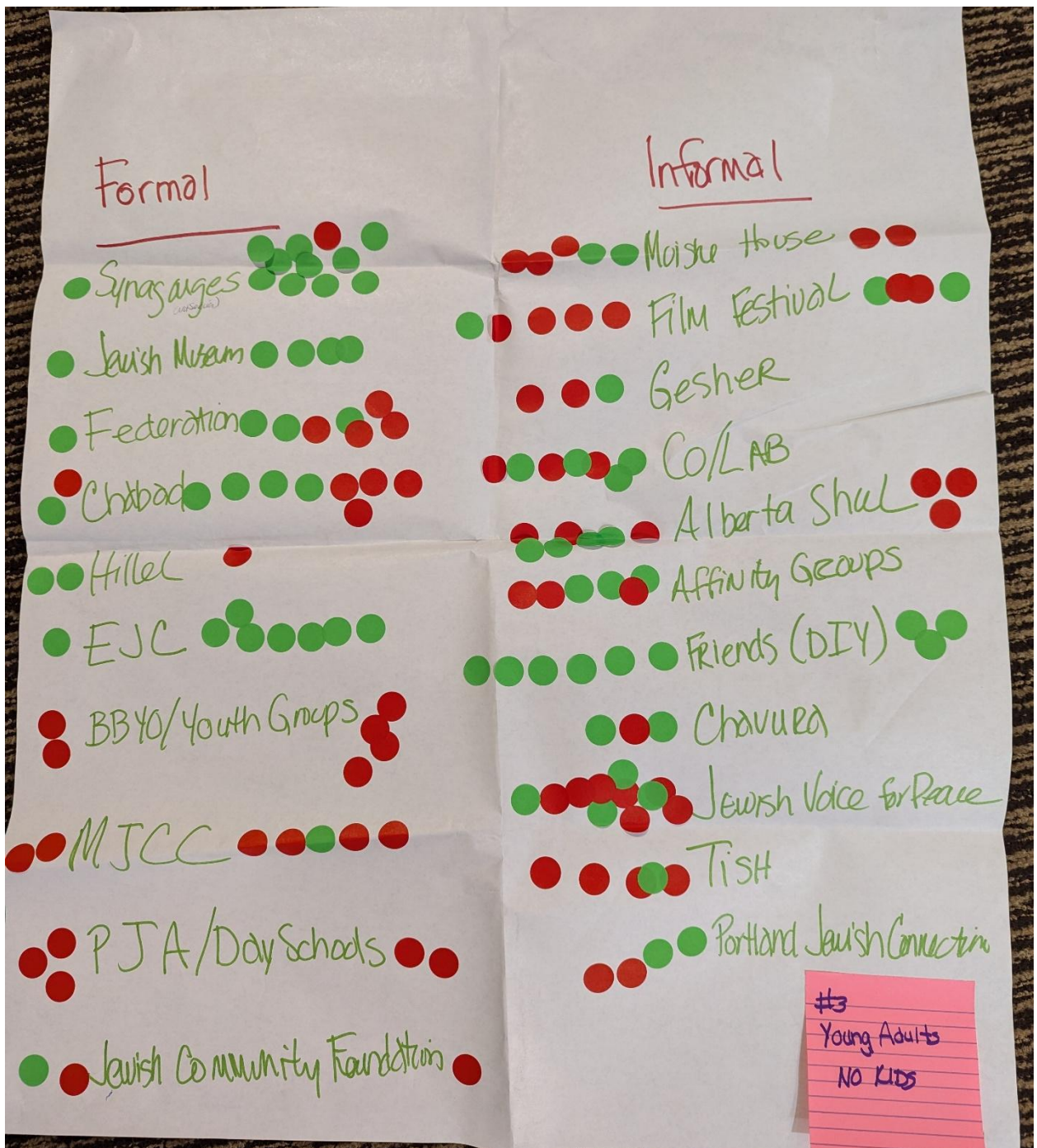
Well Circle ●●

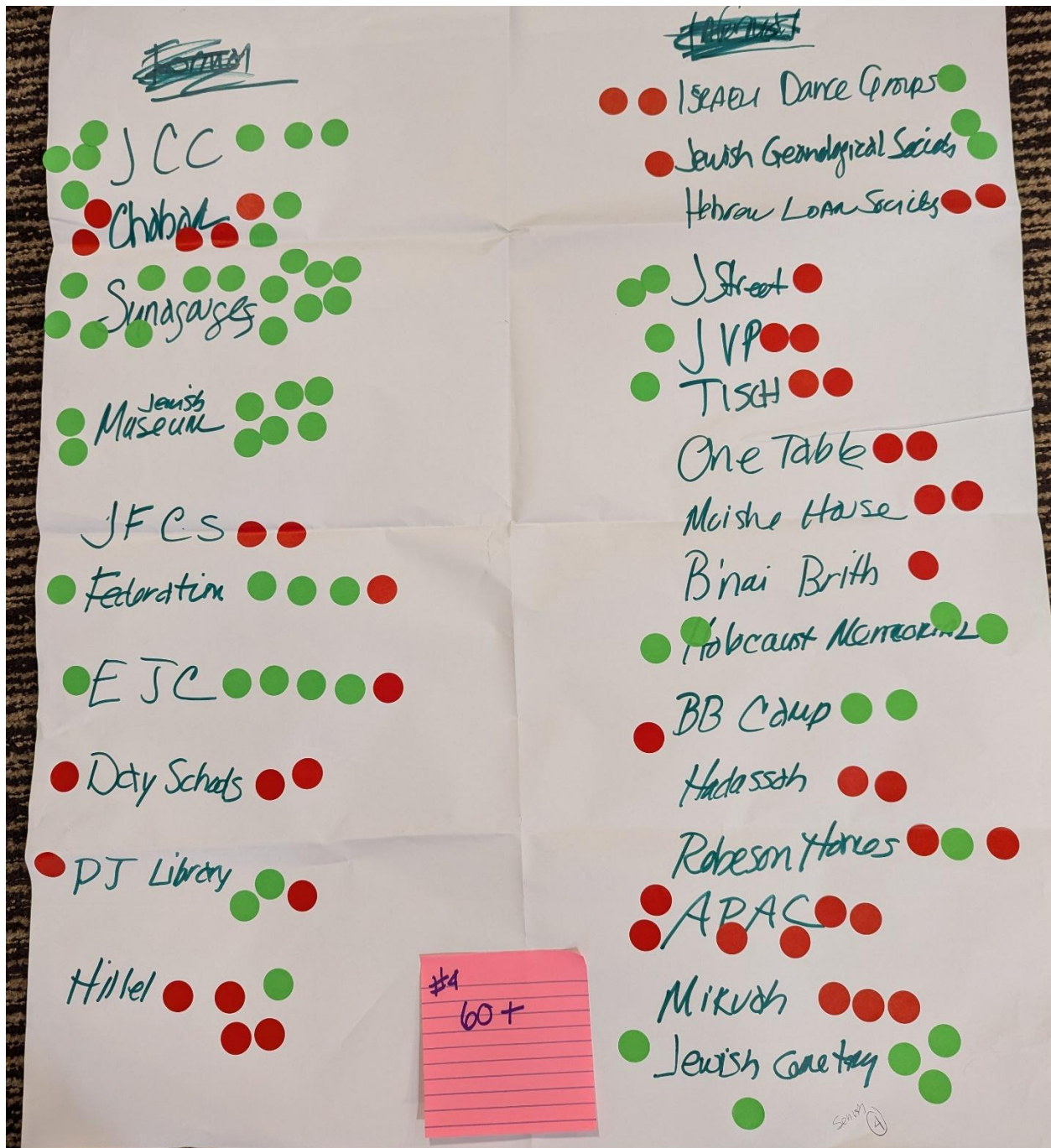
Jewish Yoga ●●●

#1

Young Adults with Kids







Jewish Organizations

CO-LAB
Hadassah
Federation
JCC
PJA
Museum
Synagogues
Chabad
Hillel
EJC

One Table
Molshie House
Mikvah
PJC
Members of the Table
Bend the Arc
Jewish Cemetery
BB Comp

#5
Less Engaged
[JCC]



Portland Jewish Orgs

Chabad ● ● ● ● ●

Synagogues

Holocaust Museum

Holocaust Memorial

ESC ●●●●

Ice ●●●●●

Care for dead ●

Jewish Day School

J FCS

Robeson Facility

BB Comp

Hillel ● ●

Zioness ●●●●

Moishe Hoose

One Table

Koshar Brewery

TIVNU●●●●●

COLAB ●●●

Kugel ● ● ● ●

Jewish Review

ISRAELI Dancing

Federation 

#7

40's & 50's

Jewish Orgs

Synagogues

Federation

JCC

JFCS

Chabad

Moshe House

Mikvah

Jewish Employee Resource

Hillel

Hachassah

BB360

Moshe House

Camp Solomon Schechter

ADL

PJA / Day Schools

Museum

Foundation (OSCE)

NFTY / USY

J Street

EJC

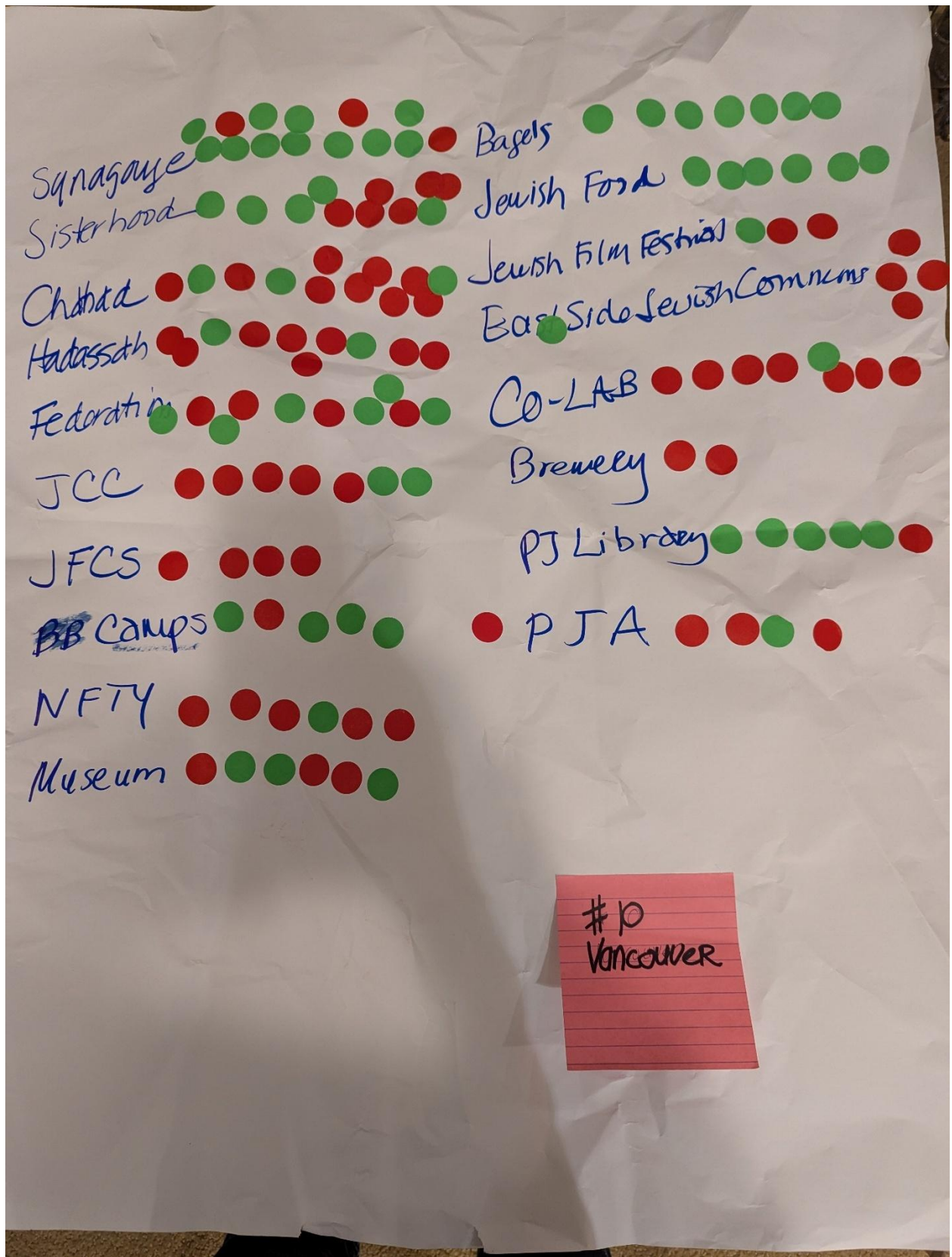
Robinson

Nice Jewish Runners

PJ Library

#9

Westside
Suburbs



Interest in Literacy Items from Prepared List [BY GROUP]

