

**Participation and Engagement
Strategic Planning Subcommittee
Final Report
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I. Executive Summary

In Greater Boston, we are fortunate to have many opportunities for Jewish engagement and participation in our vibrant city. Yet for all the Jews that are deeply connected, there are many who are only marginally connected or who do not participate at all. As a committee, our charge was how to create a community where all are welcome and no one is an outsider.

We started by listening. As insiders, our experience of community is vastly different from those who are not connected. What we found was that there are many who are interested in engaging more deeply in Jewish life, but who don't know how to get involved or feel disenfranchised from a tradition that they still treasure.

Our recommendations are also based on the best practices from other communities, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Many of these recommendations are straightforward. It must be easier for people to find information about what is available. In our busy world, initial experiences must be compelling in order for people to return. Content must be excellent. Today's younger generations will connect more readily when they are empowered to define and mold a Judaism that is meaningful for them. At key moments, during major life cycle events such as the birth of a child, at the High Holidays or a move to a new community, people seek Jewish connections more readily. Inaccessibility at those moments has lasting impact.

This report focuses on engaging four primary populations: young adults, families with young children, intermarried couples, and Jews in geographically dispersed areas. In addition, it describes broad, simple, scalable initiatives to benefit all who are not connected. What we believe is that in a time of choice, participation for all Jews, whether single, unmarried or intermarried, depends on how compelling and accessible the opportunities are. By combining a universal desire for values with the need for warmth and openness, we can create a world of meaning and beauty that will make Jewish choices compelling for all in our community who wish to participate.

Recommendations:

1. Open up the community to all who want to participate.

The basis for all recommendations starts with providing the community with better information about what opportunities already exist. Lack of information is itself a major barrier. We recommend creating a next-generation website (“JewishBoston.com”) that will market these opportunities and the community. We also recommend increasing access at key ritual times like the High Holidays and providing low commitment but compelling opportunities to taste Jewish life. Our recommendation is that we move forward immediately with both the online resource and expanding access at ritual moments. Our top fundraising priorities are creating more low barrier entry points in which to taste Jewish life and increasing welcoming training for synagogues. Of lower priority in the case of donor interest is to facilitate the creation of small group cluster models to engage more people around their specific interests.

2. Invest in innovation and leadership in the young adult community.

Our desire to involve the next generation must start with the recognition that we must delegate this responsibility to young adults themselves and focus on providing the resources and leadership that they need to create their organizations that work for them. We recommend the expansion of a grant-based model for funding young adult programming, perhaps driven by an RFP process, and the creation of leadership programs for young professionals and volunteers. In addition, our work with the existing institutions must expand to help them engage the next generation. This strategy is of top priority. We will phase in implementation by beginning with the grant-making process, followed by the creation of leadership development opportunities for social and technical entrepreneurs in the Boston area. We will then phase in an RFP process to implement areas of strategic importance to CJP.

3. Connect families with young children to the Jewish community.

At no time does life change more fundamentally than with the arrival of children. Research has demonstrated that with high-quality, relevant programming, the Jewish community can play a significantly larger role at these times, connecting families to Judaism much earlier. This period is a unique opportunity to engage families in Jewish programming and community when they are actively seeking connections and advice related to parenting. There are many opportunities in the secular, for-profit world to find these experiences, but a dearth of options in Jewish spaces. The top priority recommendation is engagement of families immediately after the arrival of their first child. The secondary priority recommendation is to expand the capacity and engagement potential of Jewish early childhood education.

4. Increase efforts to engage interfaith couples and families and to increase welcoming and sensitivity throughout the Jewish community.

A remarkable finding of the 2005 Greater Boston Community Study was that 60% of intermarried couples have chosen to raise their children as Jews. This statistic provides impetus for us to continue to expand our efforts. First we must increase our investment in our existing programming, especially in outlying geographic areas. Second, as more interfaith families become part of our community, we must expand professional training to ensure that our institutions and our professionals are welcoming and sensitive when dealing with diversity of background and Jewish knowledge. This entire strategy is of top priority.

5. Expand the Jewish opportunities available in less densely populated areas.

Approximately 50% of the Jews in the CJP area live in dispersed communities with a low density of Jewish population and of Jewish institutions. For those Jews who are not affiliated, there are few opportunities for engagement beyond the synagogue and little awareness of what congregations may offer. To create additional opportunities for participation, we recommend that CJP should increase investment in synagogues and other local agencies, expand programming with low-barriers to entry, and foster the creation of community councils and local grant-making opportunities.

II. Context

Environment

We live in a time of rapid change. So many of these changes impact our daily lives. Technologies change how we communicate and interact. Global economic development impacts our economic security and, potentially, our planetary future. This time of change is also a time of choice. People from all traditions are seeking to find identity. Despite rapid change, the search for meaning remains as universal as ever.

As Jews in America, we are products of this time. We are highly mobile and highly educated; many of us live far from the cities and communities in which we were raised. We collect in cities, but even in Greater Boston, many of us live outside the metropolitan core in geographically dispersed areas where centers of Jewish life may or may not exist. Because our community is generally highly educated, people are marrying and starting their families later in life.

Increasingly, Jews intermarry. Half of the Jewish households that will form in the near future will be intermarried. In Boston, 60% of the children born to intermarried households are currently being raised as Jews. Many more intermarried Jewish women chose to raise Jewish children than men do.

How one defines oneself Jewishly is now internally determined, not externally imposed. For all Jews under forty, the Holocaust and the early years of the State of Israel are now only memories captured in history or film.

We can see these changes in the Jewish community around us. People are choosing to participate in Jewish life in different ways than in the past. At the time of the last plan,

affiliated and engaged Jews were considered to be the Jews who chose to be members of synagogues. Today, although 49% of Jews in Greater Boston belong to a synagogue, they join congregations later and others leave when their children's Jewish education is complete. Many active Jews express their Judaism in other ways. They may be motivated to have Shabbat dinner with friends, attend a Jewish film festival or participate in Jewish social action activities, but not to join a congregation. No longer do we join a synagogue and remain members throughout our entire lives.

In the decade to come, this environment of choice will only get stronger. To flourish and grow, our Jewish community must create the institutions to appeal to the next generation and the mechanisms needed to innovate on an ongoing basis.

Aspirational Vision

We envision a community that:

- **Makes Jewish choices compelling for all and is constantly adapting to meet the needs of the next generations of Jew.**
- **Is open and welcoming to all, where all who are hungry for Jewish connection can be fulfilled.**
- **Changes with the world around us. In a time of innovation, we imagine an ever-evolving Jewish community, full of new institutions, new partnerships, collaboration, strong synagogues and agencies.**
- **Makes the best use of all resources available, including all forms of technology and best practices adapted from other communities.**

III. Strategic Initiatives

The five strategic initiatives presented below form an interlocking set of activities that work together to create the community that we aspire to be. Many of the tactics benefit multiple populations and can be scaled over time. This incremental approach builds upon an initial investment in infrastructure and is designed to allow ongoing innovation.

Initiative #1: Open up the community to all who want to participate

To be successful in attracting the next generation, our community must be inclusive and welcoming as a whole. The programs described in this particular initiative are designed to lower barriers to participation for all. By working with synagogues to help them become more friendly and warm, by increasing opportunities for non-affiliated Jews to participate in High Holiday services and to taste other Jewish experiences, and to creating a website that makes it easy for individuals to find all the opportunities for engagement in Greater Jewish Boston, CJP can help to create the Jewish community of the 21st century.

Target Population

The Greater Boston Jewish community, especially those who are less engaged or informed about community resources.

Goal

To make it so that every Jew who wants to participate in religious or communal activities can easily find, access, and feel welcome in all that the community has to offer.

Rationale behind the strategy

Our research found consistent attitudes among the members of the Jewish community who are not affiliated or connected to Jewish institutions or observance. As outsiders in the Jewish community, these Jews expressed a sense of loss, alienation, and perplexity at their situation. Many described the difficulty of finding a place in the community where they felt comfortable. High holidays were often raised as the time when they feel this loss most intensively. Another desire that many expressed was to connect to Judaism and to community in smaller groups of people with whom they could have lasting relationships.

Yet what we found in our brief survey of Jewish institutions in Greater Boston was that a tremendous wealth of opportunity for participation already exists. With over 100 different religious organizations from minyanim to traditional synagogues and with a parallel cornucopia of more secular or learning opportunities, Jewish Boston does not lack for opportunity.

Our conclusion is that what we do lack is accessibility along several different dimensions. One dimension is an easy way for people to explore the many existing opportunities. Although several online and offline information sources about Jewish activities exist, none of these are targeted towards the outsider nor do they present information in a fun or enticing manner that would encourage participation. As a community, we underutilize the internet in particular and marketing in general.

We must be more welcoming at key ritual and life cycle moments. Identity shifts over the course of a year and a lifetime. At certain times, our Jewish identity is stronger than others. For many individuals, the High Holidays are this time. For our institutions, the High Holidays are a time of tremendous strain due to the effort required to host services and also a time of financial opportunity because of dues and membership cycles. To affiliated members of the community, this financial linkage is readily understood; to non-participants seeking entry, it is a symbol of a closed society. Our recommendations include several ways to reduce this particular barrier of entry.

The final dimension that is needed is the expansion of opportunities to “taste” Judaism and Jewish arts and culture in less religious settings, particularly outside the synagogue. For those in our community who are disengaged, providing and marketing opportunities to explore and celebrate Jewish identity in low commitment ways can serve as the first step to deeper engagement or as a sustainable end in themselves.

Current work at CJP relevant to our key populations

CJP currently produces the CJP E-vents email newsletter on a bi-weekly basis, which reaches 17,000 subscribers. This newsletter is dependent primarily on submissions by community organizations. The CJP website also has a calendar of community events. Both of these efforts are of reasonable scale but could be expanded quickly to reach much further and have greater impact. We support the Jewish Advocate, both through advertising commitments and an annual grant. The Metrowest Jewish Reporter, a monthly paper targeted at the Metrowest community, is produced under our auspices.

CJP has invested modestly in funding events that are designed to build community. These include small investments in a Metrowest Film Festival, the South Area Women’s Seder and other small events. Our largest investment has been in New England Celebrates Israel, which drew over 8,000 participants in 2007, approximately half of which were not on any CJP list.

In addition, we support a wide number of community events through co-sponsorship and tribute funding. Through planning and allocations, CJP also supports a wide number of synagogue and adult education programs. However, most of these events are targeted towards existing community members.

Description

This initiative consists of the following tactics:

A. Create an online resource (JewishBoston.com) that dramatically expands the visibility of Jewish opportunities and institutions.

In a Web 2.0 world, we have the opportunity to create an exciting and compelling web presence that effectively markets all that the community has to offer to all who are interested. CJP has already begun to build the elements of this presence through our online community calendar and E-vents Newsletter. This initiative would create a separate website to hold this information and more.

From an implementation perspective, we would begin with an updated events calendar and newsletter while designing the overall architecture and functionality for the site. We envision a website that would go beyond featuring activities and organizations to include interactivity, and user supplied content such as blogs or videos.

The benefits are manifold. The site would help individuals engage with the Jewish community at the same time that it would increase visibility and marketing for our institutions.

The primary challenges are two-fold: first, ensuring that the site is technologically scalable and easy to maintain and second, determining under what auspices it should be produced. CJP will need to strike a balance between editorial control and political pressure to feature certain programs or providers.

B. Work with synagogues and other institutions to make them more warm and welcoming

Studies show that synagogue membership is highly concentrated around Bar/Bat Mitzvah age children. Parents join as their children reach the age of Jewish education and leave after that education is complete or their children leave for college. For people without children, the synagogue is often perceived as being family-centric and unwelcoming. This diminishes the role of the synagogue as a vibrant community in which people participate across all life cycle stages.

This tactic would involve a multi-pronged approach to help synagogues become more welcoming to newcomers, interfaith families, the GLBT community and other diverse populations. Leveraging existing institutions such as the Synagogue Council, the movements, and CJP's own Leadership Development Institute, CJP would expand educational and training efforts for institutions, providing opportunities for institutions to share best practices, providing marketing support, and exploring techniques used by non-Jewish institutions and faiths.

C. Expand access at key ritual moments

By working to expand High Holiday services either through free ticket programs at synagogues or through the creation of additional community or non-traditional services, we will be able to provide access for all those in our community who wish to participate. A side benefit is that synagogues and other organizations will be perceived as more open and welcoming. In addition, we look to expand services into geographies that are not as well served by congregations. All of these efforts must be well supported by marketing through JewishBoston.com and other venues to raise visibility and increase participation.

D. More opportunities to taste Jewish life

In Greater Boston, CJP has invested significantly in synagogues and adult learning. Yet many Jews also look to arts and culture or social justice as an entry point to Jewish engagement. As an additional tactic, CJP should invest in an expanded range of arts and cultural events, especially high visibility events which emphasize the roles of Jews in American life and encourage dialogue and exploration by participants. Implementation could take a number of different tracks, including the creation of a lecture series, support for more arts and cultural programming, the use of non-traditional venues and grant-making for interesting programming.

E. Expanding small group or cluster opportunities

In part, people are interested in connecting to Judaism for social opportunities. There are a number of models that have been successfully used to increase small group participation. These include GesherCity clusters, synagogue havurot, and book or discussion groups.

Building on the above initiatives, we have the opportunity to increase more intimate opportunities for involvement. In particular, we could add functionality to JewishBoston.com to help the formation of on-and-offline book groups, Shabbat dinner clubs, and other Jewish interest groups. As part of the synagogue welcoming initiative, we could work with synagogues to re-build a havurah movement. A typical challenge for small group initiatives such as GesherCity is that they tend to be staff intensive; if online or institutional models that are more scalable can be created, they could offer tremendous opportunity to engage large numbers of people.

Implementation

A. CJP Role

For much of this work, CJP's role would be as funder and convener. In two areas, we would need to take a more direct role. For JewishBoston.com, we would direct the design, implementation and ongoing management of the site. For the overall synagogue welcoming efforts, we would need to help establish and run the training and marketing programs.

B. Implementation Timeline, Challenges & Costs

Sub-Initiative	Timeline	Challenges	Costs
Online resource (Jewishboston.com)	Spring/Summer 2008 – Site Design Fall 2008 – Development Winter 2009 – Launch of first version and associated email marketing Spring 2009 and onwards – Ongoing operation	1. Determining organizational ownership and structure 2. Technical design 3. Making sure site stays focused on target populations 4. Creating compelling content	Startup Costs: \$250,000 Annual Costs: \$250,000
Making synagogues and institutions more welcoming	Multi-pronged approach to include: utilize best practices from other religious communities, incorporate with LDI and welcoming campaigns	1. Increases membership in institutions, leverages existing institutions 2. Requires development and roll-out of campaign/training	1 FTE for LDI: \$95,000 Materials: \$15,000
Expanded access at ritual moments	Work with synagogues to expand High Holiday services. Address cost issues potentially through community services. Serve more geographies.	1. Inclusive, leverages institutions, has potential to increase synagogue membership 2. Implementation made easy through partnership with synagogues	\$75,000 for staff, Rabbi and space
Low barrier entry points to taste Jewish life	1. Expand range of arts and culture events; 2. Raise funding for lectures and arts and culture. 3. Give grants for interesting programming.	1. Inclusive, leverages institutions and existing programs 2. Implementation requires resources to expand current/create new programs	\$100,000 annually
Small group (cluster) opportunities	Use technology to help the formation of on-and-offline book groups, Shabbat dinner clubs, and other Jewish interest groups. Work with synagogues to re-build a havurah movement.	1. Continuously changing clusters keep concept sustainable over time, inclusive, increases membership in institutions, leverages existing institutions 2. Requires significant staff resources and technology updates to organize and manage	\$25,000 technology 1 FTE: \$95,000

Fit with overall strategic plan vision and focus

Becoming a community that is more open and appealing to all, that meets people where they are, and is adaptive to new technologies and ideas is the focus of this plan.

Attractiveness to donors

These strategies have significant scale across the community while being manageable and fundable in small pieces. The website has the potential to draw in new philanthropies who are interested in seeing technology more widely adopted by the Jewish community. The increased ritual access and the low barriers to entry programming also provide discrete, measurable funding opportunities.

Possible implications for other sub-committees and cross-cutting themes

These initiatives serve as fundamental building blocks for the entire strategic plan.

Initiative #2: Invest in innovation and leadership in the young adult community

If our desire is to involve the next generation, CJP must start with the recognition that we must move from a top-down model of programming to one that is bottom up. What interests and engages young adults is constantly in flux and we must look to this population to create the kind of opportunities that are relevant and attractive to their peers. CJP's focus should shift to providing the resources and leadership that they need to create their organizations that work for them. We recommend the expansion of a grant-based model for funding young adult programming, perhaps driven by an RFP process, and the creation of leadership programs for young professionals and volunteers. In addition, our work with the existing institutions must expand to help them engage the next generation.

We recommend that this initiative, especially the grant funding, be moved forward immediately, with the leadership training and the RFP process targeted as a top funding priority.

Target populations

This initiative will reach out to two main populations of young adults: The first are the young adult leaders who are interested in creating and organizing new expressions of Judaism. The second are the peripherally involved who will want to participate in these efforts organized by their peers.

Goals

- Expand the number and range of opportunities for young adult programming in the Greater Boston Area
- Increase the program opportunities for less involved young adults
- Accelerating the growth of innovation in the area of young adult programming

Current Related Work at CJP

CJP currently provides \$299,000 of funding to Young Adult programming, which is managed by the Young Adult Task Force. GesherCity is the primary recipient of this funding. Additional allocations are made to Havurah on the Hill, Pathways, the Riverway Project and others. This year, the task force has begun a small grants based program for young adult programming that has been well received by the community. CJP's Young Leadership Division also offers a highly successful set of programming for Young Adults.

Description

This initiative consists of three connected efforts which will build over time.

Participation and Engagement Final Subcommittee Report

Phase 1

CJP will create a grants-based process to encourage grass-roots innovation. We have recently started a small grants program which we would expand. We would also foster networking and sharing of best practices across grant recipients. Along with the financial support, we should foster collaboration across grantees. Part of the evaluation process should be the identification of programming which can go to scale with the infusion of additional funding.

Phase 2

CJP will build upon the existing efforts to create new leadership training and professional development opportunities. Much attention will be paid to identifying leadership, both formal and informal in the Jewish community. We will bring together innovators including social entrepreneurs, technologists, content experts and community organizers.

Phase 3

CJP will create an RFP-driven process to drive particular areas of programmatic interests. CJP would establish areas of priority and then issue an RFP across the community to determine the best delivery partners for implementation. One such priority is programming targeted to birthright alumni, ages 21-26, aimed at utilizing this groups' social networks to bring them to a large event(s),

CJP is particularly interested in identifying and strengthening programming that can be taken to scale to have a more significant impact in the community.

Implementation Timeline, Challenges, and Costs

Sub-Initiative	Timeline	Challenges	Costs
Grants Process	Spring 2008 – Assess effectiveness of pilot program and determine future criteria and process. Set initial funding goals. Summer 2008 – Create online application and approval process Fall 2009 – Seek initial funding. Launch bi-annual or quarterly grant process Winter 2009 -	Designing appropriate grant process that encourages innovations and incorporates appropriate measurement. Integrating grant process with other aspects of organizational development and training Recognizing that not all grants will be successful Appropriate internal staffing and of grant review committee	One full time staff: \$95,000 Grants: \$100,000

Participation and Engagement Final Subcommittee Report

Leadership Training and Professional Development	2 Seminars Annually	Identifying innovative leadership Ensuring the benefits of leadership development accrue to the local Jewish community	Half Staff: \$50,000 Seminar Costs: \$75,000
RFP Process	RFP for Birthright programming Identify additional priorities Issue RFPs to the community	Finding the right partners for implementation	\$100,000

Fit with overall strategic plan vision and focus

This initiative is completely in line with our overall focus on engaging the next generation and encouraging participation of young adults on their own terms.

Attractiveness to donors

Very attractive to both young donors who want to support their peers as well as donors of all ages who believe in our vision of engaging the next generation and fostering leaders and ideas to make that a reality.

Possible implications for other sub-committees and cross-cutting themes

Strengthening our role in leadership development as well as increasing awareness of current local opportunities has been a common theme across several sub-committees. Additionally, we want to focus on efforts that strengthen synagogues and ensure their relevance with the next generation.

Initiative #3: Connect families with young children to the Jewish community

Research demonstrates that when you engage a family with young children soon after the birth of the first child, there is significant potential to influence and strengthen families' Jewish social networks. Engagement opportunities at birth have the potential to be the building blocks for lifelong connection to Jewish community, including preschool, day school, synagogue life, and camping. CJP will provide multiple opportunities for families with young children to connect with the Jewish community and each other at key moments of change and lifecycle events. This would entail a new focus at CJP on this population group. There are two components to this strategy: (1) engagement immediately after birth and (2) early childhood education.

Top Priority: Launch a cohesive strategy, with multiple programs, to engage families immediately after the arrival of their (first) child.

Secondary Priority: Expand the capacity and impact of Jewish preschools.

Target Populations

- New parents and families with young children ages 0-5 with special attention to interfaith couples and families and those in geographically dispersed areas
- Families with pre-school aged children

Goals

- Create a focus at CJP on families with young children
- Expand programming options
- Increase connections among families both within and outside of communal institutions

Current Related Work at CJP

Our work with the JCC includes funding of early childhood education. We helped fund the creation of the JCC early learning center in Acton and are in discussion about a similar effort in Hingham. Working with Hebrew College and synagogues, we also fund the Ikkarim program, which is an intensive Jewish learning opportunity for parents of young children.

Overall, Families with Young Children is not a focus area for CJP and is not currently included in the Commission on Jewish Continuity and Education.

Description

A. Create opportunities for engagement immediately after birth

We will focus on programming and building contacts with parents immediately after the arrival of their first child. Programming may include PJ library, expanded social

networking opportunities, Shalom Baby, mother's groups, and parenting skills workshops. Additionally, we will encourage synagogues to increase their non-membership based programs as an engagement tool for families with young children.

Early Childhood Education

In order to thoroughly understand the needs in the community, we must first conduct a needs assessment. This needs assessment considers location, affordability, parents' working habits and proximity to other educational options. The two critical areas of focus would be on expanding physical capacity and increasing the effectiveness of preschool as an engagement tool for the whole family.

As these strategies are implemented, significant focus will be paid to the needs of interfaith couple and families and those living in outlying areas.

Implementation, Challenges and Costs

Sub-Initiative	Timeline	Challenges	Costs
Engagement for Parents of Children 0-5	Winter/Spring 2008 – Work with JCC on rollout of PJ library 1. Begin with PJ Library and build upon that as an engagement strategy to reach out to new parents and families. Roll in other programs including Shalom Baby, Mom and Me groups, etc. 2. Increase non-membership based synagogue programming 3. Add community organizers to increase connections	1. Identifying participants, especially unaffiliated families. 2. Identifying and fostering networks of volunteer leadership	Half Professional Staff: \$50,000 Program Funding: \$300,000
Early Childhood Education	Fall 2008 – Perform needs assessment and develop plan	1. Initial investment 2. Finding qualified staff	Needs Assessment: \$150,000 Capital costs: TBD

Fit with overall strategic plan vision and focus

This initiative is completely in line with our overall focus on engaging the next generation, beginning with birth.

Attractiveness to donors

This should be attractive to donors interested in fostering strong Jewish identity with the next generation. There is potential to support adult learning, early childhood education, interfaith and dispersed families as well as to strengthen Jewish communities at multiple levels.

Possible implications for other sub-committees and cross-cutting themes

Early Childhood Education strategies are related to topics in Jewish Education & Learning and could be an integral part of strengthening synagogues.

Initiative #4: Increase efforts to engage interfaith couples and families & ensure institutions and programs are welcoming and sensitive to the needs of interfaith families

Across the United States, approximately 50% of Jews today are intermarrying. These numbers represent a very significant demographic shift locally and nationally. In Greater Boston, unlike other areas, 60% of interfaith couples are choosing to raise their children as Jews. Our success demonstrates the need to continue our work. We must increase our efforts to ensure that Jewish programs and institutions are welcoming and sensitive to the needs of interfaith families. We must also increase efforts to support interfaith couples as they make their decisions about how to raise their families and how to find a comfortable place in the Jewish community.

We recommend expanding programming for interfaith couples and families as well as professional training opportunities. As more of our synagogues welcome intermarried members, education and staff training is needed to ensure that diversity is respected and full participation is encouraged. Beyond the synagogues, professional training opportunities must be offered to all institutions, including day schools, preschools, camping, and Israel trips. For couples and families, programming should be expanded to include non-synagogue based settings and reach out to outlying geographic areas.

Target Populations

- Interfaith couples and families.
- Jewish institutions and programs and the professional and lay leaders that work with/provide services to interfaith couples and families.

Goals

- Provide settings that are comfortable and welcoming to interfaith couples and families
- Increase the numbers of interfaith couples choosing to raise their children Jewish.
- Enhance the sense of “connectedness” interfaith families feel with the Jewish community and Israel

Current CJP Work

Programs run by Reform Jewish Outreach (URJ) and Jewish Discovery Institute (USCJ) to help interfaith couples explore making Jewish choices and to help make institutions more welcoming and sensitive to the unique issues facing interfaith families.

JF&CS is piloting Mother’s Circle for non-Jewish mothers raising Jewish children (new this year from JOI) and hosts other non-denominational programs.

www.interfaithfamily.com is a web-based resource, offering articles of interest on different topics for interfaith families as well as officiation referrals

JCC Creative Judaica runs arts and crafts programs around the holidays.

Synagogues have outreach committees that run programs throughout the year.

Description

In addition to strong continued support of current efforts, we recommend:

- Welcoming/sensitivity training across all institutions and programmatic areas.
 - Expand professional training opportunities to include leadership/staff from preschools, day schools, camping, Israel trips and educational programming.
 - Grants to Jewish institutions and programming areas to create welcoming environments.
- Increase funding for programming for interfaith couples and families, expanding venues and geographic reach. Programming areas may include trips to Israel.

Implementation Challenges and Costs

Sub-Initiative	Timeline	Challenges	Cost
Increased welcoming and sensitivity to needs of interfaith families across all institutions and programming areas	1. Expand reach of professional training to all aspects of Jewish life 2. Expand institutional strategies and share best practices. May include use of inclusive tag lines	Ensuring institutional commitments to welcome interfaith families	Programming: \$200,000 Grants for unique programming for institutional welcoming efforts: \$75,000
Increased programming for couples and families, especially in geographically dispersed areas	Expand current and new programming across venues (beyond synagogues) and geographic areas.	Identifying potential participants and expanding current reach where it may be more costly to run programs	Expand current programming and marketing: \$150,000

Fit with overall strategic plan vision and focus

A central theme of the plan is to be truly welcoming to interfaith couples and families.

Attractiveness to donors

This will be attractive to donors interested in supporting efforts for interfaith couples and families.

Possible implications for other sub-committees and cross-cutting themes

Professional training opportunities apply across all arenas.

Initiative #5: Expand opportunities available in less densely populated areas

Approximately 50% of the Jews in the CJP area live outside of route 128, many in dispersed communities with a low density of Jewish population and of Jewish institutions. For those Jews who are not affiliated, there are few opportunities for engagement beyond the synagogue and little awareness of what opportunities may exist within congregations.

To create additional opportunities for engagement that are easily accessible for people living in geographically dispersed areas, we recommend that CJP should increase investment in synagogues and other local agencies, expand programming with low-barriers to entry, and foster the creation of community councils and local grant-making opportunities.

Target populations

Those people living in areas of low Jewish population density within the CJP catchment area, especially families with young children and interfaith families.

Goals

- Increase variety of programmatic options with emphasis on low barrier to entry opportunities.
- Increase feelings of connectedness amongst Jews in geographically dispersed areas.
- Strengthen Jewish institutions and expand their current reach.
- Increase partnerships between local institutions with CJP and other organizations.

Current Related Work at CJP

- Metrowest Community Fund
- Brookline-Brighton Community Fund
- Activities such as the South Area Seder that are funded through CJP's Community Building department
- Part time staff person connected to Community Services Committee

Description

Phase I: Strengthening Synagogues in Dispersed Areas

CJP will help synagogues and other institutions in low density areas to expand programming to non-members. This programming will position the synagogue as a community resource by offering opportunities for non-members to engage in a variety of activities. One focus of programming might be interfaith families and families with

young children, arts and culture offerings around the holidays and communal holiday celebrations. These events will be easily accessible both in terms of cost, time commitment and level of Jewish knowledge required to participate.

Phase II: Expanding Public Space and Institutional Programming

CJP will strengthen the partnerships between Boston-based organizations and organizations in outlying areas to bring additional programming, especially arts and cultural headliners such as film festivals or well known speakers, to geographically dispersed areas. This programming may also include “public space” Judaism.

Phase III: Community Grant Making Process

CJP will sponsor a community-based council in order to support creative, relevant programming as well as to give local communities ownership over their own Jewish experience. This forum will be a place to bring together local leadership, both professional and lay, to look at what currently exists and where there is room for expansion. They will provide guidance to the staff person in their pursuit of partnerships. The council will solicit grants based on agreed upon needs as well as review grants received from local and national institutions.

Implementation Challenges and Costs

Sub-Initiative	Timeline	Challenges	Cost
Investment in synagogues and other institutions in geographically dispersed areas	Assist synagogues in becoming a communal resource. Will include more outreach and visibility as well as non-membership based programming	There are multiple demands placed on synagogues. We'll need to frame this as a major priority	\$50,000 per year for new programming and marketing One quarter of an FTE for coordination: \$25,000
Expansion of low barrier entry point programming across geographical areas	CJP drives specific program expansion through partnerships in outlying communities. May include public or alternative space programming	Identifying the best partners, spaces to engage largest number of people	\$50,000 per year to offset extra cost of programming for few participants

Participation and Engagement Final Subcommittee Report

Community council that supports grant process and staffing to support institutional growth and outreach for outlying areas	Create community fund. Add dedicated staff and community organizers to connect people to programming and others.	Finding the right community participants for a council	FTE for staffing: \$95,000 Community Grant Process: \$75,000
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Fit with overall strategic plan vision and focus

These initiatives are meant to engage the 50% of the Jewish community living in outlying areas, with a low density of Jewish institutions and agencies. By increasing programming to these areas where there are also significant numbers of interfaith families as well as families with children of all ages, we will make progress in addressing the needs of the next generation of the Jewish community in a broad and substantive manner.

Attractiveness to donors

These initiatives will be particularly attractive for those donors who live in outlying areas and who are concerned with building strong Jewish community in their neighborhoods. Donors who are concerned with engaging the next generation of Jewish families will be also attracted to these initiatives.

Possible implications for other sub-committees and cross-cutting themes

All outcomes in the strategic plan should be relevant to geographically dispersed areas.

Please note that that all of the recommendations in this document may or may not be implemented. All budget figures in this document were preliminary rough estimates by the subcommittee. These projections will be re-evaluated and updated as appropriate during the implementation of the final plan.