

Memo

Community Input on CJP Strategy and Impact Theory of Change

TO
CJP Leadership

FROM
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In partnership with the CJP Research, Evaluation, and Measurement team, Project Evident facilitated a feedback session on October 20, 2021 to solicit input on the current version of CJP Strategy and Impact's theory of change. We focused on the long-term outcomes aligned with each of CJP's impact areas.

17 staff from 14 organizations attended the session. We introduced the purpose of the session and provided explanations on the structure of a theory of change. We used a blended approach to gather input in the session and opened the discussion by asking the participants about their perspective on CJP's role in the community. We also invited the participants to advise CJP on how to be an effective partner in their work.

For each impact area we described the long-term outcomes, then invited everyone to reflect individually and share written comments via an interactive tool in response to the following questions:

- Based on your experience, what feedback do you have for CJP on these outcomes to better align them with work on the ground?
- Do you see how these outcomes lead to the impact statement? What's missing?

We sent everyone into breakout groups to discuss the questions and wrapped up with a full group discussion.

The participants brought thoughtful reactions and suggestions that will help CJP sharpen this theory of change. The key themes we heard are summarized below:



- **Clarify CJP’s target community**, including those populations that are defined as “vulnerable”
- **Refine and clearly articulate key outcomes** to be more measurable across all three portfolios
- **Establish processes to regularly collect feedback** from partners and support their need to adapt and react quickly to changing community needs
- **Lean into CJP’s role as a “the eyes and ears of the greater Boston community”** by 1) strengthening its capacity to access and/or generate relevant data on community needs and 2) using the data to guide partners’ work

Participating Organizations

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action for Post-Soviet Jewry ● Congregation Or Atid, Wayland ● Gateways: Access to Jewish Education ● JALSA ● JCC Greater Boston ● JCC North Shore | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JFS of Metrowest ● Jookender ● Ma'ayan: Torah Study from the Sources ● Mayyim Hayyim ● Teen JUST-US Boston ● Temple Israel Boston |
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The rest of this memo shares further details on partner responses to each of the discussion questions.

CJP’s role and value proposition

Before diving into the details of the theory of change, we asked the group how they see CJP's role and value proposition or role in the community. Many of these themes reinforce CJP's current work and areas of focus going forward.

- **Fundraising, convening, community-level planning:** “Raising money, bringing divergent points of view in the Jewish Community to the table, assisting in communal planning.”
- **Setting the vision and impact focus:** “By both naming key areas of focus, and convening practitioners together, we can balance thought leadership and the practical realities of what is happening on the ground.”
- **Community data and context tracking:** “Helping us to understand demographic trends, available resources and programs, creating bridges into synagogues. The depth of impact is as important as the breadth of impact.”

- **Incubating innovation:** “Providing a space and opportunity to incubate new ideas and experiment.”
- **Organizational capacity building:** “To be the “bridge” needed to share best practices, questions, and resources among organizations on a variety of topics, including evaluation, IT, HR, program implementation, etc. (And, possibly be the resource, not just the connector).”

Question: What does CJP need to know to be an effective partner to your work?

- **Establish regular, structured and action-oriented feedback processes:** “Continue to grow CJP’s capacity to engage directly and often with partners around key issues and concerns.”
- **Provide stability along with adaptability:** “Partner on long term efforts while understanding that we need to react quickly to changing community needs and require flexibility.”
- **Offer organizational capacity building:** “When there are patterns where multiple orgs are both excelling and facing challenges? Grantees vary in skills; CJP may need to offer training on the tools for effective implementation.”
- **Maintain the theory of change as a living document:** “Needs on the ground can change so quickly, even within 6 months. What is built into this theory of change process to account for rapid change and feedback?”

Healthy, Thriving and Sustainable Communities

Organizations shared a number of helpful comments about the work required to reach the outcomes for Healthy, Thriving and Sustainable Communities - for example:

- “If you want good relationships and trust, there needs to be better, more proactive, and more frequent communication to orgs, especially when changes happen.”
- “To build trust - CJP needs to be brutally honest about what it sees as the value propositions of each agency. We are too often left guessing whether we are on the same page with CJP.”
- “Do not change a CJP liaison every year or even less. It’s hard to build trust if the people keep changing.”
- “CJP can help identify when orgs could possibly collaborate - if you have this high-level view, CJP is the best poised to identify potential collaborations. Lifting up potential partnerships among beneficiaries.”
- “CJP could help defuse tensions between agencies. And be a stronger broker and convener of collaborative efforts.”

- “Jewish organizations tend to compete. Relationship building is up to each leader. Could CJP use staff and “power of purse” to promote strategy to bring people together.”
- “The title might need revision. It says: “Healthy, Thriving, and Sustainable Communities,” but the target here is the organizations that serve the communities. The communities may be the ultimate beneficiary, but that is not necessarily explicit as shown.”

There are several implications for the theory of change and measurement:

- Include measures of trust with CJP and gather grantee feedback regularly
- Add activities that proactively and strategically facilitate partnerships and collaboration
- Equip relationship managers with the skills needed to mitigate conflict between partners
- Consider revising the name of this impact area to “Healthy, Thriving and Sustainable Organizations and Networks” and removing the word “impact” from outcomes statements because of it’s meaning in a measurement context

Caring for the Vulnerable

Comments regarding the Caring for the Vulnerable impact area push CJP to be clearer about a number of outcomes:

- “These feel very broad. Would help to define the community need in more specific terms.... What does empowered and well cared for look like? What does financial stability mean?”
- “What populations are defined as “vulnerable” and are all “vulnerable” populations equally prioritized by CJP?”
- “Sometimes these slides mention “Jewish” people and sometimes it does not. Some of our organizations serve both Jewish and non-Jewish, yet when providing data back to CJP, per the grant agreement we filter out only the Jewish participants.”
- “Seniors and ‘all abilities’ are singled out. It would be more authentic to specify outcomes for each vulnerable group including seniors and people with disabilities – which is different from people of all abilities.”
- “State what the data shows – where is the poverty? Where is the lack of mental health services? Are there geographic differences or gaps based on age? Show the data and link it to the goals for our agencies to meet the gaps. The agency capacities should be aligned with the strategic data outcomes or even the PEW report information.”
- “Sometimes, it’s not clear on how it gets decided at CJP in which way to help vulnerable communities, and it looks like the heads of such communities have never been asked what’s best for them.”
- “CJP can play the role of identifying broader themes (e.g. the current need for mental health trainers in all orgs) across diverse organizations and seeking grant funding for that”

These helpful comments can be addressed by:

- Refining the long-term outcomes to be more precise and measurable (note that this is relevant to all three logic models)
- Define CJP's target population. Define "vulnerable" as a broad/umbrella term + provide examples of specific and practical ways in which it is operationalized for different populations
- Explore ways for CJP to engage in more equitable and participatory approaches to doing needs assessment and program design. Aim for more community driven decision making
- Clearly define activities and potential outcomes of CJP's collective impact approach

Broader and Deeper Engagement with Jewish Life

Question: What feedback do you have on the draft long-term outcomes in order to better align them with work on the ground?

There was relatively less discussion of the Broader and Deeper Engagement logic model, but several comments are consistent with the theme of driving for more specificity in outcomes:

- "Is there a shared definition of "Jewish community"
- "We see a connection between being inclusive in our programs and combatting anti-semitism - inviting people in builds understanding"
- "The word handoff feels wrong here - but the concept is right. We want organizations to be able to connect and amplify each other's work when relevant."
- "The word "handoff" doesn't feel collaborative and doesn't address infrastructure issues."
- "What does nuanced support of Israel mean? The last outcome feels really vague"

These comments underscore what we heard throughout the meeting about the need to drive to more detail and clarity about the outcomes in each logic model.