The Israel Religious Expression Platform (iRep)

2022 Allocations

The Israel Religious Expression Platform, iRep, is a coalition of Jewish Federations and foundations that work together to advance legitimacy and support for diverse Jewish expressions in Israel. Since 2016 iRep has provided over $2 million in support for more than 25 civil society organizations working on the ground to promote religious diversity in Israel.


For more information on iRep and to learn how your Federation can join, please contact Einat Hurvitz, director of iRep.

iRep’s goal is to ensure that every Israeli can exercise choice and self-determination around his/her own Jewish identity and practice. These choices should also be publicly legitimized and receive meaningful support at both the national and local level. To this end, iRep invests annually in grassroots projects run by Israeli civil society organizations that focus on increasing accessibility to diverse ways of celebrating life-cycle ceremonies and Jewish holidays as well as projects advocating for government support for diverse Jewish programming.

At the end of October 2022, the iRep committee approved allocations to ten projects of Israeli organizations working in the field of religious diversity. Some of these projects are being funded for a second year. Below is a short description of the projects that were awarded funding:

Marriage Freedom Projects

iRep Goal: to promote public awareness of the different ways to perform Jewish weddings outside the religious establishment, and to encourage legitimacy of choice for these marriage ceremonies.

Israel Hofsheet (Be Free Israel) ([http://bfree.org.il/english](http://bfree.org.il/english))
Israel Hofsheet will promote and advocate for the option of secular Jewish wedding ceremonies, with a special focus on the Russian speaking population in Israel who face specific challenges in this area. They will also work with the Ministry of Justice and local municipalities to create either a national or local registration process for couples considered to be “common law married” (the status of couples who choose to marry outside the official religious establishment). For the first
time, Israeli Hofsheet will also advocate that commercial organizations offer their employees a package of services that streamline the recognition of couples as “common law married.”

Chuppot (https://chuppot.org.il/en/)
Chuppot challenges the monopoly of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel through the provision of private Halachic wedding ceremonies. With this grant, they will promote and advocate the idea that marriage outside of the Rabbinate is a legitimate and viable Jewish option. Chuppot also advocates for the legitimacy of this option among Orthodox Rabbis, in order to increase acceptance of choice in marriage by greater parts of the Religious Zionist sector.

Hillel Israel (https://www.hillelisrael.org/)
Hillel Israel works to acquaint Israeli young adults with the richness, diversity and beauty of Jewish life, and connect them to Jewish peoplehood. In this project Hillel Israel will hold a series of local events in different universities that will expose students to various options for marriage outside the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate. The events, which will be held in popular bars, will facilitate informal conversations with pluralistic Israeli Jewish spiritual leaders who conduct wedding ceremonies, from Orthodox to secular, Reform, Conservative and non-denominational. These events will also include practical legal information on the status of these ceremonies.

Pluralistic options for celebrating Bat and Bar Mitzvahs

iRep Goal: to promote greater awareness of options for celebrating lifecycle events through all streams of Jewish culture and tradition and to legitimize choice in Jewish practice.

The Reform and Conservative movements (https://www.reform.org.il/eng/ and https://masorti.org/)
Receiving a second year of iRep funding, the Reform and Conservative movements will continue a joint campaign to educate the public on options for creating meaningful Bar/Bat mitzvah ceremonies. The campaign will have a particular emphasis on promoting women’s and girl’s active role in reading the Torah as Bat Mitzvah girls, mothers, and sisters. The campaign, which includes this new website (in Hebrew) will also promote the option of holding a meaningful ceremony at the egalitarian Kotel plaza in Jerusalem.

BINA: The Jewish Movement for Social Change (www.bina.org.il)
BINA is launching Hiburim, a new Bar/Bat Mitzvah program designed specifically for Russian speaking Israeli families. Through this program, families will learn and explore together the meaning and beauty of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year, in a way that cultivates comfort and confidence among participants about their Jewish-Israeli identities and sense of belonging to Israeli society and the Jewish world.

The Yaakov Herzog Center (merkazherzog.org.il)
The ‘Added Value’ Bar/Bat Mitzvah program will operate in a range of secular and traditional communities around the southern periphery of Israel and engage Israeli youth with questions of Jewish identity, Jewish culture, and social justice. Each group of youngsters will create a social justice project based on their Jewish learning and enhance their sense of personal responsibility while becoming Bar/Bat mitzvah.
Meaningful Options to Celebrate Jewish Holidays and Shabbat for all Israelis

iRep Goal: to promote greater awareness of options for celebrating Jewish calendar events through all streams of Jewish culture and tradition and to legitimize choice in Jewish practice.

Machon Hachagim – Home for the Holidays (https://www.eng.chagim.org.il/)
Machon Hachagim will develop 20-25 new lesson plans specifically for the secular public school system. These will include high-quality, diverse, and rich Jewish content from a non-observant point of view consistent with the identities of the children in this school system. These plans will be added to the 20 lesson plans the Machon produced with a grant from iRep last year, to form a virtual holidays study guide. Machon Hachagim will also do outreach programs to over 90 public schools to acquaint them with the wealth of materials and tools available to make teaching about the holidays meaningful and personal.

The Shalom Hartman Institute - Judaism and State Policy Center (https://www.hartman.org.il/program/center-for-judaism-and-state-policy/#about-1)
The Shalom Hartman institute’s Judaism and State Policy Center is working to create policy changes regarding the regulation of public space on Shabbat in Israel, including questions around opening businesses, public/cultural institutions, and public transportation on Shabbat. Through iRep’s grant, the policy center will work with several municipalities, in the run up to local elections which will be held in late 2023, to generate a broad public discourse around these questions, and to develop policies appropriate to the residents of each municipality.

Working with Decision Makers on Promoting Jewish Diversity

iRep Goal: to create sustainable means of public support for diverse Jewish practice and choices, through working with Israeli decision makers to ensure they have access and information on all the possible diverse Jewish lifecycle events available to Israelis.

Panim (http://www.panim.org.il/en)
Panim will work with government ministries to update their funding criteria and other bureaucratic mandates to match the needs of pluralistic organizations. Special emphasis will be made to secure new avenues that have opened in the past two years and make them permanent line items in the State budget. Panim will also train pluralistic civil society organizations on how to apply for these avenues of support.

Ne’emanei Torah Va’Avodah (NTA) (https://toravoda.org.il/en/)
Ne’emanei Torah Va’Avodah will work with government ministries to develop criteria that will enable greater support for open and more pluralistic Orthodox services. NTA also works to ensure that fewer public funds are directed to organizations that work to prevent Jewish diversity, equality, and democracy.

For more information contact iRep director Einat.Hurvitz@JewishFederations.org.